

Counselling as a Mechanism for Enhancing National Security in Nigeria

Eshiet, I. B.

ABSTRACT

Matters of safety and security are topical issues in today's Nigeria. Life has always been precarious in our country. It is subject to all manners of dangers. In the first place it is often a victim of killer diseases such as malaria, diarrhoea, small pox, HIV/AIDs among others. In addition to threats from diseases, are threats that are man-made. In the past, we used to fear for the security of our property from armed robbers. Today, we fear for our lives from kidnappers, political and economic related assassination and extra-judicial killings. These have rapidly become familiar features of our landscape. The impact of this massive sense of insecurity on both the psychic and overall functioning of Nigerians cannot be overestimated. This work therefore examines counselling in the light of being one of the mechanisms for national security in Nigeria. It goes to posit on the need to check the rising threats to lives and property across Nigeria and the poor living conditions of many Nigerians. It reveals such factors as restiveness, inadequate funding of the Nigerian Police, and monetization of the labour market, political misconducts among others as some of the causes of economic, political and social underdevelopment and worries of Nigeria as a nation. Consequently, the study recommends among many others that Counselors should be employed in all governmental and non-governmental organizations in order to assist the government in making relevant decisions as it affects the nation's security.

Keywords: National security, counselling, boko haram, terrorism

INTRODUCTION

According to reports, multiple explosives went off one after the other in Kano, in the usual manners of similar attacks by the members of Boko Haram sect in Maiduguri, Damaturu, Potiskum, Gombe, Abuja, and Madalla in Niger State. The dangerous trend in insecurity came with Boko Haram, the Muslim fundamentalist sect, bombing everything within reach. It had no qualms bombing innocent people, even women and children who had no inkling of what it is fighting about. In 2010 during the Independence Day Celebration on October 1, bombs were detonated in Abuja, claiming lives and destroying property. Curiously, the Nigerian security agencies had been forewarned of the bomb blasts the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), which later claimed responsibility for the heinous act. In 2012 Independence Day's Celebration, the same group posted on its website a threat to detonate bombs at the avenue of the celebration. That probably explained the government's decision to relocate the venue of the celebration to the Aso Rock Villa where it was held in a low key manner. The security situation is worsened by the spate of bombings by the Jama'atu Ahlis-Sunnah Lidda' Awati Wal.Jihad otherwise called Boko

Eshiet, I. B. is a Lecturer in the Department of General Studies, Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua, Ikot Ekpene, Nigeria

Haram meaning in Hausa language that Western Education is sinful. Not to be soon forgotten is the August 26, 2011 suicide bombing of the United Nations secretariat in Abuja, coming not long after a similar attack on the Nigeria Police Force headquarters on June 16, both claimed by the Boko Haram. It does the government no credit to learn that arrested members of the sect escaped or were freed and the best the then President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan would do was throw his hands up in frustration, lamenting that the sect has infiltrated even his security agencies. The present insecurity in the North-East and the nation capital Abuja is worrisome by the masses for the past four years plus. That is why this work sets out to investigate the state of insecurity in Nigeria, the causes and the solution a counsellor could proffer. This work thereby uses the library form of research.

Social Insecurity

National security is a state of safety which permits a healthy environment and guarantees respect for lives and property (Jegedi, 2011). The term security means development. According to McNamara (1968) in Madike (2010), security is not traditional military activity, though it may encompass it. Security is development and without development, there can be no security. Security can also be seen as freedom from risk or danger, doubt, anxiety, or fear. It is an appreciable level of confidence (*www.merriamwebster.com*). National security can be defined as the actions and policies taken by a nation against all internal and external threats to its borders, economy and stability. National security revolves around the idea of protection of the nation and its interest. National insecurity means “security threats or attacks from people, organizations or countries that affects the well being of a nation and its citizen as a whole (Elegbeleye, 2005).

The presence of national insecurity in Nigeria is noticeable through the following incidences. Threat of extreme Islamic sect like Boko Haram, high level of unemployed youths, militant from the oil rich Niger-Delta, ritual killings, the widening economic gap between the poor and the rich, and the collapse of her justice system (Abu, 2011). According to an online source (*www.merriamwebster.com*), security is defined as “the quality or state of being secure as a freedom from danger, fear, anxiety, prospect of being laid off, etc. It is a feeling of safety and protection”. Many lives are lost in Nigeria through road crashes; diseases which could have been prevented if not for lack of commitment and care by various governments; infant mortality; ignorance, illiteracy and poverty. Successive governments cause deaths of Nigerians, directly and indirectly, mostly as a result of massive and unchecked corruption, greed, selfishness, lack of political will and conscience and of course, lack of vision and purpose.

Insecurity is not a problem that is unique to Nigeria. The US, the UK and many other countries developed, developing and underdeveloped, face the challenges of insecurity within their borders on a daily basis. The difference between them and Nigeria is how they manage the threats; how knowledgeable and prepared they are; how they deploy resources against the threats; how effective they are; how patriotic and united these people are against threats of insecurity. The Nigeria Constitution, 1999 specifically states in Chapter 12, Section 14, (2b) (Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy) that: ***(b) the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of***

government (Ogunwale, 2012). Based on 1999 statistics, the top 10 countries for ransom kidnappings in the order of occurrence were: Columbia, Mexico, Russia, Brazil, Nigeria, Philippines, India, Ecuador, Venezuela and South Africa (Eme, 2009). What this means is that – within a short space of time – Nigeria has stolen the limelight from other countries that are traditionally notorious for kidnapping. It is another addition to the chains of afflictions that have befallen the country, among which are corruption, economic and financial crimes, mass murder, armed robbery, terrorism, lynching and general insecurity. In any given society, security is an indispensable factor for growth and development. It is very glaring that nothing can be achieved in a state of anarchy; the prevailing crisis in the North is such that, if it continues, no meaningful development can be achieved in the region.

Manifestations of Insecurity in Nigeria

The underlisted are the various manifestations of conflict and insecurity in Nigeria:

Ethno-religious Conflict: Communal and societal conflicts according to Ibrahim and Igbuzor (2002) have emerged as a result of new and particularistic forms of political consciousness and identity often structured around ethno-religious identities. In all parts of Nigeria, ethno-religious conflicts have assumed alarming rates. It has occurred in places like Shagamu (Ogun State), Lagos, Abia, Kano, Bauchi, Nassarawa, Jos, Taraba, Ebonyi and Enugu States respectively. Groups and communities who had over the years lived together in peace and harmony now take up arms against each other in gruesome “war”. The claim over scarce resources, power, land, chieftaincy, local government, councils, control of markets, “Osu caste system” and sharia among other trivial issues have resulted in large scale killings and violence amongst groups in Nigeria.

Politically Based Violence: Politics in the current civil dispensation like the previous republics have displayed politics of anxiety which has played down on dialogue, negotiation and consensus. The anxiety is as a result of perceived or real loss of power by an elite stratum. Politicians started strategizing about the control and retention of power in 2015 elections way back in 2011. To this end, inter and intra-political party conflicts became rife in which politicians are deploying large resources to out-do each other, changing the rules and legislations of the political game, distorting laws and employing violence and political assassination to settle political scores. Party meeting, campaigns and conventions have become war threats where small and light weapons like guns and cutlasses are freely displayed and used to rig elections, harass and intimidate electorates. Also, a spate of politically motivated killing is rife. The most shocking of these killings was the murder of Chief Bola Ige, Funsho Williams, Dikibo, Ogbonna Uche, and Marshall, among others (Onyemaizu, 2006).

Economic-Based Violence: There is evidence to suggest that oil has given rise to vertical and horizontal conflicts between National, State and society or between dominant and subordinate geopolitical zones, classes and groups across Nigeria, given the pivotal role that oil plays in the restructuring power relations in Nigeria. It is however true that other types of resource driven conflicts have received less attention in the debate. Assets such as grazing and farming and water resource, have tended to give rise to horizontal conflicts

that involve communities across the geo-political zones. It can also be said that conflict in Nigeria is poverty induced. This explanation is closely related to relative deprivation, rather than absolute poverty. As a result of the above, the inability of the State to provide basic services for the populace, generate new conflict or renew old ones manifested through politicized agents who have used the conditions of the poor to address, the responses or non-responses of the state to the legitimate yearnings of the people.

Organized Violent Groups: Organized violent groups take varying dimension and forms. These include: ethnic militia, vigilantes, secret cults in tertiary institutions and political thugs. Various reasons and circumstances account for their emergence. The causes of the manifestations include the culture of militarism that has its antecedents in military rule, the failure of the State and its institutions, economic disempowerment, the structure of the State and Nigeria's federalism, non-separation of State and religion, politics of exclusion, culture of patriarchy and gerontocracy and ignorance and poor political consciousness (Ibrahim and Igbuzor, 2002).

Causes of Insecurity in Nigeria

Causes of insecurity would show that improper funding of the police and other security agencies is the major cause of insecurity question in Nigeria. This cause stems from the fact that there are inadequacies in the security agencies, modern communication equipment, sophisticated arms and ammunition so that the security agencies will be able to contain these criminal gangs. Also, the allowances and salaries of these security agencies are hardly paid; their welfare is nothing to write home about. As a result of the above, the Nigerian populace is bound to suffer the kind of scandal with its political elites running around in shame. Monetization of the labour market is another cause. As a result of high unemployment, graduates without jobs have gone through a lot of mental torture in the process of securing jobs and in the process they have been involved in all sorts of fiscal indiscipline and corruption and other social vices. These armies of the unemployed force themselves into the police force and other Para military and military agencies. The fallout of such a situation will be trying to cover lost ground by enriching themselves illegally and colluding with criminal gangs. As Oladepupo (2005) posits:

Gross party indiscipline and infighting among political gladiators is another. It is worthy to note that a sizeable proportion of those who have suffered attacks in recent times have been members of the ruling party and leading opposition parties and their allies.

Politics in Nigeria are beset with acts of gross misconduct, lack of internal democracy, blackmail, and indiscipline. Their act ranges from disobedience to the party's constitution, to in-fighting (internal war) among party leaders and their hangers-on. For instance, the political wars between and among governors and their deputies, the legislature and the executive, godfathers and their godsons, political dynasties, state and Abuja politicians among others. Aside from the bad eggs in the force, the poor welfare of the police, military and paramilitary personnel, with lack of adequate working tools, inadequate personnel is another factor that promotes insecurity in Nigeria. The International Institute for Strategic Studies as cited by Olonisakin (2008) captures this when he posited that the police-

population ratio in Nigeria is 1:450. At a minimum, citizens ought to have easy access to the police and feel safer as a result of the protection they offer. Yet, Nigeria has failed to meet the standard set by the United Nations for effective policing. What are the impacts of all these shortcomings?

Impact of Insecurity Question in Nigeria

The under listed are a checklist of the impact of conflicts and insecurity in a polity:

1. Social dislocation and population displacement
2. Social tensions and new pattern of settlements which encourages Muslims/Christians or members of an ethnic group moving to Muslim/Christian dominated enclaves.
3. Heightens citizenship question and encourages hostility between “indigenes” and “settlers”.
4. Dislocation and disruption of family and communal life.
5. General atmosphere of mistrust, fear, anxiety and frenzy
6. Dehumanization of women, children, and men especially in areas where rape, child abuse and neglect are used as instruments of war.
7. Deepening of hunger and poverty in the polity
8. Atmosphere of political insecurity and instability including declining confidence in the political leadership and apprehension about the system (Ibrahim and Igbuzor, 2002).
9. Governance deficit as a result of security agencies inefficiency and corruption.

Insecurity Challenges and the Way Forward

Traditional rulers, vigilance groups and politicians are perpetrating heinous crimes in Nigeria. The Anambra Vigilante Service usually called Bakassi Boys, for instance, has been blamed for some of the killings, although there is no evidence against them. But the theory that Bakassi and indeed the government in Anambra, may be involved in the killings evolved in the 2000. It was the killing of Barrister and Mrs Barnabas Igwe that led to a federal government clampdown on the Bakassi Boys. The operation took place in Onitsha, Awka and Nnewi, and 31 Bakassi operatives were arrested, while 46 detainees of the outfit were set free. An arsenal of fifty-eight assorted weapons was impounded during the raid. (Akintude, 2002). Akintunde (2007) adds and believes that the insecurity of the nation is caused by politicians. According to him, life has been insecure in the country for quite some time and the politicians are directly responsible for it. He adds.

“They bought the weapons and armed the boys to help them secure electoral victory. And when they have used them to get where they are going, they dump. When these boys no longer have access to them and they no longer measure up to the life they were living when they were getting money from the politicians, they start to threaten innocent people.”

Another major challenge is the urbanization process. This is because there is a strong and huge connection between security, environment and urbanization. General Secretary of friend of Environment, Mr. Choke Chikwendu explains in Aliu (2010) that Nigeria has witnessed considerable urbanization but without commensurate security strength. According

to Chief Supo Shonibare, an Afenifere Chieftain, rather than peace, stability and unity, democracy has only bred poverty, joblessness, political strife, insecurity and economic woes. The conclusion he said is that the country has gone back to exactly where it was six years ago (Thamas, 2004). The poor management of the national economy cannot be excluded as far as insecurity of lives and property of Nigerians is concerned. Our avaricious leaders have virtually converted our national coffers into private establishments. Former governors and sacked bank executives are living examples. Nigeria is rich in black gold but suffers scarcity. But the criminals are not the only ones causing havoc to Nigerians. The state of the country's roads, especially the highways, where potholes have remained a common feature, is adding to the ever increasing insecurity across the land. Some years ago the nation woke up to the horrible incident of road accident that claimed the lives of 42 pupils on excursion. The Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) source put a disturbing statistics out that auto crashes claimed 128 lives in the first three weeks in various highways (Madike, 2010).

However, the oil-rich Niger Delta, which incubated some militants due to prolonged neglect, is also not helping matters. Though, there is a concerted effort by the authorities to address the issue, not much, according to opinions is expected because of unnecessary politics and government's bureaucratic bottlenecks. In helplessness, citizens have watched human lives brutally terminated and laws of the land violated without relevant institutions ever able to initiate the appropriate investigative and prosecutorial processes as to secure a conviction. Another dimension of insecurity is that induced by those saddled with the responsibility of securing lives; they shot and kill innocent citizens. Many of such incidents are prevalent in the country's scenery. Finally, the Boko Haram and Jos Crises added to the already ugly dimension of insecurity in Nigeria. The criminal activities of these crises left countless numbers of lives in ruins and destroyed property worth billions of naira and death toll running into hundreds of thousands. The following, according to Mba-Afolabi (2014) are reports on recent security issues in the country.

- On June 6, 2014, Nigerian officials say massacre in village of Attagara in which Boko Haram men opened fire, killing scores of villagers, is bloodiest in series of attacks by the sect; deadly assaults have become so pervasive that officials say group has established virtual control over entire area of the northeast part of Nigeria; apparent lack of military intervention is likely to renew questions about capacity of Nigerian armed forces to confront Boko Haram.
- On May 21, 2014, two powerful bombs explode in central Nigerian city of Jos, killing not less than 46 people and wounding 45 others; no group has stepped forward to claim responsibility for the attack.
- On May 19, 2014, the profile of Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau, who commanded rampages and slaughtered civilians for years before kidnapping hundreds of school girls and capturing the world's attention; inherited leadership of the group following the death of Mohammed Yusuf in 2009, promoting harsh vision of Islam and ruling by fear and brutal violence; seems undaunted as he becomes target of international manhunt.

Deep frustration is brewing among parents and others in Chibok, Nigeria, over government's slow response to kidnapping of more than 200 girls by militant group Boko Haram; search has so far been fruitless, despite international outpouring of logistical support; region has long borne brunt of Boko Haram attacks, with several burnt-out schools dotting landscape near one where girls were captured. The cost of insecurity is quite high both for individual Nigerians as well as the nation. For the former, it stunts personal development and interfere with his or her ability to develop his or her full potentials. The mind and energy of the average Nigerian is consumed with issues of safety and security that he or she has little energy left to contribute to Nigerian's development. The message should be clear to our government. Nigerians need a polity that is stable, peaceful, and safe enough from criminal assaults, murder, chaos, tyranny and breakdown of authority so that the populace can face issues of development with vigour and courage. To attain such a polity, the following are suggested as the way forward. Governments at all levels should ensure that rising poverty indices be reversed and a realistic social security programme be pursued and systematically implemented to ensure that the populace meet their basic needs. Though there is a statutory limitation to what State government can do in the area of security, the States have something to contribute. The constitution places security on the exclusive federal list. The police and the Armed forces are all federal institutions, not legally accountable to State governments.

However, it is suggested that there should be partnership between the State and Federal governments in the area of security agencies with needed logistics for optimal performance. Secondly, as a complement to the services of the conventional security agencies, States should sponsor community-based vigilantes. Related to the above is economic empowerment. It is even more significant to ameliorate the sense of want that sometimes induces crimes; so economic empowerment of the citizenship is another way of addressing the security question. Various micro credit schemes should be put in place in pursuit of this objective. Local contractors should equally be used to execute government projects. The aim is to boost the local economy, create jobs and ultimately, social harmony.

Re-organization of the security agencies via re-training the agents is necessary. 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 neighbourhood watch. Governments should equally fix social infrastructures – roads, street lights, schools and skill acquisition centres. Apart from the above, there is no gain saying that lack of youth empowerment programmes contribute immensely to social insecurity in the polity. The government should create programmes that would empower our youths technically. This will enable them to be self-reliant and avert their minds from criminal tendencies. Finally, the practice of the rule of law, constitutionalism, avoidance of undue retrenchment of workers, payment of salary and allowances as at when due and payment of compensation for property destroyed are other means by which the question of insecurity could be avoided.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study captured the role of counseling for national security. It highlights such factors as restiveness, inadequate funding of the Nigerian Police, monetization of the labour market, political misconducts among others as some of the causes of economic, political and social underdevelopment of Nigeria as a nation. Based on the above, the study recommends that Counselors should be employed in all governmental and non-governmental organizations in order to assist the government in making relevant decisions as it affects the nation's security. The government should make professional counselors as special advisers in matters relating to economic, political and social development of the country. The Counselors should create more awareness to the public in order to enhance information flow among citizens through seminars, workshops, and lectures. Also, the government should ensure equitable distribution of information and telecommunication facilities in both urban and rural areas. The governments should ensure accessibility of information for skill acquisition, self employment, job opportunities, and self-reliance among citizenries. The government should increase opportunities for entrepreneurial development among youths as well as increase allocations for youths' developments and youth-related program. All channels of information should be used to enlighten youths on the adverse effects of acts of rebellion. Similarly, the government should give access to credit facilities and other supports mechanisms to young investors. The government should embrace the services of the counselors in all aspects of the government and her agencies. Parents should have at least 80 percent control over their children in order for them to be good citizens in terms of being morally, educationally and socially sound.

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