ATTAINMENT OF PEACE AND SECURITY IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA: ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Nigeria, in recent time, has remained crossly unstable because of a series of worrisome security challenges that are threatening her socio - political lives. The most recent of these challenges are: kidnapping, protest, terrorism, and insurgency, the effects of which are disorder, displacement, and even death. Hence, this paper examines the words peace, security, and traces the evolution of current challenges in the country to insecurity, and as well puts on record factors responsible for insecurity in Nigeria. It then discusses ways of attaining peace and security from Islamic perspectives, citing relevant quotations. This paper does towards attainment of security and peace of mind in the country. In doing this, the paper employs exploratory and theological research methods. Findings reveal that youth unemployment, poverty, and inequality are some of the causes of insecurity in the country. The paper identifies Islamic political principles such as: adl (justice), honesty, and shura (consultation), among others, as practical solutions to these cankerworms. It then recommends the need for government to address the issue of social injustice and inequality prevalent in the country and as well provide basic amenities for the citizens so as to attain security, peace, and peaceful coexistence in the country.

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1   Introduction

Security is the basic necessity of life without which attainment of peace and societal decorum is inevitable in human life (William, 2008). In modern day Nigeria, peace and security of lives have been badly hindered by the recurring security issues resulting in disorder, harm, displacement, and even death. This means that insecurity and absence of peace are major challenges confronting Nigeria as a nation (Zubairu, 2020). The situation above has badly affected the economic development as well as social and political growth of the country. The constant news on the dailies, of kidnappings, suicide bombing, agitation for secession, and ritual killings, among others, in the country shows that the security situation of the country is under threat (Zubairu, 2020).

There are various findings on mechanisms of tackling insecurity in Nigeria, most of which have been limited to socio-political and economic approaches. Even a few of them that approached the cankerworm from religious perspectives have little or no mentioning of an Islamic approach to it. This is the gap the paper intends to fill. The paper seeks to explain the concept of peace and security, discusses the interrelation between Islam, peace, and security. It also discusses the causes and effects of insecurity in Nigeria and the Islamic approach towards attainment of peace and security in the country. Specifically, the study intends to investigate the following set of questions: Are there security of lives and properties in Nigerians? What is the level of insecurity in the country? Is Islam a religion of peace and security? What are the Islamic approaches towards reducing the rate of insecurity in Nigeria?

2   Conceptual Clarification: This segment examines some concepts that are related to this work with explanation of scholars view on each of them.

2.1   Peace, Security and Insecurity

The word peace is etymologically derived from the Latin word *'Pax'* which means freedom from civil disorder or upset. This translated to mean lack or

absence of war. It can also mean the presence of justice, law order, and good governance (Mustafa et al., 2023). Peace can also be explained to mean the avoidance of violence and conflict. It must be noted that the presence of peace in any nation symbolises unity and the absence of feelings of suspicion and mistrust towards each other (Adeola and Oluyemi, 2012). Meanwhile, security means safety or freedom from danger and protection from external attack (Hornby, 2000). Hornby claims further that security, a feeling of safety, is not just a condition of being protected from or not being exposed to danger but also freedom from fear, anxiety, or apprehension. In the context of this work, the concept of security encompasses economic, political, and social stability.

Therefore, there is insecurity when lives and properties of the citizens are not safe, or when citizens live in perpetual fear and apprehension (Baldwin, 1997). Meanwhile, peace and security are indispensable tools for social and economic development. In essence, attainment of peace and security in Nigeria is essential for sustainable development in the country (William, 2008). Insecurity and violence weaken economic development and threaten human rights, democratic values, and fundamental freedom. It must be stated that the trend of insecurity across the length and breadth of Nigeria has assumed a disturbing dimension (Zubairu, 2020). There is therefore the need for researchers to put their heads together and identify ways of finding solutions to some of these challenges. This, the current work intends to do from an Islamic point of view.

3   Insecurity in Nigeria

Ajayi (2022) traced the evolution of insecurity in Nigeria to the year 1914, when the country was amalgamated by the colonial imperialists. He posits further that it was a union of inconvenience and discomfort because distinctly separate nations, communities, territories, and groups were merged together without making any conscious policies or creating any tangible structures capable of promoting unity in diversity. The colonialists concentrated mainly on areas of differences to exploit them politically and economically. The outcome of this is the absence of good governance and increase in poverty, which aggravates insecurity that has continued as part of

the country till date (Adeola and Oluyemi, 2012).

The Nigerian post-independence era witnessed a high level of civil insecurity caused by the actions of the three major ethnic groups in the country as a result of fear of dominance. This seriously disturbed the progress and hindered development in Nigeria's post-colonial days (Adegoke, 2014). The paranoid mistrust and general insecurity in this era and the inability of the political leaders to handle it led to 1966 coups and countercoups, which led to a 30-month Nigerian civil war in 1967. The end product of civil war was the loss of several lives and properties. Regrettably, about 30 years's military rules that presided the civil wars contributed greatly to the high level of insecurity in the country (Ajayi, 2022).

Further, religiously motivated riots and student-led crises in opposition to government economic policies that characterised eighties, coupled with the second coup attempt against General Babangida in April 1990, worsen the situation. Meanwhile, the coming in of the new democratic dispensation in 1999 increased the hopes and expectations of the citizen (Ajayi, 2022). Unfortunately, the country since then has remained politically and economically unstable, and it has been threatened with a lot of insecurities created by the government and some bad species in the country (Okarah, 2014). The regime of President Jonathan was also affected by a series of attacks from Boko Haram in the north and the activities of militants in the south.

Worst-still, the rate of insecurity in this modern-day Nigeria commencing from the first regime of President Muhammadu Buhari till the end of his regime was worrisome. The insecurity continued immediately after President Tinubu announced the total removal of subsidies from petrol. Subsidy removal has brought another dimension to the state of insecurities in the country. As a result of subsidy removal, insecurity is apparent in different forms, such as: economic hardship, protest of all forms, high cost of transportation, food inflation, wide spread violence, politically inspired ethno-religious conflict, and the greatest of which is the high rate of kidnapping, banditry, ritual killings, and disturbance of the lives of innocent Nigerians by some bad elements in the country. The rate of arson and physical destruction recorded so far has led to a crumbling infrastructure and the near collapse of institutions of governance in the country (Zubairu, 2020).

In Nigeria at present, nowhere seems to be completely safe from attack; places of worship, police stations, train terminus, air ports, highways, and educational institutions. As a result of all these, the deaths of thousands of people and the destruction of properties worth billions of naira were recorded (Zubairu, 2020). The efforts of the Nigerian security agencies in addressing these have not recorded an expected result**.**

4   Islam, Peace and Security

The word Islam is an Arabic term that can be literarily translated to mean peace. This makes the word peace core to both Islam and Muslims. The word peace is the word spoken by Allah (God) as contained in the Qur'an, which reads thus:

Peace - a word (of salutation) from a Lord Most Merciful (Q. 36 ayah 5).

In line with the above ayah, Islam encourages Muslims to make peace with other people irrespective of their tribe, religious affiliation, and any other forms of differences. Islam posits further that peacemaking is a teaching and tradition that has the potential to transcend divisions. In Islam, peacebuilding makes explicit the connection between 'inner' and 'outer' peace. To this Qur'an says:

It may be that Allah will grant love between you and those whom you hold as enemies (Q.60 ayah 7).

With reference to the above Quranic ayah, peace has the capacity to restore relationships, establish justice, and equitable social systems that can benefit society as a whole.

5   Causes of Insecurity in Nigeria

Scholars from various disciplines have discussed in detail the causes of insecurity in Nigeria. In the context of this work, the underlisted are some of the factors responsible for wide spread insecurity in the country.

Religious intolerance: Nigeria, though a multi-religious state, has three major religions, of which Islam and Christianity are more prominent. Some politicians, in Nigeria, use religion to achieve political solidarity by way of polarizing people to disturb the peace and stability of the country. All these have contributed in no small measure to the rate of insecurity in the country. Moreover, the inability of the adherents of these two religious groups to tolerate each other also contributed in no small measure to the high rate of

insecurities in the country. A typical Nigerian is more loyal to his religious group than Nigeria as a country. The adherents of both religions are claiming to be marginalised as a result of which the words: Islamisation and Christianisation became common in the country.

High level of unemployment: Unemployment is defined as a situation whereby those who are willing and able to work are available and actively seeking employment but cannot find one (NBS, 2021). In the context of this work, unemployment is a situation where a person who is seriously searching for work is not able to find one. Unemployment, in this context, leads to annoyance, dejection, harassment, and dependency on friends and relatives. In Nigeria, this has contributed greatly to a series of uprisings and insecurities that have confronted the country in recent times. Joblessness, they say, is tantamount to idleness, and idleness leads to vices like stealing, arm robbery, and criminality of all forms.

Weak Government Institutions: When there are weak political and legal institutions in any society, insecurity is allowed to thrive in such a society. Most Nigerian leaders lacked strong ideas for improving the welfare of its population. What this has resulted in is care-free attitude toward people's needs. Moreso, people's attitude towards corrupt citizens is a factor. In this case, there are individuals who have been convicted of corruption and are being awarded public titles and awards. Insecurity is manifested in the country because of a lack of fairness and provision of security by the leaders.

Love of money and wealth: There will be insecurity in any society where the desire for accumulation of money and wealth becomes widely spread. The desires for accumulation of money and wealth have become so common in Nigeria that the youths are seriously involving in ritual money. Some youths went to the extent of using their parents and relatives for rituals just because of money. Also, political positions are often associated with power and wealth due to the enormous amounts of funds allocated to political office holders. Therefore, greedy individuals perceive the attainment of a political position as a means of making more wealth. To this, they were doing all things possible to have access to the political power, even if it would involve the killings of others.

High cost of living: The high cost of living, otherwise known as inflation, has contributed greatly to the insecurity in the country. The price of goods and

services is increasing day in and day out while the salaries of workers remain the same. This has contributed greatly to the high level of insecurity in the country. It must be added that the high cost of living has further resulted in economic hardship and declining living condition.

6   Effect of Insecurity in Nigeria

The negative impacts of insecurity are that the progress of development in the country has not been commensurate with the abundant natural and mineral resources available in the country. Meanwhile, the most affected part of the country is the North. Hence, the regular attack by the terrorist has left most of the states in this part of the country with insufficient personnel to drive their economies. Commercial activities have considerably slowed down. Also, there is an inflow of people from the north to the south, which has led to a drastic fall in economic activities. Moreover, the government, in its effort to curb insecurity, has spent a huge amount of money. Destruction of lives and properties in the name of insecurity has indeed rubbed Nigerians of the benefits of economic development because scarce available resources of the country that should have been used to execute developmental projects were squandered and vandalised every now and then, all in the name of insecurity.

7   Islamic approaches towards attainment of security in Nigeria

There has never been a problem confronting human beings that has no solution in Islam. The inability of human beings to address their problems by Islamic injunction has been the reason why the problems of insecurity persist in the country. A few of these remedies to insecurities from an Islamic point of view are discussed below:

Justice: (*'adl* in Arabic language) is an act of placing the right things in their rightful places and also giving equal treatment to others. Justice is highly emphasised in Islam as one of the ways of preventing insecurity. Justice in Islam is a moral virtue and an attribute of human personality. It is an act of giving to an individual what is due to him. It is synonymous with equality in the sense that it establishes an equilibrium state in the distribution of duties and rights. Injustice, no doubt, is a threat to justice, peace, and security of life and property. Injustice breaks sense of mutual tolerance and social solidarity and promotes hatred, violence, and insecurity.

In most of the countries in the world where Sharī'ah is used as state law; there is relatively peace and security of life and property. Examples of these countries are Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirate. This is because Islamic law is based on justice and vehemently discourages injustice and indiscrimination in any form. It also compelled those in the position of authority to deal justly with all those under them. This means that, for attainment of security, injustice must be discouraged by all means.

In the context of this work, injustice has been identified as one of the causes of insecurity in Nigeria. Hence, to avoid insecurity, Islam condemns all forms of injustice, unfair dealings, and discrimination and considers justice to be a supreme virtue and a fundamental objective. It considered injustice next in order of priority to belief in Allah and thus declared further that standing firm for justice is to be a witness to Allah, even if it is against one's wishes. To this Allah says:

O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even though it be against yourselves, your parents, or your kin, be it rich or poor… (Q.4:135)

In order to avoid insecurity Islam has two simple propositions, which are: giving everyone his rightful due and placing things in their rightful position. There should not be discrimination for any reason, either for abilities, ambitions, status, or qualifications. Qur'ān says further:

Allah commands justice and fair dealing, and liberality to kith and kin, and He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion, he instructs you that you may receive admonition. (Q.16:90).

To clear the country of insecurity, there should be fairness, justice, and respect for every concerned citizen. Also, government and policymakers must deal justly and fairly with the citizens in terms of recognition, provision of necessary aid, funding, and other public necessities. Allah commands that:

And be equitable. Verily! Allāh loves those who are equitable (Q.49:9).

Shura (**Consultation**): *Shura* is an Arabic word that means consultation, deliberation, taken cancellation, or advice (Cowan, 1958). It implies the act of good governance in Islam and serves as a watchword for an Islamic government. *Shura* denounces all forms of oppressive ruling by the leader and encourages the establishment of justice for all citizens of the state. Implementation of this concept in Nigerian society has the tendency to

bring constant contact between the ruler and the ruled and thereby reduce the rate of insecurity in the country. We can reduce insecurity by increasing direct contact between the ruler and the ruled. In line with this Qur'an, it says: *It is part of the mercy of Allah that you deal gently with them. If you were severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from you. So pass over their faults and ask for Allah's forgiveness (Q.3:159).*
This concept, when put into practice in Nigeria, has the tendency to control insecurity.

Honesty: This is the quality of being transparent and accountable. There is insecurity in Nigeria because of a lack of transparency and accountability among the leaders and the citizens. If Nigerians are honest with each other, insecurity will go, and crime will automatically decrease. If Nigerians are honest, insecurity will become a thing of the past, and the country will have a new Nigeria. Leaders should be honest by rendering whatever the rights and privileges the citizens deserve as long as they are citizens of the country. This means that there should not be any form of discrimination, what so ever, either on the basis of gender, colour, or being a minority.

Welfare: One of the ways to curb insecurity in Nigeria is for the government to see to the wellbeing of the citizen. Welfarism has the tendency to lower the unemployment rate and eradicate insecurity. In fact, a good number of those who are involved in criminal activities in Nigeria today are doing so because they cannot meet their basic necessities of life. They are involved in criminal acts just because they could not make ends meet. They therefore end up becoming a security threat to the country. In line with the Islamic concept of welfare, leaders should provide basic social amenities to the citizen. The regime of Umar Abdul Aziz during the Ummayad dynasty is a very good example of this. He was known to have the welfare of the led in mind to the extent that he will be moving around the state in the midnight to see to the condition of the people. It is on record that everybody during his time was satisfied that there was no one to receive *zakāt* (alms given) under his administration, everybody was satisfied (Rahim, 2008). We have examples of that in some Muslim countries today, where proceeds from *zakāt* in their country are being sent to the needy in other countries of the world. It is instructive, therefore, for any nation that wishes to stem the tide of insecurity to know that peace and security will remain elusive as long as the welfare of

the citizens is not taken with all seriousness.

God-consciousness (Taqwallah): God-consciousness breeds the fear of God and righteousness. A God-fearing individual will do away with anything that can disturb the peace and security of his fellow human being and the country at large. In attaining this, parents have lots to do by giving their children a good upbringing. If children are trained in the way of the Lord, the rate of insecurity in the country will reduce. Politicians should fear Allah and should see to the wellbeing of the entire masses. Accumulation of wealth through corrupt practices should stop at all levels of government.

Selection of God-Fearing leaders: Leadership is the bedrock of a good society. Nigerians should endeavour to select leaders with the fear of God. This is because the future of a nation depends on the type of leaders it has (Q22 ayah 41). Nigerian leaders need to fear God and lead with the fear of God. They must not allow corrupt practices to have their way into the nation's polity. Politics should be practiced in accordance with the divine principles, which cater for the needs of the ruled, not the survival of the fittest, as is currently being practiced in Nigeria.

8   Conclusion

Nigeria's leaders have their own impute to the wave of insecurity in the country. This is evidence in their failure to provide basic needs for the masses and, at the same time, deals firmly and squarely with the culprits and hoodlums based on the law of the land. All commissions of enquiries that were set-up by successive governments to deal with those who encourage insecurity were jeopardised for political and ethnic chauvinistic considerations. Nigerian security has been a victim of politicisation. One major responsibility of any government is to ensure internal security and protect its citizens from external attack. Also, the provision of basic amenities to all and sundry in a state has the tendency of reducing insecurity among the citizens. The citizen at the same time will feel secured and be rest assured that the state has the capacity to defend them and protect their rights.

9   Recommendations

The following recommendations were made for improvements in the level of peace and insecurity in the country:

i) Human capital development should be the priority of the Nigerian government so as to engage the teeming youth with employment opportunities.

ii) Citizens should be allowed to practice their religion without hindrances, and there should be a forum for religious scholars to address the remote causes of religious riots. This will bring about religious harmony among various religious groups in the country.

iii) Government should ensure justice and equality for all citizens, devoid of group, tribe, or religion.

iv) Appointment and recruitment should be strictly based on merit, free from manipulation for tribal and religious affiliations.

v) Compulsory and easy access to free education should be encouraged, while technical schools need to be revived to encourage self-reliance among the youth.

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