

Security Challenges as Threats to National Unity in Nigeria: Causes, Prevention and Treatment

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Abstract

Every country on earth is faced with the problem of security challenges in her process of national development; it is not peculiar to Nigeria. But the security challenges confronting Nigeria is capable of disintegrating the Country and even metamorphose to civil war. The experiences of Nigerians during her civil war from 1966 to 1970 called for caution and academic intervention in other not to cause disaffection, disunity and human suffering. This paper seeks to probe into the etiology of security challenges in Nigeria, draw a nexus between security challenges and national unity and seek for prevention of these causes of security challenges in Nigeria. This paper is aimed at enhancing national unity, good governance and sensitizing Nigeria as a regional power.

Key words: Security Challenges and National Unity

Introduction

Global insecurity orchestrated by both man-made and natural disaster such as: erosion, terrorism, kidnapping, armed robbery and armed banditry is gradually becoming a national embarrassment to the Nigerian people. The upsurge in criminal activities seems to have taken a new dimension to the extent that Nigerians are becoming worried, as it portents a great danger to the unity of the country. Peace and harmony seem to be eluding our people. A lot of things seem to have fallen apart and the Centre can no longer hold. Our existence as a nation is threatened, and our existence as people is equally being threatened.

Yesterday was the menace called kidnapping, but today is the deadly and dastardly group called Boko Haram. Before Boko Haram we had the Niger Delta militants, the Egbesu from Bayelsa, OPC from the west, the MASSOB from the east, the MOSSOP from the Ogoni land and all forms of political assassinations and armed robberies. There is no society that does not have headache with crime, but when a nation begins to have organized groups that take a position against the state such as Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), the epidemic kidnapping in the South East, and now the Boko Haram which is an extension of international trend, it also inform one that the apparatus of the state for maintaining security, law and order is threatened. Two, that one should look for the causes of that insecurity, because when you get a situation where people carry arms irrespective of whether they themselves are going through during the process, then, you begin to wonder about the state of discontentment in our society. And when you analyze the age bracket of the criminals it also tells one about the rate of unemployment in the country that cannot accommodate this army of youths (Business day, 28 May, 2012).

In view of the level of uncertainty, tension and anxiety, this palpable fear has generated in Nigerians, and which has tumultuously affected their everyday activity, there is need for extra vigilance and sensitization among the people. This is because no meaningful development can be attained when a nation and her people are being ravaged by a horrendous organized criminal gang causing insecurity in the land. (Business day, 28 May, 2012).

This paper will examine the security challenges threatening Nigeria National Unity, trace the etiology of security challenges in Nigeria, examine the nexus between security challenges and national unity, and suggest preventive treatment. This paper is aimed at enhancing the national unity of the heterogeneous Nigerian State for national development.

Operational Definition of key concepts

It is pertinent to define the key concepts being used in this paper. The concepts are operationally defined, that is, in the writers own concept.

Security Consciousness: The term in this paper, implies vigilance. It means being proactive in deflating, combating crime nipping it in the bud in advance before it begins to manifest. It equally means readiness to suppress and detect crime using social intelligence and emotional intelligence (that is, psychology of human relations). It equally requires intelligence gathering or criminalistics.

Security Challenges: The term simply applies to our in-ability to walk and work freely, peacefully and harmoniously without fear of molestation, intimidation, assault, and inflicting of harm anywhere we find ourselves.

National unity: The term subsumes a non-negotiable peaceful coexistence of the Nigerian people and corporate existence of the Nigerian state as a nation or entity.

The Etiology of Security Challenges in Nigeria

Students of political history are not oblivious of the two major ways a nation can be besieged or its corporate existence threatened which are either by individuals taking arms against humanity. In the case of Nigeria, what we now witness is a consuming barracuda appolo of individuals taken arms against humanity. Now, the mind-boggling questing is, what are the immediate and remote causes of this unwelcomed visitor?

1 **The Glaring Syndrome of a failing state:** First, what is a syndrome? It means a collection of signs. There are three major signs or indices for assessing a failed or a failing state.

(a) **National Security:** A failed or failing state is measured by its inept or incapacity to protect the lives and properties of its citizenry. The case of Boko haram is a case in point, going by the recent statement credited to the country's Head of state where he admitted that members of Boko Haram have infiltrated his government as it is now difficult to identify who are members of the sect. He went further to say: "some are also in the armed forces, the police and other security agencies. Some continue to dip their hands and eat with you and you won't even know the person who will point a gun at you or plant a bomb behind your house" (Business Day 2012 p 6.). This explanation points to one direction. And that is, the enemy is within the house- hold. It is indeed a pitiable helpless situation that requires urgent attention.

(b) **Food Security:** Poverty, the bible says is a sin. The bible says; "Lazy hands market a man poor but diligent hands bring wealth". Another popular adage equally concurs: "An idle brain is the devil's work shop". If a man has a job and has enough money to keep body and soul together, where he can afford the basic needs of life, he is not likely to go seeking explosives to tie around himself; he is also not likely to go looking for gun to kill people. There is also insecurity that is not physical violence, this comes in the form of job insecurity, people go to work today, tomorrow they are told there is no more job for them hence they are afraid because they do not know what tomorrow holds. The economic uncertainty is part of the insecurity. (Business day, 28 May, 2012). As prof. Sam Aluko of the blessed memory puts it "the poor cannot sleep because they are hungry. And the rich can hardly sleep because the poor are awake".

(c) **Social Security:**
Lack or absence of basic necessities of life unarguably threatens the security of any nation. A country that cannot provide constant electricity, good education, employment opportunities, recreational facilities, good health care services, and good social welfare services is on the brink of national- calamity and chaos.

2 **Bad Governance:** Leadership demands courage, vision, and mission. A good leader must have strong political will in order to deal with the exigencies of the times. That is the courage or temerity to confront an obvious obstacle that encumbers the process of smooth governance or has become a clog in the wheel of progress. A good leader must have the wisdom for discernment and the strength to withstand pressure as demanded by his office. When corruption pervades, especially in high places and allowed to stay, citizens begin to loose confidence in governance and the consequence is better Imagined than said. A good leader must be able to combine intellectual capacity with political sagacity. "Lootocracy" (looting of the nation's treasury), and judicial corruption must be discouraged. A society where there is no purchased justice is a safe home for everybody. A country where its security agencies are not engrossed in mass corruption and gross inefficiency is a paradise to all.

3. Duplicated **Functions of Security Agencies/ Inadequate Training and Equipment:** Conspicuous and huge over-lapping functions of our security agencies tend to deflate and undermine their efficiency and responsibility. There are instances where the SSS (State Security Service), the police, the EFCC (Economic, Financial crime commission), the customs, immigrations, the army, the civil defense corps seem to have their functions remarkably undefined. Moreover, our security agents seem to be lagging in the modern day technical knowhow in combating crime, including lack or inadequate equipment for perfect execution of their duty.

4. **Religious Ideology:** Let us begin by citing example with what happened during the .last years of apartheid in South Africa. A young lad was asked to speak on what made him go into crime. His reply was: "I want you to know that I was raised to think you were an animal". The world is divided into two: The children of light and the children of darkness, the sheep and the goats, the elect and the damned. Righteousness, intelligence, integrity, humanity and victory are our prerogatives, while we belong to them. This is the wickedness; stupidity, hypocrisy, and ultimate defeat belong to them. This is the evil of religious ideology. It is said some people have

used religion for evil purposes. It is also sad some religious leaders seemed to have encouraged terrorism or support war either by their utterances or behavior. (Goleman, 2006, watch Tower, May 1, 2010).

Our world since 1914 the First World War and 1967-70 Nigeria Civil War have become known as one of crime and violence. In many places no one feels safe on the streets even during daytime. At night people stay in their homes behind locked and barricaded doors, afraid to go outside. This means the end of the world is near (Watch Tower, 2005).

5. Militarization of Youth By Political Irredentists: The root of evil summarizes the psychological forces that spawn such crime. When youths are unable to speak up to defend themselves and those who used them for their self-seeking political ambition, dump them after achieving their selfish ambition and fail to disarm them, what then do we expect/ The answer is not farfetched, it is to unleash terror and violence on their exploiters and cohorts. This explains why the rich are not happy. A good number of wealthy people do not use their wealth wisely by trying to affect the lives of those close to them. (Goleman, 2006).

6. Border crime: Border crime otherwise known as transnational crime refers to crime that take place across national borders. It is a term commonly used in the law enforcement and academic communities. They include human trafficking of goods, arms trafficking and drug trafficking etc. Smuggling is a seminal threat to national security as it undermines the security of the nation, for it represents a formidable national and security problem. (Wakili, 2009, and Olayode, 2009),

7. Weak Family Responsibilities: Most homes today are found wanting in the discharge of their traditional responsibilities. The causes range from civilization and economic problems. When parents fail to discharge their duty in the bid to bring up their children properly, then that nation is in danger.

8. Weak Scholastic Education: A good number of our schools have lost their moral authority. The school is another home where a child spends most of his active hours. If a school cannot inculcate moral virtues to children and sound academic knowledge, then that society is at loss. This explains why some parents these days take their time before deciding on the type of institutions their children will attend as cultism and other vices seem to be the trend of the day (Iwundu 2007).

9. Wide Spread of Uncensored Movies/ Media lapses: All manner of sex provocative and violence cultivated movies, have found their way into our markets and homes today. When innocent children begin to watch such movies unchecked, subconsciously, they begin to imbibe such ideas exposed in the movies as a way of life. Sadly enough, most of the media houses are culprits in this regard. Another way of their culpability is in the area of over celebration of evil rather than condemning it. The good is hardly celebrated. They forget that children are watching and are likely to take them serious since they are potent agents of education in the society (Iwundu, 2007).

Security Challenges and National Unity in Nigeria.

The security challenges bedeviling Nigeria is a serious threat to her national unity. The national unity of Nigeria is sacrosanct by the provisions of her constitution. Most threat to national unity of Nigeria has met brutal force and coercion. An attempt by the Igbo tribe to secede from the federation resulted to a civil war in 1966; another attempt of Isaac Adaka Boro to secede the Niger Delta area from the federation landed him in jail. The recent attempt by MASSOB leader Umezurike to re-kindle the Biafran spirit landed him in jail. The recent security challenges confronting Nigeria as noted by the Nobel Laureate Professor Wole Soyinka that, the country is already drifting (Oderemi, 2013) i.e., it is gradually returning to the inglorious era of disunity, which precipitated a civil war some thirty years ago.

Similarly, the United Nations and the United States of America have separately expressed deep concern on the state of affairs in Nigeria and called on Nigerians to tread softly in the interest of national unity. The 1999 constitution of Nigeria provides a legal framework of Nigeria's national unity. Specifically, section one under the General Provision in part one states that, "Nigeria is one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign state to be known by the name Federal Republic of Nigeria". The implementation of this provision is a function of the government. The government has the task of promoting and protecting national unity. This could be done through promotion of public welfare, justice, democracy and for Nigerians to understand one another and to see each other as equal part of an indivisible nation; and for Nigerians to believe there is a place for them under the Nigerian State.

National Unity should be a key target of government policy at all levels. Nigerians are not too satisfied with the progress made by government in promoting greater integration amongst the countries various tribes or ethnic groups. However, numerous government policies and laws differentiate Nigerians on the basis of ethnic background, to the point that, some tribes or ethnic group feels they have been the target of discrimination. Government should create a Ministry of National Unity as in the case of Malaysia, tasked with promoting greater integration amongst the Countries various communities.

Those that are instrumental to the disunity of Nigeria are not knowledgeable and pragmatic about the trends of globalization and activities in the international state system. Those things/issues used in polarizing Nigeria are

rather strength than weaknesses to the Nigerian state. In a statement issued in Washington, the United States Department identified Nigeria's ethnic and religious diversity as a source of strength (Oderemi, 2013). Moreso, Nigeria is expected to play a leading role in Africa and the United Nations; internal disunity will prevent Nigeria from becoming a regional linchpin.

In addition, Nigeria is very strategic to the interest of the United States of America. America as a unipolar power, she has a lot of responsibility in maintaining world peace, this she cannot achieve without positioning regional powers, that will assist her to police their regions, and for peace keeping missions. Therefore, Nigerians should stop being used to create disaffection, disunity nor security breaches because of her national and primary interest of becoming a foremost balancer of power in Africa. The United States of America should assist Nigeria to fight against agents of insecurity in Nigeria.

The Way Forward: Prevention and Treatment: In the human kingdom, solutions abound. This seemingly intractable problem surely requires the following preventive measures and treatment:

(1) **Review of the 1999 constitution:** There seems to be high insidious wave of disenchantment, discontentment, discouragement and demotivation across the length and breadth of this nation due to the present configuration and composition of the 1999 constitution, which many believe has failed to address salient issues in nationhood such as: citizenship against indigeneship or residency right. Others include the immunity clause, judicial reforms, police reforms (that will address policing methods in Nigeria, the lapses in entry requirement, work environment, orientation and appearance), political restructuring (take the case of multiplicity of parties), local government reforms etc. the status-quo seems to widen the gap between, ethnicity, tribalism nepotism, favoritism, bribery, corruption and patriotism, and commitment and hard work. Therefore, there is the penchant need for a new constitution that will launch Nigeria on the part of true federalism.

(2) A **National Conference** should be convoked to enable the ethnic groups articulate and dialogue on issues of national importance. Resolutions there can be reflected in the constitution and in government policies and programmes.

(3) A **Ministry of National Unity** should be created, tasked with promoting greater integration amongst the Countries various communities.

(4) **Strong Political Will:** Our leaders should be courageous enough to stamp out the menace of terrorism and other crimes irrespective of whose Ox are gored. When a leader sits back and watch the nation gradually rocked the boat, people begin to question his intellectual capability.

(5) **Visible police patrol:** Police training does not end in check points. In Europe and other civilized nations, the police are always on the move and not in the habit of mounting illegal and irrelevant road blocks and be collecting money from motorist.

(6) **Intelligence Gathering:** It is like our security agencies are not well schooled in the techniques of intelligence gathering, which seems to suggest that it may be basically one of the reasons why they are not proactive in forestalling crime.

(7) **Negotiation Breeds Motivation:** It is anarchious for a country or a leader to begin to negotiate with criminals. By doing so, he might be sending the wrong message to the law abiding citizens who perhaps have no job. The signal is that, it is only by taking arms against the state and humanity one can be recognized and rewarded.

(8) **Redefining the Role of Security Agencies:** There are so many overtly functions or visibly demonstrated over-lapping functions of our security agencies. The SSS, police, the army, customs, etc. need their functions properly redefined in order to allow for efficiency, and be held culpable when any lapse is recorded from any quarter.

(9) **Stiff penalty for Political Offenders:** There is need for stiff penalty against political thurgery, rigging of elections and monetary inducement. Our people should be allowed to choose their leaders. It is only when transparency thrives in politics that the masses can trust government

(10) **Stiff Penalty for Transnational Crime:** Our Border, both land and sea need proper policing. Offenders should be adequately punished in order to serve as deterrent to others. God- fatherism should not be allowed to prevail.

(11) **Education:** Education is the key to human development. Illiteracy and half-backed literacy are two sides of the coin that breed stupid ignoramus. If a man is properly schooled, imparted with sound moral and academic knowledge he will hardly be swayed into joining gangs. Therefore, parents, schools, government, the religious organizations, the mass media and the society have a big role to play in this regard.

(12) Job Creation: The army of the unemployed youth in our country today calls for serious concern. Nigeria is rich to a point where her youths need not to be massively unemployed. All those projects that corrupt politicians abandoned or money stolen by corrupt politicians should be channeled into creating jobs for the youth. If youths are gainfully occupied, crime will certainly reduce.

(13) Welfarism: Our youths, including the elderly unemployed are serious with the word patriotism today, because they feel that government does not care for them, the otherwise publicized sovereign wealth fund will make meaning if only our government can learn and borrow from that of Germany, Sweden, Britain and America.

(14) Security Consciousness: one adage prominently during the Nigerian /Biafra War and still remains indelible in mind, goes thus for the Biafrans: “: Anyone surrendered by the Enemy must not fail to be vigilant at all times”. One major key to the prophylactic treatment of insecurity is being recommended by McNab and Rabiger (2003).

(15) Home Security and Safety: The following are measures to ensure home security and safety;

- (i) Proper back and front door security and window security.
- (ii) Installation of home burglar alarm system,
- (iii) Setting of timer lights and lighting up dark nooks, (places)
- (iv) Trimming back three branches,
- (v) Using suitable security dog breeds (e.g. bull, mastiff, Rott-Weller, German
- (vi) Cultivating a safe neighborhood by forming a neighborhood watch,
- (vii) Having a nice gun lock and safe,
- (viii) Avoid opening the door for an unknown persons,
- (ix) Planning and constructing a safe room (a hide way within the house to which occupants can easily withdraw in order to call for help in the event of break in. Typically a safe room is created from a master bedroom. It should have a solid, ideally metal core door that locks instantly from the inside and well – ventilated, with a mobile phone to call the police or alert neighbours.

(a) Safety on the Streets and Traveling;

The following precautions measures are to be taking;

- (i) **Be streetwise:** be aware of the unwanted attention that your style of dressing and belongings may attract and avoid taking shortcuts through unfamiliar part of the city,
- (ii) **Close to Home:** Be alert and take the safest route possible from your parked car to your front door,
- (iii) **Carjacking:** Plan your route carefully and never stop your car in unfamiliar or lonely parts of the city and keep the car doors and windows locked always,
- (iv) **Road range:** If you encounter an angry driver, never get out of your car or risk getting into an argument and if possible call the police to the scene on a cell phone.
- (v) **Aggressive driving:** Avoid making angry gestures when driving because your behavior could lead to a road range attack,
- (vi) **Learn to say sorry:** One of the responses widely recommended when driving is a clear apology. So, do not risk rolling down the window.

(b) Terrorist reats: The following techniques are recommended for countering terrorist attack.

Night clubs, restaurants, hostel, schools, public vehicles, aircrafts, churches etc. are prone to terrorist attack. Abandoned bags, objects and suspicious movements should be reported to the police.

- (i) **Suspicious Package:** Beware of strange letters in an Envelope or parcel, or unidentified suitcase
- (ii) **Complete vehicle and individual search:** Cars and individual entering public places need to be thoroughly searched using detective devices.

(16) Creation of National Transparency and Accountability Vanguard (NTAV).

The present day professional misconduct, human rights abuses and security challenges call for an independent volunteer organization that shall under law monitor and report to the appropriate quarters cases just mentioned. Membership of this organization shall be drawn from such associations like De-Norsemen, the civil society or liberties, Asuu, the Nigeria Bar Association, and the Nigeria Medical Association etc.

(17) Prisons / Agencies Reforms: In Nigeria, prisons are hellish realm, where convicts struggle in a tooth-and-nail battle; everyone fights to get respect, toughness wins prestige. The question we should ask ourselves is, are the prisons the best “schools” for a society to be sending law offenders as so many go back to crime and on their release end upright back in those festering holes? Here the system continues to breed incurable recidivists. There is need for total reformation of our prisons or detention units from the angle of dehumanization to correction by adopting a system known as “restorative justice programme”. The emotional subtext of restorative justice urges offenders to change their perception of their victims from that of unleashing terror to that of demonstrating empathy (Goleman, 2007). In addition, the police psychological disposition towards crime offenders needs to be changed. This is because the very best police officers are adamant at exercising influence, the sense of constructively shaping the outcome of an interaction, using tact and self-control. Paragons of law enforcement use the least force necessary, though they may make a strong show of force to back it up. They approach volatile people with a professional demeanor, calmly and attentively (Goleman, 2007).

Conclusion

Security undoubtedly is every body’s business. The challenges that confront us today, threatening the corporate existence of Nigeria as a nation are the problems of national security. This paper has highlighted the causes and way forward. There is need for every hand to be on deck to fight this monster ravaging our beloved nation, Nigeria.

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