

Assessment of Nigeria Security Challenges Under President Muhammad Buhari's Administration (2015-2022)

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Abstract

The study begins with a background framework on the insecurity situation in the Nigerian fourth republic and efforts by respective administrations to mitigate the impacts on the citizens. However, the study limited its investigation to the past of Buhari's administration in Nigeria. This is through a critical examination of the rate of insecurity during his political era as well as combative initiatives initiated by the president, Muhammadu Buhari. It further evaluated the efficacy of state security apparatuses and how citizens had fared across the country. The study was anchored on Karl Marx conflict theory and reviewed pertinent literature to relate the study within an existing academic framework. More so, the responses were analyzed quantitatively, and the discussion of the findings was content-analyzed. The study revealed that the administration of Muhammadu Buhari had expended bountiful resources to purchase weapons and ammunition for the military and paramilitary officers in a bid to determine the extent of security threats in the country. Nonetheless, it was deduced that insecurity challenges intensified during Buhari's administration, during which many promising youths emigrated to the country in search of better means of living. According to the inferences, President Muhammadu Buhari led to the creation of semi-formal security outfits across regions in Nigeria. This was assumed to have led to a lack of respect for nationally owned security agencies in Nigeria among the citizens.

Keywords: Security Challenges, Administration, Boko Haram, Policymakers, threats

Introduction

Nigeria, as the most populous country in Africa, has been confronted with a multitude of complex security challenges throughout its history (Adebanwi, 2020). These challenges encompass various dimensions, including insurgency, ethno-religious conflicts, militancy, farmer-herder clashes, and the rise of criminal activities such as kidnappings and banditry. Understanding and assessing these security challenges is crucial for policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders seeking to formulate effective strategies and policies.

Under the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari, who assumed office in 2015 and served until 2022, Nigeria witnessed significant efforts to address the country's security challenges. The administration promised to prioritize security and combat the persistent threats faced by the nation (Adebanwi, 2020). Thus, evaluating the security landscape during this period can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of the government's response and its overall impact on Nigeria's security situation.

One of the most prominent security challenges during Buhari's administration was the Boko Haram insurgency. Boko Haram, an extremist group primarily active in the northeastern region of Nigeria, has caused widespread instability and violence, resulting in a significant loss of lives, displacement of populations, and extensive infrastructure destruction (Ibrahim, 2018). While the assessment of the Boko Haram insurgency during this period is essential for comprehending the dynamics of the security challenges faced by Nigeria (Mustapha, 2019), In addition, Nigeria has faced recurring ethno-religious conflicts, contributing to the overall security challenges in the country. These conflicts arise from historical tensions, competition for resources, and political factors (Ibeanu, 2018). Falola and Heaton (2016) have discussed the complex interplay between ethnicity, religion, and political power in fueling these conflicts. A comprehensive analysis of the causes, patterns, and consequences of these conflicts can provide valuable insights into the security landscape and the government's efforts to manage and mitigate them.

Moreover, farmer-herder conflicts have escalated in Nigeria, particularly in the middle belt region. These clashes, driven by competition for land and resources, have led to the loss of lives, the destruction of property, and the displacement of communities (Adejumobi, 2020). Ukiwo (2019) has highlighted the role of demographic, ecological, and political factors in exacerbating these conflicts. Analyzing the causes, trends, and implications of these conflicts can shed light on the security challenges faced by Nigeria and provide insights into the government's strategies for addressing them.

The persistent security challenges faced by Nigeria under Buhari's administration have had profound implications for the nation's development, stability, and social cohesion. The ability to effectively address these challenges is crucial for ensuring a conducive environment for economic growth, attracting investment, and promoting sustainable development (Adesoji, 2017). Ibrahim (2020) and Omotoso and Agbibo (2018) have highlighted the need for a comprehensive and holistic approach to tackle Nigeria's security challenges, emphasizing the importance of addressing root causes such as governance deficits, socio-economic inequalities, and inadequate security sector reforms. Understanding the complex interplay of these factors and their impact on the effectiveness of the government's response is vital for developing targeted and sustainable solutions, and the international community has closely monitored Nigeria's security challenges as they have implications beyond national borders. Nigeria's strategic importance in Africa, coupled with its role as a regional economic powerhouse, underscores the significance of a stable and secure Nigeria for regional peace and stability (Anugwom, 2018).

Therefore, assessing Buhari's administration's efforts and their effectiveness in addressing security challenges also has implications for regional and international security cooperation and collaboration. By conducting a comprehensive analysis of the security challenges faced by Nigeria under Buhari's administration, this study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge, provide critical insights for policymakers, and offer practical recommendations to enhance Nigeria's security apparatus and mitigate future threats. Through an evidence-based assessment, it seeks to promote informed decision-making and foster a more secure and prosperous country.

Research Methodology

The study adopted the survey research design. Survey design is explained by Nwogu (2012) as a procedure used in obtaining information from a sample or relevant population that is familiar with the ideas relating to the objectives of the study. In the opinion of Olaitan and Ali (2012), a survey design is one that studies a large or small population by selecting and analyzing sample data collected from the group through the use of a questionnaire, telephone, or personal interview. The survey research design is therefore appropriate for this study as it tends to obtain data from samples considered to be true representative of the entire population, which will eventually be generalized.

In addition, the study employed both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary sources include well-structured questionnaires; secondary sources include print media such as articles, government gazettes, journals, magazines, materials from the internet, newspapers, relevant text books, and term papers. The population covered by this study includes: media practitioners (journalists and reporters of private and public media outfits), students of higher learning, lecturers, civil society, security agents (Nigeria Police, Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps, Department of State Security Service), and government officials (Ministry of Communication, Nigeria Broadcasting Commission, and National Information Technology Development).

For the purpose of this study, stratified random sampling was adopted in order to put them into strata to represent the whole. A total of 200 respondents were sampled (100 from FCT and 50 each from Zamfara and Kaduna state). The primary data instrument used in this study is the semi-structured questionnaire, which allows for mind expression (open questionnaire filling) and selection of appropriate answers that best suit the respondent's opinion (close-headed questionnaire). Most of the questions are closed-ended, while a few are open-ended in the questionnaire. The collection of data is done strictly through a questionnaire, which is strictly used for academic purposes alone, and respondents are not forced to answer or supply any information. Data analysis is a process of scrutinizing, cleansing, converting, and exhibiting data with the aim of realizing useful information, drawing conclusions, and supporting decision-making (Xia et al., 2015). The data generated for the study was analyzed using the descriptive technique. After gathering the necessary information, the descriptive technique was used for the analysis of the data in answering the proposed research questions. Data checking and entry are done using Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS 20) computer software, and the data will be analyzed.

Data Analysis, Presentation and Interpretation

Table .1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	
Sex	Male	87	49.7
	Female	88	50.3
	Total	175	100.0
Age	18-30	42	24.0
	31-35	72	41.1
	36-40	41	23.4
	41 and above	20	11.4
	Total	175	100.0
Religion	Christianity	49	28.0
	Islam	126	72.0
	Total	175	100.0
Marital Status	Married	127	72.6
	Single	48	27.4
	Total	175	100.0
Occupation	Civil Servant	107	61.1
	Self-employed	55	31.4
	Unemployed	13	7.4
	Total	175	100.0

Source: Authors' Field work, 2023.

As displayed right above, 87 (49%) respondents were males, and 88 (50%) respondents were also females. 42 (24%) respondents were between the ages of 18 and 30, while 72 (41%) respondents were between the ages of 31 and 35. In addition, 41 (23%) respondents fell within the age bracket

of 36 to 40, and only 20 (11%) respondents have clocked the age of 41 and above. 49 (28%) respondents were Christians, and 126 (72%) respondents were Muslims. 127 (72%) respondents were married, and only 48 (27%) were single. 107 (61%) respondents were civil servants, while 55 (31%) were self-employed. As revealed above, only 13 (7%) respondents were unemployed.

Table 2: Security Challenges of Muhammadu Buhari's Administration

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Undecided</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>
President Buhari's administration led to an increase in rivalry among security outfits in Nigeria	91 52%	52 29%	13 7%	19 10%	-
The administration of President Buhari gave birth to the prevalence of ethnic militias and insurgent groups across the country	102 58%	41 23%	-	-	32 18%
President Buhari's administration intensified the agitation of secessionist and different separatist movement across the 3 major ethnic groups in Nigeria	60 34%	45 25%	21 12%	49 28%	
As a result of the transition to Buhari's administration, there was an astronomical increase in illegal migration into Nigeria by neighboring countries	29 16%	33 18%	62 35%	15 8%	36 20%
There was an increase in kidnapping during president Buhari's administration	129 73%	45 25%	-	-	1 .6%

Source: Authors' field work, 2023.

From the Table 2, 91 (52%) respondents strongly agreed that Buhari's administration led to an increase in rivalry among security outfits in Nigeria, while 52 (29%) also followed suit. 13 (7%) respondents were undecided, and only 19 (10%) respondents strongly disagreed. 102 (58%) respondents vehemently agreed that the administration of President Buhari gave birth to the prevalence of ethnic militias and insurgent groups across the country, while 41 (23%) respondents agreed alike, and only 32 (18%) respondents disagreed. 60 (34%) respondents strongly agreed that Buhari's administration intensified the agitation of secessionist and different separatist movements across the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria, and 45 (25%) respondents similarly agreed.

21 (12%) respondents were undecided, while 49 (28%) respondents strongly disagreed. 29 (16%) respondents strongly agreed that as a result of the transition to Buhari's administration, there was an astronomical increase in illegal migration into Nigeria by neighbouring countries, while 33 (18%) respondents followed suit. 62 (35%) respondents were neutral, and 15 (8%) strongly disagreed. As well, 36 (20%) respondents only disagreed. 129 (73%) respondents strongly agreed that there was an increase in kidnapping during President Buhari's administration, while 45 (25%) respondents only agreed, and only 1 (.6%) only disagreed.

Boko Haram, an extremist Islamist group, continued to pose a significant threat to Nigeria's security throughout this period. While the Nigerian military made some gains in pushing back the group and reclaiming territory, Boko Haram continued to carry out attacks, including suicide bombings, ambushes, and abductions. Conflicts between nomadic herders (mainly Fulani) and settled farmers over access to land, water, and other resources escalated during this period. This led to a significant loss of lives and property, and it strained communal relations in various parts of the

country. Nigeria is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country, and tensions between various groups have occasionally flared up into violence. This includes conflicts between Christian and Muslim communities, as well as inter-ethnic clashes. Kidnappings for ransom and banditry became more prevalent, particularly in the northern and central regions of Nigeria. Criminal groups, often operating with impunity, targeted both civilians and, in some cases, government officials.

The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and other secessionist groups have been active, calling for the secession of the southeastern region of Nigeria. These movements have occasionally clashed with security forces, leading to further tensions. Corruption within security agencies, coupled with allegations of human rights abuses by some elements of the security forces, undermined efforts to address security challenges effectively. The Nigerian security forces faced challenges in terms of resources, equipment, and training. This hampered their ability to effectively combat various security threats. The security challenges had significant economic implications, including a negative impact on foreign investment, economic growth, and livelihoods in the affected regions.

Table 3: Effects of These Security Challenges on Nigeria

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>		<i>Agree</i>		<i>Undecided</i>		<i>Strongly Disagree</i>		<i>Disagree</i>	
As a result of the security challenges of Buhari's administration, there was an increase in mortality rate across the country	61	34%	65	37%	21	12%	-	-	28	16%
There was serious economic decline owing to the security situation of the country under Buhari's regime	91	52%	75	42%	-	-	-	-	9	5%
Under Buhari's administration, the rate of crime and criminality was on the increase	31	17%	88	50%	7	4%	-	-	49	28%
The security challenges of Buhari's administration led to state formation of informal security network such as Amotekun, Hisbah police etc.	58	33%	108	61%	-	-	9	5%	-	-
As a result of the insecurity challenge, there was mass movement of people from the country, "the JAPA syndrome."	141	80%	23	13%	-	-	-	-	11	6%

Source: Authors' field work, 2023.

From Table 3, 61 (34%) respondents strongly agreed that, as a result of the security challenges of Buhari's administration, there was an increase in mortality rates across the country. Similarly, 65 (37%) respondents only agreed. 21 (12%) respondents were undecided, while only 28 (16%) simply disagreed. 91 (52%) respondents strongly agreed that there was serious economic decline owing to the security situation of the country under Buhari's regime, while 75 (42%) respondents followed suit, and only 9 (5%) disagreed. 31 (17%) respondents strongly agreed that under Buhari's administration, the rate of crime and criminality was on the increase, while 88 (50%) only agreed.

Nonetheless, 7 (4%) respondents were undecided, and 49 (28%) respondents disagreed. 58 (33%) respondents vehemently agreed that the security challenges of Buhari’s administration led to the formation of informal security networks such as Amotekun and Hisbah police. While 108 (61%) respondents also followed suit, only 9 (5%) respondents strongly disagreed. 141 (80%) strongly agreed that, as a result of the insecurity challenge, there was a mass movement of people from the country, “the JAPA syndrome.” 23 (13%) respondents also followed suit, and only 11 (6%) respondents disagreed.

Overall, the security challenges faced during President Buhari's administration had far-reaching consequences for Nigeria, affecting not only the security and well-being of its citizens but also its economic and social stability. Efforts were made by the government, security agencies, and international partners to address these challenges, but their resolution remained a complex and ongoing process through the administration.

Table 4: Efforts of Muhammadu Buhari’s Administration at Curbing the Security Challenges in Nigeria

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>		<i>Agree</i>		<i>Undecided</i>		<i>Strongly Disagree</i>		<i>Disagree</i>	
Buhari’s administration led to security sector reform in Nigeria	19	10%	14	8%	65	37%	77	44%	-	-
The administration of Buhari decreased the rate of human right violation and abuses across the country	8	4%	42	24%	12	6%	61	34%	52	29%
The law enforcement agencies eschewed coercive treatment of protesters in the nation.	9	5%	148	84%	-	-	-	-	18	10%
The Buhari’s administration engaged in economy restructuring and fulfillment of promises to the political agitators in Nigeria	-	-	52	29%	22	12%	80	45%	21	12%
The administration of President Muhammadu Buhari empowered the military by increasing the budget for arms and ammunition	125	71%	45	25%	-	-	-	-	5	2%

Source: Authors’ field work

19 (10%) respondents strongly agreed that Buhari’s administration led to security sector reform in Nigeria, while 14 (8%) respondents followed suit. 65 (37%) respondents were undecided, and 77 (44%) respondents strongly disagreed. 8 (4%) respondents strongly agreed that the administration of Buhari decreased the rate of human rights violations and abuses across the country, while 42 (24%) respondents only agreed. 12 (6%) respondents were neutral, and 61 (34%) respondents strongly disagreed, as well as the remaining 52 (29%) respondents who also disagreed. 9 (5%) respondents strongly agreed that the law enforcement agencies eschewed coercive treatment of protesters in the nation, while 148 (84%) respondents followed suit.

Only 18 (10%) respondents disagreed. 52 (29%) respondents agreed that Buhari’s administration engaged in economic restructuring and fulfillment of promises to the political agitators in Nigeria, while 22 (12%) respondents were undecided, and 80 (45%) respondents strongly disagreed. The remaining 21 (12%) respondents disagreed. Lastly, 125 (71%) respondents strongly agreed that the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari empowered the military

by increasing the budget for arms and ammunition, while 45 (25%) respondents also agreed. Only 5 (2%) respondents disagreed.

In response to these security challenges, the Buhari administration implemented various measures, including deploying military forces, engaging in negotiations with some militant groups, and launching various security initiatives. However, progress in addressing these challenges was often slow, and there were criticisms of the government's handling of the situation.

Table 5: Extent of Effectiveness of Efforts Aimed at Combating Security Challenges

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>		<i>Agree</i>		<i>Undecided</i>		<i>Strongly Disagree</i>		<i>Disagree</i>	
As a result of different security approaches deployed by President Buhari, there was a decline in civil protests in the country	-	-	6	3%	20	11%	55	31%	94	53%
The security apparatuses are now effective in reducing crime rate and violent conflict in Nigeria	-	-	13	7%	4	2%	128	73%	30	17%
There was a decrease in kidnapping in the country	-	-	-	-	39	22%	40	22%	96	54%

Source: Authors' field work, 2023.

6 (3%) respondents agreed that, as a result of different security approaches deployed by President Buhari, there was a decline in civil protests in the country, while 20 (11%) respondents were undecided. 55 (31%) respondents strongly disagreed, and 94 (53%) respondents followed suit. 13 (7%) respondents attested that the security apparatuses are now effective in reducing crime rates and violent conflict in Nigeria, while 4 (2%) respondents were neutral. In the same vein, 128 (73%) respondents strongly disagreed and 30 (17%) simply disagreed. 39 (22%) respondents were undecided that there was a decrease in kidnapping in the country, while 40 (22%) respondents strongly disagreed. The remaining 96 (54%) respondents also disagreed.

Similarly, the administration of President Buhari did not allow peaceful demonstrations, which was grossly in violation of citizens' human rights. Citizens were more coordinated for rebellious activities in order for them to assert their grievances and secede from the government owing to incessant insecurity threats that permeated every nook and cranny of the country. Therefore, the efforts of Muhammadu Buhari to stem the tide of insecurity in the country were just a vicious cycle that only achieved unremarkable effects.

Conclusion

In conclusion, President Buhari's administration faced significant security challenges during its tenure. While some progress was made in addressing these issues, there were limitations in terms of capacity, resources, and the comprehensiveness of the responses. Long-term solutions require not only effective security measures but also efforts to address the underlying socio-economic, political, and cultural factors that contribute to Nigeria's security challenges.

Buhari's political administration between 2015 and 2022 was a calamity for the citizens, as they lamented the high rate of insecurity and criminality in the country. Similarly, the administration of Buhari did not allow peaceful demonstrations, which was grossly in violation of citizens' human rights. Citizens were more coordinated for rebellious activities in order for them to assert their grievances and secede from the government owing to the incessant insecurity threats that permeated every nook and cranny of the country. Therefore, the efforts of Buhari to stem the tide of insecurity in the country were just a vicious cycle that only achieved unremarkable effects.

Recommendations

Based on the findings made, the following recommendations are hereby made that, if adopted by the relevant authorities, will go a long way in mitigating the impacts of insecurity in the country:

1. They further need to better equip the military, police, and security forces through a transparent and centralized procurement process to enhance their capacity to deal with security challenges.
2. The rate of unemployment, especially among youths, is quite alarming, going by the various reports of the Nigeria Broadcasting Commission. There is an urgent need to address the malady, as most of the perpetrators of the various forms of insecurity challenges are youths who are not employed or underemployed.
3. There is an urgent need for good democratic, people-centered governance with leadership that is transparent and accountable, in which the rule of law is respected and fundamental human rights are guaranteed.
4. Also, there is a need to improve leadership training in order to enhance the leadership acumen of our leaders so as to enable them to have a national view of the Nigerian situation instead of the current ethnic and religious dispositions exhibited by them.
5. There is a need to restructure the country by giving more power to the states or regions, as this will reduce the intensity of the power tussle or struggle for the center, which in most cases is anchored on petty, ethnic, and religious sentiments. Thus, restructuring our mindset toward unity, equality, justice, peace, and national development is a necessity if the Nigeria project must survive.

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