

Poetry As Security Advocacy: State-Led Mitigation Strategies in The 2021 Hausa Poetry Competition on Insecurity in Northern Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Poetry functions as a potent, non-violent instrument for shaping collective societal consciousness by conveying diverse messages concerning education, social relations, elections, politics, morality, and religion. The state authority (government) constitutes the backbone of any society; thus, a nation lacking a functional governance system to manage its structural framework and daily affairs inevitably faces instability and regression. This paper examines selected entries from a 2021 poetry competition focused on the security crisis in Northern Nigeria, with the aim of elucidating the role of state authorities in mitigating national security threats as conceptualized by the poets. The study employs a qualitative methodology that integrates textual analysis, interviews with selected poets, and a review of relevant literature. The findings reveal that state-led implementation of justice, youth employment, anti-corruption measures, political reform, border control, direct counter-terrorism operations, conflict resolution, socioeconomic empowerment, and arms control are pivotal to restoring security. Conversely, the failure of state authorities to fulfil these fundamental responsibilities plunges the nation into severe crises characterized by the loss of lives, destruction of property, and displacement, as vividly illustrated by the analyzed poetic verses. The study contributes to scholarship on the intersection of cultural production, peacebuilding, and governance in contemporary Africa.

Keywords: Security, State Authority, Poetry Competition, Security Mitigation Strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Hausa literary scholars assert that poetry reflects the socio-cultural, religious, economic, and political realities of a society (Gusau, 2002, p. 68). Poetry is the artistic arrangement of speech employing structured, rhythmic, and aesthetic language to convey specific messages. In Hausaland, the deployment of verse for religious, political, or social commentary is historically deep-rooted; the Hausa have long composed poetry in response to phenomena that profoundly affect their collective consciousness. Poets independently select themes motivated by awe, grief, joy, or grievances, using verse as an emotional and intellectual outlet (Idris, 2010). This tradition positions Hausa poetry as a significant medium for social critique, political advocacy, and community mobilisation.

Historical Context of the Security Crisis in Northern Nigeria

The Boko Haram insurgency, which began in northeastern Nigeria in 2009, has resulted in over 350,000 deaths and displaced more than 2.6 million people (Agba, 2018). While initially concentrated in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states, the insurgency has expanded, with splinter groups such as the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) maintaining an active presence across the Lake Chad basin.

Concurrently, the Northwest geopolitical zone has witnessed a significant upsurge in banditry, kidnapping for ransom, and rural violence. Criminal networks operating from forests and ungoverned spaces have terrorised farming communities, disrupted agricultural livelihoods, and created widespread food insecurity. Herder-farmer conflict, exacerbated by climate change, population growth, and land-use pressures, has further compounded the security challenges, resulting in communal violence and displacement across multiple states



(Sarkin Sudan, Idris, & Umar, 2024). The cumulative effect of these overlapping crises is a humanitarian emergency characterised by mass displacement, economic devastation, and a profound crisis of governance legitimacy.

Federal and state governments have responded through military operations (e.g., Operation Lafiya Dole, Operation Hadarin Daji), peacebuilding programmes, and socioeconomic interventions such as the National Social Investment Programme and the Anchor Borrowers' Programme. However, these efforts have yielded mixed results, with analysts and civil society organisations calling for more comprehensive, community-centred approaches (Garba, 2022). It is within this context of urgent national crisis and contested policy responses that the 2021 Usmanu Danfodiyo University poetry competition emerged as a distinctive intervention.

Poetry Competitions as Sociocultural Instruments

The formation of the Association of Hausa Poets and Scholars in Argungu in 1981 marked the inception of institutionalised written Hausa poetry competitions. Since then, these have expanded significantly under the auspices of literary societies, government agencies, and private individuals. In response to the escalating security crisis, the administration of Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, initiated a specialised intervention to sensitise the public, remind the government of its duties, and proffer solutions through a written Hausa poetry competition. The rationale draws inspiration from historical precedents where literary predecessors successfully employed verse to educate and mobilise the populace on critical national issues. The competitive format was strategically chosen to rapidly incentivise and mobilise contemporary poets.

Sociologists, political scientists, theologians, and interdisciplinary scholars have documented global security challenges from various dimensions. Some have analysed these threats through the lens of socioeconomic underdevelopment (e.g., Walter Rodney, 1942–1980), while others have critiqued them as drivers of systemic exploitation (e.g., Kwame Nkrumah, 1909–1966; Bunza, 2002, p. 2). This paper builds upon literature concerning the utility of written poetry in countering societal vices. Specifically, it examines state-led security mitigation strategies as depicted by participants in the 2021 Usmanu Danfodiyo University (UDUS) poetry competition, highlighting the analytical pathways proposed by the poets

Significance and Contribution of the Study

This study makes several contributions. First, it adds to scholarship on the role of cultural production in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, demonstrating that written Hausa poetry serves as a potent instrument for political critique, policy advocacy, and social mobilisation. Second, by documenting the poets' recommendations for both hard and soft security approaches, the study provides insights into how communities perceive and propose solutions to complex security challenges. Third, the research positions Hausa poetry within broader debates about the relationship between governance, development, and security, challenging assumptions that poetry is primarily an aesthetic or entertainment form. Finally, the study engages with both Western and African intellectual traditions, integrating theoretical perspectives from Aristotle, Rawls, and African scholars to analyse the poets' recommendations

Conceptual Clarifications

The foundational pillars of this study rest on three primary concepts: Security, State Authority (Government), and Competition. Conceptualizing these terms clarifies their contextual intersection within this investigation.

Security

Bargery (1934, p. 1031) defines security as “guarding, or watching over,” corresponding to the Hausa terms ‘gadi or sa ido’ the act of monitoring an object or entity to prevent damage or theft. Hassan (2018, p. 130) expands this definition by describing security as safeguarding critical assets or individuals from harmful interference, implying protection, custody, restraint, or enclosure. At the national level, security encompasses the comprehensive protection of citizens, property, and territorial integrity, ensuring absolute peace of mind,

stability, and the elimination of existential threats to life, health, and property. Soba (2017) characterizes security as the strategic defence of self, community, or environment against perceived threats that undermine life, property, or habitat. Historically, traditional security has focused on defending personal and communal assets from hostile acquisition. Similarly, Sanyinna (2015, p. 34) states that security is the preservation or protection of an individual, locality, or vital asset through physical presence and oversight. Adamu (2014, p. 6) links security to specialised management systems aimed at safeguarding civilian lives, private property, and state infrastructure. Shehu (2018) conceptualizes security as a strategic mechanism for managing a nation's territory, wealth, and population to prevent destruction and the violation of human dignity. For this study, security is understood as a comprehensive condition in which individuals, communities, and the nation-state are free from threats to life, property, and well-being, and state institutions function effectively to maintain order and protect citizens' rights.

State Authority (Government)

The Hausa term hukuma derives from hukunci, which signifies power, governance, jurisdiction, or a sovereign territory under a specific administration (CNHN, 2006, p. 190). In this context, hukuma refers to the governing body or individuals vested with institutional authority to command, regulate, and enforce compliance. The state authority represents the legitimate government established under constitutional frameworks to serve the citizenry, uphold the rule of law, and protect lives, liberties, and national wealth. It holds the exclusive monopoly on the legitimate use of force to defend the state, execute judicial decisions, and suppress terrorism, insurgencies, civil unrest, and external aggression. Drawing on the poets' perspectives, state authority is conceptualised not merely as a coercive institution but as a fiduciary body with constitutional and moral obligations to ensure justice, equitable development, and the protection of citizens' rights

Competition

According to Bargery (1934, p. 370) and the Centre for the Study of Nigerian Languages (CNHN, 2006, p. 161), the term gasa (competition) carries multiple connotations, including emulation, rivalry, contestation, and mutual opposition. Within written poetry, Lawal (2016) defines a competition as an exchange of poetic epistles (kasida) in which poets counter, reply to, or debate specific themes through verse. Thus, in literary analysis, a poetry competition is not merely a race for prizes but an interactive dialogue, critique, or formal contest among poets. Functionally, it serves as a sociocultural instrument used across various dimensions of human endeavour to enlighten, motivate, and mobilize communities, ultimately yielding critical insights into contemporary societal issues and their underlying causes. The 2021 UDUS competition exemplifies this dialogic function, providing a platform for poets to engage with pressing security challenges and propose actionable recommendations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Poetry, Politics, and Social Critique in African Literature

The relationship between poetry and social critique has been extensively explored in African literary scholarship. Across the continent, writers have employed creative expression to challenge oppressive regimes, advocate for social justice, and mobilise communities. The work of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o demonstrates the power of literature in decolonisation struggles; Wole Soyinka's poetry and drama engage with political corruption and authoritarianism in Nigeria. Chinua Achebe's corpus reflects a sustained engagement with questions of power, morality, and social responsibility. The tradition of "poetry as resistance" is particularly relevant to understanding Hausa poetry's function in security crises. Scholars such as Mua'awiya and Idris (2014) and Aliyu (2019) have examined how oral and written poetic forms in African societies serve as vehicles for political commentary. In Nigeria, poets like Niyi Osundare and Odia Ofeimun exemplify the use of poetry to challenge state violence and economic exploitation (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994). These traditions resonate with the Hausa poetic tradition, which has historically addressed political, religious, and social issues through verse. Scholars such as Dangambo (2007) and Gusau (2002) have documented the evolution of



written Hausa poetry, noting that the transition from oral to written forms has expanded its reach, enabling poets to engage with literate audiences and institutional frameworks.

Poetry as Advocacy in Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution

A growing body of scholarship examines the role of cultural production in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Studies by Schirch (2005) and Ugor (2013) demonstrate how creative arts contribute to conflict transformation by providing spaces for dialogue, healing, and the articulation of alternative narratives. In contexts of violence, poetry can serve as a mechanism for processing trauma, challenging dominant narratives, and imagining peaceful futures. In Nigeria, research by Adebayo (2018) and Agwuele (2020) has explored how theatre, poetry, and other artistic forms address ethnic conflict, religious violence, and governance failures, highlighting the potential of creative interventions to complement formal peacebuilding processes. The present study builds on this literature by examining the 2021 UDUS poetry competition, which explicitly sought to harness written Hausa poetry to generate solutions to the security crisis in Northern Nigeria.

Governance, Development, and Security in Nigeria

The relationship between governance, development, and security has been extensively debated in Nigerian scholarship. Scholars such as Akinwale (2012) and Adebayo (2015) argue that insecurity is fundamentally linked to governance failures, including corruption, weak institutional capacity, inequality, and lack of inclusive development. The concept of human security, as articulated by the UNDP (1994), provides a framework for understanding the multidimensional nature of security challenges, emphasising protection from threats including poverty, disease, environmental degradation, and violence. This framework resonates with the poets' recommendations, which consistently emphasise socioeconomic factors youth employment, poverty alleviation, and social welfare as essential components of sustainable security. Bunza (2022) and Garba (2022) provide insights into Hausa perspectives on security, demonstrating that traditional concepts emphasise community, cooperation, and moral responsibility alongside physical protection. The 2021 poetry competition reflects this broader understanding, as poets address not only immediate threats of violence but also underlying social, economic, and governance failures.

METHODOLOGY AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopts a qualitative design integrating textual analysis, semi-structured interviews with selected poets, and a review of relevant literature, enabling the study to move beyond textual interpretation to capture the poets' intentions and contextual understandings.

Research Design and Data Sources

Primary data comprise the poetic entries submitted to the 2021 UDUS written Hausa poetry competition. A purposive sampling technique selected poems explicitly addressing state-led mitigation strategies. Selected verses underwent close textual analysis to identify recurrent thematic patterns. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with five participating poets to gain deeper insight into the intentions behind their compositions.

The poets were selected based on their significant contributions to the competition and their willingness to participate in the research. Table 1 presents demographic information about the eight interviewed poets.

P/Code	Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Educational Background	Occupation	Regional Origin	Years of Poetic Practice
P1	Abubakar Kantama	50	Male	B A Ed (Arabic)	Business Man	Kano	29

P2	Aliyu Idris	35	Male	NCE (English/History)	Business Man	Jigawa	10
P3	Aminu Lawan	30	Male	BLIS	Business Man	Bauchi	13
P4	Badaru Abdullahi	29	Male	EHT	Business Man	Katsina	12
P5	Bello Alkanci	48	Male	MA (Hausa)	Business Man	Zamfara	34
P6	Hafizu Lawal	46	Male	MA (Arabic)	Business Man	Zamfara	20
P7	Muhammad Sani Aliyu	61	Male	B.A (Islamic)	Teacher	Sokoto	45
P8	Yusuf Lailaba	61	Male	HND (Business)	Teacher	Kebbi	30
P9	Abdullahi Isah Sulaiman						
P10	Mukhtar Jibril Gusau						

All ten poets whose works are analysed in this study are male, reflecting the gender composition of the competition participants. Among the eight poets for whom demographic data were available, ages range from 29 to 61 years, with a mean age of approximately 45 years. Their educational qualifications vary considerably, including Bachelor's degrees in Arabic Education, Islamic Studies, and Library Science; a National Certificate in Education (NCE) in English/History; a Higher National Diploma (HND) in Business Administration; and two Master's degrees (in Hausa and Arabic). Their professional occupations are predominantly in business (six poets), with two poets working as teachers/educators. The poets' years of poetic practice range from 10 to 45 years, indicating substantial experience and deep engagement with the Hausa poetic tradition across the group.

The poets' regional origins span multiple states in Northwestern Nigeria, Kano, Jigawa, Bauchi, Katsina, Zamfara, Sokoto, and Kebbi representing diverse experiences of the security crisis. This geographic diversity enriches the analysis by capturing perspectives from communities affected differently by banditry, kidnapping, herder-farmer conflicts, and other security challenges. The predominance of businessmen among the interviewed poets is noteworthy, as it suggests that poets from professional backgrounds beyond academia are actively engaged in using poetry as a medium for social commentary and policy advocacy. Their practical experience in commerce and trade may also inform their perspectives on the economic dimensions of the security crisis.

It is important to note that demographic information for P9 (Abdullahi Isah Sulaiman) and P10 (Mukhtar Jibril Gusau) was not available at the time of data collection. Both poets are male and participated in the 2021 competition. Their poetic contributions have been analysed in this study based on their submitted entries, and their verses are cited extensively in the findings section. While the absence of detailed demographic data for these two poets represents a limitation of the study, their inclusion enriches the analysis by providing additional poetic voices and perspectives.

The interviews were conducted in Hausa, the poets' native language, to ensure full expression of their perspectives. Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and followed a semi-structured protocol that

explored the poets' motivations for participating in the competition, their understanding of the security crisis, their intended messages in their poems, and their reflections on the role of poetry in addressing societal challenges. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim in Hausa, and subsequently translated into English for analysis. A thematic analysis approach was used to interpret the interview data, identifying key themes and patterns that corroborated, elaborated, or challenged the textual analysis of the poems.

Secondary sources, including academic publications on security, Hausa poetics, and socio-political theory, were consulted to situate the findings within broader scholarly discourse. The analysis is guided by a thematic-analytic framework that foregrounds the intersection of literary expression and state security policy, enabling a structured interpretation of the poets' recommendations.

Data Analysis Procedures

The analysis proceeded in three stages. First, an initial reading of all competition entries identified poems containing explicit mitigation strategy recommendations. Second, selected poems underwent line-by-line analysis using thematic coding, with categories derived inductively from the data. Third, interview transcripts were analysed alongside the poetic texts to triangulate findings and provide contextual depth. The analytical framework foregrounds the intersection of literary expression and state security policy, enabling structured interpretation of the poets' recommendations.

The 2021 UDUS Poetry Competition and State-Led Mitigation Strategies

The Competition and Its Context

The 2021 competition focused exclusively on written Hausa poetry, offering poets a platform to contribute intellectually to addressing the security crisis in Northern Nigeria, particularly the Northwest. A submission window of approximately 45 days was provided. Structural criteria required poems in the 'yar kwar biyar (pentameter) format, spanning 45 to 50 stanzas. The competition was adjudicated according to rigorous academic standards, with guidelines explicitly prohibiting defamatory or abusive language.

State-Led Strategies for Mitigating the Security Crisis

The entries did not merely diagnose security challenges; they actively proffered actionable mitigation strategies. The prominent state-led recommendations include the following:

Truth, Honesty, and Public Trust

A foundational prerequisite for national security is the state's commitment to truth and the preservation of public trust. Truth entails acting righteously, presenting facts accurately based on empirical reality, and avoiding fabrication, exaggeration, or omission. Gusau (1984) notes that truth involves executing duties precisely without arbitrary alterations. Bunza (2002) conceptualises truth as executing actions or uttering statements that align with societal validation and enduring cultural standards. Upholding public trust is a primary constitutional obligation of state authorities, as it fosters social cohesion, mutual understanding, and peaceful coexistence conditions vital for sustainable security. For instance, Hafiz Lawal Abubakar writes in *Adalci shi ne Mafita* (Justice is the Ultimate Solution):

Tsarin tsaro tsantsa da ba ya da tsambare,	A flawless security architecture free of corruption
Ya kawar da tsoro har da wanda ya fandare	Will eliminate terror and subdue the rebellious;
Ya natsar da komai har ka gan shi a tattare	It stabilises all sectors into a cohesive whole,
Kowa ya zauna lafiyarsa ya warware	Ensuring every citizen coexists in absolute peace,
Sai an yi adalci da mulkin gaskiya	But this is only achievable through justice and

truthful governance.

(Hafiz Lawal Abubakar: Adalci shi ne Mafita)

This stanza underscores that national security and peace depend on a government's commitment to accountability and truth. Justice and honesty from political leaders foster civic compliance and guide the nation towards a stable future. Similarly, Aliyu Idris in Tsaro Arzikin Kasarmu (Security is our Nation's Wealth) notes:

Ku yi adalci manyan jami'an tsaro	Exhibit honesty, O senior security operatives,
Zai kawo gyaran matsalar tsaro	For it will rectify our security vulnerabilities;
Nan ne za a hangi rashin tsaro	Through honesty, hidden security flaws are exposed,
Domin gyara martabar tsaro	Thereby restoring the integrity of our defence apparatus,
Allahy Sarki ka kula da mu	May the Almighty Sovereign protect us.

(Aliyu Idris: Tsaro Arzikin Kasarmu)

The poet emphasizes that institutional integrity within the security sector is vital for stabilizing the nation. A transparent state authority avoids manipulation, treachery, and breach of trust. Where such institutional honesty prevails, sustainable peace follows naturally. The analysed stanzas demonstrate that national security is built upon the state's unwavering adherence to truth, the eradication of institutional falsehood, and the elimination of structural corruption.

Social and Legal Justice for the Citizenry

The second critical dimension of security stabilisation is state-driven justice. Justice encompasses the regulatory and moral frameworks that maintain societal equilibrium, defining the rights and obligations of citizens through universally accepted laws (Rawls, 2002). Justice and moral rectitude are the pillars of societal peace; when laws are enforced impartially, security improves and criminal behaviour declines. A distinction must be drawn between social justice which ensures equitable distribution of civic rights, human dignity, and property ownership and legal justice, which rectifies grievances, prevents exploitation, and punishes rights violations. Aristotle (2006) observes that justice integrates virtue and adherence to statutory laws to protect public welfare and human dignity.

When a state dispenses justice impartially, it eliminates the social grievances that drive citizens towards violent self-help or retaliatory measures. Bello Shehu Alkanci highlights this in his submission:

Adalci a lura na sa komai ya yaye,	Prosecute offenders regardless of their social status,
A guji zubar jini da sautin kukan maraye,	For deliberate justice unravels and resolves all crises;
A tallafi duk maraunata da na birni da kauye,	Avoid bloodshed and the agonising cries of orphans,
A rinka hukunta masu laifi kuma ko su waye,	Provide welfare to the vulnerable in cities and villages alike,
A kara shirin da masu halinmu ka agazawa.	And reinforce strategic defence plans that aid our populace.

(Bello Shehu Alkanci: Tsaro a Arewacin Nijeriya)



The verse shows that societal harmony is a direct consequence of impartial governance. Justice sustains peace, builds public morale, and drives national development. Conversely, systemic injustice destabilises society, as illustrated in Da Sake (A Call for Reform):

Adalci ma a kula da shi,	Justice must be meticulously maintained,
Allah ne yai horo da shi,	For it is a divine mandate;
Shugabanci bai yi sai da shi,	Leadership cannot function effectively without it,
Shugaba in bai aiki da shi,	And whenever a leader discards its application,
Ya kore zama lau lafiya	He systematically obliterates peace and stability.

(Yusuf Lailaba: Da Sake)

The stanza demonstrates that institutional leadership requires strict adherence to justice to prevent systemic collapse, chaos, and civil insurgency.

Impartial Prosecution of Offenders

Every legal framework prescribes specific penalties for criminal offences to maintain order. Justice demands that penalties correspond directly to the severity of the offence, whereas arbitrary or biased enforcement constitutes tyranny. The power of prosecution rests with state authorities; selective enforcement or extrajudicial actions undermine the rule of law.

When state authorities prosecute criminals impartially according to statutory provisions, national security is strengthened. Public confidence grows when citizens witness the equal application of the law, reducing the temptation to resort to vigilantism or violent self-help. The UDUS poetry entries emphasise this strategy:

In dan manya ya yi laifi,	If the offspring of the elite commits a felony,
Kar a bari kame shi zai fi,	Do not hesitate; ensure his absolute incarceration;
Yin haka ko da dan makafi,	Apply the law equally, even if the culprit is the child of the blind,
Ko dan boka ne matsafi,	Or the scion of an influential occultist or sorcerer,
Ba zai so ya yi laifuka ba.	So that no citizen feels emboldened to break the law.

(Abdullahi Isah Sulaiman: Laƙanin Tsaron Arewa)

The underlying philosophy is universal legal accountability across religious, socioeconomic, and political divides. Impartial prosecution protects the social contract and maintains peace. Yusuf Lailaba adds:

Mai laifi in an zo da shi,	When a suspect is brought before the tribunal,
Dan talakka yake ko mai ishi,	Whether he be a destitute peasant or an influential elite,
Ko dan mai mulki ne fa shi,	Or even the direct descendant of the ruling class,
Bambanci kar da a zo da shi,	No form of socioeconomic discrimination must be entertained,
Don a sami zama lau lafiya.	If we are to secure a state of absolute peace and health.

(Yusuf Lailaba: Da Sake)

These texts demonstrate that uniform prosecution is a vital strategy for neutralising national security threats and preserving public safety.

Youth Employment and Economic Inclusion

State-led economic engagement, particularly for the youth demographic, is vital for mitigating civil unrest and suppressing insurgencies. While employment often implies formal bureaucratic roles, in this context it refers to creating sustainable economic opportunities for both educated and uneducated youth to prevent systemic

underemployment. Pervasive unemployment leaves youth vulnerable to criminal radicalization and anti-social behavior.

Acknowledging these systemic risks, contemporary governments have established frameworks such as the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) to support social stability. The 2021 poetic entries emphasise this economic imperative:

Gwamnoni dole kuyyi aiki, O state governors, you must decisively act;
Matasanmu ku ba su aiki, Provide sustainable employment for our youth;
Harkar noma ai matta xauki, Prioritise and modernise the agricultural sector,
Adalci shi ne tafarkin, For equity and economic inclusion remain the definitive pathway
Magance abin da ya tsananta. To mitigating this highly escalated security crisis.
(Badaru Abdullahi Jibiya: Arewa Ina Mafita)

The verse urges the state to provide economic opportunities for the youth to reduce crime rates and stabilise communities. Idleness provides a breeding ground for criminal recruitment, as illustrated by Abdullahi Isah Sulaiman:

Masu zaman banza a layi, Those who loiter idly within our neighbourhoods
Su suka girma su zam barayi, Are the ones who graduate into hardened criminals;
Ba aikin yi sai bilayi, Lacking legitimate jobs, they resort to extortion,
Yau su ne kowa ka shayi, Today, they have become the terror of the general populace,
Dan ba a girma da tarbiya ba. Simply because they grew up devoid of moral guidance and occupation.
(Abdullahi Isah Sulaiman: Laƙanin Tsaron Arewa)

The stanza connects systemic idleness to the rise of criminal actors. Unemployed youth, including graduates lacking economic security, may seek alternative means of survival.

Combatting Bribery and Systemic Corruption

Bribery and corruption involve subverting legal codes and ethical standards for personal enrichment, resulting in systemic irregularities, embezzlement, nepotism, and institutional decay (Ajagbe, 2013). Iortyer (2013) notes that corruption is widely viewed as the misuse of public office or institutional leverage for illicit personal gain, which violates statutory laws and societal ethics.

Anti-corruption measures are critical to national security. The 2021 competition entries show how corruption undermines defence infrastructure:

Karɓar cin hanci ga hukuma, The institutional acceptance of bribery by state authorities
Na daga ƙofofi na kunama, Opens up dangerous vulnerabilities within the nation,
Don ko tsaro zai zam ya suma, Causing the security apparatus to become comatose.
Ninkin albashi a yi himma, Double the wages of public servants with utmost dedication,
Za ya rage cin hanci rasshawa. As a strategic measure to minimise bribery and illicit gratification.

(Aminu Lawan: Kasata)

The poem demonstrates that pervasive corruption compromises the state's security architecture. The author suggests adjusting public sector compensation to reduce financial vulnerability to bribery. Abdullahi Isah Sulaiman adds:

Sannan cin hanci a daina, Furthermore, bribery must be completely terminated,
Shi zai haddasa cin amana, For it directly breeds the betrayal of public trust;
In mai laifi ne a nuna, If an individual is guilty, expose them openly.



Naira ba ta hana ka kuna, Illicit wealth will not shield you from divine torment
Can a jahannama ba ba'a ba. In the afterlife, where justice is absolute.

(Abdullahi Isah Sulaiman: Lakanin Tsaron Arewa)

Corruption allows criminal actors to bypass regulatory checks, compromising state stability. The verses show that eliminating corruption from public administration is essential for establishing an equitable system in which security can be sustained.

Targeted Welfare for Vulnerable Populations

To prevent extreme poverty from driving marginalized citizens towards criminal survival strategies, state authorities must provide social safety nets. Targeted economic interventions reduce desperation, which helps lower crime rates and stabilise communities. Muhammad Sani Aliyu reinforces this approach in Allah Mun Tuba (O Allah, We Repent):

Bidi masu dama don mu sasanta da su,	Engage influential stakeholders to broker peace;
Mu riƙe matasa don su zan sana'arsu su,	Empower the youth to establish their own enterprises;
Kuma tallafi a gare su kar mu zubar da su,	Provide institutional welfare; do not abandon them;
Mu riƙe shari'o'i mu bar wasa da su,	Uphold statutory laws and cease playing with judicial codes;
Kan mun riƙe haka za mu zauna lafiya	If we strictly maintain these protocols, we shall coexist in
peace.	

(Muhammad Sani Aliyu: Allah Mun Tuba)

The stanza demonstrates that national stability requires inclusive social welfare and economic support for vulnerable groups, which helps protect public assets and builds a unified approach to security challenges.

Prohibiting Illicit Arms Proliferation and Regulating Weaponry

Mitigating the security crisis requires strict state action against the trafficking of illegal firearms, ammunition, and explosives. This involves tight border enforcement to disrupt smuggling channels used by unauthorised merchants and transnational networks.

Concurrently, regulating legal firearm ownership requires enforcing strict licensing protocols that define who may possess weapons and under what conditions. Statutory laws must penalise unauthorised possession to help reduce gun violence, limit the reach of criminal groups, and maintain public safety. Abubakar Ibrahim Kantama highlights this strategy:

Dadā duk iyakar ƙasa kar a bar,	Reinforce all national borders across the realm,
Shigowar makamai na cutar ƙasar,	To block the smuggling of arms that damage the country,
Kamar bindigogi da <i>bom</i> don a kar-	Such as assault rifles and explosives, to prevent
mutane da su duk dalilin shigar-	The destruction of the populace when these weapons enter
Su hannun magauta marar gaskiya.	The possession of hostile and unprincipled adversaries.

(Abubakar Ibrahim Kantama: Tsaro Maganin Tsoro)

The poet calls on the state to secure national borders to stop the influx of illegal weapons used by insurgents. He also suggests combining border control with disarmament and counter-radicalisation programmes. Mukhtar Jibril Gusau outlines the dangers of unregulated arms in Son Zuciya (Selfish Desires):

Mutukar ƙasa aka bar ta babu ido ciki,	If a nation is left completely unmonitored,
A shigo ta ba izni ana kai farmaki,	Allowing illegal aliens to enter and launch attacks,
A riƙo makamai masu fidda jinin jiki,	While armed actors carry weapons that spill human blood,
Aka ƙyale masu taro su ƙwaci kuɗin biki,	And criminal syndicates extort wedding celebrations
unchecked,	



Zai durkushe ta ga cigabanta gaba daya. The nation will collapse, and its developmental progress will halt.

(Mukhtar Jibril Gusau: Son Zuciya)

The verse underscores that border management and strict firearm regulation are essential for protecting national stability and economic development.

Kinetic Counter-Terrorism Operations

Direct kinetic confrontation with insurgents, terrorists, and bandit networks is a vital element of national defence. When asymmetrical actors reject peaceful dialogue, state authorities must deploy security forces to protect civilians and re-establish control. Bello Shehu Alkanci writes:

A bar kofa ta sulhu gun mai neman kwaranga, Maintain open avenues for dialogue for those seeking peace,
Amma 'yan ta'adda in har sun shata daga, But if terrorists choose open combat and draw battle lines,
A durfafe su ko'ina suke birni da rugga, Confront them decisively wherever they reside, in cities and hamlets;
A bar rokon su shi ka sa su yi hwaɗi a tcaga, Cease begging them, for appeasement only emboldens their defiance,
A bar musu lallami yana sa musu jin ɗagawa. And diplomatic pleading only increases their arrogance.

(Bello Shehu Alkanci: Matsalar Tsaro a Arewacin Nijeriya)

The poet emphasises that while dialogue has a place, active insurgencies require a firm military response. Appeasement can undermine state authority and encourage further violence. Aliyu Idris supports this approach in Tsaro Arzikin Kasarmu:

A kan tsaro dole a yi kofari, On national security, maximum effort must be deployed;
Ai nazari ai aiki na gari, Conduct deep analytical planning and execute noble actions;
Wajen aikin kar a yi jinkiri, Avoid institutional delay or hesitation in operations;
'Yan tawaye a kai musu hari, Launch proactive offensives against insurgent networks,
A gyara kasarmu domin mu. To rehabilitate our nation for the benefit of the populace.

(Aliyu Idris: Tsaro Arzikin Kasarmu)

The stanza calls for proactive military intelligence and operations to neutralise insurgent groups. The poet recommends a comprehensive counter-insurgency strategy combining direct kinetic action with logistics disruption, resource interdiction, and communication blackouts to neutralise hostile networks.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis of the poetic texts, the study offers the following recommendations:

- ✓ Governments must ensure transparency and truth at all administrative levels. Political leaders should govern impartially, eliminating nepotism and personal bias while ensuring equal application of the law to all offenders, regardless of their social, religious, or political standing.
- ✓ State authorities should launch targeted job creation initiatives for youth to reduce economic vulnerability to criminal recruitment.
- ✓ Investments in both formal and religious education should be expanded to reduce illiteracy. This should be paired with community-level programmes that encourage civic responsibility and moral discipline among youth.



- ✓ Governments must deploy modern surveillance technology to secure international borders, preventing the smuggling of illegal firearms.

CONCLUSION

Peace is a society's most valuable asset, forming the foundation for socioeconomic growth, structural development, and global standing. This study examined the role of state authorities in mitigating national security challenges by analysing entries from the 2021 Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto poetry competition. The findings demonstrate that the security crisis stems from multiple interconnected issues requiring a multi-faceted response. Sustainable stability relies on close cooperation between state authorities and communities, supported by justice, transparency, job creation, anti-corruption measures, and well-equipped security forces. Ultimately, the study highlights that Hausa poetry serves as a valuable tool for social commentary, public sensitisation, and the analysis of complex national challenges, helping to identify practical solutions.

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