

Insecurity Crisis in Nigeria: The Law Enforcement Agents a Panacea?

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Abstract

Africa's most populous country, Nigeria is presently embroidered in security crisis which has become an unending challenge, not only by defying security measures but making a mockery of the efforts of the law enforcement agents and the millions of naira annually budgeted by government as security votes. This study therefore examines the predisposing factor in security crisis and the role of the law enforcement agents in the quest to stem its rising tide. The theory of class struggle as propounded by Karl Marx and enthused by Friedrich Engels was used to explain the topic under investigation. The quantitative technique which involved the use of questionnaire was employed to gather data from 831 respondents in Benin metropolis and this was analysed with the use of the simple percentage and inferential statistics. The study revealed that ethno-religious conflicts, weak security and judicial system, unemployment, poverty, porous borders, lopsided development and marginalization were some of the predisposing factors in insecurity in Nigeria. The study maintains that there is the need to strengthen the security and judicial system, create jobs and employment opportunities for youth while also being fair and equitable in the provision of infrastructure in the various geo-political zones.

Keywords: Security crisis, law enforcement agents, institutional corruption, restructuring, inequalities

Introduction

Insecurity in Nigeria has recently assumed an alarming rate affecting every facet of Nigerian life with no end in sight. Although, insecurity is not a problem that is unique only to Nigeria because other nations also face the challenge. However, the main point of departure is the way the social menace is managed. Unarguably, insecurity has heightened leading to severe unimaginable social consequences which has blighted the socio-economic sphere of Nigeria's life. The word 'insecurity', generally refers to the absence of resistance to or protection from harm, peaceful co-existence and development at large. Achumba, Ighomereho and Akpor-Robaro (2013), simply see insecurity as the opposite of security which tends to affect human life and existence. As a general term, it refers to a state of being subject to fear, threat, danger, molestation, intimidation, harassment and so on, in all aspect. This implies that threat to human life does not only emanate from situation of violent conflicts such as Boko Haram and Fulani herdsmen activities but also from other non-conflict sources. Nigeria appears presently to be battling with security problem and this cuts across its six geographical regions but particularly in the North-East, North Central and South-South. Residents in these regions now sleep with one eye open while government who ordinarily is charged with the protection of lives and property seems lost and incapable of doing this.

In spite of the express provision of Section 14 (2)(1), criminal activities and insecurity such as ritual killings, militancy, Biafra agitation, kidnapping, oil bunkering in have remained news headlines in Nigeria. The wave, dynamics and sophistication of security crisis has led to very serious social consequences particularly on the economy. Similarly, commercial activities have become skeletal and paralyzed in the areas worst hit by insecurity.

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Consequent upon this, trade and commerce have suffered tremendously, resulting in further pauperization of Nigerians and even government's revenue has dwindled. Social activities particularly in the crisis prone areas are very poor due to fear of the unknown as many of the best brains and man power have fled for fear of either being kidnapped, killed or maimed. This challenge that Nigeria is faced with appears intractable particularly due to what Adejumo (2011) sees as the nonchalant attitude of the Nigerian government which is supposed to uphold Section 12 (2) (b) of the Nigerian Constitution (1999). For Bankong-Obi (2011), the situation will remain if not worse because the law enforcement agencies appear unprepared for the present challenges. Adegbami (2013) notes that, generally, the Nigeria populace has lost confidence in the ability of the law enforcement agents to secure their lives and property especially against their inefficiency due to lack of sophisticated weapons and lack of modern day communication gadgets.

Furthermore, the causes of security challenges in Nigeria are varied and include economic-unemployment, poverty, rise of ethnic and militia groups, weak leadership, weak judiciary and ineffective security agencies (Jega, 2002; Saluwu, 2010; 2011; Okorie, 2011; Ezeoba, 2011 and Ali, 2013). The government safeguards the lives and property of its citizens using the security agencies which are constitutionally charged with maintaining law and order. The rising wave of insecurity in Nigeria has drawn attention to the work and modus operandi of the various state security agencies. How effective are they in the light of the glaring security crisis besieging Nigeria or as John the Baptist asked Jesus in Matthew 11:3 (Holy Bible) "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" Is it time for Nigerians to start asking if the present security agencies can be relied on or they should ask for another probably from the western world. Therefore, this formed the basis upon which the study was embarked upon.

Research objectives

This study was primarily designed to examine the security crisis in Nigeria. The specific objectives are:

- i. to identify the predisposing factors in insecurity in Benin City
- ii. to determine if the law enforcement agents are capable of preventing and managing insecurity in Benin City

Research questions

- i. what are the predisposing factors in security crisis in Benin City?
- ii. how capable are the law enforcement agents in the prevention and management of insecurity in Benin City?

Brief review of related literature

Origin and incidence of insecurity crisis in Nigeria

Without doubt, Nigeria has great potentials for greatness, especially with its large population made up of a dynamic work force, a growing economy, abundant natural resources, diverse raw materials, huge oil deposits and a reservoir of intellectuals. In spite of these indices for greatness, Nigeria still remains a developing country struggling most frantically to find her feet among the comity of nations due to the prevailing insurgency and insecurity among other factors, that have continued to pose as a challenge to its development and growth. The truth be told, Nigeria is passing through turbulent and trying times as echoes of not just insurgency but criminality have marred its nascent democracy. Crimes such as militancy, kidnapping, ritual killing, armed robbery, assassinations, destruction of public and private property and lack of relative peace appear to be on the increase in Nigeria. The security crisis that has presently engulfed the country is traceable to the aftermath of the Nigeria civil war and the adventure of the military into governance which necessitated the importation and use of arms and ammunitions (Ewetan and Urhie, 2014). Ewetan and Urhie (2014) noted further that not long after the civil war, these arms that found their way into the hands of civilians and ex-military men, were now used to carry out criminal activities. Besides the proliferation and free flow of arms, many people lost their jobs as a result of the war and needed to survive.. to survive, they resorted to criminal activities. Crime like kidnapping became prominent in the 1990s and was used by the Niger Delta militants as a means to protest the exploitation and environmental degradation of their community. The Niger Delta region which is the source of Nigeria's wealth, regrettably suffers from a paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty. The agitation and disenchantment of the marginalized youths led to the emergence of various militant groups that were involved in not just kidnapping but bombing of oil installations. These resulted to security crisis which the Federal government between May 2007 and May 2015battled to bring under control.

In the South-East, the agitation for a Biafra State which was first muted and championed by the late Col. Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, later gained currency in the activities MASSOB and IPOB led by Nnamdi Kanu whose whereabouts till date is unknown. These agitations have led to security crisis in the south-east and its resurgence is attributable to the perceived marginalization and lopsided development embarked upon by the President Buhari's administration. In the Middle-belt of North Central Zone, insecurity is also rife. In Plateau State particularly, conflict between the Hausa-Fulani and the Birom people has left hundreds of people dead while in Benue State, Governor Samuel Ortom has had a hectic time with the conflict between the Fulani herdsmen and the local people, thereby leading to many deaths and the sacking of several villages.

The North-East Zone of Nigeria has also had its fair share of security challenges, particularly as it has housed the dreaded Boko Haram. In spite of claims by the Federal government of Nigeria that it has subdued and brought Boko Haram to its knees, evidence abound to show that the contrary is the case. Edo State has also been in the limelight in terms of security issues. Apart from being one of the hot beds of kidnapping, some of its communities have been invaded by the Fulani herdsmen who have continued to rape women and girls, kill both old and young persons as well as destroy farm products.

It would appear dimensionally, that the pattern of insecurity in Nigeria has been regionalized. Militia group's insurgency in the North, kidnapers in the Eastern and Southern part of the country, ritual killings in the West, and political and non-political assassinations across the nation. As a result of the increasing incidence and prevalence of insecurity and in order to ameliorate it, the Federal government has embarked on the criminalization of terrorism by passing the Anti-terrorism Act (2011), the proscription of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), installation of computer-based Close Circuit TV camera (CCTV) in some parts of the country, and broadcast of security tips in mass media (Azazi, 2011). Commendable as these efforts may appear, the level of insecurity in the country still remains high. The question is what are the factors responsible for the continuing insecurity situation in Nigeria?

Predisposing factors in security crisis

Weak security and judiciary system

The statutory role of maintaining law and order in any given society rests squarely on law enforcement agents. Unfortunately, it would appear as Iygeal (2012) has pointed out that the law enforcement agents appears unaware of security challenges and more often than not, act after the occurrence of security breaches. He further noted that at other times, even when they hear of violence, criminal activities or likely breach of security, they ignore or are slow to act for the fear of death or harm befalling them. On his part, Temple (2013) observed that the law enforcement agents are not well provided for, in terms of life insurance, accommodation, adding that their monthly salary is poor with no welfare packages. He advised the government to stop putting the lives of security personnel in danger by sending them to quell insurgency without the required equipment. Achumba, Ighomereho and Robaro (2013) in their study revealed that even when security personnel have the basic training and equipment, some of them get influenced by ethnic or religious sentiments and are thus easily swallowed by their personal interest to serve their people instead of the nation. Olorisakin (2008) asserts that the police population ratio in Nigeria is 1:450 which falls below the United Nations' standard. This implies that as a country, Nigeria is grossly under-policed and this perhaps explains the police' inability to effectively tackle crimes and security challenges. Consequently, rather than be national peace keepers saddled with the responsibility of protecting Nigerian citizens, they take sides and fuel insecurity through either leaking vital security information or aiding and abetting criminals to acquire weapons or to escape the long arm of the law. This perhaps explains why some individuals have called for the posting of security personnel to their state of origin.

Oputa (1991) and Alemika and Chukwuma (2000) have argued that, the Nigerian Police has a very serious image problem in the eyes of the public it is established to serve. The Nigeria Police is viewed with suspicion, a pariah of some sort, perceived to be "unfriendly", "brutal", "trigger-happy", "extortionist", "crime collaborators", "gross violators of fundamental human rights", and so on. The rising crime rate, especially violent crimes involving kidnapping, armed robbery, ritual murders, political assassinations, ethnic and religious violence, election violence, has dampened the hope of the public on the capacity of the police to ensure the safety of people's lives and property. The general feeling is that the police can neither solve the crimes already committed, through arrests and successful prosecutions, nor prevent or, at least, reduce the incidence of crimes.

Closely associated with the above is the weak judicial system in Nigeria. By the Nigerian Constitution (1999), the judiciary is charged with the interpretation of the law and adjudication in civil and criminal cases. In doing this, it ensures that rules are not broken and social order is maintained. Fukuyama (2004) noted that the increasing impunity and dare devilry of sundry looting and embezzlement especially of public funds are enhanced by the weakness of the Nigeria legal system. Justice and the rule of law do not just depend on the law but on the impartiality, astuteness and nobility of the judicial officers. Unfortunately as noted by Tella (2015) and Obarisiagbon (2017), the Nigerian judicial system is weak and encourages criminality as many of the offenders easily find their way home even after being arrested and prosecuted. Nigeria is thus in trouble if the security personnel cannot prevent and detect crimes due to lack of basic equipment and training and the judiciary too, due to the flaws inherent in its system that hinders the dispense of justice.

Economy- poverty and unemployment

A poor economy with high poverty and unemployment rate appears to have been the bane of the Nigerian society (The Nigerian Bureau of Statistics cited in Ogah, Fanimo, Ebosele and Adepotun (2011). Every year institutions of higher learning produce many graduates who regrettably, are thrown into the labour market with no hope in sight for jobs. In an effort to keep body and soul together, some become frustrated and go into violent and criminal acts such as the “lucrative” kidnapping, militancy and armed robbery. Others have become prey to terrorists and are easily radicalized. The case of Boko Haram, IPOB and Niger Delta militancy easily come to mind. Nwagbosa (2012) on his part believes that past governments have failed to put in place measures that will reduce unemployment and poverty, which have been the major causes of insecurity in Nigeria. To a large extent, the Niger Delta region of Nigeria under the late President Umaru Yar’Adua and former President Goodluck Jonathan’s introduction of amnesty in which unemployed and poverty-stricken youths who laid down their arms were sent to training centres for vocational and educational purpose brought amazing peace and tranquility in that area.

Ethno-religious conflicts

Suspicion and mutual distrust among the various ethnic groups as well as the major religions in Nigeria have tended to be a source of security challenges. Two dominant religions exist in Nigeria- Islam and Christianity and there has been frequent and persistent religious clashes between these dominant religions and the end seems not to be in sight. In all parts of the country, ethno-religious conflicts have assumed alarming rates, making a mockery of the security order. Current and general state of insecurity in most parts of Northern Nigeria today is weighed to different report of Boko Haram (Ezeoba, 2011). In fact, before the advent of this dreaded religious sect, there were several instances of security crisis due to the activities of religious fanatics in the North. The maitatsine riot in Kano, Kaitungo crisis (2000), Kala-Kato violence in Bauchi State, Madala, burning of churches in Niger State in 2011 and series of arson and burning of churches in the North remains evergreen in the memories of Nigerians

Porous borders

It has been observed that the porous borders in Nigeria which facilitates unrestricted and untracked movements of people have greatly contributed to insecurity in Nigeria. Apart from unrestricted movement of individuals into Nigeria, arms and ammunitions whether they be light, small or heavy have found their way into Nigeria most times undetected and have been used by religious fanatics, insurgents and militia to wreak havoc on Nigeria’s social order with little or no response from law enforcement agents. Edeko (2011) has reported that Nigeria hosts over 70% of about 8million illegal weapons have been used to create security crisis. On their part, Adeola and Olayemi (2012) believe that the porosity of the country’s border has led to uncontrollable influx of migrants, mainly youths from neighbouring countries particularly Niger, Chad and Republic of Benin who have been majorly responsible for some of the criminal acts in Nigeria.

Lopsided development, marginalization and inequalities in the country

The present government of Nigeria has severally been accused of ethnic bias and the marginalization of some sections of the country in the distribution of basic infrastructure and theses have greatly compounded the security of Nigeria (Nwadiolor, 2011). Key political appointments presently have been given to people of Northern extraction while the South-East has been left in the cold. This perhaps explains the agitation for the Republic of Biafra and several security breaches that have accompanied the agitation. Besides, it is quite glaring that there is great disparity in life chances in Nigeria.

A vast majority of the public has a feeling of inequality, unfairness, marginalization and this has led to frustration and loss of hope, especially amongst the youths. These youths now express their disillusion about the state of affairs by any means possible, legal or illegal. The result is growing insecurity (Onuoha, 2011).

Theoretical explanation

This study adopted the theory of class struggle as propounded by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in its explanation of the topic under focus. The central thesis of this theory is that from known times, there has always been a struggle among the classes of society, the struggle for control of material values in the prices of production and the organization of power as they seek to dominate one another (Nnoli, 2003). Karl Marx states that the dominant class usually emerges to protect and guard a particular mode of production, mediates and moderates inter-class and intra-class struggles in order to maintain stability.

It is needful to state here that the struggle among social classes for the control of state power has been the propelling force in the development of many societies. Interestingly, the basis of the struggle between the two classes “the haves” and the “have nots” is the control of the state so as to determine social policies particularly the allocation of values and scarce resources. For the “have nots”, the oppressed or proletariats, there is the need for a new social order that would ensure fairly equitable distribution of resources and so they agitate as in the case of IPOB while the “haves”, the bourgeois preoccupies itself with maintaining the new class advantage, by extension the structural inequality which has led to the insecurity currently faced by Nigeria. The case of the Northern oligarchy who believes that they are born to rule Nigeria for life is instructive at this point. The current insecurity in Nigeria is traceable to, among other things, the unwillingness of the ruling class to willingly relinquish power. Consequently, this has led to insecurity in Nigeria as some sects and groups- Civil and human right organizations, OPC, IPOB, Niger Delta militants etc. are discontent with the ruling class thereby leading them to engage in intense struggle and violence.

Methods and materials

This is a cross-sectional study which adopted the descriptive survey design to gather data which helped the subject matter under investigation. To achieve this, a self-constructed semi-structured questionnaire was designed. This was divided into two, A and B; while the A aspect of the questionnaire focused on the socio-economic features of the respondents, the B aspect of the questionnaire essentially, focused on questions relating to the topic under investigation. A test-re-test method which result was .95 was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire used while its validity was determined by a face construct validity. The data gathered from the field were analysed with the aid of inferal statistics.

The study used the stratified sampling method and thus found the existing twelve (12) wards which makes up Benin City very useful for this purpose. The research instrument were administered purposively on eight hundred and forty (840) respondents made up of law enforcement agents, heads of self-help security outfits, odionwere of the various streets/quarters in Benin City sand legal practitioners. A total of eight hundred and thirty-one (831) questionnaires out of the eight hundred and forty (840) questionnaires were retrieved from the field. This was statistically found significant and so used for the study's data analysis. In the course of gathering data, the purpose of the study was not only explained to the respondents but their consent to participate in it was sought and obtained before the questionnaires were administered on them. All ethical considerations were taken into consideration in the course of the study.

Findings and Discussions

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

| | FREQUENCY | PERCENTAGE (%) |
|---------------------------|------------|----------------|
| Sex | | |
| Male | 495 | 60 |
| Female | 336 | 40 |
| Total | 831 | 100 |
| Age | | |
| 25-34 | 200 | 27 |
| 35-44 | 360 | 43 |
| 45-54 | 200 | 24 |
| 55 and above | 51 | 6 |
| Total | 831 | 100 |
| Religion | | |
| Christianity | 814 | 98 |
| Islam | 12 | 1.4 |
| A.T.R. | 5 | 0.6 |
| Total | 831 | 100 |
| Educational status | | |
| Primary | 180 | 22 |
| Secondary | 320 | 38 |
| Tertiary | 331 | 40 |
| Total | 831 | 100 |
| Marital status | | |
| Married | 705 | 85 |
| Single | 120 | 14.3 |
| Divorced | 6 | 0.7 |
| Total | 831 | 100 |

Source: field survey, 2018

Table 1 indicates that there were 495 (60%) male respondents while the number of female respondents was 336 (40%). This implies that there were more male respondents than female in the area of study. The table also indicates that respondents within the ages of 25-34 years were 220 (27%), those within the ages of 35-44 years were 360 (43%), those within the ages of 45-54 years were 200 (24%) and those who were 55 years and above were 51 (6%). This shows that majority of the respondents were between the ages of 35-44 years. It further reveals that 814 (98%) of the respondents were Christians, 12 (1.4%) were Muslims and 5 (0.6%) practiced African traditional religion. On educational status, 180 (22%) of the respondents had primary education, 320 (38%) had secondary education and 331 (40%) had tertiary education. This shows that majority of the respondents had tertiary education. For marital status, 705 (85%) of the respondents were married, 120 (14.3%) were single and 6 (0.7%) were divorced. This means that majority of the respondents were married.

Table 2: Predisposing factors in security crisis

| What are the factors that lead to insecurity? | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|------------|----------------|
| Ethno-religious conflicts | 85 | 10 |
| Weak security and judiciary system | 105 | 13 |
| Unemployment and poverty situation | 100 | 12 |
| Lopsided development and feeling of marginalization | 98 | 11.7 |
| Porous borders | 42 | 5.1 |
| All reasons stated above | 401 | 48.2 |
| Total | 831 | 100 |

Source: field survey, 2018

On factors that lead to security crisis, table 2 reveals that 85 (10%) of the respondents surveyed considered ethno-religious conflicts as a factor, 105 (13%) of the respondents believed that weak security and judiciary system while 100 (12%) were for unemployment and poverty situation, 98 (11.7%) were for lopsided development and feeling of marginalization, 42 (5.1%) were for porous borders and 401 (48.2%) were for all the reasons stated. The result of this study validates previous works on the predisposing factors in insecurity: Ezeoba (2011) on ethno-religious conflicts; Iygeal (2012), Temple (2013), Achumba (2013) and Tella (2015) and Obarisiagbon (2017) on weak security and judiciary system; Nwagbosa (2012), Ogah et al (2011) on unemployment and poverty.

Nwadiolor (2011) and Onuoha (2011) on lopsided development and feeling of marginalization; while Edeko (2011), Adeola and Olayemi (2012) on porous borders.

Table 3: Effectiveness of law enforcement agents

| Would you say that law enforcement agents are capable of preventing and managing security crisis in Benin City? | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|------------|----------------|
| Yes | 150 | 18 |
| No | 670 | 80.6 |
| Undecided | 11 | 1.2 |
| Total | 831 | 100 |

Source: field survey, 2018

Table 3 shows that 150 (18%) of the surveyed respondents agreed that law enforcement agents are capable of preventing and managing security crisis in Benin City while 670 (80.6%) stated no and 11 (1.2%) were undecided. This implies that majority of the respondents do not believe that law enforcement agents are capable of preventing and managing security crisis in Benin City. This study's findings have, to a large extent, further validated Oputa (1991), Adegami (2013), Alemika and Chukwuma (2000) and Obarisiagbon and Omage (2018). These authors believe that the upsurge in criminal activities particularly, kidnapping, ritual murders, arson, Fulani herdsmen murderous activities, election violence, has dampened the hope of the public on the ability of the police to guaranty people's security. The general feeling seem to be that law enforcement agents cannot prevent nor detect crimes.

Conclusion and recommendations

This study examined the insecurity challenges faced in Nigeria vis-à-vis the law enforcement agents. Security is a necessary ingredient for the growth, progress and political stability of any society. As revealed from the study, insecurity has remained a conundrum for the Nigeria government and appears intractable due largely to its predisposing factors such as unemployment, poverty, porous borders, inequality, lopsided development and weak security and judicial system. The government of Nigeria, particularly at Federal level should map out ways of effectively guarding the country's porous borders from entry by illegal immigrants. Besides, the law enforcement agents particularly those charged with manning the country's borders should be alive to their responsibility by preventing unauthorized entry of whether small or light weapons. There is the need also for a people-oriented leadership. One that should be fair in the discharge of its duties particularly, by ensuring even development of the n various geo-political zones. Key and sensitive appointments should be based on Federal character and quota system. This way, a lot of the agitations that usually leads to security challenges will be nipped in the bud. The government should in addition to creating jobs for the teeming unemployed youths also provide modern and sophisticated weapons for the various law enforcement agents, enhanced packages (life insurance inclusive) as well as training and retraining of men and officers of the force as well as judicial officers should be a constant occurrence. This will no doubt boost their morale.

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