THE ROLE OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES IN NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined the role of library in national security in Nigeria. The objective of the paper was to show that the library can contribute effectively in the fight against terrorism through effective propaganda; collection and dissemination of information; mobilizing the citizens through civic education and bridging of ideological and religious divides. The paper however stressed that national security is an all embracing term that deals with the protection of the interest of a nation. It is in this regard that the library has a social responsibility in national security. It recommended more government funding to achieve this task and re-organization of training curriculum of future librarians to include national security.

KEYWORDS: Role, Library, National Security, Nigeria, Information services

1. INTRODUCTION

Information is a crucial factor in national development, and the ability to use information tools is considered a source of power (Bordbar, n.d.). In the 21st century governments must recognize this need for information use and literacy as a means of development (Noruzi, 2006). Librarians and information experts play a key role in development. The cooperation and assistance of librarians is a basis for any movement to gain development. By this cooperation and the provision of useful information in economic, cultural, social and political contexts, development becomes possible (Bordbar, n.d.). The essential role of librarians in providing access to information for development means that LIS departments must provide dynamic educational systems. This discusses the changes needed in LIS education and the necessity of basic changes in the curricula in this field in Nigeria as a key factor in national development, including some guidelines for these objectives. According to Ubong King, insecurity is defined as “the state of fear or anxiety, stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection.” It refers to lack or inadequate freedom from danger. This definition reflects physical insecurity which is the most visible form of insecurity, and it feeds into many other forms of insecurity such as economic security and social security.

The renowned Security expert said that for the Government to tackle insecurity, a key starting point should be to understand the causes of insecurity as well as to investigate their sources of social disorder and instability. King pointed out that it is necessary to distinguish between different causes as each may require different remedy. Besides, it is to provide a holistic view to the suggestion or recommendations of solutions. More often, however, policy makers are disinclined to isolate and clarify particular causes. They prefer blanket references, with the consideration that the causes of insecurity are interwoven and contributory to one another. Like in many other societies, the sources of insecurity in Nigeria have been traced to a number of factors and explained by different people. These factors have been classified or grouped into external and internal factors. Beyond the external-internal dichotomy, sources of insecurity have also been classified as either remote or proximate and immediate sources/causal factors. In Nigeria, the challenge is not so much about insecurity of external sources, but rather that of internal sources. We recognize that some internal factors have been enhanced and strengthened by the presence of external forces, but, there is no doubt that, if the internal situations did not present themselves, the external forces would be unable to infiltrate.
"A library is a collection of resources in a variety of formats that is organized by information professionals or other experts who provide convenient physical, digital, bibliographic, or intellectual access and offer targeted services and programs with the mission of educating, informing, or entertaining a variety of audiences and the goal of stimulating individual learning and advancing society as a whole." A library is a collection of sources of information and similar resources, made accessible to a defined community for reference or borrowing. It provides physical or digital access to material, and may be a physical building or room, or a virtual space, or both. A library's collection can include books, periodicals, newspapers, manuscripts, films, maps, prints, documents, microform, CDs, cassettes, videotapes, DVDs, Blue-ray Discs, e-books, audio books, databases, and other formats. Libraries range in size from a few shelves of books to several million items. A library is organized for use and maintained by a public body, an institution, a corporation, or a private individual. Public and institutional collections and services may be intended for use by people who choose not to or cannot afford to purchase an extensive collection themselves, a place set apart to contain books, periodicals, and other material for reading, viewing, listening, study, or reference, as a room, set of rooms, or building where books may be read or borrowed.

Another general definition of library is from the Online Dictionary of Library and Information Science (ODLIS):

“Library -- from the Latin liber, meaning "book." In Greek and the Romance languages, the corresponding term is bibliotheca. A collection or group of collections of books and/or other print or non print materials organized and maintained for use (reading, consultation, study, research, etc.). Institutional libraries, organized to facilitate access by a specific clientele, are staffed by librarians and other personnel trained to provide services to meet user needs. By extension, the room, building, or facility that houses such a collection, usually but not necessarily built for that purpose. In the of the above, the library can be defined as a place where professionally selected books and non-book materials are acquired processed and arranged orderly for easy location and retrieval for use by patrons.

1.1 Library Science

Library science (often termed library studies, library and information science, bibliothecography, library economy) is an interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary field that applies the practices, perspectives, and tools of management, information technology, education, and other areas to libraries; the collection, organization, preservation, and dissemination of information resources; and the political economy of information.

1.2 Information

In spite of the importance of information in all human activities, it is a term that is difficult to define because it has several dimensions. Information means many things to different people. To some people, information is news, facts and data. While the telecommunications engineers associate information with bits and data, the librarians associate information with recorded knowledge, and the microbiologists consider information as the genes in DNA, which transmitted from one generation to the other. Machlup and Mansfield (1983), for example, provided 30 different distinct meanings of information.

Information is used interchangeably as news, facts, data and knowledge. Some of the definitions of information are:

- Increasing the state of knowledge of a recipient.
- Resolving uncertainty.
- Value in decision –making.
- A physical surrogate of knowledge.
- All published and unpublished knowledge about any given subject.
- Body of knowledge.

Buckland (1991) discussed the ambiguities of information when he characterized it as:

Information – as - process

Information – as - knowledge
Information – as - thing

Information is a process when it is performing the function of informing, which involves transmitting information from a source to a recipient. It is knowledge when it is performing the role of imparting knowledge to an individual, where it reduces uncertainty. Under both circumstances, information is intangible. It becomes tangible when it is a thing, that is to say a physical object such as data or documents. From the above, it can be seen that there cannot be any exact definition of information. But what is, however, apparent is that there is a connection between data and information and knowledge. Rubin (1998) provided a relationship between data, information, knowledge and wisdom as follows:

Data are raw and unprocessed, information is a processed data from which meaning arises and it is communicated, and knowledge is further processed information that is organized and interrelated and more broadly understood and applied. Wisdom is knowledge applied to the benefit of humanity.

From the above:

Data → Information → knowledge → wisdom is a continuum, and it is also hierarchical. However, the important point is that information is very crucial in the continuum. It is therefore not surprising that a wide range of people are involved in information activities. We call such people information professionals.

1.3 Information science

Information science is a field primarily concerned with the analysis, collection, classification, manipulation, storage, retrieval, movement, dissemination, and protection of information. Practitioners within and outside the field study application and usage of knowledge in organizations along with the interaction between people, organizations, and any existing information systems with the aim of creating, replacing, improving, or understanding information systems. Historically, information science is associated with computer science, library science, and telecommunications. However, information science also incorporates aspects of diverse fields such as archival science, cognitive science, commerce, law, musicology, management, mathematics, philosophy, public policy, and social sciences.

Information science should not be confused with information theory. Information theory is the study of the types of communications we use, such as verbal, signal transmission, encoding, and others. Information science deals with all the processes and techniques pertaining to the information life cycle, including capture, generation, packaging, dissemination, transformation, refining, repackaging, usage, storage, communication, protection, presentation etc. in any possible manner. "Information science is that discipline that investigates the properties and behavior of information, the forces governing the flow of information, and the means of processing information for optimum accessibility and usability. It is concerned with that body of knowledge relating to the origination, collection, organization, storage, retrieval, interpretation, transmission, transformation, and utilization of information. This includes the investigation of information representations in both natural and artificial systems, the use of codes for efficient message transmission, and the study of information processing devices and techniques such as computers and their programming systems. It is an interdisciplinary science derived from and related to such fields as mathematics, logic, linguistics, psychology, computer technology, operations research, the graphic arts, communications, library science, management, and other similar fields. Information science is concerned with the principles and practice of production, organization and the study of information from its generation to its use and transmission in variety of ways.

1.4 Library and information science

Library and information science (LIS) (sometimes given as the plural library and information sciences) or as "library and information studies" is a merging of library science and information science. The joint term is associated with schools of library and information science (abbreviated to "SLIS"). In the last part of the 1960s, schools of librarianship, which generally developed from professional training programs (not academic disciplines) to university institutions during the second half of the 20th century, began to add the term "information science" to their names. The first school to do this was at the University of Pittsburgh in 1964. More schools followed during the 1970s and 1980s, and by the 1990s almost all library schools in the USA had added information science to their names. Weaver Press: Although there are exceptions, similar developments have taken place in other parts of the world. In Denmark, for example, the 'Royal School of Librarianship' changed its English name to The Royal School of Library and Information Science in 1997. Exceptions
The rise of terror groups in some parts of the country is directly related to the neglect of costs and/or promotes distributional conflicts. Companies engage in corporate social responsibility in order to offset Social Irresponsibility of Companies – Corporate social irresponsibility is a set of actions that increases externalized conditions in urban areas in Nigeria. Out of frustration, these youths are drawn into crime.

Environmental carrying capacities and existing infrastructure and this has resulted to increased poor quality of the living one of the countries in the world with very high rural/urban drift. Most urban areas in Nigeria have grown beyond their migration of jobless youths from rural areas to urban centres is also one of the causes of insecurity in Nigeria. Nigeria is estimated to host over 70 percent of Nigeria from other countries. Small Arms and Light Weapons proliferation and the availability of these weapons have implications for the country. Given the porous borders as well as the weak and security system, weapons come easily into Nigeria’s borders has serious security implications for the country. Given the porous borders as well as the weak and security system, weapons come easily into Nigeria from other countries. Small Arms and Light Weapons proliferation and the availability of these weapons have enabled militant groups and criminal groups to have easy access to arms. Nigeria is estimated to host over 70 percent of about 8 million illegal weapons in West Africa. Also, the porosity of the Nigerian borders has made it possible for unwarranted influx of migrants from neighbouring countries such as Republic of Niger, Chad and Republic of Benin. These migrants which are mostly young men are some of the perpetrators of crime in the country. Rural /Urban Drift- The migration of jobless youths from rural areas to urban centres is also one of the causes of insecurity in Nigeria. Nigeria is one of the countries in the world with very high rural/urban drift. Most urban areas in Nigeria have grown beyond their environmental carrying capacities and existing infrastructure and this has resulted to increased poor quality of the living conditions in urban areas in Nigeria. Out of frustration, these youths are drawn into crime.

Social Irresponsibility of Companies – Corporate social irresponsibility is a set of actions that increases externalized costs and/or promotes distributional conflicts. Companies engage in corporate social responsibility in order to offset corporate social irresponsibility. The rise of terror groups in some parts of the country is directly related to the neglect of
social responsibility by companies to the community where they are operating. This was the case of the Niger Delta crisis. Unemployment/Poverty -As a result of the high level of unemployment and poverty among Nigerians, especially the youths, they are adversely attracted to violent crime. Failure of successive administrations in Nigeria to address challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequitable distribution of wealth among ethnic nationalities is one of the major causes of insecurity in the country.

Terrorism – At the most proximate and least disputable level, terrorism is the most fundamental source of insecurity in Nigeria today, and its primary bases and sources of support have generally been located in religious fanaticism and intolerance. As “the premeditated use or threat of use of violence by an individual or group to cause fear, destruction or death, especially against unarmed targets, property or infrastructure in a state, intended to compel those in authority to respond to the demands and expectations of the individual or group behind such violent acts” which has cost 13.4 per cent of the world gross domestic product. Nigeria has lost more than 1000 lives in the Northern region since 2009 to the insurgency of this infamous sect, Boko Haram which has been ravaging the northern region of the country.

Furthermore, the Boko Haram insurgency/Niger Delta militancy is sufficiently diffuse that superior fire power of government cannot be fully effective, and to approach triumph too closely may be to forement resistance by the communities where the battle would be fought. All of the factors above are succinctly summarized in the views expressed by foreign observers about the causes of insecurity in Nigeria. Located the sources of insecurity in Nigeria in four factors: political conflicts; unbalanced development that involves horizontal inequalities; religious/ethnic distrust; and leadership failure. It could be associated with low level of economic development as a result of poor governance and high level corruption.

The insecurity environment of business refers to insecurity variables that affect the performance of a business but over which the business enterprise has little or no direct control. In Nigeria, the variables range from theft to organized armed robbery, kidnapping and demand for ransom, assassination, repeated invasion and blockading of business installations, social injustice, unemployment, lack of access to livelihood resources, rising cost of living, and bombing, pipelines destruction. All these variables of crimes and social maladies have made the Nigerian security environment to be complex. In addition to the usual crimes, the coordinated attacks from the Boko Haram sect in the northern part of the country, besides making life miserable for Nigerians, has affected so many businesses operating in that region. The bomb explosions initiated by this group have been on the increase leading to enormous loss of life and property and a general atmosphere of fear and social tension in the country. With the lingering security challenges and the inability of the security apparatus of the government to guarantee safety and security in the country, the question that borders everyone in Nigeria today is “can there be security?” Is security of lives and properties achievable? He opined that government at all levels has not done enough by not confronting frontally the situation head on and dealing with it decisively, others have argued that the situation has a political undertone or inclination calculated to serve the interest of certain political gods, who have been dissatisfied and disgruntled about the political manifestations in the country.

There should be an institutionalized approach rather than the episodic and reactive response adopted by the government at the aftermath of attacks. In addition, Government at all level should not compromise in enforcing the law. Cases of corruption are not meant to be compromised at all, let alone adjourning them endlessly. The judiciary ought to have, at this stage in our development, evolved time scales for cases. There ought to have been a time to determine a case; time to close that case; and time to deliver judgement and pass sentences. In Nigeria, cases that bother on corruption and insecurity have most often been compromised. Thus, the law is no longer acting as a deterrent. Our law enforcement agencies must therefore be incorruptible and fair. To ensure all this, there must be incentives, good conditions of service and social security. Finally, dealing alone with the issues mentioned above will not appraise the root causes of insecurity. Policies that focus solely on single governmental agencies, such as security agencies or enactment of laws are unlikely to succeed. Instead, a coordinated preventive measure is necessary in addition to military strategies and judicial institutions. He posited that there is a need to reorder priorities and to seek better understanding of the underlying causes and dynamics of the insecurity in the country with the aim of providing effective conflict prevention and management strategies. The formulation and effective implementation of policies and programmes capable of addressing the root causes of insecurity in Nigeria are crucial, especially with regard to poverty: unemployment, environmental degradation, injustice, corruption, porous borders and small arms proliferation. Therefore, efforts to tackle insecurity can only be effective if there is a robust combination of legislative and judicial interventions with government reforms that address some of the acute human
security challenges confronting a vast majority of the population. To overcome insecurity there is need for intelligence gathering and surveillance so that law enforcement agents could be proactive and reasonably predict potential crime with near perfect accuracy rather than being reactive. The menace of insecurity no doubt calls for a new approach that will be founded on credible intelligence gathering”. Government must not only continue to engage the security personnel, it must, more than ever before, recognize the need to devote more attention to security intelligence, capacity building to meet the global best practice standard and acquisition of modern technology. There is also the need to modernize the security agencies with training, intelligence sharing, advanced technology, logistics, motivation and change of orientation. This effort will enhance the operational capabilities of the Nigeria security agencies by identifying avenues that would enable them respond appropriately to internal security challenges and other threats. In addition, there should be a complete overhaul of the security institutions in the country to reflect international standards of best practices so as to pre-empt these security breaches. In particular, the failure of the intelligence services to contain the recurring security breaches.

3. **THE ROLES OF LIBRARY IN NATIONAL SECURITY**

Libraries have always been a key contributor to national development and it is appropriate that they take a leadership role in the current movement on national security. The word 'national security' is used by politicians and military leaders in the line of a policy objective. However, national security loosely defined refers to the protection of the interests of a country (http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/national+security). This is where it takes a wide meaning as all embracing dimension of national life (Hussain, 2008 and Iradia, 2011) because threat posed to any element of national power creates security problems. 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. As Ogunsola observed (2011):

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 Nigerians 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” (Hussain, 2008). 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.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper recommends that:

1. Security agencies should as a matter of deliberate government policy work closely with librarians in the war against terror;
2. Libraries and librarians should be in the forefront of national security discourses through sponsorship, guiding principle and act can further the country’s national security;
3. The Library and Librarians open public reading centers where people can have ease of access to right information;
4. The Library and Librarians should explore the use of printing and pasting posters in public places to sensitize the public to the disastrous effects of national insecurity;
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;
7. The curriculum of various degree and non-degree awarding institutions should be redesigned to accommodate issues on national security for all students; Libraries in Nigeria could seek assistance in terms of funds and technical support from other countries where terrorism is on the boil.

5. CONCLUSION

Despite the shadowy light of importance cast over libraries and librarians, they still serve a needed role in Nigeria and are utilized regularly by patrons seeking information (Ossai-Ugbah, 2009). It may be that the majority of government policy makers and drafters are unaware of what the government can achieve through the library as a base for information transactions. On the other hand, it may be that many are willing to trade their rights to privacy, free speech and unhindered intellectual pursuits for a sense of security. 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.

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