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Human Trafficking: A Phenomenal Threat to Human and National Security in Nigeria

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Abstract

The problems of human trafficking are not peculiar to Nigeria, but enormous challenges to the world at large. It is a form of slave trade, and involves mostly women and children. It is a transnational organised crime because it cuts across borders of different countries, quite lucrative for the traffickers and one of the most difficult contemporary vices to tackle.

Security can be in various forms, but human security should be embedded in the concept of national security in order to combat contemporary threats and human rights violations. Human trafficking is a multifaceted menace that deprives people of their dignity, helps social breakdown, and hinders human capital progress in any given nation. It has also been discovered that money made from human trafficking is being used to sponsor terrorism, thus breaching national security. This paper is focussing on the issues of human trafficking in relations to human and national security, describing the implications and how they can be tackled. It furthers analyses the different approaches to viewing human trafficking from the angle of security (both human and national), and examines the collaborations of the law enforcement agencies in Oyo state, Nigeria in putting up a formidable force to deal with the menace from the perceptive mentioned above. And concludes that combined efforts must be made by all stakeholders in eliminating human trafficking in order to attain a sustainable human and national security.

Keywords: Human Trafficking, Human Security, National Security, Thre at and Nigeria

Introduction

Over two hundred years after the enactment of the law abolishing the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, human trafficking has metamorphosed into a modern form of slavery - where people are bought and sold within and across national borders by organised networks. Human trade is part of the worst form of human violation and part of the largest criminal activities ravaging the whole world, which has become an issue of concern to the international community. Olagbegi (2000) reiterated that human trafficking is common to women and girl-child as key victims. He pointed out that only one definition could not embrace the total manifestations of this kind of brutality. He further stated that it would be inappropriate to define human trafficking in a particular way for the fear of leaving out some forms of manifestations. The manifestations include transporting women and children from one place to another, either with or without their consent, procurement by force, violence or threat of violence or inducement, exploitation through forced labour, forced prostitution, or any other slave-like practices, bondage-like, and conditions that will favour the traffickers.

Human trafficking covers all kinds of activities that force, deceive, abduct, exploit sexually or economically, deprive people of their dignity, harm their health, compromise their personalities and lead to other forms of exploitation and mistreatment. There are potential links between trafficking and migration. When people move from one place to another,

either locally, nationally or internationally, in times of political crisis or in the face of social or economic pressures, whether they are driven by desperate situations or motivated to seek greener pasture, they may willingly consent to being smuggled across borders. This may result to finding themselves abducted into a trafficking network, unable to escape and without access to legal advice or protection once transported across the border.

Oftentimes, human beings are trafficked for different purposes such as domestic servitude, work in plantations or illegal workshops, small businesses, begging, soliciting, sex trade, recruited for armed groups, mining, organ harvesting, among others. They usually make up a cheap or unpaid workforce who can work for several hours per day, in dangerous conditions without being given enough to eat and drink. Also, they are exposed to violence, hazardous working conditions, treated like slaves, forced into the increasing market of prostitution and pornography, where a number of them are exposed to HIV/AIDS and other health risks. Many of them pay the ultimate price of losing their lives, but all of them lose their basic human rights (Olagbegi, 2000).

Furthermore, victims are usually subjected to different forms of physical assault, abuse and exploitation resulting in terribly traumatised persons. There have been major concerns over the years about the causes of human trafficking. United Nations Children's Fund - UNICEF (2007) has identified poverty, large family size, and rapid urbanisation, among others as major factors why many are vulnerable to trafficking.

Human trafficking is a global menace, with rising number of new victims on a daily basis. According to the U.S. State Department's 2006 Report on human trafficking, eight hundred thousand (800,000) people are estimated to be victims of trafficking across international borders annually. There are networks connecting the traffickers from one country to another, which has made the issue more complicated. Globalisation has made this networking easier in terms of movements from one border to another, which might not require visa or passport to cross. According to Eselebor (2014), the trade is loosely organised by cartels of criminals who are also into weapons and narcotics business, conniving with government officials in many nations of the world. Thus, human trafficking is not just an incidence but series of events that involves sophisticated networks of stakeholders.

Human security is freedom from violence and freedom from the fear of violence. It is centred on people, protection of individuals, their wellbeing and response to the needs of the people in relations to threats. Where there is no human security, there is a blend of threats that is connected to war, genocide, and culminating into displaced person (Giguere, 2013). In achieving human security, many stakeholders like the government, NGOs and so on are involved. Human security is not only involved in the protection of people but also empowers them as a mode of security, and people participate in recognising and solving issues of insecurity. On the other hand, national security is concerned with the defence of the state against external threats, protection of the state's boundaries, values, institutions and people. The state is the main stakeholder in achieving security, and it has the sole power of decision - making, empowering national authority and its military defence. Thus, national security encompasses human security.

Human trafficking is a visible threat to human and national security. In the contemporary times, it is viewed to be the third largest source of criminal revenue in the whole world after arms and drugs, with about nine and half billion dollars ($9.5 billion) yearly, and closely related to drug trafficking, document forgery, money laundering, and international terrorism (Giguere, 2013).

Human trafficking undermines human security and national security majorly because of all the elements that threatens

the rights of people through exploitation and coercion. Human security puts up a framework that classifies victims of human trafficking under the context of individuals in need of state protection (Witherspoon, 2014).

In as much as human trafficking is being addressed as a threat to human security with focus on preventing and prohibiting, human trafficking should be recognised as a crime against the state and also against individuals, which should view the notion of security as national and human security.

Conceptual Clarification

Security is a concept that is dependent in relations to people or the value systems of the societies (Brauch, 2003). Achieving security entails preventing threats, or managing it to the barest minimum level and by combined endeavours (Booth, 1999). Security also pertains to individuals and groups of people and not just the states alone (Ngwube, 2012).

To different people, security has different meanings. However, psychological and reasonable state of mind, the situation of being secured, distinctive feeling of freedom from sadness, fear, anxiety, risk, threat, danger and brutality are all included in the concept of security. Anan (2001) pointed out that with new conflicts emerging in the contemporary times, there comes a new view about the conceptual analysis of security. He wrote that it used to be the protection of boundaries or territories from external attacks, but has now encompassed the defence of people and communities from violence within, that is, internal attacks.

It is also a series of events, process towards the protection of people, properties, organisations, countries, and so on. Furthermore, it is the precautions taken against evil occurrences like attacks, crimes, sabotage, and so on.

Human security has to do with the people, their lawful interests, in view with security, Pati (2013) stated that human security is about the daily living of the common people with their legitimate concerns and the way they view security as: protection from hunger, crime, unemployment, disease, environmental disasters, political and civil unrests, and repression. Also, what they care about at the end of the day is to enjoy freedom from wants, fear, and freedom to live in human dignity.

UNDP report (1994), defined human security as "*a child who did not die, a disease that did not spread, a job that was not cut, an ethnic tension that did not explode in violence, a dissident who was not silenced. Human security is not a concern with weapons – it is a concern with human life and dignity".*

According to Tadjbakhsh (2009), human security in a simple sense means freedom from want, freedom from fear and a life of dignity. He further elaborated it to be:

- Recognising threats that are new outside the traditional instruments of violence
- Recognising forms of new security outside the state, considering people and communities
- Recognising the link between development, human rights and security

Human security lays emphasis on human rights, protection from violence, and sustainable advancement (Paris, 2001). The focus of human security is usually not on the state, but on individuals.

National security could be described as a situation whereby most treasured beliefs and values, general way of living, institutions of governance, unification, wellbeing, and welfare of a nation and the people are perpetually safeguarded and uninterruptedly enriched. The concept of national security include the human security and traditional security, which is also viewed as complete security (security of life, property, economy, economic areas of the nation, food, natural resources found in the nation, the health of the people, environment, national integrity, and preserving all that the nation sees as essential and of value) – Imobighe (2000).

Human Trafficking in Nigeria

The reality of today's slave trade in most parts of the world is that adults and children fleeing poverty or seeking better prospects are manipulated, deceived and bullied into working in conditions that they would not have chosen under normal circumstances. Sadly enough, trafficking in persons for sex is a global problem and is closely and inextricably related to some of the worst form of human rights violations (Keefer, 2006). Trafficking in humans involves taking advantage of the level of poverty and low standard of living in developing nations like Nigeria, and deceiving victims into forced labour.

Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation, WOTCLEF (2006) stated that the cankerworm called human trafficking must have been going on for a very long time in Nigeria but no attention was paid to it. Therefore, it has eaten deep into the system, especially in the rural areas.

Many are affected by this unwholesome trade with victims from different neighbouring countries into Nigeria to do all sorts of menial and exploitative jobs. Nigeria is known for international human trafficking mainly because of many girls that are being trafficked to Europe and Asia for prostitution from time to time. There is also the issue of internal or domestic trafficking – where victims are recruited to places outside their villages, towns or cities within the shores of Nigeria. This is encouraged and complicated by culture and traditions of "placing" wards in other people's households (usually extended family members or family friends). This kind of trafficking cannot be assessed simply because of the varieties in values, customs, traditions and beliefs of different nations. In addition, Nigerians are trafficked to many other countries of the world especially with the economic situation in the country, which has made people to be vulnerable to the trade, thus making the country to be a supplier and a receiver of trafficked victims (WOTCLEF, 2006).

The cartels involved in this trade have been taking advantage of the situation in the country to make huge profits as clients, recruiters, intermediaries, traffickers or exploiters. The process is usually facilitated by promises of improved standard of living; access to free education, scholarships, good jobs, and so on. Victims are deceived and lured into accepting these offers, of which their parents/guardians easily fall for since it will take some burdens off them. Akpan (2004) stated that human trafficking is not something that happens on the criminal fringes of Nigerian society, but woven into the fabric of its national life because the trafficking has the collaboration of the victims' own parents and family members. Therefore, it is not perceived as a criminal activity, but a way to boost the family status.

Virtually, all levels of the Nigerian society support trafficking. For instance, house girls and houseboys are supplied in high numbers to different classes of people in the urban areas, brought from rural areas by "helpful" aunts and uncles who take the cash and disappear, no question is asked by anyone, and nobody wants to know the answers (Akpan, 2004). Furthermore, there is the attitude of normalcy that is being displayed by many Nigerians as if it is no problem. As long as it is generating some level of income for the families that are involved, until recently when so much awareness has been given to the menace.

Nigeria has reportedly had different dimensions of human trafficking, for instance, it is rampant to see children of school ages hawking goods and wares in major towns and cities of the country, some of them are victims of trafficking from rural areas to urban centres, while some of them have been trafficked into Nigeria from other neighbouring countries. Another instance is the issue of attaching wards to traders to learn the art of trading (this is more prominent in the eastern part of Nigeria). Oftentimes, these wards are victims of internal trafficking. Consequently, the children that are being used for domestic helps, some of them have been trafficked

within the borders of Nigeria, while a good number of them have been trafficked into Nigeria from other countries (Nwosu, 2001).

There have been many reports of smuggled people caught while trying to either leave Nigeria through illegal routes or coming into the country illegally too. An instance of a rusty Nigerian boat that was turned away from Gabon and Cameroon with a cargo of hundreds of victims (mostly children) from the small and impoverished country of Benin was intercepted. These victims were destined (as were many who have made the journey before them) for the cocoa plantations of West Africa, or serve as domestic servants (Anietie, 2001).

Many reasons are adduced to the increasing market of this menace in Nigeria. The major and ubiquitous one use to be poverty, but recent studies have shown that it is now ignorance and economic motive that are driving the trade (Okah-Donli, 2017). Others are, greed, ignorance, illiteracy (in terms of formal or informal education), large family size, law enforcement lapses, get rich quick syndrome, among others. The trade is very prominent in Nigeria, especially in Edo state which is popularly known for external trafficking, that is, victims trafficked abroad especially to Italy for prostitution (Okah-Donli, 2017). Ngboawaji (2011) estimated that ninety-four percent (94%) of the victims are from Edo state, while the ones remaining are from Delta, Kano, and Borno states. Furthermore, the glamorous lifestyles of some of the people that have gone and returned have contributed to the boom of the trade in Nigeria.

The effects of human trafficking are enormous; traumatisation, terminated academic pursuits, terminated careers, health issues and complications, poor national image, even death among others (Ngboawaji, 2011).

Threat to Human and National Security in Nigeria

Threat bring about insecurity, it literarily means the intent to mete out pains, damages, injuries and any other action that is hostile on an individual in reaction to something done or not done. It might be natural like flood, earthquake, or man - made like sabotage, fire incident, and so on. Threat poses risk to the society and is related to security issues (Ngwube, 2013)

Security could be in different forms such as job security, financial security, political security, economic security, personal security, internal security, food security, physical security, social security, human security, national security, and others.

Nigeria is faced with different forms of security issues. In fact, most of the various forms of security mentioned above are posing different kind of threats to the country. Terrorism is a major one in the form of Boko Haram (insurgency group) which has wrecked so much havoc on the nation especially in the northern part. Incidentally, Daniels (2004), Keefer (2006), and host of others noted that proceeds gotten from human trafficking usually go round to drug traffickers, and they use the proceeds to sponsor the activities of terrorists, thus breaching national security. It was further noted that terrorists make use of the transit networks of traffickers and smugglers to carry their necessities. Others security issues that are threatening Nigeria are corruption; violent crimes; ethnic crisis; electoral violence; religious conflicts; and transnational criminal activities in arms, drugs and human trafficking; environmental degradation, among others (Ngwube, 2013).

Dambazau (2014) likened forms of insecurity to breeding of mosquitoes that will thrive very well in an unclean environment with stagnant water and poor sanitation, to corruption and poorly governed environments with weak institutions as good fertile ground for breeding different kinds of threats to human and national security.

Once security is absent in a given nation or society, then there will be instability in virtually all other spheres of such society.

Human Trafficking as an Issue of Human and National Security

The report furthers explained that human security revolves round two (2) basics, that is, safety from extreme threats like hunger, disease and repression; and safety from abrupt and injurious disarray in the day to day order of living – whether in homes, in jobs, or in communities. Human security can be an outcome of forces of nature, man-made or a blend of the two (Ngwube, 2013).

The threat to the survival, livelihoods and dignity of individuals is synonymous to the threat of their security. These threats can induce violence that naturally will destabilise the nation. Thus, the eminent relationship between human security and national security. Human security means much more than absence of violent conflicts. It covers good governance, human rights, access to education and health care, and ensures that individuals have opportunities and choices to fulfil their potentials. Steps taken towards this direction will reduce poverty, achieve economic development and prevent conflicts. Freedom from wants, freedom from fear, and the freedom of future generations inheriting a healthy natural environment – these are the interconnected elements for building human and hence national security (Annan, 2001).

UNDP (1994) identified seven major threats to human security, and they are; economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political threats. Human trafficking is one of the contemporary threats to the survival, livelihood and dignity of people. Others are environmental degradation, drug trafficking, terrorism, armed conflicts, internal strife, illegal arms and ammunitions trafficking, and transnational organised crimes (Calvani, 2001).

Pati (2014) identified six (6) main threats that are emerging and they are; unrestrained population growth, inconsistent economic opportunities, inordinate international migration, environmental degradation, drug production and trafficking, and international terrorism. He further mentioned that these threats are beyond state borders, they create challenges to human security globally, and they obviously worsen the national security of any given state, irrespective of the power and authority such state possess.

Trafficking in persons as a contemporary vice, is intersecting all the threats mentioned above, probably as a result of these threats being the push and pull components for human trafficking, or trafficking in persons serves as established fruitful soil for boosting some of the threats (Pat, 2014). Thus, the inherent connection between human security and national security, which translates to the mutual reinforcement of the basic safeguarding roles of national security along with the basic empowering, functions of human security (United Trust Fund for Human Security, 2012).

Protection of the state (people, territories, ideologies, values and so on) from both internal and external aggressions through powerful influences such as economic, military, political policies, among others, is what national security entails. In acquiring national security, a state should have environmental security, economic security, political security, military security, among others. Iredia (2011) viewed national security to be the means or capability of a state to deal with and conquer any challenge that comes its way.

Ngboawaji (2011) also posited that identity, border, territory, and human security are all major pillars for national security. Some foundational components that amplify the definition of national security are territorial integrity, cultural cohesiveness, socio-political stability, moral-spiritual consensus, ecological balance, economic solidarity and strength, and external peace.

General Olusegun Obasanjo (former president of Nigeria, 2001) stated that national security is all about policies that fortify the country (Nigeria), that will promote her interests, goals and purposes,

containing all instabilities, controlling crime, eradicating corruption, advancing real progress, growth and development with actual sincerity, and improving the wellbeing and welfare and the quality of every Nigerian citizen (Teniola, 2017).

The qualitative aspect and dynamism of national security is in the consistent move of the state to improve on the safeguarding and protection of lives, properties, and resources inside its outlined territorial borderlines; and its wide features that changes with fresh threats emerging or transformation of existing threats, which may be from inside or outside its surroundings (Onuoha, 2007).

Crimes generally have adverse effects on the way of lives of people. Nonetheless, there are quite a number of crimes that are so acidic to a society that they begin to pull down the entire nation and not only individuals. Human trafficking happens to be one of such. For instance, the crime of murder cannot be seen as a national security crime, but genocide (the systematic killing of large numbers of people who belong to a specific race) would definitely be (Rizer & Glasser, 2011).

There are internal and external threats to national security all around the globe and some of them are natural disasters, terrorism, poverty, economic sabotage, corruption, cybercrime, transnational organised crimes (which human trafficking belongs to), and so on.

Terrorists use human trafficking as a tool for funding in buying arms and ammunitions, in supporting their families, in training and education. Victims trafficked are kidnapped, raped, married off forcefully, and killed. They are also sold as sex slaves to rich Arabs through the terrorists' network (Lassalle, 2011).

The exploitation of human trafficking victims has made the drug trade very buoyant, by ensuring they get addicted to these drugs, backpacks, and body packing (Lassalle, 2011).

There is an increased crime rate since human trafficking generates so much revenue as part of organised criminal network and other criminal activities. It has further led to money laundering which has destabilised the economy of many nations including Nigeria.

According to OCHA (2013), the five (5) phases of human security approach should be upheld by the state in designing, implementing, and evaluating their efforts in combating human trafficking; (a) Situational awareness, (b) Mapping needs, vulnerabilities, and capacities, (c) Protection and empowerment strategies building, (d) Implement in a participatory manner, and (e) Human security impact assessment.

Recommendations and Conclusion

It is quiet true that human trafficking flourishes because a lot of people benefit from it, especially economically. It is like termite that is eating deep into the wood of the society and gives birth to more crimes, during which is gradually eroding the values of the society, destroying lives and the security of the nation.

Human security is viewed to have a great impact on national security. It is apparent to note that human security and national security complements each other, neither of the two can stand alone, they reinforce and depend on each other. Human security needs strong and stable institutions, while national security will also depend on the internal stability in the state. Survival of the state largely depend on the level of respect it has for its citizens and other states' citizens, thus demonstrating the definite relationship between human security and the interaction with national security issues

As earlier stated, the various phases of human security strategy should be endorsed by the state in planning, effecting, and appraising their endeavours in tackling human trafficking.

Leadership that would transform the country by improving the socio-economic status of its citizens (particularly in areas of job creation, affordable education, housing, feeding, healthcare, and so on. Tackling human and national security issues with transparency and concern for these issues is

highly needed in Nigeria. Having good economy will definitely limit the potential preys of these trafficking syndicates. This kind of leadership should empower law enforcement agencies with sophisticated equipment, enable the use of advanced technology in intelligence gathering for dealing with crimes, better pay, among others, so as to improve in the implementation of laws and prosecution of offenders.

Security agencies in Nigeria (especially those at the borders like Nigerian Custom, Nigerian Immigration, and so on) should double up their effort in combating flows of human trafficking as they depart and gets into the country with all honesty and sincerity. There should be a strategy in place to make Nigeria secure functional control over its wide and porous borders focusing on constructing ways to curb illegitimate and unlawful crossing at the points of coming in and going out of the country.

There must be collaboration at all levels in getting rid of human trafficking through educating (awareness) and stopping others from getting involved with the trafficking syndicates. Governmental (National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons – NAPTIP) and non-governmental organisations should work hand in hand in order to minimise this problem of security in Nigeria. Many reports such as United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security report (1994), Enaikele & Olutayo (2011), and some other scholars agree with this recommendation, that the best approach in addressing human trafficking is cooperation and collaboration at every level and through all sectors. Although, much have been done in terms of creating awareness by different institutions and organisations (governmental and non – governmental), but more still needs to be done especially at the rural level.

Securing of states' borders is a major duty of the state, yet it has to ensure proper implementation of laws against human trafficking and prosecution of traffickers to the letter, with the full understanding that protection of human trafficking victims will automatically translates to reducing the menace and advancing national security.

Conclusively, human trafficking is an infringement on the rights of people, and a national embarrassment, all resources must be put together in combating it. According to the former president of the United States of America, Obama (then senator), human trafficking is a debasement of the common humanity. Initially, human trafficking was considered as threat to human security alone, but in the contemporary times, it is being seen as a crime that affects the totality of a nation. Even though it is not as conspicuous as other threats like terrorism, but it symbolises a grave hazard to the living standard and way of living of citizens of a nation, therefore, it is a serious threat to both human security and national security. If it can be successfully dealt with, then the threat it constitutes will practically disappear.

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