

## **THE STATE OF SECURITY IN NIGERIA AND THE CHANGE AGENDA: THE WAY FORWARD**

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### **Abstract**

A good political campaign slogan is like a good fortune; concise, clever and crisp. Relying on the deep empirical knowledge, not only Nigerian, but equally at international political scene is a concession that the paramount goal of any political party is to contest and win elections. This is the case of the ruling party, All Progressive Congress, whose slogan “Change” was to drive home the party’s campaign for the change of what was considered as the parlous socio economic situations in which Nigeria had been enmeshed prior to the historic May,29,2015 handover from the ruling Peoples’ Democratic Part, to an age old opposition party, All Progressive party .Thus, this paper sets out to examine the security challenges in Nigeria before May, 29, 2015 and the efforts of the new administration so far. It also looks into the dynamics of insecurity in Nigeria. Data were derived from the existing studies on security issues. The paper shows that the current state of insecurity is a manifestation of structurally entrenched and developmental crisis that creates the environment for the emergence of poverty, unemployment, and inequality. It argues that the security challenges, if not properly addressed, may jeopardize the much expected development and improved welfare of the citizens. It also provides what is to be done through the will power of the political class to restructure the federation in the face of mounting national challenges to peace, stability and growth

Keywords: Security, Insecurity, and Change Agenda

### **Introduction**

The stability of a nation’s security is a prime factor that necessitates development, increase productivities, initiates growth and attracts foreign investment Agagu (2004:213). The return to democracy in Nigeria in May 1999, not only inherited medley of conflicts and insecurity but has witnessed the emergence of new ones and the transformation of old ones. Apart from the recurrent traditional threats to national security such as political instability witnessed with series of military coup, tribal and communal clashes and ethno-religious conflicts in the past, the upsurge of ethnic militias in the last few years of our democratic experience has added a new dimension to the litany of threats to national security in the country (Onuora,2005: 263)

There is no doubt that terrorism is a global challenge but with peculiarities in different nations and moreover with a measure of control. The action of government in checkmating this social menace is inadequate, despite the fact that Nigeria has a strong military and Para-military force in place to combat the menace of insecurity in the country; their activities are on the increase daily.

The major problem facing the government in curbing insecurity in the country is the emergence and proliferation of vigilante groups, ethnic and sectional militia as well as secessionist or separatist groups. Akinwumi (2005:16) posited that these groups emerged to defend the interest of their various ethnic groups in the country. He argued further that the economic situations in the

country promoted their emergence. This is because the country created an army of jobless youths who are prone to violence and crime, the youths are easily recruited as members of the ethnic militias as ready tools to carry out their various activities, both legal and illegal.

The increase in crime rate and the helpless attitude of law enforcement agencies towards this have been cited by the founders and admirers of the militia groups to claim legitimacy for these groups. According to Fayeye (2012:35) Prominent among these militia groups are O’odua peoples congress (OPC) formed in 1994 as a militia arm of Afenifere, a pan Yoruba group. The short lived Arewa People’s Congress (APC), arm was formed to protect the interest of Hausa/Fulani population in any part of the country. The Igbo People’s Congress (IPC), a militant arm of Ohanaeze Eastern mandate was also formed in 1999. others are the Bakassi Boys, the Egbesu Boy formed in 1998. The Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign state of Biafra (MASSOB) in 2000, Movement for the survival of the Ogoni people (MOSOP) 1992, Jukun. militia-2001, Ijawo milita 1999, Itsekri; militia-1999, and recently formed is the renewed Niger/Delta Avengers and Boko Haram sects.

Agbaje (2002), observed that the activities of these groups have assumed a dysfunctional dimension and threatened the objectives of peaceful co-existence in Nigeria. What is being witnessed today derives largely from the tensions arising between (and within) these diverse ethnic groups; and the tensions and hostilities they generate derive not merely from ethnic differences but from competition: between the groups for wealth and power, fired by the political manipulation of various politicians which run counter to social justice and national peace and security of the country.

More crucial is the fact that Nigeria today is being over whelmed by general insecurity, which threatens the nation’s democracy, especially with the high spate of armed robbery, political assassinations, ethnic conflict and mayhem of the religious sects of Boko Haram, Fulani Herdsmen, the re-newed Niger-Delta Avenger, Kidnappings, Hostage-taking.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

To enhance better understanding and appreciation of this paper, we find it necessary to clearly define, and explain some concepts, which are security, insecurity and change agenda of the Buhari’s administration. Over the years, various scholars have attempted to give a widely acceptable definition to security as a concept just like some other concepts in the field of humanity. There is no single universally acceptable definition of the concept. The varieties of definitions provide an overview of the many usages of this concept. Gamet on this note asserts that security is a very ambiguous concept, having originated from simpler definitions which initially emphasized the freedom from military threat and political coercion to later increase in sophistication and include other forms of non military security as suited the circumstances of the time. Ordinarily from day to day usage of the word, security means safety, or freedom from danger, and protection from external attack or infiltration. This is security defined from the militarist point of view. However, it is because, security; for long has been tied to the apron strings of the military. Also, Garuba corroborates this when he asserts that the cold war era gave the highest currency to the conventional security doctrine to the effect that security

...rest on the assumption that only a (strong) military system can affectively deter force (attacks) and threats of forces...the cold war

elevated security and its dependence on arms to the level of another ideology, indeed a religion.(Garuba 2011:309).

However, the contemporary thinking about security is more encompassing, as rightly observed by Omotola writing on the developing world.

Security is more than military security or security from external (attack). For many of the ten billions inhabitants in the developing countries, security is conceived as the basic level of the struggle for survival. Therefore, in order to provide an integrated African security assessment, The non- military dimensions of security should be added.(Omotola, 2008)

Therefore, the concept of the security in the post-cold war era goes beyond military hardware and intelligence. It is applied in its broadest sense to include economic security, social security, political security, environmental security, food security and of recent is cyber security and technological security. Also, good governance is now fundamental to any comprehensive understanding and explanation on the question of security .This is because of the fact that the conventional militaristic conception of security that denominates the cold war discourse proved ineffectual and grossly incapable of meeting security expectations among many countries. In this new concept, human development is considered as central (Hettne,2010;20). Here we see a new and broader conception in which security entails the capacity of a state to defend its self from external threat with all the necessary means at its disposal, and internal threats through overall socio-economic well being of its citizenry.

### **The Change Agenda and All Progressive Congress**

Relying on the deep empirical knowledge of not only Nigerian, but equally at the international political scene Albert and Aacro ,(2007:10), submit that the paramount goals of any political party is to contest and win election. Many things are involved in this process: such as nominating candidates at party convention, settlement of divergent political interest resulting from party primaries, constituting reliable campaign committees and canvassing for votes and winning an election. A normal campaign slogan carries both positive and negative messages to convince the masses for support. This is the case of the ruling party All progress congress (APC) whose slogan 'change' was to drive home the party's campaign for the change of what was considered as the difficult situation in which Nigerians were living before the historic may 29,2015 handover from the former ruling peoples democratic party (PDP) to the All Progressive Congress (APC).that campaign slogan was also buttressed by the slogan adopted by enthusiasts of the party's presidential candidate, Muhammadu Buhari, which was 'Sai Buhari Sai Baba!'. This also was adopted as a way of greeting, popular among Okada riders, Market Men and Women and even in the corporate establishments before the march, 28 presidential Polls in Nigeria. Nigeria was ruled by the same political party PDP for sixteen years. During these periods, Nigeria's case could be described as a huge leap from bad to worse (Aniehwe& Kushin 2011). The country remained on the brink with the brutal reality of state failure staring it in the face. Also, these aspirations, optimism, and yearnings that accompanied democracy have turned into disillusion and disenchantment. These anger and frustration are increasingly finding expression in both inter and intra-tribal violent conflicts and religious armed groups engagement with the state, as well as ever rising level of urban crimes and insecurity (Aliyu katsina 2012;122) Hence, 'change' as a

campaign slogan of the then opposition party, All Progressive Congress (APC), was aimed at sensitizing the electorate on the need to vote their party to effect change from old ways of doing things to new ones to overcome the various challenges bedeviling the country in all facets of life if their party assume power.

### **Conceptual Framework**

For better understanding of this essay, an attempt is made to establish an analytical framework within which the current security situation in Nigeria can best be studied and explained. In building a framework of analysis on the level of insecurity in Nigeria, it could be situated within the integrated concepts of federalism and development. The Nigeria state is inherently a violent institution and to that extent, a crisis-generating mechanism, and repression, suppression and intimidation are essential attributes of the Post-colonial African State. The establishment of hegemony, consensus building, dialogue, negotiation, respect for human rights and the rule of law as essential element of democracy are largely alien to it modus operandi(Bonnie,2005;28)

This dilemma of the Nigerian state lies in a pretentious, faulty federal system, which is another underpinning factors of conflict in Nigeria. (Suberu, 2001:xiv) argues that at the heart of Nigeria's predicament is the development of an intensed dysfunctional system of centralized "ethno-distribute federalism. He argues further that the problem is commanded by the unwholesomeness of hyper-centralization and broad institutional ruination arising from the overbearing influence on the states that make up the federation (Suberu,2001;xix). Federal states, according to Daniel Elazar (cited in Suberu ibid) are two kinds: one, those in which the purpose of federalism is to share power broadly, pure and simple: and two, those in which the purpose of federalism is to give individual national communities a share in the power of the state. Nigeria's federal arrangement is perhaps the paradigmatic African case of the innovative use of federal principles and institutions to accommodate divers commercial constituencies within the power structure of the state. These communities are not premodial but have been shaped by evolution and the reconfiguration of the federal state itself, and it is the communal competition for access to state controlled, rewards and resources, rather than the simple fact of communal diversity that provides the impetus to federalism in Nigeria. This informed Bamidele, (2014;48) to assert that the high propensity of the Nigerian federal system and to create conflict is also embedded in the distributive fragility informed by diverse local or ethno-regional preoccupations with distributing the "national cake" that frustrated the autonomous and productive mobilization of grassroots resources (Agagu, 2004:211). Corroborating the above assertion, ( Babawale, 2002: Obi-ani , 2004, onah,2005) attributed the upsurge of ethnic militias following the return to civilian rule in Nigeria to the faulty structure of the Nigerian federation, marginalization of minority ethnic groups, and the weak state thesis were important factors that gives rise to militias in the country. However, this section is basically concerned with how the region acquired its specificity vis –a –vis the environment that made the upsurge of militias in the Niger Delta region assume its alarming dimension. Aliyu (2012;36) was of the view that the current state of insecurity is a manifestation of deep-rooted and structurally entrenched crisis of development that create the environment for the emergence of conditions of poverty, unemployment and inequalities in the country. These,in turn lead to frustration, alienation and ultimately social discontent that always spark violence and insecurity in the country.From the above, the arrangement of comprehensive security is fundamentally predicated upon strong and sustainable national development which problem of inequality, social exclusion and poverty are properly addressed. This can only be achieved through a serious political restructuring that would

introduce the practice of true federalism and alter it over centralization of power and resources engendered by successive regimes.

### **The State of Security and Change Agenda of Buhari's Administration**

Nigeria as a country has been a very fragile political unity. This is because the country inherited a weak infrastructural base, resulting in many unplanned cities, poor communication network, extreme and pervasive poverty, poor access to health facilities, low capital income and high rates of unemployment (Tonni Iredia 2007:18). The most pathetic feature of Nigeria society as argued by Omotoso (2004), "is that a majority of its members are living in a state of destitution while the remaining relatively insignificant minority are living in affluence" the effect, is negative development on the Nigerian people. This is best appreciated in the light of the present level of insecurity prevailing in the country, which arguably is because of the poor management of its economic resources. The rate of unemployment is quite alarming. If an unemployed young man and woman will stay without necessities of life, such as food and shelter, it will definitely tell on the country. It is without doubt that the poor and the hungry are not only anxious but vulnerable. They can be used to perpetrate evil even with token. More so, it is a law of nature that man must survive, and if there is no lawful means of survival people will be forced by circumstances (not minding the consequences) to survive. The unemployed desperate youths are easily recruited into the group of armed robbers, kidnappers, Boko Haram and various ethnic militia such as (OPC) of Adams, Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra, Niger Delta Frontier Force, Niger Delta Avenger e.t.c The above scenario makes the task of maintenance of law and order in Nigeria a difficult [one.it](#) is so... challenging to the extent that the ability to manage our internal security by the security agencies is being doubted by the citizenry. Ordinarily, the primary objective of any government is to protect and defend its citizen from all forms of security threats and incidents like armed robbery, kidnapping, civil disorder, large scale violence, insurgency, domestic terrorism and other forms of security breaches. Meanwhile, the opposite appears to be the case, considering the level of unfortunate violent crisis rocking the country recently. Commenting on the lack of security in the country Babarinsa cited in (Dembo and Mustapha 2016) asserted that:

Human life has been cheapen and the sanctity of life desecrated. No body is safe in Nigeria, as there is a steady and dangerous decline of proper governance because the government is becoming increasingly incapable of performing the primary function of governance security. (Daily Trust June 13, 2016).

Corroborating the above assertion was the statement of Opeyemi Bamidele, governorship candidate of Labour Party in 2014 election in Ekiti State at a campaign rally that; Going by what is happening within the state, it is becoming increasingly clear that the Nigerian society is becoming more brutish and nasty, as violent death has become the cheapest commodity in the nation (Daily Independent, Feb,10,2014). The rate of violent attacks by either Armed Robbers, Kidnappers, Assassins, Bombers and Herdsmen is quite alarming that no where is safe in the country. The negative effects of this situation needs not be over stressed as the citizens are being overwhelmed by fear of impending violent attack or being kidnapped. Also, the much needed private investors local and foreign are scared of committing their money into our economy for the fear of losing them to unforeseen crisis. The factors responsible for this ugly situation are both

political and economic. The mono-culture nature of the Nigeria economy dictated by the advanced economy best explains the present economic predicament of the nation. Examining the political aspect of the problem, Aliyu (2013:112) Opines that the nature of political institution and leadership as well as its grasp of social challenges, dynamism and responsiveness to the aspirations of the people is directly related to the kind of security atmosphere that prevail in the country. If political leadership proves corrupt and unaccountable democratic ethos will be repressed and aspirations of the people will be suppressed. In this regards public interest is subordinate to private political interest of the governing elite. Ultimately, this always leads to climate of distrust suspicion, fear and alienation in which the repressed feeling of anger eventually finds expression in violent outlets. Unfortunately these have been the attitude of our political leadership since Nigeria returned to civil rule 1999 to 2015 general election that ushered President Muhamadu Buhari into power in 29May,2015. The campaign slogan ‘change’ was also buttressed and adopted by enthusiasts of the party’s presidential candidate, Muhammadu Buhari which was Sai Buhari Sai Baba. The choice of Buhari as a presidential candidate and his acceptance by the masses was based on his personality and personal integrity as elder state man. Supporting this prejudices was the statement by one young man, few days to the inauguration of President Muhammad Buhari at the filling station when a motorist jumped the long queue with a token of one hundred naira bribe to the petrol attendant as puts by Simon Kolawole, that;

...all this nonsense will stop on may 29<sup>th</sup> when Baba is sworn in as president, you people should continue to do whatever you like for now  
(This Day, June 7, 2016.)

The expectation went through the skies like a rocket at the may 29, 2015 inauguration of the president.

However, among three promises made by the president during the campaign was the fixing of insecurity problem in the country within the shortest possible time, although his party, the ALL Progressive Congress (APC), made like five thousand more. Other promises made by the president was to create jobs for the teaming unemployed youth, and to fight corruption to stand still. The president determination to end insurgency was demonstrated at his inaugural speech that:

among the problems confronting us as a nation, the most immediate is Boko Haram. Though progress has been made in recent weeks by our security forces but the victory can not be achieved by basing the command and control centre in Abuja. Therefore, the command centre will be relocated to Maiduguri and remain until Boko Haram is completely subdued. he added we cannot claim to have defeated Boko haram without rescuing the Chibok girls and all other innocents persons held hostage by the insurgence. (The Nation 30<sup>th</sup>, May, 2015).

Moreover, the replacement of the service old chiefs by the new ones with a more Improved conditions of service is a practical demonstration of hope and sincerity to end insurgency. Citing the head of state broadcast in one year in office, he said: “from day one of this administration, we purposely set out to correct our condition, to change Nigeria. We reinforced and galvanized our armed forces with new leadership and resources. we marshaled our neighbors in a joint task force to tackle and defeat Boko Haram. By the end of December 2015, All but pockets and remnants had been routed by our gallant armed forces.” Drawing from the above, there is no doubt whatsoever that the seriousness with which the new administration has confronted the insurgency

in the north-east is a clear departure from the past ones. There is also no doubt the new service chiefs are not only trimmed and fit than their predecessors, we have recovered our territories, but yet we are to recover the chibok girls. As we fumigate the north-east and get rid of Boko Haram, we have dropped the ball in the militancy groups in the Niger/ Deltan; Niger Delta avengers and Movement for The Actualization of Biafran are ripping up pipelinas and setting the economy on fire. They have reduced oil production export from 2.2billion barell, per day to less than 1.1 billion barell, per day (Punch, June 10, 2016). The economy is being threatened daily by the activities of these groups. Just few days after the sallah celebration, there was an attack at a mosque by Suicide Bomber in Dambora area of Brono State that resulted to the death of nine persons, a day after the State Governor, Kashim Shettima and the Chief of Army Staff, Tukar Buratai celebrated the success recorded by the army in fight against Boko Haram and peaceful celebration of Eid-il-fitr festival (The Punch July 9, 2016). The violent linked to the Boko Haram insurgency as res ulted in an estimated 20,000 deaths between 2002 and 2015 (The Nation, February 10, 2016).

Moreover, the kidnappers are not relenting but more demanding, only from January to June this year the reported cases of kidnapping has risen to 45% of the crime committed. (Vanguard, July 4, 2016). The herdsmen are hounding us daily. They are now venerated as new Boko Haram. Their activities are similar, to Boko Haram. There was a reported case of attack in Oke-Ako, Ikole Local Government Area in Ekiti State, two people were reported dead while more than fifty people sustained varying degree of injuries (Punch, 21, May 2016.) in his reaction to this incident, the governor of Ekiti state, Ayodele Fayose placed total ban on the rearing of animal in the state till date. At this juncture, one year gone by, the following questions could be asked; has Buhari: failed? or have we failed him? by expecting too much from his administration. The answers to the above questions are no! as already stated, Buhari's choice of candidature in All Progressive Party (APC) was informed by discipline and personal integrity. President Buhari came into office at a time when Nigeria was racing downhill in every facet of life. The administration has made a considerable and commendable effort in fixing the insurgency problem in the north eastern Nigeria. Now that our military are proud and eager to fight again, and they are no longer demoralized and endangered, there is need for the government to revive other security agencies so that they are more efficient and fit for the task ahead.

### **The Way Forward**

The political future of the country is being threatened by the activities of these militia groups because the various ethic nationalities that make up the country are relating with one another with every bit of suspicion.

The negative impact of this ugly situation now is a big source of worry to all and sundry, especially, the security agents, the top government functionary and the entire citizens. The big question now is what went wrong?

- The federal government as a matter of urgency should tackle the problem of poverty among the Nigerian youth. This can be achieved through a policy that would create job and engage the teaming unemployed youth in the country.
- There is need for political restructuring that will introduce the practice of true federalism in Nigerian polity.

- On the Niger Delta, the government should intensify effort to fully implement the United Nations Environmental Programme Report and advance the clean-up operations in Ogoni land in good time
- The government should stop militarizing the democratic system and embrace democratic policing, all the civil courtesies are accorded to the citizens. they should embrace dialogue, instead of deploying soldiers to engage in guerilla-warfare operations under the pretext of maintaining law and order.
- All the governors and other leaders in the Niger Delta regions should be made to account for the huge sums of money that accrued to the region and embark on meaningful development to justify federal allocation to the region.
- The federal government should review all existing memorandum of understanding it signed with oil multinationals to enhance greater participation of the oil-bearing communities. Also, there is need to engage in comprehensive review of amnesty programme for better result, so that youths would be meaningfully engaged. More importantly, the federal government should involve a policy to control the influx of life ammunition into the country through illegal means.
- Similar, government should discourage the use of fire arms during campaign of political party, while candidates contesting for political office should be held responsible for illegal possession of arms during campaign for election.

In conclusion, since security is not a one man affair both the government and the citizenry have a role to play: partnership is indispensable in curbing security challenges. While the citizens are expected to be patriotic, vigilant and proactive, the government needs to provide an enabling and free environment for the peaceful co-existence of all and sundry.

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