

Full Length Research Paper

National Security in Nigeria: The Role of the Library

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This paper assessed the concept of library, national security as well as the security challenges facing Nigeria. The paper also tries to show how the library can contribute effectively in the fight against terrorism, insurgent, youth restiveness, and militancy through proper and effective collection and dissemination of information at the right time, mobilizing the citizenry through civic education, information literacy programme. The paper concludes that library has a social responsibility in national security and recommended among others that Libraries and librarians should be in the forefront of national security discourses through sponsorship, guiding principle and acts that can further the country's national security; the Library and Librarians should open public reading centers where people can have easy access to right information; the library in the rural areas should be employed to distribute literacy materials that will help people to be better functional information users; Librarians and libraries should design a blueprint for security consciousness. Finally, government should make funds available for effective implementation of all the recommendations enumerated above.

Key words: Nigeria, Security, Challenges, Role, Library.

INTRODUCTION

Security has to do with self-preservation which is the first law of existence. Security implies a stable, relatively predicatable environment in which an individual or group may pursue its ends or objectives without disruption, harm, danger and fear of disturbance or injury (Dasuki, 2013)

Security of a nation therefore, is concerned with the well-being, welfare and interest of her citizens, preservation of her sovereignty and territorial integrity against external aggression (Ossai-Ugba, 2013). The importance of security to economic well-being of a country and her citizens cannot be over emphasized. The importance attached to security was well captured in the Nigerian Constitution of 1999: Section 14 (2) (b) of the constitution states that "the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government". Invariably therefore the Constitution has saddled the Government with the responsibility of safeguarding lives, property, welfare of Nigerians against both internal and external threats including other forms of danger. Thus, it

is incumbent on the Government to monitor public order and safety, including law and order.

National security therefore embraces several elements that cut across military, economic, social, religious and political sense to mention but a few. The development of any society to a large extent depends on the extent of the security of lives and property of the citizens. A secured atmosphere will encourage intellectual minds who will be a great asset to Nation building; it will also guarantee an environment for the growth of infrastructural development.

According to Ogebebe and Babatope (2012) National security is important not only to the government, but to the nation as a whole. National security serves many purposes. First of all, the armed forces are a very important aspect of national security. The Federal Republic of Nigeria has a very strong military that ensure that the nation stays safe, however Nigeria's security concerns and threat perceptions emanated from many quarters. These include the threat of extreme Islamic sects like Boko Haram, bad leadership, high level of unemployment, Militia from the oil rich Niger Delta, ritual killings and kid napping, the widening economic gap between the poor and the rich, influx of illegal migrants from the neighbouring countries, emergence of political

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and regional thugs, election rigging and malpractice and injustice due to the collapse of the judiciary system (Ugulu & Oghuvwu, 2015). In addition, when threats are directed at the country there is an attempt to keep these threats isolated. National security is also concerned with emergency preparedness among many other things.

To tackle security challenges, nations established the armed forces, police, security agencies and other Paramilitary forces. It is however to be noted that given the broader perspective of national security, government security agencies alone cannot provide the desired security to the environment or nation. Therefore, everybody has a role to play at enhancing our national security. National security should be everybody's business. The purpose of this paper therefore is to discuss the roles of the library in curbing Nigeria's security issues.

What is a Library?

A library can be seen as a collection books, book related and non-book materials (slide filmstrips, films, CD-ROMs, Microforms Video, etc.) which are organized, interpreted and made available for use globally. The acquisition, organization, preservation and dissemination are usually done by professionals. A library can be also seen as a collection of organised information sources. It is primarily set up to acquire, organize, and preserve information resources as well as make them accessible to the various prospective users. Library is concerned with the collection, processing, storage and dissemination of recorded information for the purpose of reading, study, research and consultation. Information is new ideas or knowledge extracted from the environment for human use with the aim of modifying behaviour, effecting changes, and enhancing efficiency in all human endeavours (Ajegbomogun, 2008). Information helps create enlightened and responsible citizens. The library is the gateway to information. It is a place where information is acquired, processed, repackaged, preserved, and disseminated. Dictionary of Library and Information science defined "library as a collection or group of collections of books and /or other materials organized and maintained for use" (reading, consultation, study and research).

Prytherch (2000) quoting Landau (1966) sees Library as a collection of books, book related and non-book materials housed, organized and interpreted to meet the broad and varying needs of people for information, education, knowledge, recreation and aesthetic enjoyment. The definitions above show that a library is not just a collection of only books for reading but also include book related and non-book materials. With the advent and development of technology, the concept of library has been expanded above that line. At present we have concepts such as virtual library, digital library, online library, etc. The concept has changed from traditional

library to electronic library. The formal where we visit the library building to make use of information resources has changed. Users with the aid of ICT devices can access the library materials regardless of the place or distance. However, libraries all over the world have solemn responsibility to ensure the transmission of the people culture from one generation to another in addition to the preservation of these cultures. Libraries, Museums and Archives are important providers of information and knowledge required by the people on a daily basis.

What is National Security?

National security can be defined as the actions and policies taken by a nation against all internal and external threats to its borders, economy, and stability (Ossai-Ugba, 2013). It doesn't have to be terrorism or an enemy nation, though it often is. The security interest includes safety of life and property, economic, physiological, mental well-being and the freedom to pursue the attainment of legitimate objectives without hindrance. This definition is holistic and most relevant to us as it sees the objective of national security as elimination of all distractions in order to bring about growth and development of the society and its constituents. In other words, every national security structure must be seen in the light of its two core obligations of preserving the safety of its citizens at home and abroad, and preserving the integrity of the borders and assets of the country. The assets of the country include physical objects such as the infrastructure and other tangible assets that support the economy. Intangible things such as national values, the political ability to project power and authority, including national cohesion of citizens, are treasured assets any country would desire to have.

Nigeria's Security Challenges

No country is free of security challenges. These challenges also vary from one country to the other. Thus, Nigeria's security challenges are as follow:

Terrorism

Perhaps the greatest and predominant security challenge in Nigeria today is terrorism or terrorism related issues. Islamic fundamentalist group, popularly known as Boko Haram is the harbinger of terrorism in Nigeria today. The sect, which is predominately based in the Northern Eastern part of the country, has an ideology that is averse to western education and anything it represents. The sect also seeks an enthronement of Islamic (Sharia) government in the whole of Northern Nigeria. Frequently Boko Haram attacks churches, government institutions, the police and military barracks as well as the media through armed attacks, suicide bombing. Some notable attacks carried out by the sect are the Mogadishu

Barracks bombing in Abuja in December 2010, the Police Headquarters in Abuja in June 2011, and the UN office bombing in Abuja in August 2011 Saint Theresa Catholic Church Madalla, bombing of December 2011 to mention. They have demonstrated capability by taking people of different countries hostage.

Insurgent

The insecurity in Nigeria's maritime environment is a major challenge to our national security. These occur in many forms such as piracy, illegal oil bunkering, oil theft illegal fishing and hijacking.

Youth restiveness

Elegbeleye (2005) defined youth restiveness as "a sustained protestation embarked upon to enforce desired outcome from a constituted authority by an organized body of youths." It is marked by violence and disruption of lawful activities. The obvious effects of youth restiveness on the Nigerian society are loss of lives and property which constitute a major threat to security of the State as well as its corporate existence. It also discourages genuine economic and democratic development. Strategies employed include mass agitations, protests, demonstrations, looting, vandalism, cultism, ethnic militia, political thuggery among others.

Militancy

Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) activities of the group spread across kidnapping of people; blowing up oil pipelines and hostage taking to draw the attention of State and Federal Governments to lack of development and environmental degradation of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria Dasuki (2013), listed the security challenges in Nigeria to include: terrorism, maritime security, Niger Delta militancy, kidnapping, illegal bunkering, pipeline vandalism, armed robbery, youth unemployment and climate change.

Traditional Roles of the Library and Librarians

According to Ogunsola (2011): "traditionally libraries were collections of books, manuscripts, journals, and other sources of recorded information. In the last 50 years, libraries have increasingly developed into a provider of information resources and services that do not even require a building." The Library's traditional lasting objective is to provide access to relevant information resources. The aim of this is to give high value to the needs and expectations of users. Generating and sharing information is useless, if there's no way to locate, filter, organize and access it. Traditionally librarians are in the forefront of information dissemination and they will continue to be there (Ramos, 2007). Libraries collect,

stock, process, organize, disseminate and distribute information/knowledge recorded in documentary and non-documentary sources/formats. Since knowledge and information are so vital for all round human development, libraries and other institutions that handle and manage knowledge and information are indeed invaluable in national security. According to John (1998): "of all the roles that librarians and libraries play two are critical to modern society as we know it. The first is the role of the library as the place where the information seeker can access information without restriction - the access role. The second role has been the world-wide effort of libraries to archive, protect and provide ongoing access to information and the world's cultural heritage for the long term - the preservation role. These two fundamental roles have differentiated libraries from all other institutions." In this vein to propose that libraries are "in the midst of a revolutionary phase, with new assignments crowding the librarian's agenda, is to state the obvious" (Mokogwu, n.d). This is where the civic and social responsibility of the library takes center stage.

Social responsibility is a part of librarianship (Ugulu & Oghuvwu, 2015). The issue of national security is therefore core value of librarianship. Since no meaningful learning, education and development can take place in a context of insecurity and brazen destruction of lives and properties, the onus lies on the library for responsible librarianship through dissemination of information that can contribute to peace and national security in Nigeria by helping the citizens to understand their role in national security. The library as a storehouse of information has positively altered its scope of influence across time to become not only a place that houses books but a gateway through which information can be conveyed to people irrespective of location. Librarians have traditionally been concerned with certain functions. Rowland (1998) lists some of these as:

1. Collection development and acquisitions.
2. Cataloguing and classification.
3. Circulation.
4. Referencing and,
5. Preservation, conservation and archiving

From the inception of the human race various service oriented sectors have transformed in many ways. This is because services to humanity ought to also adapt to change and reflect the present conditions and status in today's society. Issa (2003) pointed out that economic and national power and status for instance are leveraged on the widespread use of information and knowledge which the library provides. Agreed that the responsibility of library and information services rests on the librarian and information scientists, there is also the need to collaborate with the security agencies in bringing maximum information services to the public and in this case for national security.

The Roles of the Library and Librarians in National Security

The role of the library in national security is not just to spread information in a particular area but to offer a holistic approach, around all aspects of the policies of the country called Nigeria. Currently, the war on terror and terrorism is not only fought by the armed forces but the whole nation is engaged in the economic, scientific, political and social activities and happenings in all practicable fields of life. For the library, this is a feasible objective, which is achievable through the information and dissemination process of the library (Hali, 2003).

“National security is the requirement to maintain the survival of the state through the use of economic, diplomacy, power projection and political power” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_security). Information is therefore a crucial factor in national security. This is because the line between security and insecurity lie in information given or information withheld. The ability to use information and its associated tools is a source of power for any nation (Bordbar, n.d.) which the library and librarians are best equipped to do. In Nigeria's current security challenge, citizens and government must recognize this need for information use and literacy as a means of national security (Noruzi, 2006). Information remains the only product which the library handles and this includes all media in which the information is shaped. The only means through which the real integration of people living in political, economic, religious and ideological poles could be brought together is through the actual cooperation and exchange of vital information between the two: the terrorist and the terrorized.

The philosophy behind the library and its services is based on information collection, categorization, conservation, and management. At this time, when Nigeria is still in democratic embryo, ideological divides which is the threshold upon which terrorism thrives can be countered through effective information dissemination. There is an urgent need for provision of “right information, in the right format, for the right people, at the right time, and in the right place” to stem the tide of ignoramus decadence. The long years of political and religious distrust in the country has fanned the flames for crises that have polarized the society and divided Nigerians across ethno-religious lines. To allow every Nigerian to read from the same page, it is important to flash the searchlight of information dissemination on restive areas so that they cannot be used to destroy the hard earned peace and unity the country is presently enjoying.

Ogunsola (2011) observed: Librarianship has undergone a radical change in recent years, which will be continued in the future. As libraries have changed, so too, has the role of the librarian. Increasingly librarians have assumed the role of educator to teach their users how to find information both in the library and over electronic networks. Public librarians have expanded their roles by

providing local community information through publicly assessable computing systems. Some librarians are experts on computers and software. Others are concerned with how computer technologies can preserve the human cultural records of the past or assure that library collections on crumbling paper or in old computer files can still be used by people many centuries in the future. The work of librarians has moved outside library walls. Librarians have begun to work in the information industry as salespeople, designers of new information systems, researchers, and information analysts. They are also found in such fields as marketing and public relations and in such organizations as law firms, where staffs need rapid access to information.

Though information officers and librarians may not be military people, because of their professional background, they are usually equipped to provide technical information services to experts in other fields using the language they understand most since language is a synergy. In providing information services, librarians may need to adopt campaigning or mobile libraries to bring library services to the doorsteps of citizens to educate them on national security. Nwalo (2003) observed that the compilations made by mobile libraries reflect perceived needs of local communities. This will help to provide security services to communities and help citizens and patrons of the library attain maximum information services, in spite of their vocations. Ifidon and Ahiauzu (2006) observed defined information as “structured data that causes a human mind to change its opinion about the current state of real world and contribute to a reduction in the uncertainty of the state of the system”. Since information is a transformation agent, a shaper of perspectives and philosophies of life, the onus lies on libraries as information centers and librarians as information managers to ensure that Nigerians have access to information that will direct their actions. Some Nigerian who participated in protests across the country are uninformed as seen in the fuel subsidy protest of 9th – 15th January 2012 (NTA News Bulletin, 13th January, 2012). Information therefore is a sine qua non for individual and collective freedom and attainment of national security. Anasi (2010) citing Sokari (2006) agrees that “information is necessary for people to be liberated from the shackles of ignorance, misconceptions, economic stagnation, social unrest, and political instability. Social cohesion cannot be achieved without timely, accurate, and relevant information.” This is because information is fresh ideas or fact taken out of a person's surrounding for use with the objective of transforming behaviour in all areas of human life (Ajegbomogun, 2008). Information helps create enlightened and responsible citizens. The library is the gateway to information. It is a place where information is acquired, processed, repackaged, preserved, and disseminated (Anasi, 2010).

Currently, electronic media is one of the most effective

and powerful means of mass mobilization. A nation not mobilized enough to withstand terrorism cannot aspire to preserve its freedom, faith and ideology for long. On the other hand, strongly mobilized people cannot be forced to abandon their security in the face of terrorism. It is in this regard that libraries and librarians can ginger up the electronic media to promote and expand security awareness among the people at large. The library through the media has been waging war of its own to counter the hostile propaganda from insurgents and terrorists in Nigeria. Like their names suggests propaganda: Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and Boko Haram (Western Education is nonsense), the government through the library can fund effective counter propaganda campaigns that will sensitize the citizens to the ills of terrorism and win over their sympathizers. One of the most effective means of maintaining national security is through propaganda and the primary tool of propaganda is the media. Some of the techniques adopted in a conflict to gain the desired results are repeating the lies of the terrorists, attacking personal opinions disguised as fact, headlining propaganda, selective control of information and the yellow journalism (Gamble and Kwerliambli, 1990). Thus, the role played by the library and librarians is a morale-boosting role. "In the military parlance, morale is the will to fight for the national cause to the last" (Issa, 2003). Thus, in the war on terror, psychological operation is not the only function which the library can perform in the context of national security; it can act as a bridge between the armed forces and the people (Hali, 2003).

The library provides not only information resources and guidance, but it is also a judgment-free zone in which a citizen can investigate interests of the terrorists without worry of embarrassment or exposure. A greater understanding of the differences and similarities between peoples of the world can potentially initiate and expand feelings of tolerance and empathy for cultures, religions and traditions outside of one's immediate sphere. This the library can provide. Omotayo (2005) noted that: "in war situations in enlightened societies, use of libraries increases as users flock to libraries to find information to guide them. Information that can promote peace, unity, progress, peaceful co-existence, and harmonious relationship among all the communities must therefore be available in libraries. Librarians, therefore, in promoting access to this information, act as agents of the promotion of communal peace and reconciliation."

The importance of libraries to the Nigerian society can be seen through the statistics of people who use the library to gain access to print media. The majority of people who use libraries usually do so through the public or university library system in their communities. People throughout the country rely on public or university libraries as a provider of access to print and electronic information, access to email, assistance with information gathering and leisure reading (Becker, 2003). Some

people choose to only engage the world through information sources that reinforce their views and reassure them that the world is exactly as they perceive it to be. Others are overly curious and want to know everything they can about everything no matter the barriers they face. It is the people who fall in the middle that are truly helped by the library and librarians. An individual may at some point have questions about current events, people or cultures outside of their own immediate experience, religion or ethnicity. Their desire for information might be driven by a school project, a story on the news or by simple curiosity. Curiosity and the desire to learn about the world can be protected and nurtured by the library. The freedom to explore and read about other cultures is vital to national security, especially as a tool to mitigate and prevent radicalization. The library and librarians indeed have a role to play in national security.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The security agencies should as a matter of deliberate government policy work closely with librarians in the war against terror;
2. The Library and Librarians should print and paste posters in public places to sensitize the public to the disastrous effects of national insecurity,
3. Libraries and librarians should be in the forefront of national security discourses through sponsorship, guiding principle and acts that can further the country's national security
4. The Library and Librarians should open public reading centers where people can have easy access to right information;
5. The library in the rural areas for instance be employed to distribute literacy materials that will help people to be better functional information managers;
6. Librarians and libraries should design a blueprint for security consciousness.

Libraries in Nigeria could seek assistance in terms of funds and technical support from other countries where terrorism is on the boil.

CONCLUSION

The issue of national security is a core value of librarianship. Since no meaningful learning, education and development can take place in a context of insecurity and brazen destruction of lives and property, the onus lies on the library for responsible librarianship through dissemination of information that can contribute to peace and national security in Nigeria by helping the citizens to understand their role in national security. The library as a storehouse of information has positively altered its scope

of influence across time to become not only a place that houses information resources but a gateway through which information can be conveyed to people irrespective of location. Libraries and librarians should be seen as important tools in national security. National security is possible through the utilization and collaboration of library, human, and material resources. This paper has shown that the library plays an important role in the security of nation like Nigeria.

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