

## **INSECURITY AND ITS IMPLICATION ON NIGERIA FOREIGN POLICY BETWEEN 2017 AND 2022**

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### **Abstract**

*The paper investigates the impact of insecurity on Nigeria's foreign policy between 2017 and 2022. The objective of this study is to examine the impact of insecurity on Nigerian foreign policy between 2017 and 2022. The study adopts a qualitative approach and relied on data collected through secondary source. The research is anchored on the realism theory, which investigates the relationship between the state and its hold on security and proposes that foreign policy is a tool used by any countries for the advancement and protection of their national interests. The study revealed that Nigeria's level of insecurity between 2017 and 2022 ranked third in Sub-Saharan Africa and sixth globally. The study also revealed that security concerns had significant and multifaceted effects on Nigeria's foreign policy, having an impact on the country's diplomatic contacts, regional influence, economic prospects, and global position. The implication is that it will lead to lack of foreign investment, national economic downturn; and a negative image of the nation. This study recommends among other things, a paradigm shift from Nigeria's current national policy framework to that of the realist theory, which is proactive, pragmatic and committed to putting the security, economic progress and well-being of her citizens at its core. The study concludes that Nigeria's state of insecurity has negatively impacted her foreign policy implementation as well as her economic and political connections with other West African States because the majority of them rely on the Nigerian economy.*

**Keywords:** *Foreign Policy, Insecurity, International Relation, National Interest*

### **Introduction**

Nigeria's history underwent a turbulent time between 2017 and 2022 as the nation struggled with serious insecurity issues. These security concerns had significant and multifaceted effects on Nigeria's foreign policy, having an impact on the country's diplomatic contacts, regional influence, economic prospects, and global position. The

growth of banditry and inter communal violence in other regions, as well as the rise of insurgent groups like Boko Haram in the northeast, severely taxed Nigeria's institutional ability and resources. The administration struggled to devote enough time to its foreign policy goals as it focused significant resources on combating threats to internal security (Umaru, Pate & Haruna, 2015). Nigeria has the seventh highest population in the world, is the Giant of Africa in terms of military might and diplomatic ties and the world's fifteenth largest oil producer. This giant has been hampered by insecurity, corruption, poverty, and poor governance (Osaghae, 2015).

Nigeria experienced a busy year in 2022. One reason is that it served as a practice run for the 2023 general elections which in all intent and purpose was a huge undertaking. Additionally, there is escalating insecurity when political campaigns and related events take place. Events in 2022 were very horrific, terrorists ambushed and attacked passenger train traveling from Abuja to Kaduna on March 28, killing a few passengers and kidnapping dozens more. After nearly six months of negotiations and unverified rumors' of ransom payments, the last 23 passengers from the train who had been detained were set free. In a separate terrorist attack, a church in Owo, Ondo State, was attacked on June 5<sup>th</sup> and more than 30 people were killed. According to Cable News, at least 2,840 violent incidents occurred between January and July 2022, resulting in 3,823 kidnappings and 7,222 Nigerian deaths. (Cable News, 2022).

The Institute for Peace and Economics 2021 Global Peace Index put Nigeria 146th out of 163 countries, ranking only ahead of Iraq, Syria, Libya, Afghanistan, Israel, Gaza, Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, and Russia, which have historically been conflict zones. The security issues are escalating into total anarchy and chaos. In addition, the Global Conflict Tracker, hosted by the US Council on Foreign Relations have stated that bandit attacks in the North West region have had at least 5,000 fatalities since 2018 and almost 350,000 people have been killed in the country's North-Eastern region since 2009 as a result of the actions of the Islamist extremists known as Boko Haram. The Lake Chad Basin has approximately three million displaced persons as a result of terrorism (Global Peace Index, 2021).

Terrorism, armed banditry, kidnapping, attacks on state infrastructure, perennial herder-farmer clashes, gang violence, attacks on police stations, prisons, airports, and power transformers, inter-communal violence, ritual killings, "mob" justice, and casual intimidation of ordinary citizens by law enforcement agents are all common in Nigeria. There is an economic war in the South-South region as government strives to maintain the peace essential for optimal crude oil extraction for FOREX revenues. Approximately 80 percent of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings come from the oil and gas industry. The country is experiencing political uprisings in the South-West and secessionist uprisings in the South-East. Terrorism, banditry, and kidnapping have all taken on horrific dimensions and colors in Northern Nigeria today. (Global Peace Index, 2021).

The examination of Nigeria's foreign policy indicates that the country's leaders' function inside four "concentric circles" of national interest. The innermost circle, which

is focused on Nigeria's immediate neighbors—Benin, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger—represents the country's security, independence, and prosperity; the second circle is concerned with Nigeria's relationships with its neighbors in West Africa; the third circle is concerned with issues of peace, development, and democratization in continental Africa; and the fourth circle is concerned with Nigeria's relationships with institutions, organizations, and states outside of Africa (Adebayo 2008). Based on these, Nigerian Heads of State and Presidents have labored throughout the years to guarantee that no single component of the country's foreign policy is flawed (Philip & Olalekan, 2018).

In light of this, there is an immediate need to examine the direction of the nation's foreign policy and realign it to meet the interest of the nation, so that the strategic interests of the nation and its people take precedence. Consequently, the focus of this study is to investigate the impact of insecurity in Nigeria on Nigerian foreign policy from 2017 to 2022 and to ascertain the extent to which Nigeria is accorded its rightful place in the community of nations in spite of its protracted history of insecurity. The primary objective of the study is to investigate the impact of insecurity in Nigeria on Nigeria's foreign policy between 2017 and 2022, while the secondary objective is to examine the impact of insecurity on Nigeria's foreign policy.

## **CONCEPTUAL DISCOURSE**

### **The Meaning of Insecurity**

The idea of insecurity according to Ali (2013), as referenced in Abdullahi, (2022), is "a state of fear or anxiety caused by a concrete or alleged lack of protection". It refers to either insufficient or non-existent freedom from risk. This concept highlights the most visible type of insecurity which is physical insecurity, and it transforms into other forms of insecurity, such as economic and social security. Insecurity is associated with lack of safety, danger, hazard, apprehension, and lack of protection. According to Beland (2005), as referenced in Abdullahi, (2022), insecurity is a condition of worry or anxiety caused by a lack of protection. It can also be described as the condition of being vulnerable to risk or anxiety, where anxiety is a vague unpleasant emotion experienced in anticipation of an unfortunate incident. These definitions highlight an important point: persons affected by insecurity are not only unclear or uninformed of what will occur, but they are also exposed to threats and dangers when they do. Insecurity is also defined as a violation of peace and security (Abdullahi, 2022).

### **Incidences of Insecurity in Nigeria**

Since the beginning of president Goodluck Jonathan administration till the Muhammad Buhari administration, Nigeria has seen unprecedented levels of insecurity. Insecurity has become regionalized, with militia organizations in the south, terrorism and insurgency in the north, kidnapping and banditry in the east and south, secession struggles in the east and ritual killings in the east and west. Events in the Nigeria Federal

Capital Territory (FCT) between April and August 2022 confirmed the fears on the minds of many Nigerians that the Islamist insurgents and other armed groups has reached critical levels, said Anietie Ewang, a Human Rights Watch researcher in Nigeria. "Because the groups' ability to spread beyond their base, even to the nation's capital, authorities must greatly expand their efforts to protect people."(Human Rights Watch 2022). Nigeria has been at war with the Islamist insurgent group Boko Haram and its affiliates, most notably the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), for over a decade. These groups murder and abduct people in their attempt to topple the government and create an Islamic state. Strong criminal gangs with sophisticated weapons have proliferated in the Northwest as a result of years of conflict between farming communities of the Hausa ethnic group and nomadic herders, mostly of the Fulani ethnicity. These gangs terrorize communities, kill, plunder, and kidnap people, including schoolchildren, for ransom.

Armed men assaulted a minimum-security jail in Kuje and a federal district village around 40 kilometers from Abuja on July 5, 2022. The Islamic State West Africa Province claimed credit for the attack, which resulted in the escape of almost 900 prisoners, including over 60 suspected members of Boko Haram. Security analysts have also suggested that Ansaru, a Boko Haram splinter group supported by Al Qaeda, was involved in the attack, though it is unclear their level of involvement. Six members of the Presidential Guard Brigade, an elite army unit tasked with protecting the president and the federal region, were killed by unidentified assailants on July 25, 2022, in Bwari, a village in the federal region that is home to the Nigeria Law School's campus. (Human Right Watch,2022).

A video surfaced on social media on the 24<sup>th</sup> of July 2022, showing abducted victims of the March train attack, on the Abuja bound train going from Kaduna being thrashed by their captors. In the video, members of the armed group threatened to kill or sell the victims as hostages to others if the government did not meet their demands, which included the release of some ISWAP members and payment for ransom. They also threatened to kidnap President Muhammadu Buhari and other government officials. According to data obtained and analyzed by The Cable Index, the data and research department of The Cable news, 5,067 Nigerians were claimed to have been killed in 2021 due to insecurity. The Cable Index examined and analyzed daily media stories from 2021, as well as data from the Council on Foreign Relations. From January to December 2021, an average of 14 Nigerians were killed daily in different violent acts recorded in the news media, according to the Cable Index.

In the data used to compile this report, 1,024 violent attacks were reported across the country (The Cable News Index, 2021). During the data extraction process, The Cable Index eliminated security operatives' kills as well as the deaths of suspected criminals alike as Boko Haram fighters, bandits, and gunmen. Kano had the lowest reported casualties in the country, with five dead from three attacks. In the same spirit, the Institute for Economics and Peace's global peace index for 2021 put Nigeria 146<sup>th</sup> out of

163 countries with a score of 2.712, while the country was ranked 39th out of 44 Sub-Saharan African countries evaluated in the region. According to analysts, insecurity has a negative impact on economic growth by, among other things, drying up investments, raising unemployment, and reducing government revenue.

Each year, thousands of Nigerians are kidnapped by heavily armed men known as bandits, and dozens of children are kidnapped from schools in the North East for ransom. According to SBM intelligence, 2,371 (FY 2020: 2,860), Nigerians were kidnapped in the first six months of 2021, while 10,366, (2020: 7,063), Nigerians were killed. It is projected that between 2016 and 2021, approximately 5 billion was paid as ransom to kidnappers, showing that the country's abduction industry is booming. According to the 2022 Global Terrorism Index, Nigeria is the third most afflicted country in Sub-Saharan Africa and the sixth most impacted country in the world.

## **Theoretical Review**

This study is anchored on the realism theory of international relations. The realism theory of international relations, informally known as 'Realism,' evaluates the relationship between the state and its hold on security. In essence, realism makes multiple assumptions. It subscribes to the notion that "states are unitary, geographically-based actors in an anarchic international system with no authority above, capable of regulating interactions between states in the absence of a true authoritative world government" (Teryyima 2014:6), as referenced in Emejuru, and Yotamuno, (2020). The three fundamental elements of Realist thinking are survival, self-help, and statism. Statism is a state-centric theory of international relations because it assumes that nation states are the major actors in international politics. According to realism, foreign policy is an instrument used by any country to promote and protect its national interests, which must coexist with the protection of territorial integrity and sovereignty, the strong economic and social well-being of the populace, the creation of opportunities for productive trade relationships with other nations, and the use of "soft power" through the dissemination of cultural assets. (Ashaver, 2014).

## **Research Methodology**

This study used the library sources approach as a qualitative study and specifically attempted to identify pertinent literature, including recent media coverage on elections in Nigeria, utilizing secondary sources of information from a variety of books, journals, seminar papers, lectures, newspaper, and magazines, the methodology uses analytical reasoning. All of these turned out to be really useful as informational resources. This approach was chosen because it was thought to be the best way to get factual information concerning insecurity in Nigeria, its implication on Nigeria foreign policy. It is vital to note that the majority of this work is descriptive and analytical.

## **The Implication of Insecurity on Nigeria Foreign Policy**

Foreign policy, according to Alli (2014), is policy aimed at projecting a nation's vital interests, such as the preservation of sovereignty and security, as well as the advancement of economic and other objectives. It is therefore a nation's response to the world outside and beyond its boundaries, a response that is the outcome of environmental factors of both internal and external foreign relations. According to Ota and Ecoma (2015), It is a planned and articulated approach used by institutionally appointed decision makers to try and exert influence over the global environment in order to achieve a certain set of national goals. Foreign policy, according to Anyaele (2003), in Daniel, (2015), is essentially the global promotion of a country's interests.

A close assessment of Nigeria's foreign policy reveals flaws, uncertainties, and contradictions that jeopardise national security. Today, it is self-evident that Nigeria is mired in significant security and developmental challenges as a result of the perplexity of "Big Brother Foreign Policy". For the past five decades, Nigeria has adopted a paradoxical Big Brother foreign policy towards her neighbours, which has strengthened religious fanaticism, criminality—especially the smuggling and proliferation of small and light weapons—borderless irregular migration into the nation, leaving it vulnerable to the whims of terrorism, and a bankrupt economy. (Akporera & Omoyibo, 2013). According to Gambari, Nigeria's foreign policy structure could be described as a "Concentric Circle." The dialectics of concentricism is based on the first priority being Nigeria's national interest, the second priority being the West African Sub-region, and the third priority being the rest of Africa. (Gambari, in Ashaver, 2014). Therefore, the ultimate objective of foreign policy is "promotion and protection of national interests, promotion of African integration, and support for African unity: promotion of international peace and mutual respect in all manifestations, respect for international laws and treaties" (Ashaver, 2014).

Comparatively, "the demarcation among the layers has remained blurred" in Nigeria's foreign policies with actual execution, suggesting inconsistencies and paradoxes. As Adenji pointed out, in practice, all other factors, including Nigeria's enormous resources dedicated to the cause of Africa, were eclipsed by anti-colonial and anti-apartheid movements, and the stark distinction between the center of the concentric rings and the outer ones remained. (Adenji, 2005), cited in Ashaver (2014).

The recent spate of violence in the Nigerian polity and its attendant consequences, combined with the nation's lackluster security architecture and a lack of the enabling political will to 'tackle the sources of arms and collaborators, as well as confused policy on how to address this cankerworm of insecurity, is instilling fear in the citizenry and stalling development.' (Akporera & Omoyibo, 2013).

Nigeria's security concerns have significant political implications in Nigeria's relations with other West African states. Insecurity has tarnished the country's image. Former Commonwealth - Secretary General, Chief Emeka stated during a delegation of the Presidential Advisory Council on foreign policy to President Goodluck Jonathan that

unless Nigeria is able to address the prevalence of violence throughout the country, its image on the global stage will suffer. He claims that domestic insecurity is a drag on our foreign policy since our standing abroad is heavily influenced by internal realities. Millions of displaced people and hundreds of refugees in other West African countries have been displaced and moved. Influx of Nigerian refugees into neighboring states causes social problems such as joblessness, increased crime rates, and a lack of social infrastructure in the host state, and sometimes conflict is transferred to refugee camps in other states before it is reversed to the state of Chadians and Liberians entering Nigeria.

## **Conclusion**

This study showed that Nigeria's state of insecurity has negatively impacted her foreign policy implementation as well as her economic and political connections with other West African States because the majority of them rely on the Nigerian economy. It has also had an impact on the Nigerian economy because it hindered foreign investment, which has harmed her reputation among other countries throughout the world during the research time. Poverty, low literacy levels, and youth unemployment, particularly in the northern region where insecurity is prominent, should be addressed. Some of these are contributory factors to Nigeria's insecurity, which must be addressed, as all of these concerns negatively expose citizens' minds to violence.

## **Recommendations**

In light of the aforementioned study, the researchers recommend the following:

- i. Promotion and preservation of human security, is essential if Nigeria state is to enjoy stability and peace.
- ii. Government should fix social Infrastructure as roads, schools, health centers and vocational centers, as lack of youth empowerment contributes immensely to social insecurity.
- iii. Nigeria should adopt self-help or self-sufficiency as an achievable objective. This is a policy in which a state depends entirely on its own resources, both human and material, in the management of national security.
- iv. The study suggests a significant paradigm shift from Nigeria's current national foreign policy framework to that of Realist theory of international relations, which is proactive, pragmatic, and committed to putting the security, economic prosperity, and well-being of her citizens at the center.

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