

Nomadic Cattle Breeding, Banditry and Insecurity in Nigeria: A National Appraisal

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Abstract

Nigeria is currently facing serious national challenge occasioned by insecurity which can be traced to many factors. These national malady ranges from Boko haram insurgency, the menace of armed nomadic cattle breeders, otherwise known as herdsmen and the bandits from the northern parts of the country, miscreants from neighboring African countries like Senegal, Mali, Somalia, Niger, Chad, amongst others who were used by Nigerian politicians during previous elections to ensure they win those elections, local 'almajiris' who are children and youths of northern descent without a formal education, who litter the streets seeking for alms and other source of assistance from well to do Nigerians. These have led to loss of lives and properties, as well as depression. Critical analysis was employed in the review of the various data gathered using exploratory and descriptive analytical method. The relative deprivation theory was used as the main thrust to anchor this analysis. From the data gathered, solutions on how to tackle and eliminate these forms of insecurity were proffered, which will bring the true national unity and reconciliation in Nigeria.

Keywords: Insecurity; insurgency; herdsmen; miscreants; banditry; kidnapping

Introduction

Ninety percent of the population of cattle in Nigeria is concentrated in the North, likewise seventy percent of goats and sheep bred in Nigeria are found in the north (Lawal-Adebowale, 2012). This was occasioned by the ecological condition of the region made up of lighter sandy soil, long dry season and low rain fall that is more beneficial to ruminants (Lawal-Adebowale, 2012). At a time the herders considered moving towards the southern part of the country due to the following reasons; first, it was a herculean task grazing these ruminants in the north during the lengthy dry season, characterized by fifty degree centigrade temperature, which last for nine months (Kratli, 2008), secondly the high alarming rate of desertification in the north which has affected fifteen out of the nineteen northern states, (Iruoma, 2019), Third, the herders' believe in the customary rights of grazing their animals, hence the need for migrating downward south (Iruoma, 2019). Iruoma (2019) further asserts that when herders feed their cattle on farmers' crops, farmers retaliate by killing their animals. These constant destruction of agricultural farms and crops led to clashes between herders and farmers (Imo, 2017). Often times these clashes has been violent and bloody (Iruoma, 2019). Furthermore, the inaction and negligence displayed by the Federal government towards the activities of these herdsmen has led to the escalation of their violence to other criminal activities like rape, kidnapping and gruesome killings amongst others, thus the advent of insecurity from the herders (Oriola, 2021). According to Olawole, et al. (2018) Fulani herders have killed one thousand two hundred and twenty-nine people in 2014, sixty-three people in 2013 and more than five hundred deaths recorded due their activities in July 2016. The major casualties are from Benue, Nassarawa, Plateau, Taraba, Kaduna, Adamawa, Zamfara, Oyo, Imo, Cross River and Enugu (Olawole et al, 2018)

On the other hand, post independent banditry started in the Nigeria in some parts of the Western Region, characterized by political violence, crime and organized insurgency. (Odinkalu, 2018). However, the modern banditry has destroyed most parts of the Northwest geopolitical zone, namely; Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, Kebbi, Sokoto down to Niger State which is in North Central geopolitical zone. They killed, maimed, kidnapped and raped the vulnerable. (Odinkalu, 2018). In addition, many school children, teachers and their families were victims of these modern-day banditry. Also, Malumfashi & Maina (2021) noted that the bandits have strong links with the Francophobe's Mali, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, and Central African Republic (Malumfashi & Maina, 2021). Furthermore, the communication between these bandits and a popular Islamic cleric (Sheik Ahmad Gumi) revealed that they are Islamic militants from neighboring West African States. (Malumfashi & Maina, 2021).

In this line of thought Campbell (2014) noted that in the North East, mainly Bornu, Yobe and Adamawa, where the Islamic fundamentalist called Boko Haram, whose ideology was to fight western education as well as western civilization and replace them with Islamic ideology, has been killing, kidnapping, maiming people and their animals, as well as destroying properties.

In a nutshell, the causes of insecurity in Nigeria were enumerated as; unemployment, corruption, imbalance and uneven development, weak and compromised judicial system, open borders, a high influx of arms, narcotics, slavery, criminal situation, terrorist threat (Ibenegbu, 2020).

Objective and Conceptual Issues

The objective of the paper is to undertake a holistic national appraisal of the security apparatus in the country, in order to unmask its causes, effects on national development. Also, the challenges faced by the custodians of Nigerian security apparatus will be examined in order to nip these at the bud and proffer solutions which when adopted by the architects of national security will improve the situation of lives and properties of the citizenry.

Insecurity

This is lack of confidence about yourself or your relationship with other people (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, 2021). Also, according to Wordnik (2006), it is a state of being insecure or unsafe. Furthermore, Mariam Webster (1828) defined it as deficient in assurance, beset by fear and anxiety. There is general state of insecurity occasioned by the various terrorist organizations in different parts of the world, as well as bandits and other religious extremist.

Insurgency

Insurgency is caused when a group of people attempt to take control of their country by force (Cambridge Dictionary). The insurgency in Nigeria was caused by the religious extremists who called themselves 'book haram' which implies that western education is taboo and unacceptable thus denounced it. They have succeeded in radicalizing many like minds into such ideological lining (Malumfashi & Maina, 2021).

Herdsmen

Lawal-Adebawale (2012) noted that herdsmen are those who breed and keep domestic herds of cattle. They produce the majority of cattle meats consumed in Nigerian. Thus

Nigerian herdsmen started their breeding business from the Northern part of the country because of the peculiarity of the weather before migrating to the southern part of the country as a result of environmental factor.

Miscreants

According to Cambridge advance learners Dictionary, miscreants are those behaves badly or those that do not obey the rules. Hence, they refer themselves as above the law. Generally, in Nigeria, they are mainly found in various motor parks, thus they are called motor part touts.

Banditry

This is act of robbery and violence according to Collins English Dictionary. In their quest for material accumulation, the Nigerian bandits built fortified enclaves in the hinterland of Zamfara State, North West Nigeria from where they carry out their criminal activities of robbery, kidnapping, cattle rustling and village raids, in the neighboring states of Katsina and Kaduna (Chukwuma, 2019).

Kidnapping

Kidnapping is an act of taking someone into hostage and in most cases a ransom is paid before the person is released. The story of kidnapping in Nigeria started in 2003, when a sitting state governor in Nigeria was abducted (Maja-Pearce, 2013), later this kidnapping business metamorphosed from politics to kidnap for ransom. Thus, we heard of kidnapping by Boko Haram of school children, in which some were killed, some were victims of underage marriage (Campbell, 2021), while some were rescued through military interventions as well as negotiations. Students of many secondary schools in the north have become victims of kidnapping (Campbell, 2021).

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

Exploratory and descriptive analysis formed major part of critical review of various data gathered. In doing this, various literatures were critically reviewed. Relative Deprivation theory is used to anchor this analysis. This is an actual perceived lack of resources required to maintain the quality of life, such as maintaining a home, consumables and other utilities (Longley, 2020). This lack of resources needed to maintain the quality of life needed for people within the bracket of a particular socio-economic group can lead to various social change movements. Furthermore, absolute deprivation leads to abject poverty, frustration and depression (Longley, 2020). This can lead to anger and resentments, with resultant negative variables as its implications (Smith, et al, 2011). Hence Ted Gurr (1970) argued that it is a universal assumption that inequitable distribution of resources and wealth will provoke violent rebellion thus the emergence of political violence, social movements and radicalization. According to Gurr conflict is not merely a passing social event but an inseparable part of the human experience (Gurr, 1970). Furthermore, people who are deprived of goods, service and comfort are more be involved in armed conflict to improve their material condition (Gurr, 1970).

The various levels of insecurity in Nigeria which ranges from the criminal activities of the herdsmen, banditry in the North West and parts of North Central, Boko Haram insurgency in the North East as well as other criminal activities in the South perpetrated by unknown gunmen, can be grouped under relative deprivation of their basic rights to live as responsible citizens by the government, hence their venture into criminal activities born out of frustration and anger (Garga, 2015).

Causes of Insecurity in Nigeria

a. Unemployment

23.2 million Nigerians representing 33.3% were either unemployed or work less than twenty hours per week, as at 15 March, 2021, as reported by National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2021; cited in Olurounbi, 2021). This has worsened the economic crisis in Nigeria as average per capita income has nosedived. In addition, Olurounbi (2021) asserts that Nigeria's unemployment rate has more than quadrupled in the past five years, as the economy went through recessions, thus casting a shadow over the efforts to implement policies to drive growth and create jobs by President Mohammadu Buhari's administration. As the popular saying goes that, "an idle mind is a devil's work shop". Unemployment gave credence to increased vices and social ills, therefore, when people are not adequately employed, they become instruments in the hand of the "devil" to perpetrate harms to other members of the society, occasioned by their state of despondency.

b. Corruption

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime publication (2019) revealed the high rate of corruption at public and private places which is the bane of underdevelopment in Nigeria, thus incessant crime in the country. According to the report, bribery and nepotism has promoted mediocrity rather than meritocracy in Nigeria, for instance in giving admission, the wrong candidate is preferred over the right candidate because of nepotism or even bribery. Consequently, the right candidate will take to the street if he could not get admission and join the bandwagon of crime committers due to frustration. Furthermore, there nepotism in the work places that result in giving employments to less qualified ahead of more qualified counterparts. This impacts negatively on Nigeria's economy as effectiveness and productivity is sacrificed at the altar of nepotism, hence frustration and even depression will follow suit, which eventually paves way for criminal activities and insecurity for the general populace (UNODC, 2019).

c. Imbalance and uneven development

Imbalance and uneven development create two extremes of 'haves' and 'have nots'. Thus, uneven development leads to inequality of wealth and health within a state which gives rise to international migration (Internet Geography, 2021). According to Internet Geography (2021) Nigeria has one of the most uneven distributions of wealth in the world. Consequent upon this poverty and migration in search of greener pasture has ensured. Furthermore, this poverty has resulted to crimes such as armed robbery, kidnapping, baby trafficking, assassination and political thuggery.

d. Weak and Compromised Judiciary

The weak and compromised Judiciary has not helped the criminal justice system in Nigeria, as some of the judicial officers are in the pay pockets of powerful criminals and groups in the country (Langseth, 2002). This has worsened the state of insecurity in Nigeria as some of the strong criminal cartel has a way of paying themselves out of

the dragnet of law and justice. If there have been strong and uncompromised judicial system in Nigeria that get the criminals convicted or sentenced the high rate of insecurity in the country would have been reduced. Also, a wrong justice given can lead to depression which is a causative factor for other forms of crimes and criminality. This singular factor has resulted to an increase in number of crimes in the country.

e. Open borders

A great deal of criminal activities in Nigeria emanate from the criminals from her neighboring West African countries as a result of the porosity of its borders (Addo, 2011). Furthermore, this open border has resulted to organized crimes and jihadists movements in their hundreds, originating from the West and Central African countries of Chad, Niger and Cameroon (Adetula, 2015). Nigeria is attracted to these criminals because of her role as the regional hegemon, thus the attraction of these criminals into the country. Consequent upon this, Osimen et al (2017) opined that these trans-border crimes are for financial or economic benefits, as well as for political and religious considerations.

f. High influx of arms

Various arms conflicts, insurrections and insecurity in Nigeria which had seen the destruction of human, material resources and institutions was caused by free flow of small arms and light weapons that found their way unchecked due to the country's porous border (Egbutu, 2019). For example, arms conflicts led to Adaka Boro uprising of 1966, which made way for insurrection that climaxed to the civil war of (1967 – 1970). Furthermore, these proliferations have seriously frustrated the war against terrorism and other forms of insecurity in the country. This was occasioned by high number of weapons in West African sub region. For instance, out of 640 million small and light weapons circulating globally, hundred million are found in Africa and out of these hundred million, thirty million are in sub – Saharan Africa, while eight million are in West Africa (Guardian Editorial, 2018). Thus, instead of curbing insecurity in Nigeria, it is rather on the increase.

g. Narcotics

According to Krasna (1996) narcotics is a security threat to the consuming individuals, the state and the international community. Security threat cannot be well analysed and addressed without the contribution of narcotics. This is as a result of the nexus between drugs and criminals, as oftentimes drug and crime are inseparable. Thus, they are interwoven. For a society to deal with crime, drug abuse must be seriously tackled among the fold of its youths, who are majorly students (Krasna, 1996).

Furthermore, after the collapse of Soviet in 1991, there was a need for a new world order free from security threats. The major thrust of these security threats is narrowed down to drugs and narcotics which has a link with terrorism and extremism

(Swanstrom, 2007). Therefore, to the global war on terrorism is incomplete without a global action against illicit drugs and narcotics.

h. Slavery

There is a huge economic gain in Human trafficking. Hence Bigio (2021) posits that about twenty-five million people are trafficked worldwide, producing \$150 billion annually for the perpetrators. Therefore, human trafficking helps terrorists earn money and strategic advantage. Thus, they fuel conflicts and threaten national security (Bigio, 2021). Bales & Mumford (2020) cited in Mirage (2020) corroborated Bigio's position that fighting terrorism globally must have a serious action plan on how to eliminate modern day slavery, because of the way human trafficking can fund terrorism. The researchers posit that terrorists enslave their captives in form of modern slavery whom they use for political reasons, military personnel as well as for economic expansion (Bales & Mumford, 2020). Also trafficking and slavery have a universal coloration, hence it is obtainable in every part of the globe, including the United States (Keefer, 2006). Keefer in her research work has established a nexus between human trafficking, narcotics and terrorism which are interwoven in nature.

i. Criminal Situation

On Thursday July 10, 2003 a contingent of Nigerian Police numbering more than two hundred, led by the then AIG Umuahia zone (Raphael Ige) abducted the sitting governor of Anambra State, Dr Chris Nwabueze Ngige to an unknown destination. Thereafter the state legislature led by the Rt. Hon. Eucharia Azodo read resignation letter purported to have been written and signed by the governor. However, the governor denied that he has resigned (The New Humanitarian, 2003). Historically, this criminal act plotted by a few disgruntled individuals in the state officially marked the beginning of kidnapping in Nigeria. After this incidence, series of kidnapping of government officials, diplomats, businessmen, clergy, students, relatives of Very Important Persons (VIPs) started taking place unabated till date. In this line of argument, Obarisiagbon & Akintoye (2019), assert that 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. Obarisiagbon & Akintoye further remarked that after the Nigerian civil war of 1967-1970 and the military incursion into Nigeria politics which gave way for the importation of arms and ammunitions into the country, after the war those in possession of these arms started using them for other criminal activities. This situation was corroborated by Arinze et al (2021) that arms and ammunitions imported by politicians for election purpose in Nigeria, which were left in the hands of thugs were later used for other criminal purposes.

j. Terrorist threat

The initiation and radicalization of innocent women, youth and children into the various terrorist groups and as well Fulani herders increase the insecurity situation in Nigeria. These people are thought to carry arms as well as sent on suicide missions. For Obi (2015)

“the activities of the Islamic sect (Boko Haram) had resulted to loss of lives and properties in the country, especially in the Northern part of Nigeria. These activities include bombing, suicide bomb attacks, sporadic shooting, of unarmed and innocent citizens, burning of police stations, churches, kidnapping of school girls, women. Also kidnapping, rape, armed robbery, political crises, murder, destruction of oil facilities by Niger delta militants alongside the attacks carried out by Fulani Herdsmen on some communities in the North and South have been another major insecurity challenge facing the country”.

Effects of Insecurity on the Development of the Nigerian State

Garga (2015) cited in Adekola & Enyiche (2017) opined that the endemic twin evil of crime and violence has blighted the socio-political and economic landscape of Nigeria, especially the Niger Delta area of Rivers State. Thus, the failure of successive governments to tackle the issues of poverty, unemployment, and inequitable distribution of the national wealth among ethnic nationalities ultimately led to anger, agitation and violence against the Nigerian State by some groups and individuals who involved themselves in crimes like militancy, kidnapping, bombing, armed robbery, destruction of government facilities and many more. This position was further advanced by Onime (2018) who asserts that insecurity in Nigeria has reached an alarming stage, showing its hydra head in various facet of the Country. Hence lives are lost on daily basis, population depleted, businesses went to comatose, investments are nose-diving, multinational corporations are closing shops and leaving the country, unemployment soaring high and the populace in fears. He further opined that this situation poses a threat to governance and economic growth in Nigeria (Onime, 2018).

In order to give a global attention to this insecurity situation in the Country so as to get help from major world powers, the role of both print and electronic media is of great necessity.

The Role of the Media in tackling insecurity in Nigeria

The Nigerian mass media, both print and electronics have made the reportage of the insecurity in Nigeria have a global audience (Nwabueze & Ebeze, 2013). This is even as the nation is waiting on its leaders to seek for an international assistance towards eliminating insecurity in Nigeria. Not minding some opinions from the government circle that mass media should protect the security forces in their reportage, however the Nigerian press has been quite professional in their reportage. This has made them have global visibility. Thus, many nations of the world are withdrawing their citizenry from Nigeria, even as others issue travel restriction to Nigeria by their citizens. This has resulted to an increased pressure on the central government to seek foreign help since the security agencies in Nigeria could no long be relied upon to save the situation.

The role and challenges of security agencies in tackling insecurity in Nigeria

Nigeria security agencies namely; the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, the Police and the Civil defense all work in corroboration to tackle the security situation in Nigeria. Therefore, they involve surveillance and intelligent gathering as well as other sophisticated methods to fight these security challenges. These help them to gather information sufficient to prevent a crime that is yet to be committed, intervene in the one that is being committed or investigate a crime that has been committed (Ashaolu, 2012).

However, despite their efforts to tackle crime and insecurity in Nigeria, the security agencies are often faced with the challenge of inter-security wrangling, not adequately equipped, poorly remunerated, short staffed, the issue of sabotage amongst themselves as well as the use of these security men by the political class.

The complicity of the political class

The distribution of the security men among the political class and other elites has further depleted the number of security men available to secure the citizenry.

Also, the urge for the primitive accumulation of bullion has made the Nigerian political class to be so desperate that in order to win elections at all cost thugs are imported into the country and armed with various weapons that later turn them as great instruments for crime (Odisu, 2015). Furthermore, when they win election, the allocation for the procurement of military hardware, weaponry and prompt payment of the security personnel are all predated upon, hence resulting to the inability of the military and paramilitary to defeat the criminals (Odisu, 2015). These set of people virtually predate on every sector of the government's budget which has resulted to ill performance of the budget, leading to unemployment, increase in crime and enrichment of few elites.

The affluence of the elites

From my personal experience during the festive period, particularly in Anambra state where I often spend my festive vacation, most elites come home with convoy of flashy and expensive vehicles, and move in convoy of these exotic cars with security personnel, amidst hunger and poverty in the land. This has led to some unemployed youth to go into crime and kidnaping of these elites and their family members in order to negotiate heavy ransom which ranges between tens to hundreds of million, particularly the case of Chukwudumeme Onwuamadike popularly known as Evans who incidentally hails from Anambra state.

In addition, the security personnel allocated to these elites have further reduced the number of security men who should always mediate between herders and farmers to ensure there is no senseless killing.

Farmers-herders clashes and Ethnic- Religious Factor

The farmers/herders conflict started from reactions to provocations and now to deadlier planned attacks. This started from Middle Belt states of Benue, Plateau, Nassarawa and Taraba. The factors responsible for these conflicts are the environmental degradation which affected the grazing land in the North, to grazing of farmers' farms in the middle belt and government inaction to distress calls (Crisis Group, 2018). Gursoy (2020) corroborated this position that federal government are indifferent to the situation, to the extent that it was reported that some elements in the security forces corroborate with the attackers. Furthermore, there is a nexus between ethnicity and religion in the conflicts. This is because the herders are Muslim by religion and Fulanis by ethnicity, while the farmers are mainly Christians and other minority tribes in the middle belt (Gursoy, 2020). People were calling President Buhari to be decisive in dealing with the situation, irrespective that the herders are same ethnic leaning with him. His inability to be decisive on the security issue has led to its escalation to other parts of the country. The inability of the federal government to protect the life of the citizenry has led to the call from various quarters for regional policing.

The Impact of the Regional Security Outfits

The inability of federal government to deal decisively with the security situation caused by the Fulani herdsmen and other bandits has resulted in the formation of regional security out-fits. In the South west, after the death of the daughter of Pa Reuben Fasaranti, the then leader of Afenifere, there was increased pressure on the leaders of the region to float a security outfit with synergy among the six South west states of Ogun, Lagos, Oyo, Osun, Ondo and Ekiti. This led to the formation of 'Amotekun' on Thursday January 9, 2019 in Ibadan (News agency of Nigeria, 2020). Thus, the headquarters of the operation was located in Ibadan. As a security outfit, it will assist the Nigerian Police in dealing with crimes like indiscriminate killings, kidnapping, banditry and destruction of farm lands (Aneasoronye, 2020).

In the South East, the delay in the formation of the regional security outfit was viewed with suspicion, that the governors were stooges of the federal government and therefore that defined their cowardly stance on the formation of the regional security force (Okoli et al, 2021). Hence when the South East governors eventually met in Owerri on 11 April, 2021 (BBC news pidgin, 2021), to announce the formation of the regional security group, it was greeted with mix reactions. While a section of the zone welcomed it, others saw it as playing a script orchestrated by the caliphate to counter Eastern Security Network (ESN), which at that time was accused by the governors of committing some atrocious acts (Okoli et al, 2021).

Conclusion

From the various literature reviewed and interview conducted in the course of this research, it can be seen that various variables were responsible for the escalated security tension in Nigeria, starting from the continual and unchecked movement of the herders from one part of the country to another.

Another factor is the inability of the federal government to react promptly to deal decisively with the situation. This was where the ethnic and religious factors were said to play major role. Also, the centralization of the security architecture in Nigeria is not helping matters as the federal government that controls the police command decides on where to act and where not to act. Furthermore, the fact that the security personnel who are not indigenes of the geo-political zone did not adequacy master the terrain.

Unemployment also played a major role, as most of the bandits are unemployed youths who found criminal activities like kidnapping and raping of women lucrative and fanciful thus their heavy involvement in that. The importation and arming of thugs who were mainly unemployed youths from other countries used for election were left without disarmament and they started terrorizing the streets with the arms.

In addition, the porous borders which were left unmanned were responsible for the proliferation of small arms and light weapons into the country. Also, this was another reason for the influx of the religious fundamentalists from different African countries who saw Nigeria attractive as a regional power.

Furthermore, the ill equipment of the security personnel with modern gadgets and ammunition has really affected the war. Another factor is lack of increased funding of the security forces as to cater for their welfare as well as their family members which is a source of great motivation. Also, better corroboration among the security agencies is lacking, in order to combat crime and banditry, as inter agency rivalry does more harm

to the unity of the security forces fighting this malady. Finally, the security agencies are not using latest technology to detect and fight criminals.

Recommendation

Nigeria should adopt ranching as a method of cattle breeding rather than allowing cattle to be moving on the streets of Nigeria. This will reduce the tension and conflicts caused by the movement of the herders.

The Security personnel should be adequately funded to tackle the challenge of insecurity. This is inclusive of adoption of modern technology in policing, recruitment of adequate personnel to man the over two hundred million population of the country as well as good remuneration. Also good welfare package for their family members will be a source of great motivation.

The borders should be properly and adequately secured to check the influx of non-citizens into the country as well as small and light weapons.

Furthermore, amendment of the current constitution to give way to ethnic and religious peculiarities of the Nigerian people, to make way for the devolution of power to the lower levels of governance in terms of resource control and creation of state and community policing is paramount.

Also, the need to remedy the power sector to be working twenty hours per day for every part of the country is urgently needed for the industrial revolution of the country which with tackle the unemployment menace in the country (Arinze et al, 2021).

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