

Crime and insecurity: The need for alternative policing in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Researches in the field of Criminology have indicated that no crime-free society exists. Every human aggregation carries along some intricacies and divergences that may harm human relations. This paper examines the existing relationship between crime and domestic insecurity in Nigeria highlighting those factors responsible. Using the available data, the need of policing alternative is rather suggested. The analysis shows that, some of the factors responsible for the nation's precarious condition of insecurity consist of unemployment, poverty, corruption and police inadequacies. These influence crimes such as; abduction, armed robbery, swindling, politically related assassinations and insurgent activities. Thus, there is the need to suggest alternative ways of policing oneself as an answer to the current insecurity situation engulfing the civilian populace. This is an idea which many Nigerians believe can secure the future if the country is to continue as a national entity.

Keywords: Crime, insecurity/security, insurgency, administrative roles, policing alternative.

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INTRODUCTION

Crime refers to the commission of acts that are forbidden, or the omission of acts required, by law and for which offenders are liable to be punished if convicted in a court of law (Siegel, 2012). It is a peculiar element which if uncontrolled to some reasonable height results in societal insecurity. Therefore, conditions indicating insecurity are criminal behaviours argued by Durkheim (1964) as pathological phenomena that shock all healthy and normal life (Ritzer, 2003). It can be related that, the rate of criminal activities in Nigeria and the state's failure to manage the situation are a determining factor of the country's domestic insecurity status.

Security is perceived as crime prevention, security technology and risk management or loss prevention. It also relates to the contextual and conceptual meaning considering environmental and or socio-cultural factors (Brooks, 2010). Its provision depends on the conventional belief that "the state is the only institution on which primary responsibility and power for the safety of its territory and its people reposes" (Zabadi, 2005:30). It is

achieved when individuals and/or multiple actors have the freedom to identify risks and threats to their well-being and values.

The working definition of this paper sees insecurity as a condition of public uncertainty against their lives, properties and dignity as a result of growing number of criminal activities which pose danger and threats (Buzan et al., 1998). This suggests measures of alternative policing as means of security management within the Nigerian context. The popular view posits that, insecurity exists, until people can: Live in freedom, peace and safety, participate fully in the governance of their countries, enjoy the protection of fundamental rights, have access to resources and the basic necessities of life and inhabit an environment which is not detrimental to their health and well-being (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2007:19).

Recent global analysis shows that Nigeria occupies the 148th position out of the total 162 countries surveyed (Institute of Economics and Peace [IEP], 2013). It is

against this background that the research looks at some factors responsible for insecurity in the country and the need for other policing measures as security management alternative.

INSECURITY SITUATION IN NIGERIA AND FACTORS RESPONSIBLE

For the purpose of clarity, this paper focuses on the most influential factors that affect the general public in terms of insecurity. But is the country secured considering the current situation? Salawu (2010) argued that a major cause of what we now see as ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria has to do with the accusation and allegations of neglect, oppression, domination, exploitation, victimization, discrimination, marginalization, nepotism and bigotry. Gofwen (2004) believed that religious fanaticism, ethnic jingoism, regionalism, and favouritism are found to be the major impediments to nation building.

Recent development in the world of crime reveals that Nigeria is one of the global leading cannabis consumers (UNODC, 2014). This as findings show results in the commission of more heinous crimes such as rape, murder, thuggery, abduction, theft and burglary among other things (Abdullahi, 2003; Siro, 2008). Acts of insurgency/militancy, hostage taking, armed robbery, political related assassinations and many number of crimes become the nation's dominant characteristics (Achumba et al., 2013). To evaluate further, the following factors were argued to be responsible for the disturbing situation in the country.

Unemployment/poverty incidences

Most empirical studies view the two variables as twin born for they are in most cases correlated. Poverty is an abject state, in which an individual is incapable of utilizing resources around him to improve economically and socially (UNDP, 1996; Chigbo, 1996). On the other hand, International Labour Organization - ILO (2007) defines unemployment status as the economically active population who are without work, but available for and seeking work, including people who have lost their jobs and those who have voluntarily left work (World Bank, 1999).

Adebayo (1999) sees unemployment in play when a significant number of people wish to work but cannot get jobs. Table 1 contained unemployment rates records from the Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics between 2000 and 2009. These vary by age group, educational level and sex classification. In addition, the 2013 Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) records showed that, 41.6% of persons between 15 and 24 years were unemployed. For persons between 25 and 44 years 17% were unemployed.

These incidences as seen above, encourages criminal behaviour among the urban youths (Siro, 2008). This is

Table 1. Ten year period unemployment rates.

Year	Unemployment rates (%)
2000	31.1
2001	13.6
2002	12.6
2003	14.8
2004	13.4
2005	11.9
2006	14.7
2007	14.6
2008	14.9
2009	19.7

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of Nigeria (2010).

an interpretation of Cohen subcultural theoretical explanation where exploitation and domination of the majority masses by the elites always necessitate criminal counter cultures (Cohen, 1955). Nigeria's unemployment also contributed to increasing feminization of poverty that encourages prostitution and cross border trafficking of young women as a means of survival. This situation causes trauma, anger, frustration, low self-esteem, negative life satisfaction, unhappiness and mental disorder including depression and acute stress to the affected groups.

Other economic consequences of unemployment include; flight of youths and able bodied men from the country in search of better opportunities thereby reducing the labour force and national production capacity (Akande and Okuwa, 2009). As at 2010, when the population estimate was 160,000,000, an average of only 50,200,000 (31%) Nigerians were employed. The remaining 109,800,000 (69%) were either unemployed or lack job satisfaction (NBS, 2010). Obadan and Odusola (2001) added that, unemployment became more acute in the 1980s and this has been on the increase ever since. Accordingly, in 2008, 15% of the nation's work force was unemployed while in 2011 the figure rose to 20% (Lamido, 2013).

Akware et al. (2013) argued that, from independence (1st October 1960) to date, there exist a strong relationship between increase in unemployment and crime. Some researchers maintained that there is a correlation between small scale theft, insurgency and militancy on one hand and unemployment on the other (Alexis, 2011). Kirby (2011) argued that insecurity rises with unemployment and poverty because; lack or loss of income affects the people's ability to provide basic necessities for their life. Lamido (2013) argued that unemployment in Nigeria is caused by improper orientation of the youths, absence of social welfare policy and societal negative attitude towards vocational and technical education. Apparently, political violence, ethno-religious conflicts and insurgency rising in the country

Table 2. Corruption perceptions index of Nigeria 2001 – 2010.

Year	CPI	Transparency (%)	Countries covered	Ranking	Corruption (%)	Ranking
2001	1.0	10	91	90	90	2
2002	1.6	16	102	101	84	2
2003	1.4	14	133	132	86	2
2004	1.6	16	145	144	84	2
2005	1.9	19	158	152	81	6
2006	2.2	22	163	142	78	21
2007	2.2	22	163	142	78	32
2008	2.7	27	180	121	73	59
2009	2.5	25	180	130	75	50
2010	2.4	24	178	134	76	44

Source: Idris (2013).

today are no doubt a consequences of unemployment and poverty.

Corruption

The act of corruption is defined as 'the misuse of public power, office or authority for private benefit through bribery, extortion, influence peddling, nepotism, fraud, speed money or embezzlement' (UNDP, 1996:7). The same concept is related to the misuse of public power (office) for private benefit where public officials have a direct responsibility for the provision of public service and or application of specific regulations (Holmes, 2012). Recent global analysis relate corruption to the perverse incentives in government, low salaries, poor rewards for performance, insecure tenure of employment, and lack of professionalism in public service (Memoli and Pellagata, 2014).

According to Aremu et al. (2011) the factors responsible for promoting police corruption in Nigeria include the system itself, the police culture, poor remuneration, poverty, recruitment procedures and organisational climate. In his book, 'A culture of corruption, everyday deception and popular discontent in Nigeria', Smith (2007) maintained that, Nigeria is a country where elites increasingly pursue wealth and power without regard for the consequences; while on the other hand, the ordinary people seek money by all means. The perception of 'simply to survive' portrays that law and order have given way to rampant corruption at every level and this has become one of the symbols of popular discontent across the globe not only in Nigeria.

Idris (2013) concluded that there exists a perfect correlation between corruption and insecurity in the country. The institutional controls are becoming weak as mild penalty system is ineffective in deterring corruption therefore corroborating Merton's (1968) anomie theory analysis. Relative sense of normlessness exists in a society and individuals are stereotyped into conformists, innovatists, ritualists, retreatists and rebellions. In this

regard, corruption engulfs security sector as the security managers accept the cultural goal (+) and reject the institutional means (-). Studies continue to argue that corruption in the security sector has diminished the capacity of the Nigerian state to maintain effective law and order (Okiro, 2007). This argument is supported by some empirical evidences obtained from the transparency international (TI) and Mo Ibrahim foundation.

As contained in Table 2, Nigeria recorded poor results in terms of transparency considering the corresponding Corruption Perception Index (CPI) grade in the ten year period. This argument supports findings by Alemika (2009) that the incidences rely much among the law enforcements especially the police. It therefore could be deduced that the country achieved the highest transparency score of 27 only in 2008. The transparency percentage score is seen as bi-modal having common scores of 16 and 22 with each appearing twice in the years of 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2007 respectively. The average percentage of corruption across ten year period is 80.5% which is very high.

Table 3 indicated that, the highest score of Nigeria's security was in 2008 with 47%. Unfortunately, it dropped to 44 and 46% in 2009 and 2010. The distribution of percentage score is uni-modal, recording a common value of 42% in 2002, 2003, and 2006. The highest security ranking was 45, only in 2004. In terms of insecurity, the country achieved the least 8th position only in 2004. The ranking across ten year period is uni-modal as the nation maintained the tenth position in 2001, 2002, 2003, 2005 and 2007. This analysis sounds discouraging.

Police inadequacies

Wentz and Schlimgen (2011:114) refer to police as a public service agency. Alemika (2009:483) defined policing traditionally 'as the diverse mechanisms or measures (consciously) employed by the community to enforce its values, norms, and rules through protective

Table 3. Security Index of Nigeria, 2001 – 2010.

Year	Security score (%)	Security ranking	Insecurity score (%)	Insecurity ranking
2001	43	43	57	10
2002	42	43	58	10
2003	42	43	58	10
2004	41	45	59	8
2005	43	43	57	10
2006	42	44	58	9
2007	44	43	56	10
2008	47	36	53	17
2009	44	-	56	-
2010	46	36	54	17

Source: Idris (2013).

devices (target hardening), surveillance, detection, and apprehension of suspects'. Similarly, police are law enforcing agents whose main function is to provide security and maintain law and order in the societies, states and nations (Ahmed et al., 2013:72). It was argued that 'police are agencies of the state employed to maintain the social order in which the interests of the rulers and the dominant economic class are paramount' (Chukwuma, 2005:2). It is an important segment through which policing strategies are applied to maintain security in all human societies (Nilson and Oliver, 2006; Alemika and Chukwuma, 2003).

Alemika and Chukwuma (2003) identified the problems of inhuman condition of police cells, poor working gadgets and un-hygienic environment as what disturb the force in the country. Other obstacles of the agency observed were low commitment from the part of the officers, indiscipline, police criminal connivance, poor police-public relations, poor knowledge of law, lack of integrity and a total disregard of human rights and resources management inadequacies (Okunola and Ojo, 2012).

Ladapo (2012) revealed that the outstanding impediment to policing in Nigeria is inadequate funding and poor resource management. Ironically, the Nigeria police focus on the security of the elites rather than the poor (Kasali, 2012). In their GIS based analysis of police stations in Kano metropolis, Ahmed et al. (2013) found that the total number of divisional police stations in the area was thirty three while the outposts' was fifty two. These findings concur with Eme (2009) that the country fails to meet the minimum United Nations police civilian ratio standard of 1:450.

ADMINISTRATIVE ROLES IN NIGERIA'S SECURITY MANAGEMENT

Omodia and Aliu (2013:36) argued that governance entails a process of proper management of state

institutions and structures to enhance socio-economic and political transformation of society. It is a process by which a political system achieves such values as accountability, participation, openness (or transparency) and respect for the rule of law and due bureaucratic process through care and concern for people's rights, livelihood, welfare, and ensuring harmonious existence by protecting their environment and future by the authorities concerned (Inokoba and Kumokor, 2011:141). These definitions highlight the expected role of Nigerian state in security management if the system were to become responsive to public need, equitable and dependable.

Ojo (2010) argued that, maintenance of order and the rule of law is a government role. A good governance embarks on improving citizens' welfare by the state. On the other hand, bad governance or failure may entail a state of anarchy. This is a type of society that Durkheim in his organic solidarity analysis believe is where high crime is observed, individualism maintained and collective consciousness and representation are weakened or absent (Ritzer, 2003). Hence, relative sense of normlessness increases making individuals insecure and exposed to insecurity vulnerabilities (Merton, 1968).

According to Omodia and Aliu (2013), the reality in Nigeria shows an absence of strong institutions of accountability and transparency which subsequently undermined the ability of the state to deliver public goods and services. In addition, this has deepened political corruption and the politics of prebendalism and patrimonialism (Lewis, 2011). The fundamental functions of government therefore must involve investing in services free of corruption and characterised by transparency

NEED FOR POLICING ALTERNATIVE

Considering these postulations, it is indicated that the government is indolent, careless and weakness in its

functionalities vis-à-vis security management. This calls for alternative policing via other security strategies to ameliorate the situation. Hence, people shall be given a lawful right to depend and provide security for themselves. These private supports can be either in form of collective efforts (community policing) or individual based to sustain the livelihood of the citizenry. Otherwise, the society may be thrown to anarchy and eventually a total collapse of the whole social system.

CONCLUSION

The elucidated analyses exposed the observed situation in Nigeria as inimical for public security. Pervasive factors such as unemployment, poverty, corruption and police deficiencies were responsible for this unfortunate state. All these were associated to the weak leadership characterising the national state. In view of these, government should provide employment opportunities through various means. This will checkmate poverty and reduce the citizens' involvement in crimes especially the youth. Welfare of law enforcement agencies and the general public should be improved. Provision of adequate modern working tools to tackle the current challenges should also be in place. Notwithstanding, people should be allowed lawfully to provide self-protection security on either individual or collective basis.

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