

HOBBISSIAN STATE OF NATURE AND THE QUESTION OF INSECURITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Insecurity has unquestionably generated intolerable levels of fear, anxiety, hopelessness and powerlessness in Nigeria. The Hobbesian State of Nature is a conceptual description of the political life of man in a hypothetical pre-political society before the emergence of democracy characterized by a lack of government, laws and authority.. It was put forward by Thomas Hobbes, an English Philosopher (1588-1679). The Hobbesian State of Nature is “a time of war where every man is enemy to every man” and a “time wherein men live without other security than what their own strength and their own invention shall furnish them withal”. The question of insecurity in Nigeria can indeed be partly understood through the lens of the Hobbesian state of nature. Early political philosophers saw the provision of state security as essential for cementing the state-society relationship The paper is a philosophical look at the Nigerian state and the status quo and also examines some of the more specific and immediate causes of insecurity. Consequently, Insecurity in Nigeria has become so widespread and has taken so many lives on the daily basis. It then follows that something is wrong with our security affairs and also with the state called Nigeria which is contrary to the position of early political philosophers that the provision of state security is essential for cementing the state-society relationship. Finally, this work will help in re-emphasizing and fostering ways by which the problem of insecurity can be addressed even with the regrettably number of lives that have been lost.

Keywords: Nigeria, insecurity, state, society, Hobbes state of nature , leadership.

Introduction

Every conception of insecurity implicitly embraces a notion of what security is: that it means to be secure, how this security is guaranteed and what it is that people need to be secured against in the first place. The two concepts are so closely linked, both analytically and practically, that it makes little sense to discuss them in isolation from each other. Throughout the social sciences, the term ‘insecurity’ is used interchangeably with risk, anxiety, uncertainty and other synonyms. Without over emphasizing the significance of terminology, it is important to state at the outset why this work has concentrated on insecurity. Becks write that

although societies have become relatively insulated from the age-old ‘natural’ insecurities of famine, premature death and illness, human action has created the potential for even greater insecurity¹. Our best efforts at shaping our world to make ourselves more secure have paradoxically led to even greater insecurity.

The need for security was the basis of the social contract between the citizens and the state. With that being said, security should be a fundamental right and entitlement for every citizen in which people willingly surrendered their rights to the government who oversees the survival of all. From this perspective, security embodies the mechanism put in place to avoid, prevent, reduce, or resolve violent conflicts, and threats that originate from other states, non-state actors, or structural sociopolitical and economic conditions. Security is vital for national cohesion, peace and sustainable development. Insecurity to me is defined as a breach of peace and security; whether historical, religious, ethnic, regional, civil, social, economic, and political that contributes to recurring conflicts, and leads to wanton destruction of lives and property.

In Nigeria today, we are doomed to live in ‘insecure times’, Insecurity has seeped in to the fabric of our lives, and has become the template of our daily lived experience and the nightmare vision of our dreams and expectations. For the spread of insecurity is present for all to see and experience in their everyday lives. Bob Dylan once remarked that ‘you don’t need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows’, in order to lampoon those who failed to recognize the winds of change which were sweeping societies. Nor, one might be inclined to argue whether is a collection of academics is necessary to confirm that our lives today are growing increasingly insecure². The united states and a few other countries have had to issue a red-flag warning to its citizens on travelling to some parts of the country because of security issues ranging from kidnapping, armed banditry, killings, abductions and of course terrorist attacks and many others problems which constitutes the major form of insecurity we are facing today as Nigerians. The major security challenges in Nigeria is the Boko Haram terrorists which invaded the northeastern part of Nigeria via Lake Chad which have been rumoured to have allied with the famous Islamic state (ISIS) supplying them with logistics, arms and ammunition, manpower, training and mode of operation. This notorious sect which was known to majorly inhabit the North-eastern part of Nigeria (Sambisa forest), especially Maiduguri and Adamawa, has gone ahead to terrorize other parts of the North-Western States in Nigeria namely Katsina, Zamfara, Kano and Kaduna using the

major Forest linking Zamfara through Katsina and Kaduna known as Rugu Forest as their hideout. They portray themselves as Fulani herdsmen whereas it is only a disguise to perpetuate their evil goals such as kidnapping, cattle rustling, gang-raping and all sorts of evil vices. Lately, the major security concern has been that of travellers along the Abuja-Kaduna express road. There's been a lot of abductions on that road and the road has been termed to be highly risky for travellers hence the resolution to prefer the Railway mode of transportation or the Airways for those who can afford. But recently, the Kaduna Airport and the Kaduna bound train were attacked. These armed bandits kidnap innocent travellers and even kill some if their families fail to pay the ransom requested. They molest female and even male prisoners while they are in captivity and this has been a very alarming threat to the security in Nigeria.

Efforts to address insecurity in Nigeria involve not only addressing the underlying causes. This includes promoting good governance, fostering socio-economic development, and addressing issues of inequality and justice. Additionally, diplomatic efforts, regional cooperation, and international assistance can play a crucial role in tackling transnational security threats and strengthening Nigeria's security apparatus. It is worth mentioning that while the Hobbesian state of nature highlights the potential for insecurity in the absence of effective governance, it does not necessarily mean that insecurity is inevitable in all societies. Many countries have successfully established stable and secure environments through effective governance, the rule of law, and inclusive policies.

The Philosophical Importance of Security Provision

From a political philosophy standpoint, social contract theorists such as Hobbes and Locke argue that states exist, by and large, to provide security. These theorists, and empirical political scientists alike, argue that the state's provision of security provides the *raison d'être* of states, and therefore is critical to cementing the social contract between state and society. For empirical scholars who assess how citizens' performance evaluations affect their perceptions of the state, the key question raised here is generally how the state's ability to provide adequate protections for individuals shapes their attitudes toward the state³. Essentially, the emphasis is a state-centered one that focuses on whether and how well the state is able to provide this good. Yet, increasingly, citizens in both the developed and developing world extensively rely on non- state providers to meet their security needs. This raises a new and important question, one that focuses on the consequences of who provides. In a world where non-state actors from commercial firms to vigilante groups participate heavily in the provision of

security, the question of who provides is as essentially political as the question of the quality of state-provided services. The provision of security is seen as a key, defining characteristic of the state, and, importantly, one that shapes citizens' attitudes toward and support for the state⁴. This implies that attitudes toward the state will suffer when this good is not publicly provided⁵. Yet, it is an empirical question as to whether non-state security will dampen relations between society and the state as implied by extant political science literature.

Human Nature and security

Security matters. It is impossible to make sense of world politics without reference to it. Everyday, people somewhere in Nigeria are killed, starved, tortured, raped, impoverished, imprisoned, displaced, or denied education in the name of security. The concept litters the speeches of politicians and pundits; newspaper columns and radio waves are full of it; and images of security and insecurity flash across our television screens and the internet almost constantly. All this makes security a fascinating, often deadly.

Hobbes sees man as self-assertive and sees him even more as in search of security in a world of self-seeking men; and he puts a high value on prudence and consistency of purpose⁶. Organized society is a discipline which the prudent accept and the imprudent must be forced to submit to. Rousseau also sees man as the victim of society, as a creature who has lost his integrity. Society derives from his needs, develops his faculties, and yet is oppressive to him⁷. As a rational and moral being, man is at once the creature and the victim of society, and can be cured of the ills it produces in him only in a reformed society. Bentham sees man as a subject of desires who, unlike other animals, can compare and foresee; he sees him as a competitor and collaborator with other men in the procuring of what satisfies his desires⁸. Man, as Machiavelli sees him, is self-assertive. He lives, not to seek God's favour or to serve some larger than human purpose, but to satisfy himself; he seeks security and something more, he seeks to make himself felt⁹. He seeks reputation, to make his mark, to create some image of himself which is impressive to others. The stronger he is, the more he is willing to risk security for reputation. Man is both self-preserving and self-assertive.

Causes of Insecurity in Nigeria

Unemployment and poverty are part of those things that are responsible for insecurity in Nigeria. The true test of an employment work policy that leads to egalitarian security is whether or not it is able to successfully fulfil a number of

interrelated tasks. Employment policy needs to restore full employment and thus substantially reduce poverty, inequality and insecurity for those without work. It should contribute to overall economic growth and productivity without damaging the environment, and at the same time provide the foundation for a sustainable economy that encourages the development of social wealth and productivity. It should lessen the persistent job insecurity of workers, and ensure the satisfaction and more humane treatment of those in employment, including fair levels of pay. According to Victor Aino, the only solution for the insecurity challenge in Nigeria is for “the Nigerian government to govern in a way that fosters development”⁹. Development in this context consists of creating an economy with relevant social, economic and physical infrastructure for business operations and industrial growth, to provide gainful employment, functional and useful education, and quality health care for the people. Furthermore, there is a need for government to ensure that rising poverty indices are reversed to ensure that the Nigerians meet their basic needs. A basic income would provide economic security to the most disadvantaged in society, and attenuate the various poverty traps that plague so many social benefit systems.

The jobless youth, referred to as Al-Majeris in northern Nigeria, have no meaningful job, so they are readily manipulated with a minimal amount of money and also adopted the frustration-aggression theory in discussing the Boko Haram terrorist and militant aggression¹⁰. According to Andrew Abah, his study defined frustration as a condition that prevents a group or an individual from getting the pleasure they had envisaged to enjoy. Ayegba listed poverty and unemployment as critical factors preventing youth from getting a quality technical education, leading to insecurity in Nigeria¹¹, while Arowosegbe posited that lack of entrepreneurship and access to technical education among the youths contributed to the Boko Haram terrorism. Also, Boko Haram’s inability to get the theocratic Islamic nation is regarded as frustrating, and their response to it was to take up arms against the government and kill innocent civilians¹²

Corruption and unethical practice is another factor responsible for insecurity in Nigeria. Corruption is like cancer that has eaten deep into our system and it can be known to be a ripple effect because it affects every area of the economy with security topping the list. We heard about the major scam by the former minister defence who connived with some other officials to embezzle the money supposed to be for procurement of arms and ammunition for the security agencies in the fight against insurgency in the Northeast. Corruption has already become a part of life in the country. Research have it that Transparency International placed

Nigeria on 146th position out of 198 countries in the Corruption Perceptions Corruption can only be curbed only when we have selfless leaders who will go the extra mile to effect change in different tiers of government.

To Arendt, evil exists and becomes banal in modern societies and this is because evil is a social product, socially constituted, and since all of modern life is subject to this banalization, so is the idea of what constitutes 'evil.' Torture, genocide, mass murder, are often the results of people 'just doing their jobs' signing the right forms, and ensuring that people remain in their rationally determined categories¹³. This also means that, like all human relationships in Nigeria, they become both commodified and institutionalized. Resistance to domination is very difficult outside of the iron cage of bureaucracy and/or capitalist modes of production. Evil is made banal just as all aspects of modern life are made banal. The best it can hope to offer is a *post facto* legal challenge to evil but only if it has been codified and placed into a liberal-constitutional legal system. For example, Terrorist crimes tribunals and tribunals dealing with genocide and crimes against humanity are increasingly more effective as a measure to prosecute individuals. But they remain after the fact prosecutions. Their victims are already dead. We have seen this most recently with the terrorist attacks in Kaduna and other Northern states

Another factor responsible for insecurity in Nigeria is imbalance in the nation's resources. Olalekan Afolabi is of the view that systemic and calculated social marginalization and external influence are the major precursors to the development of terrorism in the embattled Niger-Delta region of the country¹⁴. The Federal Government should deal with this problem appropriately by using a significant way and that is to balance the development of all regions of the country. Other aspects of political violence facing Nigeria has been the agitation by Minority groups for creation of more States and resource derivation. Each region of the country wanted more control of the resources acquired from its domain. Bearing this in mind, the Niger-delta region once again comes to mind, following the discovery, exploration and sale of crude oil as a source of national revenue. The Niger-delta people challenged the hegemony of the three larger ethnic groups, arguing that the federal system robs them of access to the mineral and oil wealth in their own lands. As a result, the increase of regional powers led to secessionist movements by minority groups who felt they would be excluded from the benefits of membership. The four political regions of the country each asserted a greater claim to the oil revenues nullifying all concessions and granting itself rights to exploration. As part of this decree the Nigerian government has rights to all petroleum "in, under, or upon any lands of the country; all petroleum under the

territorial waters of Nigeria; all land forming part of the continental shelf of the country”¹⁵. Uwaifo Samuel asserted that the politics of imbalance in the nation’s political, social, economic, political and co-operate governance in the management, sharing, and allocation of the nation’s common wealth, constitute to a very large extent rampant state of insecurity, rancor, fear, suspicion and feelings of agitation, exclusion and isolation within and among the various ethnic nationalities in Nigerian state¹⁶.

Porous borders and high influx of arms is a serious problem in Nigeria. Here, smugglers use porous coastal borders of the country to sell arms. They provide pistols, shotguns, rifles, assault rifles, grenades, and explosives used against the people and military forces. The country’s borders are not well-guarded. Insurgents from other countries can easily penetrate the country. In the North East, the situation is particularly perilous. Terrorism in the country is primarily caused by porous coastal borders.

Narcotic trafficking is also one of the causes of insecurity in Nigeria. Nigerian gangs are one of the largest distributors of opium in the world. The Director-General of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, NDLEA, Buba Marwa drew a link between the use of hard drugs and insurgency. He, therefore, called on the National Assembly to halt the move on the legalization of cannabis. “Insecurity is clearly one of the key challenges, if not the most important challenge at the moment facing us as a nation today. It needs all institutions and all Nigerians to stand up to the occasion and not to leave everything to the security agencies alone¹⁷. He has attributed drug abuse to the major cause of insecurity in Nigeria. He described it as a national tragedy and has become the nation’s number one problem. He explained that bandits, kidnappers and several many other persons were usually on drugs, noting it has become a problem every Nigerian must all join hands together to tackle.”

Insecurity in Nigeria

An enduring role for the state in ensuring security is to shield citizens from ‘unpredictable risks’: occasions when individuals face immediate crises that are beyond their own control. If the state system of risk protection collapses or is inadequate, or if redistributive policies have little impact on inequality, individuals will suffer from continual anxiety, low self-esteem and a lack of control over their lives, all of which are destructive of a cohesive community and individual autonomy¹⁸.

Early political philosophers saw the provision of state security as essential for cementing the state-society relationship. The idea that security is a chief public good to be provided by the state is borne out of people's everyday expectations of public service provision. Bratton and Chang interrogate the aspects of stateness that matter most for democratization. They find that state capacity, and in particular law enforcement capacity, is a critical determinant of the quality and supply of democracy at the macro level¹⁹. From their individual level analysis, however, Bratton and Chang conclude that "if the state can attain political stability, regulate conflict within its borders and protect the citizenry from criminals, then people will conclude that democracy is being supplied²⁰. They also note that contrary to conventional wisdom, societies do not refer to the delivery of official welfare services in forming positive opinions about the desirability of democracy"²¹. This demonstrates the importance of security provision from the vantage point of ordinary citizens. The provision of security is seen as a key, defining characteristic of the state, and, importantly, one that shapes citizens' attitudes and support toward the state. This implies that attitudes toward the state will suffer when this good is not publicly provided. The state consistently articulates itself as a domain of security that is manifested in a variety of ways and includes all features of the political. Security is the benchmark on which all aspects of society are based and judged. In the articulation of the security state precise practices of statecraft emerge that serve to legitimize the state and its actions in the face of terror. National security discourse ratifies perceived realities that the state maintains as necessary to its survival realities that include economic, political, and health issues. In the ratification of these realities, the state sets forth a culture of security in which the citizenry is embedded. To Campos, "the culture of security in which the citizenry is embedded makes the citizenry controllable and susceptible to the ideas of security put forth by the state".²²

'State failure' assumes all states are constituted and function in the same way: on a spectrum from good to bad. Yet the relevant question is not 'Is the state failing?' but 'For whom is the state failing, and how?' This captures the fact that different actors within the state have different interests; what is good for some informalised power structures that enable elite consolidation of power and profit may not be good for ordinary citizens; and that in fact, the goal of the regime may be to sustain structures and power relations that are generally considered the consequences of state failure. The concept of state failure is only useful in the context of human security, as it enables a fuller

description of the realities and coping strategies in the state, taking into account agency, interests and incentives on the part of various local, national and regional actors²³. The question now is: Nigeria a failed state? Or the state is failing?

The conventional wisdom suggests that when political goods such as security are not adequately provided by the state, citizens' of the state may suffer. Rotberg suggests that the lack of widespread security and a rule of law can lead to state weakness and eventually failure. But when the state fails to provide a good to citizens' satisfaction, they may turn to non-state sources, be it the market or society, for the provision of this good²⁴. Finally, in the voting model, contact victimization is again positive and statistically significant. Therefore, those who report being victims of violent crime are more likely to vote on election day. Voter turnout is also influenced by feelings of personal insecurity in the model. The more unsafe people feel in their neighborhoods, the less likely they are to go to the polls to cast a ballot²⁵. Personal insecurity undermines state legitimacy in Nigeria and also suppresses voting. Unless the state is able to create a broad sense of safety and security in society, attitudes toward the state will suffer, and voter turnout will be undercut. The more unsafe people feel in their neighborhoods, the less likely they are to go to the polls to cast a ballot everyday security experiences affect their political behavior.

Hobbes State of Nature and the Nigeria situation

In one of the most famous quotations from the history of political philosophy, Thomas Hobbes described the life of human beings in the state of nature as 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short'²⁶. In this natural condition human beings lived alone in a state of equality, constant fear of death, war, and general insecurity. It was a state in which there was no dominion, no law, and no property. It is not out of place to conclude that it was a state that was incompatible with the ultimate aim of man to avoid death, and then would wish to leave it. In both the *Elements of Law Natural and Politic, and De Cive*, Hobbes did not claim that his state of nature had existed at a specific point in history, only that there were both past and present people who had lived, and were now living, in that condition.²⁷ In *Leviathan* Hobbes admitted that the state of nature was never generally so, although again there were some people who were living in that awful state now.²⁸

Looking at the Nigerian state one would see that it harbours a variety of elements present in the Hobbesian state of nature where there is perpetual fear and strife, no laws, no authority, no sense of justice or injustice and no sense of right or wrong. Similar to the Hobbesian state of nature, the Nigeria state is one where self-

interest and the spirit of corruption is the dominant rule - an evident fact in the everyday living of Nigerians among political and public office holders and even the commoner on the street. Lawlessness, fraud, armed robbery, hired assassinations, political, religious and ethnic violence, kidnaps, general insecurity of lives and properties causing perpetual fear and strife and other stated issues in the Hobbesian state of nature are replicated in the Nigerian state. They hold both individual and society to ransom owing to their devastating effects and make progress and development a mirage. We are still in a state of nature.

Conclusion

Hobbesian state of nature provides a conceptual framework to understand the question of insecurity in Nigeria. The complex security challenges require a comprehensive approach focused on improving governance, addressing socio-economic disparities, and fostering dialogue to create a more secure and stable society. While scholars have often asserted that the provision of security is of paramount importance for citizens, the paper shows that the insecurity challenge in Nigeria has assumed a formidable dimension that not only requires a multi-stakeholder approach, as it is being touted in various quarters, in quelling this hostilities threatening Nigeria's statehood, but also necessitates a revival and underpinning of moral values and virtues. The thirst for blood and the preference for violence in expressing pent-up frustration and disenchantment with the state, its citizens and national emblem may be a pointer to the need to revive moral values and virtues within the socio-economic, political, religious and educational institutions in the country.

Nigeria has become much more Hobbesian. Unless there is national stability in all the regions in Nigeria, life of the citizens are threatened. In meeting this danger, reducing poverty and developing the unstable regions of our nation are now imperative. In what has become a truism of Nigeria, security without development is questionable, while development without security is impossible. Lack of political direction, socio-ethnic unity and economic stagnation are the driving factors that are fueling the tendencies for insecurity within the country. Understanding the highly despicable state of Nigerian political scene ridden with anarchy, corruption, nepotism, thuggery and favoritism, its hostile economic condition and crippling ethnicity-related issues, one can draw up a useful relationship between the poverty in the land and acts of insecurity in all its ranging forms.

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