

**SECURITY THREAT IN NORTH EAST NIGERIA: FACTORS AND OPTIONS**

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**ABSTRACT**

Since 2007, security situation in Nigeria has taken a turn for the worst, ranging from increasing spate of kidnapping in the South East Geopolitical zone and similar security challenges from the Movement for the Sovereign State of Biafra (MOSSOB). There is also cult war and criminality in South West and herder-farmer conflicts across the country. The greatest contemporaneous challenges perhaps occur in the North East. They are exemplified by the spate of incessant killing occasioned by Boko Haram insurgency, banditry, farmers-herders clashes and so on. There is therefore the need to investigate the factors responsible for this with the view to determine options that may end the debacle. Findings include that bigotry, bad governance, infrastructural deficiencies, terrorism, unemployment, are factors responsible for security threat in North East Nigeria. It also poses serious threats to the unity and corporate existence of Nigeria as a sovereign state. The study surmises that the inability of the managers of Nigeria's security to address the country's security challenges during the above period raised yet another critical question on the preparedness of Nigeria to attain desired political, social and economic heights in the year 2025. Recommendations include the needs for value reorientation in terms of ethnic and religious tolerance, provision of infrastructure, quality education and rule of law.

**KEYWORDS:** Security, Threat, Terrorism, Governance, North East, Nigeria, Boko Haram

## **INTRODUCTION**

One of the primary roles of the state is to provide peace and security for its citizens within the nation-state, to ensure their protection against threats from outside (Naidoo, 2000). Every responsible government will treat human security and peace building concerns with utmost priority. According to Chapter II, Section 14 (b) of the Nigerian Constitution, the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary duty of government. Within the framework of global social system, human security has become a contemporary social issue for understanding global dispositions. The supporters of human security and peace building initiative challenge the conventional notion of national security, thus, arguing that the focal point of security should be the individual. They submitted that a people centered security is quintessential for national, regional and global stability. Supporting the above, El-Baradei (2006) expressed the view that the quest of humanity for peace is not confined to one region as the search for security is still a major concern for people and nations. The current security picture on a global scale is not entirely free from violence as presumed, because the world has rarely been more peaceful or felt so secure.

In Nigeria, the importance of internal security has been carefully articulated by Gbanite (2001) that when the citizens' right to safety from all kinds of man-made threats are reduced considerably. It is imperative to note that the country has been facing severe security challenges over a long period of time, which resulted in the increasing spate of ethnic militia in Nigeria and their continuous attacks on both the government and the citizens.

Understandably, the security situation between 2007 and 2015 in Nigeria obviously took different dimensions. These periods, however, witnessed a consistent pressure on the government by Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Movement for the Sovereign State of Biafra (MOSSOB), increasing spate of kidnapping and banditry in the South - East Geo – Political Zone now in North east and north west,, incessant bombings in the northern parts of Nigeria by Boko Haram group, Mehem by the Islamic assailants in Jos

crisis, politically motivated killings by unscrupulous groups, herder-farmer conflicts among others (Ameh, 2008: 9).

Consequently, the inability of the managers of Nigeria's security to address the country's security challenges during the above period raised yet another critical question on the preparedness of Nigeria to attain desired political, social and economic heights in the year 2020. It further poses serious threats to the unity and corporate existence of Nigeria as a sovereign state. Blench, (2010)

One of the major consequences of the perennial conflict, attacks by boko haram terrorist, and counter-attacks between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria is massive death toll of many innocent lives and actors involved in the conflict. Olayoku (2012). noted that between the year 2006 and 2014, Nigerian Watch Database recorded 615 violent deaths related to terrorism, cattle in the year 2006, 22 deaths were recorded after the herdsmen farmers conflict in 2006, 54 in 2007, 31 in 2008, 83 in 2009, 39 fatalities in 2010 and a massive increase in death toll in 2011 which puts the figure at 116, 128 deaths in 2012, 115 deaths in 2013 and a total of 27 deaths was recorded in 2014. The latest security threat since 2016 in Nigeria is the rise of banditry, kidnapping which has become a big industry.

It is a known fact that natural or environmental resources are the bulk of renewable and non-renewable stocks of material resources that exist in the natural environment that are both scarce and economically useful in production and consumption, either in their raw state or after a minimal amount of processing (WTO, 2010). These renewable resources serve as the main input in production process for both herdsmen and farmers in every clime and regions of the world. While farmers depend on land and usable water for the cultivation of arable and cash crops, and rearing of domestic animals for subsistence (personal consumption) or for commercial purposes, herdsmen heavily rely on water, safer climate and arable lands for the survival and productivity of their herds of cattle. In essence, land and water are prime renewable resources that play pivotal roles in the production process of both herdsmen and

farmers. Therefore, conflict between these two groups of resource users is always centered on the scarcity, deprivation and uneven allocation of these resources in history and recent times.

The increasing number of reports of violence at this stage makes understanding herder-farmer conflicts an urgent task. There is need to know not only the cause of the conflict, but also the nature of the conflict (religious, ethnic, and political undertones). Perhaps the most crucial question is why the conflict between herders and farmers has escalated into widespread violence. The implication of the conflict for Nigeria's national security cannot be over emphasized. The humanitarian, economic, and social consequences of the conflict have been manifold and telling. The attendant security and livelihood crises threaten the collective subsistence and survival of the affected populations. There are also other externalities, such as diminution of agricultural productivity and decline in household capital, all of which do not augur well for societal and national sustainability.

### **Conceptual clarification**

#### **Concept of security**

Some scholars in conceptualizing security placed emphasis on the absence of threats to peace, stability, national cohesion, political and socio-economic objectives of a country (Igbuzor, 2011; Oche, 2001; Nwanegbo and Odigbo, 2013). Thus, there is a general consensus in the contemporary literature that security is vital for national cohesion, peace and sustainable development. It is therefore apparent that national security is a desideratum, sine qua non for economic growth and development of any country (Oladeji and Folorunso, 2007). In the intelligence community, there is a consensus that security is not the absence of threats or security issues, but the existence of a robust mechanism to respond proactively to the challenges posed by these threats with expediency, expertise, and in real time.

On the other hand, in the context of this article, insecurity is defined as a breach of peace and security, whether historical, religious, ethno-regional, civil, social, economic, and political that contributes to recurring conflicts, and leads to wanton destruction of lives and property. It connotes different meanings such as: absence of safety; danger; hazard;

uncertainty; lack of protection, and lack of safety. According to Beland (2005) insecurity is a state of fear or anxiety due to absence or lack of protection. Achumba (2013) defines insecurity from two perspectives. Firstly, insecurity is the state of being open or subject to danger or threat of danger, where danger is the condition of being susceptible to harm or injury. Secondly insecurity is the state of being exposed to risk or anxiety, where anxiety is a vague unpleasant emotion that is experienced in anticipation of some misfortune. These definitions of insecurity underscore a major point that those affected by insecurity are not only uncertain or unaware of what would happen, but they are also vulnerable to the threats and dangers when they occur.

### **Concept of Conflict**

Conflict is a struggle or contest between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values, or goals. According to Fasona and Omojola, (2005); the term conflict refers to misunderstanding, disagreement, or divergence of ideas, between two or more parties. Michel (2012); posited that conflict exists when two people are fixated on an inconsistent point of view. The common denominator in these definitions of conflict is the existent of conflict beyond single individual to two or more parties or group of people. Another significant element for conflict to exist is the divergence of goals or interest between two or more actors which may lead to the pursuit of various means to achieve their objectives. Conflict is thus dependent on people's differences in opinion, views.

Moreover, Folger (1997); defined conflict as the interaction of interdependent people who perceived incompatible goals and interference from each other in achieving those goals. In the broadest terms, Diez et al (2006) opined that conflict denotes the incompatibility of subject positions. These definitions emphasize the opposition or incompatibility at the root of conflicts, and initially leaves open the exact nature of these incompatibilities. This implies that the definitions failed to clarify whether the source of the conflicts are between individuals, groups or societal positions; whether they rest in different interests or beliefs or whether they have a material existence or come into being only through discourse.

### **Threat**

This refers to a statement of an intention to inflict pains, injury, damage or other hostile actions on someone. It may also be the attempt for retribution for something done or not done. Security threat can be natural or man-made such as terrorism, banditry, fire disaster, accident, erosion, earthquakes, tsunami, earth tremor, drought, landslide and so on.

### **Concept of Management**

Terry (1969), defines management as a process consisting of planning, organizing, actuating and controlling, performed to determine and accomplish the objectives by the use of people and other resources. According to this definition, management is a process and a systematic way of doing things. It is thus the sum-total of the following activities: (i) the determination of objectives, plans, policies and programmes; (ii) the provision of security for men, material and machinery (iii) the organization of resources into sequential and appropriate operational processes (iv) the art of directing, motivating, supervising and control workers and their performances, and (v) provision of maximum growth, prosperity and happiness for both employer and employees and the public at large. It is noteworthy to state that the various definitions and perspective of management do not run contrary to one another but are made up of diverse composite perspective of management that create an exhaustive meaning of the concept of management.

Furthermore, the four key concepts and nature of management, which include goal orientation, universality, integrative force and social process are essential tool in handling security threat. These concepts thus make the adoption of management principles in the handling of security in the north east very effective. Consequently, the concept of management brings about the achievement of goals, through its universal applicability and integration of collective efforts to the realignment of social objective through the resolution of this prevalence conflicts.

### **Security Management Strategies**

Conflict management has been used interchangeably with conflict resolution. Essuman-Johnson (2009); contents that conflict resolution refers to the elimination of the causes of the underlying conflict with the agreement of the parties. On the other hand, conflict management refers to the elimination, neutralization or control of the means of pursuing either the conflict or the crisis. It is rarely accomplished by direct action and is more frequently achieved only over a long period of time. Globally, conflicts have become perhaps a permanent feature in human social relations. Conflict in resource use is not uncommon and perhaps not unnatural between living beings (Alfonso and Erik, 2001). Indeed, Driscoll (1994) opined that conflict management requires intervention to reduce conflict but when conflicts degenerate into violent and destructive clashes, they become unhealthy and counterproductive.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Frustration and Aggression Theory**

The origin of Frustration and Aggression theory can be linked to the publication of Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer and Sears (1939) and Zillmann (1979) in which they presented what is now popularly called the frustration-aggression hypothesis (F-A) Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer and Sears (1939). According to them, the central thesis of Frustration and aggression theory is that aggression is always a function of frustration and the occurrences of aggressive behavior always presuppose the existence of frustration. They further defined aggression as any behavior which is intended to injure, cause harm, pain to the individual to whom it is directed. According to Zillmann (1979), the major tenets of the theory are;

- a) frustration instigates behavior that may or may not be hostile or aggressive;
- b) And any hostile or aggressive behavior that occurs is caused by frustration.

The theoretical significance of this theory is its ability to concisely explain the reasons for security threat in the country. Environmental conflict from the perspective of this theory is a product of the frustration of bandit as a result of severe ecological changes and Boko Haram incessant attacks in their home state with the resultant effects such as the death of many cattle

which are their most treasured possession, cattle rustling and migration to the south. All of which makes people put on aggressive behavior which is a derivative of the previous frustration they have encountered as a result of grazing in the face of adverse weather condition, scarcity of environmental resources and security threats from Boko Haram attacks. Therefore, the destruction of lives and properties, houses and massive death toll that perpetually fill up the front-page of the national dailies are the product of aggression that evolves from frustration and sense of deep loss

Frustration Aggression Theory is adopted as part of my workable theories because it explains the reason for conflict.

### **Factors Responsible for Security Threat in the North East Nigeria**

The primary reason for the insurgency ravaging the North East. Religious bigotry via misinterpretation of Islamic injunctions. There is wide range of ungoverned spaces in the North East which laid a foundation for insecurity in the region. The failure of the state become a significant factor causing security threats in the region. Lack of service delivery such as education, health, unemployment, infrastructure and other social amenities has made the people of the environment vulnerable to security threats.

Also, selfish politicians recruit fighters to work for them during elections to ensure ballot boxes are either snatched or destroyed in areas that they lack grip and to fight after elections in the event that they lose. The use of political thugs and the syndrome which perpetuates it is a creation of political leaders who use people for political thuggery during election and to deal with political adversaries. Post-election violence is mostly caused by political thugs hired by political leaders' other factors includes, environmental, population explosion, religion, desertification, terrorism, power and politics, ethnicity. poverty, unemployment. These form the major reasons for security threat in the north east Nigeria.

Primary factors implicated in security threats in North East include;

**Motivating Causes:** These are the actual grievances of injustice, oppression, frustration and hatred, deprivation, exclusion, discrimination that people experienced on personal level,



motivating the affected people to act negatively including, banditry and terrorism thereby constitute security threat.

**Triggers of Conflicts:** These are the direct perpetrators of security threat such terrorist acts, they may be momentous or provocative events, a political calamity an outrageous act committed by the enemy or other events that call for revenge or actions even peace talks may trigger opponents of political compromise to carry out terrorist action in order to undermine negotiations in bringing peace. This act constitutes security threat as witnessed in state like Borno and Adamawa state.

**Structural Factors:** These affect people who have been unfairly treated by either by Government or community which include aspect like demography imbalance globalization, rapid modernization, transitional society, class structure and so on.

**Technological Factor**

In addition to the cultural and religious motivations of terrorists and the political and organizational enabling factors, technology has evolved in ways that provide unprecedented opportunities for terrorists, advances in communications and information technology. This technology provides both assistance to the terrorists and an opportunity for targeting as industrialized societies place greater reliance on information infrastructures. Terrorists will likely avoid dismantling the internet because they need the technology for their own communication and propaganda activities.

Accordingly, terrorists may be more interested in systemic disruption rather than the total destruction of information networks. While the consequences of a major disruption of American or global information infrastructures could be catastrophic financially or socially, terrorists have not shown the inclination or capability to undertake massive strikes in this area like the case of north east Nigeria.

There have been limited attacks along these lines, but the major use of information technology has been as an aid for terrorists rather than as a target of their activity. The reported use of the internet and e-mail by al Qaeda to coordinate the strikes on the World Trade Center

and the Pentagon provides a dramatic example of this sort of coordination. Information technology's biggest impact on terrorists has involved the everyday tasks of organizing and communicating, rather than their methods of attack.

**Secondary factors include**

**Environmental Factors:** Security threat can occur as of environment such as climate change. Environmental security scholar Thomas Homer- Dixon emphasized the role of resource scarcity and competition as the primary, though not the only cause of the conflict (Homer-Dixon, 1999; Blench, 2010). But resources scarcity is induced by many factors and is not without consequences. This type of scarcity is essentially a decline in the availability of or access to natural resources. It is usually induced by climatic and environmental factors such as climate change, acute drought, environmental degradation, fresh water depletion, desertification, erosion, extreme heat, loss of wetland which constitute serious security threat.

Scarcity of land, water and foliage which stems from unfavourable weather and climatic condition reduces the availability of these resources and usually changes the pattern of grazing by herders and their social relations with farmers. As growing pressure on natural resources caused by human population increase, growth in the population of herd, due to improved conditions of the cattle often compel the pastoralists to seek for more pastures beyond their limited range (Bello, 2013).

**Population Explosion:** Another major cause of the security threat is population explosion of both humans and livestock which is based on the hypothesis of Thomas Malthus (1798) on eco-scarcity and population pressure entitled 'an essay on the principle of population' in which he proposed that population and resources are initially in equilibrium, but while populations grow exponentially, food production increases only linearly. According to him, population grows exponentially, while food production grows in arithmetic progression. Moreso, population growth will reduce the availability of natural resources because population grows faster than food supply, and poor people will impoverish the soil and natural resources by overuse and this will induce competition and conflict over means of existence.

**Unfavorable Ecological Changes:** Scarcity of water, land and harsh weather in the North East and North West part of Nigeria is a major factor that necessitates the migration of people from one place to another, where the ecology is more favourable to their herding business because of a more favourable weather and access to water by existence of river Niger and Benue.

**Land Ownership System:** The mysticism and inclination to land ownership in Nigeria is also a major cause of security threat. The indigene settler syndrome is always a factor necessitating conflict over land use especially when there exists a deliberate deprivation or perceived marginalization of one group in the allocation and utility of land and access to water. As a result of transhumance, pastoralist from North East and North West part of Nigeria who migrate to the middle-belt in search of forage and water inevitably become host and settler and are often seen as strangers, settlers or foreigner. The attendant effects of this is that in case of any further deprivation of resources by the indigenes, the pastoralist often transfer aggression on the indigene for their previous losses and flee while the indigene respond by employing every means of evacuating them from their land. (Adisa, 2012).

**Ethno-Religious Intolerance:** Another major reason for the security threat is the ethno-religious dynamics of relations between people from different religious beliefs. The ethnic dimension comes to play in different part of the country such as TIV and Jukun in Taraba state, Herdsmen and Farmers in Benue and Plateau which constitute security threat in the country (Shetimma and Tar, 2008).

**Boko Haram Attack and forced Migration:** Incessant attacks and the conquest of some of the North East and North West part of Nigeria by the Boko-Haram sects, has forced people from the north east to migrate downwards to more peaceful and safer North- central for the safety of safety

### **Consequences of Security Threat**

(a) **Loss of Life and Human Insecurity:** One of the major consequences of the perennial conflict, attacks and counter-attacks by Boko Haram, Bandit and kidnapers in Northern Nigeria is massive death toll of many innocent citizens. (Olayoku, 2012).

(b) **Loss of Cattle:** Another severe consequence is the loss of cattle to conflict and bandits as many herds are lost during the conflict to by bandits who take advantage of the conflicts to steal cattle from their owners. On the side of security forces, many lost their lives in the process protecting the citizens (Audu, 2014).

(c) **Destruction of Properties:** Another effect of this security treat arising from terrorist is destruction of farm properties and farm irrigation equipment, farming tools, houses and cars by who usually carry out organized violence as retaliatory act on the farming communities particularly in Borno and Adamawa state.

(d) **Threat to National Unity:** The persistent attack by the Terrorist and bandit has drawn the attention of Nigerians to the threat it poses to national unity. In line with this conception, the Honourable Speaker of the House of Representatives, now former Yakubu Dogara on the 26th of April, 2016 who clamoured for deliberate and proactive actions to end the incessant attacks and kidnapping across the country, noting that if not properly checked could divide Nigeria (Ovuakporie and Agbakwuru, 2016).

(e) **Displacement:** Another lethal effect of this conflict is the displacement of people from their homes and community for safety reasons. This has become the persistent effect of the clash between herdsmen and farmers in North Central Nigeria. Djadi (2016); reported that over 20,000 people have fled the wave of attacks since 2010.

### **Conclusion**

Insecurity is obviously the most contemporary challenge in Nigeria is contemporary times, and the North East contributes is one of the most affected regions. Causes of insecurity in this region include that bigotry, bad governance, infrastructural deficiencies, terrorism, and unemployment. There is need to understand and mitigate these threats as they pose serious

threats to the unity and corporate existence of Nigeria as a sovereign state. In order to forestall this, the underlisted are recommendation.

**Recommendations**

1. There is need for value reorientation in terms of ethnic and religious tolerance. The National Orientation Agency should live up to its billings and increase advocacy visits to critical stakeholders and inter face with generality of the public on the necessities of tolerance. This will rid the society of ethno-religious intolerance.
2. The state should provide good governance to the people by reaching the unreached. So many areas and spaces have not yet been reached with governance.
3. Government should prosecute Politicians who incite violence before, during and after elections. No matter how highly placed a politician is, if found culpable, he or she should be prosecuted according to the dictates of the law.
4. Non- state actors in the provision of security (Vigilante group) should be motivated as their performance in safeguarding lives and property has been helpful in no small measure in stemming the tide of security threats in the region. Stipends should be given on a constant basis to keep them motivated.
5. Multi stakeholders meeting should be a routine programme as it greases the wheels of understanding in the community.
6. There should be sanction on any religious leaders that preaches inciting religious messages. Prohibition laws should be made to curb this excess.
7. Employment placements for the youth should be a priority for government. This will keep the youth off the streets and out of idleness. Skill acquisition has worked to reduce youth restiveness in the society thereby keeping them tendencies of being miscreants.

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