

CURBING SECURITY CHALLENGES FACING CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examined the contemporary security challenges facing Nigeria, such as, army/shiite clashes, Boko Haram terrorism, herdsmen/farmers clashes, kidnapping, banditry, cattle rustling, arms smuggling, militancy, illicit proliferation of small arms, violent extremism and insecurity amongst other violent crimes in Nigeria. The paper focused on the strategies to improve on the security situation in Nigeria. It noted that the recent history of Nigeria, is faced with complex, transnational and technology driven security threats. The paper outlined diverse ways, especially in the areas of criminal information processing and sharing, global monitoring and methods to apprehend criminal elements in Nigeria. It also discussed some evolved workable strategies towards tackling the insecurity threats in a coordinated and sustainable manner. The aim of the paper is to make Nigeria a safer country for the people to live in peace and harmony. The study adopted the descriptive methodology. It drew upon primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include oral information and secondary sources include newspapers and books.

Keywords: Insecurity, Challenges, Curbing Crimes, Peace, Nigeria.

Introduction

The current woes and challenges of insecurity facing Nigeria cannot be won with kids gloves. Contemporary security challenges facing Nigeria have sagged the country's national and international image and threatening to consume it. There is an urgent need to redouble the nation's efforts on rejigging the nation's security architecture and improvement of the economy to ease the living conditions of Nigerians. The backdrop of the alarming national security siege, worsening economic hardship, and a wave of banditry, kidnapping, corruption, scandals, including international wire fraud and killings has in recent times given Nigeria a bad name and image. The country could be rid of the present herdsmen/farmers clashes, Boko Haram terrorism, banditry and kidnapping woes if government and the security agencies would frontally and forth-rightly tackle the problem. The reenergizing of the war on insurgency and other criminal and security threats, ensuring that culprits are not spared from facing prosecution but dealt with according to the law would ensure peace and harmony in the land. Thus, a renew crackdown on all kinds of terrorist and hoodlums has become imperative not only to save the nation from anarchy, but also preventing it from sinking into imminent destruction. Thus there is need for the people to turn away from evil and embrace good deeds, righteousness exalt a nation but sin destroys it. Banditry, kidnapping, insurgency, army/Shiites clashes, herdsmen/farmers crisis bring pains, sorrow and shame to Nigeria, but peace and harmony bring joy, comfort, unity and contentment for the upright in Nigeria. Killing of Nigerians by criminals is upsetting; obviously, the criminal justice system should be able to address this problem. With state police operation, nobody should be killed. But unfortunately, in recent time, Nigeria had since turned a haven for bandits and kidnapers, who operate regularly around cities, highways, communities and forest, which the bandits used as operational base across Nigeria. it is unfortunate, to experience that bandits and insurgents on rampage in Northern Nigeria often abduct women only to demand ransom or "protection money" from their parents or communities. Sometimes, the bandits, who carry sophisticated guns also rustled herders' cattle and steal foodstuff from farmers; while some of the unfortunate women are raped or killed.

It is also important to note that, Nigeria's rising poverty and unemployment rate must be checked before it gets out of control. The latest unemployment figures released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed that the number of unemployed Nigerians rose to 20.9 million in the third

quarter (Q3) of 2018 from 17.6 million in the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2017. The figures show that unemployment rate rose to 23.1 percent at the end of Q3 of 2018, up from previous 18.8 percent in the corresponding quarter in 2017. The rising poverty and unemployment rate in Nigeria is worrisome, agonizing and upsetting; likewise, government failure to curb it is equally disturbing, distressing and “nail biting”. This is because poverty and unemployment are threat to national security and peace. This paper urges the government to come up with new initiatives to create jobs and to curb insecurity. It is not enough to make promises on job creation and poverty reduction. This is the time to fulfill such promises, because rising poverty and unemployment of the youths can worsen the nation’s general insecurity.

The recent World Economic Forum (WEF) report that Nigeria has reached 50 percent on the world’s misery index underscores the need to address the rising unemployment and poverty in the land. Therefore, the government should frontally tackle the scourge so that it would help to curb the security challenges facing contemporary Nigeria (Orabuchi, 2019). Unfortunately, unemployment, especially youth unemployment has not only been linked with poverty, life dissatisfaction, and crime, but also with suicide, violence, substance abuses, anxiety, depression and other psychological disorders, such as, poor self-esteem, without jobs, it is greatly challenging for Nigerian youth to face change, divergence and vicissitudes of life with success. The absence of hope and opportunity for upward mobility for these youths leave unpredicted future for them and for the country. Therefore, the future of these young adults is being mortgaged by those in the government who could not come up with policies that would address the endemic unemployment problem of the country. Thus, the government has chosen to truncate the future of the Nigerian youths and by extension the future of the country is placed in jeopardy. This would now expose the youths to the danger, vulnerability and risk of insecurity. (Orabuchi, 2019). Insecurity thrive in Nigeria because the country has become one of the poorest countries in the world. There is also insecurity due to absence of work and unemployment as many young Nigerians have been laid off in the commercial sectors, in banks, industries, and even in small-scale enterprises. Moreso, there is what they call hunger in the land and any nation where there is insecurity, hunger, will not only experience insecurity, hunger will also breed criminality and a situation where criminality prevails there will be multiple kidnapping, banditry and insurgents killings because criminals kill for political, economic, ethnic and religious jihad reasons.

In recent history of Nigeria, ethnic, religious, individuals and political groups armed themselves to oppress and exploit the weak. Hence, insecurity breeds fear in the land. People can no longer travel safely on the roads, the wealthy ones have to fly and then, how many airports do we have that everybody have to fly to avoid bandits, kidnappers, and insurgents (Ikoku, 2019). Nigeria, the giant of Africa, because of insecurity has become a laughing stock among all the nations of West Africa, in Africa and beyond.

Strategies to Curb Security Challenges facing Contemporary Nigeria

One of the best strategies to curb the challenge of insecurity in Nigeria is for the country to respect the rule of the law. When you have a government that operates under the rule of law, then everybody and the institutions would be subjected to it. A situation where people think they are above the law, then insecurity, disobedience and killings would thrive in such a country. And when the citizen finds out that there is no obedience of the rule of law then the end result would be anarchy, chaos, insurrection, lawlessness and rebellion (Ikoku, 2019). This act of disorder and misgovernment breed self defence for people to arm and defend themselves from insurgents, bandits and kidnappers. Nigeria has been in this sort of insecurity since independence in diverse ways as people are divided along ethnic fault lines of ethnocentrism, politics, nepotism and hatred. There is so much injustice projected into the political system to ensure insecurity and killings. The diverse ethnic groups cannot continue to live like this. It is unacceptable! Nigeria should be restructured; when restructured, everybody would become equal, and nobody will scramble for money from Abuja. The states will be independent, the will be state police (Clark, 2019).

In the situation of insecurity Nigeria finds herself today, where killings of citizenry are worrisome, the Inspector-General of Police (IGP) should order the deployment of aerial surveillance helicopters to major cities, forest and axis of insurgents, bandits and kidnappers’ hideout so that the police could effectively curtail crimes in the country. The Police Air Wing Operational base in Abuja would cater for Abuja-Kaduna highways and the adjoining states in the North West and North Central.

Whereas the base in Ondo would cater for the adjoining states and highways hotspots in the South eastern region, strategic operational base should be located to cater for the adjoining states to crackdown hideout of kidnappers and bandits. Aerial surveillance is imperative to improve the security of lives and property in the affected areas of the country (Mba, 2019).

As a strategy to fight contemporary security challenges facing Nigeria, the idea of the Inspector General of Police (IGP), Mohammed Adamu (2019) for the Federal Government to approve recruitment of 40,000 Community Police Constables across the federation as part of measures to strengthen community policing is a right step in the right direction. Each of the 774 council areas in the country would have a minimum of 50 Constables to strength security at local levels. The community policing would also ensure that it involved the engagement of community-based organizations, groups, and institutions to see that it works for the betterment of all. It is important to note that the Police Campaign against Cultism and Other Vices (POCACOV) is a national programme designed by the Federal Government Community Policing agenda. The idea of community policing was to involve all stake holders in the onerous task of crime reduction in Nigeria (Mba, 2019).

As a strategy to fight banditry and kidnapping in Nigeria, the police should sensitize members of the public to join the fight against crime and criminality at the community level. All Nigerians are to key into the programme for the overall reduction of crime in all Nigeria's indigenous communities in the country so that killer herdsmen do not dislodge indigenous farmers from their ancestral farmland and homes. All citizens of Nigeria should identify security threats and proffer local solutions to them. The synergy among the security agencies in Nigeria as a strategy to curb insecurity can yield positive results. Nigerians should give the police their unwavering support toward the campaign to fight crime in the communities. Fighting crime to get positive result needs identification of societal problems and cross-sectorial consultation to achieve local solutions to local problems is the key message to enhance conflict management and resolution. Fighting crime in any society positively should involve everyone in a bottom-up approach meant to tackle the root cause of most crimes (Agubuzu, 2019).

The government and the Nigerian people need to come together to identify the root cause of insecurity and corruption in Nigeria, because it is a danger to the corporate existence of Nigeria. Insecurity and corruption are monsters, which are threatening citizens' freedom and national development. For the fact that Nigeria is labeled across the world as a terrorist country and rank among the five countries with the highest impact of terrorism should prompt huge concerns in every Nigerian. This bad name and image threatened the peoples' potentials and the country's economy. To redeem the Nigerian image, the Nigerian government and people need to start positive image restoration, through the nation's institutions, systems, societal traditions, ethical and moral values as well as personal behavior and called for the re-enactment of the core family values of hard work, integrity, honesty and discipline (Shittu, 2019).

To fight insecurity and corruption in Nigeria, the country needs to adhere to best international practice, deploy preventive and proactive measures, curb poverty and under-development and learn to penalize criminals. Most people in Nigeria commit crimes because there are no punishments; if there were any, most people would probably think twice before they engage in crimes. Nigerians should speak out against evil rather than keep silence (Shittu, 2019). All hands must be on deck in the fight against corruption and insecurity. If Nigerian must advance economically as well as remove the garb of terrorism, banditry and kidnapping, which it ingloriously wears at present.

Federal Government should move against hate speeches that cause insecurity in the country. The government should charge security agencies and stakeholders to critically examine the threat posed by fake news, hate speeches and porous borders to check insecurity of the nation. The emergence of social media has made it easier for mischief makers to incite the public against themselves and make the nation ungovernable (Lawal, 2019).

Furthermore, for the Nigerian government to curb her numerous crisis in the 21st century, it has to adopt full strategic thinking to conflict management and resolution. For example, according to Yinka Odumakin (2019) a leader of Afenifere and an activists, there would have been no Shiites crisis in Nigeria in the first place if there was a better crisis management with leadership responsibility. The December 14, 2015 clash between the Shiites sect and the Army Chief of Staff, Lt General Tukur Buratai was avoidable. Gen Buratai did not have to drive through the Shiites when he ran into their procession at Polo Road near Railway Clinic on the said day. He had alternative routes in the road through

Commandant House in ZI GRA the Flyover at Danangari to Zaria Depot which soldiers normally use for endurance trek and Chikaji NTC route. He could have reported the Shiites to the Police to arrest and prosecute their leaders for obstruction. The country would have been spared of this prolonged Shiites/government or security crisis occasioned by resort to self-help. The crisis having occurred, the fallout should have been creatively managed. Furthermore, there was no reason keeping the Shiites leader in detention without proper trial all these years, from 2015 – 2019, especially, after he had lost hundreds of his members, including his biological children, according to the group's account. (Odumakin, 2019). It is important to note that the disobedience of court orders on his freedom was unnecessary in a democracy without prejudice to the right of government to prosecute any citizen who has committed any offence. Because of this unfortunate situation, the Shiites have defiantly stood against the Buhari government in sustained protests over the detention of their leader. It was a great relief that they recently suspended the agitations on the eve of the latest bail and a great discomfort that the Shiites have vowed to resume protest with the return of El-Zakzaky to detention. To curb the many crises confronting the Buhari administration, the government has to improve on its public communications. There is no way a more strategic administration would not have allowed El-Zakzaky return home without treatment. The government should have allowed doctors of his choice in his own preferred hospital. The Shiites leader is a detainee and not a convict, why do one want to treat him like a prisoner because of sectarian feud taken to extreme? (Odumakin, 2019).

To curb security challenges facing Nigeria, no leader in the country should play politics with security religion in 21st century Nigeria, let the leadership call all the stakeholders far a meeting to come together and sincerely fight insecurity collectively without propaganda. The Buhari-administration should also tactically learn to reduce the number of conflicts it confront at a time. the government should not open up many fronts of conflicts and battles to contend with. Security matters should not be treated with kid gloves but with all compelling and drastic truthfulness, forthrightness straight forwardness and uprightness with all stakeholders and security sections involved. The government should diplomatically closed some of the crisis point in the country, to achieve success in conflict management, a good leader should not open so many war fronts daily; it makes no sense taking too many enemies simultaneously which can be difficult and manage by a poor nation.

It is unfortunate, the insecurity challenges the Nigerian state is facing under this Buhari led administration is worrisome, such as, herdsmen/farmers clashes, cattle rustlers, forest and highway kidnapping and banditry. The government should unveil plans to re-jig the country's security apparatus as a strategy to totally crack-down on criminals. These involve strategic employment of multi-pronged measures, including deployment of technology to boost security of lives and properties in all the six-geopolitical zones. The government should carry out changes in the security agents where necessary, so as to boost the morale of army, police and, DSS engaged in various security assignments across the country. This should be done in order to reinvigorate and re-energize Nigeria's security agents to do more; to enhance maximum performance. The government should bring in the military when needed to compliment the work of the police including the deployment of troops on certain highways on temporary basis to crackdown on bandits and robbers (Taiwo, 2019). To the government should also deploy the use of the Airforce assets bomb hideouts where criminals are located. Likewise, the government should also deploy the speedy implementation of community policing will facilitate a more effective collection of intelligence. Drones will also be deployed to fast-track the monitoring of the forests; CCTVs will be mounted along high ways to monitor security activities in the hotspots flashpoints (Taiwo, 2019).

Community policing initiative would also help in revamping police intelligence gathering capacity. Community policing reform would help fight crimes effectively by recruiting police officers from their Local Government Areas (LGA) and stationing them there. The government should equip the police force with advanced technology and equipment to facilitate their work. Nigerian laws should also be enforced to prosecute law breakers and secure an atmosphere of peace and tranquility for all Nigeria, wherever they choose to live. There can be no property, if there is no security (Taiwo, 2019). The best strategy the government can also use to fight the killer herdsmen is for security agents and the traditional rulers to arrive at a resolution to ensure that the killer herdsmen are forced out of the community. This is because it is foreign herdsmen that are the bad ones that have come from different borders that are porous; those are the ones the security agents and traditional rulers should focus on to separate the corn from wheat (Taiwo, 2019). With the right measures in place, the insecurity palaver in

the country would have been nipped in the bud. To fight insecurity in Nigeria, the Nigerian police should completely repent of structural decay and merchandizing policing. The Inspector General of Police should be ready to effectively fight insurgents, bandits and kidnappers and not to look the other way. Real investigative policing would help to curb the menace of criminals and police should not be an institution for the manipulation of the law to collect bribe. It should be an abomination for a police officer to demand and collect bribe. Fighting crime in Nigeria need dedicated officers who would once again project positively the image of the police to determine to fight insurgency, bandits and kidnappers. The decay in Nigeria police could only be attributed to systematic failure and organizational weakness; this is a functional issue begging for urgent solutions. What Nigeria police needs is a modern structure with dedicated officers.

Conclusion and recommendations

The establishment of state police would go a long way to resolving and managing the current security challenges facing the country (Wike, 2019). This is because the present security structure makes it difficult for the federal police to respond quickly to security challenges. There should be state police for Governors to effectively fight crime in the country. Nigeria police system is fashioned according to the United States' model, which has Federal, State and Local police. Each of them has their responsibilities. In the present situation, if a crime is committed, the Commissioner of police will first report to the Inspector General of Police before taking any action. This structural arrangement makes the police operation action slow, weak and taking workshop that can bark but cannot bite. It gives criminals the opportunity to achieve their evil intention in any state of the Nigerian Federation.

With the formation of state police and community policing, state governors would be more effective to fight bandits, kidnappers and insurgents. The state governors may even establish state Neighborhood Safety Corps agency to support state security agencies with information, unfortunately, the contemporary security challenges facing Nigeria would frustrate the governors for obvious political reasons of fear and suspicion.

If state police and community policing is encouraged insecurity would be reduced to the barest minimum across the country, as state police would monitor the people at the grassroots with ease. State police would even curb electoral violence across Nigeria as the state police would monitor ballot box snatchers and election manipulators. Unfortunately, the government uses the Nigerian army to conduct elections which result to electoral violence during the 2019 general elections. The negative actions of the army was brutal and aggressive such that several embassies were shocked. (Wike, 2019). To fight crime in Nigeria, governors should be empowered to raise the bar of security by providing necessary logistics and security architecture that will enable operatives to perform their duties efficiently, effectively and diligently, to ensure maximum protection of lives and property of the citizenry. The security agents should ensure that there is no hiding place, criminal den, or save haven and hide out of kidnappers and bandits in the communities, farms and forest in Nigeria. With state police and community policing in place in Nigeria, insurgent, bandits and kidnappers would find it very difficult to dislodge indigenous communities. State police system would encourages the police to have genuine documents and recording of the nature and extent of killing by state and non-state actors in order to respond to the challenges of violence and insecurity in the state and local communities. This would help the farming communities from killer herdsmen, insurgents and bandits. (Ebije, 2019)

Furthermore, the effort of the Nigeria Air Force to acquire the Super Tucano aircraft, which is expected to beef up its operation and assist in the conduct of its operations against insurgents, bandits and kidnappers by 2020 is the right action in the right direction. With the complex nature of the forces equipment, there is need to ensure safety within the force. Any measure therefore, that enhances the protection of personal safety and equipment without neglecting mission effectiveness would add value to the accomplishment of Nigerian Air Force (Abubakar, 2019)

The Federal Government, through the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFUI) should check widespread criminal and fraudulent actions, specifically by corrupting non-governmental organizations, NGOs and some foreign firms operating in the country.

NFUI (2019) said some of the identified crimes were financing of terrorism, illegal mining as well as proliferation of weapons. Terrorism in the North East is not a Nigerian problem alone but can international issue with other terrorist groups like ISIS. The killings happening even in Zamfara is also not only a Nigerian issue happening because of the illicit financial in flow of people across Nigeria's

porous borders who used to fund terrorism and banditry. These are all international crime as a result of illicit financial inflow, foreigners came into the country and kill Nigerians. It is not that Nigerians are killing each other; foreigners are involved and they get funding from these corrupt civil society organizations (CSOs). As a strategy to curb insecurity in Nigeria in the 21st century, the federal government should target the corrupt NGOs and foreign firms and commence delisting them. Insecurity can't be won with kid gloves; it needs serious government will power to clamp down on criminals as well as government peaceful relations with Nigerian's neighbours remained imperative in confronting terrorism, insurgency and banditry. The government should partner with ECOWAS, AU and the UNO in fighting terrorism.

Another strategy that could help curb insecurity in contemporary Nigeria is for the government to continuously introduce training of skill acquisition and youth empowerment programs in the school system as well as creating industrial training centers across the six geo-political zones of Nigeria. This would help curb poverty and unemployment. The government should also re-integrate and empower ex-militants, civilian JTF (Joint Task Force) members, de-radicalized Boko Haram terrorists, IDPs and Nigerian refugees to enable them to leave self-reliant, productive and wholesome livelihoods. There is the need to properly institutionalize the resettlement, rehabilitation and reconstruction of insurgency devastated territories and persons. The Sambisa forest, the den for terrorists, should be a Joint Development Territory (JDT). It should be developed using public private partnership (PPP) model to make the Sambisa forest a security and economic power house for Nigeria rather than leaving it to degenerate into a safe haven for terrorists and other criminal elements to ply their trades. Youth empowerment would foster peace, security and sustainable development in Nigeria (Golwa, 2019).

Another strategy that would help curb insecurity and poverty in Nigeria is for the government to open up rural communities to development by providing boreholes, roads, electricity, schools, health care and skills acquisition centers to prevent rural-urban migration and to encourage self-reliant and entrepreneurial development and farming in the rural areas. Likewise, another strategy that would help fight insurgency, banditry and kidnapping in Nigeria is the establishment of army "Super camps". Thus, the government initiative to establish the Nigerian Army "Super Camps" in Kotonkoro, Mariga Local Government Area of Niger would help to tackle kidnapping, cattle rusting and banditry in the area (Adams, 2019).

Another strategy that would help curb insecurity in contemporary Nigeria is the use of drones. Drones would assist security agents in tackling down kidnappers and rampaging killer herdsmen. When the drone is deployed, it gets the correct axis and locations of either the kidnappers or the killer herdsmen via the aerial surveillance camera installed in the drone. The information can then be utilized by the ground troops. Putting stringent measures in acquiring technology like drones helps in suffocating security agencies by leaving them with the same old method of fighting crime, instead of opening up their horizons (Okezie, 2019). When the state police system embraces the use of drones, criminals are easily defeated. Criminals would find it difficult to nest and perpetrate their evil plan. Kidnappers, bandits and insurgents cannot operate the way they are operating today because both the people and the police would not give them breathing space.

Another strategy that can best curb farmers/herdsmen crisis, banditry and kidnapping in Nigeria is the formation of forest guards, for example, recently, Enugu state recruited people from the local council to constitute members of forest guard to check the destructive and criminal activities of some herdsmen and their cattle (Okoli and Okutu, 2019). 260 security vehicles were purchased for the 260 electoral wards in Enugu State, one for each ward, including motorcycles and communication gadgets to facilitate optional community policing. The forest guards were to help enhance intelligent gathering. The 1700 forest guards were specially trained and equipped with arms to fish out miscreants. Another strategy that could best curb insecurity in Nigeria is for the government and security agents to regulate the usage of arms by killer herdsmen, such as, AK47. The government should arrest and prosecute syndicates that specialize in smuggling small arms, light weapons and ammunition from North Africa through the Sahel region and supplying same to their criminal partners-kidnappers, armed robbers, political thugs and other elements in Nigeria and other African countries. The financiers of these illegal arms dealers from Libya and Mali need to be cracked down so that arms do not get into the hands of criminals (Igbokwe, 2019). Furthermore, in order to curb insecurity in Nigeria, security agents should ensure that cattle rustlers do not dispossess the Fulani of their cows. This is one of the reasons you find them engaging in these crimes. Culturally, cows are their own lifeline. Moreover, the

Fulani should regard their cattle business as a private business that supposed to be kept in ranches, so that the cows do not roam about to destroy peoples' farmlands.

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