

# Democracy and National Security Challenges: The Nigerian Experience

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**Abstract:**-Till the recent past Nigeria has been ruled by several military dictatorships. Upon her return to democratic rule, Nigeria has been faced with several national security challenges. Most of these challenges were not only carried over from the many years of military dictatorship but arose as a result of many years of military dictatorship. It is a truism that the military handed over several pending national security issues to the incoming democratic regime. The present day Nigeria has been able to witness handing over from one democratic regime to another. This paper highlights a few issues of concern in relation to Nigeria's national security. The major task of this paper is to find out whether democratic regimes in Nigeria have been able to maintain Nigeria's national security. With this question in view, the study used primary data in answering the question through survey design and collection of data from relevant states as means of generating data. The results of the study show that Nigeria's democratic government have the capacity and also have been able to maintain Nigeria's national security. More can be done in this area, so recommendations were made towards further enhancement and greater maintenance of Nigerians National Security.

**Keywords:** Democracy, National Security, Militancy, Sectarian Violence and Terrorism

## I. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria returning to democratic rule after many years of military dictatorship and suspension of the Nigerian constitution that usually comes with military dictatorship, and oppression by the military government was finally handed over to a democratically elected government in May 1999. Democracy thrives on equality of citizens, freedom of speech and rule of law. Nigeria's democratic experiences from the days of independence has remained checkered with several instances of military takeover otherwise known as Coup d'états.

For about twenty years now, Nigeria has experienced a relatively stable democratic dispensation as the politicians have tried hard to keep the military out of government power and in the barracks where they rightfully should be. However, several issues have bothered Nigeria's democratic experience. One of them is the nature of Nigeria's democracy. Egwu, (2006) points to the fact that Nigeria's colonial experience plays an overwhelming role in the present Nigerian state, this in turn has affected the nature of politics and by extension the

general quality of democratic governance and Security in Nigeria.

The security of citizens remains the major responsibility of any government thereby national security remains the rallying point of any government since sectors of governance derive strength from the nature of security in existence. National security goes beyond protecting the state from internal and external threats by the military as it involves the improvement in socio-economic life, political, health, environmental, physical, food and security of the people (Omodia and Aliu, 2013). It is not strange to observe that in Nigeria's 58 years of independence, about twenty years in her democratic experience, Nigeria still suffers from poverty, unemployment, corruption and illiteracy as money politics which recently manifested in direct vote buying further contributes to degrading Nigeria's political space, as those in government do everything possible to make sure they remain in power even at the expense of the generality of the people.

Threats to Nigeria's national security emanate from social, political, economic as well as other sources which include poverty, social injustice and self-aggrandizement. In their submission, Okoroafor, Nzenwa, and Oti (2012) note that democracy and national security have the potential to complement each other as well as help society to thrive and grow when practiced well. Security threats in existence today like the Niger Delta crisis, herdsmen/farmer crisis and activities of the Boko Haram terrorist group are issues which have become threats to Nigeria's stability and democracy.

It is against this backdrop that, this paper sets out to observe the relationship between democracy and Nigeria's national security in order to find out whether Nigeria's democratic government has been able to maintain Nigeria's national security. Basically, the major objectives of this paper are:

- (1) To find out whether democratic governments in Nigeria have been able to maintain Nigeria's national security.
- (2) To find out whether there is an existing relationship between democracy and national security in Nigeria.

### Research Question

Have democratic regimes in Nigeria been able to maintain Nigeria's national security?

*Research Proposition*

Democratic regimes could have the capacity of maintaining Nigeria's national security.

## II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK/CLARIFICATIONS

*Democracy*

Historically, democracy was first practiced among the Greeks. It was a government conceived with the idea of being a government for the people by the people. It was to be a government of equal representation allowing citizens to participate with equal opportunity and equal rights (Davies, 1961). Participation, equality and rule of law are very key components of any democracy right from the inception of democracy. According to Onyewuenyi (2000) the Greek philosopher, Aristotle observes that the reason for existence of any government is the provision of conditions conducive to growth and happiness of the citizens thereby, democracy is the rule of the many who work for the best interest of all the members of society.

Democracy is a system of government which emphasizes the mass participation of the people in the affairs of government. It is a government formed by the people themselves through free and fair elections. Democracy in Nigeria seems more theoretical than practical as it seems that candidates emerge to occupy elective positions in selfish manners which in most cases are not the collective agreement of the people but to represent the interest of the few who continually oppress the electorate otherwise known as the masses. This position is agreed by Atim (2014) when he notes that elites out of power see the institutions of liberal democracy particularly party pluralism and elections as the opportunity which they hope will give them what they see as a richly deserved but long delayed access to power. He further defines democracy as a political system where people of a given society have the right and possibility to participate freely as individuals or groups in an election. This trend is very dangerous to Nigeria's democracy as Anza, (2010) in his submission observes that in over a decade of democratic rule, Nigeria's internal security landscape has deteriorated as old security threats have either remained or resumed new worrisome dimensions. In agreement Mohammed and Johnson (2005) posits that Nigeria's democratic experience is yet to foster a meaningful democratic culture beyond past ethno regional cleavages as in spite of great expectations and reawakened and reinforced old forms of political identity thereby breeding conflict. They further observe that Nigeria's post military socio-political formation is built around ethno regionalism which is bad for Nigeria's democracy. This position is buttressed by Ayokai (2010) who notes that the prolonged military dictatorship is important in understanding of the escalation of insecurity in Nigeria as the advent of democracy stops the presence of violence and militarization instituted during the long years of military rule.

*National Security*

The word security originates from the Latin word *sercuro* meaning uneasiness. Basically, security originally means liberation from uneasiness or a situation of peace without having any form of risks or threats (Mesjesz, 2004). Security as a concept has changed from gathering of war weapons and armour as a means of security to issues of human development, poverty reduction, job creation and all that makes human existence comfortable and worth living. Dzurgba (2010) discusses the concept of security from the perspectives of food security domestic security, neighborhood security, social security, international security and diplomatic security, all these attained together collectively can be considered as non-military security. The concept of national security was developed during World War II in the United States. Earlier, it focused on military war power and strength but today it has been modernized as the scope which has been broadened to include non-military that might include among others economic situation and infrastructural development and societal wellbeing (Anyadike, 2013) which is closely related to Okoli and Orinya (2013) who in their opinion note that, national security refers to the safeguard of the citizenry from poverty, disease, ignorance hunger and all forms of territorial and environmental vulnerabilities. It comprehends territorial and non-territorial, military and non-military concerns of national sustainability. Furthermore, Babangida (2011) in his submission highlights the fact that national security has to do with the physical protection and defence of Nigerian citizen's territorial integrity and promotion of prosperity of all Nigerians. While Wehmeier and Ashby (2002) define national security as activities that ensure protection of a country, persons and properties against future threats, dangers, mishaps and all forms of perils.

National security is achieved through the protection of cherished values required for human existence which can be attained only by both military and non-military methods. It is important to note that both methods compliment each other in achieving maximum output as they work together.

## III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

*Frustration and Aggression Theory*

Proponents of this theory are John Dollard and Neal Miller. In an attempt to explain aggression, it is pertinent to take note of the difference between what people feel they want or deserve to what they actually get as well as the expected need satisfaction and the actual need satisfaction. (Davies, 1962). This theory postulates that aggression is the outcome of frustration and that in a situation where the legitimate desires of an individual is denied either directly or by indirect consequences of the structure of society, feelings of disappointment may lead such a person to express his anger through violence directed at those responsible or people directly or indirectly related to them. (Faleti, 2007)

Evidence of violence in Nigeria that has threatened national security in Nigeria's democratic government can be seen in frustration has led to aggression in the Niger Delta crisis after waiting peacefully and agitating for what the people consider as their fair share of oil wealth exploited from their land they take to vandalizing oil pipelines, kidnapping oil workers for ransoms. The north-eastern Nigeria is not left out as terrorist by the Boko haram sect continue to bomb, kidnap and cause havoc in the north east part of the country. Nigeria's democratic government needs to do more in the preservation of national security or these negative situations would not have risen. These groups who feel frustrated in turn causes problems for the Nigerian government who they believe are responsible for their situations, thereby harming innocent citizens since they have no access to government.

#### *Major Security Challenges Existing under Nigeria's Democracy*

Poverty remains a national security challenge in Nigeria. It is a global phenomenon which affects all counties of the world in one way or the other. Nigeria's democratic governments have put in efforts to try to alleviate the conditions of poverty. (Haanya and Samson, 2016). It is pertinent to note that, Nigeria is the most populous nation in Africa, with a population of 154 million people (Ucha, 2012). Though Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is on the rise it has not translated to better living conditions for the citizens as poverty still lingers on with 92% of Nigerians living on less than a dollar per day (NB.S, 2016) Nigeria is also ranked amongst the highest country with prevalent rate of HIV/AIDs. (Haanya and Fada, 2016). Audu (2009) posits that corruption is a national security challenge in Nigeria's democracy as it has resulted to decaying of infrastructure, bad roads poor medical and living conditions. He further notes that corruption as a national security challenge in Nigeria's democracy has directed resources from the poor to the rich thereby increasing the cost of running government to the advantage of the rich and also widening the gap between the rich and the poor which increases the already existing political instability in the nation. To further buttress this national security threat, Ihoni (2010) posits that corruption has contributed to the present stagnation of the drive for development in Nigeria.

On the other hand, Abdullahi and Saka (2007) note that the interplay of colonialism, military rule and poor leadership are central to the poor institutionalization of democratic rule and the abundant societal challenges in Nigeria. Militancy in the Niger Delta has remained a national security threat. This came as a result of tension between foreign oil corporations and the Niger Delta minority groups who felt they were exploited. These groups were basically the Ogoni and the Ijaw (Osungde, 2008). The inability of the government to address the root causes of environmental degradation and lack of basic amenities in the Niger Delta region resulted in agitation by ethnic groups causing militarization the region. With the emergence of conflict in the Niger Delta region, kidnapping became prominent in the South-East zone of Nigeria; these

activities were targeted at prominent residents. The activities of kidnapping escalated since youths were used during elections as political thugs. After these elections they were dumped and left jobless thereby constituting a security threat as kidnapping became a lucrative way of livelihood. Iseolorunkanmi (2007). Oladoymbo (2010) in their submission observes that the Jos crisis known as sectarian violence is a security threat, the attack has claimed several lives with attacks on both Christians and Muslims as several Christians and Muslims alike have lost their lives as a result of the Jos crisis.

Another major security challenge affecting Nigeria's national security under its democratic dispensation is the Boko Haram terrorist group. This terrorist group is a controversial militant group that seeks imposition of Sharia law in northern states and opposes western education, culture and modern science. (Dunia, 2010). Activities of the Boko haram terrorist constitute a serious security challenges to the Nigeria state under a democratic government. The group is involved in killing of innocent citizens, raping of women, kidnapping and bombing across Nigeria most especially in the north-east thereby making Nigeria unsafe for both investors and tourists. (Iseolumkanmi, 2017). Terrorism has cost the Nigerian government a lot of expenditure and slow response towards activating a change in the narrative.

#### IV. MATERIALS AND METHODS

##### *Research Design*

For this research paper survey design was used. It was used, since it is a suitable method of obtaining information from various respondents across board and data to generalize. Poland (2005) notes that survey design is an appropriate means of gathering information under the conditions when the goals of the research call for quantitative and qualitative data especially when the information sought is specific and peculiar to the respondents and the researcher may have a view to likely responses.

##### *Area of Study*

The area of study is few chosen states in north eastern Nigeria. Though the north east is made of Borno, Adamawa, Yobe, Gombe, Bauchi and Taraba, three states were chosen randomly for the purpose of this study they are Borno, Adamawa and Yobe. Borno state population is 4,151,193, [NBS, 2012]. Yobe states population is 2,321,339 [NPC, 2017] while Adamawa state's population is 3,168,100 [LGIDD, 2012].

##### *Population of Study*

The targeted population of this study were residents of this area and the respondents include farmers, politicians, security experts and academics. The total population of the study area for representation was Borno, 4,151,193, Adamawa, 3,168,101 and Yobe 2,321,17 making the total population of the study 9,640,633.

The sample size determination was calculated with a confidence level of 96%. The statistical formula used to determine the sample size of the population of the study was Taro Yamane. This formula is appropriate since the population of the study area is known.

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where;

n= sample size

N= total population

e= acceptable error link or margin error

Thus;

$$n = 9640663$$

$$e = 4\% = 0.04$$

$$(e)^2 = 0.0016$$

$$n = 9640663 \frac{9640663}{1+9640663(0.0016)}$$

$$n = \frac{9640663}{1+15425.0608}$$

$$n = \frac{9640663}{1+15425.0608}$$

$$n = \therefore = 624$$

$$n = 600 \text{ (rounded)}$$

The sample size for the study was rounded to 600 thereby having a rounded figure of 200 each per state for equal representation.

#### *Instrument for Data Collection*

The instrument for data collection used for this research study was a questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised of both open and close ended questions. A total number of 600 questionnaires were administered. However, 577 copies were returned thereby giving a success rate of 97%.

#### *Method of Data Analysis*

The study used simple percentages to answer the question as well as to confirm or disprove the research proposition. They were all computed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

## V. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### *Proposition*

Democratic Regimes could have capacity to maintain Nigeria's national security

(Percentage on Democratic Regimes capacity to maintain Nigeria's National Security)

Responses	Frequency	Percentages %
SA	116	20.1
A	198	34.2
D	150	25.9
SD	115	19.9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>579</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Field Survey, 2018*

The above table reveals that 116 respondents representing (20.1%) strongly agree that civilian regimes have the capacity to maintain Nigeria's national security, while 198 respondents representing (34.2%) also agree that democratic regimes have the capacity to maintain Nigeria's national security. On the other hand, 150 respondents representing (25.9%) disagree that democratic regimes have the capacity to maintain Nigeria's national security and 115 respondents representing (19.9%) strongly disagree that democratic regimes have the capacity to maintain Nigeria's national security. The analysis of the results indicates that 20.1% of the respondents strongly agree while 34.2% agree summing up to 54.3% in the table of simple percentage.

From the table above, it shows empirically that, democratic regimes in Nigeria have the capacity to maintain Nigeria's national security, which by extension implies that there is an existing relationship between democracy and Nigeria's national security.

This result goes with the findings of Usman (2015) who observes that Nigeria's democratic regimes have capacity to maintain Nigeria's national security. He reports that the president sacked service chief who were involved in siphoning funds meant to purchase arms to maintain Nigeria's territorial integrity and to fight the Boko haram terrorist. He further observes that the government has also made efforts to tackle the scourge of corruption in the country which automatically leads to an improved national security status. Eric (2016) agrees with this as he reports that Nigerian democratic regimes have the capacity to maintain Nigeria's national security this is seen in the directive given by the president to move Nigeria's Defence Headquarters to the troubled region of Maiduguri and the deployment of personnel and equipment to the region to improve its military might. Salihu, (2016) observes that democratic regimes in Nigeria have been involved in provision of basic amenities such as social and economic infrastructures, programmes to generate employment, enhance income earnings, increase productivity and equitable distribution of income towards enhancing Nigeria's national security. In the same vein, Okunmadema, (2001) notes that as a result of socio-economic problems, government put in place programmes designed to act positively on the poor and they were categorized into nine specific programmes; agriculture, health, education transportation, housing, finance, industry/manufacturing and nutrition, this also cuts across programmes in water, sanitation

and environment. All these are towards enhancing an improved national security status.

## VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper looked at democracy and Nigeria's national security. This was with the view to ascertaining the relationship between democracy and Nigeria's national security and to find out whether democratic regimes in Nigeria with specific interest in the Buhari led democratic regime has been able to maintain Nigeria's national security. Findings from the paper show that Nigeria's democratic regimes/regime has the capacity to maintain Nigeria's national security.

The study also reveals that there is a very strong existing relationship between democracy and national security in Nigeria. Having revealed the above, the existing recommendations are suggested.

1. A lot of efforts have been made in improving the standard of living of the Nigerian citizens. Some of these projects are short lived and are not sustained, while effects of some are not felt completely due to partial implementation. There is need to make sure these projects are fully implemented, and monitored for sustainability.
2. There is the need for a periodic change of hands and restructuring of the corrupt military national security apparatus where those found wanting or performing at a minimal level should be shown the way out to bring in new capable officers with fresh ideas who are more determined to see success in military national security without bias. Basically, there should be periodical overhaul of the military and security organizations.
3. There should also be periodic unbiased review of chief executives of sensitive organizations that are directly involved with issues concerning national security and the generality of the people at all levels.

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