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Media, Security Challenges and the Future of Nigeria: A Theoretical Overview

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Abstract

Security issues in Nigeria have of recent attracted global attention. The country now faces security threats from insurgent groups and bandits including the unknown gunmen that operate in broad day light almost unhindered. These have resulted to massive loss of lives and properties with devastating effects on the economy of the country and freedom of movement. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the challenges posed by the unfolding threats from these enemies of the nation building and how the mass media in Nigeria could help in saving the country from this mess. The study employed literature review method and anchored on the Democratic Peace Theory. The review reveals that Nigerians depend so much on mass media for accurate and timely information about the happenings in the society; the traditional roles of the mass media in any society which are to inform, educate and entertain are so crucial that Nigeria can hardly progress meaningfully without these channels of mass communication; that although the mass media are faced with a lot of challenges in the fight against insecurity in Nigeria, they have significant influence in fighting the menace; the media have not been fully utilised in addressing the security challenges in Nigeria. Based on the findings, the study recommends among others that the government should adopt dialogue and communication based approach in addressing security problems facing the country instead of relying solely on the use of force and stiff measures; Journalists in the media industry should utilise the mass media as agents of social change, and in spite of all odds redouble their efforts in setting agenda for public discussion on the best ways to salvage the country from the quagmire of insecurity; government officials and other relevant authorities should periodically organise media security summit for members of the public to contribute their quota on how to achieve attitudinal change and secure the country from collapse, security agents should work with intelligent information to avoid being victims of insecurity.

Keywords: Security; challenges; insurgency; bandits; unknown gunmen; mass media; future.

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Introduction

Security challenges have assumed a monstrous dimension in Nigeria both in the frequency of occurrence and the sophistication in character, especially since the return to civilian regime in 1999. Hitherto, security challenges in the country were infrequent and restricted to armed robbery and ethno-religious violence, but since the democratisation of the Nigerian political landscape with its attendant's rights and freedom of expression and association, the trend of security challenges has attained a bewildering dimension. Therefore, Nigerian State is currently enmeshed in a myriad of security challenges that pose a threat to the consolidation of democratic governance (Omemma, 2017).

According to Aning (2016) cited in Yagboyaju and Akinola (2019, p.3), most of these security challenges "have emerged partly as a result of multiple socio-economic injustices, including but not limited to marginalisation, social inequality, political exclusion, corruption, economic deprivation, unequal allocation and distribution of state resources." Despite strong optimism that the return to democratic system of government in 1999 would abolish ethnicity and ethno-religious arises, the country continues to be driven by tides of ethnic hostilities with devastating consequences (Kwaja, 2009). Babangida (2002, P.11) as cited in Oghuvbua (2021) enumerated such consequences as "a waste of enormous human and material resources leading to fragility of the economy and its political process." However, Nigeria is not alone in the confrontations of insecurity. The fact remains that security challenges have become one of the complexities confronting virtually all nations, government, security institutions and agencies. These challenges are diversified in forms and approaches to control of the situations. This is witnessed in the dynamics of security approaches which had shifted from the military-centred perspective to an all-encompassing one. By implication, this presents the need to recognise national security as a business of all, for all and by all. According to Ogu and Oyerinde (2014), to ensure that this is achieved, effective communication process, sophisticated communication facilities and adaptive participatory communication approach are needed to be amply recognised, appreciated and maximised.



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On the basis that communication is the basic driver of social interaction which can prevent and curb enmity as well as promote peace and tranquillity in the society, the media are unarguably the apparatus for informing the citizens on security issues and making the security agents to be proactive instead of being reactive in protecting the nation from the threats posed by the insurgents operating within the country. In fact, for any nation to be truly secured in this 21st century often referred to as the information or jet age, it must look beyond the conventional security forces. A critical examination of technological development and security dynamics reveals that there has been a drastic shift in the conceptualisation and application of communication-security affiliation as communication has developed to determine modus operandi in virtually all aspects of social life (Okeke and Oji, 2014). In his observations, Al-Rfouh (2015) noted that the battle ground has shifted from being a geographical location to a cybernetic environment. In this case, its instruments or tools for victory are not only guns and arsenals but include every form of technology that has the potential to affect the physical, mental and spiritual comfort of individuals.

The author further posits that the advent of digital and instantaneous communication technologies through the instrumentality of machines, systems, facilities and devices such as the satellites, fibre optics, cable, broadband, Internet, social media, mobile phones and other mini devices has redefined the entirety of human interaction and has triggered a rethinking of established concepts of governance and national security since the end of the cold war. As submitted by Altheide (2017), most wars and crises are triggered via the instrumentality or communication of fear, falsehood, propaganda or manipulative framing of victimisation. According to the researcher, there is need for adoption of communication systems to counter such content or intent before they turn into full-blown crisis or war. Media reports on the Gulf war and the war between Russia and Ukraine are clearly characterised by media propaganda. So, the current advancement and popularisation of information and communication technologies supports the demand for a severe need to re-examine the place of information as it affects security in any country, especially in a multi-ethnic and diverse nation like Nigeria.

In the words of Jimoh and Awodi (2021), the current state of insecurity in Nigeria is highly worrisome and almost every effort to combat it seems to generate more questions. Prominent



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among these questions is “can communication and information technology skills, strategies and infrastructures used for the monitoring, collection, sharing and dissemination of information help in strengthening the national security of Nigeria?” In attempt to address the above question, Adams (2016) submits that communication and information technology (ICT) play crucial role in strengthening the national security against potential threats and probable attacks via monitoring, sharing and providing mechanism to protect the country with quick response systems. Appraising the security situation of Nigeria, Ngige, Badekale and Hamman (2016) posit that the greatest security challenge facing Nigerian government today is the imposing impunity of terrorist activities of the Boko Haram, an Islamic fundamentalist based in Northern Nigeria. However, it could be argued the threat posed by Boko Haram is dwindling with the killing of the leader and the intensified efforts of the Nigerian military but unfortunately, the emergence of the Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP) - a militant group and administrative division of the Islamic State (IS), a Salafi jihadist militant group and unrecognised proto-state, and bandits, as well as the unknown gunmen still makes Nigeria unsafe for the citizenry, and has rendered counter terrorism operations difficult. Hence, the media have even more tasks ahead. Any organised society, government or institution which takes the media for granted does so at its own peril. The mass media often play a key role in today’s fight against terror all over the world. The media have enough potential and can contribute effectively to conflict resolution and reconciliation (Ngige et al. 2016).

However, Popoola (2012) says that insurgency and conflict is the bread and butter of journalism. It provides ready-made material for media men to exploit. Media audiences are usually excited to read detailed stories on how events unfolded. In the process, media houses increase their profit margins. It is commonly claimed that both terrorists and the media benefit from high levels of media attention to terrorism (Hoffman, 2006). From the above statement, it is clear that Boko Haram insurgent in Nigeria gain from media attention that communicates their goals and grievances to a wider audience. This perspective holds that the insurgents and the media outlets have a symbiotic relationship in which both can benefit from media attention to insurgency. Igoe (2010) asserts that the media do not hype insurgency; professional journalists argue that insurgency is an important public policy issue and deserves substantial coverage from the media.



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The norms of professional journalism including objectivity and balance limit media outlets' willingness to exploit insurgency to increase their audience share and lead them to devote substantial attention to the views of governments when covering episodes of political violence (Igoe, 2010).

Affirming this view, Hamid and Baba (2014) assert that in reporting fundamental events such as insurgence, adequacy of coverage is no doubt demanded. Thus, the media owe the public an expedient responsibility not just to report such developments, but to adequately give such account. The core responsibility of the media is the surveillance function. Here, Hamid and Baba (2014) observe that the media are expected to bring to the consciousness of the public impending dangers. This function places a demand on the media to cover, analyse and report significant developments within and outside a given society. However, as noted by Peresin (2007), insurgents mainly seek first and foremost to manipulate and exploit the media for their own purposes by sending messages of violence and thus gaining mass publicity. According to Peresin (2007), the majority of experts justly call the contemporary terrorism mass media oriented terrorism. This is because, by analysing insurgent activities, one may notice that in the majority of cases they are carried out precisely in order to draw the attention of the international media.

Also, Sharifi (2015) argues that insurgents have recognised that the media is a fast paced industry which spurs them to persistently unleash gruesome attacks in order to keep their presence in the media, and by extension, in the public debate. The authors suggests that insurgents are like any other organisation; they are constantly updating their methods, creating new styles, keeping the public interested in their deeds, stressing that this has posed serious challenges for security forces and policymakers. Margaret Thatcher, British Prime Minister from 1979 to 1990, paid specific attention to this effect by calling the media the “oxygen” of terrorists (Muller, Spaaij and Ruitenber, 2003). According to Margaret Thatcher, the solution to this problem is simple. Thatcher suggests that the media should not pay any attention to terrorist acts and refrain from reporting them. By withholding the “oxygen” in this way, she contends that terrorism would die. Walter (1978) cited in Biernatzki (2002) says that insurgents recognise that their best route to public recognition is through appealing to traditional news values: drama, conflict and tragedy, as fueled by competition among the media. In Nigeria, studies have shown



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that the Nigerian media have not fared well in this regard. Okpara (2010) cited in Hamid and Baba (2014) observes that the Nigerian media are yet to effectively play the surveillance function of the media in their reportage of insurgency. He contends that this has led to the unabated insurgent activities in Nigeria. The Nigerian media have not done well in discharging their surveillance role, particularly in the Boko-Haram crisis. In reporting daily occurrences, including the outbreak of conflicts, the media despite the ownership pattern are generally expected to display a real sense of objectivity. They must ensure balance and fairness in their reports; this implies that their report must be free from bias. To guarantee this, all parties involved must be given equal attention, stories must not be one-sided and that facts must be separated from opinions (Okpara, 2010).

Consequently, Popoola (2012) avers that the government sees the media men as unpatriotic and uncommitted to the national interest, peace and stability of the country. The belief of the government is that journalists' surveillance of society should be comprehensive and that they should therefore have information that could lead to the arrest of all the members of Boko Haram. This notion is apparently confirmed by the fact that almost every day there is news about activities of this sect in the press. Sometimes, it is as if they enjoy more publicity than the government. While Boko Haram is allegedly killing journalists for giving information to security agencies, government is accusing the media of not being patriotic (Popoola, 2012). Furthermore, Igoe (2010) asserts that the new media such as blogs, content farms, and social networks linked to traditional media outlets influence coverage of insurgency. He also opines that this issue is increasingly important as the audiences and "news holes" of traditional media decline in size and as more people rely on new media for news and information. Corroborating this view, Weimann (2012) notes that insurgent groups use social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and internet forums to spread their messages, recruit members and gather intelligence. He observes that the insurgents take to social media because social media tools are cheap and accessible, facilitate quick, broad dissemination of messages, and allow for unfettered communication with an audience without the filter or selectivity of mainstream news outlets.

Agba (2007) argues that the media should go back to the concept of journalism in public interest to be able to discharge its proper role in times of crises. It is the position of this paper to state that



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to achieve the above objective, the mass media in Nigeria needs to solve its internal problem of cohesion and integration; for there are as many media houses as there are many political interests. There are therefore, external and internal obstacles in the realisation of the positive role of the media in this insurgence era. In all, it is argued that the media require a political ideology that guarantees freedom of speech and access to information. The media take up the role of watchdog as the fourth estate of the realm. In other words, it plays a mediating role between the government and the governed. Through objective reportage, the media exposes socio-political and economic ills in the society they serve. In this, the actors of these ills are exposed with dependable facts and evidence that will prevent the allegation of slander or libel against the media. This implies that media reports must come with utmost integrity in the interest of the nation. The late sage, Chief Obefemi Awolowo, says the more prosperous a state is and the more equally and justly distributed its wealth is, the less liable it is to the danger of internal disorder and the abler it is to discourage external aggression.

Against the backdrop, the media are assigned the functions of championing the course of adhering strictly to the socio-political ideology of the nation it serves. In the Nigerian situation, therefore, the media in its appreciation of the dissenting ethnicity, religious, languages and incurable mutual suspicions, hovering on the nation like bubonic plague, must avoid as much as possible, subjectivity, prejudice and imbalances in news reports. Thus, responsible media, committed to the goals of nation building and national development must tread warily and exercise great discretion if it is to strengthen the national security of its country for peace and national development (Gambo, 2007).

Although, Nigeria has a strong military force to ensure the safety and protection of her territory, the security challenges have remained daunting. Security threats and concerns are on the increase, ignited by many factors such as unemployment among teeming youths, militancy in the oil region (Niger Delta), armed robbery, ritual killings, kidnappings, the activities of bandits' nicknamed unknown gunmen, as well as extrajudicial killings. Added to the foregoing are the mayhem caused by insurgency like Boko Haram, Fulani Herdsmen (Ugbegili, 2018), and the West African branch of the Islamic State group known as the Islamic State's West Africa



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Province (ISWAP) - a militant group and administrative division of the Islamic State (IS) (Urowayino, 2020).

Unarguably, one of the major timeless problems confronting Nigeria as a nation, as well as most of other nations of the world, is insecurity. Agudosy (2016) observes that although insecurity has been the bane of many nations, the hydra-headed type currently experienced in Nigeria has gone beyond imagination, giving both the leaders and the led incessant worries as to how to address and redress the palpable, perverse, and gnawing security situation in the country. This situation has equally created a growing security awareness of Nigerians such that it has become the usual talk that the security system has failed and that the government has not made any significant progress, making some people to resort to safeguarding themselves by forming paramilitary groups such as Operation ‘Amotekun’ (Leopard) established on 9 January 2020 by the six state governors of all the South Western states of Nigeria, namely; Lagos State, Oyo State, Ogun State, Ondo State, Osun State and Ekiti State.(Urowayino, 2020); ‘Ebubeagu’ formed by the five Eastern States in the Southeast, and the outlawed Eastern Security Network(ESN) led by Nnamdi Kanu of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), which of course, has been labelled as a terrorist group by the Federal Government of Nigeria. Corroborating the view that insecurity is at its peak in Nigeria, Okereocha (2011) remarked that the increasing cases of kidnappings, bombings, murder, robbery, rape, assassinations, religious and political riots, and the failure of state security agencies to stem the tide has led to the increasing awareness of Nigerians on the need to take extra measures to safeguard their lives.

In the year 2010, the US tagged Nigeria as one of the most prone nations to insurgency and terrorism as a result of the failed attempt by Farouk Abdul Mutalab, a 23-year-old Nigerian student who almost blew up a plane in Detroit Michigan. On March 28, 2022, bandits attacked the Kaduna-Abuja bound train and kidnapped over 100 persons on board. Aljazeera (2022) news online reports that this is the second train attack since October, 2021 in Nigeria, which is battling armed rebels in the northeast and bandits who have kidnapped hundreds for ransom in the centre and northwest, leaving the population terrified. Similarly, the State of Kaduna, Brono, and some other Northern states remain unsafe with many people in the hands of bandits and kidnapers, and the over hundreds of the Chibok girls still in captivity. Thousands of other innocent



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Nigerians have lost their lives to insecurity in the States, and unknown number held captive by their captors. This, however, does not imply that the security architecture of Nigeria is not entirely working but it suggests that the political will to fight insurgency in the country is weak. Against this background, this paper seeks to do a critical review of the security situation in Nigeria through integrative critical literature review of the security situation in Nigeria, and draw from the existing literature lessons for the leaders of the country and Nigerians in general as well as suggest possible ways out of the security challenges the country finds herself, and project what the future of security in Nigeria looks like.

Statement of the Problem

Over the years, the fragile security situation of Nigeria has remained an issue of public concern, as the country has been enmeshed in a firebox of insecurity leading to scores of deaths of innocent civilians, foreigners, political office holders, and even the security operatives. To say the least, the insecurity challenge has assumed formidable dimensions, forcing the country's political, economic and social spheres to remain in comatose. The entire nation is in trouble because millions of innocent lives have been lost, valuable properties destroyed, investments/employment opportunities denied, thereby leaving the masses at the mercy of hunger and abject poverty. The number of violent crimes such as armed robbery, kidnapping, ritual killings, suicide bombings, religious killings, politically-motivated violence and killings, inter- ethnic crises, armed banditry and other forms of criminalities have increasingly become the unavoidable norms in Nigeria society especially in recent times.

The government has tried everything from “force-for-force” to carrot-and-stick approach to diplomacy but the problems seem to be on increase on daily basis with no end in sight. There has also been strong advocacy for a multi-stakeholder intervention to the insecurity question rather than lean on military options alone (Imhonopi and Urim, 2013; Open Society, 2012; Ujomu 2001), but unfortunately, this advocacy has not worked. This may not be unconnected with the increasing ethnic hate, religious bigotry, political rivalry and a growing population of disgruntled citizens in the country who feel that they have been short-changed and given very limited or no



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access to the common patrimony. With the insecurity issues in Nigeria surging, we are left with only one option – to find answer to the problem. Hence, this study has become imperative.

Objectives of the Study

On a broader perspective, this study is an attempt at a holistic inquiry into the influence of the mass media in the war against insecurity in Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- (1) identify the role of mass media in curbing terrorism and banditry in Nigeria.
- (2) ascertain the causes of insecurity in Nigeria.
- (3) find out why it has been difficult to rid Nigeria of terrorists and bandits
- (3) suggest the ways out of the security challenges in Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What roles do the Nigeria media play in curbing terrorism and banditry in Nigeria?
2. What are the causes of insecurity in Nigeria?
3. Why has it been difficult to rid Nigeria of Insecurity.
4. What are the ways out of the security challenges in Nigeria?

Literature Review

Security

Various scholars across the globe have postulated different view point on the concept of security and insecurity. The term ‘Security’ originates from Latin word ‘Se-curus’. ‘Se’ means ‘without’ and ‘Curus’ means ‘uneasiness’ (Oghuvbu, 2021). This implies that “security originally meant liberation from uneasiness or peaceful situation without any risks or threats” (Oghuvbu, 2021, p.3925). Thus, security has a wider meaning such as to feel safe, to be protected and it is used to describe a situation without any risks or worries (UNDP, 2002 Cited in Oghuvbu, 2021). Security is broadly viewed as “freedom from danger or threats to an individual or a nation. It is the ability to protect and defend oneself, be it an individual or a nation, its cherished values and legitimate interests and the enhancement of well-being” (Mijah, 2007 cited Eugina 2013, p.60). Nwagboso (2012) cited in Adagbabiri and Okolie (2018, p.48) argues that security is “commonly



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associated with the alleviation of threat to the survival of individuals or groups” Thus, security can be equated with freedom from present and future danger, harm or anxiety.

In the view of Onoja (2014, P. 35), “security is peoples’ relative feeling of being secure from economic, political, socio-cultural and psychological fear.” This implies that security must be people driven or oriented to assure citizens that government is competent, capable and efficiently ready to guarantee their safety and freedom of movement, association that enables them to carry out their socio-economic activities without molestation, intimidation, harassment or violent threat from any person or group within and outside of the polity (Eke, 2013). Security is often equated with national security because the contextual meaning of both applies to human security. In the context of this paper, security entails protecting the citizens from the threats posed by terrorists, and, kidnappers, herdsmen and the unknown gunmen.

Empirical Review

Ayodeji (2015) carried out a research on “Curbing Insurgencies in Nigeria: Roles for the Media” The researcher adopted survey methodology, using Focus Group Discussion as an instrument to elicit discussants’ perceptions as to how the media can be used to curb the spread of insurgency in Nigeria. According to the researcher, survey research method was considered suitable for the study because it focuses on the people and their views, beliefs, opinions, perceptions, attitudes and behaviours as molded by contemporary reportage of insurgent activities around them. The research was based on Development Media Theory, with emphasis laid on the application of media techniques to lessen political tension, increase level of political education, and create a sound, stable, and secure atmosphere for public enlightenment; all for the purpose of carrying the masses along towards national development. The theory sees the press as a very important entity in the society. It is seen as the voice of the people. The “voice role” of the press is a sacred one which demands that it should be carried out fairly, honestly, courageously and constructively.

The researcher probed into the case of the group “Jama’atul Ahlus Sunnah Lidda’awati wal Jihad”, popularly referred to as Boko Haram, which means Westernization is a sin, trying to see if the media were used to publicize the terrorist actions such as killings, kidnapping, bombing, disruption of public peace and so on. The researcher sought to know whether the activities of the



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media has aided the actions of insurgents and how it may be used as a tool to stem the insurgency tide in the country. In summary, the researcher recommended among other things that the media must work hand in glove with the security agencies in order to understand the sensitivity of information at their disposal so as not to disclose classified information that could endanger the security of the nation and that they should also understand that press freedom must be used in good faith and in such a manner as does not jeopardize the peace, unity and sovereignty of the country.

Similarly, Olagunju and Rasaq (2014) studied “The Media and the Ideology of Insecurity: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Two Editorials on Federal Government-Boko Haram Face-off”. The researcher used Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine two editorials on the Federal Government-Boko Haram face-off, with the aim of revealing the media’s roles in the event. In order to achieve this, the researcher employed Van Dijk’s Socio-cognitive approach to CDA, to evaluate how the editorials represent the ideology of insecurity and how they contribute to, or solve the problem. Eventually, the study discovered that words, phrases and clauses (i.e. language) are essential in discourses. Through these elements, the editorials present the raging insecurity problem as insuperable because the Boko Haram insurgency is ideologically positioned as the powerful side. The researcher observed that the ‘Us’ vs. ‘Them’ as was the position of the Federal Government in the fight against insecurity in the country was regarded as a weak approach. However, the editorials, particularly, datum A, by qualifying the insurgent group with ‘Islamic’, presents a face threatening act against the Islamic faithful. The researcher therefore recommended that the media need to be more sensitive in their use of language in order to save the delicate bond of the nation from disintegration.

Also, Omega (2015) studied “The Role of Mass Media in the Fight against Terrorism and the Instrumental Use of Women in Boko Haram Insurgence in Nigeria”. The researcher used a descriptive research method to examine the activities of Boko Haram, provide sufficient evidence of a shift by Boko Haram to include women and girls in its terrorism in Nigeria and to suggest the strategies the mass media could adopt in combating Gender Based Violence (GBV) by the terrorists. Using case study as research design, data for the study were collected from a variety of sources including the print and electronic media. Interview schedule was also



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employed as research instrument. The study adopted Social Responsibility and Social Expectations Theories as the theoretical base of the study. The theories have relevance to the study, as they challenge the media practitioners' ingenuity to expose cases of Gender-Based-Violence by creating room for public debates, in-depth analyses of issues and the display of qualities of fairness and responsibility in serving their communities.

The theories encourage media practitioners to see themselves as agents in the battle to fulfill certain obligations to society mainly to be met by setting high or professional standards of truthfulness, accuracy, objectivity, and balance. In conclusion, the researcher observed that the mass media have enormous roles to play if Boko Haram's tactics of involving women and girls in their activities is to be combated. The researcher also recommended that the mass media should give prominence to the reportage of cases of GBV, devoting special pages for discussion of GBV (in the case of print media), organizing debates on the issue to enlighten the public about the incidence of violation of the rights of women and the girl-child, carrying out in-depth analyses of issues concerning GBV, using of improved surveillance system such as the closed circuit system installed in strategic places such as the parks, churches, markets, schools and other public places, alerting government of any possible outbreak of violence, among others.

Furthermore, Jimoh (2021) carried out a research on "Barrels to Buttons: The Nexus between Communication and National Security in the 21st Century". The study was anchored on the Systems Theory to examine the relationship between communication and national security in this jet age, in response to the security challenges facing Nigeria as a nation. The theory was propounded by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy in 1968, with emphasis on the interdependence and interconnectedness between sub-systems of a whole system; in this case, national security and communication as sub-systems of the Nigerian national Eco-System. Beyond the establishment of their relationship, the researcher discussed some specific ICT adoptable systems to meet the security needs of the country such as Global Positioning System (GPS) Technology, Intelligent Monitoring and Control System, Social Media, Virtual Emergency Operations Centre (VEOC), Data Mining and Database Tracking System, Intrusion Detection System (IDS), Uniform Security Management System and One Push Emergency Button System. The researcher therefore called on all the national communication and security stakeholders to explore,



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acknowledge, appreciate and understand the link between these systems as they are cardinal to the survival, peace, unity and progress of the nation which has been the dream of its founding fathers.

Causes of Insecurity in Nigeria

The causes of insecurity in Nigeria have been identified by many scholars and authors. Nigerians and the leaders at the political pyramids of power in the country are unarguable aware of why the country is facing security challenges. What may seem to be dicey is the panacea to the problems. There is no doubt that Nigeria has great potential for greatness, particularly with its large population consisting of a dynamic workforce, a growing economy, abundant natural resources, diverse raw materials, huge oil reserves, and intellectual reservoirs. Despite these aspects of greatness, Nigeria continues to be a developing country struggling the most frantically to find its feet among the nations' committees due to, among other factors, the prevalent insurgency and insecurity that have continued to present a challenge to its development and growth. Krokeyi and Dadi, (2015) point out some causes of insecurity in Nigeria to include the followings: the menace of unemployment, which according to the authors causes poverty. Extreme poverty leads to a crime that gives rise to insecurity (Krokeyi and Dadi, 2015); elite exploitation of ethnicity and religious differences – it is important to note that diverse ethnic make-up is not itself a cause of insecurity in Nigeria but the actions of the political and religious leaders across the nation who sometimes use ethnic sentiments to achieve their selfish ambitions (Krokeyi and Dadi, 2015). These politicians and religious leaders fan the ember of mistrust and resentment among different ethnic groups and among the country's major religions and in the process cause Nigeria's insecurity (Okpaga, Chijioke and Eme, 2012).

Similarly, Achumba, Ighomereho and Akpor-Robaro (2013) assert that control of scarce resources, fuel, land, economies, traditional and political offices resulted in mass killings and destruction of properties in many communities in various parts of the country. Nigeria's various ethnic groups also draw attention to neglect, racism, dominance, abuse, victimisation, injustice, marginalisation, nepotism, and intolerance. This often results in ethnic violence and religious conflicts (Krokeyi and Dadi, 2015). Others are corruption, weak security apparatus, Porous borders, marginalisation and inequalities in the country as well as bad governance and poor



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leadership (Achumba, Ighomereho and Akpor-Robaro, 2013). The authors submit that corruption was largely responsible for government failure and systemic infrastructure collapse, resulting in large-scale insecurity in Nigeria. With respect to security apparatus, Achumba, Ighomereho and Akpor-Robaro (2013) argue that Nigeria's security system is seen as very poor in both personnel and equipment as security officers are poorly trained and poorly remunerated. As a result, the requisite expertise is not available to meet modern security challenges. The country is also under policed. This, perhaps explains the police inability to effectively tackle crimes and security challenges. Many of the soldiers fighting the insurgency in the Northeast of the country have been ambushed on some occasions and many have been killed by the rebels as a result of information leaked to them by those who were supposed to fight them (Krokeyi and Dadi, 2015). Olonisakin (2008) as cited in Achumba, Ighomereho and Akpor-Robaro, (2013) assert that the police population ratio in Nigeria is 1:450 which falls below the United Nations standard.

In addition, porous border with free human movements and cross-border crossings that are essentially untracked, have created unstable frontiers and led to Nigeria's high level of insecurity (Achumba, Ighomereho and Akpor-Robaro, 2013). There is an unregulated inflow of Small Arms and Light Weapons into the country as a result of the porous borders which has enabled militancy and crime in Nigeria. Edeko (2011) has reported that Nigeria hosts over 70% of about 8million illegal weapons that have been used to create a security crisis. Also, the porous condition of both the Nigerian borders has contributed to the uncontrollable influx of migrants, predominantly young people, from nearby countries such as the Republic of Niger, Chad and the Republic of Benin accountable for some of the insecurity promoting criminal activities in Nigeria (Adeola and Olayemi, 2012). The issue of killings and attacks on farmers by the Fulani herdsmen is not unconnected with the problem of porous borders which has given room for mass migration of the herders into the country (Achumba, Ighomereho and Akpor-Robaro, 2013).

Furthermore, marginalisation and inequalities in the country has given rise to agitations for splitting of the country. Under President Buhari's government, key political positions are given to people from Northern extraction while the Southern part of the country is left in the cold. This has undoubtedly added to the unending agitations for division among the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria, such as the Biafra Republic in the East, Oduduwa Republic in the West and



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Arewa in the North (Achumba, Ighomereho and Akpor-Robaro, 2013). The consequence of this is growing uncertainty. Equally, bad governance and poor leadership has become a perennial problem in Nigeria. Any government anywhere has the primary function of providing basic services such as water, electricity, good road network, quality education, and general infrastructure. Ironically, these basic things are not there in Nigeria and the people, in general, are frustrated and demoralised. Demoralisation and anger logically provide a strong fertile ground for aggression and general insecurity.

According to Charas, Mbaya, and Liberty (2014 cited in Achumba, Ighomereho and Akpor-Robaro (2013), a number of violent cultures such as thuggery, indiscipline, corruption, abduction, bombing, etc. have come in since the arrival of third and fourth republics in 1999 and 2009 respectively, which was just a decade ago after the previous military invasion that has led to this unimaginable security challenges. From then till 2022, the situation is growing worse. In another dimension, the government's lack of diplomacy in its use of information tends to inflame frustrations and loss of hope in the government. This situation results in building up insecurity in the country. In support of this view, Ojobah, Amiriheobu, Chinwe, and Owunari, (2021) state that worsening economic conditions and bleak projections for the future have only fanned the flames of insecurity in Nigeria. The country has barely recovered from the economic recession that started 2016, and President Buhari has now called on Nigerians to brace for another recession (Ojobah, Amiriheobu, Chinwe, and Owunari, 2021). The authors note that youth were already incensed by reports of high-level elite's corruption, galloping inflation, and unprecedented levels of unemployment, and now the government has announced increase in the price of fuel and an electricity tariff. So many opinions have been aired on the present epoch of disorderliness plaguing the front of the Nigeria state. These opinions, though diversified, highlights that Nigeria is a lawless state, thus, is at the point of tumbling; which demands international attention. For instance, a former United States Ambassador to Nigeria, John Campbell, and a former Director with Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, Prof. Robert Rothberg, have said it is time for the US to acknowledge that Nigeria is a failed state in the light of the many challenges plaguing the country. In an article titled, 'The Giant of Africa is Failing' which was published in the May/June, 2021 edition of 'Foreign Affairs'



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magazine, they argued that every part of Nigeria now faces insecurity which threatens the nation's corporate existence.

Methodology

Qualitative research method was applied to explore the extant literature in the area under investigation. This was done by undertaking a scoping review of peer reviewed articles on insecurity in Nigeria. A scoping review approach was considered the best way to examine state of the art literature that covers a wide range of security challenges in Nigeria and beyond. Although a scoping review has its own limitations such as the limited opportunity to provide details for practice, it has an overwhelming advantage of providing practical examples of how terrorism and banditry are tackled in countries with security challenges. With such practical examples, Nigeria can draw an inference that could help her address her security problems.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the Democratic Peace Theory to explain the security challenges in Nigerian. Democratic peace is the proposition that democracies are more peaceful in their foreign relations. This idea dates back centuries, at least to Immanuel Kant and other 18th-century Enlightenment thinkers (Reiter, 2019). However, this theory was first made popular in a keynote article by Michael Doyle in *Journal of Philosophy and Public Affairs* (Doyle, 1998). Doyle argues that there was a difference in liberal practice towards liberal societies and liberal practice. According to this theory, security largely depends on encouraging liberal institutions to discharge their responsibilities creditably; and a security policy must have as its long-term project the spread of liberalism (Doyle, (1998). Therefore, the route to peace is to encourage democratic system, the universal respect for human rights and the development of civil society. But such conclusion depends largely on untroubled and robust correlation between the democratic nature of a state and peaceful inclination (Okonkwo, Ndubuisi- Okolo, Anagbogu, 2015). Thus, the democratic peace theory assumes that liberal states do not fight wars against other liberal states.

Democratic Peace Theory thrives on the idea that democracies by nature do not go to war with one another, a fact which historically has guaranteed peace between democratic states, arguably without exception (Pugh, 2025). Democratic peace is rooted theoretically in the writings of



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Immanuel Kant, and in particular his work “Perpetual Peace”. Kant claims that peace is a reasonable outcome of the interaction of states with a republican form of government. He believes that the republican constitution “gives a favourable prospect for the desired consequence, i.e., perpetual peace. The reason is this: if the consent of the citizens is required in order to decide that war should be declared (and in this constitution it cannot but be the case), nothing is more natural than that they should be very cautious in commencing such a poor game, decreeing for themselves all the calamities of war.(Pugh, 2025). Contrasting republicanism with other forms of governments, Kant argues, on the other hand, in a constitution which is not republican, and under which the subjects are not citizens, a declaration of war is the easiest thing in the world to decide upon, because war does not require of the ruler, who is the proprietor and not a member of the state, the least sacrifice of the pleasure of his table, the chase, his country houses, his court functions, and the like (Kant, I. 1957). Although the Democratic Peace Theory is used more to explain peaceful coexistence of states, it applies adequately to maintaining cohesion within a democratic state as well where every citizen is free to participate and share equally in the resources of the state and remain happy without conflict. Nigeria belongs to democratic states endowed with sufficient resources to take care of her citizens and prevent disaffection and internal war with terrorists and bandits.

Traditional and New Media: Implications to Security Challenges in Nigeria

Generally, media play a very important role in the global fight against terrorism (Ngige, Badekale and Hamman, 2016), 2016). In the same manner, some forms of the media, especially private media organisations such as the ones used by groups agitating for independent states, and the social media (SM) that are not regulated by National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) can be used to fuel different kinds of terrorism and other criminal activities. In recent years, Nigeria’s national security has been threatened by different forms of terrorism challenges, which has affected lives and properties worth billions of Naira (Chukwuere, and Onyebukwa, 2018). *PLUS TV Africa* in its programme, *PLUS TV Politics* broadcast of 2nd May, 2022 was run with the by line “PDP, others lament killing of 12,250 Nigerian in one year.” This suggests the high level of insecurity in the country. This number refers to the casualties of insecurity not to



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mention the number of kidnapped victims and those rendered homeless and turned to refugees in the homeland.

Under the forgoing situation, the media are expected to be the vanguard of security, especially in the performance of their surveillance role. However, this is not always the case. While it cannot be said that the Nigeria mass media is not playing significant role in the reporting on the security situations in Nigeria, it is also worthy of note to understand the media play both positive and negative roles when it comes to the security of the nation. The traditional media which are regulated by the government could be said to be helping in no small measures to stem the tide of insecurity in Nigeria but there are some pirate radio stations like the out lawed Radio Biafra and the defunct Kudurat Radio that are used as propaganda machines to champion the disunity and insecurity in Nigeria. Similarly, the new media are not regulated by any legislative law in Nigeria and they are as well used by every citizen that is computer literate or has the skills for operating smart phone to disseminate information. This makes the new media prone to misuse.

Globally, terrorists, separatists, political organisations, religious groups, individuals and so on are using social media (SM) to spread their information and ideas. In this case, Nigerian national security is under threat by the activities of Boko Haram (BH), Fulani Headmen, Niger Delta avengers, agitation of Independent People of Biafra (IPOB) and others (Chukwuere and Onyebukwa, 2018). Social media (SM) is an open world of communication platform with little control by government agents. BH and IPOB groups are noticeably using SM in advancing their activities. However, there are few or no empirical studies to justify whether the general public using SM believes that the platform impacts on national security, in this case the insecurity in the northern and south-eastern parts of Nigeria (Chukwuere and Onyebukwa, 2018). SM is now a social communication norm in developing countries. SM promotes positive and negative agendas.

SM can be described as online-based tools and services connecting people, and enabling interaction with each other over the internet. The new media has increased social and political interactions through WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter and other platforms (Chukwuere and Onyebukwa, 2017). Social networking sites are used by terrorist groups with dedicated servers



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and websites to spread their propaganda (Nsudu and Onwe, 2017). They use the medium for recruitment, fund raising, training mechanisms and other forms of cybercrime. This platform helps in promoting local and international terrorist groups and the insecurity associated with it. International and local terrorist groups deploy SM to organise or strategise attacks and ways of escape (Nsudu and Onwe, 2017). The authors further allude to the fact that they use the medium to increase their presence and to spread propaganda. Locally, Nigerian insecurity is increasing and lives and properties are threatened on a daily basis. This insecurity is affected by the penetration and diffusion of SM. SM cannot be easily controlled or censored from the general public as a result of social freedom and a lack of cyberspace law (Nsudu and Onwe, 2017). The social freedom of speech associated with SM makes it free for users to generate contents at any time and post them online.

SM is not only used by terrorist groups to challenge the peace and stability of a country; the citizens themselves are using the medium to render terror on each other by means of fake news and fake postings, which promote propaganda and fear. An example is the increased number and differing nature of unverified news or information surfacing on SM platforms, emanating from the corridor of northern and south-eastern Nigeria. Furthermore, Kenya's national security has been implicated in the misuse of SM (Kimutai, 2014). Most times, this news and information are neither confirmed nor verified, which results in the dissemination of fake news. However, at the broadcast of any kind of attack or terrorist news, thousands and millions react immediately, attacking one another based on ethnicity, religion, and tribe. At the same time, such news immediately creates fear, tensions and violence in the society.

Therefore, the insecurity situations in the northern and south-eastern parts of Nigeria are being affected by the presence of SM in the following manners (Nsudu and Onwe, 2017): Terrorist and other criminal groups use the platform to execute attacks, kidnaps, rape, robbery and many more. According to Nsudu and Onwe (2017), the medium is also used to combat terrorism and other forms of crimes in developed countries. A study has revealed that SM platforms such as Facebook have been used in Nigeria to fight human trafficking, and many more (Nsudu and Onwe, 2017). At this point, insecurity is regarded as an impediment towards social development in Nigeria.



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Insurgency and the Future of Nigeria

When General Muhammadu Buhari was elected the president of Nigeria in a historic election that took place in 2015, expectations were high as the wave of ‘change’ took over the country with renewed prospects to urgently tackle the challenges that have hindered economic prosperity, sustainable security and overall national development in the country (Mohammed, n.d). In outlining priorities when he took over, President Buhari committed to tackle Security, Unemployment, and the Economy as his key priorities (Mohammed, n.d). To tackle the challenges, the Nigerian Presidents took some concrete steps, especially in the northeast; notably the overhaul of the top military hierarchy by bringing in new service chiefs and moving the military command centre to Maiduguri, the Borno State capital, the heart of the battle.

The president took further steps to prioritise regional cooperation particularly with the neighbouring Lake Chad basin Commission countries namely Cameroon, Chad, and the Niger as well as Benin on the other side of the border, and the operationalisation of Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) although technically set up since 1998 was barely functional until its recent rebirth – providing the security apparatus through which the countries can coordinate Military intervention in the region (Mohammed, n.d). The President has also reached out to key International Stakeholders such as France, the USA and the United Kingdom to garner additional supports to tackle the insurgents. The efforts of Mr. Presidents have resulted to recapturing the claimed territories by the Military and weakening the structures of the insurgents in Northeast. However, the emergence of humanitarian crises described by the President of International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) in 2015 as one of ‘one of the worst in the world.’ According to Mohammed (n.d), despite the recent semblance of peace in the region, the insurgents have engaged in ‘hit and run’ guerrilla warfare with sporadic attacks principally with Improvised Explosives Devices (IEDs) strapped to innocent victims particularly girls and women in crowded spaces planning to carry out as much destructions and casualties as possible. The author states that although Nigeria continues to intensify its efforts in tackling both the security as well as the humanitarian crisis in the short to medium term, the underlying socio-economic and political factors, which have created an enabling environment for insurgency still persists. This will also need to be addressed intensively in the medium and long term. Underscoring the potency of the



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security challenges in the various States in Nigeria, Idayat Hassan, Director of the Abuja-based Centre for Democracy and Development, in Nigeria, told *The New Humanitarian* that the states no longer have the monopoly of force; they have lost control; from the north to the south, life has become nasty, brutish, and short (Anyadike and Mbachu, 2021). Gunmen, ESN, Bandits, Kidnappers, all ta rampage.

With a dynamic and changing International Security environment, it is hard to predict the future of Nigeria particularly with new and emerging challenges. However, extrapolations can be made by looking at some of the drivers and trends shaping Global Security. Globalisation and the inter-relation between economic and security trends, terrorism, state fragility, and geopolitical uncertainty are all factors that have even identified as driving forces shaping the future of global security environment (Mohammed, n.d).

Mohammed (n.d) opines that for Nigeria, given its strategic place as the Africa's most populous country, the potential implications of economic crisis as well as spill over effects of *Boko Haram* crisis in the northeast, the escalation of violence linked to farmer-herder clashes as well as the relapse of insecurity in Niger Delta region pose existent challenges for the government, its neighbours, and the global security environment looking ahead. This reality highlights the importance of having a balance menu of instruments of not only national power but emphasises the need for collaboration with regional and international stakeholders. This does not only demands innovation, since the country is dealing with non-state threats, but also reinforces the importance of having the political will to ensure peace and stability for development of the country (Mohammed, n.d), Future direction must, therefore, be mapped out from passed as well as from the current security trends.

Discussion of Findings

Findings of the study reveal that Nigerians depend so much on mass media for accurate and timely information about the happenings in the society. This implies that the traditional roles of the mass media in any society which are to inform, educate and entertain are so crucial that societies can hardly progress meaningfully without these channels of mass communication. It



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was also observed that although the mass media are faced with a lot of challenges in the fight against insecurity in Nigeria, they have significant influence in fighting the menace, as they helped in keeping the people abreast of the security situations in the country. This observation is in line with the position of Tejumaiye (2011) who posits that though, the press in Nigeria has been faced with challenges; these challenges have not prevented them from impacting on the nation in diverse ways. According to him, the mass media shape culture, influence politics, play important role in business and affect the daily lives of millions of people, including people's attitudes, conducts and fundamental moral values.

We also found that the mass media have not been fully utilised in addressing security issues in Nigeria. Consequently, it was revealed that the high level of insecurity in Nigeria can be curbed if the mass media can be properly utilised, since communication-based approach through the mass media has been considered better than application of force in handling security situations in the country. This is in line with the submission of Ogu and Oyerinde (2014), who posit that effective communication process, sophisticated communication facilities and adaptive participatory communication approach are needed for the security architecture of the country to be amply recognized, appreciated and maximized. This can find solace on the fact that communication is the basic driver of social interaction which can prevent and curb enmity as well as promote peace and tranquillity in the society, as rightly captured by Okeke and Oji (2014) who posit that for any nation to be truly secured in this 21st century often referred to as the information or jet age, it must look beyond the conventional security forces.

A critical examination of technological development and security dynamics reveals that there has been a drastic shift in the conceptualization and application of communication-security affiliation as communication has developed to determine modus operandi in virtually all aspects of social life. On a similar note, Al-Rfouh (2015), upholds that the battle ground has shifted from being a geographical location to a cybernetic environment. In this case, its instruments or tools for victory are not only guns and arsenals but include every form of technology that has the potential to affect the physical, mental and spiritual comfort of individuals. He further posits that the advent of digital and instantaneous communication technologies through the instrumentality of machines, systems, facilities and devices such as the satellites, fibre optics, cable, broadband,



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Internet, social media, mobile phones and other mini devices has redefined the entirety of human interaction and has triggered a rethinking of established concepts of governance and national security since the end of the cold war.

Conclusion and Recommendations



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Based on the findings of the study, we recommend that:

- (1) The government should adopt dialogue and communication based approach in addressing security problems facing the country instead of relying solely on the use of force and stiff measures in handling security matters.
- (2) Journalists in the media industry should utilize the mass media as agent of social change, and in spite of all odds redouble their efforts in setting agenda for public discussion on the best ways to solve the security problems facing the country.
- (3) The government officials and other relevant authorities should periodically organise media security summit for members of the public to contribute their quota on how to achieve attitudinal change in Nigeria as a possible means of solving the problem of security challenges in the country.
- (4) The welfare of the mass media operatives should be duly considered and guaranteed so as to encourage them to uphold their responsibility of keeping the society informed without any compromise.
- (5). The Nigerian armed forces and para military organisations in Nigeria should face the bandits, terrorists, kidnapper and the hoodlums in their hideouts and leave the highways which now serve as toll gate for the service men.
- (6). Nigeria should seek for supply of information on the insurgents from the more advanced countries like America, Britain and France to prevent surprise attacks by the insurgents.

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