A REMEDY TO SECURITY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study critically examines the underlying bases of security challenges in Nigeria and proposes potential solutions. Insecurity, manifesting in forms such as Boko Haram insurgency, violence by Fulani herdsmen, armed banditry, and widespread kidnapping, continues to deepen fear among ordinary citizens. These threats are further intensified by hunger, unemployment, poor infrastructure, and other societal issues. At its core, the security crisis stems from crime—actions that violate both natural and divine principles. The findings indicate that political security, freedom from domination and arbitrary governance, economic and social stability, cultural autonomy, environmental protection, and resource access all play significant roles in shaping the dynamics of the Fulani herder-farmer conflict and its broader impact on national development. It is recommended that the federal government involve peace building and conflict resolution experts in addressing the herder-farmer crisis and promote ranching across the country, accompanied by training for herders to manage ranches effectively.

Keywords: Root Causes, Security Challenges, Nigeria, Fulani Herdsmen

Introduction

Insecurity in Nigeria has taken multiple forms—including Boko Haram attacks, violence by Fulani herdsmen, armed robbery, and mass kidnappings—creating widespread fear among civilians. These threats are worsened by hunger, joblessness, failing infrastructure, and a range of other social problems. Crime, defined here as acts contrary to moral and divine order, lies at the heart of the nation's security issues. Today, criminal activity in Nigeria has reached alarming levels, no longer occasional but now a regular occupation for many. The country faces persistent violence: brutal killings, armed robbery, rape, cult-related violence, ritual murders, corruption, fraud, high-profile abductions, child trafficking, and politically or religiously motivated bombings using advanced weapons—all of which destroy lives and property. These ongoing atrocities suggest that Nigeria is deeply entrenched in a cycle of criminality.

It is deeply troubling that society appears powerless in the face of such violence, where human lives are treated with the same disregard as animals hunted without mercy. This paper aims to explore the

fundamental causes of Nigeria's security crises and offer practical solutions to this enduring problem.

Nigeria and Security Challenges

Nigeria's current security crisis stems from ineffective, misdirected, and poorly prioritized security policies. A nation's primary duty is to ensure the safety of all individuals within its borders. Yet in Nigeria, security concerns extend beyond military threats to include food, financial, transportation, health, personal, and national safety. The country also grapples with political and ethnic tensions, assassinations, abductions, armed robbery, human trafficking, environmental damage, separatist movements in the Niger Delta, desertification in northern regions, erosion in the southeastern areas, and recurring urban flooding, among other issues. Often, discussions on security are narrowly focused on militarization, while deeper systemic failures are overlooked. Many Nigerians lack access to basic necessities such as clean water, healthcare, electricity, reliable transport, food, and quality education. This deprivation fuels ethnic and religious conflicts and contributes to the rise of terrorism.

Fulani herdsmen typically settle in fertile regions to graze their cattle. However, as migration patterns shift due to economic and socio-political pressures, tensions between herders and local farming communities have intensified. Each year, numerous Nigerians lose lives, farmlands, and crops to clashes with herders. These conflicts often begin when herders' cattle encroach on farmland (Ajibefun, 2017). The resulting violence has displaced entire communities and destroyed livelihoods. Herdsmen often claim the conflict is rooted in religious persecution and the killing of their livestock, while farmers view the herders as a direct threat to their crops, especially when cattle are allowed to graze freely on cultivated fields (Ajibefun, 2017).

The herder-farmer conflict has become one of Nigeria's most pressing security issues, second only to the Boko Haram insurgency in severity (Okoro, 2018). The cycle of violent attacks and retaliation has led to serious social divisions and economic setbacks. According to Olakiitan (2016), the government's failure to decisively address these attacks has serious consequences. Herdsmen now possess sophisticated weapons, enabling them to target perceived enemies with impunity—a growing threat to national security. In many cases, even law enforcement agencies have been unable to counter their firepower and aggression. As Okoro (2018) notes, entire villages have been destroyed, elders abducted, churches burned, clergy and worshippers killed, police officers murdered, and widespread looting and sexual violence committed—with minimal government response. This inaction poses a grave danger to national stability and development.

The displacement of farmers has significantly reduced agricultural output, leading to shortages in both rural and urban markets, particularly in central Nigeria (Chukwuma, 2016). The socio-economic toll of the herder-farmer conflict mirrors the devastation caused by Boko Haram (Abdullahi, 2019). Nearly every sector of the economy suffers due to ongoing violence and instability. Dauda (2019) warns that progress in food production could be reversed in regions most affected by the crisis. Daily life in these areas often comes to a standstill, as people avoid farming and other economic activities out of fear for their lives.

Conflict is inevitable in any diverse society, especially one as ethnically, culturally, and religiously varied as Nigeria. However, violence leads to stagnation and underdevelopment through the destruction of lives, land, and property. These crises have severely damaged relationships between different groups. Olukunle (2018) defines crisis as an event that creates instability and danger for individuals, communities, or entire societies—often arising suddenly and without warning,

threatening national stability. Titilope (2016) describes crisis as any occurrence that brings negative shifts in security, economy, politics, society, or the environment, particularly when abrupt and unforeseen.

Environmental conflict arises from adverse ecological conditions such as degradation, scarcity of resources, and rising demand. In developing nations like Nigeria, environmental scarcity results from the depletion of renewable and non-renewable resources due to overuse and climate stress. Limited access to water, arable land, and energy forces populations to migrate. Northern Nigeria, characterized by arid and semi-arid climates, experiences a long dry season (October–May) and short rainfall periods (June–September) averaging 600–900mm. Over the past 30 years, the rainy season has shortened from 150 to 120 days. In the last six decades, over 350,000 square kilometers of land have turned into desert, advancing southward at 0.6km per year. States like Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Yobe, and Zamfara now face desertification affecting 50–75% of their land. These changes have devastated agriculture and livelihoods, pushing millions of pastoralists southward in search of viable grazing land.

Originally, this migration was seasonal, with herders returning north after the dry season. But as pastureland in the north diminishes, herders now stay longer—often until June or July—and some have settled permanently in central Nigeria. This shift has increased competition over land and water with sedentary farming communities (Agboola, 2020). Herder attacks have fueled dangerous political, economic, and religious narratives. Some believe these attacks are part of a long-term plan by Fulani groups to displace indigenous populations and take over land. Among Christian communities, the violence is often interpreted as a covert form of jihad. In March 2016, Methodist Church leader Dr. Samuel Uche stated, "We are aware there is a game plan to Islamize Nigeria, and they are using the Fulani herdsmen to initiate it." In the southeast, Biafran separatist groups see the attacks as part of a northern agenda to dominate southern peoples and impose Islam. Some southerners accuse President Buhari of inaction, citing his Fulani heritage and role as lifetime patron of the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association (MACBAN). While these claims lack concrete evidence, they deepen religious mistrust and threaten national unity.

Richards (2019) argues that escalating violence by armed bandits pushes civilians to take up arms for self-defense or revenge, ultimately undermining law and order and fostering anarchy. The sounds of gunfire, bloodshed, and the burning of homes and farms during conflicts pose serious threats to national stability (Akanji, Badmus & Kolade, 2017). For safety, people flee affected areas, placing pressure on host communities through overcrowding and increased demand for food, water, and shelter. Recurrent violence between herders and farmers, along with cattle theft and banditry in various states, continues to endanger peace and security. Although the conflict is often framed in religious terms, competition over land and resources remains the central issue.

Glesitch (2010) outlines key dimensions of comprehensive security:
- Political security: Freedom from domination and arbitrary rule
- Economic and social security: Freedom from poverty and deprivation
- Cultural security: Freedom from ethnic and religious oppression
- Environmental security: Protection from ecological damage and resource insecurity
- Food security: Access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food for a healthy life

These security challenges have intensified over time. Nonetheless security remains essential for national unity, peace, and sustainable development. Currently, Nigeria struggles to guarantee any of these security dimensions for its citizens. Given the persistence of insecurity and the inability of

state security forces to protect lives and property, a critical question emerges: Can Nigeria achieve real security? Is the safety of citizens and their assets truly attainable? The situation appears overwhelming, and many argue that governments at all levels have failed to confront the crisis decisively. Others suggest the insecurity is politically motivated, orchestrated by powerful figures dissatisfied with the country's political direction.

Some Root Causes of Security Challenges in Nigeria

The sources of insecurity in Nigeria are numerous. The Catholic Laity Council of Nigeria (CLCN, 2019) identifies the following as fundamental causes:

(1) **Moral Decline**: Widespread ethical deterioration is evident in various forms—rampant corruption, excessive greed, sexual immorality, marital infidelity, promiscuity among youth, the trivialization of sex in higher institutions, and same-sex relationships.

(2) **Erosion of Cultural Values:** Traditional values that connect communities to their ancestors and spiritual beliefs are weakening. The sanctity of life once discouraged actions harmful to human dignity, while communal communication countered extreme individualism and authoritarianism. These values fostered humane societies and nurtured virtues that resist moral decay.

(3) **Injustice and a Flawed Justice System**: Nigeria's legal framework is deeply flawed, where the rule of law has given way to the rule of individuals. Many laws are outdated and selectively enforced. Certain powerful figures—"untouchables"—operate above the law, avoiding arrest or prosecution. For example, former Head of State General Ibrahim Babangida repeatedly ignored summons to appear before the Oputa Panel investigating human rights abuses. Similarly, high-profile individuals linked to sponsoring Boko Haram violence remain free, while justice is often reserved for the poor. James Ibori, convicted abroad for corruption, was treated as innocent at home—highlighting the unequal application of justice (Sat. Punch, 04/04/2021).

(4) **Religious Intolerance and Ethnic Conflict:** Effiong C. (2019) identifies several drivers of religious and ethnic tensions:

- Religious exclusivity
- Clashing values
- Psychological envy
- Unregulated rivalry
- Use of religion as cover for other conflicts
- Growing societal strains

(5) **Poverty, Unemployment, and Low Wages**

Effiong (2019) highlights that Nigeria grapples with widespread poverty, high unemployment, and inadequate pay for workers. Retired civil servants also face hardship due to poorly managed pension systems and the absence of welfare support. Unemployed youth, lacking opportunities, often turn to criminal activities, contributing to insecurity. Meanwhile, underpaid public employees may resort to corruption and exhibit reduced productivity. Retirees frequently express frustration through protests and criticism directed at the government.

(6) **Unregulated Influx of Lethal Weapons**

The unchecked spread of small arms remains a critical issue. Some politicians have armed unemployed youths to serve as campaign enforcers during elections but failed to retrieve the weapons afterward. These arms are now used by the same individuals to form cult groups or engage

in armed robbery and kidnapping for ransom, fueling a rise in violent crime and deepening national insecurity.

(7) **The Problem of Fake and Illicit Drugs**
Drug abuse among Nigerian youth is on the rise, with many committing serious crimes while under the influence. Although pharmaceuticals are intended for health benefits, their misuse has become widespread and damaging.

(8) **Greed and Selfishness**
Reflecting Thomas Hobbes' view of human nature, many individuals prioritize personal gain above all else. When self-interest becomes the sole guiding principle, conflicts inevitably arise—leading to disputes, violence, and broader security threats.

(9) **Decline in Moral and Spiritual Values**
In the pursuit of worldly desires, societal adherence to moral and spiritual principles has weakened. As referenced in Galatians 5:16–26 and Isaiah 65:1–8, this departure manifests in immoral and destructive behaviors. There are growing signs that the nation is drifting toward chaos or collapse, marked by escalating insecurity.

Security Issues and Challenges in Nigeria: Pathways to Resolution
Various interconnected factors—acting individually or collectively—have historically contributed to Nigeria's security challenges, particularly those rooted in religious intolerance. These may stem from excessive religious fervor, competition over limited resources, or prejudiced attitudes toward individuals of differing faiths, which can foster psychological resentment and eventually escalate into violence. Such tensions are sometimes intertwined with cultural differences that evolve into political disputes, often masking underlying economic motivations.
In recent years, Nigeria has faced an unprecedented level of insecurity, making national safety a pressing concern. Eme, Nwachukwu & Olise (2017) identify key causes such as youth unemployment, a culture of quick wealth driven by greed, the spread of small arms, and weak border and maritime surveillance. Achumba, Ighomereho & Akpor-Robaro (2013) add that institutional weaknesses, deep inequalities, ethno-religious tensions, public distrust in government, poor security infrastructure, and erosion of communal values further exacerbate the situation. Immediate contributing factors include porous borders, rural-urban migration, corporate social neglect, poverty, terrorism, and an unstable business climate.

Possible Solutions to Security Challenges
To overcome persistent insecurity, Nashakyea (2019) recommends urgent action:

(1) **Government Responsibility**
A core duty of any government is to protect its citizens, who in turn entrust it with authority. This protection is best achieved through good governance, which promotes holistic human development, enables dignified and self-sufficient living, and ensures efficient, accountable public services. Public officials must consistently act in the public interest, align with laws and policies, avoid personal gain, and, when necessary, prioritize national needs over organizational convenience.

(2) **Role of Religious Institutions**
Religious bodies exist fundamentally to promote peace. Both Christians and Muslims are expected to embody peace in their conduct. A genuine spiritual commitment should translate into ethical behavior and a shared dedication to service and societal well-being.

(3) **Corporate and Individual Responsibility**
Sound corporate governance ensures organizational effectiveness. Ethical organizations contribute to society by safeguarding the interests of all stakeholders, including communities and employees. Supporting these views, Eme, Nwachukwu & Olise (2017) propose leadership development, good governance, socio-economic advancement, eradication of corruption, promotion of social justice, a shift in societal values, and a more balanced security strategy to combat crime and terrorism like Boko Haram. They emphasize that lasting security depends on visionary leadership, improved governance, job creation, fairness, equal rights, and a fundamental transformation in national values.

Conclusion
Addressing insecurity requires more than military force or surveillance technology. It demands quality education, effective governance, and meaningful employment for the large population of disillusioned and restless youth. Achieving lasting peace calls for collective effort across all sectors of society.

Recommendations
1. The government should enhance technological capacity by deploying CCTV systems to monitor borders and detect illegal entry of immigrants and weapons.
2. Youth unemployment must be actively addressed by all tiers of government.
3. Security personnel should be trained to resist bribery and other corrupt practices.
4. Adequate remuneration for security agents is essential to reduce vulnerability to corruption.
5. Civil society organizations should raise public awareness, advocate for reform, and support initiatives to strengthen national integrity. Additionally, security agencies require modernization through better training, intelligence cooperation, advanced equipment, logistical support, motivation, and shifts in operational mindset.

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