A Historical Perspective of Security in Nigeria: Meaning and Components.

Akombo I. E. & Nyuni Yakubu

Abstract

The concept of security in the Nigerian context, and possibly, across the globe, incorporates diverse variables. The variables, put together, guarantee security of life and property, though subject to how adequate the variables are properly sustained. This paper discusses what constitutes the concept of security in the general context. It goes further to identify the various components of security in the Nigerian perspective. It equally identifies the variables embedded in each of the components of security. A brief attempt has also been made to identify some agencies and programmes established by successive Nigerian regimes to guarantee security of life and property of the citizens. The paper laments that, due to the deficiencies in the sustenance of most of the agencies and programmes, the issue of insecurity has continued to be one of the major threats to life and property in Nigeria. The authors utilized the historical research methodology for data collection cutting across mostly primary and secondary sources.

Key words: *Security, Nigeria, Components, Perspective*

Akombo I. E.
Department of History and Diplomatic Studies,
Taraba State University, Jalingo.
08030403902
akomboelijah@gmail.com

Nyuni Yakubu
Department of History and Diplomatic Studies,
Taraba State University, Jalingo.
uniyakubu@gmail.com
08082120055

Introduction

This article discusses what constitute the concept of security and its components in the Nigerian context. Efforts have been made in the article to analyze the meaning and components of security in the Nigerian context. Based on several attempts by scholars to define what the concept *security* stands for, the authors are of the opinion that there is no single universally accepted definition for the concept. Rather, while each scholar defines the concept based on his or her perspective or understanding of the concept, each society does so in the context of its value system and norms.

Nonetheless, no matter the diversity of definitions for the concept, there seems to be a common thread that runs through almost every definition, which is the absence of hostility. This implies that the term "security" is relative in its interpretation in the sense that what a certain community may consider as appreciable peace or security, another may not. Generally, however, irrespective of the relativity in its definitions, the concept has to do with an atmosphere of calmness or peace, as elaborated in this discourse.

Aside the issue of definition of the term "security", the paper analyses the various components of security as the guarantee for meaningful security. For an elaborate understanding, the authors have isolated each of the components in a separate sub topic for detailed analysis. Among other things, the authors have tried to identify the variables of each of the components as the *"guarantors"* for the attainment of meaningful peace or security as elaborated elsewhere in the paper.

Meaning of Security

There is no water-tight definition of what security is or is not. The definition varies according to the context and norm underlying its definition. It also has to do with individual societies based on specific norms, values and aspirations; a violation of any which is considered by such a society as insecurity.

However, no matter the variety of definitions based on individual societies and individuals, the general understanding of the concept of security implies safety or absence of threats to acquired societal values, life and property. It equally entails freedom from danger to life and property and the presence of a favourable atmosphere for the people to pursue their legitimate interests within the society (Sen, 1999; Bassey 2004; Amobighe, 1990).

Components of Security

The foregoing points to the fact that any comprehensive definition of what security broadly means must incorporate certain basic components. These components, put together, give us a more concise, but broad, picture of what security really implies. The components are as follows: national security, human security, food security, economic security, environmental security, job security, social security (including access to education and absence of criminal and anti-social conduct, etc).

To be able to guarantee the foregoing components of security, successive Nigerian governments have evolved a number of agencies, programmes and schemes, right from the colonial era, among which include the Armed Forces, the Police Force, Correctional Services (Prisons Service), Immigration, Custom Service, Human Rights Commission, ICPC, EFCC, DSS, NDE, DIFFRI, River Basin Development Authorities, UPE, Austerity Measures, NEPAD, MDGs, etc. While some of these agencies, programmes and schemes serve specific components of security, some cut across many components such as the Armed Forces and the Police Force. Tables 1 & 2 below represent components of security and security agencies and programmes in the Nigerian context respectively.

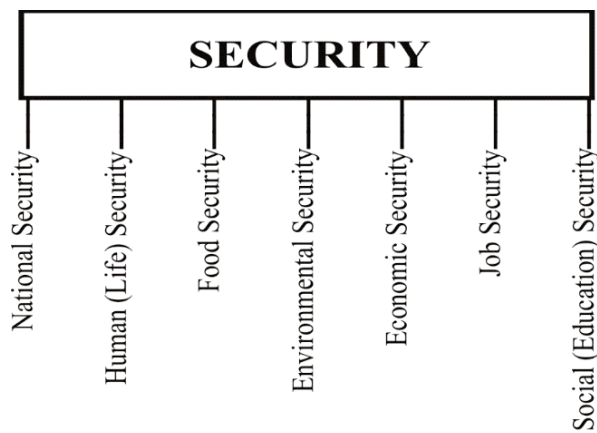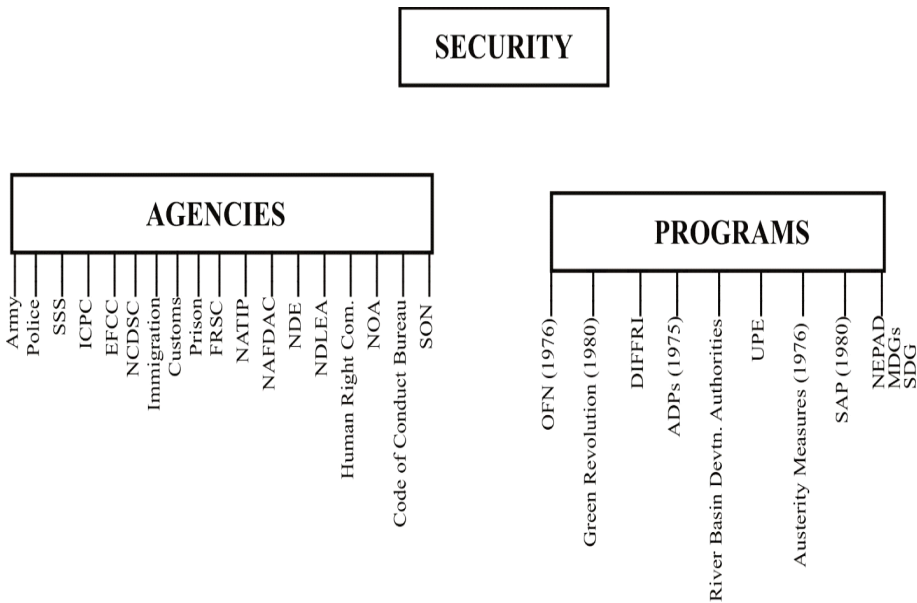**Table I: Organogram of Components of Security in Nigeria**

Table 2: Organogram of Security Agencies and Programs in Nigeria

```
                        ┌─────────────┐
                        │  SECURITY   │
                        └─────────────┘


┌──────────────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────────────────┐
│           AGENCIES           │      │          PROGRAMS            │
└──────────────────────────────┘      └──────────────────────────────┘
```

Agencies: Army, Police, SSS, ICPC, EFCC, NCDSC, Immigration, Customs, Prison, FRSC, NATIP, NAFDAC, NDE, NDLEA, Human Right Com., NOA, Code of Conduct Bureau, SON

Programs: OFN (1976), Green Revolution (1980), DIFFRI, ADPs (1975), River Basin Devtn. Authorities, UPE, Austerity Measures (1976), SAP (1980), NEPAD, MDGs, SDG

Human Security:

According Olaoluwa, B. A. O, et al (2023), "the core of the concept of human security emphasizes the protection and empowerment of people, rather than just states or territories". In a similar vein, the United Nations' Development Programme (UNDP) defines human security as "a condition that results from the protection and promotion of human rights, as well as the availability of basic necessities, such as food, shelter, and healthcare" (UNDP, 1994). This informs the assertion by Olaoluwa, B. A. O., et al (2023), that, "human security is about ensuring that all individuals have access to the resources and opportunities they need to live fulfilling lives free from violence, oppression, and poverty".

The foregoing views imply that human security is mainly about the security of life of the citizens. In other words, it has to do with all those variables that enhance and promote peaceful environment and well-being of the people devoid of threats to life and freedom from hunger, disease, crime, jobs, etc. (Waston, 2011; Human Development Report 1993; Kumssa and Jones, 2010).

Deriving inputs from the views of Pam, 2005; Human Security Report, 2003; Ikonne, et al 2005:61, Abraham Nabhon T. and IroAghedo (2014:24) sum up that human security embodies the:

> idea of positive peace, human rights and sustainable development; enhancement of livelihood of all people at risk, the dignity of the individual, respect for diversity, community empowerment, decentralized forms of government, peace and co-existence, accountability and transparency of actions aimed at the betterment of livelihood.

Basically, there are two major indices for human security, which are absence of want (lack) and fear.

Looking at the concept of human security further, it is relevant to re-echo the assertion by the former Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations that human security constitutes:

> those things that men and women anywhere in the world cherish most: enough food for the family; adequate shelter; good health; schooling for the children; protection from violence, whether inflicted by man or by nature; and a state which does not oppress its citizens but rules with their consent..

In the words of Olaluwa, B. A. O, et al (2023), human security is, therefore, a socio-political system that concerns itself "with reducing, and if possible, removing the insecurities that plague human lives".

Generally, human security guarantees or increases the citizens' chances of advancing the economy. This informs Smith's (2019) remark that human security enhances the fulfilment of human development. On the contrary, an atmosphere devoid of human security leads to general insecurity in the society. It is therefore not arguable that human security promotes general development in the society.

In their efforts to link human security to diverse areas of development, Olaoluwa, B. A. O, et al (2023), identify some as follows:

i. Human-centered Development: The concept of human security shifts the focus of development from solely economic growth to improving the well-being of individuals. This approach prioritizes the basic needs of people, including access to healthcare, education, housing, and employment. In this sense, human security can be seen as a fundamental component of development.

ii. Empowerment of Vulnerable Groups: Human security recognizes the vulnerabilities of certain groups, such as women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. By addressing the specific needs and concerns of these groups, development efforts become more inclusive and equitable.

iii. Conflict Prevention and Resolution: Human security aims to prevent conflicts by addressing the root causes of insecurity, such as poverty, inequality, and social exclusion. By promoting peaceful coexistence and resolving conflicts through dialogue and diplomacy, development can be sustained for the long-term benefit of all.

iv. Environmental Sustainability: Human security also recognizes the importance of environmental sustainability for development. By protecting natural resources and ecosystems, human security contributes to the sustainability of economic growth, social development, and overall human well-being.

v. Global Cooperation: Human security requires cooperation at all levels, from local to global. Development cannot be achieved if countries act independently of one another. A joint effort is needed to address common challenges and reduce inequalities between nations.

National Security:
This is perceived in two major components, namely; internal and external security. While internal security has to do with absence of domestic threats of all kinds, external security implies absence of threat from territorial integrity perpetrated by external forces or factors.

The concept of national security is perceived variously by scholars as follows:

i. Ray (1987) sees it as the capacity for self defence.

ii. Goldstein (1999) associates national security with the ability of a nation to defend its borders and territorial integrity from external forces; ability of the nation to maintain its sovereignty; control of conflicts and threats to the lives of citizens, among others.

iii. O'Brien (1995) summarises the concept as absence of violence of all kinds, be they military, environmental, economic, political, social, etc.

In the context of the foregoing, the main function of the State is to provide or promote human and national security. This entails the provision of those institutions or agencies specifically for the purpose of providing safety for the citizens and to ensure equal access to the law and protection from abuse.

Cillier (2004) and Pam (2005) identify two major governmental institutions put in place to guarantee human security as follows:

i. Traditional institutions: These comprise the criminal justice system comprised made up of the police, justice and correctional services/prison; the military and the intelligence community.

ii. Nature or form of governance. This is made up of government institutions, rules, norms and values that underpin the institutions, and their efficacy.

Based on the foregoing, there is a variety of indices which point to the failure of the state security architecture which usually creates a security vacuum to guarantee national security. These indices include, but not limited to, the following:

i. Increase in hostage-taking and kidnapping;

ii. Militancy;

iii. Inter- and intra-ethnic conflicts;

iv. Inter-and intra-religious wars;

v. Armed banditry;

vi. Illegal arms trafficking;

vii. Political violence;

viii. Gangsterism;

ix. Unemployment;

x. Poverty;

xi. Infrastructural and institutional collapse;

xii. State inability to respond to the above.

In many countries of the world, national security or security tasks are decentralized at various levels or circles (Russet, et al, 2004) in which each level or circle represents what could be referred to as a "Security Community" which concerns majorly with the security of the community before other considerations, that is, the security of the immediate community. This is even the principle and practice in contemporary International Relations whereby each country is bothered more about its internal security than that of its neighbours. This implies that in international security architecture, each country constitutes a "Security Community". However, there have emerged more broad security communities across the world in forms of regional groupings such as European Union (EU), NATO, and ECOMOG.

Nigeria's security architecture, especially during the colonial era and the First Republic before the era of military rule, was typical of the concept of "Security Community" which was organized in a hierarchical level made up of the Central, Provincial or Regional and Native Authority levels. This was in line with the principle of federalism which gave each federating unit some level of autonomy until the Regional Constitution was abolished in 1967 by the military regime. Before then, each Province or Region had its Police Force, so also each Native Authority had its Police Force independent of the Regional Police and the Central Government.

The abolition of the Regional Constitution in 1967 resulted in the hyper-concentration of power and security apparatuses under the control of the Central Government. This resulted from the oil boom which concentrated power and wealth in the hands of the Federal Government. Consequently, the Police, Army, Prison Service (now Correctional Services) and other paramilitary agencies became over-centralized, since the Federal Government could boast of the financial muscle to shoulder the responsibilities of sustaining all the security agencies.

Worrisomely, however, the Federal Government has continued to fail to

provide adequate security to citizens across the nation, especially what is being experienced at present in the country. This calls for a retreat to the re-adoption of the policy of hierarchical "security circles" or "communities" incorporating the Federal, State and Local Government levels, including even smaller communities, based on the ability of each circle to sustain its security apparatus.

Food Security:

It is not arguable that life cannot be secure without food, which implies that food is the only means for the sustenance of life. This is why the issue of food security is very paramount or central in the life of man.

Food security does not just entail the availability of food, but, most importantly, the adequacy and even distribution at relevant intervals, as well as the quality in terms of nutritional value and hygienic nature food is prepared and served. This implies that food security is a combination of several components. For food security to be guaranteed, therefore, the various components must be adequately guaranteed. This is why Nigeria has, over the years, evolved several agencies and programmes to ensure that food security for the citizenry is adequately guaranteed. Such programmes and agencies include Operation Feed the Nation (OFN, 1976); Green Revolution (1980); River Basin Development Authorities (RBDA); National Policy on Agriculture (1986); National Accelerated Food Production Programme (NAFPP, 1973); Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs, 1975); School to Land Programme (1988); NAFDAC; Customs; DIFRRI, etc.

It is important to note that as important and as relevant as the above programmes and agencies were/are in guaranteeing food security in the country, corruption and mismanagement have continued to serve as great impediments to the attainment of the desired objectives. While some of the programmes and agencies have achieved cosmetic temporary successes, some collapsed right from their points of takeoff, thereby leaving the country with a vicious circle of food insecurity.

Job Security:

Job security simply means availability and accessibility of citizens to job opportunities. This also borders on the stability and quality of jobs available to

citizens. This takes care of the problem of unemployment. It is not refutable that right from the period of oil glut in the early 1980s, unemployment has continued to be on an astronomical increase. This has remained a great threat to job security.

To avert the foregoing trend, the Nigerian Government introduced programmes to ensure job security, especially by not only creating jobs, but making Nigerian school leavers not only to be self-employed, but employers of labour. This necessitated the introduction of programmes such as National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in 1986, Federal Universities of Technology Scheme, Vocational and Technical Education, N-Power, Sure-P, Skills acquisition, etc. Even then, the rate of unemployment has continued to rise at an astronomical progression. This demand for timely re-structuring of our educational system in order to lay more emphasis on technology and training in skills as opposed to the prevailing non-functional system which seemingly places premium on white collar jobs.

Economic Security:
The security of the economy in areas such as the exploitation and prudent use of resources is very important for the growth of any economy. Unfortunately, over the years, these important aspects of the economy have been grossly abused and misused due to increasing disturbing dimensions of corruption.

Consequently, in efforts to guarantee the safety of the nation's resources, as well as prudent use, successive Nigerian Governments evolved agencies to deal with violators in order to guarantee judicious use of resources. Such agencies include ICPC, EFCC, Customs Service, Army, Police, DSS, NEMA, DIFRRI, FERMA, Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB), and Public Complaints Commission (PCC). Each of these has specific functions to perform for the purpose of guaranteeing economic security as outlined in the statutory functions of each of the agencies and programs.

Unfortunately, corruption and misappropriation of priorities have grossly impeded the agencies and programmes from achieving appreciable results. Very worrisomely, agencies such as the Armed Forces, DSS and the Police are seemingly being used to victimize suspected opponents, especially in our

present political dispensation.

Environmental Security:

Environmental security entails the safety of the environment to accommodate and provide the necessary factors for sustenance of life. It deals also with absence of threats to the environment.

The security of the environment is not only crucial to human life, but also to agriculture and other related activities that are facilitated by the condition of the environment. Among the programmes evolved to guarantee environment security include NEMA, DIFRRI, Federal Road Maintenance Agency (FERMA), and Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC). Unfortunately, corruption, misappropriation and mismanagement have continued to impede the anticipated success by these agencies.

Security Of Access To Education (social Security):

Education is considered to be one of the fundamental human rights of all human beings. This was properly captured in the Second National Development Plan, 1970 – 75, during Gowon's regime. Apart from the introduction of the UPE Scheme by the regime, which expanded the number of primary schools and enrolment in them, including scholarships at state and federal levels, the Second National Development Plan "made primary education free from September, 1976" (Ujo, A.A. 1994:84).

In recognition of the importance of education to all, particularly at the primary level, the philosophy of Nigeria's Educational System, as captured by the National Policy on Education (1977), stated that the system is based on:

> The integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and equal educational opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, both inside and outside the formal school system.

The foregoing policy statement on Nigeria's philosophy of Education was explicitly reflected in Chapter 2, Article 18, of the 1999 Constitution (Original Copy p. 29) which provided for:

i. Free, compulsory and Universal Primary Education

ii. Free university education; and

iii. Free adult literacy programme.

The implications of the above provisions in the constitution point to the fact that for the security of Nigerians to be guaranteed in terms of access to education, every opportunity will have to be provided so that every citizen must have access to education as specified in the constitution.

Unfortunately, even though efforts were initially made to provide security to education for all Nigerians, the reverse has continued to be the case, especially at present, which points to a situation of insecurity in our educational system. This unfortunate development is associated with a number of factors, prominent among which are corruption and lack of political will and sense of direction by our successive leaders. One indication of the lack of will by our political leaders is the fact that the citizens' right to education is not made justiceable in the constitution of the country. This means, therefore, that one cannot sue the government if one's right to education is violated. No matter the factors, Nigerians still need security of education, which is one of their fundamental human rights, and as contained in the nation's Constitution.

Conclusion

The authors have, first and foremost, made seemingly an elaborate discourse on the meaning of the concept *security*. Efforts have been made to explain the difficulty in arriving at a universally accepted single definition for the concept. Consequently, the authors asserted that the definition of the concept is relative, depending on the context and society in which the term is applied. This stems from the fact that what could be referred to as security or peace in one society could be regardedthe other way round.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the authors posit that no matter the difficulty in arriving at a single universally accepted definition, there are two common denominators in each of the definitions, which are absence of hostility and threat to life and property. Furthermore, any comprehensive definition of the term "security" incorporates a number of variables, otherwise referred to as components, as presented in this discourse. The authors, therefore, assert that

the concept of security, in the Nigerian context, incorporates six components, namely, national security, human security, food security, economic security, social/job security and environmental security. Invariably, to the Nigerian society, any condition devoid of any of the above variables or components implies absence of real or complete security, otherwise referred to as relative security.

Furthermore, the authors attempted to analyse the contents of each of the components of security in the Nigerian context highlighted above. Effort has also been made to briefly mention some of the agencies and program successive Nigerian governments put in place to guarantee the attainment of some of the components of security. However, no elaborate assessment has been made to determine the extent of successes or otherwise of the agencies and programmes, since it is not the focus of this article.

In conclusion, and by way of recommendation, the authors suggest that, given the diverse components of what constitutes security of life and property, government should always ensure that all the agencies and programmes instituted to guarantee security of life and property are adequately and properly sustained. This is because anything short of this, or any malfunction of, or deficiency in any of the components will impact negatively on the search for attainment of meaningful security of life and property of the citizens.

References

Watson, S. (2011), "The 'Human' as Referent Object?: Humanitarianism as Securitization", Security Dialogue 42(1): 3-20, in cited by Abraham N. Thomas and IroAghedo (2014), "Security Architecture and Insecurity Management: Context, Content and Challenges in Nigeria", in Sokoto Journal of Social Science, Vol. 4: No.1, June, 2014, P. 24.

Human Security Report, 2003, Issues Affecting Human Security in North – East Province, Sri Lana, CHA.

Kumsse, A. and Jones, J.F. (2010), "Climate Change and Human Security in Africa", in International Journal of Sustainable Development and

World Ecology, 17(6): 453 – 461.

Pam, S.O. (2005), "The Post-Colonial State and Insecurity in African: The Nigerian State Experience", in Ikome C. William, I.O and E.U. Nwagbara (eds.) Security Service and sustainable Development in Nigeria: Port Harcourt: University of Port Harcourt Press: 59-78

Ray, J. (1987), Global Politics, 3ʳᵈ Edition, Boston: Houghton Mifflin

Goldstein, J. (1999), International Relations, New York: Addison Wesley Longman.

O'Brien, R. (1995), International Political Economy and International Relations; Apprentice or teacher? London: John Macmillan: 89-106.

Cillier, J. (2004), "Human Security in Africa: A conceptual Framework for Review". A monograph for African Human Security Initiative, available at www.africareview.org (accessed on January 8, 2013)

Russet, B. Starr H. and Kinsela D. (2004), World Politics: The Mune for Choice London Wadsworth.

Ujo, A.A. (1994). Citizenship in Nigerian State: Studies in Politics and Administration 2. Publisher: Pass mark International, Kaduna, Nigeria, p. 78.