

*Review*

# Harnessing national security through the emerging Nigerian video film theatre

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## Abstract

This paper aims to give vision to the fact that theatre arts can be used as an instrument for the enhancement of national security through the gains made from the Nigerian video film industry as has been exemplified in Nollywood productions as contributory factor which significantly impact positively on the sustenance of the economy and the propagation of our culture as the basis for the nation's development. The paper adopts qualitative methodology in examining how the Nollywood productions constitute veritable source of inspiration for the economy and its impact in harnessing national security for the country. Findings reveal that Nollywood productions are indeed strong base of economic earnings for the practitioners and as export commodity serve as a means through which foreign revenue is attracted to the country. It is also noted that Nollywood provides employment for the youth who participate at the various stages of the production processes which keep them engaged as well as economically empowered thereby they contribute to the sustenance of the national security since they do not pose challenge to its operations. Additionally, it is observed that the productions offer opportunities for the advancement of diplomatic relations and a vital channel for awareness creation which enhance national security. Based on the findings, it is then recommended the adoption of new technologies to improve the quality of the films in order to enhance their marketability. It is also advocated that funds should be made available to the producers in form of endowment as support from the government, sponsorships from corporate organizations and individuals to enable them increase the production capacity as well as facilitate the purchase of more equipment to boost their man power development that will in turn enhance national security.

**Keywords:** National security, Nigerian video film, theatre artist

## INTRODUCTION

Security is a natural phenomenon which encompasses all the activities of the people inhabiting human communities as individuals or groups located within the earthly space occupied presently by human beings. No matter where man lives whether in a fortified citadel, underground, sea shore or desert mansion, under the bridge in Lagos or the skyscrapers and their Twin Trade Centre in New York, he is ever conscious of his security. It is as a matter of truth and fact that man embarks on building fortified masons underground, and in the sky and moon in an attempt to securing his life yet man ironically is surrounded by the fear of insecurity; of the unknown that makes him live in perpetual fear of the ever threatening phenomena of

uncertainty in his life which he does not understand and cannot even run away from no matter how he attempts to distance himself from the realities of his being.

So, man is ever trapped in the web of his own concern and to extricate himself from this entanglement, he begins to think of his life and how to safeguard it and in the bid thinks of security; dreams of employing the angels to guard him so that he will not die and abandon his earthly possessions. This is the reason why man is ever running around looking for means of safeguarding his life and wealth. Yet insecurity and failures of security networks stare man in his disappointed face. This concurs with the submission of Esiemokhai when he observes that:

The most significant evidence of failure of man-made security are the twin tower bombings, the Madrid train bombings, the Moscow theatre attack, the Bali bombings, the London bombings in the home of the MIS, the Mumbai attack (3).

Despite all the efforts made by nations, governments, organizations, communities, groups and individuals to ensure their safety, security has remained an ever threatening phenomenon “afflicting” human families today in various dimensions. In Afghanistan, Pakistan and many parts of the Middle East the Al Qaeda networks is holding them to ransom. In Nigeria, Boko Haram is blowing up the churches, army barracks, police stations, markets and government establishments connected with security aimed at eliminating their suspected enemies.

Then in many parts of Nigeria, the armed robbers and kidnapers are threats dealing with their victims as they please. In Niger Delta, the Militants are blowing oil wells and pipe lines to draw attention to their sufferings and to their polluted environment. Indeed, Nigerians are concerned and expressing fear for these threats to their lives and properties. In one of the concern expressed by Ogunyemi these threats are highlighted:

The Seamless spate of bombings since the second half of the 2011, especially in the northern parts of the country, seems to suggest that Nigeria and Nigerians are faced with insurmountable challenges of insecurity. What started like isolated incidents in Borno two years ago began to rear their ugly heads in neighbouring states and have now almost enveloped the entire country, including the federal Territory (FCT), Abuja (36).

He goes further to lament the fact that:

Schools, markets, churches, mosques, media houses, university campuses, police units (including the headquarters) and multi-lateral agencies like United Nations Secretariat in Nigeria have all been attacked snuffing out scores of peoples lives and causing monumental destructions of property (36).

This shows that insecurity in Nigeria has reached an astonishing level to the point that every part of the country is afflicted with one crises or the fear of uncertainty as no one knows who will be the next victim. As at today, security challenges is a serious issue that threatens the Nigerian nation and therefore every effort should be made to find solutions to curtail the situation. It is necessary before delving further into our discourse, to clarify the concepts such as harnessing and national security on which it is based to facilitate understanding and acceptance of this presentation.

### **National Security**

This is the protective measure or network a state employs to safe guard its interest in relation to lives and properties of the citizens and the allies. It is the responsibility of a sovereign state to protect its territory and maintain control of the resources both human and materials for its development. According to Esiemokhai:

National Security is an intricate network of systems of defense measures, aimed at ensuring the safety of governments, the state and their nations, through overt and covert measures of military intelligence operations, under-cover disruptions of the sinister activities of men and women with misplace consciences, the security of the people, their state and governments is ensured (2).

The above goes to the show that national security is about protection for the people and their safety in society. It also implies that in any given situation, be it religious, economic, social, political or even while envisaging a developmental project, the people's security is of paramount importance and therefore ought to be taken into consideration.

National Security is all embracing as it should take into consideration man's welfare and safety in relations to other human activities in society such as politics, economics, religion, science, technology and education. It should be designed based on a policy which is people's oriented and sustainable in order to restore hope or confidence on the people as means of survival. A research group- Willnigeria lends credence to the above by asserting that:

... National Security must be deepening, broadening and encompassing. It is a policy that must, in today's world take numerous factors into account, ie domestic and foreign policy, the fundamentals of development, personal safety, human rights, the ecology, energy and natural resources – including fresh water (2).

Based on the above, it is evident that national security concerns human welfare in society for the benefit of the citizens and not necessarily the acquisition of expensive military machine guns and bombs which are rarely used. This prompted Abidde to express the view that national security is to uphold national values. The most fundamental value of any nation is survival, self preservation and collective progress (cited in Willnigeria 2). The promotion of values based on culture and the general development of the society are the basic prerequisites for the success and implementation of an effective national security policy.

Some elements of national security which should be taken seriously as identified by Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia include military security, political security, economic security, environmental security, security of energy and natural resources, national security and rights and freedoms, technical aspects (3-4) Additionally, Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia defines national security as a collective term encompassing both national defense and foreign relations, specifically, the condition provided by: a Military or defense advantage over any foreign nation or group of nations (2). From the on going, it is clear that national security encompasses the internal security and even extends to international relations of a country. The emphasis is on the ability of a state like Nigeria to defend her territorial interest at home and abroad in a way that her sovereignty is not jeopardized or threatened.

## Harnessing

In the wisdom expressed by Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, to harness is to control and use the force of strength of something to produce power or to achieve something (685). This means that Nigeria can take advantage of the boom in the productions of the Video film industry as exemplified in Nollywood to strengthen its economy and consequently harnessing her national security. It is imperative at this point to examine the ways through which the Nigerian video films typified in Nollywood have been used to harness national security.

## Nollywood

Nollywood is the Nigerian film industry which has been responsible for the production of Home Video Films using video cameras and other Cinema gadgets and techniques. Amunike Submits That:

*Nollywood is entertainment source for Nigerian movies, show times, film reviews, trailers, tickets and celebrity news... Nollywood films are indigenous to Nigeria and are produced by Nigerians. Nollywood films are currently and mostly produced on video format using private residence and offices as sets and locations hence it is popularly known as home video Movie (169).*

From the above, it is evident Nollywood is indigenous to Nigeria as it came into being as a product of cultural necessity and entertainment to fulfill the aspirations of many artists, their audience at an affordable rate which is considerably accessible, based on the current social-economic situation. In the calculation of Nwankwo

*...The Nigerian Video film industry seems to have emerged... from the need of the society to develop a film making tradition that suits its socio-economic peculiarities.... The emergences of a newer form of film making became needful; one that will circumvent the problems encountered in the older inherited cinema by being cost-effective in production, easy to distribute and with relatively convenient exhibition mode (61).*

This buttresses the fact that Nollywood is a product of Nigerian culture and its themes are also steeped in it. In Haynes opinion

*Nowhere else in Africa has a domestic market for audio-visual entertainment been captured more successful, the videos are produced on several distinct basis, and have a variety of forms, styles, themes, as well as language of expression. Taken together, they give something like an image of the Nigerian Nation (2).*

The above comment from a critic and foreigner buttresses the fact that Nollywood belongs to Nigeria as Hollywood is to America and Bollywood to India.

## Nollywood: Employment

Since the emergence of Nollywood, it has immensely contributed to the development of Nigeria's economy and the creation of employment opportunities for many youth.

Through its various departments and production processes, it has engaged many who are involved and taken them off the streets in a meaningful venture. Menegba Observes that:

*Employment generation is an important aspect of the contribution of theatre arts to national development because unemployment is an index of under-development. The home video industry appears to be the major source of employment for the generality... The fact remains that theatre arts has reduced the population of the army of the unemployed youths in Nigeria (234).*

The fact is that the jobless often create problems and threats to national security because they can easily be recruited to work against the state in their efforts to survive and earn a livelihood. Insecurity manifests when many of the citizens especially the youth are in the state of despair and hopelessness to the point of not having means of buying food and other necessities of life. When many are in this situation, it becomes threats to national security which is similar to what is obtainable in Nigeria at the moment. So, Nollywood is contributing to harnessing national security by providing job to many artists, cameramen, technicians, producers, marketers and drivers. According to the report from the Nigerian Film and Videos Censors Board (NFVCB)

*Film making employs about a million people in Nigeria, Split equally between production and distribution, making it the country's biggest employer after agriculture. ...Nollywood... Nigeria's movie industry grosses US\$ 200m – US\$ 300m a year in revenue.... Nollywood movies cost between US\$ 15,000 and US\$ 100,000 sourced mainly from the movie producers or "marketers" (cited in BGL Research 2)*

The fact that Nollywood is one of the biggest employers of labour means that it contributes to harnessing national security through engagements of those whom would have been jobless and problem to the society. This positive development has opened more avenues for job creation in Nigeria. According to UK-based PVL Media Consultants' Study on Nollywood

*Nigeria offers the greatest opportunities for publishers, content producers and distribution platforms for film, television, digital media, mobile and other forms of entertainment. The Nigeria media industry signifies a confluence of creativity and commerce. This creativity has the potential to sustain when combined with entrepreneurship and increasingly professional management (cited in BGL Research 4).*

This implies that Nollywood film industry is attracting more jobs while reducing unemployment and security threats to Nigeria. Moreover, it has been a channel for the reduction of inequality that exists in the society between the rich and the poor. Chowhury, Landes and Santini opine that Nollywood industry has notable value for the nation in terms of employing a large number of young people, spawning off or boosting

related industries and decreasing inequality between the rich and the middle class (13).

Nollywood through its employment serves as a stabilization force for the reduction of stress or pressure on many of the citizens whom would otherwise remained redundant. Again, Ayakoroma identified various areas of employment in Nollywood to include:

Major professional areas of script writers, actors, directors, producers, cameramen, special effects generators, film editors, advert visualisers, poster designers, printers, and sales personnel among others. Little wonder then that the industry, as at 2001, was adjudged the third largest in the world, after Hollywood and Bollywood (143).

This shows the many ways Nollywood creates employment opportunities for the citizens empowering them to live better and contribute to the development of the country and then harness the national security. Government sources indicate the total number of people working in the industry as over 1 million, whereas more conservative estimates puts this figure at 500,000. (cited in Chowhury, Landes and Santini 19).

### **Economic Empowerment**

Nollywood provides economic empowerment for Nigeria- the artists and to those involved in the industry. The revenue accruing from the industry serves as means of improving the economy. Chowhurry, Landes and Santini postulate that:

Nollywood industry today is the biggest film industry in Africa and one of the leading industry in the world with respect to the number of films produced per year. A Nollywood film cost between \$40,000 and \$210,000 to produce and sell up to 120,000 copies locally and more when exported on video or DVD (13).

This means that Nollywood productions are recognized locally and internationally as a source of revenue generation for the economy and the members. This vital economic and social role played by Nollywood prompted Ayakoroma to observe that:

It is interesting to note that as at 2004, it was speculated that the video film industry had generated well over \$300,000 billion into the Nigerian economy; and it was also said to have created well over 300,000 jobs for young men and women. These are in the areas of transport and catering services, hospitality, location arrangement, costume, and make-up, technical assistants, production assistants, extras or waka pass, etc.

Through these employments, money is made available to the people and which in turn impact positively on the sustenance of the economy and the harnessing of the national security. Moreover, the income accruing from the sale of the audio and video films abroad adds to the foreign exchange earnings. This brings positive image for Nigeria and as well improves diplomatic and cultural relations in countries where the films are utilized.

### **Enlightenment**

Theatre arts presentations both as texts and performances provide avenue for information dissemination through which the people are made aware of their responsibility to the state and a channel for cultural expression. This could be done by working the projected action into the production to enable the audience understand what the expected action should be and by so doing, they become aware and ready to take the action at the appointed moment. Following this essential role of the theatre Ejeke submits that:

With the writings of and production of plays with relevant thematic concepts, the Nigerian theatre can hopefully tune the minds of the Nigerian audience towards meaningful changes and development. Such changes can occur if the people follow up the suggestions and line of action initiated by the productions...If pursued with favour, such a struggle could bring about the desired development and changes (257).

Ejeke goes further to observe that through the production of the plays the people can turn around from a state of inaction to that of fruitful action, which is sine qua non for national development. This is what Nigeria needs to achieve her development objectives (257). Thus, national security can be harnessed for the well being of the citizens when they are conscious of the situation based on the need to give information willingly as well as co-operate with those concerned with the security management for appropriate action.

The desperate crave for material acquisition by some of our citizens pose serious challenge and threats to national security as many commit crime namely: murder, suicide, pen robbery and armed robbery as well as sabotage the state developmental efforts. This state of dismal hopelessness could be changed through theatrical activities like drama, dance and musical performances which impact positively on the audience's conscience. Ola-Okoyi and Bank expressed the view that:

Nigerian home video films, drama, musical films, or stage performance could be used thermostatically to demystify the crave for materialism or discredit other vices. Media mediated messages should be used to eulogize positive virtues which are prerequisites and of the best interest of the required sustainable development in the country (81).

The above buttresses the extent the theatre arts especially the home video films can go in influencing audience perception and behaviour in any given situation determined by the desire aimed at achieving positive result which on the same vein harnesses national security.

### **CONCLUSION**

The study is based on the efforts aimed at buttressing the fact that theatrical activities typified in Nollywood home

video film productions can serve as veritable source of inspiration for harnessing national security in Nigeria. This is achieved through the ability of the Nollywood industry to create employment opportunities for many especially the youth. Through the financial resources available, the youth are empowered to contribute towards the harnessing of national security and cultural development for the benefit of all.

Since it has been realized that Nollywood has the ability to harness national security and the development of Nigeria generally, it then becomes imperative that adequate attention be given to the industry to enable it manifest its maximum potentials. The study therefore recommends the injection of more funds in form of grants and endowment for the Nollywood and the other arts of the theatre. More funds should be made available to those responsible for the productions to enable them buy equipment to improve the quality and maintain high standard which will attract more revenue to the nation in order to harness the security networks. National security is a concept that should be based on the welfare of the citizens through the projection of their interest and implementation of good policies to benefit them. So, the provision of social amenities such as water, food, power, health services, accommodation, education, economic empowerment through employment and the establishment of industries should be pursued vigorously in order to alleviate the sufferings of most Nigerians. We should secure our nation with lasting ingredients of security like food and basic education but not merely with "Pump Actions" and "Machine Guns".

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