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## **National security issues and challenges in Nigeria: Which way forward**

**NWEKE PRINCE O.<sup>1\*</sup> AND NWACHUKWU TOCHUKWU STEPHEN<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Department of Educational Foundations, University of Nigeria, Nsukka  
Email: [nweke.prince@live.com](mailto:nweke.prince@live.com) | Tel: +234(0)806-445-1455

<sup>2</sup>Department of Public Administration, University of Nigeria, Nsukka  
Email: [tochukwu4jesus@yahoo.com](mailto:tochukwu4jesus@yahoo.com) | Tel: +234 (0)803-369-3530

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This paper attempts to examine and evaluate the origin, causes, and suggested solutions to National Security Issues and challenges. The paper highlights the ongoing concerns, challenges and proffers solutions which citing Mr. President as the only authority that should acknowledge the failure of the security agencies and provide complete overhaul of the Security Agencies to pre-empt these security breaches. In particular, the failure of the intelligence services to contain the recurring security breaches. Such as the spate of bombings which has once more brought to limelight the need for a Sovereign National Conference. And until these structural distortions and anomalies are addressed, the monster of insecurity will loom large. The paper recommends that Mr. President has the power to act decisively to execute his office, and this can be achieved by implementing the anti-terrorism law and punish culprits of such heinous crimes capable of causing instability in the nation. This paper also discusses the instrumentality of effective use of the Islamic panacea in tackling moral degeneration and insecurity that have both become the bane of Nigeria. From this paper, we see that it is expressly stated in our Constitution that the Government(s) is ultimately responsible for the security of lives, property, etc of the people of Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Security, National Security, National Development, Boko Haram, Insecurity

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\*Corresponding Author: Email: [nweke.prince@live.com](mailto:nweke.prince@live.com) | Tel: +234 (0)8064451455

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### **INTRODUCTION**

There is no doubt that the major challenge of Nigeria's national security is the containment of diverse manifestations of violence spearheaded by various unknown groups. The major group in contemporary Nigeria that has stretched the resources, expertise, patience and even the competence of Nigeria's security apparatuses to the limit, both individually and

collectively, is the Boko Haram sect and their sponsors. The sheer number of deaths arising from bomb attacks orchestrated by the Boko Haram far outstrips any other cause of death in Nigeria, including epidemics (Bankong-Obi, 2012). One of the shortcomings of Nigeria's security issues is its pro-realist orientation that accords the deployment of force. Thus, the strategy of choice among national security agencies is the use of force in various guises to

subdue those identified as threatening national security (Agaptus, 2013). The government's supposed superior force has not rolled back the menace of insecurity which creates the impression that the government is not doing enough to secure the people. This mindset led Bankong-Obi (2012) to attribute Nigeria's intractable security challenges to government's apathy towards exterminating the terror group and inefficiency on the part of the security agencies.

Today, the country's nascent democracy is being tested by rampant crime and an unprecedented campaign of terror such that in the south, civil unrest threatens safety a stability, to the east; gangs who kidnap expatriates for ransom lie in wait on the roads, in bars, and cities; and to the north, the Islamic terrorist group called Boko Haram is growing both in number and brutality hence the group has posed brazen challenges to the government and issued the ultimatum "leave or die" to Christians living in the northern Nigeria and confidence that the government can protect the people is at all-time low (Agaptus, 2013).

According to Alozieuwa (2012), the challenge posed by the Boko Haram sect in Nigeria is not only about the viciousness of either its terror campaigns, or the sect's avowed mission to impose Islamic law on the country, but about the confusion regarding the exact cause(s) of the violence. However, many theories that have emerged to explain the problem, have broadly seen revolving around socio-economic, political, and religious themes; all of which in his estimation do not explain the reason for such violence, brutality and cruelty in one's own country against his/her brothers. In view of the above assertion, this paper seeks to unravel the National Security issues, challenges, and how Boko Haram has constituted itself as a national security threat to the harmonious co-existence of Nigeria after decades of dictatorships. Nigeria saw its fourth democratically elected president take office in 1999. Today, the country's nascent democracy

is being tested by rampant crime and an unprecedented campaign of terror such that in the south, civil unrest threatens safety and stability, to the east; gangs who kidnap expatriates for ransom lie in wait on the roads, in bars, and cities; and to the north, the Islamic terrorist group called Boko Haram is growing both in number and brutality hence the group has posed brazen challenges to the government and issued the ultimatum "leave or die" to Christians living in the northern Nigeria and confidence that the government can protect the people is at all-time low.

Notwithstanding, what constitutes security in modern times is a question that has never been answered satisfactorily by scholars and researchers. Its perception even within one community varies in time (Ejogba, 2006). For instance, until recently, most of the mainstream writings on security studies literally defined it in terms of a state's capabilities to defend its territorial integrity from threats, actual and imagined, as well as acts of aggression from other potential enemies (Okwori, 1995). To this end, states build and equip armed forces towards achieving this goal. The main assumption of this conception is that threat of violence, and the actual ability to commit violence by a state, against an enemy successfully deters threats and aggression (Rouke, 2005; Alabi, 1997). At the domestic level, the belief is that internal law-enforcement agencies and other instruments of domestic intelligence are all that is required for a state to be secured. There is however, an evident shift on what actually constitutes security in the post-Cold War era. Presently, there is an attempt to broaden it to accommodate other relevant, if not critical, elements within this conception. Issues such as economic development, equality, political accountability and good-governance are now regarded as fundamental to any comprehensive understanding and explanation on the question of security. Perhaps, this is because of the fact that the conventional militaristic conception on security that dominate because of the fact that the

conventional militaristic conception of security that dominated the Cold War discourse proved ineffectual and grossly incapable of meeting security expectations among many countries. In this new conception, human development is considered as central (Hettne, 2010; Booth, 2007). Thus, we see in this shift, a new and broader conception in which security entails the capacity of a state to defend itself from

external threats with all the necessary means at its disposal, and internal threats through overall socio-economic well-being of its citizenry (Absolute Astronomy, 2011; Tedheke, 1998). Here, there is a greater recognition of the relevance of other elements such as political, environmental, economic, and social factors as irreducible components of security of any country (Buzan & Hansen, 2009).

### **Conceptual Definitions**

#### **Concept of Security**

Hettne (2010) defined security “as a reasonable level of predictability at different levels of the social system, from local communities to the global level” The understanding here is that at the global level. There is a presence of an order which is predicated upon the predictability of the behavior of other members within the system. At local level, security thus includes the ability of the state to predict the likely implication of any particular condition on its citizens. The recognition lies squarely not on the state’s ability to enforce law and order, though that may be important, but in creating the necessary socio-economic conditions that guarantee fair amount of predictability on the behavior of its citizens. For the purpose of this study, (Aliyu, 2012) conceived and present security as a state of reduced or contained threats and tension in which the stability of a state is not in an imminent danger of disruption from within and without. Stability is here viewed as the order, regularity and pattern, which characterized the state’s condition over an extended period (Aliyu, 2012).

Nwanegbo and Odigbo (2013) argued that the concept of ‘security’ is a crosscutting, and multi-dimensional concept which has, over the last century, been the subject of great debate. However, long before that, the history of mankind was interspersed by the frenzied search for the best way of ensuring the security of the people, their properties,

territories, states and institutions among others. In all places and countries, security has been considered as a “first order value” worth preserving. The aforementioned notwithstanding, there is no consensus on the definition of security. This is not surprising because as a social phenomenon, it is often approached from different perspectives. Above all, the concept of security has been seen as a situation where a person or thing is not exposed to any form of danger or risk of physical or moral aggression, accident, theft or deterioration. While some security experts argued that the concept of security has always been associated with the safety and survival of the state and its citizens from harm or destruction or from dangerous threats (Mukhtar, 2012).

Those conceptions generally hold that the state is the only institution with the primary responsibility and power for the safety of its territory and its people (Zabadi, 2005). Therefore the concept of security in this study is operationalized within the context of a nation hence the concept of “national security issues”. Majorly, two contending perspectives tend to provide the basis for the conceptualization of human security. One is a neo-realist theoretical framework, which is predicated on the primacy and centrality of state in conceptualizing security. It tends to explain security from the standpoint of state primary responsibility. Within this context, Buzan (1991) argued that the, straitjacket” militaristic approach to security that

dominated the discourse during the Cold War was „simple-minded“ and subsequently led to the underdevelopment of the concept. For him, human security includes political, economic, social and environmental threats including those that are militaristic. Thus, Buzan (1991) illustrated a tripartite concept analysis of security based on international system, state level and individual level but submitted that sovereign states should remain the most effective security provider.

The second approach is a postmodernist or pluralist view that seeks to displace the state as a major provider of security but rather places greater emphasis on non-state actors. Advocates of this approach tend to argue that the concept of security goes beyond a military determination of threats. According to Booth (1994) states and implicitly governments must no longer be the primary referents of security because governments which are supposed to be the guardians of their people’s “security” have instead become the primary source of insecurity for the many people who live under their sovereignty. As a result, Booth (1994) further argued that human security is ultimately more important than state security. While concurring with Both, Nwabueze (1989) posited that economic security of the individual is or should be of far greater concern to the government and society than the security of the state ( Nwanegbo and Odigbo, 2013).

### **Concept of National Security**

The concept of “National Security Issues” is often misunderstood says (Wolfer, 1962) and as such elusive says (Carey, 2000). Hence a strange phenomenon, a subjective “felling”, and therefore relational and relatives, rather than an objective “thing” than can be seen and handled. However, National security is the requirement to maintain the survival of the state through the use of economic, diplomacy, power projection and political power. The concept developed mostly

in the United States of America after World War II. Initially focusing on military might; it now encompasses a broad range of facets, all of which impinge on the non military or economic security of the nation and the values espoused by the national society (Anyadike 2013).

Accordingly, in order to possess national security, a nation needs to possess economic security, energy security, environmental security, etc. Security threats involve not only conventional foes such as other nation-states but also non-state actors such as violent non-state actors, narcotic cartels, multinational corporations and non-governmental organizations; some authorities include natural disasters and events causing severe environmental damage in this category. Measures taken to ensure national security include: using diplomacy to rally allies and isolate threats; marshalling economic power to facilitate or compel cooperation; maintaining effective armed forces; implementing civil defense and emergency preparedness measures; ensuring their silence and redundancy of critical infrastructure; using intelligence services to detect and defeat or avoid threats and espionage, and to protect classified information; using counterintelligence services or secret police to protect the nation from internal threats (Anyadike 2013).

Generally, Braithwaite (1988) quoting the encyclopedia of the social sciences defined national security as “ability of a nation to protect its internal values from external threat”. Also, Lipmann defines it by stating that “a nation has security when it does not have to sacrifice its legitimate interest to avoid war, and is able, if challenged, to maintain them by war”. Morgenthau (1948) posits that national security and national interests are inter-related; where the former is seen in terms of power and therefore is the essence of politics.

Imobigbe (1981) refers to it as the defense and survival of the state. The danger of looking at national security from this

narrow angle according to Nweke (1988) is three-fold; but we shall concern ourselves with the first two: First is the tendency to equate “defense” with “security” and to bestow undue responsibilities to the military as if the armed forces alone are the guardians of national security. This tendency in turn creates in the minds of the armed forces that it is only through them that security, stability and progress can be achieved. Secondly, national security has been used by civilian statesmen as political rhetoric’s or slogan for rallying the citizens in the face of perceived internal or external threats to the governments in power and for bolstering their local influence and political base (Adebayo, 1986).

Dyke (1966), concludes that there is no doubt that national security embodies the sovereignty of the state, the inviolability of its territorial boundaries, and the right to

### **Problems, Causes and Challenges of National Security in Nigeria**

One problem is that security expertise is limited in Nigeria where this level of terrorism is a relatively new phenomenon. And training as well as resources for building that type of intelligence gathering capability is lacking. Another problem was highlighted by Jonathan in a January 9 address where he noted that part of the difficulty in defeating Boko Haram is that the group has infiltrated both the government and the military. Another problem identify by Aliyu (2012) may be corruption as close to 95 percent of the populace believe that the government is corrupt, according to a Gallup survey released in January, 2010.

Aliyu (2012) critically outline three important variables that define the nexus of the causes and problems militating against National security issues in Nigeria which he cited as poverty, inequality and mass unemployment. The idea, it is worth mentioning here, is to show that these indicators are actually the fundamental

individual and collective self-defense against internal and external threats. But the state is secure only when the aggregate of people organized under it has a consciousness of belonging to a common sovereign political community; enjoy equal political freedom, human rights, economic opportunities, and when the state itself is able to ensure independence in its development and foreign policy.

Freedman’s (1998) view is that once anything generates anxiety or threatens the quality of life in some respect, it is thus labeled a “security problem”. The notion of economic security thus encourages a confrontational approach to trace policy, while that of “environmental security” has often served more to confuse than to clarify by encouraging a search for adversaries.

security threats which have engendered insecurity in the country today.

Unlike, in advanced societies where economic power offers political leverage, in Nigeria the reverse obtains, with one dominant social class determining, to use the words of Harold Lasswell, who gets what, when and how. Therefore, economic problems including poverty, unemployment and inequality, structural politics of exclusion, and a discriminating social system in which an individual will never realize his potentials without a “godfather” provide the cannon fodder of radicalization, social tension, conflict, violence, and the ultimate break down of law and order as we are presently witnessing in Nigeria today (Aliyu, 2012 cited in Oyeshola, 2005).

Elesin (2012) on his owned viewed showcase terrorism, Armed Robbery, Kidnapping and other criminalities as a quick survey of the security challenges in Nigeria. He argued that Militants in the southeastern parts of the country also contribute, in no small measure, to the security challenges facing the country. Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) masterminded several bomb attacks in the

country including that of October 1st, 2010 when two bombs exploded near the Eagle Square venue of the 50th independence anniversary celebrations, killing many and injuring several others (Elesin, 2012). Adelani Adegbenga and Olalekan Adebayo have both opined that it was the fear of bomb attacks that made the Federal government of Nigeria to cancel the year 2012 Democracy Day ceremony.

There is also the economic consideration. The Nigeria Delta insists it owns the oil that funds the national budget. And Dokubo has warned there will be no oil to export if anything happens to Jonathan. The ex-militants had demonstrated enough capacity to cripple Nigeria's oil production when they reduced crude oil production from 2.4 million barrels daily, mb/d at about 700,000 mb/d. That reality forced the federal government to resort to the Amnesty Programme. Today, oil production is over 2.6mb/d (Agbo and Suleiman, 212).

Obasanjo, who was represented by the National Secretary of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Prince Olagunsoye Oyinlola, stressed that the only viable way out of the ugly situation is dialogue and enlightenment programmes for youths, community leaders, village heads, religious leaders, local government chairmen, traditional rulers as well as politicians. He added that erosion of cultural values due to increasing acculturation and negative external influences have also contributed largely to the spate of violent crimes and insecurity in the country. Another critical factor worthy of mention is the breakdown of cultural values. Unfortunately, evasion of these values due to increasing acculturation and negative external influences, have also contributed largely to the spate of violent crises and general insecurity we have today (Binniyat, 2012).

In addressing the challenges to the survival of democracy and National Security Issues in Nigeria, it is pertinent to consider security issues and problems that have affected or capable of affecting the attitude,

confidence and cooperation of all groups and segments that makes up the Nigerian federation. It is also necessary to explore the gaps and gray areas in the national constitution that are responsible for various problems and crises and how these gaps can be addressed. Some of the major security problems currently confronting the nation have been identified to include: political and electioneering conflicts, socio-economic agitations, ethno-religious crises, ethnic militias, boundary disputes, cultism, criminality and organized crimes. However, these problems either by individually or collectively constitute threats to the peace, security and development of the country. Invariably, they have implications for the continuity and survival of the nation's nascent democracy. On the other hand we also need to explore how democracy can itself be deliberately constructed as a positive response to these problems (Abiz, 2008).

Beyond the effects of national security concerns on the economic fortunes of the country, the nature of the security challenges facing the country also have implications for the country's political system. Equally, social cohesion among various groups and interests is important in the process of national political development. Therefore, the constituent parts of the country must be and indeed feel that they are being carried along in the process of national governance (Abiz, 2008). Experience has also shown that widespread discontent and loss of confidence in the system have ways of affecting national political stability. Invariably continuing escalation of violence and crises across the country will impinge on the survival of our democracy (Abiz, 2008). Accordingly, there is the challenge to rethink and improve on policy and institutional means of dealing with security concerns arising in the country. At the political level, the federal, state and local governments should evolve programmes of cultural and political education and orientation that seek to enthrone the fundamentals of democracy so that the political contestants as well as the generality of the citizens imbibe principles and practices

essential for sustainable democracy. Such programmes must also address specific tendencies that create security breach and concerns in the country (Abiz, 2008 cited in Nairaland, 2014).

While appreciating the various efforts of the government and many others unmentioned efforts in tackling National Security Issues and challenges in the country, the present situation in the country still evidences that all the efforts made by the government have really not met a total desired results. That is because in spite all the human and capital efforts, insecurity has continued unabated. The insecurity situation has also become so uncontrollable that the former National Security Adviser to the President, Andrew Azazi according to Misbahu Bashir had to raise concern over the level of insecurity in the country. (30, Editorial/Opinion, the Nation 19) (Esilen, 2012).

## CONCLUSION

From all indications, national security issues are big challenges in Nigeria's effort to develop. Of which the primary responsibility of any government is to ensure the security of lives and properties of the citizens. Equally, Boko Haram insurgency has also compounded the existing threatening security situation in Nigeria. In the Nigerian context, the government seemed to have announced the amnesty programme without engaging in requisite consultations. For Nigeria to tackle its security problems, it is instructive that recourse should be made to the Islamic panacea. Notwithstanding, given our experience and where we are coming from, we agreed that we can do better, but how much better can we realistically expect to perform? We have a vast array of persons, groups, and institutions that for long were schooled in a particular way, and have never known any other way of doing things than the non-accountable, non-democratic, and non-people friendly style. Nigeria as a nation is in a major

transition, a major journey away from a past we cannot ignore, to a future that must be better. Along the way, there will be frustrations caused by perceived sluggishness of the pace of the journey. There will be resistance from those who benefited from the old order and for whom the new means loss and reduction to irrelevance. Therefore, there is need for government and stakeholders to explore alternative avenues rather than force to finding lasting solution to the security challenges and the menace of Boko Haram if actually Nigeria wants to develop and ends the ongoing insurgent in the country.

## THE WAY FORWARD

The need to resolve or possibly offset the growing trend of death and depredation caused by the Boko Haram and insecurity challenges in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized in view of the enormity of waste being recorded by Amnesty International and other international agencies on human rights. The truce terms of the radical sect makes the hope of having peace restored to look like a ruse in the country (Abisoye, 2012).

The use of force is been suggested by some. They based their argument on the idea that when a group of people decide to take up arms against their nation and murder innocent members of the populace, the only way to prevent anarchy is to deal with the issue firmly. Gubio is of the view that the group must be handled with firm caution; being a group that does not want to operate or recognize the existing Nigerian government neither do they want to know neither the Nigerian constitution nor the Nigerian laws. A "Carrot and Stick" approach is being proffered as the measure of ensuring a lasting solution to the problem (Obasanjo, 2011).

The Northern elites should also broker peace in the region as it is believed that they are lovers of peace and tranquility which the menace of Boko Haram threatens; as it is only in peace that the region will witness development of all sorts. Since the menace has

subsided, this is the right time for the Nigerian government to establish special force that can urgently counters the terrorism of Boko Haram caliber as well as open a viable channel for information sharing between the government agencies and the individuals or private security outfits because security is every body's responsibility.

The federal government and the entire security agencies do all they can that is necessary to stop the continuing bloodletting in Northern Nigeria (Anyadike, 2013).

They federal government should endorsed a mandatory military training to Nigerian youths after completion of their high school education as part of efforts to stop violence in parts of the country; and this will as well check the wave of insecurity in the country.

They federal government must create a new department of home security, new department of national intelligence, and reorganized the whole system (Kayode, 2012).

The federal government should apply the use of rule of law and new advance technologies to tackle insecurity challenges like computerized machines and other technical accessories like in other western countries.

The federal Government should also endorsed equal opportunity to guarantee self protection and liberalizing individual ownership of small arms to be promulgated to ensure that every Nigerian citizen is able to defend his or her own life (Philippe and Abimbola, 2012).

The NCS is expected to tighten the noose on illegal proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs), explosives and other offensive weapon. Similarly, NIS should mount a formidable campaign against the influx of illegal immigrants and effectively monitor the international borders since some of them could be willing hand for perpetration of violent crimes.

The federal government should urgently investigate the roles of the security

agents and other functionaries irrespective of their closeness to the corridors of power.

There is need for provision of modern equipment for the force to enhance effective crime fighting and prevention which is also of immense value.

The Inter-agencies collaboration of security and intelligence agencies has to be further encouraged such as National Intelligence Agency (NIA), State Security Services (SSS), Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI), Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) and such others should be equipped in all ramifications to be able to cope with contemporary security challenges.

There is also need to investigate or identify the kind of misery, grievances, misgiving, deprivations and despair that cause some people to take pleasure in terminating human lives, including their own sometimes. Basically, the investigation should be done with the view to effecting radical change in society and channel such deadly instincts towards peaceful ends based on dialogue, negotiation, resolution of conflict and mutual healing (Abisoye, 2012).

The teaching of good morals by clerics has also been stressed as a panacea to the current insecurity posed to the country by such outlaws as the Boko haram sect members and militants in the Niger Delta (Suntai 2011; Abisoye, 2012).

The Federal Government should tackle the myriads of problems, including insecurity, facing the nation by making universal education available to the youth as well as addressing the problem of poverty.

The federal government should bring economic opportunity to the people who don't have it and reduce the rate of prosperity which has always been concentrated in and around urban areas (Clinton, 2013).

Finally, the federal government should urgently look into the problem solving skills and creative opportunities as an alternative to fight against community violence, drugs abuses, thugs, crime, murder, poverty and youth unemployment in the Northern Region

of Nigeria, while the carrot and stick could be in the form of dialogue and massive intelligence gathering by the security personnel to root out perpetration of the alleged serial killing and bombings to proffer immediate solution to ongoing national security challenges which has highly affected the nation's economic and foreign investors partnership.

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