# Internal Security Threat in Nigeria: The Role of Leadership in Surmounting the Challenges

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**Abstract**
*Nigeria as well as many other Third World nations are faced with the problem of internal security. These internal security challenges have been on since colonial imposition up till the time of independence, they only differ in nomenclature and magnitude. In recent times, the Niger Delta restiveness, the Boko haram insurgency, armed robbery, kidnapping and ritual killings among others have acted as major threats to the internal security of Nigeria. Leadership in Nigeria has been changing hands while at the same time, security threats have been changing in dimension. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to assess the role of leadership in internal security threats in Nigeria.*

## Introduction

Internal security is the act of keeping peace within the geographical confine of a state and its borders. It is the responsibility to protect life and property by a sovereign state or other self-governing territories. Responsibility for internal security ranges from police to paramilitary forces and in exceptional circumstances the Military (Chris, 2016, p.3). What this means therefore is that the act of peacekeeping within Nigeria is known as national security. Similarly, internal security is the freedom from or absence of those tendencies which could undermine internal cohesion and the corporate existence of the country. It is the ability of a nation to maintain its vital institutions, promote national values, socio-political and economic objectives in order to meet the legitimate aspirations of the citizen. The challenges posed today by kidnappers, armed robbers, assassins, insurgents and smugglers just to mention but a few, are enormous task on the leadership. This is necessary since security has to do with the process connected with alleviation from fair, assuaging any kind of threat to lives and properties. Security is such an important concept that every state, organization and individual desire (Bodunde, Ola &Afolabi, 2014, pp.213-214). Sustainable security is rider to protection against danger, loss and criminality, including the freedom from anxiety and fear (Moshood & Sule, 2014, p.51.). Regrettably, security threat in Nigeria has continue to question the leadership charisma of the government including security agencies.Ota and C Okolo, 2013 has cited in (Tangban and Osakwe,2016, p.143) posits that internal security threat contributes to partial breakdown of law and order, distrust in national political system; where people feel that government policies do not serve their needs. Such feelings contribute to social unrest, militancy and terrorism that continues to threaten the nation. This security threats takes physical or psychological dimensions. In physical terms, armed robbery, religious strife, kidnapping and terrorism are various forms of security threats. While corruption, poverty, squalor and injustice are forms of psychological security threats. On the other hand, threats to national peace ranges from low-level civil disorder, large scale violence, or even armed insurgency ragging the North East. Such irregular threats of internal insecurity are either directed at the state's citizens, or the organs and infrastructure of the state and it ranges from petty crime, serious organized crime, political unrest, or even domestic terrorism (Chris, 2016p.4). While a host of aforementioned internal insecurity prepares ground for foreign attraction. This study seeks to narrow the gap on the role of leadership in surmounting the security crises.

## Methodology

The methodology adopted for this study is qualitative analysis. It combines the use of primary and secondary sources such as Books, Journals, Newspapers and legislative debates The choice of this method is to navigate the

existing literature and narrow the gap on leadership challenges regarding security issues in Nigeria.

**Major Causes of Security Threats in Nigeria Proliferation of small arms and light weapons:** Though most of the measures and lessons of the World wars have prevented the outbreak of another global war, however, regional conflicts and internal strife have been on the increase. Despite efforts to minimize the pains of war, it is however waxing higher, a condition not peculiar to Nigeria alone. Rather than war being between nations these days, it has assumed the dimension of insurgency or internal conflict. Insurgencies have largely defied all known rules or solutions and have therefore continued to spread in a contagious manner. War has transformed into an industry in recent times. It has provided employment for people and a major source of income for some nations and multi-national companies. Weapons are produced by industries that need to make profits in order to pay workers, taxes and provide income for shareholders. Side by side with these industries are internationally recognised military contractors who equally survive on the sale of weapons. In view of these recent developments, it is economically unwise for some to allow wars to seize as that will throw millions of people into the unemployment market.

Presidential Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons, (PRESCOM) revealed that about 60 per cent of the illegal arms in the Southeast zone of Nigeria are produced locally. At a forum in Enugu, the South East coordinator on House Survey of the Committee, Aloysius Okolie, said: "Some communities are known for fabrication of arms ". He explained that 40 per cent of the illicit arms are imported by politicians and the remaining 60 fabricated within the zone (PRECOM, 2018, p.2). The spate of the activities of armed gangs indicate that while security forces are acquiring weapons in a bid to live up to the demands of the country, individuals and groups in the various geo-political zones are acquiring SALW for political gains and for the benefits derived from acts of illegality and criminality fueled by poor political leadership (Iloani & Echewofu, (n.d)).

As part of measures to curtail and contain the upsurge of insurgencies across the globe, Nigeria was at the forefront of the sponsorship of a bill to the 69th ordinary session of the United Nations General Assembly on the *proliferation of small arms and light weapons.* Osakwe C.C.C. and Sule, S. (2016, p.16.) are of the opinion that if the bill goes through, it will go a long way in dissuading the fears on the seeming inability to stem insurgencies as a result of the profit involved in the sale of arms and ammunition. It is however hoped that with the ratifying of the Arms Trade Treaty on 24th December 2014, the objective of regulating the international trade in conventional weapons will be achieved sooner than later. The authors of the treaty had earlier warned that "a combination of weak domestic regulations of authorized firearms possession with theft, loss or corrupt sale from official holdings tends to be a bigger source of weapons concern than illicit trafficking across boarders" (Abolurin, 2011, p.12).

**Unemployment**: Unemployment is a major cause of security threat in Nigeria. The availability of a large army of the unemployed is a ready tool for mischief making. Nigeria keeps on producing graduates at all levels but governments have not been able to enact policies that will provide employment for them. Akwaki, and Mtar, 2015, as cited in (Ja'afar, A. et.al, and 2017) maintains that:

> the universities and other institutions of higher learning are not capable of absorbing majority of applicants while those who gain admission graduate into an uncertain society. In a bid to acquire basic necessities of life, some of these unemployed youths get easily lured into crimes like armed robbery, kidnapping and oil bunkering to mention but a few. The Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria confirms the unemployment saga by stating that "unemployment has reached its highest level ever. More people are out of job…the result is that a growing number of men and women of working age are unable to earn money with which to feed themselves and their families, pay their house rent, send their children to school and pay their medical bills" (p.203).

The secretariat further opined that the situation on ground reveals that only few Nigerians have cornered a large share of wealth while the vast majority are victims of poverty and destitution.

The attendant situation arising from the above is not just a threat to life but a threat to human rights as well (Ja'afar, A. et.al, 2017, 203).

**Corruption**: Corruption is also a major player in the creation of security threat. Those who embezzle public funds with impunity make resources scarce for any serious government to work with. Trillions of naira that would have enabled government to actualize certain policies are diverted into private pockets. Some others are done through tax evasion, contract scam and money laundering.

**Identity crisis**

A major threat to internal security in Nigeria is identity crisis. Nigeria's impediment to economic progress lies in the widespread character of ethnic feud existing among constituent ethnic groups comprising Nigeria. Numerous conglomerates of tribes and ethnic groups are suffocating under the influence of the larger groups in the same country. Boundary disputes, religious intolerance and fear of domination have made these ethnic groups to draw daggers at each other's throat, escalating internal threats to the detriment of peace and progress (Bodunde et al, 2012, p.216).

**Modes of Security Challenges in Nigeria**

The nature and characteristics of security challenges in Nigeria takes many forms and keep evolving with the national question such as ethnic composition, resource sharing and political will.  These security challenges include:

**Kidnapping and Hostage Taking:** This unpleasant phenomenon, according to (Bodunde, Ola and Afolabi, 2014, 217) began in the Niger Delta region but has spread to other parts of Nigeria. It was used first to address wanton neglect of their communities by government and multi-national companies (Abolurin, 2011, p.189.) As time went on however, kidnapping metamorphosed into full time activity by criminal elements. Money is now being made by kidnappers who call the families of their victims to pay millions of naira for ransom. Politicians have equally keyed into it as a means of dealing with opponents and perceived enemies. Most kidnap cases are not reported for fear of execution.

**Armed Robbery:** Travelers by road are the highest victims of armed robbery attacks. On daily basis, armed robbers, using sophisticated weapons block highways and rob victims of their valuables with utmost ease. The Police Force as well as other security agencies have not been able to curtail the menace. Abolurin captures this succinctly in the following words: "With the increase in security outfits and private security organizations, cases of armed attacks are on the increase. It seems the Nigerian security agencies are helpless in the face of rising wave of criminality in Nigeria. In 2011, in the first half of the year, about 5000 cases of armed robbery were recorded, 2700 arrested, 700 killed and 800 assorted weapons recovered from hoodlums" (Igwe,2010, p.133.)

**The Boko Haram Insurgency**

Boko Haram, which literarily means western education is forbidden in Hausa but officially called *Jama'atuAhlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad* (People Committed to the Prophet's Teachings for Propagation and Jihad), is a militant neo-Islamic movement based in northeast Nigeria. The group which was designated by the United States as a terrorist organization in November 2013 has a strong followership among the army of unemployed. The sect that became known as Boko Haram was founded in 2002 in Maiduguri, the capital of the north-eastern state of Borno by Mohammed Yusuf. The sect had a political goal of creating an Islamic state and therefore established a religious complex with a school which attracted poor members from across Nigeria and neighboring countries (Ja'afar, A.A., et.al. 2017, p.203).

In attacks occurring mainly in the northern part of Nigeria, Boko Haram killed more than 5,000 civilians between July 2009 and June 2014, including at least 2000 in the first half of 2014. At the end of November 2014, more than 13000 were thought to have died. Corruption in all aspects of life including the security services, unwarranted politicization and diversionary tactics by authorities have hampered efforts to counter the unrest. Since 2009 Boko Haram has abducted more than 500 women and children, including the kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls from a government school in Chibok in April 2014.About 650,000 people fled the conflict zone by August 2014 and an increase of well over 400,000 between May and November thereby creating a situation of untold humanitarian crisis (Daily Trust, Tuesday, December, 2014, p.12).

Boko Haram's increasing activities led to a violent uprising in July 2009 during which its

leader, Mohammed Yusuf was executed under suspicious circumstances. The group emerged stronger following a mass prison break in September 2010 which was accompanied by increasingly sophisticated attacks. Initially the attacks were against soft targets like markets, schools, motor parks. By 2011 the attacks had increased steadily to include suicide bombings on police buildings, the United Nations headquarters in Abuja and the Command and Staff College Jaji. At the beginning of 2012, the Nigerian government established a state of emergency, extended in the following year to cover the entire northeast of the country. The emergency, rather than curbing the militant activities has paradoxically increased the intensity and ferocity. The Nigerian military proved ineffective in countering the insurgency, hampered by an entrenched culture of official corruption and sabotage. At a piont the sect declared a caliphate and was in control of swathes of territory in and around Borno state but could not capture the capital of the state (Daily Trust, Tuesday, December, 2014, p.14).

The scourge of the Boko Haram insurgency has created a legion of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP), whose status in life will no more be the same. These persons had to abandon their jobs, schools and businesses to seek refuge where daily survival is the only obligation. The traumatic condition in which these people find themselves can lead to death, terminal diseases, psychiatric disorders and other forms of social dislocation. Some have been permanently separated from their families as the need for safety made them to run in different directions during attacks. Given the Nigerian culture of corruption and impunity, the IDP camps may lack basic social amenities while items meant for them could be diverted thereby increasing their sufferings.

On Monday 24th of November 2014, the Boko Haram attacked Damasak in Borno state and killed not less than 50 people. The following day, two female suicide bombers blew themselves and about 45 shoppers and traders in Maiduguri market. All these happened despite the imposition of state of emergency and security check points. The religious connotation often given to the activities of the Boko Haram is however doubtful because the Islamic law is very bitter about the taking of innocent lives; therefore, it is now clearer to all that the Boko Haram insurgency is an enemy to humanity.

However, with the coming into power of President Muhammadu Buhari in 2015, efforts have been stepped up in the fight against these insurgents. Before then, the activities of the sect had spread across Kano and Kaduna to Abuja, they have since been effectively confined to parts of the dreaded Sambisa forest in Borno state only to resurface again. They only occasionally carry out suicide attacks still within the north-east region alone.

**The Role of Leadership in surmounting these Internal Security Threat in Nigeria**

In identifying the role of leadership, this study sets out to outline some definitions of leadership. Leadership is a process by which a person influences other to accomplish some objectives and directs the organization in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent (US Army, 1983, pp.22-100.). Leadership can also be defined as a process by which a person influences other to accomplish a mission (www.nwlink.com). In yet another form, leadership means inspiring others to pursue your vision within the parameters you set, to the extent that it becomes a shared effort, a shared vision and a shared success (Hendy,2017, pp.2-3.). The common features of the definitions above are that a leader must be someone who can inspire vision, can enable others to act, can model a way and must possess the ability to direct people mentally and physically. It is against this backdrop that the role of leadership in internal security in Nigeria is subdivided into policy direction, increase in the manpower of security agencies especially the police, job creation, purging the security agencies of 'bad eggs', investment in childhood education and strengthening of boarder security.

**Policy Direction:** Leadership in Nigeria has been weak in terms of policy direction. Successive governments have initiated policies aimed at mitigating security threats but ended up not being able to implement them. The decisions taken so far by the present federal government might have been responsible for the success recorded so far in the fight against insurgence. On inception, the military high command was moved to Maiduguri, the epic centre of the Boko Haram. Efforts were made to stop diversion of funds meant to procure arms for soldiers fighting the war while the former National Security Adviser, whose office

was used to divert previous funds was arrested. From October 18-22 2017, the president was in Turkey to attend D-8 Summit and also to discuss security and anti-terrorism issues with his Turkish counterpart. Arms seemed to have been consistently smuggled in from Turkey in recent times and so the visit afforded the two governments the opportunity to enter into an agreement that will stop illegal arms trafficking (Bodunde et al, 2014, p.215.). In this scenario, the Nigerian police effort is grossly inadequate in combatting crimes. The Nigeria government should therefore recruit more security personnel in all the security agencies and as well stuff them with modern sophisticated weapons and gadgets to curtail the security challenges in the country.

**Job Creation:** There is a symbiotic relationship between unemployment and criminality. The army of unemployed in Nigeria is a ready tool for dubious politicians, ethno-religious chauvinists and other criminally minded elements. Armed robbery, kidnapping and the like are usually executed by unemployed youths. It takes a lot of patriotic zeal for an unemployed person to resist going into criminality in a developing country. The leadership of Nigeria through the government has made many move to create jobs for the teeming unemployed youths so as to forestall the urge towards crime and insecurity. Most state government have deployed alternatives measures to engaging youth through programmes which includes S-power, and promotion of small and medium enterprises. During the third quarter of 2016, the informal sector created over 144,000 jobs. *https//tradingeconomics.com.emp*. A comparative analysis of job created and new entrance into the labour force makes the effort of the government insignificant.

**Moral Dose of Education:** Alongside the other physical, policymaking and psycho-social apparatus of dealing with these challenges lies the moral dose of education. From our primary schools to the university level, the teaching of moral education that will appeal to the minds of the growing children to resist anything militating against the values and norms of the Nigerian nation will to some extent yield positive results. Law and force are good to some extent, but moral education appear to surpass them, for it deals with the mentality and character formation (Ibrahim, 2017, pp.1-2).

**Purging the Security Agencies of "bad eggs":** The government, as a matter of policy, has tried to fish out members of the security agencies who fraternize with criminal elements. The much the government has been doing is to transfer officers suspected of collaborating with criminals. In the first half of 2017 for instance, the Abuja-Kaduna highway faced the challenge of armed robbery and kidnapping, with the occurrence almost on daily basis. In less than one week after officers serving in different formations along the highway were redeployed, no fewer than 32 suspects were arrested by a joint police/military taskforce (Oluwasegun, 2017, p.9). Merely redeploying the officers is not enough because they can simply carry on their subversive activities wherever they may be posted to.

**Strengthening of Border Security**
The porous borders of Nigeria have allowed infiltration of AK 47 rifle carrying herdsmen from Senegal, Gambia and the Central Africa Republic. Customs have identified up to 1,100 illegal border areas in Nigeria while only 97 are approved posts. Between January and October 2017, customs seized 2,671 pump action rifles. These has led to hostilities from border communities who benefit directly from smuggling activities consequently contributing to serious security threat in the nation (Azurgba, 2003, p.52). What needs to be done is for government to employ more hands into the agencies involved in border security and also create more border posts. In addition, a lot of investment in intelligence gathering is necessary to check the activities of illegal aliens not just around the border but all over the country as well.

**Submissive Spirit and Accountability**
In all normal democratic practices, the leaders are accountable to the people. They are supposed to submit to the will of the people rather than being autocratic and despotic. Leaders must learn to be responsive to the yearnings of the people they chose to represent, otherwise their anti-people policies will aggravate crisis than reduce them. It looks strange if leaders, rather than play to the aspirations of the led, divert huge resources for personal use. This will however leave the people with no other option that to fight back through violence (Okenyodo, n.d). As a matter of necessity this study recommends:

## Distribution of Security forces and posting Constraints

Evidently, distribution and irregular posting of security personnel constitute part of lingering threat to peace in Nigeria. The politicization of appointment and posting of strategic top-ranking officers such as Commissioners and District Police Officers (DPO) to seemingly lucrative areas is a cause for alarm. Effective policing practice requires a good communication and human relationship, however this is obstructed by irregular and political posting and deployment of police officers for political gains (Okechukwu et.al, 2016, p.3). A notable example was the mass redeployment of Officers on the eve of election for political patronage in States such as Osun, Kogi, Ekiti and Lagos States. In 2014, the role of security men became an issue during and after the elections in Ekiti and Osun States where the All Progressives Congress, APC alleged that security men were used for rigging in their officials while at the same time giving leeway to the opposition, the People's Democratic Party, PDP (Okechukwu et.al, 2016,p.5). A-build up to the aftermaths of 2014 poll in the aforementioned states was the massive deployment of security forces to Osun and Kwara States during the 2019 general elections. This cast doubt on the election credibility and leadership character of the government and security agencies as a non-political patrician outfit. The professional autonomy of the security architectures should be free of any undue political interference.

## Leadership and Collaboration in Nigeria Security System

The Nigerian security system requires serious improvements in its leadership skills and strategic collaboration with stakeholders for effective community entry and security mapping. The intelligent system and information gathering of Nigeria security agencies does not always encourage free flow of information from informant as a result of its brutality, diversion of information and corruption of cases for financial benefits (Umar, 2018, p.5). Though, to strengthen the leadership charisma for an improved security surveillance there is need for serious community policing and public relationship.

## Conclusion

If the responsibility of government is to secure the lives and properties of citizens, the success or otherwise of any security venture rests with the leadership. Security threat is a national issue and therefore behoves on the leadership to see to its end. Policy direction which to some extent is referred to as body language of the leadership is the major determinant of the extent or magnitude of security threat. In Nigeria, armed robbery, kidnapping, insurgency, assassinations and regional restiveness are some of the security threats faced by citizens. The extent to which security threats can be prevented or curtailed depends largely on the leadership. Through policy formulation and re-engineering of the security forces, a lot can be achieved in terms of curbing security threats. Public offices should be made less attractive in terms of remuneration and access to uninhibited wealth. The concerted efforts by individuals to get to positions of authority is in itself a sure bet to insecurity as thugs are armed and security agencies are swindled to favour particular individuals or groups.

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