



Human security: A necessity for national development in Nigeria's post Covid-19 Era

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Abstract

Human security is an emerging paradigm for understanding global vulnerabilities whose proponents challenge the traditional notion of national security by arguing that the proper referent for security should be the individual rather than the state. Human security holds that a people-centered view of security is necessary for national, regional, and global stability. Human security includes traditional national security concerns such as security from external aggression, security from external intervention, security from foreign occupation, and security from internal strife. It also includes livelihood provided by: steady jobs and meaningful employment, security from disease, food security, protection from crimes and domestic violence, freedom from political repression, right to clean air, safe water, and a sustainable healthy environment, right to practice one's religion freely, etc. The thrust of this work is to elucidate the importance of the security of the 'human person' for the effective national development of the Nigerian state, especially in the post-Covid-19 era. The research will focus on the livelihood phase of human security, including security from disease, food security, etc. The study will also examine the nexus between Human Security and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).The paper employs secondary source materials.

Keywords: Human Security, Development, Covid-19, Leadership, Sustainable Development Goals, Nigeria.



Introduction

Human security is people-centered; it focuses institutions' attention on human individuals and their communities worldwide. This emphasis on human beings distinguishes human security from the objective of protecting state territories that dominated security policies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Human security focuses on the human person, regardless of gender, race, religion, ethnicity, citizenship, or other distinguishing characteristics.¹

The idea of security has for long been represented as only security of borders against foreign attack or as an international defense to global security from the threat of nuclear devastation or protection of a state's interest in its foreign policy while overlooking the main concerns of the populace who desire security in their existence. To most of them, security represents prevention from political repression, unemployment, hunger, diseases, environmental hazards, and social conflict.

The UNDP communiqué classified human security into seven groups: political, economic, health, personal, food, community, and environment. The idea of human security was perceived as essential for human development. That is to say, if there is an absence of security and solidity in the standard of living, development may be deficient.² Human development is closely correlated with human security. The former seeks to develop the human person, while the latter seeks to protect them from threats to that development. Human security facilitates human development, while human development releases more resources to improve human security.

Human security phases include;

- **Economic Security:** It requires an assured basic income for individuals, usually from productive and remunerative work or, as a last resort, from a publicly financed safety net.
- **Food Security:** Food security requires all people to have physical and economic access to basic food. According to the United Nations, the overall availability of food is not a problem; instead, the problem often is the poor distribution of food and a lack of purchasing power.

¹Alkire, S. (2003) *A Conceptual Framework for Human Security*. Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security

and Ethnicity, CRISE. Queen Elizabeth House: University of Oxford. P. 3

²Enwerem, T. (2016) *Challenges to Human Security and Development: Terrorism and Environmental Conflicts in Nigeria*. Unpublished Masters Research Thesis, Institute of Graduate Studies and Research, Eastern Mediterranean University Gazimağusa, North Cyprus. P. 19

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- **Health Security:** Health Security guarantees minimum protection from diseases and unhealthy lifestyles. In developing countries, the significant causes of death traditionally were infectious and parasitic diseases, whereas, in industrialized countries, the major killers were diseases of the circulatory system.
 - **Environmental Security:** Environmental security aims to protect people from the short and long-term ravages of nature, artificial threats, and deterioration of the natural environment.
 - **Personal Security:** Personal security aims to protect people from physical violence, whether from the state or external states, from violent individuals and sub-state actors, from domestic abuse, or predatory adults.
 - **Community Security:** Community security protects people from losing traditional relationships and values, and from sectarian and ethnic violence.
 - **Political Security:** Political security is concerned with whether people live in a society that honours their fundamental human rights. Human rights violations are most frequent during periods of political unrest. The government may control ideas and information while repressing individuals and groups. Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "no one shall be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."³

However, the widespread absence of human security in Nigeria demonstrates that human security is the first and foremost requisite for development. Moreover, it is concerned with the issues related to the quality of life. The goals of "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want" may well be attained only through the protection of an empowerment framework of human security that promotes the highest freedom of how to live in dignity. Unjust political, social, and economic structures often threaten human security in Nigeria. The fragmentation process of social groups, economic systems, and political structures threatens human security at every step. Conflicts and civil unrest have made Nigeria insecure in the last six decades after independence in 1960. The security of people is endangered by poverty, hunger, unemployment, health hazards, discrimination, ecological degradation, and the recent scourge of covid-19 pandemic, therefore thwarting development. These sources of insecurity need to be addressed holistically in order to pave the way for development. Against this backdrop, this paper seeks to elucidate

³Amnesty International (2003) *Combating Torture – A Manual for Action*. United Kingdom: The Alden Press. P. 1
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/act400012003en.pdf>

the importance of the security of human persons for effective national development of the Nigerian state, especially in the post-Covid-19 era.

Literature Review

Buzan, in his work *'People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era,'*⁴ examines how states and societies pursue freedom from threat in an environment in which competitive relations are inescapable across the political, economic, military, societal and environmental landscapes. He placed attention on the interplay of threats and vulnerabilities, the policy consequences of overemphasizing one or the other, and the existence of contradictions within and between ideas about security. Buzan also outlined four questions that structured international security studies which according to him, are analytical tools through which the evolution of international security studies portrays the deeper, substantial core that defines what international security is all about and what brings this literature together. The first is whether to privilege the state as the referent object, which he explained should be all about constituting something that needs to be secured which are the state, individuals, ethnic groups and the environment. Secondly, whose security should be protected? Should security be considered the primary objectives of states? Should security be concerned exclusively with external threats or also with domestic ones? The broad approach to Human Security give up systematic precision in favour of conventional normative influence: emphasizing on the issues which weaken the life chances of the largest number of people.⁵

Conceptual Framework

Human security is often associated with the 1994 Human Development Report on Human Security drafted and championed by MahbubulHaq. Human security tends to bridge the freedom from want and freedom from fear, freedoms that lay at the heart of the United Nations. Earlier, the United States Secretary of State at the San Francisco conference in 1945 opined that:

"The battle of peace has to be fought on two fronts. The first is the security front, where victory spells freedom from fear. The second is the economic and social front, where

⁴Buzan, B. (2007) *People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era.* ECPR Press.

⁵Buzan, B., Hansen, L. (2009). *The evolution of international security studies.* Cambridge University Press.

victory means freedom from want. Only victory on both fronts can assure the world of an enduring peace.... No Provisions that can be written into the Charter will enable the Security Council to make the world secure from war if men and women have no security in their homes and their jobs."⁶

From the above discourse, the phrase 'freedom from fear' indicates freedom from violence, and the phrase 'freedom from want,' freedom from poverty. It is essential to bear this mental equation in mind, because, of course people fear poverty and destitution; they also want peace and police protection.

Human Security shares the conceptual space of human development, which is likewise people-centered and multi-dimensional and is defined in the area of human choices and freedoms. But human development is a broader, long-term, holistic objective that can capture the aspirations of any society, whether rich or chronically poor. The aim of human development is the flourishing or fulfillment of individuals in their homes and communities and the expansion of valuable choices. In contrast, human security has a strictly delimited scope. While both approaches address those already destitute, human security also has a systematic preventative aspect. While human development aims at "growth with equity," human security focuses on "downturn with security."⁷

Threats to Human Security in Nigeria

The lack of good governance militates against human security in Nigeria, and development becomes a mirage where there is no good governance. Most of our leaders need a sense of commitment to growth and things that will better the lives of the citizens. Mimiko captures the situation this way: "The decolonization allowed the crop of leaders that aligned with colonial power to take over Nigeria. This ensured the sustenance of a neo-colonial economy even after political independence. These leaders, on assumption of power quickly turned up the repressive machinery of the colonial state rather than dismantling it. Significantly, they have no vision of development to accompany the efficient instrument of repression they inherited. All they were interested in was access to power and privileges and not development."⁸

⁶Alkire, S. (2003) *A Conceptual Framework for Human Security*. Centre for Research on Inequality.....P. 13

⁷ Ibid. P. 7

⁸Mimiko. O. (1997).*The Global Village: Selected Topics on International Economic Relations*. Akure: Olaniyan Publishing Company. P 6-7

A high level of corruption and indiscipline is another barrier to achieving human security. The Nigerian state is corrupt, managed by corrupt leaders who have made it an instrument of capital accumulation rather than using it to project the citizenry's interest. An excellent plan supervised by a corrupt state can hardly do a good job.⁹ Corruption and development are antithetical to each other, the two cannot cohabit, and so, where one is present, the other suffers.

Electoral fraud is one of the banes of Nigeria's development. When a leader assumes office illegitimately or through electoral fraud, such a leader is bound to fail to generate meaningful development. This is because such illegitimate leader tend to display character that repress development such as; selfishness, corruption, pride, thuggery and inefficiency and also, there is apathy and natural detachment to development plans by the people as they did not see such emerging leader as the product of their consent through voting. This menace is evident in Nigeria.

Terrorism "a policy intended to strike with terror those against whom it is adopted; the employment of methods of intimidation; the fact of terrorizing or condition of being terrorized"¹⁰ is also a threat to human security in Nigeria. The emergence of Boko-Haram and its gruesome killings of innocent souls in the Northern part of the country poses a serious threat to the lives of Nigerians in the Region. Furthermore, other threats to human security include; extensive poverty, unemployment, income inequality, poor education opportunities, inequitable access to health care, violent conflict, political repression, abuse of rights, lack of information empowerment, gender inequality, etc.

Furthermore, human insecurity has triggered various upheavals in Nigeria which includes;

Ethno-Religious Conflict: Communal and societal conflicts, according to Ibrahim and Igbuzor, have emerged as a result of new and particularistic forms of political consciousness and identity often structured around ethno-religious identities.¹¹ In all parts of Nigeria, ethno-religious conflicts have assumed alarming rates. It has occurred in places like Osun, Abia, Kano, Bauchi, Nassarawa, Jos, Taraba,

⁹ Ibid. 7

¹⁰ Nelles, W. (2003) "Theoretical Issues and Pragmatic Challenges for Education, Terrorism and Security Research" in Nelles, W (Ed.) *Comparative Education, Terrorism and Human Security: From Critical Pedagogy to Peace Building*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. P. 11

¹¹ Okonkwo, R., Ndubuisi, O., and Threasa, A. (2015) Security Challenges and the Implications for Business activities in Nigeria: a Critical Review. *Journal of Policy and Development Studies*. Volume 9, No. 2.P. 160.



Ebonyi, and Enugu States. Groups and communities who had, over the years, lived together in peace and harmony now take up arms against each other in gruesome war. The claim over scarce resources, power, land, chieftaincy, local government, councils, control of markets, Osu caste system, and sharia among other trivial issues have resulted in large-scale killings and violence amongst groups in Nigeria. In these conflicts, new logic of social separation and dichotomy has evolved in many communities in Nigeria. Eme and Anthony assert that there is the classification of the "settler" and "indigene," "Christian" and "Muslim," and "Osu" (slave) and "Nwadiala" (free born).¹² These ethno-religious identities have become disintegrative and destructive social elements threatening Nigeria's peace, stability and security.

Economic-Based Violence: This is also known as the political economy of violence in popular parlance. Recent writings in the mass media across the globe and the political divide have emphasized the role of resources in generating conflict, which is a significant factor in economic-based violence. Cries of resource control and revenue sharing regularly rent the air between proponents and opponents. Although not limited to oil in the Niger Delta, the most prevalent campaign about the link between resources and conflict focuses on oil and the Delta region. Put differently; there is evidence to suggest that oil has given rise to vertical and horizontal conflicts between national, state, and society or between dominant and subordinate geo-political zones, classes, and groups across Nigeria, given the pivotal role that oil plays in the restructuring of power relations in Nigeria.¹³ It is, however, confirmed that other types of resource-driven conflicts have received less attention in the debate. Assets such as grazing, farming, and water resource, have tended to give rise to horizontal disputes that involve communities across the geo-political zones.

The other thesis is that conflict in Nigeria is poverty induced. This explanation is closely related to relative deprivation rather than absolute poverty. As a result of the above, the inability of the state to provide essential services for the populace, generate new conflicts or renew old ones manifested through politicized agents who have used the conditions of the poor to address the responses or non-responses of the state to the legitimate yearnings of the people.

Organized Violent Groups: Organized violent groups take varying dimensions and forms. These include; ethnic militia, vigilantes, secret cults in tertiary institutions, and political thugs. Various reasons and

¹²Dantala, D. (2014) Insecurity and the Challenges of Development in Nigeria. *Developing Country Studies*. Volume 4, No. 22.P. 51.

¹³ Ibid p. 51



circumstances account for their emergence. The causes of the manifestations include the culture of militarism that has its antecedents in military rule, the failure of the state and its institutions, economic disempowerment, the structure of the state and Nigeria's federalism, non-separation of state and religion, politics of exclusion, culture of patriarchy and gerontocracy and poor political consciousness.¹⁴

Achieving Human Security in the New Normal

To achieve human security, all factors posing threat to its existence must be eradicated, such as; extensive poverty, unemployment, income inequality, poor education opportunities, inequitable access to health care, violent conflict, political repression, abuse of rights, lack of information empowerment, gender inequality etc. To eradicate these threats, development requires total commitment from the leadership. The need for discipline and honesty on the part of the project implementers cannot be compromised; such officials should show enough discipline, interest, willingness, dedication, and honesty. Without these attributes and the will to pursue set economic goals, all other ingredients of development present would amount to nullity.

Good governance is vital in achieving human security. There must be zero tolerance for corruption; the court must mete capital punishment on corrupt leaders, and the leaders must imbibe the Spartan discipline style. Furthermore, our economy needs to be diversified. The over-dependence on crude oil is to the detriment of other resources, leading to poverty, unemployment, etc. There is a need to revamp the agricultural sector; this sector was instrumental in the development of Japan. Agriculture used to be the mainstay of Nigeria's economy, but the discovery of crude oil succeeded in putting agriculture into a state of oblivion.

Furthermore, stability and continuity of policies must be imbibed because it encourages investment and propels development. For instance, when Park was assassinated in Korea, his policies remained and were built upon. Nigerian leadership must learn to build on policies rather than jettison them for new ones or for party politics and personal aggrandizement.

Additionally, reforming the electoral process is imperative for socio-economic and political development. The electoral process should be reformed in such a way that nobody assumes power (political) through crook or fraudulent means. The process should be made

¹⁴Okonkwo, R., Ndubuisi, O., and Threasa, A. (2015) Security Challenges and the Implications for Business activities in Nigeria.....P. 160

open, free, fair and competitive. All legal battles preceding the elections must be concluded before any swearing-in. This will create a natural environment conducive for development.

Human resources development is also essential to national development. Development depends very much on human knowledge and skills. This must be such that a high quality of education and training is achieved for a large majority at a reasonable price. The context and quality of such education and training should be relevant and adequate to the country's development needs. Literature on development stresses the hypothesis that it is the people who develop and that development can only occur if there are large numbers of suitably qualified people.

There is a need for attitudinal change. Nigerians must change their pessimistic attitude toward development. The idea or belief that "things cannot work in Nigeria or Nigerian factor" should be discouraged. The actual development is achieved through internal activities rather than external influences. Development is seen as a process generated within a society by forces propagated and invigorated by the existing members of that society. It is believed that outsiders can neither start nor sustain development. Although no country can develop in isolation, however, emphasis should be placed on something other than foreign resources for the country's development. The models of development of Japan and China show how these countries utilize their internal resources, both human and material, for rapid economic development. It is reasonable that Nigerians should inculcate a high sense of patriotism, as demonstrated by the Japanese and Chinese.

Nexus between Human Security and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Human security appears to be at the heart of the United Nation's work. The organization's Charter, its humanitarian programmes and agencies, and the normative ideas it promotes all point toward a people-centered worldview. The modern human security movement owes much to a UN report which popularized the concept in 1994. Human security, taken to its logical conclusion, holds critical implications for the way politics and economics are organized: it challenges the values and institutions that currently exist as they relate to human welfare, and it questions the interests that are served by these values and institutions. Above all, human security is solidaristic in a cosmopolitan sense: it implies moral obligations towards humans

across borders and that free and secure individuals are the foundation of peace and security between and within states.¹⁵

Furthermore, the Sustainable Development Goals emphasized a “world free of poverty, hunger, disease and want; free of fear and violence; with equitable and universal access to quality education, health care and social protection; to safe drinking water and sanitation; where food is sufficient, safe, affordable and nutritious; where habitats are safe, resilient and sustainable; and where there is universal access to affordable, reliable and sustainable energy.”¹⁶

Human security can support the United Nations system to build on its unique position to facilitate integrated actions to achieve the SDGs in a more people-centered, comprehensive, sustainable and inclusive manner. By providing states, large and small, with a new way to address the root causes of development deficits and prioritize, integrate, and promote targeted and people-centered solutions, human security can result in a more robust United Nations response. It is, however, pertinent to note that the seven human security phases or groups are subsumed into the seventeen agenda of the United Nation’s sustainable development goals. Nigeria must improve its human security/development index to meet its sustainable development goals.

Conclusion

Human security is indeed people-centric; however, lack of good governance, corruption, religious and political intolerance, economic based-violence, terrorism etc. are militating against its achievement in Nigeria. It is essential to focus on human security to achieve broader developmental agendas. Human security could be achieved through sound and equitable political, economic, and social policies that bring about economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security. Proper attention should be given to each phase of human security for Nigerians to enjoy peace and stability in the new normal and for the Nigerian state to also achieve its United Nations sustainable development goals. Furthermore, should the government of Nigeria fail to improve the human security index of its citizenry, especially in the post-Covid-19 era, the fallout could trigger insecurity in the country.

¹⁵ Newman, E. (2014) “The United Nations and Human Security: Between Solidarity and Pluralism” in Martin, M., and Owen, T. (Eds.) *Routledge Handbook of Human Security*. New York: Routledge. P. 225

¹⁶United Nations (2022) *Human Security and Agenda 2030*. United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security. P 1
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