

# Security Challenges and Implications to National Stability

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## Abstract

Security of lives and property is a dire need for any thriving country. Without security, a country remains exposed to threats, and is vulnerable. In this state, the attainment of such a country's objectives and projects becomes a herculean task. This is the case for Nigeria. In the face of this insecurity situation of Nigeria, the attitude of the government remains unsatisfactory. Hence, this paper sought to examine the security challenges facing the Nigerian government and their implications to national stability. To do this, the paper relied on secondary sources and made use of empirical approach. Finally, the paper made recommendations such as the retraining of Nigerian security agencies, the changing of the government's approach and attitude regarding security matters, the evolving of programmes of cultural and political education and orientation, embarking on a de-radicalization strategy among others, that will aid the government to ensure security in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Security, Nigeria, *Boko Haram*, national stability

## 1. Introduction

The issue of insecurity has become a persistently worrying one for Nigeria. In Nigeria, no place is apparently secured. This obnoxious situation has grown to the extent that many, especially the government, are befuddled and at loss of insight of what meaningfully could be done to avert the menace of insecurity. Yet, the Nigerian constitution (1999) expressly stated that the government is primarily responsible for the security of lives and property of the citizens of Nigeria. Every day we wake up to the news of petty crimes, armed robberies, ethnic/religious killings, armed insurgency, the Niger Delta problem, which appears to have died down after the hullabaloo of amnesty, terrorism, *Boko Haram* massacres and bombings in Abuja, Maiduguri and other Northern cities.

In fact, insecurity has assumed a pervading form in the country. The cause of this insecurity, now sophisticated and seemingly intractable, has been attributed to the government's nonchalant attitude. Adejumo (2011) observed this nonchalant attitude of the Nigerian government in the discharge of its primary responsibility of ensuring security over the years. Little wonder, Bankong-Obi (2012) attributed Nigeria's intractable security challenges to government's apathy and inefficiency of the security agencies. Nonetheless, it is instructive to note that insecurity, which has been sophisticated for the Nigerian government to handle, is not peculiar to Nigeria alone. Advanced countries of the world like France, Britain, Switzerland, Germany, Russia and United States of America are faced with challenges of security on a daily basis.

Rather than bemoaning this obnoxious state of insecurity, this paper seeks to examine the security challenges of the Nigerian government and what they imply for the stability of Nigeria. It also aims at making recommendations of sustainable solutions that will ensure security in Nigeria.

## 2. Conceptual Clarification

A most rewarding approach to this paper is to place certain basic concepts in their correct perspective. Hence, the subsequent understanding of concepts such as security, insecurity and national stability. Security, as seen in the Wikipedia, "is the degree of resistance to, or protection from, harm. It applies to any vulnerable and valuable asset, such as a person, dwelling, community, nation, or organization." According to Adebayo (2011), security could be referred to as a measure that ensures peaceful co-existence and development at large. It is implied from Adebayo's view that with the existence of security, there is absence of fear, threat, anxiety, tension, and apprehension over the loss of life, liberty, property, goals and values, among others. And as Akhakpe (2013) rightly pointed out, security could mean different things at different times to different people. It is perhaps imperative in this paper to come to certain terms with what sort of security is deliberated here. This is so because by the term security, one could mean food security, financial security, personal security, energy security, environmental security, cyber security, national security, among others. But for the purpose of this paper, the concern here is about the national security of Nigerians as far as lives and property, and indeed, general well-being. As such, proffering an understanding of the concept, *national security* that offers the sense of security this paper is concerned about, cannot be out of place.

The term, security as used here can be understood as national security. As national security, Oriakhi and Osemwingie (2012) viewed it as referring to "a state where the unity, well-being, values, and beliefs, democratic process, mechanism of governance and welfare of the nation and her people are perpetually improved and secured through military, political and economic resources. Held and McGrew (1998:226)

traditionally understood national security as the acquisition, deployment and use of military force to achieve national goals. For Ogbonnaya and Ehigiamusoe (2013), the concept of national security cut across many disciplines covering military protection, surveillance, protection and human rights. Romm (1993), in providing an implicit sense, saw national security as the ability of a nation to preserve its internal values from external threats. Hence, “national security implies the appropriation and deployment of state apparatus of coercive force to deal with situation of crisis, nationally or internationally” (Akhakpe, 2012).

Next to the concept of security is the concept of insecurity. Insecurity only portrays the absence of security. Achumba, Ighomereho and Akpor-Robaro (2013) would term insecurity as “the antithesis of security.” They further acknowledged that due to the many ways insecurity affects human life and existence, the concept of insecurity has been variously interpreted. There are some common descriptors used to define insecurity, they include: “want of safety; danger; hazard; uncertainty; want of confidence; doubtful; inadequately guarded or protected; lacking stability; troubled; lack of protection; and unsafe, to mention but a few” (Achumba *et al*, 2013). Beland (2005) would describe insecurity as “the state of fear and anxiety stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection.” This description notwithstanding, Achumba *et al* (2013) gave a working description of insecurity that was adopted by this paper, as: “not knowing, a lack of control, and inability to take defensive action against forces that portend harm or danger to an individual or group, or what make them vulnerable.” This insecurity nurtures the phenomenon of terrorism. Little wonder, Oriakhi and Osemwingie (2012) purported that insecurity and terrorism are two inseparable phenomena. They argued that domestic terror and other social vices are perpetrated in the absence of strong security structure. This has been the case of Nigeria for some time now. Not only that terrorism had held sway in the country, it had progressed from Niger Delta militancy to the present seemingly intractable *Boko Haram* insurgency.

Consequently, insecurity threatens the stability of any nation. As regards the concept of national stability, Cole (2014) opines that the concept signifies a feeling of well being or contentment among the citizens of any country; a contentment driven by the level of the citizens’ engagement with the system that governs them. Such stability, according to Cole (2014), must “be built on a re-established relationship of trust between our politicians and the people they serve.” In this regard, this paper understands the concept of national stability as referring to a nation being firmly fixed; not likely to give way or overturn. Stability is essential for any nation embarking on the process of development.

Having said the foregoing, which portrays the working knowledge of concepts used within the work, an exploration of some studies on insecurity in Nigeria becomes imperative in order to drive home the central idea of this paper.

### **3. Recent Studies On Insecurity In Nigeria**

For some time now, as Nwadiolor (2011) rightly observed, the problem of insecurity, which used to be one of the lowest in the hierarchy of social problems facing Nigeria, seems to have assumed an alarming proportion since the end of the Nigerian civil war which ended in 1970. So high is the rate of insecurity in Nigeria now that every facet of Nigerian life has been badly affected. Fear and distrust of the other person loom large in the polity and these have bedeviled our developmental exploits as a country. The current state of insecurity has posed serious challenges and menace to Nigeria’s macroeconomic environment. Not only has the country suffered colossal losses in terms of infrastructure, properties and human lives, her economic development has also experienced retardation. For any sustainable development, there must be security, which is not just an intrinsic aspect of development but an essential precondition for one. Most studies have granted evidence to this fact. Nonetheless, what remains a chagrin is that the government of the country who is supposed to be the driver of the economic development of the country and do possess the fundamental right, as granted by the Nigerian constitution, to provide security, seems to be lacking ideas of what to do. At this juncture, let us examine some studies. To this, we shall now turn to.

Ujah and Eboh (2006) in their study examined security as an important element of business environment across Nigerian states. The study was of the view that crime and insecurity are bad for business. It also argued that perceptions of security greatly influence business and investment decisions and that adequate emphasis needs to be given to perceptions about security threat in the business environment. The study recognized the security benchmark as comprising of six measures, namely major crimes (crimes with violence); minor crimes (crimes without violence); police resources, cost and availability; perception of security situation by business enterprises; emergency preparedness and insurance; and security strategies and programmes. These measures reflect different dimensions of the security challenges in the business environment. Each measure is operationalised by a set of indicators, which the study empirically evaluated using verified quantitative data collected from public sector agency or qualitative data obtained through perceptions-based survey of firms. The study observed the continued debate on security about the sharing of responsibility between the federal state and local governments. As such, the study sought to drive public debate on security policies, particularly the question of responsibilities between the three tiers of government in ensuring security.

Oladeji and Folorunsho (2007) in their study examined the relationship between economic growth and political instability during the period 1970-2003 in Nigeria. By political instability here, the study implied violence, lack of property, and other forms of disorder that led to the risk of loss for which economic agents were employed. This political instability was measured by a combination of four variables namely: number of political assassination, coup attempts, ethnic disturbances and most importantly, violence. The causal relationship between political instability and macroeconomic instability was investigated using Ganger-Causality tests. Data employed for the analysis were gathered from the statistical bulletin of the CBN complemented by the world development indicators of World Bank. The study found that there was a negative link between political and macroeconomic instability and economic growth and investment rate. The study is of the view that the transition to civil rule is yet to make positive impact on national security and stability, hence the poor economic performance in Nigeria during 1970-2003. The study portrayed the dynamics of the higher the level of political and macroeconomic instability, the lower is the economic growth and investment rate. This being the case, the study recommended the prevention of insecurity and any form of instability by the political leaders in Nigeria and the strategies of prevention must clearly address the root causes of conflicts. The study further recommended that the Nigerian government should review the current stabilization programme in order to restore macroeconomic stability.

Oriahki and Osemwingie (2012) in their study investigated the impact of national security on foreign direct investment in Nigeria using Least Square method. They observed that national security proxy by defense and security vote (annual expenditure on security) crowd out foreign direct investment in Nigeria. Foreign direct investment, as we know, is a vital source of savings for any developing country and thus, an engine for growth, however, it is a paramount source of concern when the FDI is being crowded out and impacted negatively by issues of insecurity as it is the case of Nigeria. To provide solution, the study recommended that the government, the major player in security, should adopt strong policy measures by devising a more holistic approach to tackling the state of insecurity by entrenching the culture of transparency such that funds allocated to the sector (security) are effectively utilized for equipping the security system to meet the 21<sup>st</sup> century's standard. Also, it recommended that the government should seek technical assistance in the area of intelligence from advanced countries. Finally, the study was of the view that proactive measures be adopted by the government.

Akhakpe (2012) on his own part, tried to point out in his study, the recurring election crises under liberal democratic system and the threat they pose to national security in Nigeria. Of great concern to the study is election, the major instrument for selecting political office holders and the means of ensuring accountability and mobilization of the citizenry for political participation. Yet, elections in Nigeria have always been marked by malpractices, which has often brought about unpopular governments to power with the resultant legitimacy crisis, breakdown of law and order and general threat to security. For instance, as Akhakpe (2012) observed, the aftermath of the 2011 general elections in Nigeria threatened the very existence of the Nigerian state. The Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) came out openly to reject the result of the presidential elections, which it alleged that its candidate, retired General Buhari won. While the case was in court, political jobbers and miscreants seized the opportunity to create a state of insecurity in the country through the spate of bombing and communal violence in several parts of the north. The political uncertainties in the country created avenues for aggrieved groups to revive their hitherto latent agitations for all manners of things. The study therefore contended, using the structure agency theory, that election in which 'the winner takes all' is suitable for a plural society like Nigeria. The study also argued that the endemic problem of electoral conflicts and crises within the Nigerian state can be resolved by the enthronement of genuine democracy based on the people's cultural values, which contain the universal ideals of democracy.

With particular focus on Nigeria, Ogbonnaya and Ehigiamusoe (2013) in their study examined the security challenges posed to nation-states by these "violent non-state actors" such as *Boko Haram* and Niger Delta militancy in international politics, especially since September 11, 2001 bombing of the World Trade Centre in the United States. The study adopted descriptive and analytical approaches and found that these two terrorist groups have not only challenged the security of the Nigerian state but also threatened its unity, territoriality and sovereignty. The study therefore, recommended that the Nigerian state and its government involved in national and international security policy making should study and thoroughly understand the operational methodologies and instruments of these terrorist organizations and the threats from them. Furthermore, it recommended the complete overhauling of the security institutions of the Nigerian state in order to meet the current security challenges confronting the state. Finally, the study recommended that the Nigerian state and its government should reach global agreement for cooperation in various areas in order to curtail international crime and terrorism and reduce global insecurity.

Nwozor (2013) in his study examined the Nigerian state caught in the crossfire of national security arising from the insurgency of various rogue groups, most prominent of them is the *Boko Haram* sect. Relying on secondary sources of data, the study interrogated the force theory that underpins Nigeria's security engineering and contended that the continued insecurity in this polity is a demonstration of its ineffectiveness.

The study also contended that the proposition by the federal government to grant amnesty to the *Boko Haram* sect is not as simplistic as it seemed, as it transcended the narrow definitional criteria of bartering forgiveness for peace. Hence the study was critical of the proposed amnesty programme of the federal government and advocated a holistic approach that incorporated other issues that are promotive of justice, morality and ethicalness in the polity.

Having seen the foregoing studies, this paper tries to emphasize the implicating dangers of insecurity to the national stability of Nigeria, especially now that there is an increasing rate of insecurity in the face of seemingly government's inability to fight insecurity. This paper attempts an empirical approach in its study, which is the gap it tries to fill. And in doing so, it extends knowledge in the subject-area.

#### **4. The Reality Of Insecurity In Nigeria**

In Nigeria, the security situation can be said to be challenging. "The country can boast of relative peace, when the situation is viewed from a national perspective" (Radio Nigeria, 2014). No place in the country, regardless of how one tries to picture the scenario, is secure. Hardly do Nigerians wake up to good news as regards their security. It is either that it is the news of abduction and killing of some people, especially children in states like Borno, Yobe, Kano and Bauchi or the senseless massacre in the name of protesting an election result or the invasion of some communities in Zamfara by unknown violent men or the occasional OPC and MASSOB disturbances or the Niger Deltans' militancy or the usual religious/ethnic oriented conflicts or the insurgency transversing the borders of Benue, Nasarawa, Adamawa, Plateau, Taraba and Kogi states or the *Boko Haram* terror attacks in the North. In fact, the 276 female students abducted by *Boko Haram* militants on the night of April 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>, 2014 from the Government Secondary school in the town of Chibok in Borno are yet to be found. Also, multiple explosions within the country have been recorded recently. These explosions go off at a rate which will soon make them look like a normal occurrence. Coupled to these, these miscreants and terrorists called Boko Haram, under the commandeering of Abubakar Shekau are not relenting in their bid to making Nigeria, and now, her neighbouring countries like Cameroun, Niger and Chad, restive. Their method has not only developed sophisticatedly but also, unsuspectingly in their deploying of young girls to cause these explosions. In fact, with violence and terror Abubakar Shekau had tried creating an independent state for himself within the country. A move that will have a devastating effect on the national stability of Nigeria, if allowed to be. So terrible is this situation of insecurity that many in Nigeria are hopeless of any forthcoming panacea to this seemingly intractable state of insecurity that looms large in the polity and as such, have disposed themselves into expecting the worst of the situation.

In all this, one is constrained to ask: what has the Nigerian government done to proffering a lasting solution to the security issue of the country? The government of the country seems clueless as regards resolving the security problem. Not that the government is not working towards resolving this issue, its action has been predictable and quite negligent enough to give these miscreants causing mayhem and various atrocities breathing space to regroup and re-strategize on their next line of dastard action. Adejumo (2011) talked of this negligent attitude of the government when he recalled President Jonathan Goodluck's response to 2011 UN House Bombing: "Terrorism is a global phenomenon. May be it is Nigeria's turn." As further interpreted by Adejumo, it seemed that the supreme leader of the country was saying that, "Why not, it's our turn to start getting blown up." How much should one expect?

It is not that this security problem was a new phenomenon to the present government of Nigeria. As Adejumo (2011) rightly observed, "security was a driving issue in the last presidential campaign following bomb blast by Niger Delta militants and attacks of police by members of the extremist Islamic group, *Boko Haram* in the Northern part of the country. President Jonathan campaigned very hard to convince Nigerians that his government was meeting those security challenges. But the rioting, mostly in the North that followed immediately after his election raised questions, which are still unanswered, about security preparedness." Yet, the President is not at loss with what his duty was, for he said, "As president, it is my solemn duty to defend the constitution of this country. That includes the obligation to protect the lives and properties of every Nigerian wherever they choose to live" (Adejumo, 2011).

#### **5. The Security Challenges Of The Nigerian Government**

Having said the foregoing, it is pertinent to note the security challenges which the Nigerian government has to grapple with if security is to be restored to Nigeria. First of all is the failure of security agencies in the country. In particular, the failure of the intelligence services to contain the recurring security breaches. These security agencies appear incapable of matching the sophisticatedness of these miscreants. They discharged their duty unprofessionally and unmotivated. One wonders how they can veritably help the Nigerian government in restoring security to the country. In fact, the current trend of violence is imprinting on the psyche of Nigerians that the government security apparatus is incapable of guaranteeing the security and safety of its people.

Another security challenge comes from the judiciary arm of government of the country. In Nigeria, the

Judiciary has occasionally compromised cases that concern insecurity and thereby making the law not to act as a deterrent again. This challenge needs to be speedily resolved since many Nigerians have become conditioned to the acts of carnage, brigandage, looting, massacre, butchery and bestiality.

Indecisiveness on issues bothering on insecurity from the part of the Nigerian government is another security challenge. This indecisiveness is not peculiar to the present Nigerian government but it has been an attitude of every federal government since the first republic. The leaders of this country need to cultivate strong political will to oversee this security problem and not appear ever clueless, negligent and predictable.

Unemployment appears to be the strongest security challenge of the Nigerian government. So alarming is the rate of unemployment in this country. Many Nigerians of whom are in the youth bracket are not gainfully employed. This situation has continually fanned the embers of insecurity in Nigeria to flames. These youths are frustrated by their unemployed state into perpetrating crimes of various degrees.

Another of these security challenges is the issue of lop-sided development of the country. As Nwadiakor (2011) rightly pointed out, “the deliberate concentration of Nigeria’s capital resources to the development of a few cities in the name of federal and state capitals, culminating in the prevalence of a large population of rural and underdeveloped communities who later came to see the developing cities of Lagos, Port-Harcourt, Kano, Enugu, Ibadan, Kaduna and Calabar to mention but a few, as a different country has equally compounded the security of this country.” The situation created is such that the rural areas dwellers consider as enemies and subsequently, appeared to have waged a cold war against the urban areas dwellers. The rural areas dwellers out of envy for the goodies enjoyed by the urban areas dwellers, engage in organized criminal expeditions to the cities and retreat to escape security agencies, and this has continued till date.

The final and not the least of these security challenges is the nefarious and virulent activity of the Islamic sect *cum* terror-group, *Boko Haram*. This terror-group has constituted itself a thorn in the flesh of the current government of Nigeria. The group has claimed responsibility for most bomb explosions and mayhem experienced within the country in recent times. The sheer lawlessness and carnage carried out by these renegade of Islam have heated up the nation and made the country less secure.

## 6. The Implications Of Security Challenges To National Stability

It is one thing to possess the intention to abate the insecurity situation and another to really abate it. What is meant here is that Nigerians are actually tired in hearing promises of restoring security from their government. It is high time the government grabbed the bull by the horns. If not, this insecurity, if it has not even started, will affect legitimate social and economic activities in the country. And as Adejumo (2011) made us to understand, problems resulting from insecurity have a damaging consequence of giving the signal to the rest of the international community that Nigeria is not safe and secured and as such not suitable for economic investment and activities. Radio Nigeria (2014) brought to the limelight the gravity of this implication, if these security challenges are allowed to fester, when it observed: “First, it is capable of stalling any developmental intention of the Government. The much needed foreign investment in the country is bound to be elusive if the security situation is not addressed.” Not just that alone, the security challenges facing Nigeria, as Adejumo (2011) further pointed out, have telling implication for the country’s political system. Every part of the polity must feel that it is being carried along in the process of national governance. “Experience has shown that widespread discontent and loss of confidence in the system have ways of affecting national political stability” (Adejumo, 2011). Most importantly, constant violence in the country will impinge on the continued existence of Nigerian democracy. More worrying is the fact that insecurity in Nigeria have not only impacted unhelpfully on Nigeria’s image in the international community, they have also threatened Nigeria’s unity and corporate existence (Walter, 2012). In concord, Akande (2014) cautioned, “our nation stands on the rim of crisis. A stupendous national disaster beckons....The well being of the nation hangs on a balance. If we do not act decisively, the demands of the moment will find us wanting and history will issue a terrible verdict against us.”

## 7. Conclusion And Recommendations

This paper examined the security challenges of the Nigerian government and their implications to the stability of Nigeria as a nation. As revealed, insecurity has posed a conundrum for the Nigerian government and appears intractable. In the face of apparent insecurity, the Nigerian government has wobbled in its responsibility. To assist the government in ensuring security in Nigeria, this paper has engaged itself in thinking of the way out. This paper therefore, recommends the following:

- The retraining of Nigerian security agencies, especially the intelligence services on sophisticated and combative method of restoring security rather than a complete overhaul of these agencies. The government should recourse to advanced countries like Britain and France in this regard.
- The judiciary of the country needs to step up and eschew being compromised in all issues, especially that of security.
- The government of the country needs to change its approach and attitude regarding security matters.

Whatever strategy for restoring security the government has, needs to be reviewed since it has proved to be inadequate and ineffective. To do this, the government needs to be open to suggestion and advices that can bring about security to Nigeria. Also, the government should always be decisive and proactive so as to forestall particular cases of insecurity lingering on.

- Education in the country needs to be revisited and upgraded if security can be restored in this country. The quality of education in the country is on the wane. Government needs to raise the quality of education by, not only financially supporting the education sector but also, evolving programmes of cultural and political education and orientation that seek to enthrone the fundamentals of democracy. This would make the Nigerian citizens imbibe principles and practices essential for sustainable democracy.
- The government needs to create sufficient employment for the people of its country. If the government cannot do this all alone, it should seek assistance from the private sector. This can go a long way in restoring security in Nigeria. When idle minds are occupied with meaningful work, they would be indisposed to perpetrating crimes.
- There is the need for government to spread Nigeria's capital resources to the development of every state of the country no matter its contribution to the economy.
- The government should embark on a de-radicalisation programme for the many young people in the Northern region who have been erroneously indoctrinated. A programme that goes beyond meting out punitive measures but entails "giving voice and representation to young people in the region" (Akande, 2014).
- The government should seek "the operational involvement and assistance of ECOWAS and AU, including deploying multinational security operations across the Sahel to track and hunt down Boko Haram operational chain" (Akande, 2014).

As could be deduced from the foregoing, the state of insecurity as found in Nigeria now is unwanted and thus, calls for urgent attention. An attention that is not just urgent but rapt. This is so because the security challenges Nigeria is facing, are threatening the fabrics of its national stability. "The time for excuses and half-measures is long past" (Akande, 2014). Yet, "this current leadership can help avert disaster if they wake up to what true governance is" (Akande, 2014).

Besides, what we need is a Nigeria that is secured, no more no less. This paper has tried to question the Nigerian government's attitude to the insecurity that has gripped the polity. While it did that, it added its voice to the call for a more circumspect attitude to be adopted by Nigerians, to the issue of insecurity. In the spate of recent violence in the country, this paper urges concerted efforts by all Nigerians in order to win the war against violence/insecurity in Nigeria.

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