Eshi as an Agent of Security in Avurugo Igala
Nke Si N'aka

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Abstract

The wanton insecurity, criminality, kidnapping, instability and terrorism currently ravaging Nigeria have affected development in the country. Albeit, insecurity has been with us probably. Since we became a republic, however, it is rapidly on the increase and taking new dimensions in the country today. This study investigates the deity Eshi as an agent of security in Avurugo Igala. The purpose of the study is to find out the extent to which Eshi protects and secures the people of Avurugo, Igala. During the course of this study, primary and secondary sources were utilized. The study adopts risk and neorealism theories as preferred theoretical frameworks. The data was analyzed descriptively. The study therefore noted that despite the insecurity challenges in the country, there are some security agents that guide and protect the people of Igala land. Some deities make great impact in Igala land in the area of security. The study suggests that since some deities help in the security of the people, the communities that own such deity should uphold and maintain the activities of such deities for prosperity.

Keywords: Insecurity, security, Human Existence Development and Community.

Introduction

Insecurity is an absence of protection or safety in human existence. Omoyibo and Akpomera (2012) define insecurity as uncertainty or anxiety about oneself and lack of confidence. They went further to state that insecurity entails peril, death trap, ambiguity, dearth of fortification, and lack of security. It is the state of being prone or vulnerable to danger or threat of danger.

Insecurity has become a devastating blow which security agents in Nigeria appear incapable of handling visa a vis its multifaceted manifestations like bumbling kidnapping/hostage taking, destruction of property, creation of fear to mention but a few. Nevertheless, this paper focuses on the spate of insecurity in Nigeria which has generated national security concern. National security could be defined as the protection or the safety of a country's secrets and its citizens hence emphasizing the overall security of a nation. This protection extends to safeguarding a nation against domestic and foreign threats. National security is best described as a capacity to control those domestic and foreign conditions that the public opinion of a given community believes necessary to enjoy its own self-determination or autonomy, prosperity and wellbeing. Similarly, national security according to Adedimeji (2009) may be regarded as the collective security of the people in a particular nation and not the security of the person or the political party in power. National security is the safety of a nation against threats such as terrorism, war or espionage. In summary, national security is the extent to which a nation safeguards itself from dangers, both internal and external.

Nations, societies and communities have employed several means in order to maintain the security of their people. Federal Government has made several efforts at putting an end to this menance of insecurity. One of which is the inauguration of the security outfit known as the joint task for singular aim of quenching the activities of robbers, ethnic militia, kidnappers as well as terrorism. Furthermore, in most traditional communities like Avurugo and Odolu, they have fortified their deities for their security. Most deities in various societies/communities protect and safeguard the lifes and properties of the people in the area. Eshi deity in Avurugo community is a very strong security agent.

Origin and Role of Eshi in Avurugo Community

The Avurugo in Kogi state can he found along the Northern Coast of Africa. It is bounded by the East by Okpuje, west Odolu, North Okwu and South Nrobo—Uzo Uwani. Those who founded Avurugo, at the beginning of the 16th century according to Ameh (2010) were no common place wayfarer with prosaic pedestrian pedigree. They were men and women garbed in the royal garments straight from the place of the Atta Igala the then powerful leader of the Igala race.

Literature Review

Various scholars across the world have presupposed diverging perspectives on the concept of security. According Igbuzor (2011), human security could be defined as protection from harm and hurtful disruptions in the daily activities, at homes, offices or communities. That is, security is the state of being safe and secure from danger, it could also be protection from chronic threats such as hunger, diseases and depression. Okereke (2013) opines that human security is the protection of important aspect of human lives in a way that would enhance human freedom and fulfilment. Human security encompasses freedom, want, harm, fear and the freedom to take appropriate actions without any form of hindrance. It is also the assurance of future well being and freedom from threat. Adejumo (2012) observes security from the socio-political perspective averred that security involve capacity to pursue cherished political stability and consequently social ambitions. That is, security is sociopolitical in nature as without security, there can be no political stability and consequently social activities will be in chaos. Palme (2014) argues that there is a connection between security and survival. For him, security is a basic condition for the survival of human beings. In the views of Otto and Ukpere (2012), security relates to the presence of peace, safety, happiness and protection of human and physical resources or the absence of crisis. From the ongoing discussions, one can deduce or extrapolate that security is any laid down procedures toward the protection of persons and property against hostile persons. It is a situation whereby conducive atmosphere is created within which people in the area can go about their normal daily activities without threat to either their lives or properties.

Theoretical Explication

Theories provide a framework for understanding behaviour, thought and development. By having a broad base of understanding about the how's and ways of human behaviour, we can better understand ourselves and others. Security abounds in theories such as risk, realist, resilience, neorealism to mention but a few. Time may not permit us to discuss the numerous theories. Owing to this, few theories will be canvassed thus:

Risk Theory

Risk theory is a theory that provides frameworks that can contribute in mitigating risks, coming to grips with uncertainty, and offering ways to organize society in such a way that the unexpected and unknown can be anticipated or at least dealth with a reasonable and ethically acceptable way. It was proffered by few psychologists — Amos Tversky, Daniel Kahneman and Paul Slovic in 1977, when they started to investigate the ways in which people as a matter of fact make decisions under uncertainty or risk. It attempts to explain the decisions people make when they are faced with uncertainty about the future. Risk theory is a widely used scientific discipline, based on the identification of a threat, the specification of risk and the specification of how to overcome the risk. Risk theory is relevant to the present study because it will help in ~~the~~ analysizing of security and how to handle insecurity.

Resilience theory

Resilience theory is a theory that addresses the root causes of vulnerabilities, focuses attention on emerging risks and tackles early action. It was propounded by a clinical psychologist - Dr. Norman Gamezy around 1974, and he was also noted as being the founder of research in resilience. It has its roots in the study of adversity and interest in how adverse life experiences impact harmfully on people. Resilience theory is a collective resilience model contributed by many researchers. It argues that it is not the nature of adversity that is most important, but how we deal with it. When we face adversity, misfortune, or frustration, resilience helps us bounce back. It helps us survive, recover, and even thrive in the face and wake of misfortune. In 2005, Shechan defined resilience as an interaction concept that is concerned with the combination of serious risk experiences and a relatively positive psychological outcome despite those experience. Resilience is important because it gives people the strength needed to process and overcome hardship. Those lacking resilience get easily overwhelmed and may turn to unhealthy coping mechanism.

Neorealism theory

Neorealism theory can also be called structural realism. It is a theory of international relation that emphasizes the role of power politics in international relations. It sees competition and conflict as enduring features and sees limited

potential for cooperation. It is a theory of international relations and was first articulated by Kenneth Waltz in l979. The basic tenets of neorealism enable the systematic approach to studying shifts in state behaviour. The theory claims to explain the reality of international politics. It emphasizes the constraints on politics that result from humankind's egoistic nature and the absences of a central authority above the state. For realists, the highest goal is the survival of the states, which explains why states actions are judged according the ethics of responsibility rather than by moral principles. The dominance of realism has generated a significant strand of literature criticising its main tenets. However, despite the value of the criticisms, realism continues to provide valuable insights and remains an important analytical tool for the analysis of nations stability. Neorealism according to P. DnWilliam (2008) depicts the international system as a realm where self-help is the primary motivation; it is of the opinion that states must provide security for themselves because no other agency or actor can be counted on to do so. The theory is very important to this study because it sees security as the security of the state and places particular emphasis on presentation of the state's territorial integrity and the physical safety of its inhabitants.

Empirical Studies

While the above reviews provide the theoretical framework for the study, materials have also been taken from other researchers.

Onyechi, (1990) studies Edvugwu the hero of Obimo oral tradition. The objective of his study is to find out the position of Edvugwu as a strong deity in Obimo. His study was qualitative research design. Onyechi's study observed that Edvugwu was a deified hero in Obimo land. Also he found out that Edvugwu Obimo secures the life and property of Obimo community. Onyechi,O.O. (1990) and the present study are similar because both of them secure the life and property of the communities. The two studies differ in the sense that while Edvugwu Obimo is a deity, Eshi Avurugo is an idol.

Onoh, O (1998) studies oral documentation: The example of Uto Nsude. The aim of his study is to find out the place of Uto in Nsude oral tradition. The research was a descriptive research. The research found out that Uto Nsude in Udi, Enugu state has been a great source of security in Obimo community. Again, the study

found out that there would have been no Nsude without Uto Nsude, the legendary precursor, on whom all the historical myths and legendary concerning Nsude uptill date revolve. Onoh's study and the present study are similar because both are talking about the security of the community. The two research works differ because Uto was a human being that was dieyfied while Eshi is an idol propounded by the early settlers of Avurugo.

Methodology

Data for this study were elicited from the primary source and secondary source. The instrument used in data collection is the oral interview. Six old people of Avurugo three men and three women were interviewed. They were among the oldest people of the community. They were selected using accidental sampling. Accidental sampling mostly entails easy-to-reach people for convenience and accessibility. Furthermore, the sampling method is sufficient as it draws from a population that is close to hand and within the research's areas of contact. The responses are analyzed using qualitative method of research design.

Discussion of Findings

The Eshi Deity

The history of Avurugo dates back as far as human memories could recount- And like the history of many local groups in Nigeria, the received accounts are for the most parts purely mythological and legendary during that remote period, the people were illiterate and their languages unwritten, and so all that is known then was from tradition handed down from generation to generation. In this content, most of the traditions found in Avurugo revolve around the deity Eshi Avurugo Edem Eke the legendary precursor and founding father of Avurugo. Eshi Avurugo was said to be an idol prepared by the pioneer habitant of the area.

From the information we got during our research, Eshi was an idol arranged by the early settler of Avurugo community for the purpose of security. According to Omnicha one of the informants, the people of Avurugo took in the Eshi during the wars and other moment of attacks from people or other Avurugo community. He went further to note that people outside Igala land also take refuge in Eshi till date.

Eshi The Security Agent

There is no doubt that Eshi Avurugo is a great idol in Avurugo history. This greatness had made it possible for it to .be able to guide and protect the land of Awurugo and beyond. Eshi is a supernatural being in Avurugo. The people of Avurugo worship it and they believe it controls or exerts force over some aspects of their lifes. According to Peter (2022), one of the respondents, the Eshi has great powers that nobody on earth joke with. He went further to mention that Eshi has multiple functions in the community which such as presiding over procreation, rains, irrigation, agriculture, destiny and justice. The idol (Eshi) controls all the activities in the community. Another informant Adejo mentioned that Eshi secures people and, community in many ways such as killing anybody that steals any item being guarded by Eshi. Again, that people all over the area consult Eshi for so many purposes. He also pointed out that people from other communities do come and pick Eshi symbol to their community to wreak vengeance. According to Adejo, Eshi does not waste time in killing any offender and that Eshi always demand for the head of anybody it kills. Hence, people of Avurugo and beyond fear Eshi and its activities. They do not joke with anything concerning Eshi. The idol Eshi is a security agent in Avurugo and many other communities around. Moreover, Eshi secures his people from so many angles thus: stealing aspect, kidnapping, killing and land disputes among others.

Stealing

Eshi doesn't joke with thieves. According to Adejo, one of our informants, any thief that steal any item Eshi is safeguarding does not last up to seven native weeks. Once somebody takes any property belonging to Eshi's jurisdiction, the person will fall sick. The sickness will come inform of swollen stomach. The stomach will protrude and continue to increase in size until the victim becomes uncomfortable and die. One significant thing about the death of the thief is that nobody cries and the body is not buried. The community throws the body to the evil forest. The informant made us to understand that thieves do not go near anything that is under Eshi jurisdiction. Hence Eshi is a very good security agent because anything in its custody is secured.

Kidnapping

In Avurugo community, kidnapping is not rampart like in other communities around. This is as a result of the giant security Eshi. According to Sule, one of our informants, people from Avurugo are always free from the kidnappers because once they are kidnapped and Eshi is informed, the kidnappers become sick and tormented instantly to the extent that they will be trying so many things to find out the cause of their illness. At times, the kidnappers will see unknown men that will tell them to release the captives and be free. These strange developments will make them to release the Avurugo people they are holding, and once they release them all the illness will leave them. This incident was revealed by one of our informants Sule who was once a victim of the kidnappers.

Killing (Murder)

Killing or murder of any kind is prohibited in Avurugo community. Eshi frowns at any murderer. If anybody kills in Avurugo, the murderer will be afflicted with sicknesses of swollen body. The whole body becomes protruded and the person does not last two days with the illness, as he dies within two days. Once the person is dead, the body will be thrown into the evil forest and the property will be taken to the Eshi shrine. According to Adebo, our informant, nobody touches a pin that belongs to the person killed by Eshi. Everything becomes Eshi's property, even the wife or husband of the diseased depending on the person killed by Eshi.

Land dispute

In Avurugo community, before you drag anything especially land with anybody, you must be sure that you are the rightful owner of the land. According to Ameh, Eshi Avurugo hates anybody that forcefully acquires another person's land. He went further to tell us that Eshi secures people's land for them, once somebody is dragging your land and you are sure that you are the rightful owner of the land; what you need to do is just to consult Eshi and Eshi will fight for you. He strikes any intrude to the land with sickness and if the person does not leave the land for the rightful owner, the intruder will die.

It is pertinent to note here that anybody killed by Eshi is not buried rather the body is thrown to the evil forest by the community.

Summary and Conclusion

The security of a community is very important because it is not only about reducing and preventing injury and crime. It is also about building strong cohesive, vibrant, participatory community. This means that perception of safety is as important as measuring injury and crime rates. Any community without security is faced with an oppressive regime, human rights abuses, and a racial segregation. The roles of security agents are to protect and defend the domestic threats. To uphold and enforce the criminal laws of Nigeria. Eshi Avurugo protects and defends the people of Avurugo and beyond. The study advises the communities to maintain and uphold the activities of their deities because they are very strong agents of security.

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LIST OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

S/N	Name	Age	Status	Occupation
i.	Omicha Ogbobe	104	Onyishi	Farmer
ii.	John Ameh	52	Educated	Civil servant
iii.	Adejo Omeba	72	Chief Priest	Herbalist
iv.	Suleman	75	Elder	Farmer
v.	Adebo Okoriko	87	Elder	Herbalist
vi.	John Abu	62	Educated	Civil servant