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COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES FOR SECURITY AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA

by

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Abstract

An issue of global concern, and a cause for great worry to all and sundry in Nigeria, security is a crucial factor in any attempt at national development. Therefore, this paper diagnoses and decries the state of security and development in Nigeria. Adopting and adapting the systems theory, the paper examines the interplay among national development, communication, and security. It argues that development, communication, and security are analogous to a vehicle, its engine, and its fuel respectively. Mutual inclusiveness rules in the scheme of things in a system of a vehicle propelled by an engine, which in turn is sustained by fuel. The same principle applies equally to Nigeria because national development cannot occur unless there is communication to propel it, and security to sustain it. To tackle the problem, the paper proffers a communication-oriented solution based on development communication models that had succeeded in other contexts and societies.

Key Words: Security, national development, development communication.

17: 1 Introduction

Communication is one phenomenon that has generated enormous and sustained controversies among communication scholars worldwide. Expectedly, there are divergent schools of thought on the nature, roles, influences, and effects of
communication in communal affairs and processes. Nevertheless, there is a consensus that participatory communication is both crucial and central to development of any kind in the society. That culminated in the emergence and evolution of development communication, a specialized discipline in communication studies that promotes the deliberate use of inclusive communication to stimulate desired changes in society. The discipline has different names among scholars including development communication (DEVCOM), communication for development (COMFOD), and development journalism (DEVJON) (see Anaeto and Solo-Anaeto, 2010: 34; Ojebode, 2006: 19; Soola, 2002: 9; Udoakah, 1998: 7; and Nwosu, 1990: 17). Although innumerable research reports on communication-driven development programmes justify the efforts that scholars put into development communication, yet researchers have been mostly silent, or at best, taken for granted another crucial factor: security. This leads to the question of the meaning of security and other recurrent terms raised in this paper.

2.0 Contextual Clarifications
These researchers acknowledge the fact that the concepts defined below have other meanings in different contexts. Nevertheless, they have used them in the senses assigned here.

Security is the state of guarantee of protection from attack, injury, loss of life and property.

Communication is the process of attaining commonness of ideas, goals, information, feelings, thoughts, meanings, and messages.

Development is the holistic and continuous improvements in the total quality of the lives of the members of a society. Therefore, national development is the endless process of initiating and executing planned programmes of mass participatory action that will continually lead to improvements in all facets of citizenship.

3.0 Security and National Development: The Situation in Nigeria
One does not need to be a skilled public analyst to comment authoritatively on the security and national development situation in contemporary Nigeria.

On security issues, the mass media are awash on daily basis with news of gruesome murders, armed robberies, kidnappings, communal conflicts, religious crises, intra-group violence, inter-group brutality, human trafficking, breeding and sale of human babies, and senseless terrorism. Given our working definition of security, one may dare to declare straightway that Nigeria is tottering dangerously
on the precipice of self-annihilation. Almost everyone, irrespective of socio-
economic and political status, is at risk of attack and injury that may culminate in
dehumanisation, loss of life, and property dispossession. Perhaps, the only thing
that is more pathetic than the security situation in Nigeria is the apparent impunity
and immunity that criminals who undermine communal security enjoy. Until their
assassinations, Bola Ige and Chinweke Asadu were sitting Minister of Justice and
Kwara State Commissioner of Police respectively in the service of the Federal
Republic of Nigeria. The unresolved murders of the duo and other high profile
killings are a clear indication that nobody is really safe in Nigeria. Armed hoodlums
raid banks and paralyse economic activities here and there with audacity. Hooligans
spend hours raping, dehumanising, killing, and looting victims unchallenged. In
the northern part of the country, genocide, kidnappings, and victimisations are
daily affairs, no thanks to terrorists. Political parties, ethnic groupings, and even
trade unions like the National Union of Road Transport Workers, in addition to
clandestine cult groups, exterminate, injure, and destroy lives and property at
will. Illegal orphanages abound where teenagers are serial-raped and used as
breeding machines for babies that are sold like chicken. In summary, security in
Nigeria is only next to non-existent. There is absolutely no guarantee of protection
from miscellaneous forms of attack, injury, and their attendant threats of loss of
life and property.

Similarly, considering that development is the quest for societal attainment and
maintenance of the highest standards of living comparable with what is obtainable
elsewhere in this age of global village, it is easy to conclude that Nigeria is one or
two centuries behind benchmark nations. Electricity and transportation, the basic
infrastructure for further development, are grossly inadequate. The available
roads are potholes infested. Poverty is widespread. Hunger, diseases,
unemployment, and social insecurity are extensive. Despite its abundant natural
resources, Nigeria is more of an import dependent than an independent nation.
Statistics abound on how less than one percent of the over 140 million Nigerian
population controls the Nigerian national resources to the detriment of the
majority. The gap between the haves and the have-nots increasingly becomes a
gulf. Corruption, nepotism, tribalism, religious bigotry and other primordial
instincts dominate noble principles in national life. The current picture of
development in Nigeria is truly pathetic.

4.0 Security, Development, and Communication: The Interplay
There is no gainsaying in the fact that an atmosphere of security is prerequisite
for any human endeavour. Without a reasonable level of guarantee of protection
from unprovoked attacks and injuries and the threats they pose to personal life, liberty, and property, life itself becomes a daily nightmare. On the other hand, development, the quest for the preferred individual and collective standards of living, is an inherent nature of humanity. Since the beginning of life, humanity has always sought to study and fabricate devices to control the environment in order to live a happier existence. Moreover, communication, irrespective of mode (intra-personal or inter-personal, formal or informal, group or mass) is the crux of the matter as far as life is concerned. It is the fulcrum around which life revolves in its entirety. As Nwosu (1990:87) submitted:

...Communication is so central to human existence and all human activities that it would be fool hardy for any group to put it in the background in its economic, political, social and other activities...communication is the most vital factor in building or developing an organised, united and progressive nation; ... without it there will be no national entity and no effective solution to national problems and national development... In any reasonable theory and practice of nation building, communication should occupy a key position...because of the obvious fact that all human activities take place in a cross-fire of information flow and communication.

What then is the interplay among the variables, development, communication, and security? An analogy would suffice for an answer. A motor vehicle needs an engine for propulsion, and the engine needs fuel for combustion. Development is analogous to the vehicle Nigeria needs to reach the next higher level of living; communication is comparable to the propelling engine; and finally, security is equivalent to the fuel that sustains the engine. When one starves an engine of fuel, it shuts down, and a motor vehicle with a stalled engine is soon grounded and vulnerable to depreciation. Therefore, if Nigeria is serious about development, the government and all stakeholders must accord security, communication, and national development their rightful, tripartite, and central position in the scheme of things.

Given the deplorable situation of security and development in Nigeria, one wonders about their causes. The next section explores the question.

5.0 Causes of Insecurity and Underdevelopment in Nigeria
Nigeria is a complex and heterogeneous society with diverse ethnic groups, languages, and religions. The struggle for economic, social, and political supremacy
among these groups is enough cause of tension, often culminating in needless dissipation of energies and other resources in superiority tussles, to the detriment of security and national development. Nevertheless, there are other glaring causes of insecurity and underdevelopment in Nigeria. These include corruption, ignorance, wide spread poverty, unemployment, underemployment, religious bigotry, ethnic chauvinism, nepotism, materialism, and tenure elongation syndrome among politicians.

It has been established that food is the first necessity of life. A perpetually hungry person without hope of employment is a potential criminal. Convicts and suspects often justify their crimes, rightly or wrongly, that they took to crimes because of unemployment. Therefore, one may argue that, lack of legitimate means of access or hope of access to the basic necessities of life and some of its luxuries, is the root of insecurity and underdevelopment in Nigeria. Arguably, the quest for access to the basic necessities of life and some of its luxuries is the harbinger of other attitudinal problems like religious bigotry, ethnic chauvinism, nepotism, and materialism.

6.0 Theoretical Framework
This paper rests on a framework of two theories. They are the systems theory and the diffusion of innovation theory.

The systems theory propounded by Ludwig Bertalanffy rests on the assumption that in any environment, the whole is greater than the sum of its components Anaeto et al. (2008: 147). In the Nigerian system for instance, security, communication, development, and other processes constitute a complex and integrated whole. Although, the simple cause-effect linearity observable in one part of the system does not, in the short term, represent a complete picture of the system; nevertheless, an innovation in any component of a system, no matter how minute, triggers a corresponding change in the entire system, whether desirable or undesirable. Therefore, the systems theory underscores the wholeness of intra-systemic and inter-systemic interaction, exchange, and diffusion.

On the diffusion of innovation, Anaeto et al. (2008: 116) noted that Ryan, Gross, and Rogers propounded the theory, which is an offshoot of the diffusion of information and influence tradition seeking to determine the role of interpersonal relations in mass media influence (Littlejohn and Foss, 2008: 321). The theory indisputably ranks high in popularity among scholars, researchers, policy-makers, and planners of development communication programmes. This popularity is perhaps responsible for the many names the theory has assumed in its half-
The names, in chronological order, include the multi-step flow theory (Ojebode, 2006:30); the diffusion of innovation and development theory (McQuail, 2007: 491); the innovation-diffusion theory (Anaeto et al, 2008: 116); and the information/innovation diffusion theory (Baran and Davis, 2009: 271).

The basic assumption of the theory is that desired changes can occur in the society when relevant ideas are introduced to few influential members of the society, for relay transmission to other members of the society through a chain-reaction of interpersonal communication efforts of the influential few. The theory posits that information often passes through many intermediaries after leaving its source before it gets to the final recipient. These intermediaries are called steps and thus, the theory is also called the multi-step flow theory. The number of intermediaries in the information flow varies from case to case but the major ones according to Rogers (cited in Ojebode, 2006:30) are as follow.

1. The change agent,
2. The gate-keeper, and of course,
3. The followers.

The change agent is the innovator who seeks to introduce new ideas through initially convincing a few opinion leaders called gate-keepers, to the masses called the followers.

The process of innovation has five distinct stages as outlined below.

1. Knowledge (the people’s awareness are drawn to the new idea);
2. Persuasion (the people are encouraged to examine the new idea and to consider accepting them);
3. Decision (the individual decides to adopt or reject the innovation);
4. Implementation (the individual who chooses to adopt the innovation puts it to some use); and
5. Confirmation (on the basis of the preliminary trial of the innovation, the individual becomes convinced about the wisdom or otherwise of accepting or rejecting the innovation and decides accordingly).

Furthermore, Rogers (cited in Anaeto et al. 2008: 117) identified five categories of adopters in the process of innovation. They adopt an innovation at different times in the process. They are:

1. Innovators
2. Early adopters
3. Early majority
4. Late majority and
5. Laggards.
7.0 Communication Strategies for Security and National Development

If all tiers of government in Nigeria muster and exercise sustained political determination to attain a safe and developed Nigeria, the way forward and upward is simple. The solution lies in the adoption and application of a three-pronged key consisting of the following principles.

1. Mass conscientisation
2. Participatory development communication, and
3. Diffusion of innovation model.

The first step is to embark on mass conscientisation. The philosophy of mass conscientisation is the brainchild of Paulo Freire. It is, according to Akinpelu (2002:41) "the creative raising of consciousness and self-awareness to the reality of one's existence, with a view to creatively transforming it through positive and critical action". This implies that conscientisation is praxis, the matching of meditation with appropriate actions. When properly applied, conscientisation stimulates people to reflect on their situations, thereby recognising their deplorable conditions for what it is, and allowing that awareness to catalyse release of energy from the mind, in addition to the motivation and determination to work towards positive transformation of one's circumstances.

To kick start the process of mass conscientisation, governments in Nigeria need to identify and mobilise relevant change agents. In this context, change agents are influential members of the society whose opinions and pronouncements sway their protégés, admirers, and followers. Religious leaders, traditional rulers, entertainment icons, motivational speakers, politicians, human rights activists, and executives of organised unions, groups, associations, and non-governmental organisations, are some of the relevant people for the role of change agents. Government should open and maintain sincere, interpersonal, group, and mass communication channels to harvest inputs from both the change agents and their followers that will constitute the second step.

The second step is to adopt the principle of participatory development communication. As the name suggests, participatory development communication is the principle of seeking and obtaining the voluntary, active, and complete involvement of all stakeholders in all the stages of a development programme. In participatory development communication, innovators or change agents talk with the people. They do not talk down to the people or, at the people. They motivate the people towards identifying, seeking, and implementing home-grown solutions to communal problems. It is a principle Moemeka (2005:1) aptly described as "knowing the audience and subtly leading from behind." This
means that government must, as a matter of urgency and paramount priority, jettison its current posture of talking down to the people it wants to bring development to through the arrogant bottom-down communication model. Rather, it must talk with and integrate Nigerians into the search for security and progress in the land. Moreover, given Johns Bloomberg’s popular P-Process model, the stages all stakeholders must actively participate in include analysis of the problem to understand the situation and set remedial goals; strategic design of specific objectives and resources required to accomplish them; development, pre-testing and production of messages and programmes meant for the target audience; management, implementation, and monitoring of programmes aimed at remedial goals; finally, evaluation and re-planning to determine level of accomplishment and need for alternative strategies.

The beginning of the procedure for participatory development communication, government must sincerely be willing and ready to accommodate divergent views from the nooks and crannies of the nation. Through interpersonal, group, and mass communication channels, the government must allow the people to set their own agenda and chart the way towards their desired society. In other words, government should sincerely vest sovereignty in the people by listening to them and harmonising their goals for the nation with the mindset of implementing them, even when such goals are at variance with the thinking of the government. Government should preclude from its consciousness, the retrogressive idea of “no-go-areas” based on the erroneous and arrogant assumption that government can best decide for the people. Issues like constitutional amendments, federalism, resource control, state police, taxation, and any other issue should be accommodated and expressed views should be respected and implemented.

The third step is to build on the first two steps by applying relevant the principles of the diffusion of innovation model towards identifying and removing the causes of security flop in Nigeria and setting the nation on the path towards sustained development. The third step includes the following actions.

1. Through the change agents, government should draw people’s awareness to the need for a safe and progressive Nigeria based on the consensus opinion on the way forward derived from conscientisation and participatory communication.

2. Encourage the people to voluntarily support the programmes of actions aimed attaining a new Nigeria that will be the pride of all citizens.
3. Allow individual citizens to decide the merit of the programmes of actions in their own time.
4. Plan, implement, and evaluate consensus programmes of actions.

8.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

Security is so porous, defective, and inadequate in Nigerian that one may safely describe is as next to non-existent. There is little or no guarantee of protection of lives and property irrespective of one's position on the socio-economic and political scale. Similarly, it is glaring that Nigeria is very far behind the benchmark nations in national development. The nation is trapped in a vicious circle of poverty and insecurity. It is enmeshed in the quagmire of violence and other elements of humanity's inhumanity to humanity.

However, Nigeria has more than enough natural resources to join other nations of the world that its citizens are proud of and other people envy. To achieve this status, governments at all tiers in Nigeria must initiate and sustain the process of peaceful transformation of the nation, bearing in mind, as G. F. Kennedy had observed, that those who make peaceful change impossible, make violent revolutions inevitable. The lessons from Libya and Egypt during the arrogant regimes of Ghadaffi and Mubarak respectively should be a perpetual reminder that all is subject to change, either voluntarily or compulsorily. A lesson well learnt and courageously applied by Fredrik De Klark when he bowed to the inevitable wind of popular change by dismantling apartheid in South Africa and enthroning democracy. Today, he is a hero in the eyes of history.

Governments in Nigeria should therefore embark on sincere, selfless, people-determined, and people-oriented efforts aimed at liberating the nation from the throes of insecurity and retrogression.
References
The contemporary world is afflicted with pervasive insecurity of varying degrees, structure, magnitude and proportions. Commonsensical wisdom and empirical observation have shown that where there is pronounced insecurity, development is always on recess. This is why virtually all countries of the world deploy a lot of their resources to enhance their national security and by extension pave the way for the development of their national economies. In Nigeria, insecurity in contemporary times has threatened all facets of her national life which trend has impeded the spate of development in the country. The emergence of Boko-Haram in the country has further heightened the degree of insecurity in the country.

This book entitled National Security and Development in Contemporary Nigeria, which derives from a National Conference that was hosted by Al-Hikmah University set out to examine all aspects of insecurity in the country and how the evident insecurity impact on national development. Given the strategic importance of national security to both national and international development, we wholeheartedly recommend the book to all scholars and practitioners who are interested on the subject matter of national security and development in Nigeria in particular and the world in general.

About the Editor

Bello-Imam, I.B. is a Professor of Political Science and Strategic Studies with specialisation in Public Administration and Management. Bello-Imam has won more than 8 National and International Scholarships and written more than 100 published works, locally and internationally. He is currently the Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences of Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Nigeria. Most significant of his published works are Local Government Finance in Nigeria (ed.); Local Government in Nigeria: Evolving a Third-tier of Government; Politics and Administration in Nigeria; Governance in Nigeria: Economy, Politics and Society in the Adjustment Years, 1985-1995; Democratic Governance and Development Management in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, 1999-2003 (eds.); Perspective on National Economic Management and Administration in Nigeria (eds.); The War Against Corruption in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects; The Local Government System in Nigeria; 50 Years of the Nigerian Project: Challenges and Prospects (ed.); Yar’Adua’s Seven Point Agenda: An Assessment (eds.); The Deregulation of the Downstream Sector of the Oil Industry in Nigeria (ed.); President Jonathan’s Transformation Agenda: An Assessment (ed), etc.