

## MORAL VALUES: BEDROCK FOR SUSTAINABLE SECURITY AND ECONOMIES IN AFRICA

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### Abstract

*Security of African states and economies have been faced by challenges as the region continues to witness insecurity in various ways and dimensions, poverty, hunger, unemployment, infrastructural decay amidst other unsavory incidence. The situation continually grows that it becomes worrisome that the continent seems not to be developing as expected. Using Nigeria as a case study, this work identifies that the fundamental problem lies with the human person who is deficient in area of moral values in dealing with public wealth. Using virtue ethics theory and secondary sources of information, the work discusses the challenges of security and economies of Africa to include corruption, tribalism, and such have consequences which include unemployment, hunger, insecurity and the like. The work sees moral values as the fundamental principle that if those who are managing the affairs of the states imbibe, the challenges will reduce and positive impacts seen. Such include: accountability, honesty, pursuit of common good, selflessness and so on.*

**Keywords:** Moral values, Security, Economies, Unemployment, Corruption.

### Introduction

It has been in the public domain that many African states are faced with security and economic challenges. These challenges have been responsible for the poor growth and development among the African States. Obi (2011) points out that when an issue is discussed and such after rebounds again, it remains crystal clear that it has a genuine problem but an unsatisfactory solution. Such is the situation about sustainable security and economies in Africa. The situation especially when one considers Nigeria is continually growing. Security challenges in the recent times have taken a multi-faceted dimension in such a way that uncertainties on the security of lives and property remain high. Security challenges not only affect lives and property but equally hits on the economy of a nation. Africa nay Nigeria has been experiencing security challenges which seem unabated and thus, the economy remains in shambles.

It is pertinent to mention that for any nation to develop, there are fundamental aspects that should be in place. These include economic development, social development, and environmental protection. This is in line with the United Nations 2005 World Summit Outcome Document titled “the interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars”. No doubt, Nigeria for instance has for years made plans that are wonderful in outlook. Mere looking at the plans be it economic, social, security, environmental and so on, it gives hope of a better outcome. However, with time such becomes obvious that the plans are mere paper work. The budgets of the state every year look hopeful but in the end little is achieved. This is a situation of much concern. Such concern was felt by Obi (2011) when he asserts that the society is tilting into what he described as egoistic and non-futuristic development. Citing Nigeria as an example, he points out that the country is where one chooses to enrich himself instead of executing a project that would have positive impact to both the present and future generation. This scenario is crystal clear in Nigerian state and as such it becomes imperative to emphasize an aspect of the human factor that could reposition the security and economy of the nation. Nmah (2011) viewing from the angle of security states that the nation spends much on security without getting a commiserate value of the money spent.

This work therefore examines certain factors responsible for continued challenges in the area of security and economies in Africa using Nigeria as a paradigm. The effects of such are pointed out. The work holds that it is the human person that plans and executes the plans for the nation. On that note, if the human person does not imbibe moral values which could allow him carry out his responsibilities as expected, the society will keep dwindling in security and economic development. Where man is highly guided by moral values, the security and economic challenges are reduced.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

**Moral Values:** Moral values are seen as the behavioural practices, goals, attitudes acceptable by the society. These are expected of the human person for harmonious co-existence as well as societal development. Such values are developed through human interactions, religious affiliations, education and so on. The values are to a greater extent universal no matter the religious, cultural, societal affiliation of an individual. For instance: honesty, integrity, accountability, justice, courage, cooperation and so on. Moral values concern themselves with right and wrong, they are the ideas that the society considers important.

**Security:** Security as a term may be seen as freedom from threat, danger or anxiety. It is a state of being protected. Ebeh (2015) opines that when security has to do with a nation, it connotes conditions of peace, stability, order and progress. In this regards, peace to a nation like Nigeria involves a situation where the nation experiences harmonious co-existence, social, political and economic stability. Ebeh further states that

National security question involves a lot of issues. It practically touches on all spheres of human existence. ...a dislocation in any particular area of the system is bound to have an overlapping effect on other areas. It ranges from food security to issues of environmental degradation. It touches on health matters. It encompasses psychological security as well as arms security. (p. 4).

The above position has shown that security of a nation touches all spheres of the nation for it is a system. Any malfunction in any part of the system affects the whole. He emphasizes that

A number of factors may expose a nation to danger. To that extent, national security may also be viewed as a multidimensional process whose purpose is to safeguard national values. The most fundamental values of any nation is its survival, self-preservation, and self-perpetuation. A nation that is capable of protecting herself from harm equally enjoys immense capacity for enviable development. We may therefore posit that national security and national development are complementary and inseparable phenomena. (p. 5).

By the above assertions, the current research relies on the understanding of security (national security) for its findings. Again, the present work acknowledges the fact that security and development remain inseparable. Security of a nation therefore has various factors that must be considered for it to be achieved especially the root causes of security challenges. Nwolise (2006) stresses more on security when he views security to have multi-facets. Security encompasses condition which suggests that the 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.

**Economy:** Economy according to Kenton (2021) has to do with the production, consumption, and distribution of goods and services used to fulfil the needs of those living and operating within the economic system. It is the large set of inter-related production, consumption, and activities that aid in determining how scarce resources are allocated. Kenton mentioned that the economy of a particular region or country is governed by its culture, laws, history, and geography, among other factors, and it evolves due to the choices and actions of the participants. This emphasis on the actions of the participants is apt to the current research as it is interested in the moral values of those handling the economy of Africans using Nigeria as a paradigm.

### **Security and Economic Challenges in Africa and the Resultant Effects vis-à-vis Nigeria**

Security challenges cum economic challenges have been the major problems Africa and Nigeria in particular are facing. Although without giving credence to military rule, it is imperative to mention that insecurity situation has been growing with alarming rate since the era of Nigeria's fourth republic (1999-date). In this way, there is security and economic problem in the country. No matter how it is looked at, one sees the human factor as the major cause. These are signs of leadership failure.

**Corruption as a Factor:** One of the fundamental causes of the challenges in Nigeria remains corruption. Izuegbu (2015) held this view to be a bane facing Nigeria. Where corruption is institutionalized, one could not expect much in terms of sustainable security and economic growth. Ogbeidi (2012) views political corruption as unethical behaviour, which violates the norms of the political order. Political corruption usually encompasses abuse by government officials such as embezzlement and cronyism, as well as abuses linking public and private actors such as bribery, extortion, influence peddling and fraud and so on. In this regards Ogbeidi maintains "corruption threatens good governance, sustainable development, democratic process, and fair business practices" (p. 5).

It is obvious that when political leadership of a state espouses corruption, it becomes difficult for it to act positively to the benefit of the state and its citizens. This clearly has been the case of Nigerian state since independence. Not minding the citizens, the political leadership class, in its quest to secure or retain power, suppress opposition, and have access to unlimited fund for personal use, have sacrificed positive governance on the altar of corruption. From the first generation of political leadership class through the successive military and civilian generation

of political leaders, Nigerian political leadership had grown continually in corrupt practice. Political corruption becomes a cancerous phenomenon that pervades the Nigerian nation unabated. If the cancerous part is not removed, it must definitely move the nation from deteriorating stage to decay. Corruption in Nigeria has long history among the leadership class. The Nigerian experience has shown that a wealthy nation in terms of resources does not guarantee security and economic development. Ogudiya (2010) regretted that despite natural endowment the country has, the citizens are still in penury as the economy continues to go down due to poor leadership and corruption. Ukwaba (2012) asserted to this long lived negative phenomenon in the nation's political landscape. He discussed series of corruption in the first republic of Nigeria. In his words Ukwaba (2002) analysed it this way:

... the platform for corruption in Nigeria was laid by the emerging petty bourgeoisie ruling class of the First Republic who, in betrayal of the public trust reposed in them, accumulated fortunes for themselves and for their henchmen. The anti-corruption strategy adopted at the time was more of instituting public enquiries which only indicated those involved with lesser penalty such as declaring some of them unfit to hold public office for not less than ten years, meaning that they could go and enjoy their ill-gotten wealth for ten years and come back to indulge in the same corrupt practices. (p. 34).

Not only that there was corruption, there was leniency in handling corrupt office holders. No one was made to repay what he stole rather; corrupt officers were let loose to use their wealth. Such attitude no doubt is capable of promoting corruption in the nation as it is witnessed daily. The Nigeria's Second Republic under Alhaji Shehu Shagari witnessed corruption on increasing level. Ikejiani-Clerk (1995) mentioned that the account of corruption during Shagari's era would fill the archives if recorded.

The third and fourth republic has no difference. No wonder Ogbeidi (2012) did not mince words when he asserts that

Incontrovertibly, corruption became endemic in the 1990s during the military regimes of Babangida and Abacha, but a culture of impunity spread throughout the political class when democracy returned to Nigeria in 1999. In fact, corruption took over as the engine of the Nigerian society and replaced the rule of law. (p. 16).

In the present republic (Fourth Republic) corruption has continued in all circles of government. In the words of Ogbeyi, "if corruption in the 1990s was endemic, corruption since the return of democracy in 1999 has been legendary" (p. 16). During the first four years of Olusegun Obasanjo, an audit report released by Vincent Azie who was the Acting Auditor-General of the Federation revealed that federal ministers allegedly stole more than N23 billion from public fund ranging from embezzlement, payments for jobs not done, over-invoicing, double debiting, inflation of contract figures and so on. Adekeye (2003) and Haruna (2009) hold that instead of the presidency to investigate or probe the ministers, Vincent Azie was retired hastily by the presidency for procedural offences.

It is obvious that the list is endless in the fourth republic. Ogbonna, Omoju and Udefuna (2012) among other scholars see corruption as one of the greatest challenges of a nation but were worried about the magnitude and degree of its manifestation in Nigeria's fourth republic. In all public sectors, corruption manifests. Obielosi (2012) culled from the Nigerian survey and corruption survey study, "Final Report" Institute for Development Research, stated that other governmental bodies experience corruption.

Corruption is a bane of security and economy in Nigeria. The political class is consumption-oriented. Soludo (2012) made the submission that the 'sharing' mentality has crippled development in Nigeria for years. Hard work is gone for nobody regards one for that. So, the nation is busy moving backward. Obielosi (2012) disturbed by such mentality and the state of the nation holds that

Most Nigerians are not perturbed with baking the cake. The conception is that the cake is baked already. Many struggle to get their own share of the already baked cake. This is why we move from decadence to decay. Most of the things we enjoy today came shortly before and immediately after independence. There is little or no effort to maintain the old and update them or even install the new. Proceeds are squandered and nothing done to get more. The most painful aspect is that culprits and perpetrators get free. Often they are even given other posts in ministries. The highest we have seen is that panels are set up and reports never made public or even adhered to. (p. 75).

The interest of many involved is not on improving the lots of the citizens nay the country. Everyone is interested in the culture of squandering and so, good governance has continued to elude Nigeria. Corruption is capable of taking a nation backward into the point that it becomes a value. Resources meant for social

services are diverted for private benefit. Obama (2006) sees corruption as capable of eroding the state from the inside out, sickening the justice system until there is no justice to be found, poisoning the Police force until their presence becomes a source of insecurity rather than a source of security. Nigeria no doubt has witnessed all the above observations of Obama. This is serious because as Oguejiofor (2012) holds “we have no hope of joining the community of developed nations unless we find a solution to that endemic problem pervading the whole gamut of governance in Nigeria” (p. 368).

**Ethnicism/Tribalism as a Factor:** Discussing the challenges facing the economy and security of the Nigerian state without reference to tribalism is like discussing processes of birth without fertilization. Asking the reasons for that may not be necessary when one appreciates the existence of over two hundred and fifty ethnic groups in Nigeria. Stories of tribal agitations have been on the pages of history books and newspapers as well as academic papers in Nigeria. A critical look at the nation’s incessant problems would always have something to do with tribalism. Nzomiwu (1999) observes that tribalism poses a dangerous signal to Nigeria in all ramifications. He asserts that it develops to the level that crimes are covered up because a particular tribe is concerned and also, contributes to poverty of the nation. One thing to restate is that since the amalgamation of this heterogeneous group of people as a nation voices have continued to sound.

The truth remains that tribes play a significant role in Nigerian nation and Africa in particular. Researches have shown that a tribe man is more important in Africa than a citizen of a state. In fact, state could be seen as European making. In Africa, language, culture, tradition, history, religion and social institutions belong to the tribe not the state. Even the distributive politics discussed above is part of what tribalism invented. The question of Nigeria project is inferior when compared with tribal project. A Nigerian is more at the tribe than the state no matter its political position and this has severely affected good governance especially where it affects equity and justice. Okpalike (2012) views that

In Nigeria, tribal fraternity is stronger than national unity; sectional interests attract more dependable and credible loyalty than national programs. The average Nigeria is more at the tribe than the nation.... There is more dignity in a tribal role than a national role and tribal roles demand more commitment and character than national roles. Most people will not feel fulfilled as having contributed to the society until such a contribution has been recognised by the tribe. (p. 232).

The picture showcased above cannot allow for sustainable security and economic viability. This develops into marginalization in all levels of government as Izuegbu (2012) holds. Even with the creation of states, the problem is still there and will continue if not checked. The concomitant effect is that whoever 'grabs' power in Nigeria faces his tribe to the detriment of other tribes. The most interesting part of it is that the judgement for a performing government is determined by what the government had done for a particular tribe. Whether other tribes 'benefit' from the government or not, that is not necessary as far as that particular tribe is 'benefitting'. With such situation in Nigeria, security and sustainable economy have been a mirage for over fifty years of independence of the nation. Edum and Amaefula (2012) recognized that tribalism is a serious challenge to Nigeria nation. According to them, "the leaders deny the prevalence of tribalism...and by implication, do not notice its adverse effects" (p. 175).

### **Resultant Effects of the Challenges**

**Poverty and Unemployment:** Poverty no doubt is not an unfamiliar concept to the citizens of the Nigerian state. Poverty is a situation of being poor. It is important to make it clear that the researcher's assessment is basically on the citizens of the state, not the country itself because the country Nigeria is rich in resources. The assessment focuses on how the abundant resources are contributed to the eradication of poverty. Scholars on issues about Nigeria have been unanimous in asserting that the nation Nigeria has not done well in the area of poverty reduction cum eradication. The most worrisome to the scholars is that the people who would have been living in wealth owing to the fact of the abundant resources are paradoxically wallowing in abject poverty while only few 'self-anointed' individuals enjoy the wealth of the nation. Chukwuemeka and Mbalisi (2012) among other scholars hold that "the nation's economy still presents an unsavoury paradox profile of a rich nation populated largely by poor people" (p. 99).

Certainly, the nation's position in poverty has a long history. What continues to be the concern of many analysts is the availability of resources in Nigeria which has failed to get to the masses. For Iwuoha (2012), poverty contributes to the vices experiencing in Nigeria.

Again, the massive unemployment in the nation is alarming. Assessing the number of graduates that leave the Nigerian higher institutions every year and the number that gets themselves engaged in profitable ventures, one would simply see the level of insincerity of the political class. The researcher holds that the government cannot employ everybody but the government through proper economic programmes can create enabling environment that would translate into



jobs. It is a truism that private sector drives economy of most developed countries of the world but that is only when the needful has been done by the government. Many students rejoice as soon as they are admitted into the university but they become sad at the end because of joblessness. Certain questions should be raised. Has the Nigerian government deemed it important to promote individual initiatives? Has the government created enabling environment that would attract investors to the country? What of the many industries that have collapsed in the country are there efforts to revive them? How sincere is the government in terms of privatization bids in Nigeria? What concrete efforts have been made for small scale industries to thrive and drive the economy of the state? The questions continue but the answers are far-fetched. What a nation needs is for the government to use the resources to create job opportunities but the case in Nigeria is different because of corruption and insincerity of the leaders. No wonder Oguejiofor (2012) observes that

The average Nigerian youth is living in a country that gives him little or no opportunities to make good, to live dignified like (sic) and exercise his God given abilities. Unemployment rate cannot even be ascertained since there is no instance in our public service that documents those that have not been employed. It is only through personal contacts that we can begin to imagine how alarming the rate of unemployment is in the country. In some parts of the country you can easily get ten thousand applicants when you advertise for 10 jobs. (p. 372).

This actually is a disheartening condition in a country like Nigeria. It has been observed that when advertisement for any job is made in Nigeria, the rate at which graduates would be scrambling for the job remains a source of concern. Abdullahi (2012) identified unemployment as one of the causes of crisis in Nigeria. On his part, Ogbeidi (2012) regretted that “it is simply disheartening that Nigeria a country blessed with natural resources is now doomed with uncertainty where abject, high unemployment rate... have become the order of the day” (p. 21). It then follows that Nigeria has great challenges to overcome.

**Insecurity:** One of the pronounced functions of any responsible government is security of lives and property. Security of any territory guarantees the growth of economic and social life of the area. Omede (2012) views security as a dynamic condition which involves the relative ability of a state to counter threats to its core values and interests. Nigeria is in the antithesis of security which is insecurity. Onifade, Imhonopi and Urim (2013) conceive insecurity as a state where human and national security of a country is compromised by internal or external forces or

interests exacerbated by the former's weak or poor economic, military and/or human resources development conditions. The above definition of insecurity is apt to this work owing to the fact that in Nigeria, insecurity and its dimensions depicts the picture. Nigeria as a nation since independence has had its share of insecurity and it is a continuum. It is to be recalled that the level of violence in a state is used to ascertain whether the government is good or bad.

The insecurity in Nigeria has been so pronounced in the recent times. Igbuzor (2011) holds that the cause is leadership failure. It is a result of inability of the government to provide public goods to the citizens. To this end, many frustrated people resort to violence at the slightest provocation or opportunity. Regretting that Nigeria has what it takes to provide security but the culture of corruption in public sphere results to the insecurity, Hazen and Homer (2007) describe it as paradox of plenty. With such leadership failure, the crime rate shoots up and the security of lives and property is threatened. Instead of the security of the citizens, the leaders protect themselves and their supporters. Egwu (2007) opines that the security of the Nigerian nation-state has been reduced to that of the ruler and his immediate supporters, so, the security of Nigeria has failed because it does not include vital aspects of social and national development supported by the provision of basic social, economic and even military conditions needed for adequate national security. Concretely, many scholars in their various literatures have given credence to the existence of insecurity in Nigeria. Nwagboso (2012), Nwolise (2006), Okafor (2011), Adesoji (2010), Achinama, Ighomerebo and Akpor-Robaro (2013) among other scholars have many of these evidence of insecurity in Nigeria.

### **Moral Values as Panacea to the Challenges of Sustainable Security and Economies in Nigeria and Africa in General**

The challenges discussed above have so far exposed that the issue of security and economy in Nigeria and Africa has much to do with the human person. The human person is the epicenter of every other factor that could drive sustainable security and economy of Africa. It may be out of place to keep emphasizing on the issues without getting to the root cause of the issue. Plans may be made, committees may be set up, experts may be engaged but if the root cause is not tackled, the problem must persist. Why should the economy continue to remain at negative side in Nigeria? Why the rise in insecurity in Nigeria? It is obvious that the human factor remains the issue here. As stated earlier, Nigeria is good at presenting a well articulated economic plan but the underlying question is how the plans were executed for the actualization of the expected economic benefit that

would enhance growth. The unrest and insecurity being witnessed daily are orchestrated by man who tries to harbour what should be used for all. It has been stated above that insecurity, unemployment, hunger, poverty are resultant effects of certain human factors. It then follows that to solve such problems, emphasis should be laid on the character of the person who manages the economy and invariably, who is in charge of security of the people. Emphasis on moral values comes to play.

In order to validate moral values as bedrock for sustainable security and economies, this work highlights the virtue ethics approach. The virtue ethics approach which was found in Plato's work but was so prominent in Aristotle's philosophy was concerned with human character and morality. It emphasizes consideration of actions based on reasons. For instance, an honest person cannot be identified simply as one who practices honest dealing and does not cheat. As Hursthouse (2013) holds, if such actions are done mainly because the agent thinks that honesty is the best policy or that they fear being caught out, rather than through recognizing "to do otherwise would be dishonest" as the relevant reason, they are not the actions of an honest person. In the works of Macintyre (1981) who popularised the theory, Aristotle did not aim to identify the qualities of good acts or principles in his definition of ethics but of good people. As Macintyre suggested, acting as a good person is the state of being well and doing well which makes a complete human life lived at its best, but for Aristotle, the virtuous man has to know that what he does is virtuous; and good man has to judge to do the right thing in the right place, at the right time and in the right way. The virtues include both intellectual and character virtues. There is need to feel that what one is doing is good and right; to have an emotional as well as a cognitive appreciation of morality is an essential component of virtue. It therefore follows that the effectiveness of an ethical system depends on the nature of the people who employ it. This suggests that the moral standard of individuals determines the actions such individuals take. The more sound ethics of an individual is, the more the person does what is right at the right time, right place and right way.

The virtue ethics theory or approach by implication has given credence to moral values as a hallmark for achieving human development. The human person remains the centre of all. It then goes that what is needed to drive the economies in Africa or ensure security is not just expertise but the underlying factor is the 'personality' of the person. Emphasis therefore is on the character of the persons involved, the sincerity of purpose of those piloting the affairs of the people. A leader whose moral values are questionable cannot move the nation positively for

no one gives what he has not. Bridges have collapsed, public funds have been embezzled, funds have been diverted, unemployment is on the increase and so on because the human person in positions of authority failed to be objective and guided by moral principles of using public resources for public good. The fact remains that if moral values are not considered by the people in charge of resources, one should not expect automatic security and economic development in Africa.

Emphasis on honesty, accountability, prudence, frugality, and commitment to duty, pursuit of common good, cooperation, justice, probity and so on is what Africans need. Africa has got leaders and experts that are capable of driving her economy and her security. There are experts with sound knowledge in the continent however, the questionable moral values have kept dragging the continent back. Where Africans build consciences in line with moral values, things will fall in place. The cases of fraud among the nations of Africa are disturbing. Such scenario cannot allow meaningful development and security of the states of Africa. The agitations today especially in Nigeria, the increase in unemployment all over the country and things like that are offshoots of lack of sound moral values.

### **Conclusion**

This work has x-rayed certain challenges facing the security and economic development of African States using Nigeria. Africa in most cases has been bedevilled with security challenges and economic backwardness. Nigeria as an example is not without both human and material resources to get to a sustainable security and economic growth. The problem lies majorly on the human person involved in the process. Non-existence of moral values in man has been a major threat to the security and economy of Africa. Where corruption persists, where tribalism, nepotism, ethnicism and the like are on the increase, one may not expect sustainable security and economy in Africa. Proper understanding and practice of moral values such as accountability, frugality, probity, justice, cooperation, honesty, commitment to the common good and the like will transform African economy and security. It then follows that men at the helm of affairs should be ready to be guided by the dictates of moral values. Where such is done, there will be visible positive impacts, execution of plans will be without corruption. In that case, the problem of insecurity is reduced drastically and economic growth and development witnessed.

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