

Mass Media and the Security Question in Nigeria

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Abstract

The security question in Nigeria today has curiously engendered heated debates as various individuals, groups and organizations have voiced their opinions on what measures to be taken to draw Nigeria out of the seeming doldrums occasioned by incessant and mindless kidnapping and killing of innocent people in cold blood. The situation is made more poignant and doleful when such pogrom is mischievously carried out via organized bombing of churches, mosques, police stations, government buildings, etc., which is quite strange and condemnable in a democratic dispensation. Taking note of the various suggestions already proffered in this regard, the paper intends to critically examine how we can utilize the enormous benefits of mass media for saving the country from its disastrous security problem by dispelling and quelling this gruesome killing that has become endemic in Nigeria. In doing this, the paper adopts the descriptive method and utilizes the agenda-setting theory. The choice of mass media is predicated upon the overweening ambition that they have overwhelming power to address this all-important national issue by keeping surveillance and correlating the environment in their watchdog function. But through their overarching function of ensuring the dissemination of effective communication, they are better placed to assist the populace to make informed decisions on how to evade further molestations.

Key words: *Mass media, Nigeria, national security, security question*

Introduction

One of the major timeless problems confronting Nigeria as a nation, as well as all nations worldwide, is insecurity. It hardly needs to be said that there is high rate of insecurity problem bedevilling the socio-economic, religious, and political life of the populace in Nigeria. According to Ngonso and Ekhareafu (2015, p. 149),

In many parts of the country, the citizens have different stories to tell about the level of threat to their lives by different violent groups. In the six geopolitical zones of the country, it seems obvious that violence, threats of violence and insecurity have become the lots of people.

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 challenges 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 employing plain cloth Israeli security experts and police guards, as well as using closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras, bullet-proof jackets, ballistic vests,

ballistic helmets, car locators among other security products and services. As Okereocha (2011, p. 32) rightly remarked,

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.

It is agonizing to note that many political office holders, religious and traditional leaders, legal and medical practitioners, college of academic professors, political pundits, social critics, stakeholders, concerned students, the police and military men and other security agencies, among others, have all met and even discussed vigorously the painful and provoking topic of national security in the face of incessant mayhem and wanton spilling of blood in the country especially by the dreaded members of the *Boko Haram*, yet the solution to the protracted problem is still at bay. The burning question is: Has it been proven that the bloodthirsty members of the *Boko Haram* sect, the infamous armed robbers, the notorious hired assassins, child-traffickers, ritual killers, and the kidnappers and their like have become invulnerable and invincible such that they may be allowed to throw Nigeria into pitiful chaos?

Under this hapless situation, we may not be considered as putting our oar in if only to reiterate the obvious fact that the measures taken to address the security question in Nigeria, especially the *Boko Haram* insurgencies, remain shaky and insipid to be profitable enough to our nascent democracy in ameliorating, if not nipping in the bud specially, the activities of the members of the much hated *Boko Haram* sect. Quite expectedly, several efforts have been made and still being made to quell the problem (though not with much success) as the members of the extremist group have been resistant and obdurate to perpetrate their mischievous activities at almost every twist and turn (with least provocation) as the conscientious fight against them rages.

Besides, several reported cases of kidnapping, child trafficking, ritual killing, and hired assassination go to shamefully expose the incompetency, or rather inability, of our security outfit to curb these societal ills that turn the country into an almost inhabitable place. Added to these societal ills is the spate of armed robbery attack on almost daily basis that sends some people to their early grave while some valuable property is irretrievably lost.

However, it should be noted that the idea of using brute force by mere use of arms in addressing the contemporary national security challenges, especially the case of *Boko Haram* insurgency, has been

condemned as *faux pas*, and most people are of the opinion that concerted dialogue and campaign would have properly been a reasonable panacea, and perhaps a lasting solution. This is where the ancillary function of mass media is copiously needed. Thus, this dialogue can be possible if the mass media are fully and conscientiously utilized in gap-bridging between the government and the aggrieved persons and groups, who have resolved to perpetrate to-do and mayhem. But as it stands, it is regrettable that the devil has been let loose by pitiable flogging and so, it must growl. It would even seem that such brute force has rather made the members of the unholy sect to be furiously up in arms. This attitude would have deeply informed the security agencies that such ill-fated security problem should not be redressed by mere marching arms with arms, which invariably would result to a showdown, giving rise to full-blown attempt at precipitating religious violence (*Jihad*) in the country.

Surely, at this time we are enshrining and consolidating our democratic dispensation, not many Nigerians would nod in full acquiescence to such a security measure that vigorously promotes and emphasizes the wholesale use of arms. That is why the underlying colloquial expression, or rather word, in the current political circle has always been "caution." Perhaps, it might even be why many people had alleged that the former president, Dr. Goodluck Ebele

Jonathan was dull in handling the security question in Nigeria as he acted like a bull in a China shop. For instance, Adeyemi (2011, p. 48) alluded to the Fabian approach adopted by ex-President Jonathan when he elegantly remarked, "The President is yet to demonstrate the sense of urgency in his actions. He is driving the country on a low speed."

In contrast to ex-President Jonathan's mode of operation, President Muhammadu Buhari appears to be giving the deep impression that *Boko Haram* has almost been conquered, and that Chibok girls are being recovered in great number. Nevertheless, the evidence to this mountainous claim is yet to be confirmed, since the gory stories about the Nigerian soldiers leaves us in quick doubt as to whether his propaganda machinery has not failed in that the government's December 31, 2015 deadline for stamping out the insurgency of the *Boko Haram* sect seemed to have been met with little success. That was why in a show of defiance, he ordered that the soldiers should shoot endlessly in order to restore the status quo ante. As if that was not enough, he also replaced the service chiefs and moved the centre of the operations to Maiduguri. According to Paden (2016, p. 128),

From outward appearances, the major elements of the Buhari strategy were as follows: strengthen credible military and political leadership at all levels;

restore morale and historical support to the troops, including improving the welfare of the troops and their families; regain and hold all lost territory; provide more effective countermeasures against lone-wolf suicide bombers by improving grassroots intelligence; partner with regional and international allies and secure international resources; and begin the process of policy planning for reconstruction in the devastated areas of the northeast.

In lieu of the present security quagmire in the country, especially the scourge of the *Boko Haram* sect, we have chosen to address the problem by paying deep recourse to mass media and not to any particular type or aspect of mass media. The understanding is that each of them cannot be neglected or ignored in the quest for security in Nigeria considering their specific impact. This informed the decision to use the generic term "mass media." This paper is, therefore an attempt to x-ray the best possible measures to be taken to address the security question by taking cognisance of the fact of non-linear historico-political development of Nigeria, which has made it somehow difficult to solely rely on the use of arms. The paper is not, in any way, alluding to or insinuating that mass media have never been called into question, but that the procedures followed were not

properly supported with deep dialogical and thoroughgoing investigative and interpretative reporting, with the hope of exposing the real and perceived causes of insecurity in Nigeria and put an end to them.

Methodology

The paper adopted a descriptive research method. This method concerns itself with the gathering and analyzing of the relevant data for the sole aim of giving intelligent and intelligible description and interpretation of existing events in order to achieve the desired goal of the write-up.

Conceptual Analysis

Mass Media

We have chosen to give a panoramic definition of mass media as “all the communication channels used in disseminating information to a large mixed audience with the aid of technology” (Agudosy, 2010, p. 3). According to Hanson (2005, p. 10), they are simply “technological tools used to transmit the messages of mass communication.” These two definitions hint on the major characteristics of mass media: the modes of transmission that are technologically supported, which make the message to be of massive nature, hence mass communication; the messages that are sufficiently large; the fact that the audience is large, amorphous, heterogeneous, and

unlimited, and colloquially tagged “to whom it may concern.”

It is worthy of note that the major mass media are print (including books, magazines, journals, newspapers), film (principally commercial motion pictures), broadcasting (essentially radio and television, but also other associated forms such as cable and radio cassettes), the display media (billboards, posters, vehicle exteriors), mobile phones, and the Internet. The increasing use of the new media, which invariably form part of the mass media, enables us to engage in many mass media services such as email, websites, blogging, etc.

Security Question

Security question is a wide concept that has received a plethora of interpretations from scholars from various quarters, and it is a topical issue in the context of national security, which is “the protection or safety of a country’s secrets and its citizens” (Macmillan Dictionary, 2009, online). It covers the political, socio-economic, cultural, religious, environmental, healthful issues, and many other aspects of our being in the world. This idea is corroborated by Oladele (2012, p. 1) when he avers,

In Nigeria today, the security question is very complex and it varies from zone to zone, state to state and community to community. As such, there are peculiar economic, cultural, and socio-political

implications in security matters, which should be duly handled by those concerned in authority.

Indeed, security question in Nigeria borders on any issue that concerns, or is interiorly connected to, the security of Nigeria as a nation state, but, as a matter of fact, we commonly talk about political security, economic security, environmental security, health security, food security, personal security, etc. It is based on this taxonomy that we often consider them generally as national security when we want to refer to issues bordering on our nation, such as natural disaster, and events causing severe environmental damage to the populace.

It is remarkable to note that security question centres on man. Perhaps, that is why some scholars emphasize “human” security as against “national” security. In their view, the proper referent for security should be the individual rather than the state. Their contention, which we are heavily tempted to accept, is that people-centred view of security is necessary and will invariably give rise to regional, national, and global stability instead of the other way round. Notably, it is this foreseeable mistake of not giving due consideration to “human” security that has opened the floodgate of terrorism and an almost irresistible conflict in Nigeria with their concomitant economic retardation and political strangulation. As Nnoli (2006, p. 60) adroitly

remarks, “Such conflict causes havoc to political and economic activities. It turns people’s attention from creative production to creative destruction.”

Added to this grave oversight in not giving precedence to human security, is also the undue emphasis and propagation of pretentious and compensatory politics practised by our political office holders, who assign political posts or positions to persons who are incompetent to handle such offices. Unfortunately, this is patently and impudently done at the expense of persons who are qualified and better placed to handle matters pertaining to those offices. This also explains why there is exponential rise in internal violent conflicts like the scourge of *Boko Haram*, the herdsmen fighting with local farm communities, inter-communal conflicts, political kidnapping, ritual killing, human trafficking, assassination, political thuggery, and so on.

Truly, the security question is not resolved by increased incidences of firing political officials like the infamous sack of National Security Adviser (NSA), General Owoeye Azazi and the Minister of Defence, Dr Bello Haliru Mohammed (with flimsy reasons) in order to give the impression that ex-President Goodluck Jonathan was really serious in tackling security question in Nigeria. What a farce! The consciousness of the urgent need for security would have informed ex-President Jonathan, for instance, of the need for immediate appointment of a new Minister of Defence, but the

office was left vacant for a couple of weeks before a new appointment came. Similarly, the sack of NSA, Sambo Dasuki on grounds of misappropriation of funds and the recent appointment of Major-General Babagana Monguno (rtd) has not made much difference as issues of security still stir us in the face despite profound pledges to dislodge the *Boko Haram* group.

As a result of much discussion on the security question, some concepts like security issue, security crisis, security problem, security matter and security quagmire have been used as convenient synonyms for security question. Owing to frequent discourse also on security question, many perturbing issues have equally been raised by the mass media, which are thought to be possible reasons for the grievances on the part of the concerned populace as well as escalating the pockets of conflicts and clashes by some aggrieved sectarian groups. Some of them are frequent practice of harassing and/or arresting and detaining people; callous and pitiable practice of extra-judicial killing; curious lack of social security; unemployment compensation; virtually no well equipped health services; shaky insurance policy and pension schemes; no educational (academic) scholarship; no continuity of policy making and implementation; no agricultural loan to rural farmers; failure in continuous generation and supply of power; multiple dilapidated road networks, which are rather death

traps; ill-structuring of markets; and white elephant projects left for younger generations to behold as monumental symbols of their failure to perform civilly with probity, which serve as hideouts for hoodlums. It is little wonder Adeyemi (2011, p. 48) perspicuously observed,

The Nigerian economy has in the past few years been wobbling under the weight of poor infrastructure. Youth unemployment is at its highest peak while prices of goods, especially food items, are beyond the reach of the average Nigerian. Worst still, the state of insecurity in the nation is almost approaching an alarming level.

It is not saying too much to aver that these factors mentioned above, and many others, have constituted the bull point for incessant agitation and relapsing to criminal activities by some people at any slight provocation, which invariably generate the sense of insecurity.

Theoretical Framework

The theory that guides this study is *agenda-setting theory*. *Agenda-setting theory*, or the phrase “agenda-setting function of the mass media”, as DeFleur (2010, p. 161) entitled it, was coined by McCombs and Shaw (1972, 1993) to describe their seminal study, in which they considered the relationship of media emphasis and the audience perception of the message in

the context of political campaign. Originally, it was called *agenda-setting hypothesis*, but with increasing researches in this phenomenon of media emphasis and audience beliefs, it graduated to being tagged *agenda-setting theory* (DeFleur, 2010, p. 161). The core idea of this theory, as McQuail (2005, p. 512) remarks, "is that the news media indicate to the public what the main issues of the day are and this is reflected in what the public perceives as the main issues." Rodman (2006, p. 459) wholly agrees with this assertion when he says, "The amount of attention given to an issue in the media affects the level of importance the public assigns to that issue." Heath and Byrant (1992, p. 279) conceive it as the "creation of public awareness and concern of salient issues by the news media." This is the case with security question in Nigeria which has been flooded in the mass media to the extent that there is hardly any day that passes without our having anything to discuss on the security question in Nigeria.

In adopting the *agenda-setting theory*, the researcher believes that it is the mass media that determine what goes later to become public opinion. This is because, as even Hanson (2005, p. 383) adroitly observes, "Issues that are portrayed as important in the news media become important to the public – that is, that the media set the agenda for public debate." As such, the frequent repetition of a message in the mass media obviously will increase the number of people learning the

message. When this happens, the audience will virtually tend to give or attach importance to the issues to the degree of the attention given to the issues. As McLeod, Becker and Byrnes (1974) cited in DeFleur and Dennis (1988, p. 487) opined, "An audience member ... will adjust his or her perception of the importance of issues in the direction corresponding to those issues in the medium used."

Thus, the frequent occurrence of criminal activities in Nigeria makes the mass media to copiously report such activities, which again are discussed by the audience in the society. It is even in this context that we can appreciate the fact that the mass media mirror the Nigerian society. Consequently, there is no doubt that the degree to which the security issues are discussed is virtually the degree in which such insecurity activities are perpetrated in the society, making the mass media to give their focus on them to the extent that such issues become salient in the public agenda. Dearing and Roggers (1996, p. 192) corroborated this idea when they opined that the "position of an issue on the media agenda importantly determines that issue's salience in the public agenda." That is why the mass media have been concerned with the security question in Nigeria, and have been addressing how the government should handle it in order to reduce the sense of insecurity frequently besetting our minds and modifying our social relations. This entails educating our leaders to avoid

their toeing the wrong path in resolving the security issue, which has become an intolerable thorn in our flesh.

The mass media have this exclusive prerogative because therein reside the power of contemporaneously disseminating information to a large audience, and information, as we all know, is a potent force in changing people's behaviour. So the watchdog perspective of the mass media, as Curran (2005, p. 129) observes, is not just about protecting the public by preventing those with power from overstepping the mark, but the mass media in a more expansive way, as agencies of information and debate, facilitate the development programmes of the government by ensuring in the proper functioning of democracy.

Causes of Insecurity in Nigeria

It is not an easy project to name a particular factor as the main or root cause of insecurity in Nigeria. The reason for this is that some of the factors scholars regard as the root causes are rather mere excrescences emanating from other basic causes. There are, however, remote and proximate causes of insecurity, which have been bringing about so much fuss on security question in Nigeria.

The remote cause of insecurity in Nigeria derives from the fact that Nigeria is a nation with multi-ethnic and religious groups, and does not practise unitary system of government

like Tanzania, Côte d'Ivoire, Mozambique, Zambia and many other Africa nations. This factor corresponds with the first category of what Ikejiani-Clark (2000, p. 1) calls the "two interlocking truths, which should be considered if there would be political, social, and economic development in Nigeria." The first truth is that "Nigeria is the home of many nationalities or ethnic groups." The second truth is that "Nigeria has been in crisis position since independence, chiefly as a result of conflicts emanating from ethnicity or the forces of reproductive symbolism because of the road not taken." According to Ikejiani and Ikejiani (1986, p. 18),

The failure to recognize the fundamental reality of ethnicity in the creation of states in Nigeria has been the basis of inner tensions, which have rocked the social, economic and political stability of the country and will continue to do so if no correction is made to right it.

As such, the infamous massacres of people (especially the Igbo people in the North) in *Boko Haram* pogroms usually send signals that the embryonic sentiment of unity, which has hitherto been projected, is but a false facade, a farce, a stratagem.

Thus, it should be noted that the multi-national characteristics of Nigeria have always been the cause of insecurity, and of course, a "tolerable curse" since its independence, which

we have ignored in the manifest pretence that it pays more to unite than existing separately. This, of course, has weakened the political will and, therefore, social and economic development of Nigeria. Remarkably enough, the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) worsens the possibility of separating the ethnic entities in Nigeria by its indissolubility clause, as enshrined in the Preamble, which reads:

We the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, having firmly and solemnly resolved to live in unity and harmony as one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign nation under God dedicated to the promotion of inter-African solidarity, world peace, international co-operation and understanding ... and welfare of all persons in our country on the principles of freedom, equality, and justice, and for the purpose of consolidating the unity of our people ... do hereby ... give to ourselves the following constitution.

A cursory look at the Preamble of the Constitution stated above evidently reveals that there is a gross failure to indicate who the “we” and “people” are; whether the “we” envelopes the Igbos, Yorubas, Hausas, Kanuris, Ibibios, Ijaws, and other ethnic groups in Nigeria. If so, is their welfare being considered “on the principles of freedom, equality and

justice?” *Das ist die Frage*. Surely, the Constitution worsens the matter all the more by the superlative and royal clause “welfare of all persons in our country.” What kind of welfare does the Constitution envisage or make provision for? Until this matter is made perspicuous to our sheer understanding, we cannot pretend that there will ever be peaceful co-existence of all the ethnic entities making up the country. This explains, for instance, why the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) feel marginalized (and are actually marginalized), in the scheme of things, and have been zealously craving to be emancipated from this forced, cursed, unequal and unjust political entity called “Nigeria.”

We have to accept the truth that Nigeria is not a nation state as such, a fact which Ikejiani-Clark (2000, p. 1) perspicuously observed when she said,

Nigeria is not a nation state in the traditionally accepted sense of the word “nation.” The institutions through which Nigerian administration functions are nearly all foreign importations. Nigerian frontiers are legacies of colonial regime and even the English language used in administration and government is not a language used in most homes.

It is little wonder the members of the dreaded *Boko Haram* sect have

been expressing grievances over the use of foreign languages (the English language, and sometimes the French language), hence their condemnation and sheer rejection of western education with its penumbral characteristics. Thus, according to Abolurin (2015, p. 104), “The denunciation of western education by the sect analytically represents a position, and the interest behind the position is the strict observance of Sharia legal code in some Northern states.”

Though the various ethnic groups as nations have been managing to exist together (sometimes, fighting like cat and dog), our leaders seem to have neglected the fact that each of these groups, as a nation, has its rights and should be given a fair share of the resources of the country. Here, we recall the pathetic case of the people of Niger-Delta Region in their well-pronounced outfit “Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta” (MEND), who have been agitating and engaging in violence and, even, spearheaded the call for true federalism or fiscal federation, otherwise known as “resource control.” According to Anibueze (2009, p. 18), “This is a call for an amendment of the 1999 Constitution which reserves 13 percent of the federation account to each state from which a natural resource is derived and this they condemn as small.”

So, the existence of linguistic and cultural divisions pose the single greatest internal political challenge to

Nigeria, making it difficult to sustain a national unity. No doubt, that is why there has been continual rivalry among various ethnic and religious groupings. According to Nwosu (1993, p. 94), “such rivalry, which is embedded in our riotous situation and the forced idea of maintaining or preserving the unity of the country (as defined by the colonialists) gave birth to the concept of ‘unity in diversity.’” Although there is an appearance of unity (a façade of unity), such unity, as experience currently shows, is forcefully and externally imposed – if you like, a false amalgamation. It was mere surrender to the major ethnic political entities without consideration like the biblical Gibeonites who having been informed that the Lord had promised their land to the children of Israel, voluntarily submitted, out of fear, to Joshua.

Thus, this obvious neglect of the much-touted national question, which remotely generate the security question in Nigeria, is what Ikejiani-Clark (2000, p. 1) referred to as “the road not taken.” This national question, according to Ikejiani and Ikejiani (1986, p. 3), borders on “how the various ethnic/national groups can live together peacefully and harmoniously within a larger geographical unit called Nigeria under a central political authority.” Incidentally, the importation of colonial heritage, which Ikejiani-Clark (2000) noted erenow, was also expressed by Nnoli (1978, p. 110) when he averred,

The truth of the matter is that, as in many other spheres of national life, Nigerians have merely followed in the footsteps of their erstwhile colonial masters without fully appreciating the latter's motives, or they have appropriated the colonial heritage for their own personal and class interests.

Coming to the proximate causes of insecurity in Nigeria, many scholars have tried to suggest that the probable causes of the spate of insecurity in the country are as a result of poverty, ignorance, economic banditry and deprivation, the scourge of mass unemployment, political intimidation via thuggery, undue exercise of the power of incumbency, among others. As none of these factors can offer conclusive explanation as to why the nation is frequently in disastrous commotion, each of these factors is considered a potent force, giving rise to the state of topsy-turveydom in Nigeria.

Fayemi and Daudu in Oladipo (2012, online) "traced the current state of insecurity and under-development of Nigeria to the inefficiency of their laws." According to Fayemi in Oladipo (2012, online), "insecurity persists because the laws have been rendered inactive, giving room for impunity to take the place of the law." A very good example here is the recent National Universities Commission's (NUC) introduction of Arabic language as one of the entry

prerequisites for courses in all Nigerian universities as well as Arabic language as General Studies (GS) Course and requirement in all universities in Nigeria. Added to this mind-boggling violation of our laws is the NUC requirement/prerequisite of Arabic for Management Courses such as Accounting, Business Studies etc. This is an aberration, to say the least, for Arabic language has nothing to do with Accounting Banking and Finance, etc, but one cannot read the Quran in its pure and original state without learning the Arabic language. Hence, it breaches S. 10 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (as amended) that specifies that "the Government of the Federation or of a State shall not adopt any religion as State Religion." So, in allowing that Christians (in whatever denominations) should be subjected to study Arabic language without a window of option, is a breach of their freedom from discrimination, which is covered by Section 38, Subsection. (1), (2), and (3) of the said Constitution.

However, ex-President Jonathan opined that "the root cause of the current malaise bothers [sic] on weak moral foundation, poverty, dirty politics, poor governance, unemployment, religious intolerance and extremism" (Akinwumi, Shittu, Negedu, King, and Macauley, 2012, p. 2). Though these items mentioned above fall within the proximate causes of insecurity in Nigeria, it is obvious that they are the remnants of remote

causes, which pervade this country, making it to be almost ungovernable.

Again, corruption, as “an important negative factor in economic development” (Goldstein, 2003, p. 511), is one the causes of insecurity in Nigeria. The gap between the haves and the have-nots has incessantly widened so that some individuals or groups have, from time to time, agitated for their fair share of the allocation of resources. Hence, the marginalization of the minorities, wherever they are found in the country, has given room for internal conflicts, hence the emergency of the political *Boko Haram* sect.

Resolving the National Security Question

It is the supposition of the paper to address the national security question by examining the irreplaceable functions and impact of the mass media, which when properly adopted, will go a long way in bringing Nigeria to her hopeful paradise. But it must be quickly pointed out as Miller (1968, p. 105) poignantly observed, that we are in

a world of insecurity – insecurity in the face of rapid change, insecurity in the wake of vast revolution, insecurity in the inevitable new forms of the church, insecurity in the shifting orders of belief and authority, insecurity in the maze of new forms, new hopes, new visions, and we dare to add, insecurity in the face of sheer

and blatant irresponsibility on the part of our political officeholders by their not providing social amenities for the well being of Nigerians.

The leading political class thought that the application of force would bring a near solution to the problem, but evidence is overwhelming to indicate that such imperial proposal has not only woefully failed but has also received condemnable verbiage from several quarters. Sani, according to Omipidan and Alabelewe (2011, p. 9), warned that “no amount of force can bring down *Boko Haram*.” It is little wonder ex-President Jonathan, according to Bamdele, Orji and Ojo (2012, p. 5), of late maintained that “he preferred to talk with members of the group (*Boko Haram*) to using force.” What we want is not a momentary solution, for we have had a fair share of them, but rather true solution, or what may be colloquially rolled up in the phrase “a sure solution.” That is why we feel that mass media will be a welcome panacea in this issue that is of national interest.

Mass Media and the Quest for Security: Any Way Out

It is the basic function of mass media to help in furthering modernization or other national goals and interests like addressing the issue of insecurity in Nigeria and bringing the problem to a halt thereby foster and “support objectives such as national unity,

stability and cultural integrity” (Dominick, 2002, p. 469). The fact that mass media have uncontrollable influence in changing the political, social, and cultural institutions makes it even possible for them to provide arrays of information that will help to change the insecurity situation in Nigeria. This is possible because mass media, as Biagi (2003, p. 33) remarks, mirror the society and make input in policy formulation and implementation. They go beyond this stage to monitor the implementation of the policy for the cooperative existence of the poor masses.

The role of mass media in resolving the spate of insecurity in Nigeria should not be undermined. In the first place, it should be noted that the essence of the mass media is for communication in its deepest (massive) form. Communication of information has its undeniable impact on the people, and as MacBride (1980, p. 180) rightly notes, “Communication, in the broadest sense, is an instrument of social change. Once a problem is recognised and understood, progress towards a solution can begin.” Here also, persuasive communication is needed, and as Rivers and Schramm (1969, p. 22) remarked, “To accomplish any substantial change, persuasion must control a psychological dynamics by which the receiver will, in effect, change himself.” It is, therefore, wrong and condemnable to accuse the mass media in Nigeria under the threat of acts of violence or terrorism, of

inciting and creating a climate of fear in order trigger off massive reflex demand for security. Even the very fact that the mass media have the power to spread fear is an indication that they have equally the power to salvage the problem of insecurity in Nigeria by pointing avenues and opportunities, attacking indifferences or distribution, and above all, influence the climate of opinion by its agenda-setting role, giving rise to the mobilization of public opinion with a view to coming up with positive results. Hence, in doing this, the informational role of the mass media is undeniable and of course, should be encouraged.

As the primary function of the mass media is always to inform the public of significant facts, however unpleasant or disturbing they may be, like the devilish *Boko Haram* insurgency, it may not be of benefit for them to be facetious, since we need not be informed umpteen times to know that “we live, alas, in an age” as MacBride (1980, p. 177) aptly notes, “stained by cruelty, torture, conflict and violence.”

Besides, it would be a disservice to Nigerians, and, in fact, a grave mistake to abandon this task of informing and alerting public opinion through their agenda setting, which have proved effective enough in resolving many national problems. What is more; no matter the feeling of some people that it is idle to consider how the mass media can modify attitudes and the value systems, it is

evident that their role in this regard is proven when they create greater public awareness and mutual understanding among ethnic groups, institution etc., with the prospect for peace and security in Nigeria.

There is no doubt that human rights are extremely violated in Nigeria. As such, there cannot, and can never be security if nothing is done to remedy such aberrations. If it is often said (and rightly so) that the police and other security agencies, the judiciary and others connected to human rights violations in Nigeria have virtually failed, and that our system is corrupt and rotten, it is the bounden duty of the mass media, and, indeed, their first task, "to help to make human right a reality by ensuring that everyone enjoys the right to know what his rights are" (MacBride, 1980, p.181). It is the failure of the police to respect human rights (or do I say, the dereliction of duty, callousness, and all that) that led to the extra-judicial killing of Muhammed Yusuf, the pioneer leader of the *Boko Haram* sect, which made the members of the *Boko Haram* sect to be het up, and this brought about the first havoc by the sect in Nigeria in 2009. He was not charged to court much less given the opportunity to defend himself. Of course, the mass media (not even the judiciary) more than any other institution in Nigeria, sternly condemned such unpalatable justice. Such extra-judicial killing is quite offensive not only to our human sensibility but also to our noble

judiciary, yet nothing has been done to give justice its face.

Without being prolix, it is worthy of note that some people whose relatives have been callously and brutally killed either by the police or members of the *Boko Haram* in the Northern part of Nigeria have vowed to engage in criminal activities via taking revenge by taking laws into their hands. As painful and regretful as it is, no adequate compensatory packages were given to the families whose relatives were massacred in such repeated pogroms, yet it is spuriously believed that the best way of assuring security is by incessantly engaging in senseless attack of the members of the *Boko Haram* sect. That is why the mass media should lay bare and have been laying bare such human rights violations. If the mass media engaged and still engage in total condemnation and repudiation of apartheid in South Africa where the political system is built on the denial of human rights to a majority of the population on the basis of racial discrimination and even conceive such practice as an ongoing task, the mass media in Nigeria should equally borrow a leaf in this regard in the face of the menace of the faceless members of *Boko Haram* sect. They must make it evidently certain that beyond ethnic, cultural and religious differences, every person is a human being, and that the right to life is, beyond refutation, inviolable and inalienable.

Added to the roles the mass media would play to bring a halt to the

criminal activities of the extremist religious sect, *Boko Haram*, is by making concerted effort in the education of the populace. Incidentally, Oladele (2012, p. 1) primarily enumerates education as one of the factors that will guarantee security in Nigeria: "Ultimately, what will guarantee security in our country and communities are education, gainful employment, food security, empowerment of the people. Not to provide all this will make the country vulnerable and insecure." This having been said, it devolves on our political office holders to prove by their action, not their words that insecurity problem will be tackled by providing the social amenities and create a sense of belonging to an average Nigerian.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The researcher's attempt in this discourse has been focused on how the mass media would assist in reducing to the barest minimum the criminal activities in Nigeria, which keep us on edge because of our painful feeling of insecurity in Nigeria. In acknowledging the overwhelming importance of the mass media in acting as catalysts in the prospect of resolving the security question in Nigeria, it should be noted that no nation is rid of security problems. Hence, security question is part and parcel of what every nation – big or small – has to contend with. Why it appears that Nigeria has experienced the worst kind of security problems, unknown to its history, is because of the gross and

brutal damage done to our political system in which our various leaders – present and past – have merely ignored, instead of paying curious attention to our ugly and deteriorating situation, and the fact that the poor masses are not fairly treated in the scheme of things.

Again, the security question points to the sheer neglect of our need to give education its pristine position in modifying behaviour. If education is faithfully imbibed, not necessarily as a profitable ticket of employment or gaining a political position, it will guide the behaviour of the political office holders in properly making objective decisions and steering the affairs of the nation in the right direction.

Lastly, differences underlying our traditional cultures should be deemphasised and similarities emphasised. This is what the mass media have been doing and should be encouraged all the more in order to bring about peaceful co-existence among the various ethnic groups.

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