

Management of Security Challenges in Nigeria: A Reflection of Buhari's Administration

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Abstract

Although security challenges are global phenomena, Nigeria's case appears to be perennially mismanaged, hence the need to critically examine them with a particular focus on President Buhari's Administration (2015-2023). The study was anchored on the risk management theory. Utilising a qualitative approach, this research drew from policy documents, security reports, and scholarly analyses to evaluate the administration's counterterrorism measures, military operations, and diplomatic engagements. The study also explored the role of governance, economic policies, and inter-agency collaboration in mitigating security risks. Findings suggested that while certain military operations, such as Operation Lafiya Dole and establishing new security task forces, yielded temporary gains against Boko Haram and other insurgent groups, systemic issues, including corruption, weak intelligence coordination, and socio-economic grievances, undermined long-term security effectiveness. The paper recommended a multi-dimensional security framework that integrates governance reforms, technological advancements, and regional cooperation or confederal structuring to ensure sustainable national security.

Keywords: Management, security management, Buhari administration, security challenges, Nigeria

Introduction

The Nigerian state has, over time, experienced breaches in security in many ways, and those breaches appear grossly mismanaged. Security issues in Nigeria range from pockets of disquiet caused by uncultured individuals or groups of individuals like pickpockets and "Yahoo boys" to highly planned, organized and targeted distortion of national peace by bandits, terrorist sects and separatist groups.

In recent years, Nigeria has battled Boko Haram, bandits, Islamic State of West African Province – ISWAP, Fulani herds men-host community clashes, agitation of separatist groups such as the Indigenous People of Biafra – IPOB, which the federal government had proscribed; the Oduduwa Republic agitators, all of which have, in their rights, raised men and women who consider unleashing violence on state apparatuses to driving their agitations home (Titus & Atakpa, 2017:106). Observably, the scope of security and its management continues to grow speedily to justify the Internet era. This trend constitutes several levels and kinds of security challenges, albeit requiring different types of strategies for management. Security is one issue that has transcended several governments, past and present, with nearly no solution found. Onoja (2014) observes that security in Nigeria gained currency for three reasons. The first is the consequence of military intervention in politics; the second is the international enabling environment, including the origin of security studies; and the third is the prevailing insecurity situation that worsened from the 1980s.

A couple of other things, including a political unwillingness to face the hydra-headed phenomenon of insecurity, have been a recurrent decimal across the period of its persistence. For instance, Olofin (2020:1), in a study, found that Nigeria's disposition to internal management of security is predominantly reactive as well as ineffective. The author adds, "This is not unconnected with the weakness of intelligence gathering, a situation made worse by the absence of credible and reliable national identification system and limited application of high-tech gadgets in intelligence gathering". Otherwise, how could "287" students in Kuriga school in Kaduna state recently be abducted by motorcycle-riding gunmen easily without intervention by security agents? Ridiculously, the kidnappers demanded 40 trillion naira as ransom. It took weeks (March 7 - March 24, 2024) for the government to negotiate and secure the release of 137 students by the Kaduna state Governor, Uba Sani (<https://apnews.com>article>nige>).

With security holding strategic importance in the expansion of any nation, according to Olofin (2020), security management includes all attempts by stakeholders to create frameworks to advance, as well as sustain the security of people and develop strategies to mitigate concomitant risks that can ever be posed to the people. Therefore, in the context of national security, diverse areas include but are not limited to road security, and border security (Osimen et al., 2017; Olomu et al., 2018; Olomu et al., 2018b; Okarah, 2014); economic and financial security (Nwagboso, 2012); election security (Richard, 2021); social security, (Ikuomola, 2019). These and more captured in several literatures, show an avalanche of typology of security.

Security, according to Ononihu & Okonkwo (2020:2) is also viewed through two lenses of external and internal security. The former, according to Eke in Ononihu & Okonkwo (2020), lies within the purview of the military dimension and warding off external threats or war against independence, and the latter is with domestic matters and "arrangements for stability in the polity through the maintenance of law and order". Conversely, Oriazowanlan & Erah (2019:2) observe that "Insecurity could be referred to being susceptible to imminent danger which affects individual interest and society core values," that is lack of peace, safety and protection as well as exposure to danger in an environment or society due to economic, political, socio-cultural, ethno-religious conflict, inequitable distribution of natural resources, poverty and unemployment, porous border and weak security system among others.

Ujah & Eboh (2006:7) opine that security is not just a thing that is intrinsic to development, "but also an essential precondition for sustainable development". Similarly, Nwolise (2006:352) explained that "security is an all-encompassing holistic concept which implies that the territory must be secured by a network of armed forces: that the sovereignty of the state must be guaranteed by a democratic and patriotic government, which in turn must be protected by the military, police and the people themselves, the people must not only be secured from external attacks but also from devastating consequences of internal upheavals, unemployment, hunger, starvation, diseases, ignorance, homelessness, environmental degradation, pollution and socio-economic injustices."

Agazuma & Mochi in Ekwe (2022) define security as freedom from risk and protection from bodily harm or injuries, and human beings are intuitively driven by the urge to maximize available resources to safeguard their physical, physiological, and psychological well-being. Meanwhile, Katsina (2012:109) posits that "what constitutes security in modern times is a question that has never been answered satisfactorily by scholars." To this end, he observed that the shift in conceptualization provides for defining security as a state's ability to put up defense for itself against external threats using all available means it has and internal threats using the overall socio-economic well-being of its citizenry. Okonkwo et al. (2015) identify the following as major causes of insecurity in Nigeria: ethno-religious conflicts, weak security system, unemployment and poverty, porous borders, and systemic and political corruption.

Statement of the Problem

Even though security challenges are global phenomena, Nigeria's case appears to be perennially mismanaged, hence the need to critically examine them with a reflection on Buhari's Administration. Also, the management of security may have been in place but requires studies such as this to update its status. In essence, this study seeks to underscore and bring to the fore the efforts geared towards the management of security challenges in Nigeria between 2015 and 2023 when President Muhammadu Buhari was at the helm of affairs. The major reason for this attempt is the fact that in most cases, the former is usually deemed to be better than the latter (Titus, 2014:168).

It, therefore, seeks to understand the ways security challenges were managed in Nigeria during Buhari's administration to attain its generally acclaimed worst status in Nigeria's democratic dispensation. Consequently, the three major questions arising from the above situation and analysis of the problem statement are as follows:

- i. What were the security challenges most experienced in Nigeria from 2015 to 2023?
- ii. What steps were taken towards managing the security challenges in Nigeria between 2015 and 2023?
- iii. What were the results achieved after the said steps were taken towards the goal?

Research Method

The paper adopted a qualitative/descriptive procedure for data collection, analysis and reporting. It relied more on secondary data through journals, books, the internet and other scholarly publications to critically examine the reliability and viability of issues.

Conceptual Explanation

Brief explanations of key concepts are as follows:

Management: It entails effective utilization and coordination of resources such as capital, land, materials and labour to achieve an intended goal (Nkwede & Nwali, 2014:118).

Security: This refers to a state of tranquility among citizens of Nigeria, living without fear of threats to their lives or other things that make up their standard of living.

Security Management: This includes every effort made to reduce security challenges to the barest minimum.

Administration: Administration involves the effective use of human, material and financial resources for the achievement of organizational goal(s) (Nwankwo, 2006:11; Titus et al., 2024:61).

Buhari Administration: This has to do with the eight years of Buhari's civilian rule in Nigeria (2015-2023)

Security challenges: These are human problems militating against societal peace, well-being and development, such as armed robbery, kidnapping, and insurgency.

Theoretical Framework

The Risk Management Theory

Risk Management theory is derived from risk management endeavour. It is adopted as a theory for management and other endeavours and is appropriate for security management. Credit to this theory is given to Irwin Mehr and Bob Atkinson Hedges, 1963 (<https://books.google.com>>about). The theory opines that through organizational risk analysis and evaluation, the threats and vulnerabilities regarding information security could be estimated and assessed. Also, the evaluation results could be used for planning information security requirements and risk control measures (Hong et al., 2003).

Invariably, the authors note that risk management is a process of establishing and maintaining information security, though within an organization. Indeed, Nigeria is seen as an organization, a large one for that matter. The pivot of this theory is risk assessment for cost-effectiveness. It requires the consideration and assessment of the threats and vulnerabilities of information assets.

The theory is important to this study because it expresses how stakeholders in the security system in Nigeria could assess security risks before developing management systems to achieve an improved security system. It provides for how stakeholders could first assess the situation and what brings it about, then continue with assessments of possible strategies for nipping the challenges in the bud (Ekpo, 2023:35-36; Spikin, 2013).

Review of Related Literature

Nigeria's Security and Challenges

Many commercial activities in Nigeria have been curtailed, decreased or liquidated as a result of the country's security difficulties, particularly in locations like Borno, Kano, Kaduna, Yobe, Benue, Kogi, and Enugu (Oriazowanlan & Erah, 2019). Nigeria, as a growing country, has its own set of social, political, economic, and cultural issues, many of which are exacerbated by current insecurity and insurgent activities in various parts of the country. Pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta region is a typical example of unrest in the south; some of the region's youths decided to take their fate into their hands by engaging in pipeline vandalism as agitation for a fair share of their endowed natural resources, which the Federal Government has harnessed to cater for other regions, particularly the northern part of Nigeria, while neglecting them (Oriazowanlan & Erah, 2019). Nigeria's rising rate of insecurity has had a substantial impact on the country's economic growth, oil production, and daily barrel output.

Furthermore, Ndubusi-Okoli & Anigbuogu (2019) state that the frightening rate at which the nation's economic, political, social, and religious affairs are shrinking is a clear sign of instability. As a result, investors, foreigners, expatriates, and even Nigerians are hesitant to invest and commit their hard-earned resources in lucrative companies in the country.

Evidence has revealed that persons in high-ranking positions are the true culprits and backers of the country's Boko Haram insurgencies. The country's high rate of reliance on other international equivalents, as well as the country's high poverty rate, reflect this (Ndubusi-Okoli & Anigbuogu, 2019). As a result of the government's incapacity to offer a secure and favorable environment for the protection of lives, property, the conduct of business, and a variety of economic activities, business investors have shown little interest and are dissatisfied (Ndubusi-Okoli & Anigbuogu, 2019). Conflicts between farmers and herders have wreaked havoc on the humanitarian situation, displacing thousands of people and destroying property (Ekpo, 2023:37). Due to the sheer attitude of some top government officials toward life security, the provision of a secure and safe environment for lives, properties, and the performance of business and economic operations have been hampered in Nigeria (Ndubusi-Okoli & Anigbuogu, 2019).

Boko Haram Insecurity

Apart from its religious background and emergence in 2002, Boko Haram arguably became a 'home-grown' terrorist group for some desperate politicians in northern Nigeria (Asua & Okon, 2014:41-42). The deadly terrorist group almost made Nigeria ungovernable during Jonathan's and Buhari's regimes through bomb/gun attacks on police stations, army barracks, correctional centres, churches, mosques, public institutions, etc.

National Security

National security is a broad and multidimensional concept that encompasses the protection of a nation's citizens, economy, and institutions from external and internal threats. Over time, scholars and policymakers have debated and refined the scope of national security to include military, economic, cyber, and human security dimensions. This literature review explores the key perspectives on national security, the evolving nature of threats, and the strategies employed to mitigate risks as follows:

Traditional Perspectives on National Security: The traditional concept of national security is rooted in realism, which emphasizes the role of the state in ensuring its sovereignty through military power and strategic alliances (Walt, 1991). Classical realists like Morgenthau (1948) argued that national security is primarily about protecting territorial integrity and maintaining a balance of power. The Cold War era reinforced this view, leading to an arms race and the establishment of institutions such as NATO to counter external threats.

Economic and Cybersecurity Dimensions: With globalization, economic security has become an integral component of national security (Baldwin, 1997). Economic stability, access to resources, and trade policies significantly influence a nation's ability to protect its interests. Scholars such as Keohane & Nye (2011) highlight the interdependence of states, which makes economic disruptions potential national security threats. Similarly, cyber security has emerged as a crucial aspect of national security in the 21st century. The rise of cyber warfare, hacking incidents, and information warfare necessitates robust cyber security policies (Singer & Friedman, 2014). Governments and international organizations are increasingly prioritizing digital infrastructure protection against cyber threats.

Human Security and Its Implications: Human security broadens the scope of national security by focusing on individual well-being, including protection from poverty, disease, and human rights violations (UNDP, 1994). This approach argues that national security cannot be fully achieved without addressing internal socio-economic disparities and promoting human rights. Scholars such as Sen (1999) emphasize the role of development in creating stable and secure societies.

Contemporary Challenges to National Security: Modern threats to national security have diversified, including terrorism, climate change, and pandemics. The 9/11 attacks reshaped global security policies, leading to heightened counterterrorism measures and the expansion of intelligence networks (Crenshaw, 2001). Climate change is increasingly recognized as a security threat due to its impact on resource availability and forced migration (Barnett, 2003). The COVID-19 pandemic also demonstrated the importance of biosecurity and global health preparedness in maintaining national stability.

Policy Responses and Future Directions: Governments have developed multifaceted security strategies to address emerging threats. National security policies now incorporate technological advancements, international cooperation, and resilience-building measures. The integration of artificial intelligence, big data, and surveillance mechanisms in security planning is a growing area of research (Brundage et al., 2018). Furthermore, scholars advocate for a balanced approach that considers civil liberties while enhancing security measures (Etzioni, 2015).

Corruption Insecurity

Corruption encompasses all unethical practices carried out by people for personal gain. Ironically, corruption in Nigeria is traceable to the military (the supposed most formidable security agent) through incessant military incursions since 1975. Since then, corruption has not only become endemic but institutionalized in all facets of the country's eco-system. Sadly, in Nigeria today, there is hardly an act of insecurity that is not linked to corruption (Nwali, 2013:111-112). No security challenge could be as deadly as corruption insecurity as presently witnessed in Africa's most populated and naturally endowed country. The management of security challenges in Nigeria has been a central issue, particularly under President Muhammadu Buhari's administration (2015–2023). Corruption and insecurity are intertwined, with corruption undermining security efforts and fostering a climate conducive to criminal activities. This literature review examines scholarly perspectives on corruption and insecurity and their impact on governance and security management in Nigeria during Buhari's tenure.

The Nexus between Corruption and Insecurity: Corruption has long been recognized as a major impediment to effective security governance. Scholars such as Rotberg (2009) and Agbiboa (2015) argue that corruption erodes public trust in security institutions, diverts resources meant for security, and facilitates crime through bribery and collusion with criminal elements. In Nigeria, corruption within the security apparatus has been documented in cases where security personnel have been accused of colluding with insurgents, bandits, and kidnappers (Okeke, 2018).

Security challenges under Buhari's administration: Buhari's administration inherited a range of security challenges, including:

- i. **Terrorism and Insurgency:** Boko Haram and its splinter faction, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), continued to carry out attacks despite government offensives.
- ii. **Banditry and Kidnapping:** The rise in armed banditry, especially in the Northwest, led to mass abductions and displacement.
- iii. **Herders-Farmers Clashes:** Persistent conflicts between Fulani herders and farmers fueled ethnic and religious tensions.
- iv. **Militancy and Separatist Agitations:** The resurgence of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and Niger Delta militancy threatened national stability.

Several scholars have assessed the effectiveness of Buhari's security management:

- a. **Successes:** The administration achieved significant territorial reclamation from Boko Haram, enhanced regional cooperation, and increased defense spending.
- b. **Challenges:** Despite military efforts, insecurity persisted due to poor intelligence gathering, inadequate funding, human rights violations by security forces, and failure to address the socio-economic roots of insecurity (Ojo, 2022).

IPOB Insecurity

The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) has been a significant factor in Nigeria's security landscape, particularly during President Muhammadu Buhari's administration (2015–2023). Founded in 2012 as a separatist group in Nigeria, IPOB seeks to restore the defunct Republic of Biafra, a country which seceded from Nigeria in 1967 and suffered defeat by the Nigerian army and accordingly surrendered after 30 months of civil war in 1970.

Presently, their leader, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, is in prison custody after being arrested on 14 October 2015, despite various court orders that ruled for his release (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/N>).

The activities of IPOB have significantly influenced Nigeria's security dynamics. The group's ability to mobilize mass actions has heightened insecurity in the South East and South-South zones. Their actions have challenged the nation's unity and posed threats to national security, necessitating a strategic response from the government. Worthy of note too is the group's stay-at-home order, which has not only taken its toll on the economic security of the entire Igbo land and the country at large but also led to the loss of lives in the thousands and property worth billions of naira.

Government's Response under Buhari's Administration: The Buhari administration adopted a firm stance against IPOB's activities. The government's approach included the arrest and prosecution of IPOB leaders, military interventions, and the proscription of the group as a terrorist organization. These measures aimed to curb the group's influence and maintain national cohesion (en.wikipedia.org).

Critique of the Administration's Approach

- i. Scholars have critiqued the administration's handling of IPOB-related insecurity. Adekunle & Alokpa (2023) argue that leadership failures contributed to the persistence and escalation of security challenges. They contend that despite promises to address insecurity swiftly, the administration's strategies were inadequate, leading to a proliferation of crises across various regions.
- ii. The administration's communication strategies in managing IPOB agitations have been evaluated for effectiveness. Studies indicate that public awareness of these strategies was limited, and their appropriateness was questioned. This gap in effective communication may have hindered the government's efforts to manage the crisis and shape public perception (iiardjournals.org).

Restructuring Insecurity

Most authors believe that the major causes of insecurity, as manifested in insurgency, militancy, youth restiveness, etc., is the current structure of Nigeria. They recall that Nigeria fought a devastating civil war between 1967 and 1970 as a result of the present structure of the country. The 'Aburi Accord' which was a confederation accord was negated by the then Nigerian government led by General Yakubu Gowon. The military government of General Sanni Abacha divided Nigeria into six geo-political zones, but no restructuring was considered. The creation of States or Zones is one thing, and restructuring is another (Titus & Udoudoh, 2018:18).

Management of Security Challenges in Nigeria – Buhari's Era

The government and citizens of Nigeria took a couple of steps towards putting a stop to or at least mitigating the security challenges threatening its existence. Some of them are reviewed in this unit of the study. Akinyemi (2021) observes that community policing plays a role or roles even in national peace and security. The author considers community policing as entailing a community partnership in which people play active parts to ensure a safe and secure environment. It is seen as a shift from a military-inspired approach to fighting crimes to one that relies on forming partnerships with constituents (Okafor & Aniche, 2018; Gbenemene & Adishi, 2017; Ozoigbo, 2019).

Further Reflections on Buhari’s Administration

According to Nigeria Security Tracker (NST), no fewer than 19,366 Nigerians were kidnapped (abducted) in 2694 kidnapping cases during the Buhari administration (2015-2023), as shown in the table below:

Table 1: Estimated Number of Kidnap Cases from 2015-2023

No. of Cases	Year	No. of Victims
111	2015	926
137	2016	347
141	2017	484
157	2018	987
231	2019	1,386
439	2020	2,860
590	2021-2023	12,426
Total	1,806	19,416

Source: Punch Newspaper, <https://punching.com>

In 2017, there were 484 reported cases of kidnapping. This number increased to 987 in 2018, 1,386 in 2019, and 2,860 in 2020. The upward trajectory continued, with 12,426 abductions recorded between January 1, 2021, and May 2, 2023. The NST's data compilation, based on media reports, provides a comprehensive overview of the security challenges during Buhari's tenure. It's important to note that these figures may be conservative due to underreporting or unverified incidents. The escalation in kidnappings underscores the pressing security challenges Nigeria during the period under review, highlighting the need for effective strategies to combat such crimes.

A greater part of the abductions targeted school children: Niger State’s Kangara, Zamfara State’s Jangebe, Kaduna State’s Afaka, Kebbi State’s Yuari. Also, the illegal activity becomes not only a business but a lucrative one at that. For instance, in 2017, following his arrest, a notorious kidnapper, Chukwudi Dumeme Onuamadike, a.k.a. Evans, reportedly told police that he received \$4 million in ransom from four of his high-profile kidnapped victims between 2015 and 2016. Similarly, an Enugu-based politician, Tochukwu Okeke, who in 2019 narrated how he was kidnapped by a late notorious kidnapper, Collins Ezenwa, popularly known as ‘E-money,’ said he paid \$2 million, which had a naira value of N700 million at the time of his release (<https://www.vanguardngr.com>). While some kidnappers went after the rich/wealthy, others were unselective. No Nigerian was spared (whether commuting interstate, farming or resting at home). Little wonder that Wole Soyinka described Buhari’s government as a monumental disaster (<https://www.pmnewsnigeria.com>buhari...>). It dashed the hope of most Nigerians who preferred

his candidacy as a military general to fight insecurity in the country. Insecurity rather became worse during his tenure.

Empirical Review

Adekunle & Alokpa (2023) examined the relationship between leadership failure and insecurity during Buhari's tenure. Their study, which utilized an ex-post facto research design and content analysis of secondary data, concluded that ineffective leadership contributed to security challenges. They recommended a reevaluation of leadership approaches to enhance national security.

Similarly, Olawunmi (2023) analyzed Nigeria's security situation from Buhari's tenure to the present day. The research highlighted the centrality of security in national discourse and emphasized the need for good governance as essential for sound conflict management. The study underscored that the ability to provide security based on good governance is crucial for creating a safe environment conducive to socio-economic and political development.

Accordingly, in the northern part of Nigeria and the middle belt, there have been clashes between herders and farmers, which, in recent times, have culminated in more sophisticated clashes between host communities and visitors to their communities. Similarly, organized attacks by men of the underworld have also taken center stage and have been seen to manifest in so many ways, such as the invasion of security bases – military formations, police stations- setting them ablaze. Therefore, one should not be surprised of kidnappings at points that are close to military formations on the highways, as was the case with the kidnap of the erstwhile Prelate of Methodist Church Nigeria, Reverend Dr Samuel Chukwuemeka Kanu Uche and members of his entourage which was reported to have happened few meters away from a military checkpoint on 4 June 2022. It is reported that the clerics were released nearly two days later after paying N100 million to the kidnappers (<https://www.premiumtimesng.com>).

In the same vein, it is worth noting that with the increased use of online platforms, cyber-attacks have also become a thing of concern security-wise. It has become a high-class security challenge. To this end, individual's emails are attacked - wiping away monies in accounts linked to the emails. Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and other social media accounts are hacked and used to commit heinous crimes, as well as swindle people who are oblivious of the hacking incidents. This brings to mind, a recent prosecuted case of murder at the State High Court in Uyo, the Akwa Ibom State capital where one Uduak Akpan was sentenced to death by hanging for the rape and murder of a first class graduate he lured to his hideout via Twitter, in the guise of offering her a job in April, 2021 (<https://www.channelstv.com/>).

The study elicited answers for the research questions as follows:

What were the security challenges most experienced in Nigeria (2015-2023)?

The security challenges mostly experienced in Nigeria include armed robbery in urban and suburban areas, cult activities, especially within areas where there are higher institutions of learning, kidnapping and banditry, secession and agitation for self-determination in certain regions of Nigeria. Also, herders and farmers clashes, and organized attacks by men of the underworld.

The implication of this result aligns with the position of Olofin (2020), who observed that the increasing insecurity in Nigeria is a function of many unchecked chains of factors, adding that they are posed by criminals, terrorists, disgruntled employees, and technical problems. Additionally, they noted that other crimes mostly found in the urban areas included armed robbery, kidnappings, ritual killings, cultism, and human trafficking (Titus & Ita, 2019:8).

What factors promoted security challenges in Nigeria during President Buhari's administration?

Factors which promoted security challenges in Nigeria then included poverty, rising unemployment, failing economy and politics especially in an electioneering period. Lack of awareness of the environment by citizens and negligence by their parents are also included. According to Akinyemi (2021), the collapsing social and political institutions in the country are factors that fuel security challenges in Nigeria. Authors also identify poor economic growth, inequitable distribution of national wealth, political instability and unaccountability as factors driving the rising security challenges obtainable in the Nigerian society.

Which sectors did security challenges affect the most in Nigeria (2015-2023)?

The sectors mostly affected by security challenges in the Nigerian were education (as could be seen in and sampled by the kidnap of school children above); movement for fear of kidnap or arrest, dead as in the South East Sit-at-home order; and without doubt, this portends part of the reasons education is in ruins in Nigeria, as there are no proper security measures taken to protect the lives of pupils and their teachers.

It is worthy of note that the 'economy' could be a cover term for a lot of other events largely affected by insecurity. Meanwhile, Oriazowanlan & Erah (2019:76) opine that the development of micro, small and medium-scale enterprises (MSMEs) is hampered by insecurity. According to the authors, "there are enormous consequences of insecurity on economic development especially, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) that are so volatile, susceptible and easily vulnerable to attack". Also, business owners withdraw from taking calculated risks in new investment opportunities or expanding existing ones, owing to high security challenges lurking in their businesses and lives.

Other scholars, in tandem with the findings of this study, believe that potential investors have been scared away by the rising insecurity in many parts of Nigeria. Ujah & Eboh (2006) submit that insecurity is perceived among business operators in Nigeria as a major constraint to investment. In addition, Nigerians who live abroad are afraid of investing their money back home. Also, Ekwe (2022) believes that security challenges have debilitating effects on socio-economic activities. The author's study focused on Owerri, the Imo State capital, noting that many commercial activities in Nigeria have been curtailed, decreased or liquidated as a result of the country's security difficulties. The opinions of these authors are corroborated by the findings of this present study.

What steps were taken towards managing the security challenges in Nigeria (2015-2023)?

Between 2015 and 2023, the Nigerian government took several steps to address security challenges, including terrorism, banditry, herder- farmer clashes, and separatist agitations. These measures included military operations, policy reforms, and regional collaborations. Here are some key steps taken:

1. Military Operations and Counter-Terrorism Efforts:
 - a. Operation Lafiya Dole (2015-2021): Aimed at countering Boko Haram and ISWAP insurgents in the Northeast.
 - b. Operation Hadin Kai (2021- Present): Replaced Lafiya Dole to enhance counter-terrorism strategies.
 - c. Operation Safe Haven: Addressed communal clashes and banditry in Plateau and Southern Kaduna.

- d. Operation Whirl Punch, Whirl Stroke, and Thunder Strike: Targeted bandits and criminal elements in the North-Central and Northwest. To this end, Nigeria purchased A-29 Super Tucano fighter jets (2021) from the U.S. to boost aerial combat against terrorists. The Nigerian government substantially raised its security budget during this period. Allocations for the security sector rose from N948.01 billion in 2015 to N2.49 trillion in 2022, with the defense budget increasing from N375.49 billion in 2015 to about N1.65 trillion in 2024. Similarly, the police budget saw a significant rise from N327.56 billion in 2015 to N969.65 billion in 2024 (thenationonlineng.net; businessday.ng)

2. Strengthening Law Enforcement and Intelligence:

- a. Community Policing Initiative (2020): The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) introduced community policing to improve local intelligence gathering.
- b. National Centre for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (2021): Established to tackle illegal arms proliferation.
- c. Cyber security and Surveillance Systems: Investments were made in digital surveillance, drone technology, and intelligence-sharing.

3. Efforts Against Banditry and Kidnapping:

- i. Operation Puff Adder: Launched by the police to combat kidnapping and highway crimes.
- ii. Banning of Cattle Grazing in Some States: Some states like Benue and Ekiti enacted anti-open grazing laws to curb farmer-herder conflicts.
- iii. Deployment of Joint Task Forces: Multi-agency task forces were deployed to key conflict zones.

4. Amnesty and Rehabilitation Programmes:

- a. Operation Safe Corridor in 2016 - Present: A rehabilitation programme for repentant Boko Haram fighters.
- b. Negotiations and Prisoner Swaps: Some abductees, including the Chibok and Dapchi girls, were released through negotiated settlements.

5. Regional and International Collaborations:

- i. Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF): Nigeria worked with Chad, Cameroon, and Niger to counter Boko Haram.
- ii. Security Partnerships with the U.S., U.K., and E.U.: These involved intelligence sharing, military training, and equipment support (https://civiliansinconflict.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/CIVIC_Nigeria).

6. Economic and Social Interventions:

- i. National Livestock Transformation Plan in 2018: Proposed to modernize livestock farming to reduce farmer-herder clashes.
- ii. Social Investment Programmes: Aimed at reducing youth unemployment, a key driver of insecurity.

7. Crackdown on Separatist Agitations:

- a. Operation Python Dance (Southeast): Targeted IPOB activities.
- b. Arrest of Nnamdi Kanu in 2021: The IPOB leader was extradited and detained for treasonable charges (Ohazurike, 2020:141).

Unfortunately, despite these efforts, insecurity persisted due to:

- i. Corruption and poor military funding.
- ii. Human rights concerns and extrajudicial actions.
- iii. Resurgence of attacks despite counter-insurgency efforts

What were the results achieved after the said steps were taken towards the goal?

Despite these initiatives, insecurity remained a significant concern. The period saw a rise in armed banditry, mass kidnappings, farmer-herder conflicts, and communal clashes, particularly in states like Plateau and Benue. These issues severely undermined Nigeria's socio-economic development. Public perception reflected these challenges, with crime and insecurity ranking as top concerns among Nigerians. A significant majority reported feeling unsafe in their neighborhoods, indicating a pervasive sense of insecurity. In summary, while Nigeria undertook substantial measures to curb insecurity between 2015 and 2023, the persistence and evolution of security threats (as by the new splinter Boko Haram or ISWAP group called Lukaruwa, meaning deceit in Hausa language) continued to pose significant challenges to the nation's stability and development.

To this end, Oriazowanlan & Erah (2019) posit that despite the government's frantic efforts at stemming the tide of insecurity in Nigeria, the trend has remained both obstinate and unabated. Additionally, Zems (2016) observes that at a high rate, people are ready to kill or be killed for mere tokens as a result of poverty and unemployment.

Discussion of Findings

Findings from the above discussions reveal that security challenges most obtainable in Nigerian society include armed robbery in urban and sub-urban areas, cult activities especially within areas where there are higher institutions of learning, kidnapping and banditry, secession and agitation for self-determination in certain regions of Nigeria. Also, herders and farmers' clashes, and organized attacks by men of the underworld. Others are poverty, rising unemployment, failing economy and politics, especially during electioneering period. Lack of awareness of the environment by citizens and negligence by parents. The sectors most affected by security challenges in Nigerian society are education and the economy. Worthy of commendations are the recent elimination of terrorism leaders in several forests in the northern parts of Nigeria and the help by private security outfits in lessening the burden of state-established and controlled security agencies.

Conclusion

Certainly, unlike the "unknown gunmen" factors which promoted security challenges in Nigeria during President Buhari's administration, the areas mostly affected were education, movement and the economy. Undoubtedly, steps were taken towards management of the ugly situation. However, the results were not good enough for the achievement of the desired goal. Presently, security challenges in Nigeria are exacerbated by the continuous dwindling of the economy for more artificial poverty. Politicians are now known to have weaponized poverty for selfish relevance in politics. Morality is fast dying out with youths getting more involved in fraudulent and ritualistic activities by the so-called "yahoo boys". Corroborating the above observation is a recent WhatsApp video showing a "Yahoo boy" with a Nigerian Police escort/PA. What a paradoxical dimension of security challenge in our 21st century Nigeria! What a mockery of the recent old-new anthem "Nigeria we hail thee".

Recommendations

- i. The elimination of terrorism eggheads in several forests in the northern parts of Nigeria should be continuous till normalcy returns.
- ii. Private security agencies which helped in lessening the burden of state-established and controlled security agencies should be encouraged to do more
- iii. Steps taken towards managing the security challenges in Nigeria should include the training and retraining of security agents, provision of aids to security formations by governors of states, community policing, installation of aerial Closed-circuit television (CCTV cameras, and review of acts establishing several security agencies.
- iv. Programmes aimed at alleviating poverty among youths to reduce high incidences of social vices should not only be created but prioritized.
- v. Specific plans should be made to increase national security by increasing the effectiveness of the police with specific policies such as changing the orientation of the police to improve the quality of service; increase the use of scientific method in policing; introduction of appropriate equipment; capacity building, training and retraining of police and involving community policing; using lethal weapons less often to control crowds; and paying all entitlements of security personnel, especially call and duty allowances, promptly.
- vi. Ultimately, this study subscribes to managing security challenges in Nigeria through a confederation system of governance.

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