EXPLORING NATIONAL SECURITY AND IT'S CHALLENGES IN NIGERIAN STATE SYSTEM

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Abstract
The primary aim of this study is to examine the persistent contentious issues in Nigeria that are linked to the country's national security. The article contends that security threats have evolved into an extremely difficult challenge that has persistently disrupted the Nigerian State System. This research employs the national state thesis as its theoretical foundation to clarify the nature of national security narratives in relation to the Nigerian state. This article constitutes an exploratory research investigation. It draws extensively from the existing works of scholars and researchers within the broader field of national security studies. The article utilizes secondary data collection methods as its source of materials for the investigation. The article finds that Nigerian security issues are complex, spanning both horizontal and vertical dimensions, where both the government and the majority of the Nigerian populace bear significant responsibility. The work therefore recommends that addressing the menace of national security demands multi-faceted strategies, requiring both political will from the government and appropriate orientation from citizens to reduce the scourge of security threats in the Nigerian state in the 21st century and beyond.
Keywords: Security, Issues, National Security, Politics, Democratic Sustenance

Introduction
As the effects of globalization continue to spread worldwide, there has been an unprecedented rise in insecurity on a massive scale. Security experts and intellectuals such as Oladele (2018) and Abraham (2020) have argued that because the world has

become a so-called "global village," nation-states, whether developed or developing, now grapple with insecurity in various ways. Based on available research evidence and the works of experts like Nnoli (2011) and Alexander and Vincent (2022), there are numerous security breaches, including international terrorism, drug trafficking and use of contraband materials, trans-border crimes, proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs), global wars, ideological conflicts, human trafficking, civil unrest and violence, armed conflicts, and various other security concerns (Nwaobi, 2013). In all this, it can be argued that the activities of nations directly impacted by these security breaches are inevitably connected in one way or another to the consequences of security challenges as they continue to unfold.

Drawing from the seminal works of Collier (2010), the African continent, like other continents, is not exempt from these issues. In his examination of security threats facing Africa, Collier (2010) has sought to make two significant distinctions. The first concerns security challenges related to the growing radicalization of intergroup relations in terms of ideological contests, and secondly, the increasing devastation caused by the changing nature of the environment. In the first instance, numerous works by African scholars attribute these challenges to religious extremism and the growing tendency of extremist social groups, many of whom are located in the Gulf of Guinea and several West African states, to spread radical ideology. What is currently evident from available security reports is a striking revelation of a wide range of wealthy and influential individuals who are widely believed to have exerted significant financial influence in sponsoring terrorism and terror-related activities within the sub-Saharan African region.

In their analysis of terrorism financing in the Horn of Africa, for instance, Nickels and Cleaves (2023) noted that terrorism is big business and has continued to be recognized as one of the notorious sources of security breaches in Africa. The report further demonstrated that the Nigerian Boko Haram terrorism, for example, operates (though illegally) with an annual fiscal budget of approximately US$ 10 million. The same applies to the Al-Shabaab and Al-Qaeda groups and their operational mechanisms around the Islamic Maghreb, where millions of US dollars are purportedly generated each year for terrorism and terror-related activities.

In the case of Nigeria, national security has recently taken a different shape, and due to the dramatic changes in the nature of security concerns, scholars, experts, opinion leaders, and the government have all been working hard to understand what has continued to drive such enormous national threats to the people. Francis (2021) argues that insecurity in the Nigerian state is currently at its highest level. According to Francis (2021), insecurity in Nigeria is multi-faceted, ranging from the Boko Haram insurgency that has persisted since 2009, internal conflicts, armed banditry, militia activities, and various belligerent group agitations (such as the Indigenous People of Biafra, IPOB); the Niger Delta crisis, farmer-herder conflicts, electoral violence, religious disharmony

and tensions, and recently, the emerging trends of kidnapping and abduction of Nigerian citizens and foreign expatriates alike, ostensibly for ransom and other sinister purposes. It goes without saying that the polity has continued to overheat in recent times, with the security forces having little room to quell the uprisings.

Given the above problematic, this study therefore raises very fundamental questions, namely: what are the predisposing factors driving insecurity in Nigeria? In what ways do these security challenges impact Nigeria's national security in its quest for a viable nation-building drive? What has the government done to mitigate the scourge of insecurity and establish enduring security architecture in the country? These questions, as a matter of fact, require corresponding answers in terms of the noble objectives necessary to understand this salient topic under investigation.

The article is divided into six thematic areas, including but not limited to the introduction, research problematic/research questions, conceptual issues, the theory underpinning this work, as well as conclusion and recommendations.

Conceptual Issues

Security:

The concept of security has eluded unanimous agreement regarding its true nature or meaning. A considerable number of scholars have considered this concept in a rather loose manner. According to Afolabi (2016), security concepts find expression in a condition of relative peace, tranquility, and stability. This definition, however, has been criticized by radical scholars who feel that earlier writers have overemphasized the role of the armed forces and other security outfits, which are considered to be the arbiters of peace, tranquility, and stability in any political system worldwide (Nigeria inclusive).

In the words of Buzan (1991), criticizing what scholars like Afolabi (2016) had earlier said, placing greater emphasis on the role of the military through the use of force to compel obedience and thus ensure peaceful coexistence in society as a means of achieving security is rather problematic. This system, to him, is a complete negation and hence a deviation from the principles and practices of democracy and all best practices guiding the workings of democratic states. At the risk of being biased, this study believes that although the desire to assuage any form of fear, threat, and intimidation is essential to the notion of security, Radical thinkers such as Nwolise (2008) and Nnoli (2011) opine that, among other things, the logic of political dialogue, accommodation, and to a greater or lesser extent, compromise should form the major building blocks for security in society. Nwolise (2008) further questioned that the tendency of nation-states to identify security as the exclusive preserve and prerogative of the armed forces and other security outfits not only presents a system considered militaristic but also largely speaks to a society whose group efforts and intergroup reconciliations are made to look like a child's play. What can be deduced from the above points raised by Nwolise (2008) is that security does not occur in a vacuum. Security and indeed national security is

realistic when all avenues for human freedom, emancipation, liberation of the human mind, as well as the capacity to incorporate good governance, have been effectively harnessed and utilized.

This way, a vast majority of the people may naturally take their lessons from the ruling class (this group manages and controls the commonwealth on behalf of the citizens) provided that the masses have something positive to learn from the leadership. Where citizens are completely alienated by the leadership in most cases (several evidence abounds in Third World countries, Nigeria inclusive), it is difficult to talk about security. This is because a vast majority of idle citizens may resort to social vices, the consequence of which could be grave for national sustainability and survival.

Concept of National Security

Just like security concepts, national security has been viewed in different lights, depending largely on the ideological convictions of the scholars involved. In this study on the correlation between human and national security, Abraham (2020) has eluded that early writers, especially scholarly literature available before the cold war era, conceptualized national security as synonymous with military dictatorship. According to Abraham (2020), national security at the time was literally equated with coercion, force, oppression, and suppression. It also defines the absolute capacity of the state system to deploy its arsenal and other coercive state apparatuses for the sole purpose of upholding its national sovereignty, protecting territorial integrity, thereby entrenching peace and stability. The state also employs national security strategies in order to pursue armed confrontation against any would-be or potential aggressor where certain territorial rights have been breached.

Conversely, the notion of national security, however, has since given way to human security. After the period signaling the end of the cold war in the 1990s, the changing new paradigm has placed greater emphasis on human security as opposed to national security. To be sure, human security, over and above the political gimmicks of the old order, revolves around how best citizens are shielded and protected from the embers of excruciating poverty, hunger, diseases, and ignorance, national disasters such as flooding, ecological problems and droughts, unemployment, and so on. In the view of this study, it is appropriate to align with the latter ideas because, as earlier pointed out, when citizens are adequately catered for by the government, very little will be heard about social malfeasance and crimes in society.

Theoretical Framework: The National State Thesis

Quite a number of theories have been propounded by scholars to explain and clearly situate issues relating to national security discourses. There are theoretical evaluations on how best the institution of the state (government) could best manage its people given the availability of resources at a given time to ensure peace and stability. Thus, while most realist scholars may want to tinker with theoretical issues around power, elitism,

prebendalism, and as avenues to explain national security, this article adopts the national state theory as its theoretical medium for explaining the context of this work under review. Though this thesis was first propounded by the Greek philosopher Aristotle, it was later amplified by Jowett (1885), Ross (1937), and Copestone (1946), (Black, 1966, cited in Abraham, 2020).

This theory presupposes that any state system exists for the purposes of providing critical needs of human existence to its citizens. What this means is that there exists some form of democratic representation in society, provided not all citizens could sit to govern at the same time. What is expected therefore is that the minority (political elites) who govern the majority (citizens) have to, as a matter of statutory obligations, make available social goods to the people who in turn surrender their loyalty to the rulers. This is a two-pronged affair, which when properly managed, could translate to even distribution of common patrimony based on mutual trust and understanding, and hence create an atmosphere where group interest, rather than few selfish aggrandizements, thrives. Corroborating the above viewpoints, Aristotle (n.d) insists that every state system must exist and indeed should exist essentially for the good of man, which is the basic structure of human existence. What this means is that human happiness is central to every human if human intents, goals, and objectives are to be rigorously pursued and achieved.

While this theory may be considered appropriate for explaining the notion and subject matter of national security, a number of theoretical crises have been thrown up. First, the theory presents the political leadership as omniscient and overemphasizes the importance of government institutions over and above human sagacity, skills development, and independent thinking. Situations such as this encourage citizens to be lazy and hence depend solely on the government for provision of basic needs. We live in a global economy characterized by global economic meltdown, increasing population, inflation, falling standard of petroleum products, rising food prices, and insecurity. It therefore goes without saying that leaving every human responsibility and need of members of society to the government alone could be detrimental to the system. This is in view of the lean scarce resources available to the government, the misplacement of public policy priorities, as well as incessant political and bureaucratic corruption that have lived with humans to date.

Issues and Challenges to Nigeria's National Security

For the benefit of hindsight, the crisis of nation-building and political transformation and the ensuing internal confrontations and insecurity, to most historical experts do not happen in a vacuum. Some of the teething issues experienced, it has been argued, though debatable, emanate from the political structures inherited by African Natives, namely, Nigerians from the colonial system way back in time. While this argument is subject to intense re-evaluation due to the nature of conjectures and ambiguities surrounding it, the fact remains that the entire blame game cannot go to the colonial masters. The latter, from research evidence, have since left the shores of Africa, nay,

Nigeria. It is only unreasonable to begin to blame people that exist as independent political entities (Nigeria inclusive) and rush into conclusions that the colonial imperialists who exited several decades ago from Nigeria as responsive for the nation's challenges.

At whatever level of analysis, however, it is also difficult to completely absolve the colonial system from the problems given that the idea of violence was supposedly transmitted directly or indirectly from the colonizers to the African Natives. It is running in our DNA, and people, indeed, African or Nigerian locals now only attempt to amplify and modify this threat as part of survival instinct, which is why it is relatively difficult to talk about a free Nigerian society without conflicts.

From the classic works of Oladipo (2016) colonization, which portends the direct or indirect domination, subjugation and exploitation of African Natives by foreign aliens, stands tall, and can be rightly fingered as predisposing factors to social crisis in not only the African continent, but particularly on the case of Nigeria. From his analysis, Oladipo (2016) insist that by the very nature and character of colonial conquest, the imperial system becomes culpable and hence, supposedly responsible for all that have continued to happen in Third World countries. For instance, during colonization, violence was promoted. This was exemplified in the way and manner young and able men and women were forcefully assembled, manhandled, and eventually whisked away as slaves in several European countries of the world. The declaration of war of conquest unarguably was designed to pit African locals against their immediate neighbors and communities. Characteristically, these communities freely engaged themselves in local conflicts, stampeded lesser communities and aggressively hunted down on their enemies, who were in turn sold out to colonial merchants for onward shipment to the 'New World' overseas.

The failure of security agencies to keep banditry and terrorism in check has become even more worrying given the vast resources and budgetary expenditures allocated to defence budgets so far. However, Ikeh (2021) in her study on the impacts of sectional agitations for self-determination by some groups in Nigeria argues that until recently, the Nigerian state has faced one of the worst national security threats in its history as an independent nation-state. Ikeh (2021) stated that an inquiry into Nigeria's South Eastern states of Ebonyi, Abia, Imo, Anambra, and Enugu reveals a striking reality of separatist agitations orchestrated by the outlawed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and other splinter groups. Since November 2015, when violent protests erupted between irate youths in the area and Nigerian security forces, several deaths and properties worth billions of naira have been lost in the process.

With the arrest and subsequent imprisonment of its leader Nnamdi Kanu, the entire south east has known no peace. Reports from the region show open confrontation between the nation's armed forces, assassination, burning down of government

buildings, abduction, treasonable actions, and counteractions by the belligerent youths, most of who tend to have enforced parallel government, killings and beheading of persons, kidnapping, etc. In fact, recent developments show that the IPOB boys have threatened the very foundation of the nation's democratic space by declaring that there would be no such thing as elections in the region. It only took the wisdom of the federal government to deploy its security apparatus to quell the seemingly intractable insurrection in the region.

In their studies to assess the implications of fake news on Nigeria's road to peace and security, Dango and Hussaina (2020) commented that due to the volume of fake news, Nigeria has become one of the least peaceful political entities on the planet. To be sure, Dango and Hussaina (n.d) informed that the menace of fake news is so strong that sections of Nigerian society, particularly social groups, are at daggers drawn in the context of the nation's inter-group relations. Their thesis is based on the reality that fake news stories are crafted by their perpetrators to deliberately misinform and deceive their target audience. To a greater or lesser extent, fake news strives to unquestionably misinform, stir up embers of disunity among people of different cultures; fuel disharmony and hatred, and stimulate civil unrest, political violence, among others. The Nigerian state currently thrives on fake news manifesting in the form of graphic advertorials, news items, graffiti, cartoons, and many others. Wardle (n.d) cited in Dango and Husseina (2020) listed a number of fake news items to include, but not limited to, satire and parody, false connection, misleading content, manipulative, fabricated, and false contents, among others.

Accordingly, Awe, Ajiboye, and Gbadeyan (2020) noted that apart from fake news, the Nigerian state has been plagued by hate speech. Hate speech, according to Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary (n.d), refers to any form of public speech expressing hate or encouraging violence meant to harm opponents, persons, or groups of persons. Generally speaking, hate speech is ill-conceived and targets its audience with a high level of vindictiveness and threats. On his part, Odubela (2015) argues that hate speech is synonymous with discrimination, racism, violence, and harassment. It could also lead to the death of innocent citizens and fuel conflicts in a complex multi-culturally diverse political entity such as Nigeria. Awe, et al. (2020) lamented that Nigeria's political system in recent times has been flooded with hate speech. The various social media platforms such as YouTube, Twitter, WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, etc., are major gateways for the manipulative posturing of hate speech.

Audu (2017) has pointed out that the agitations are due to the rants of the outlawed IPOB leader, Nnamdi Kanu, in his hideout when he previously commanded his teeming followers to either boycott public elections or attack security installations of the Nigerian government over non-adherence to its demands. Undoubtedly, Kanu's utterances led to a number of inter-group sanctions and ultimatums where the Igbo ethnic groups were asked to leave the northern part of the country in preparation for

possible secession attempts.

Conclusion

This article has examined issues and challenges of Nigeria's national security. The study sought to explain the lingering security questions that have continued to fester despite the ambitious steps taken by the government as well as the colossal resources expended for security and development purposes. The article argues that the rising wave of globalization and all its portends has had debilitating adverse effects on global security of most advanced economies as well as those of Third World countries. The argument, however, tilts towards the fact that developed nations, by virtue of a viable government structure in place, seem to have mustered adequate shock-absorbing systems to contain the menace. Findings from the study shows that advanced democracies such as those of the USA, Britain, France, Canada, etc., may have cases of security breaches.

These anomalies, however, can be said to be insignificant compared to security threats that occur in low-income economies (Nigeria inclusive). According to the evidence gathered in the course of this investigation, the preponderance and frequency of threats in Nigeria take multiple shapes. It could take the form of horizontal and vertical postures. In either case, the people (Nigerian citizens) and the powers that be (public officers) are as culpable as the people they govern. Insecurity in all its forms is therefore a two-way traffic. It is driven solely by inconsistencies in the kind of government action or inaction relative to the varieties of policies or strategies put in place to checkmate the threats. On the other hand, security breaches or threats in Nigeria probably take place due to lack of adequate safety nets for survival. It therefore goes without saying that when citizens appear helpless and can hardly find any respite, they are tempted to go in search of alternative survival means available to them in society.

Based on the findings of the study, this work proffers the following strategies as a panacea for resolving the lingering security threats in Nigeria. First, this article believes that security begins and ends with the government. What this means is that democracy appeals to political representation. The latter controls the machinery and affairs of the state on behalf of the people. It is therefore incumbent on the government to rightly deploy its machinery of social control to checkmate any form of deviant behaviour among members of society considered to be detrimental to national interest and security. What has happened in Nigeria is a case where the 'big boys' who have close affinity with Aso Rock, the nation's seat of power, are allowed in some cases to go free, while Nigerians with no 'connection' are made to face the music. This practice, rather than serving as deterrence, has emboldened such persons or groups to continue in their misdemeanors. This is a big challenge to containing insecurity and guaranteeing national peace and tranquility.

Again, there is a need to apply the right kind of political dialogue (though this method is

said to have failed in most states of the federation, including Zamfara State) towards resolving sectional agitations. Tackling security challenges in Nigeria presupposes government at all levels to be responsive, proactive, and rise up to imminent challenges where there appears to be an uprising. Political representatives should voice out their displeasure and speak in one voice where there is an infraction and breakdown of law and order. Besides, any person or groups of persons found to have acted at variance with the nation's national security in terms of ethical conduct, expression of hate speech, inciting violence using the instrumentality of vendetta or diatribes should be prosecuted by law enforcement agencies – the Nigeria Police, DSS, and even the Nigerian Army using appropriate legal sanctions. There is also the urgent need to strengthen the security outfits in the country. The situation of insecurity in the country is overwhelming, and the nation's security architecture is overstretched. More efforts are required by the government to reinforce the security system to effectively contain insecurity in the country.

Lastly, the economic system is biting, while prices of staple food items are spiraling. Evidence shows that due to poor economic policies, social groups may resort to social vices such as kidnapping, armed robbery, prostitution, human trafficking, etc., to be able to survive the harsh economic realities of the time – what government can do is to quickly resolve the cashless policy saga, release monies into the economy, which in turn may assist to break the jinx of anxieties among millions of Nigerians who have been made to go through the dilemma of hunger, malnutrition, health challenges, and other related psychological trauma in recent times.

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