

Addressing Security Challenges through Good Governance in North western Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examines the contribution of good governance in transforming security challenges in north western Nigeria. The data used for this study was sourced from scholarly works and publications that are online and in print, academic journal articles, magazines, newspapers, and textbooks and periodicals. Thus, the study used secondary data and employed descriptive content analysis as a data analysis technique. A good governance theory was therefore adopted to underpin the study. It was found out that corruption, poverty, unemployment, poor governance leading to poor government policies and a weak judicial system were the major factors causing insecurity in north western Nigeria, which negatively affected the social, economic and political development of the region. The study recommended that the government make a concerted effort to develop and implement youth empowerment policies that will empower youth to be self-sufficient, and that corrupt practices be dealt with seriously.

Security, Insecurity, and Good Governance

1.1 Introduction

Good governance has become the central concept at the confluence of security and development with core elements that include accountability, effectiveness, efficiency, transparency, inclusiveness, equity, and the rule of law (Adebayo & Jide, 2014). The qualities of good governance obviously determine the quality of state affairs, and the development of a state can be hindered by insecurity. That is why the governance of the security sector has often remained an issue of great concern to policymakers (Adeyemi, 2021). Therefore, in most of the African states, the roots of security sector governance, as

noted by Mustapha (2013), can be traced to pre-colonial African history, where the colonialists brought in their own system, instruments, and institutions and used force not for security but for political and economic exploitation. This situation contributed to the security governance process later inherited and adopted by the independent states of Africa to be defined by the same structure, instruments, and institutions that were built to serve their purpose (Christian, 2020). Without good governance, a nation makes itself vulnerable to the drivers of insecurity (Mohammed, 2015). Good governance is a central feature in the often internal or society based threats Nigeria faces (Amujiri & Agu, 2012). A common theme for virtually all of Nigeria's security challenges is poor governance (Christian, 2020). In many instances, these security concerns are, in fact, symptoms of weak, exclusionary, or exploitative government processes (Adeyemi, 2021). These security issues, therefore, will persist until the underlying problems of governance are addressed.

According to Aning (2016), most of these security challenges in Nigeria have emerged partly as a result of "multiple socio-economic injustices," including but not limited to "marginalization, social inequality, political exclusion, corruption, economic deprivation, unequal allocation and distribution of state resources, among others. Good governance is believed to be the key issue for providing quality services through ensuring quality management. It is believed that good governance is not only the appropriate mechanism for achieving superior quality, but it is certainly a necessary one (Rahman, 2016). Governance is said to be good when the rights of people are protected, security is adequately provided, basic freedoms are guaranteed, and the welfare of people is maximally satisfied (Mohammed, 2015).

Therefore, security should be given utmost attention and priority above all other interests in the state, because it determines the unity, integration, and peaceful coexistence that ensure the existence of a country as an entity capable of devising a viable and effective alternative for social, political, and economic growth and development within the constraints of its limited resources (Ademola, 2020). This is attainable through good governance. Several studies of the current insurgencies in the northwest have revealed a strong link between good governance and national security. Such studies therefore conclude that good governance is the only thing that will sustain growth and reduce insurgencies in Nigeria, as what we are seeing now is the resulting effect of bad governance (Christian, 2020).

This study was conducted to examine the role of good governance in addressing the current security challenges affecting the livelihoods of the people living in the region. The study focuses on the administration of Muhammad Buhari. This is because of the fact that his regime has been associated with tidal waves of concern over the question of governance due to the phenomenon of intense security challenges and celebrated cases of corruption among high-level public officers accused of promoting insecurity as well as the politicization of the state's reaction to constructive opposition, particularly in northwestern Nigeria. The period has also seen a decline in public trust in governance due to security concerns and legitimacy crises on a scale never seen before in the history of the nation (Mohammed, 2015). Many studies have found that this problem is caused by the government's failure to administer justice in the governance process, particularly in the allocation and distribution of resources (Duerksen, 2021).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

North western Nigeria has been experiencing an increased rate of insecurity for many years. This has affected the living standards and economic status of people. The region has never experienced in its history the type of security challenges that are currently being faced, and this is attributed to a lack of good governance in the government's administration. This has resulted in the current condition of unemployment, poverty, injustice, inequality, and discrimination among youth and consequently paved the way for the rising insecurity in the region. Thus, the region has become the safe haven of increasingly active terrorist groups that engage in several criminal activities ranging from village raids, sexual violence, kidnapping for ransom, banditry, large-scale cattle rustling, and other social vices (Sama'ila, 2019). This has grossly affected the peaceful coexistence and livelihood of people in the region. The violence in Northwest Nigeria has resulted in an estimated 80,000 refugees crossing the border into the Maradi region, Niger, since 2019 (Vanguard, 2020).

Several Nigerian governments have spent billions of dollars in the past to ensure the stability of peace and security, making the country's defense budgets larger than any other essential sector (Adeyemi, 2021). Nigeria's current administration, which is fighting corruption, crime, and economic hardship, has made only minor progress in addressing insecurity concerns. However, their greatest efforts are fundamentally flawed due to the absence of good governance. In terms of peace, however, Nigeria was rated very low in the 2020 Global Peace Index, joining the likes of Libya, Sudan, Syria, Iraq, Somalia, Yemen, and other war-torn countries (Oluwole, 2021). Therefore, it is crystal clear that the state of insecurity in Nigeria is largely a function of government failure and a lackadaisical attitude towards the poor masses. This is showcased by the inability of the government to deliver public services and to provide basic needs for the masses, like shelter, food, clothing, etc. (Adebayo & Jide, 2021). The paucity of basic needs by the people of Nigeria has created a pool of frustrated people who are easily ignited by any event that is violent (Sama'ila, 2019).

1.3 The Study's Objectives

- To examine the role of good governance in addressing security challenges that are bedeviling the peaceful coexistence of Nigeria, with specific reference to the northwest region.
- To identify the persistent factors limiting the effort of the government in response to the insecurity threat in northwest Nigeria,
- To examine how good governance would be the solution to the security challenges in northwest Nigeria,

1.4 Research Questions

This study aims to provide an answer to the following questions:

- To what extent does good governance contribute to addressing the security challenges that are bedeviling the peaceful coexistence of the northwestern region?
- What are the persistent factors that limit the effort of the government in response to the insecurity menace in north western Nigeria?
- How would good governance be the solution to the security challenges in northwest Nigeria?

2.0 Literature Review:

2.1. Conceptualization of Terms

2.1.1 "Good Governance"

The concept of "good governance" conveys the qualitative dimension of governance that indicates an effective, efficient, participative, or democratic form of government which is responsible for the transparent and accountable management of human, natural, economic, and financial resources for equitable and sustainable development (Adeyemi, 2021). It assures that corruption is minimized, the views of minorities are taken into account, and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making (Mohammed, 2020). It is also responsive to the present and future needs of society. Aning (2016) posits that good governance, being an adjective expression, connotes certain value-assumptions. Good governance is associated with efficient and effective administration in a democratic framework (Amujiri&Agu, 2012). It is equivalent to a positive and development-oriented administration that is committed to the improvement of the quality of life of the people. It implies a high level of organizational effectiveness. This is why Christian (2021) viewed it as the capacity of the center of power within the political and administrative system to cope with the emerging challenges of society. It refers to the adoption of new values of governance to establish greater efficiency, legitimacy, and credibility of the system. In short, it must have the attributes of an effective, credible, and legitimate administrative system—citizen-friendly, value-caring, and people-sharing. The concept of "good governance" derives its relevance in the context of misgovernance, which includes nonfeasance, overfeasance, and malfeasance (Nwanegbo&Odigbo, 2013). According to Oluwarotimi (cited in Christian, 2020), good governance is the panacea for the insecurity challenge in Nigeria. She states that the war against insecurity could be won only by raising governance standards, which means cultivating a culture of good governance where the government is responsible and accountable to the people. Good governance has eight major characteristics. It is participatory, consensus-oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective, efficient, equitable, and inclusive and follows the rule of law (Adeyemi, 2021).

2.1.2 Insecurity

Insecurity is the antithesis of security. It refers to a lack of or inadequate freedom from danger. This implies that insecurity is an absence of peace, order, and security (Purity &Anigbuogu, 2019). Beland (2007) defined insecurity as "the state of fear or anxiety stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection." This definition reflects physical insecurity, which is the most visible form of insecurity, and it falls into many other forms of insecurity, such as economic security and social security. Akpor (2013) defines insecurity from two perspectives. Firstly, insecurity is the state of being open or subject to danger or threat of danger, where danger is the condition of being susceptible to harm or injury. Secondly, insecurity is the state of being exposed to risk or anxiety, where anxiety is a vague, unpleasant emotion that is experienced in anticipation of some misfortune. These definitions of insecurity underscore a major point: those affected by insecurity are not only uncertain or unaware of what will happen, but they are also vulnerable to the threats and dangers when they occur. Therefore, insecurity is viewed as "not knowing, a lack of control, and inability to take defensive action against forces that

portend harm or danger to an individual or group, or what makes them vulnerable" (Oladiran, 2014).

2.1.3 Security

For the purpose of this study, security refers to the state or condition of being free from any form of danger or threat. In the view of Akin (2008), security refers to "the situation that exists as a result of the establishment of measures for the protection of persons, information, and property against hostile persons, influences, and actions." It is the existence of conditions within which people in a society can go about their normal daily activities without any threats to their lives or properties. It embraces all measures designed to protect and safeguard the citizenry and the resources of individuals, groups, and the nation against international sabotage or external aggression (Ogunleye, 2011). In the view of Nwanegbo and Odigbo (2013), security refers to "the situation that exists as a result of the establishment of measures for the protection of persons, information, and property against hostile persons, influences, and actions." It is the existence of conditions within which people in a society can go about their normal daily activities without any threats to their lives or properties. Security, therefore, according to Ogunleye (2011), embraces all measures designed to protect and safeguard the citizenry and the resources of individuals, groups, businesses, and the nation against sabotage or violent occurrences.

2.2 Theoretical Foundation

2.2.1 Theory of Good Governance

The study adopted the good governance theory to describe the style of governance in Nigeria and its impact on the security of the nation. The theory explains the need to promote the process of governance through the application of the theory's principles. Good governance theory has established a set of principles aimed at improving the governance process in developing countries like Nigeria. Accountability, transparency, public engagement, responsiveness, competency and capability, efficiency and effectiveness, and prudent financial management are a few examples. The idea of good governance theory was first recognized and introduced by the World Bank as a condition that requires efficient and timely practices that help improve the standard of service in developing countries (Bjork & Johnson, 2001).

The theory is relevant to the study because it focuses on how public authorities in developing countries like Nigeria can best apply the principles outlined above to improve public service delivery. Public service delivery entails the role of the government in the provision of basic and welfare services to the citizens with the aim of improving their living standards. These services include, among others, security (protection of lives and properties), educational services, healthcare services, infrastructural services, public utilities, sports facilities and viewing centers etc. This is why Jolade&Rafiu (2014) argued that the tenets of good governance can be used as a parameter to assess the performance of governance in Nigeria.

3.0 Methodology

The method adopted in this research is content analysis, using mainly secondary data. The secondary data employed includes existing literature on the topic, such as books, academic journals, newspapers, magazines, conference papers, World Bank publications, periodicals, and other related documents. In the course of the research, the researcher

consulted the internet and an e-library for data collection. As a result, the collected data were analyzed using a descriptive approach to data analysis.

4.0 Good Governance and Security Challenges in Nigeria

4.1 Nigerian Government Efforts to Address Security Issues in Northwest

The Nigerian government has put in place different measures to combat the security issues that have been bedeviling the peaceful condition of the northwestern states. These include, among other things, the implementation of security programmes, non-state defense groups, negotiation between the government and terrorist groups, border closure to mitigate the inflow of small and light weapons, shutting down networks to distort communication between the terrorist groups and their informants. These policy measures can be discussed below.

4.1.1. Implementation of Security Programmes

Amid the complex web of security issues in the northwest region, the government of President Muhammadu Buhari has for long sought to consolidate military gains against "bandits" and other prominent terrorist groups by implementing sweeping military operations, notably "Operation HadarinDaji" and other associated security programmes (The Guardian, 2021). This program is designed to achieve the peace, stability, socio-economic rehabilitation, reconstruction, and long-term sustainable economic development of the region. Nigerian military troops have been deployed on missions in all the affected states in order to subdue an array of violent attacks across the region, especially in Zamfara, Sokoto, Kebbi, and Katsina states, being the most victims and vulnerable states (Christian, 2020).

4.1.2 Non-State Defense Organization

An important corollary to the official military effort has been the emergence of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), a militia set up to protect communities from banditry, alongside local hunters and other vigilante groups. The northwest governments have leveraged these non-state actors extensively in the banditry counterinsurgency effort, though levels of trust in them have varied (International Crisis Group, 2017). These civilian vigilantes use their knowledge of local inhabitants, geography, languages, and cultures to great effect. However, while mostly helpful so far, the CJTF could become an internal security problem during the transition away from military control, particularly in border areas where smuggling is lucrative and small arms are easy to obtain (Cropley, 2019). Their actions have occasionally sparked concern about human rights violations, discrediting the military and drawing the attention of international organizations (Amnesty International, 2019).

4.1.3 Negotiation between the Government and Terrorist Groups

As a result of the federal government's failure, the state governments of Katsina, Sokoto, and Zamfara began direct negotiations with these criminal organizations in an attempt to bring the criminal activities to an end. The governors provided amnesty and other incentives to the criminal organizations as part of these negotiations. Some have even committed to freeing all members of such groups who have been detained in exchange for hostages. These accords have so far failed for a variety of reasons: First, these criminal organizations lack a centralized command and a unified aim, making it difficult to bring them all together in a single discussion. Furthermore, agreements reached with

one group are not binding upon others. Second, the dialogues left out local communities that bear the brunt of violence and want the states to provide compensation, justice, and protection in exchange for a lasting peace. (Oluwole, 2021).

4.1.4 Border Closure to Mitigate the Inflow of Small and Light Weapons

Border closure is a protectionist policy that prevents the movement of goods or people between different jurisdictions with limited or no exceptions associated with this movement (Christian, 2020). Due to insecurity, smuggling and criminal activities, the Nigerian government ordered the immediate closure of her land borders with the neighboring countries on August 1, 2019, disallowing the movement of goods and services in and out via the land borders. The move was said to be in a bid to curb smuggling of the rice staple and associated corruption. The goods caught in the ban include weapons and ammunition (Vanguard, 2019). The closure seemed to be straining Nigeria's relations with her neighbors and has been met with strong opposition by the neighbors, casting a shadow over the newly enacted ECOWAS free trade agreement, which seeks to scrap restrictions on trade among African countries (Adeyemi, 2021).

4.1.5 Disabling Networks to Distort Communication between Terrorist Groups and Informants

It is a well-known fact that the bandits also take advantage of the availability of the networks to coordinate their attacks. In response to this, on Friday, September 3, 2021, the Nigerian Communications Commission said, "the pervading security situation in Zamfara state has necessitated an immediate shutdown of all telecommunications services for some period of time (Vanguard, 2019). This is to enable relevant security agencies to carry out the required activities towards addressing the security challenges in the states. One of the biggest hurdles to combating banditry is the issue of informers who use mobile networks to communicate with bandits about the movement of military troops (Guardian, 2021).

5.0 Summary of Findings

- The study discovered that good governance plays a vital role in reducing the level of insecurity affecting the peaceful coexistence of the northwestern region. This is as a result of the government's efforts in addressing security challenges through policy intervention and other necessary measures. Therefore, it is crystal clear that such policies have positively impacted on the livelihoods of people as the rate of kidnapping, killings, house raids, sexual assaults, cattle rustling, and other acts of terrorism is minimal.
- The study found out that corruption, poverty, unemployment, poor governance leading to poor government policies and a weak judicial system are the persistent factors limiting the efforts of the government in its fight against insecurity in northwestern Nigeria, which negatively affected the social, economic and political development of the region.
- The study revealed that good governance would provide lasting solutions to the myriads of challenges facing security conditions in Northwestern Nigeria by practicing good governance principles such as equity and fairness, citizen's participation, transparency and accountability, responsiveness, competency and capability, efficiency and effectiveness, and prudent financial management, etc. This will create a conducive atmosphere for improving the security situation in the region.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The role of good governance in addressing security challenges in northwestern Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. This is due to the effort of the government in taking a number of steps to address the security challenges that have been plaguing the peaceful coexistence of the region over the years. This includes policy intervention and other indigenous measures that have been made possible through the practice of good governance. Thus, it is evident to note that the Nigerian government achieved a milestone in its fight against insecurity in the northwest.

Based on the research findings, the study recommends the following:

- All the implemented security programmes such as military operations, civilian joint task forces, and other groups of youth that are involved in vigilante groups that fully participate in rehabilitating and rebuilding their communities should be reinforced to meet the demanding security challenges that have deteriorated the peaceful condition of the region. Furthermore, increasing the size and capacity of the military and nonmilitary security forces and improving their effectiveness is an urgent necessity.
- The government should consider corruption as the greatest enemy to national development. Thus, any reported corrupt practice should be seriously dealt with. Political office holders, as well as administrative and military officers, who are found guilty of corruption should immediately face the raft of the law. The government should make a concerted effort to develop and implement youth empowerment policies that will empower youth and free them from the shackles of poverty. Sound policies should be implemented to guide the direction of the government towards national development, and the judicial system should be allowed to operate independently so as to guarantee justice in its dealings.
- The government should consider application of good governance's principles in its dealings, particularly in policy formulation and implementation processes, as this will help to provide long-term solutions to the myriad of security challenges in the Northwest.

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