



Security Challenges and Responsibilities of Building Sustainable Peace in the Realm of Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria faces complex security challenges hindering sustainable peace in its landscape, such as Banditry, Terrorism, Kidnapping, Boko Haram and Communal conflicts among others which have resulted in loss of lives, displacement, and economic instability. Despite numerous efforts by both the government and the community, these challenges persist, undermining national development, peace and stability. The paper aims to examine the security challenges and identify responsibilities of various stakeholders and propose effective strategy for building sustainable peace in the Nigerian landscape. The study reviews existing literature on security challenges and peace building via thorough assessment of chosen materials available and released lately (mainly from 2010 to date), as gathered in the Web of Sciences database and selected specialized publications, from distinct educational viewpoints. Also, it is expected to identify key factors contributing to security challenges in Nigeria and propose effective strategies for sustainable peace. The study will provide recommendations for the government, civil society and international partners on how to address security challenges and promote peace building in the realm of Nigeria.

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INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's security landscape is marred by various challenges, including banditry, terrorism, kidnapping, and communal conflicts, which have resulted in significant human suffering and economic instability (Okoli, 2019). Despite efforts by the government and community, these challenges persist, undermining national development and stability (Agbibo, 2018). This paper aims to examine the security challenges and identify responsibilities of various stakeholders in building sustainable peace in Nigeria. Insecurity in Nigeria is a complex issue with multiple nodes and common causes (Hassan, 2022).

The country's body politic faces a seeming epidemic of insecurity spanning jihadist insurgency, criminal banditry, farmer-herder conflicts, and violent separatist agitations (CDD, 2022). Otiye Igbuzor (2021) opined that; it is well

recognized all over the world that peace and security of life and property are the primary conditions for progress and development of any society.

There is a consensus among scholars that there is a clear linkage between failures in governance, democratization and sustainable development on the one hand and insecurity and violent conflict on the other hand. Unfortunately, Nigeria is located in a region that is bedeviled with conflict and insecurity. Peace has been generally defined as the absence of war, fear, conflict, anxiety, suffering and violence. But this conception has been criticized by many scholars for being inadequate for understanding the meaning and nature of peace (Ibeanu, 2006). The Norwegian peace theorist, Johan Galtung distinguishes three types of violence that can help to understand the concept of peace namely:

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1. Direct violence manifested by physical, emotional and psychological violence.
2. Structural violence which comes in the form of deliberate policies and structures that cause human suffering, death and harm, and
3. Cultural violence which involves cultural norms and practices that creates discrimination, injustice and human suffering (David, 2006).

In addition, Galtung outlines two dimensions of peace. The first is negative peace which is the absence of direct violence, war, fear and conflict at individual, national, regional and international levels; and positive peace which describes the absence of unjust structures, unequal relationships, justice and inner peace at individual level. A more useful conceptualization of peace must therefore see beyond the narrow conception of absence of war, fear, anxiety, suffering and violence.

THEORIES OF INSECURITY

Insecurity is a complex and multifaceted concept that can be understood through various theoretical frameworks. Some key theories of insecurity include:

Structural Failure Theory:

This theory posits that the Nigerian state's structural weaknesses, such as poor governance and institutional failures, contribute to insecurity (Agbibo, 2018). The theory suggests that the state's inability to provide basic services and ensure security for its citizens creates an environment conducive to insecurity.

Frustration-Aggression Theory:

This theory states that frustration resulting from unmet needs and expectations can lead to aggression (Dollard et al., 1939). In Nigeria, poverty, unemployment, and inequality can frustrate individuals, making them more susceptible to recruitment by extremist groups.

Social Conflict Theory:

This theory emphasizes the role of social conflicts in generating insecurity (Marx, 1848). In Nigeria, conflicts between different ethnic and religious groups can contribute to insecurity.

Constructivist Theory

This theory emphasizes the role of social constructs, such as identity, norms, and perceptions, in shaping insecurity (Wendt, 1992). Constructivist theory suggests that insecurity is not just a product of objective threats, but also of subjective perceptions and interpretations.

Human Security Theory

This theory prioritizes the security of individuals and communities over state security (UNDP, 1994). Human security theory suggests that insecurity is often rooted in economic, social, and environmental factors, and that addressing these underlying causes is critical to promoting security.

Security Challenges in Nigeria

Nigeria is a diverse country full of variety of tribes, cultures and believes among others that need to take in to cognizance and respected by whoever champion and happen to be on the mantle of leadership to drive the country with care, justice and egalitarian concern to all and sundry, unfortunately the country experiences series of leaders and leaderships that endangered the country into insecurity hub recognized by the whole world. It faces almost all forms of insecurity situations ever experience by the whole world such as:

Banditry:

In the view of Okonkwo, Ndubuisi, & Threasa, (2015) Apart from the scourge of kidnapping Nigeria has become a fertile ground for dare devil armed robbery, cattle rustling and other forms and all sorts of criminalities. There is no evidence to show that all security measures put on ground by Nigeria government has shown any appreciable drop in the incidents of armed robbery. Rather, it would seem armed robbery is



on the increase. The situation is such that virtually every Nigerian now lives inside highly walled fences and barricaded compound, a sort of self-imposed prison yard.

In its 2008 report, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said armed robbery cases were more pronounced in seven states in the country. The figures which the NBS said were based on cases reported to the police in 2007 identified the crime-prone states as Oyo, Imo, Rivers, Kano, Ogun, Cross River and the FCT. The breakdown of armed robbery cases showed that in 2009, Oyo state had 244 cases; Imo (176); FCT (172); Rivers (145), Cross River (137) Kano (108) Ogun (107) Anambra (96) Adamawa (96) Abia (89) Akwa Ibom (88) Ekiti (85) Edo (79) Lagos (70) while each of Gombe, Benue, Plateau, Kwara, Sokoto, Jigawa, Kebbi and Yobe states had less than 28 cases. Robbers have remained like the nation's albatross. Unfortunately, security agencies, especially the police that are responsible for internal security often seem helpless in the face of increasing crime wave in the country.

Kidnapping:

Kidnapping and Abductions for ransom or political leverage are prevalent, often linked to poverty, inequality, and poor governance (Okoli, 2019). Kidnapping started in the oil-rich Niger Delta area when it was used a tool to address the wanton neglect of their communities by successive administration; it has since grown to become the new multimillion naira business now thriving outside the region. As Nwankwo (2012), noted, for the south-east, kidnapping is now a tool for settling personal and political scores.

Besides, the pecuniary gains accruing from the ransom collected from the families of victims, usually in huge millions of naira, many desperate politicians in Igbo land are now using kidnapping as a tool of vendetta on perceived political enemies. Kidnapping has made Nigerians to live in perpetual fear. Even in the northern parts of the country where the wave of kidnapping is now very rampant and became order of the day, living has continually slipped to the Hobession state of nature where life is brutish, nasty and short.

Boko Haram:

Boko Haram's insurgency and attacks on civilians and security forces. This issue has significantly affected Nigeria's economy and security, with the group leveraging ideology and funding to propagate its activities. Is a religious Islamic sect that came into the limelight in 2002 when the presence of the radical Islamic sect was first reported in Kanama (Yobe state) and also in Gwoza (Borno state) Nwanegbo and Odigbo (2013). "Boko Haram," which in the local Hausa language means "Western education is forbidden," officially calls itself "Jama'atul Alhul Sunnah Lidda'wati wal Jihad," which means "people committed to the propagation of the Prophet's teachings and jihad" (Meehan and Speier 2011).

The Boko Haram is a controversial Nigerian Militant Islamist group that seeks the imposition of Sharia law in the northern states of Nigeria. Ideologically, the group opposes not only western education, but western culture and modern science (Dunia, 2010). The activities of the Boko Haram group constitute serious security challenges in the contemporary Nigerian state. This ranges from killing of innocent Nigerians, raping of women, bombing of major cities and police stations in the northern part of Nigeria, particularly, Borno, Kano, Bauchi, Niger, Yobe, Adamawa, Abuja, among others (Nwagboso 2012)

Terrorism:

According to Sampson and Onuoha (2011) as "the premeditated use or threat of use of violence by an individual or group to cause fear, destruction or death, especially against unarmed targets, property or infrastructure in a state, intended to compel those in authority to respond to the demands and expectations of the individual or group behind such violent acts".

Hired Assassins:

Many Nigerians including law-abiding citizens continue to be cut down by bullets from either the guns of the assassins, or the armed robberies and occasionally from the ransom-seeking kidnapers. Although these heinous crimes



carry capital punishment in the nations various laws and statues, the situation continues to deteriorate as a result of the helplessness of the law enforcement agents to bring the perpetrators of these dastardly acts to book. The Nigeria government has failed in their basic responsibility to the citizens to protect lives and property.

Communal and Ethnic conflicts:

According to Sunday Iduh (2011), It has been observed and estimated over the years that one million Nigerians were displaced by internal conflicts between 1999 and 2004. Using Plateau State as an example, inter-communal clashes over political control, land, and competition over resources among others between February and May 2004 generated about 250,000 Internal Displaced Persons (IDPs) (International Crisis Group, 2006), setting the pace, as Nigeria's most IDPs, since the return of civil rule which made the former President Olusegun Obasanjo to exercise his constitutional power by declaring a state of emergency in Plateau State. Vigilante and separatist groups Niger Delta on the brink of breaking down and the Christian-Muslim conflicts were not the only crisis plaguing Nigeria, indeed Nigeria have had her own share of political, ethnic, and communal conflicts and they are still on going from time to time. Communal and Ethnic conflict on our contemporary day's simply means inter-communal violence and clashes over resources (Best, 2018)

Farmer-Herder Conflicts:

Clashes between farmers and herders, often over land and resources, cattle rustling, farm trespassing, contribute to insecurity and displacement. These challenges have resulted in significant human suffering, displacement, and economic instability (UNHCR, 2022).

Causes of Insecurity

1. Poverty and unemployment: Profound wealth disparities and widespread poverty fuel insecurity, fostering alienation and creating recruitment grounds for criminal and extremist groups (Adamu, 2025). Also high levels

of poverty and unemployment can contribute to insecurity by creating an environment in which individuals may lack focus and engage in to over thinking which is going to be disastrous and lead to affect human faculty to think upside down.

2. Bad governance: Systemic governance failures, corruption, and ineffective security apparatus exacerbate insecurity (Abbas, 2021).
3. Porous borders: Nigeria's extensive and poorly controlled land borders enable illegal cross-border activities, including arms trafficking, free flow of ammunition and extremist groups, further complicating security challenges (Adamu, 2025).
4. Ethno-Religious Tensions: Deep-seated ethno-religious tensions can contribute to insecurity in Nigeria, often manifesting in violent conflicts and attacks (Best, 2018).
5. High level corruptions: Corruption, weak institutions, and poor governance can exacerbate insecurity in Nigeria by creating an environment conducive to crime and violence (Agbiboa, 2018). Corruption within security agencies and government undermines efforts to address insecurity.
6. Lack of patriotism and False believe among Nigerians: lead to so many insecurity issues such as religious killings, tribal crises, killings and sentiment among others which causes serious setback in countries development.

Consequences of Insecurity in Nigeria

- 1- Humanitarian Crisis: Insecurity has resulted in significant human suffering, displacement, and loss of life in Nigeria (UNHCR, 2022).
- 2- Economic Instability: Insecurity has had a negative impact on Nigeria's economy, deterring investment, disrupting trade, and



undermining economic growth (World Bank, 2022).

- 3- Social Cohesion: Insecurity has strained social cohesion in Nigeria, exacerbating ethnic and religious tensions and creating divisions within communities (Okoli, 2019).

Peace Building Theories

Peace building theories provide frameworks for understanding and promoting peace in societies affected by conflict. Some key theories include:

Conflict Resolution Theory

This theory emphasizes the importance of resolving conflicts through dialogue, negotiation, and mediation (Kriesberg, 2007). Conflict resolution theory suggests that conflicts can be managed and resolved through effective communication, empathy, and compromise.

Peace building as a Process

This theory views peace building as a long-term process that involves multiple stages, including conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and post-conflict reconstruction (Lederach, 1997). It emphasizes the importance of addressing the root causes of conflict and promoting sustainable peace.

Liberal Peace Theory

This theory posits that peace can be achieved through the promotion of liberal values, such as democracy, human rights, and economic development (Paris, 2004). Liberal peace theory suggests that the establishment of democratic institutions, free markets, and the rule of law can help to promote peace and stability.

Local Ownership Theory

This theory emphasizes the importance of local ownership and participation in peace building efforts (Mac Ginty, 2011). It suggests that peace building initiatives are more likely to be successful when they are led and owned by local communities, rather than external actors.

5. Social Capital Theory

This theory emphasizes the importance of social capital, including social networks, trust, and cooperation, in promoting peace (Putnam, 2000). Social capital theory suggests that strong social relationships and networks can help to build resilience and promote peace.

Conflict Transformation Theory

This theory posits that conflict can be transformed through a process of constructive engagement, rather than simply being managed or resolved (Lederach, 2003). Conflict transformation theory emphasizes the importance of addressing the underlying causes of conflict and promoting positive change.

Responsibilities of Stakeholders

Government:

Government should endeavor to provide security, addressing poverty, unemployment and promoting good governance (Agbibo, 2018). There is need for intelligence gathering and surveillance so that law enforcement agents can be proactive and reasonably predict potential crime with near perfect accuracy rather than being reactive. The menace of insecurity no doubt calls for a new approach that will be founded on credible intelligence gathering (Adagba, et al 2012). Government must not only continue to engage the security personnel, it must, more than ever before, recognise the need to devote more attention to security intelligence, capacity building to meet the global best practices and acquisition of modern technology.

Civil society:

Promoting peace building, advocating for human rights, and providing support to affected communities (Okoli, 2019) It is the aggregate of non-governmental organisations and institutions that manifest interests and will of citizens or individuals and organisations in a society which are independent of the government. As a result of the inability of government to provide adequate security, Ebohon, and Ifeadi, (2012) opined that Nigeria should move from a state-centric to a



human security paradigm. This will involve moving from an elite centered to a people centered security organization approach and involve civil society in the state security project. One of the roles of civil society is to convince other stakeholders that action is better than inaction and that insecurity does not have to be accepted as unavoidable. They have to play the roles of critic, catalyst and advocate of those interests. It is also essential to raise public awareness, to awaken society to the disastrous effects of insecurity and to get across the message that fighting it is possible (Busuyi, Ayodele & Sunday, 2022).

Religious Groups

Religious groups in Nigeria have a major role to play in ensuring security in the country. The teachings of religious groups are one of the bases of value development in the contemporary world. The role of values in human security cannot be over emphasized. It is a known fact that values govern behaviour. Where social values and norms concerning fundamental human right in both public and private places have been distorted and violated, the people and government tend to live in an atmosphere of instability and insecurity (Clifford, 2009). If every religious group can tolerate the other, then religious crisis which has been a problem in this country will be abated (Busuyi, Ayodele & Sunday, 2022).

The Communities

In relation to collective responsibilities towards lasting peace in contemporary Nigeria, communities should strive to live peacefully with other communities. They should also be vigilant of strangers in their localities to ensure that criminals do not have easy access to their communities (Busuyi, Ayodele & Sunday, 2022).

The Individuals

Security should be seen as everybody's business. As individuals we need to cultivate the habit of being security-conscious and to report any security situation to the appropriate authority (not only the police) immediately. Every individual must evince a high level of security awareness and alertness. This is because individuals understand

their communities better and any report of suspicious behaviour or activity could lead to actionable intelligence leading to disruption of attacks (Busuyi, Ayodele & Sunday, 2022).

The International partners:

Providing humanitarian assistance, supporting peacebuilding efforts, and promoting regional stability (UN, 2022)

Strategies for Building Sustainable Peace

1. Addressing poverty, inequality and unemployment: Implementing economic development programs and creating job opportunities can help reduce the drivers of insecurity (Agbibo, 2018).
2. Promoting good governance: Strengthening institutions, promoting transparency, and accountability (Okoli, 2019). Peace and security are determined by good governance. Good governance is the panacea for the insecurity challenge; war against insecurity would be won only by raising governance standards that is, cultivating the culture of good governance where the government is responsible and accountable to the people (Oluwarotimi 2012).
3. Peace building initiatives: Supporting community-based peace building programs and promoting inter-communal dialogue (Best, 2018)
4. Security sector reform: Reforming the security sector to improve effectiveness, accountability and enhancing professionalism are crucial for effective security governance (Eme, 2019).
5. Inclusive Peace Education: Peace education is recognized as a potent tool for managing and preventing conflicts, promoting national security and social cohesion.
6. Community Engagement: Community-based initiatives, such as Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms, can help resolve conflicts and build trust.



7. Addressing corruption and injustice: this issue in Nigeria need to and must be totally eliminated and eradicated for peace to reign. Nepotism and a culture of impunity must also be eschewed from our national psyche and life. Creating employment to unemployed youth - Social effects of unemployment include personal hardship, depression, decay of acquired but unused skills, and involvement in crime.
8. Re-organization of the security agencies: This can only be done through a new reorientation and re-training of security agents. People should be more security conscious, share information with the police and other security agencies. The populace should not leave security matters to security personnel only. All should be involved in security information and data gathering. Moreover, efforts should be put in crime prevention than control. Furthermore, the government should increase the size of Nigeria's security agencies, empower and motivate them very well and strengthen neighborhood watch (Okonkwo, Ndubuisi, and Threasa, 2015).

CONCLUSION

Nigeria's security challenges require a comprehensive approach that addresses the root causes of insecurity and promotes sustainable peace. This paper has identified key factors contributing to security challenges and proposed effective strategies for building sustainable peace. The government, civil society, and international partners must work together to address these challenges and promote peacebuilding in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Government: Implement economic development programs, promote good governance, and strengthen security institutions.
2. Civil society: Promote peacebuilding initiatives, advocate for human rights,

and provide support to affected communities.

3. International partners: Provide humanitarian assistance, support peacebuilding efforts, and promote regional stability.
4. Government should include Peace and security education in schools curriculum: This is a critical factor for sustainable peace and national development.

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