IJAAR PUBLISHING®

Scholarly Journal of Social Sciences Research | ISSN: 2955-0785
Vol. 4, Issue 4 (2025) | www.ijaar.org/sjssr

The Interplay of Insecurity and Politics: Implications for Human Life and Prosperity

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Abstract

Insecurity remains one of the most critical challenges facing many developing societies, especially in regions where governance structures are fragile and political processes are highly contentious. This paper examines the multidimensional relationship between insecurity and politics, highlighting how political actors often exploit insecurity for electoral advantage, economic benefits, or power consolidation. The politicization of insecurity undermines national cohesion, weakens institutions, and exacerbates human suffering. The paper adopts a qualitative and descriptive approach to explore how insecurity affects citizens' daily lives, socioeconomic development, psychological well-being, and national prosperity. It argues that sustainable security requires a depoliticized approach rooted in cooperation, long-term planning, and people-centered governance. The article concludes that insecurity must be addressed through collective responsibility, equitable governance, and inclusive participation, particularly of youth, who are both victims and potential agents of change.

Keywords: Insecurity, Security, Politics, Governance, Electoral Manipulation

Aina, M. J. & Danjuma, A. (2025). The Interplay of Insecurity and Politics: Implications for Human Life and Prosperity. *Scholarly Journal of Social Sciences Research. 4*(4), 71-75. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18085024

Introduction

Insecurity and politics are deeply interconnected phenomena that shape the functioning and stability of societies. Insecurity refers to a condition of vulnerability to threats, violence, or harm, which may arise from crime, terrorism, insurgency, kidnapping, communal clashes, or structural inequalities (Nwankwo, 2020). Beyond its physical manifestations, insecurity also includes psychological fear, uncertainty, and a breakdown of public trust in institutions.

Politics, according to Lasswell (1936), revolves around "who gets what, when, and how." In contemporary democratic societies, politics influences resource distribution, governance priorities, and public policy, including security strategy. When the environment is insecure, politics becomes tense and reactionary; conversely, when political leaders act irresponsibly or self-interestedly, insecurity worsens.

The interplay between insecurity and politics is particularly evident in countries where governance institutions are weak, corruption is widespread, and public trust in leadership is low. In such societies, insecurity becomes both a tool and a consequence of political action.

This paper expands on these issues by exploring the dynamics of political manipulation of insecurity, the socioeconomic consequences for citizens, and the broader implications for national prosperity. It also highlights the growing frustration among youth populations who experience insecurity directly and often feel abandoned by political leadership.

Conceptual Clarifications

Insecurity

Insecurity is not merely the absence of physical safety; it includes systemic and structural conditions that expose individuals or communities to risks. These risks may stem from economic deprivation, political instability, ethnic tensions, weak law enforcement, organized crime, or socio-political exclusion (Hassan, 2020). Insecurity disrupts normal life and creates an atmosphere of fear, which reduces productivity, investment, and social well-being.

Politics

Politics encompasses the processes, institutions, and interactions through which societies make decisions, allocate resources, and exercise authority. Political actors influence public life through policies, laws, and governance frameworks. In fragile democratic contexts, political behavior often determines how effectively insecurity is managed or exacerbated (Adebayo, 2020).

Politicization of Security Challenges

The politicization of insecurity occurs when political actors exploit violent incidents, insurgency, or crime for political advantage. Instead of addressing root causes, leaders may blame opponents, manipulate public fears, or capitalize on crises for electoral gain. Adebayo (2020) emphasizes that this practice weakens institutions and diverts attention from meaningful security reforms.

Electoral Manipulation and Security

In many contexts, security agencies become tools in the hands of political elites during election periods. Deployment of military or police forces is sometimes used to intimidate

voters or suppress opposition. This weakens the neutrality of security institutions and fosters citizen distrust.

Governance Failure and Insecurity

Poor governance fuels insecurity when political leaders fail to provide basic services, equitable distribution of resources, or strong institutions. Corruption diverts funds meant for policing, intelligence gathering, or community development, leaving the population vulnerable to violence, crime, and exploitation.

Ethno-Political Dimensions of Insecurity

In multiethnic societies, insecurity is often framed through ethnic or religious lenses. Political actors use identity politics to mobilize support, which can lead to communal conflict, militancy, or insurgency. In such contexts, insecurity becomes deeply tied to competition for power and resource control.

Consequences of Insecurity on Society

1. Economic Consequences

Insecurity stifles economic activities by disrupting markets, discouraging investment, and reducing productivity. The World Bank (2020) observes that regions plagued by violence experience slower economic growth, higher unemployment, and weaker fiscal performance. Businesses relocate, farms become inaccessible due to fear of attacks, and transportation costs rise due to security risks.

2. Social Consequences

Insecure societies face breakdowns in social cohesion as fear erodes community trust. Families are displaced, social interactions diminish, and communal structures weaken. Schools shut down in conflict-prone areas, depriving children and youth of education opportunities.

3. Psychological Consequences

Hassan (2020) highlights that prolonged exposure to insecurity results in trauma, anxiety, and depression. Individuals living in volatile regions often experience constant fear and emotional instability, which affects their productivity and relationships.

4 Political Consequences

Persistent insecurity delegitimizes governments and erodes public trust. Citizens begin to view the state as incapable of protecting them, which may lead to political apathy, protests, or in extreme cases, support for non-state armed groups.

The Youth and Insecurity

1. Youth as Primary Victims

Young people disproportionately suffer from insecurity due to their mobility, educational disruption, and exposure to unemployment. Many youths become victims of kidnapping, banditry, communal clashes, or gang violence.

2. Youth Frustration and Political Disillusionment

Okonjo-Iweala (2020) notes that youths express growing frustration over ineffective political responses to insecurity. Their aspirations are hindered by fear, lack of opportunities, and diminished social mobility.

3. Youth Involvement in Crime Due to Insecurity

In contexts of prolonged insecurity, some youths are drawn into criminal activities or armed groups due to unemployment, marginalization, or misinformation.

4 Youth as Agents of Security Reform

Despite challenges, youths remain powerful actors in peacebuilding through advocacy, innovation, community engagement, and digital activism.

Implications for Human Life and Prosperity

1. Insecurity limits access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities—key components of human capital. This has long-term effects on productivity and national development.

2. A country facing constant insecurity cannot attract investment, tourism, or foreign partnerships. Human and material resources are destroyed, reducing national prosperity.

3. Security crises overwhelm institutions, leading to ineffective law enforcement, judicial delays, and reduced state legitimacy.

4. Internal displacement disrupts livelihoods, increases poverty, and places pressure on host communities and government resources.

Strategies for Depoliticizing and Addressing Insecurity

1. Governments must prioritize transparency, accountability, and equitable resource distribution to build trust and reduce grievances.

2. Local communities must be involved in designing and implementing security strategies to enhance effectiveness and sustainability.

3. Empowering youth through skills, education, and entrepreneurship reduces vulnerability to criminal recruitment.

4. Modern security threats require technological responses, including digital surveillance, intelligence analysis, and data-driven policing.

5. Transnational crimes such as trafficking and terrorism require collaborative approaches.

Conclusion

The interplay between insecurity and politics presents profound challenges to human life, development, and national prosperity. Politicizing insecurity whether through manipulation, selective enforcement, or neglect deepens suffering and erodes trust in governance institutions. Sustainable solutions require collaborative efforts, strong leadership, inclusive governance, and meaningful youth participation. Ultimately, depoliticizing security and prioritizing human well-being are essential steps toward achieving peace, stability, and prosperity.

Recommendations

1. Political actors should avoid exploiting insecurity for partisan gain and instead collaborate across party lines to address root causes.

2. Government should prioritize citizen safety by investing in effective policing, intelligence gathering, and poverty alleviation strategies.

3. Youth empowerment programs should be expanded to reduce frustration, unemployment, and crime susceptibility.

4. Strengthen community policing and local security networks to ensure timely reporting and response.

5. Enhance transparency and accountability in security sector funding and operations.

6. Promote national unity and social cohesion through inclusive policies that reduce ethnic and regional tensions.

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