

The Nigerian State and the Challenges of Curbing Insecurity: A Perspective on the Role of Students

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The impact of armed violence is transcendental and, by extension, negatively affects development, peace and good governance, often by creating a climate of impunity, corruption and undermining public institutions. It is also closely tied to transnational crime and the misery and abuse associated with the illegal trafficking of arms, drugs and people, which impairs national development. In recent years, Nigeria has undergone social upheaval on several counts; the most recurrent being the one arising from extremism and other insurgencies. Nigeria's national discourse is laced with issues of persistent conflict, turbulent violence and a desperate search for stability, security and peace. This paper assessed the current level of insecurity in Nigeria and posits that government alone cannot deal with the situation. The paper argued that Nigerian students form the majority of the country's population and there is extensive evidence of the way students' ingenuity, energy and resilience can be harnessed to generate real and positive change in curbing insecurity and fostering national development. The paper also concluded that engaging students in positive ways as part of the drive towards national development will make a large portion of Nigerians less vulnerable to violent extremism, and by extension, benefit society as a whole.

[Students; Insecurity; Violence; Security; Peace and National Development]

Introduction

The¹ insecurity challenge in Nigeria has assumed a frightening dimension that requires a multi-stakeholder approach, as it constitutes a threat to Nigeria's statehood. Central to achieving this is the revival

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and reinforcement of moral values and virtues. A myriad of elements interact to bring about insecurity in Nigeria. These include easy access to small arms, social and economic deprivation and marginalization, exposure to violence in the home, lack of quality educational opportunities and Nigeria's do-or-die style of politics. The foregoing contributes to bringing about a society laced with fear and insecurity. Researches on conflict and crime in Africa identify the "youth factor" as a crucial element in the perpetration of violence. The bulk of these youth are, however, students of various educational institutions. According to Cebulla, under the conditions of globalised uncertainty, young people may feel themselves pressured, and try to avoid long-term life projects because of contradictory forces of responsibility and autonomy while not knowing the consequences of their decisions.² Lately, Nigeria has been enmeshed in a firebox of insecurity leading to the deaths of innocent civilians, foreigners, members of the nation's security personnel, elected officials and many public servants. The insecurity challenge has assumed an alarming dimension, forcing the country's political and economic managers, and indeed, the entire nation, to rue the loss of their loved ones and investments in most parts of the country. The number of violent crimes such as kidnappings, ritual killings, car-hijackings, suicide bombings, religious killings, politically-motivated killing and violence, ethnic clashes, armed banditry and others have increasingly become the regular signature that characterize life in Nigeria since 2009. Violence in Nigeria has been on the increase in Nigeria since the gruesome and extrajudicial killing of the *Boko Haram* leader (Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf). The then president of Nigeria, late Umaru Yar'Adua did not order the investigation of the death of Yusuf in police custody; neither did the National Assembly members. In fact, his execution was celebrated in some quarters of the Nigerian media without questioning. Thereafter, the sect began full scale retaliation against government facilities and civilians.

The incessant attacks on various communities and individuals by this sect have resulted in death and loss of properties worth millions of naira. It is also important to note here that in Nigeria, the rapid growth

² A. CEBULLA, Risk through the Years – A Statistical Portrait of Young People's Risk Perceptions and Experiences Relative to those of Older Generations, in: *Journal of Youth Studies*, 12, 1, 2009, pp. 39–56.

in students' population, combined with rapid and unguided civilization (globalisation) are seen by scholars to be correlated with insecurity. For instance, Snapps and Hamilton jointly argued in their studies of youth restiveness and contributions to insecurity in the Niger Delta that factors such as economic and political socio-cultural are the causes of youth restiveness.³ Elegbeleye posits that the jingoistic pursuit of patriotic ideas, the peer motivated excitement of being a student and the perceived victimization arising from economic exploitations are the causes of incessant youth restiveness.⁴ The likelihood of being violent is believed to be particularly acute in contexts where large populations of young people, mostly students are coming of age in the face of unstable governance and development challenges. In such circumstances, students are more likely to band together in search of solutions, and in some cases, they resort to violent acts. In some cases, these often translate to students being susceptible to be recruited into armed rebel groups, either by personal choice or coercion.

At the global level, a Nigerian student, Umar Farouk Abdulmutalab, 25, was arrested for attempting to blow up a Northwest Airline plane from Amsterdam to Detroit, United States of America. This was a case of suicide mission orchestrated by the Al-Qaeda on Christmas Day, 2009. At the national level in Nigeria, there are reoccurring cases of students being used as suicide bombers by the Islamic extremist group, *Boko Haram* to attack schools, worship centres, market places and government facilities. Not only has the continued state of insecurity threatened the very fabric of national integration in the country and created the ecology of fear, disquiet and anxiety, it has also meted a deadly blow to industrial development. The destruction of the much needed infrastructure has taken the country many years backwards. The government has continued to trudge on in the face of this daring challenge and has continued to evolve strategies to contain or douse this conflagration. Meanwhile, academic writers, social researchers, scholars, security experts and consultants have also not rested in making good recommendations and adaptable solutions to address this national blight.

³ O. J. SNAPPS – D. I. HAMILTON, Youth Restiveness and Industrial Disruption in the Niger-Delta, in: *American Review of Political Economy*, 2, 2011, pp. 18–32.

⁴ O. ELEGBELEYE, Recreational Facilities in Schools: A Panacea for Youth Restiveness, in: *Journal of Human Ecology*, 18, 2, 2005, pp. 93–98.

Since the problem affects all and sundry and for the nation to experience peace and stability, there is the need for students to be carried along in the fight against insecurity in Nigeria. Many students, in particular, youths are drawn into gang and predatory activities partly in response to a feeling of marginalization and social and economic exclusion. There is, therefore, the need to sensitize the masses, most especially, these students on their roles and duties in curbing insecurity in the society.

Conceptual Clarification

It is important to begin this paper by first establishing what is meant by the term student. A student, according to *Microsoft Encarta Dictionary*, is somebody who studies at a school, college, or university. A student can also be said to be a young person taught at school or by a private teacher; a young person who learns from a mentor or other person who is skilled, knowledgeable, or experienced. *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary* further defines a student as one who attends a school; one who studies or an attentive and systematic observer. Although age specification is considered useful for clarification purposes, the representation of students as an age category has been contested in a number of cases. As Delgado noted, the term student can refer to various ages depending on an individual's standpoint. Different countries, agencies and individuals associate student with various ages.⁵ Moreover, as Eccles and Gootman pointed out, the use of age categories for the determination of student is problematic because differences exist among adolescents within the same age group.⁶ Early adolescents, for instance those between ages 10 and 14, are different from older adolescents who fall between 15 and 18 years of age. Therefore, while studentship is related to age, it is not determined by numbers. On the one hand in Nigeria, majority of the students are youth, and sociologically, youth denotes a stage of life between childhood and adulthood. On the other hand, some adults could still be regarded as mature students in their quest for academic qualifications such as a graduate student or a doctorate student. Based

⁵ M. DELGADO, *New Frontiers for Youth Development in the Twenty-first Century*, New York 2002, pp. 32–34.

⁶ J. ECCLES – J. A. GOOTMAN (eds.), *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development*, Washington DC 2002, pp. 19–21.

on this view and specifically for the purpose of this paper, whatever a person's age is, he or she is usually deemed to remain a student probably until learning stops. Consistent with this requirement, a student may, therefore, be a person who is between childhood and 30 years of age.

Nowadays, fear is an ever-present feature of life in Nigeria. This fear is the outcome of a very obvious situation of insecurity of lives and properties. To ably define insecurity, it is pertinent to have a brief description of what security is. In the *Webster Dictionary*, security is defined as "the quality or state of being secure, freedom from danger, fear or anxiety and freedom from prospect of being laid off". In everyday life, most people simply view security as an act of protection of one's property and it is not uncommon, especially in Nigeria, to associate the term "security" to a gateman or security-man. However, in a broader sense there are various forms of security such as security of lives and properties, food security, job security, investment security, national security, emotional security and intellectual security- plagiarism, piracy, etc. In this wise, Omede sees security as a dynamic condition which involves the relative ability of a state to counter threats to its core values and interests.⁷ For Nwolise, security is an all-encompassing condition which suggests that a territory must be secured by a network of armed forces; that the sovereignty of the state must be guaranteed by a democratic and patriotic government, which in turn must be protected by the military, police and the people themselves; that the people must not only be secured from external attacks but also from devastating consequences of internal upheavals such as unemployment, hunger, starvation, diseases, ignorance, homelessness, environmental degradation and pollution cum socio-economic injustices.⁸

Conversely, insecurity is the antithesis of security and has attracted such common descriptors as want of safety, danger, hazard, uncertainty, want of confidence, state of doubt, inadequately guarded or protected, instability, trouble, lack of protection and being unsafe, and others. Achumba et al. argue further that these common descriptors point to a condition where there exists a vulnerability to harm, loss

⁷ A. J. OMEDE, Nigeria: Analysing the Security Challenges of the Goodluck Jonathan Administration, in: *Canadian Social Science Journal*, 7, 5, 2011, pp. 90-102.

⁸ O. B. C. NWOLISE, National Security and Sustainable Democracy, in: E. O. OJO (ed.), *Challenges of Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria*, Ibadan 2006, p. 30.

of life, property or livelihood.⁹ Therefore, they consider insecurity to be a state of not knowing, a lack of control, and the inability to take defensive action against forces that portend harm or danger to an individual or group, or that make them vulnerable. For Beland, insecurity is “the state of fear or anxiety stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection”.¹⁰ It refers to lack (of) or inadequate freedom from danger. This definition reflects physical insecurity which is the most visible form of insecurity, and it feeds into many other forms of insecurity such as economic insecurity and social security. In this paper, insecurity is conceived as a situation where human and national security of a state is compromised by internal or external forces or interests exacerbated by weak or poor economic, military and/or human resource development conditions.

Theoretical Framework

The youth population of any country is very integral part of the discourse on violence or conflict. Scholars, in recent times, have examined the roles of youth in conflict and near-conflict situations. One of the most seminal theories on the roles of youths in violent and conflict cases is the “youth bulge theory”. Traditionally, this theory provides one of the most popular explanations on the roles of youths in conflicts, especially in developing countries that are obviously characterized by poverty, unemployment, lack of basic amenities, and a lot of other challenges. This theory was propounded in the 1990s by a German economist and sociologist, Gunnar Heinsohn who argues that a large youth population is prelude to instability and civil unrest. He was of the opinion that a “youth bulge” occurs when a country hosts between 30 % and 40% of young males from ages 15 to 29 years.¹¹ Thus, tensions and unrest in the Islamic world and Africa are attributed to these populations’ age structures having a relatively

⁹ I.C. ACHUMBA – O.S. IGHOMEREHO – M.O.M. AKPOR-ROBARO, Security Challenges in Nigeria and the Implications for Business Activities and Sustainable Development, in: *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development*, 4, 2, 2013, pp. 79–99.

¹⁰ D. BELAND, The Political Construction of Collective Insecurity: From Moral Panic to Blame Avoidance and Organised Irresponsibility, in: *Center for European Studies Working Paper Series*, 2005, p. 126.

¹¹ M. DIOUF, Engaging Postcolonial Cultures: African Youth and Public Space, in: *African Studies Review*, 46, 1, 2003, pp. 1–12.

high percentage of young men. Conflicts are seen as inevitable in those countries and can best be regionally confined through military interventions. The “youth bulge theory” was further popularized by American political scientists Fuller and Pitts, and Jack Goldstone, who argue that developing countries whose populations are “youth heavy” are, therefore, especially vulnerable to civil conflict.¹²

Proponents of the “youth bulge theory” highlight that a burgeoning youth population poses threat to peace, especially if youths are economically and politically marginalized. This thinking also asserts that young people, especially those in the developing world with Nigeria inclusive, constitute a vulnerable group with diminished life prospects, facing challenges of limited access to resources, employment and education. Anthropologist Richard, studying youths in Sierra Leone and Liberia, asserts that youths are likely to engage in violence as a result of the alienation of young people by state institutions, non-state actors and the private sector.

The Nigerian case is definitely not an exception. As at 2014, 49.8 % of the country’s population belonged to the youth category. This is a “youth bulge” population, which is characterized by unemployment and high level of illiteracy. The unfortunate issue is not the geometric increase in the youth population, but the fact that as the youth population grows, so does the unemployment rate. In fact, unemployed youth in Nigeria is numbered about 11.1 million in 2012.¹³ According to the 2014 Nigeria Demographics Profile, the country has a youth dependency ratio of 84 %.¹⁴ This paper, therefore, on the basis of this theoretical explanation, argues that the Nigerian government’s hesitancy in formulating pragmatic policies towards tackling the indolence of the Nigerian youth is the basis for the country’s insecurity challenges. In other words, topical issues like the *Boko Haram* Insurgency in North Eastern Nigeria, the Niger-Delta Crisis over environmental degradation and socio-economic neglects, inter-ethnic clashes in North West-

¹² L. BEEHNER, The Effects of “Youth Bulge” on Civil Conflicts, in: Backgrounder: Council on Foreign Relation, 2007. Retrieved from <http://www.cfr.org/world/effects-youth-bulge-civil-conflicts/p13093> [2015-09-09].

¹³ T. A. ODUWOLE, Youth Unemployment and Poverty in Nigeria, in: *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology Research*, 1, 2, 2015, pp. 23-39.

¹⁴ C. F. ONUOHA, Youth Unemployment and Poverty: Connections and Concerns for National Development in Nigeria, in: *International Journal of Modern Political Economy*, 1, 1, 2007, p. 125.

ern Nigeria, and other issues of armed robbery in the South can be evaded and solved if policies are implemented to tackle the educational and economic needs of the youth population (who particularly are the key actors in most of these situations of insecurity).

Causes of Insecurity

Nigeria is a country of potential abundance in terms of the natural, mineral and human resources. These, however, have not satisfactorily metamorphosed into development and the country is plagued with insecurity, ethnicity, extremism, violence and conflict. The factors causing this insecurity include absence of institutional capacity resulting in government failure which Fukuyama referred to as the breakdown of institutional infrastructures.¹⁵ The foundation of institutional framework in Nigeria is very shaky and has provoked deterioration of state governance and democratic accountability, thus, paralyzing the existing formal and legitimate rules nested in the hierarchy of social order. This view is corroborated by Igbuzor who sees the state of insecurity in Nigeria as a function of government failure.¹⁶ This manifests in the incapacity of government to deliver public goods to its citizens. This lack of basic necessities by the Nigerian people has created a growing army of frustrated people who resort to violence at the slightest provocation or opportunity.

Also, the gaping chasm of inequality and absence of fairness and justice contribute to insecurity in Nigeria. The perception of marginalization by many Nigerians is informed by the ostentation showed by the political class and elite vis-à-vis the grinding poverty to which citizens are subjected. Even security has been bourgeoisified by the elite. As Egwu contends, the security of the Nigerian nation-state has been reduced to that of the ruler and his immediate supporters. This state of inequality, unfairness and injustice has toughened the people, forcing them to take their destiny into their hands.¹⁷

¹⁵ F. FUKUYAMA, *State-Building: Governance and World Order in the 21st Century*, Ithaca 2004, p. 29.

¹⁶ O. IGBUZOR, Peace and Security Education: A Critical Factor for Sustainable Peace and National Development, in: *International Journal of Peace and Development Studies*, 2, 1, 2011, pp. 1–7.

¹⁷ S. G. EGWU, *Ethnic and Religious Violence in Nigeria*, Jos 2001, pp. 18–29.

Ethno-religious conflicts have been identified as another major source of insecurity in Nigeria. Ethno-religious conflicts exist when the social relations between members of one ethnic or religious group and another of such group in a multiethnic and multi-religious society is characterized by lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion and fear, and a tendency towards violent confrontations to settle grievances. These conflicts revolve around who gets what and how in the state especially as it concerns the distribution of scarce resources, power, land, chieftaincy titles, local government councils, control of markets and expansion of religious territories. These have resulted in large-scale killings and violence among ethno-religious groups in the country.

Finally, the failure of security agencies such as the police, the military, state security services and paramilitary units to share intelligence information has been identified as one of the factors frustrating quick apprehension of culprits. Also, the failure of intelligence gathering by the security agencies as well as the near passivity of security operatives in proactively policing the country, coupled with the non-apprehension of culprits, is also a contributory factor to the rising tide of insecurity in Nigeria. Of course, when the armed forces and paramilitary agencies are not well-tooled with modern fighting and security gadgets and their welfare is not given priority attention, they may not want to make any sacrifices for the nation. All of these factors point to a passive national security team that is not really committed to fighting crime or stopping the merchants of violence or terror envoys from having the field day in the country. The mantle, therefore, falls on the students to be a major force in bringing about positive changes and salvage the state of insecurity in Nigeria.

Nigeria and the Manifestations of Insecurity

The Nigerian State is a confluence of nations made up of people (nationalities) associating involuntarily in the pursuit of uncommon interests. It is characterized by the absence of justice and held together with impunity by its armed forces, which are controlled by elements from their names, bound together by a common agreement, sharing the national cake on certain unwritten principles. It lacks the essential ingredients of legitimacy i. e. certain nationalities have not consented to the association and the country is being ruled unjustly by elements within the three most populous nationalities. Insecurity is

thus an ever-present characteristic of life in Nigeria for the past couple of years. People increasingly die, maimed or injured due to violence which in all areas of daily living. Fear of armed robbery is gradually crippling Nigerian's economic life. Vast numbers of passengers of daytime public transportation are divested of their cash, or even mowed down periodically by armed robbers. Irrespective of the security provided, gangs of robbers swoop on travellers and wreak havoc on them. Fagbemi and Ogugbuaja assert that one such broad day-light violent robbery led to the death of 16 persons and the loss of N20 million cash along Ilorin and Omu-Aran in Irepodun local government of Kwara State on Tuesday July 13, 2004.¹⁸ Long distance journeys, to Abuja, Lagos, Onitsha, Kaduna, Maiduguri and Port Harcourt are parts of everyday business activities of Nigerians. Economic activity is, therefore, increasingly subjected to impediments.

Lives in many cities have been very adversely affected by the reign of terror instigated by not only armed robbers and assassins but also by Islamic terror group, *Boko Haram*. Music centres, game houses, hotels, restaurants, cinemas entertainment halls, shops and markets are parts of legitimate business. These businesses constitute major economic activities providing opportunities for employment and income earning. These enterprises which used to provide leisure and entertainment for large sectors of the Nigerian population are now virtually non-existent in most cities, especially in northern Nigeria, due to insecurity. People's homes are invaded at all hours, particularly at night, by armed robbers, paid assassins, and ethnic or religious militias. Middle and high level manpower has, in recent years, been especially prone to danger within and outside the territory of educational institutions. The assassination of lecturers in Enugu, Nsukka, Ile-Ife and elsewhere is part of this trend. These assassinations are suspected to be carried out by student cult members. Major towns in Nigeria have, in recent months, been subjected to situations of siege by armed youth gangs.

According to Nwagboso, the Niger Delta conflict started in the early 1990s due to tensions between international oil companies (IOCs) and some representatives of Niger Delta minority ethnic groups who felt

¹⁸ A. FAGBEMI – C. OGUGBUAJA, Robbers Kill 16, Cart Away N20 Million in Cash Van Raid, in: *The Guardian News*, July 15, 2004.

they were exploited without due compensation from the IOCs.¹⁹ Thus, ethnic and political unrest continued in the region throughout the 1990s and persisted despite the enthronement of democracy in 1999. Although the Federal Governments' Amnesty Programme reduced the rate of militancy in the region, the incessant kidnapping activities in the Niger Delta region eventually spilled over into some States in the South-East and South West geo-political zones of the country. The *Boko Haram* terror is a major security challenge in Nigeria that has adversely affected the Nigerian economy. According to Olugbode, the word "*Boko*" is a Hausa word meaning "animist", "western", or non-Islamic education; and the Arabic word "*Haram*" figuratively and literally means "sin" or "something forbidden".²⁰ The *Boko Haram*, like the Malian Islamists in Northern Mali, is a controversial Nigerian militant Islamist group that seeks to impose Sharia Law or its radical interpretation of Islam on the northern States of Nigeria and other parts of the country. Dike also holds that the group opposes not only western education, but also western culture and modern science.²¹ It was founded in 2002 in Maiduguri by Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf and on Thursday, July 30, 2009, Nigerian security forces captured Mohammed Yusuf in Borno State after days of clashes that killed more than 300 people. The Nigerian security forces had stormed *Boko Haram's* stronghold on Wednesday night, killing many of the militants and forcing others to flee. The violence began on Sunday night in Bauchi State, before spreading to other towns and cities in the North-east. It is estimated that about 300 to 600 people were killed in the violence. Shortly afterwards, the police announced that Mohammed Yusuf had been killed while trying to escape. Hardly did anyone believe this statement from the police. The most common perception in Nigeria and elsewhere is that the police found him a nuisance and took it upon themselves to get rid of him. A shocking picture of his body was published on the BBC website. It is pretty gruesome and not

¹⁹ C. NWAGBOSO, Security Challenges and Economy of the Nigerian State (2007–2011), in: *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 2, 6, 2012, pp. 244–258.

²⁰ M. OLUGBODE, FG Deploys Troops as Boko Haram Bomb Police Station, in: *This Day Newspaper*, October 13, 2010, p. 1.

²¹ P. DIKE, *Nigeria and the Quest for an Enduring Security Mechanism*. Paper on National Security at the Royal United Service Institute. London on March 26, 2010.

to be viewed by those with weak stomachs.²² The death of their leader in 2009 turned the group into a killing machine that has put paid to the economic development of the Northern geopolitical zones.

The activities of *Boko Haram* have constituted a serious security challenge in contemporary Nigeria and the group has been linked to the dreaded Al-Qaeda terror group.²³ It has been accepted in many quarters that the criminal and evil agenda of the *Boko Haram* terror envoys in Nigeria. The introduction of suicide bombing on Nigerian soil has not only paralyzed economic and social activities in Maiduguri, Bauchi, Adamawa, Abuja, Suleja, Kano, Damaturu, Minna, among other cities, but has also made Nigeria unsafe for investment and tourism. The *Emir* of Gwoza in Borno, Alhaji Idrissa Timta decried, in the first half of 2014, the renewed insurgency in the area, saying it has crippled the socio-economic activities in his domain. Timta submitted that “it is sad to say that my people have been blocked from going to the market by the insurgents, who kill at will. Even the food crops cultivated by them in the last farming season have ended up with the *Boko Haram* as the harvests were seized by the insurgents making life unbearable”.²⁴ Moreover, the crisis has brought the once thriving economy of the far north region, which borders Nigeria to the west, to a halt, hampering tourism, agriculture, and trade with Nigeria. The significant shift in the local economy is also threatening the financial infrastructure of Cameroon. Waza National Park (Cameroon’s largest game reserve) used to brim with tourists, with the dry season driving elephants, giraffes, gazelles, and hyenas to the few remaining watering holes to drink water and shade themselves from the sun. But the threat posed by *Boko Haram* has caused a steady decline in visitors and it is most visible during the

²² O. ODUYELA, The Emergence of Boko Haram: From Religious Intolerance to Religious Terrorism in Nigeria, in: *African Reporter*, 2014. <https://africanreporter.wordpress.com/2014/05/21/the-emergence-of-boko-haram-from-religious-intolerance-to-religious-terrorism-in-nigeria-2/> [2015-07-08].

²³ C. ONIFADE – D. IMHONOPI – U. M. URIM, Addressing the Insecurity Challenge in Nigeria: The Imperative of Moral Values and Virtue Ethics, in: *Global Journal of Human Social Science*, 13, 2, 2013, p. 58.

²⁴ O. DANIEL, Boko Haram Has Paralysed Economic Activities In Gwoza, Making Life Unbearable – Emir Cries Out, in: *News Agency of Nigeria*. <http://www.informationng.com/2014/04/boko-haram-has-paralysed-economic-activities-in-gwoza-making-life-unbearable-emir-cries-out.html>, posted on April 13, 2014 [2015-07-08].

high season. Though unable to give precise numbers, Tourism Ministry spokesman, Serge Eric Epoune affirmed that “*they used to come in thousands, but today, not even one visitor goes there. People are fearful for their lives*”.²⁵

Students as Engines of Change

In the era of decolonization that followed the end of the Second World War, young people were held up as the future of many African societies. Amid the burgeoning nationalism of the 1950s and 1960s, students were seen to have an important role in building prosperous new societies newly freed from the chains of colonialism. There were chances for young people to both challenge existing power structures and to develop their own visions for the future. This role was often encouraged by the nationalist leaders of the time who saw a need to generate a powerful sense of community and shared destiny among their compatriots. These leaders, such as Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, saw the need to harness the creative energies of young people as part of their new plans for economic, political and social transformation. This was evident in the positive activities of the West Africa Student Union (WASU) in the attainment of independence in Africa. Much of the positive momentum seen in the immediate post-colonial era was lost, however, as the dreams of development began to crumble. This has been worsened by political leaders’ inability to respond to the demands and needs of the nation, thus, culminating in the reinforcement of the view that students have a role to play in national security.

The role of students in ensuring security in Nigeria begins with education. Education is the greatest and most efficient instrument to improve moral values, discipline, and responsibility. Through education, people will be able to create new jobs, build a strong and competitive economy, promote harmony and coexistence, etc. Can you imagine how truly great Nigeria would become if 180 million people worked together towards the greater interest of the nation and not for selfish short minded purposes? Students should make their edu-

²⁵ N. K. CHIMTOM, Boko Haram Insurgency Takes Rising Economic Toll on Nigeria’s Neighbours, in: *News Express*. <http://www.newsexpressngr.com/news/detail.php?news=9783&title=Boko-Haram-insurgency-takes-rising-economic-toll-on-Nigeria%E2%80%99s-neighbours>, posted on February 24, 2015 [2015-07-08].

cation and studies their main priority because it is through this that they can make a meaningful contribution to the society. According to Sanford, youths, male and female, may be forcibly recruited into fighting forces or join voluntarily for multiple motives, which include disillusionment, retribution or a desire to act simply because they lack education that could enlighten them.²⁶

Students are the back bone of any nation. They can change the future of the society with their youthful vibrancy and courageous behaviour. Unfortunately, today, Nigerian youth are more interested in activities and events that are neither productive nor useful to them as well as the nation. They spend their days peddling drugs and playing video games while their nights are used for partying. However, the present conditions of the world – its economic and social insecurity – should awaken the students from their slumber and make them enquire what the future holds. It is surely the students who will suffer most if there is crisis in the country. Students should, therefore, open their eyes and minds to the existing conditions, study the evil forces that are at play, and with concerted effort, arise and bring about the necessary reforms – reforms that will contain within their scope the spiritual as well as social and political phases of human life. For instance, students can hold a forum and suggest means to the government on how best insurgency and other acts of insecurity can be curbed in the country, rather than leave it all to the government. A good example is that of Michael Mumo, 21, Emmanuel Kinyanjui, 20, James Kimani 22, and Iyan Bett, 22 who went a step further to assist Kenya, their country, to curb terrorism. After much has been said about the state of insecurity that has engulfed their country which have left many people in a state of despair, many decided to keep away from crowded buildings in a bid to protect themselves from danger. However, these students in the Department of Mechatronics Engineering came up with a security system that can, as they say, be used to identify everyone who enters a building using Near Field Communication (NFC) technology. This system can help avoid the hustling involved in getting into buildings where one has to submit to body searches, write their name, national identification card (ID) or pass-

²⁶ V. SANFORD, *The Moral Imagination of Survival: Displacement and Child Soldiers in Colombia and Guatemala*, in: S. McEVOY, (ed.), *Troublemakers of Peacemakers? Youth and Post-Accord Peace Building*, Notre Dame 2006, pp. 49–80.

port number and give details of the person they are going to see and the floor he or she is on each time. All these are in a bid to ensure adequate security. Sadly, this is not always a fool proof security measure as many people, particularly in cases where ID is not left behind, give false names or use illegible handwriting because they do not understand the reasons behind the scrutiny at the front desk. Through this system, these students hope to make the process of logging identities more effective by automating access to buildings. According to them, the system, which relies on contactless technology, can also be used to automatically regulate the number of people who access public places; *“with this, we shall be able to know who went where and at what time, helping security organs with intelligence gathering”*.²⁷ They assert that in their quest to help their nation curb the increasing trend in insecurity and terrorism, they ventured into the world of Radio Frequency Identification systems (R.F.I.D) as well as the emerging technology of Near Field Communication (N.F.C.) systems.²⁸

A natural reaction to horrific acts of violence and insecurity like school bombings and terrorist attacks is the desire to lash out and punish the perpetrators. People who are angry or frightened often feel that the ability to fight back puts them more in control or will alleviate their sense of pain. While anger is a normal response felt by many students, we must ensure that we do not compound an already tragic situation and react against innocent individuals with vengeance and intolerance. There is a tremendous risk of unfairly stigmatizing people in this country and around the world who may look like our perceived enemies either because of their race, language, religion, style of dress, etc. Attacking them for what some other people have done or said will only lead to more conflict. Students may have difficulty channelling their feelings appropriately and can easily pick up negative or demeaning cues given by people around them. Given the diversity of Nigeria’s educational institutions where various races and tribes co-exist, some students may become targets of hostility and blame. Bul-

²⁷ F. CHIGUNTA, *The Socio-Economic Situation of Youth in Africa: Problems Prospects and Options*. <http://www.yesweb.org/publications/> [2015-03-21].

²⁸ Mechatronic Engineering Department of JKUAT (2014), *Mechatronic Students Aim to Solve Kenya’s Insecurity Problems through Innovation*. <http://www.ihub.co.ke/blog/2014/06/the-intel-autobots-project-rfidnfc-technology-in-security-and-control-systems/>, posted on July 17, 2014 [2015-07-08].

lying and harassment are never acceptable and can be especially damaging when certain students or segments of society feel especially vulnerable. Students should note that such behaviours can only further contribute to the risk of violence and insecurity in schools and communities. For instance, after a cab killed a student of Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, in 2014, students unleashed mayhem on the community, and tried burning down the NEPA Office in the process. Such would only do more harm than good by further contributing to the existing insecurity. Rather, students should shun peace-truncating reactions to events around them.

Students should also understand the importance of treating all people with dignity and not judging groups of people based on the actions of a few. Most importantly, students should model tolerance and compassion in their words and behaviour. Doing so is not only critical to preventing further harm in the society, but the process presents a potentially powerful opportunity for our young people to learn and incorporate into their values the true strength of commitment to individual freedom and upholding the respect and dignity of all people. Since what goes around comes around, what we would not want others do to us, we should not do it to anyone. Violence and hate are never solutions to anger. Perpetrators of violence against fellow students or against our country cause tremendous harm because they act violently against innocent people out of blind hate. We must not act like them by lashing out at innocent people around us, or hating them because of their origins, their appearance or their choice of dress. Students should understand that groups of people should not be judged by the actions of a few. It is wrong to condemn an entire group of people by association or religion, race, tribe, affiliation or even proximity. No one likes to be blamed or threatened for the actions of others.

Nigeria is weak because of our diversity and because we see each other differently from the angle of different ethnicities. Everyone desires to be treated with fairness, respect and dignity, and certainly, individuals that are proven to be guilty of crimes should be punished. But no matter how angry we are over these terrible crimes, our Constitution ensures fair and equitable treatment under the law. Vengeance and justice are not necessarily the same. Justice means punishing the real perpetrators, not innocent people. Hurting other children and neighbours will not make solve our problems, stop terrorists, or help

punish students who harm or harass their colleagues. It will only add to the hate and anger and further increases the risk of insecurity. We are in this together. People of all ethnicities are hurt by terrorism and other acts of violence. We need to support each other, comfort each other, and work together to help those mostly in need during difficult times. History shows us that intolerance only causes harm and we should learn from history by not repeating terrible mistakes such as inappropriate, often violent, treatment. By reaching out to our classmates, friends, and neighbours from diverse backgrounds, we can help heal the wounds from tragic events and build stronger and more resilient communities.

John F. Kennedy, a former President of the United States counsels that: *"ask not for what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country"*. Greatness is not attained by what you can do for yourself, or your surrounding at a micro level, but what you can do to help the less privileged and your country as a whole. Nigeria is very wealthy in terms of natural resources, endowed with many solid minerals and oil, but most importantly of all, we have our proud and gifted citizens and students. The people are what we should consider to be the strength of our nation and so we should appreciate and cherish them. From that perspective, I wish to inform you that security starts from your homes. Your upbringing and moral values are what determine the level of security that we have across the country. We presently have a high crime rate due to the deterioration of family moral values, and overall difficult financial situation. Parents or guardians are no longer aware of their responsibilities and are busy sending out kids on the streets, without previously teaching those rights and wrongs. There are numerous distractions that our students encounter on a daily basis, but if the parents have not taught them well they could easily take a wrong path. It is sad that most students do not know that taking another person's property, regardless of the value (even a pen or pencil) is considered stealing which is a crime. Some also do not know that chewing gum and spitting it out on the street or dropping litter on the road is wrong and considered an offense. As a society, we focus on the conducts of armed robbers whilst forgetting that they started with minor offenses and later advanced to more violent crimes. A student, who is disciplined and in possession of good manners, has less chances of committing crimes.

In that sense, the best way for students/youths to ensure security in Nigeria is through self-discipline. At the individual level, some other ways include belief in a positive future, commitment to school and the ability to act independently with a sense of control over one's environment. Problem-solving skills, plans for the future, resourcefulness in finding support, adaptability, critical thinking and conflict resolution initiatives are also important skills. Asides from these listed measures of curbing insecurity in Nigeria, Mezieobi outlined the understated as ways students can bulldoze insecurity impeding Nigeria's national transformation:

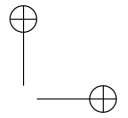
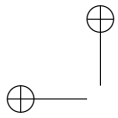
1. Students should make use of the social studies lessons they have been taught in schools, that is, civic education and citizenship education, which will wake them up to their socio-civic competence responsibilities and effective citizenship such as inspiring feelings of patriotism, and these will make them socially distant from violent practices.
2. Students should also inculcate worthy attitudes and habits (worthy character development) that will go a long way in eliminating fight, strife and violence.
3. Students should be resistant to unsuitable acts, ideologies and politics that divert them from the systems of ideas aiming at attaining sustainable peace, security and development.
4. Students should have a clear purpose and commitment towards life.
5. Students should have a powerful vision as inspiration for a sustainable future which will be the major force directing their engagements.
6. Students should invent projects to achieve their purpose with clear accountabilities and action plans. These project, asides from making them less available for other unproductive and peace-truncating activities, they will also boost Nigeria's productivity and inventions.

7. Students should develop a strong national identity irrespective of tribe, religion and language differences, rather than ethnic nationalism.
8. Students should find agreed ways to work through conflict rather than avoiding it. Students and youths should agree to communicate even when it's hard.

I, therefore, call on all students to join this battle to save Nigeria and become renaissance students by learning and practicing these thematic words: honesty, honour, integrity, consciousness, respect, contentment, courtesy, and patriotism. It is through these virtues that students/youths can help curb insecurity in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The problem of insecurity in Nigeria has become a challenge for the Nigerian government, most especially in the quest for national development, and peoples and a purview into the spectrum of national life reveals that religious fundamentalism in the country has arisen as a result of multiple problems. Some of them are lack of education of the adherents, strongly held misconceptions by religious zealots who believe that the only way to expand their religious territories is by killing those who refuse to be proselytized by their arm-twisting tactics, misinterpretation or literal interpretation of Scriptural demands, economic deprivation which forces them to vent their anger on the State and an insensitive and irresponsible government that has failed consistently to provide the people with the basic necessities of life. This paper, thus, submits for the need to revive and reinforce moral values and virtuous ethics among students, and that educational institutions should go a step further by codifying these values/principles so that students, small and old, can begin to imbibe them to guide their conduct, behaviour and social relations with others. Regenerating the moral values and codes that should guide the actions and behaviour of students and even every citizen is an urgent task that must be done to safeguard the future of the country and raise passionate and ethical citizens committed to the welfare, betterment, and development of Nigeria and Nigerians. According to Agrawal, a true moral value is one that upholds respect for human life and personal freedom. And the sum total of the moral values of a society is its image of human-



ity.²⁹ The ultimate value is recognised as the sanctity of human life and derivatively, as the supreme worth of the individual person, or as the value of human life. Students should, therefore, work tirelessly to secure their lives and our lives.



²⁹ M. AGRAWAL, *Morals and the Value of Human Life*, in: E. EMMANUEL (ed.), *African Philosophy: An Anthology*, Massachusetts 1998, pp. 146–154.

