

Security Votes in Nigeria: A Desideratum for Security or Recipe for Corruption*

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Introduction

Without doubt, insecurity is one of the fundamental and notorious challenges facing Nigeria, the most populous nation in the continent of Africa. The problem has grown in proportion, sophistication and gravity especially with provincial militia groups mutating with no restraint. The emergence of the monstrous, ferocious invidious and blood-thirsty organization called Boko-Haram¹ has alarmingly aggravated the situation.

Perhaps not unexpectedly, the security challenge in Nigeria has dominated public discourse and tasked the energies of security operatives as well as the nation's resources beyond the imagination of perceptive observers. Indeed the growing insecurity in Nigeria has not only attracted negative attention to the country but made it become a country of interest. To demonstrate the monstrosity of the situation, only recently, the erstwhile President Goodluck Jonathan wrote for congressional approval of one billion dollars for equipment upgrade to help combat the menace of Boko Haram.²

It is fair however, to immediately concede that insecurity, especially internal one, is a global problem. Thus, the advanced technologies and democracies face varying degrees of insecurity. However, the difference between those other countries and Nigeria is that in Nigeria, there is no visible or demonstrable capabilities, patriotic zeal, political will, effective strategies and commitment to combat, degrade, destroy and defeat the monster of insecurity.

Without doubt, the need for adequate security in any society cannot be over-emphasized as there can be no meaningful development in an atmosphere of insecurity. Thus, it has been observed that "security is a desideratum for achieving... developmental goals."³ At domestic and international levels, the need for adequate security is not only recognized but well documented. For instance, at the international level, the United Nations as far back as 1945 committed itself:

"To maintain international peace and security, and to that end, to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment and settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace."⁴

To demonstrate its commitment and fidelity to the promotion of world peace, the UN established the Security Council in Article 23 and charged it with the "primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security."⁵ In pursuance of this mandate, the UN has embraced multi-faceted peace programmes including peacemaking, peace keeping, peace-enforcement and peace building.

Following the precedent laid down in the Charter of the United Nations, regional organizations also make provisions in their constitutive instruments for the promotion and protection of regional and international peace. The African Union for instance has as one of its objectives, the desire to promote peace, security and stability in the continent.⁶ Nigeria's, constitution, in recognition of the desirability for peace as a condition for

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¹ Boko Haram, officially called *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad*, is a militant Islamic fundamentalist organization which forbids western education and has waged relentless terrorist attacks on many states in the Northern part of the country, notably, Yobe, Bornu, Adamawa and Kano killing, maiming and kidnapping scores of civilians. Many soldiers have also been killed and territories captured by this militant Islamic sect.

² See, Punch Newspaper, 17 July, 2014. Available at www.punchng.com/..president-seeks-1b.. This request is in addition to 968 billion naira budgeted to fight the insurgent group in the 2014 Appropriation Act. See, Vanguard, May 24, 2014, available at www.vanguardngr.com last accessed on 5/5/2015.

Article 1, Charter of the United Nations, signed on 26 June, 1945 in San Francisco at the conclusion of the United Nations Conference on International Organizations. The Charter came into force on 24 October, 1945

³ Eme Okechukwu I. & Anyadike, Nkechi, "Security Challenges And Security Votes in Nigeria", 2008-2013, *Kuwait Chapter of Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review*, Vol. 2, No. 8; April, 2013 at 25.

⁴ Article 1(1)

⁵ Article 24

⁶ See, Constitutive Act of the African Union, Article 3(f)

development declared that, “the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government”.⁷

By reason of the importance of security as a foundation for peace, stability, socio-economic development and survival of any nation, no measure may be too much to spare in ensuring peace in any society. In Nigeria, apart from establishing institutional infrastructure; that is the Armed Forces,⁸ the Nigeria Police Force⁹ and the Directorate of State Security Service, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, and making budgetary allocations to them, humongous amount of money, called security vote is regularly collected by the heads of the executive branch,¹⁰ at the national, state and local government levels; ostensibly to combat security challenges that may arise in their respective domains. In a couple of reports and commentaries, several billions of naira has allegedly been collected and spent by these heads of governments as security votes. In the words of Michael Mnebe,¹¹ “Nigeria has wasted in excess of sixty billion dollars in the so-called security vote to president, Governors and Local Government Chairmen”. Although there is no scientific data on which this figure can be predicated and validated, it is nonetheless indicative and revelatory that the amount collected as security votes¹² by those entitled is massive.¹³

The worrisome aspects of this practice are that there is no limit to, or regulation of, what may be spent as security vote and, sadly, the amount involved is neither appropriated nor subject to any form of legislative scrutiny or accountability.¹⁴ Rather, the allocation and use of the amount involved are usually shrouded in secrecy. Further, notwithstanding that this so-called security vote is regularly obtained, security challenge has continued to grow with worrisome sophistication and gravity in Nigeria. This sad development has constrained many commentators to query the legitimacy of security votes in the face of the persistence of crimes in the country?¹⁵ That the amount usually obtained as security vote is seemingly limitless, unappropriated and unaccounted for should provoke patriotic and not mere passing interest. This is especially so in a democracy which has as its tenets, transparency, openness, accountability and political participation.¹⁶ Besides, and importantly, it is evident that in the absence of control, the practice is susceptible to abuse. Again, in the face of monumental corruption which has ravaged this country and rendered it virtually prostrate is it not desirable and imperative to subject security vote to public scrutiny especially as public officials are, arguably, the Chief perpetrators of corrupt practices in Nigeria? If the receipt and spending of security vote cannot be subjected to public scrutiny and censorship, is it not desirable that the practice should be circumscribed by scrupulous legislative examination in order to promote transparency and accountability?

It is proposed, in this paper, to critically, though skeletally, examine the practice of payment and spending of unbudgeted funds in the name of security votes and demonstrate that it is not only anti-thetical to basic democratic norms of transparency and accountability but a recipe for corruption and, ultimately, economic doom for Nigeria.

Meaning of Security Vote

Not unexpectedly, there is no scientific or generally accepted definition of what security vote is. Indeed, there is no known rigorous juristic attempt at defining the expression. Again, some informed commentators have been content to write on the subject without detaining themselves with the burden of definition. Suffice it to examine some attempts at defining the term.

Security vote has been pejoratively described as:

"an opaque fund" reserved for the executive arm
at various levels of government, to manipulate security issues for
political and economic gains..."¹⁷

The term has also been derisively defined by many other commentators. To Kumolu,¹⁸ it refers to "funds unconstitutionally appropriated by government at all levels in Nigeria for the purpose of enhancing national

⁷ Section 14(2)(b)

⁸ Section 214, Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended).

⁹ Section 217, Ibid.

¹⁰ That is, the President, Governors and Local Government Chairmen.

¹¹ Michael Nnebe, “Squandering of Riches in Nigeria” Nigeriaworld.com/feature/publication/nnbe/052713/html/.

¹² See for instance, Charles Kumolu, “Insecurity: What Has Security Votes Secured”, Vanguard, 15, May, 2013. Also available at www.vanguardngr.com/2013/05/insecurity-what-has-the-security/. Last accessed on 9/6/2015.

¹³ Ebitu Ukiwe lamented that the amounts stated as security votes “are outrageous.” See, Vanguard, June, 8, 2006.

¹⁴ Yinka Olatunbosun. “Governors’ Handling of Security Vote”, The Nation, April 4, 2013.

¹⁵ See for instance, O. Egbo, I Nwakoby, J. Onwumere & C. Uche, “Legitimizing Corruption in Government: Security Votes in Nigeria”, *African Studies Centre*, Leiden, The Netherlands, ASC Working Paper 91/2010, available at www.ascleiden.nl

¹⁶ See, Y. Akinseye-George, *Legal System, Corruption and Governance in Nigeria*, Lagos: New Century Law Publishers Ltd, 2000, at 72-95.

¹⁷ Egbo J. Onwumere & C. Uche, Institutionalizing Corruption: Security votes in Nigeria. African Studies Centre, Leiden, The Netherlands, ASC Working Paper 91/2010

¹⁸ Charles Kumolu, Insecurity: What has the Security Vote Secured, Vanguard, May 15, 2013.

security." According to another source, it is "an omnibus heading under which state money is siphoned with no questions asked."¹⁹ The term has also been defined as "misappropriating and stealing of public money under the guise of enhancing national security."²⁰ The practice "encompasses setting aside money for national security and operationalising such expenses."²¹

A more temperate view of security vote may yield a less derisive definition than given above. Security vote may thus be defined as the budgetary or extra-budgetary allocation ostensibly for security, received by the President, Governors and Local Government Chairmen which they spend without legal obligation to account for how it is spent. It is an amount spent by heads of government, with or without legislative appropriation, supposedly -on security without the requirement of disclosure on how the money is spent. Thus, what constitutes security vote may not have been appropriated by the relevant legislature; and even where the amount is appropriated, how it is spent, why it is spent and when it is spent are matters within the exclusive prerogative of the particular head of government who is not under any imperative duty of making any disclosure.

Security Vote as Catalyst for Corruption

Many informed, objective and perceptive commentators have seen a strong relationship between security vote and corruption and have come to the irresistible conclusion that security vote²² is a window for embezzlement of public funds in Nigeria. For instance, the Legal Defence and Assistance Project, LEDAP, a non-governmental organisation once lamented that:²³

"Security vote, as well as Local government allocations are the two windows through which states executives loot public treasuries".

The congruence between corruption and security vote was also exposed by a commentator²⁴ in an on - line forum as follows:

"The idea of handing millions of naira to unaccountable politicians, in the name of addressing security problems is a recipe for pervasive corruption. The use of security votes offers a virtual carte blanche to the country's president as well as state governors to squander billions of naira in state allocations without scrutiny, accountability and without providing 'security' for anyone save the executives' pockets and/or their bank accounts.

In the same vein, it has also been observed that:

"Every year, billions of naira is misappropriated with impunity from the federal to the state governments...The funds purportedly meant to provide security... end up being looted and transferred into personal bank accounts."²⁵

In confirmation of the notorious fact that security vote is largely drawn for personal gain, the United States Government reported in a document filed by the States Department in the District and Bankruptcy Courts for the District of Columbia that:

"Abacha together with Mohammed Sani Abacha, Bagudu and others, systematically embezzled public funds worth billion of dollars from the CBN on the pretext that the funds were necessary for national security. After causing the CBN to release the funds often in cash, Gen. Abacha and Bagudu then moved the funds overseas, including through US financial institutions."²⁶

It was also reported that:

"Over 60 false security vote letters were

¹⁹ How The President and Governors Steal From Security Votes – Naira Land Forum, 23 Dec. 2011 www.nairaland.com/831219/how-president-governors-steal, last visited on 22 July, 2014

²⁰ Egbo, et.al; Op. Cit. at 4

²¹ Ibid.

²² See , Egbo. et.al, Op. Cit.

²³ LEADAP Press Release, www.ledapnigeria.org/index.php?Option=com-content&view=a Last accessed 24/7/14

²⁴ See, www.nairaland.com/83129/how-president-governors-seal=s.Last accessed on 24/7/2014.

²⁵ See, This Day Newspaper, 16 October, 2012, available on line at www.thisday.com.

²⁶ Ibid. Abacha, the former Nigerian Military head of State was alleged to have secured 60 false Security Vote letters to loot CBN.

addressed to, and endorsed by Gen. Abacha each of which resulted in withdrawals of Nigeria's public funds from the CBN. Subsequently, the funds were deposited into accounts controlled by, or used to purchase assets for the benefit of General Abacha, Bagudu or other members of the conspiracy.²⁷

In exasperated and emotive words, Okey Ndibe²⁸ also posited that:

"One of the reasons why unscrupulous elements mobilize all means to corner a gubernatorial post is their freedom to siphon huge monthly allocations amorphously named security votes." The columnist then queried: "Why in the world should a governor or president be entrusted with sole disbursement of millions of dollars each month in the alleged name of security."²⁹ Regrettably, this practice has not abated.

Indeed, there is no doubt that the general belief in the polity, is that security vote has been grossly abused and that it is no more than a nomenclature, a euphemism, for corruption. Interestingly, Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso, the immediate past Governor of Kano State who, by virtue of his office was well situated to know, has repeatedly maintained that security vote is a smokescreen by governors to divert public funds.³⁰ He unequivocally "decried a situation where huge funds are spent in the name of security vote and at the neglect of developmental needs of the people."³¹ Calling for the abolition of payment of security vote, the Governor recommended that security votes should be channeled through the normal budgetary process to enhance transparency in public spending.³² That this incisive declaration is damning is obvious.

Similarly, Governor Rochas Okorocha of Imo State raised the alarm that security vote has been a vehicle for the perpetration of corruption. Condemning his predecessor whom he alleged collected N6.5 billion annually as security vote, he promised to reduce the amount to N2.5 billion.³³ Also, on 12 November, 2007, media reports quoted the former Governor of Oyo State, Rashidi Lagoja to have requested the Federal Government to stop the allocation of security votes to Governors as a way of fighting corruption.³⁴ It was reported that the Governor's then estranged political father, Adedibu, had demanded a share of the monthly security vote from the Governor.³⁵

The controversy about security vote has been the subject of heated and emotive debate even in some Houses of Assembly. For instance, in Edo State, the Governor, Adams Oshiomole was once accused of collecting N911 Million "between November, 12 to December 31, 2008 as security vote without decline in extra judicial killings, kidnapping, and cultism in the state. Similarly, the Ondo State Governor was accused of collecting N4 billion annually as security vote."³⁶

The same uproar was witnessed in Abia State with the House denouncing the allegation that it had approved N700 Million monthly as security vote for the Governor. The House, through its spokesperson, Deputy Speaker, Chinedum Elechi stated that³⁷

"This House has not approved the 2010 budget estimate as public hearing is still going on. We need to put paid to the rumour that the House has passed N700 million for the governor. Assuming it is passed the way it is in the budget estimate, it is only going to be N667 million and not N700 million".

One may ask: what is the difference?

The irony in all of this, which is a validation of the general belief that security vote is merely an acronym to secure the financial interest of the recipients rather than the lives and property of Nigerians, is that insecurity has grown exponentially in this country with worrisome intensity and gravity. Expressing the same sentiment, a commentator has incisively observed that:

We believe that the money handed over to governors in the name of

²⁷ See, Sahara Reporters, sahareporters.com/2014/03/06/how-abacha-and-associates.

²⁸ Okey Ndibe, Let's Expunge Security Vote and Immunity African Outlook, www.africanoutlookonline.com/index.php.last accessed on 29/7/2014.

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Ibid

³² Ibid see, also, The Punch, 2 Oct; 2012

³³ Ibid

³⁴ See P.M News Nigeria, August 3, 2011 available at www.pmmnewsnigeria.com/2011/08/03/security-vote-to-secure last accessed on 24/7.

³⁵ This Day Newspapers, 16 October, 2012.

³⁶ Michael Nnebe, Squandering of Riches in Nigeriaworld, nigeriaworld.com/feature/publication/nnebe/

³⁷ Daily Champion, January, 20, 2010

security vote has not played any meaningful role in curtailing insecurity in Nigeria and must be scrapped. With the security vote governors seemed to have only succeeded in securing their own pockets and not Nigerians."³⁸

Instructively the idea of security vote predates the current democracy.

Thus, it has been asserted that;

Babangida was ruthless in the way he amassed his colossal wealth. First is the illegal self-allocation of free oil sold on the spot market. Then he initiated the corrupt culture of maintaining a huge monthly security vote virtually as personal pocket money.³⁹

Human Rights Watch,⁴⁰ in a study conducted in 2007, with focus on Local Government noted, *inter alia*, on security vote as follows:

The security vote is one of the most opaque items in any local government budget; and it is also typically one of the largest single allocations... According to a Commission of Inquiry convened in 2006, Khano local Government's Chair has received an average of N60 Million (\$461,000) annually for his security vote... Tai local government's chair had a security vote of N40 million (\$ 300,000) in 2006. Opofo/Nkoro Local government's security vote was N36 million (\$ 280,0000 in 2006. In each of these cases, the security votes exceeded the total capital budget for either health or education."

Nigeria in Crises

That Nigeria is in crises is a notorious fact. Nigeria is in social, political, economic, and religious crises. As insightfully articulated by Okon Uya,⁴¹ "only the most hopelessly uninformed or those who derive personal gain from our present unacceptable circumstances can fail to appreciate that Nigeria has been in crisis for a greater part of our journey to nation statehood since independence". Continuing, the renown Professor of History noted that:

"Crisis abounds in virtually all sectors of our national life; frustration and precipitous decline of our once vibrant civil societies; stunted political, social and economic growth; massive unemployment; insecurity of life and property; collapsing health, educational and infrastructural services; stark poverty of the many in the midst of the opulence of the few; pollution of values evidenced in massive corruption; indiscipline and moral decadence;⁴² etc

On the developmental problems of Nigeria, the present author was constrained to lament elsewhere that:⁴³

Undoubtedly, Nigeria is a nation richly endowed by providence. She is blessed with abundant human and material resources and not plagued by the numerous natural disasters like flood, tornado, wild-fire and earthquake which have devastated many nations of the world and rendered them prostrate. It is therefore a regrettable irony that notwithstanding its enormous human and material endowment and divine protection against natural disasters, Nigeria,

³⁸ PM. News Op. Cit.

³⁹ Osahon (2010) quoted by at 19

⁴⁰ Human Right Watch, 2007 at 33

⁴¹ O.E Uya, Nigerian Intellectuals and the Challenge of Nation Building University of Uyo Convocation Lecture, University of Uyo, 2009 at 7.

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ J.A. Dada, Nigeria: The Challenges of Nationhood; Calabar: University of Calabar Press; 2009 at 11.

like many nations in Africa has remained an underdog in the community of nations, still essentially marginalized, peripheral, exploited and despised; unable to play the role which her numerical strength and abundant human and material resources bestow on her.

In further validation of the gravity of the crises, it is relevant to note that Nigeria's total debt stock as at December, 31, 2013 stood at N10.4trn.⁴⁴ Consequently, it is important to acknowledge that Nigeria does not have a limitless purse from which it can spend without restraint or any form of accountability without the danger of economic doom or total asphyxiation. Indeed, in the last one year, payment of salaries of public employees particularly at the national and state levels have been erratic⁴⁵.

The enormity of the crises plaguing Nigeria as demonstrated above makes it imperative, and urgent that we respond positively to addressing them.

One practical way that the bulk of these crises can be combated and defeated lies in the prudent and accountable management of national resources. This will entail, *inter alia*, blocking and eliminating all sources of economic waste, including but not limited to security vote.

Securing the Security Vote

Every year, dating back to the military era, Nigeria's defence spending in budget estimates, has been given primacy in sectorial allocations. In 2012, for instance, N921.91 billion was allocated to security. In the 2013 budget about N1 trillion was budgeted for security, representing an increase of N135 billion over what was appropriated in 2012.⁴⁶ In the 2014 budget N968.127 billion, that is about 20% of the total budgetary estimate of N4.962 trillion was allocated to defence.⁴⁷ Ironically, in spite of these annual huge allocations, the problem of security has been arrested. Reacting to the allocation for defence in 2012 budget, Nasir Ahmad El-Rufai observed that:

"For a nation that is not at war, Nigeria's defence spending raises several critical concerns. The paradox of course is that the more government spends on defence, the more insecure Nigerians feel."⁴⁸

It is, therefore, legitimate to assert that it is not merely doubtful but conclusive that moneys allocated to defence have not been prudently utilized. Specifically commenting on security vote, it is relevant to ask the following inter-related questions: On what do the recipients of security votes spend this money? Equipment, personnel or information? If equipment why would they be bought outside budgetary allocation and without legislative approval? Further, why would the acquisition of military equipment be shrouded in secrecy? Again, does a State or Local Government have the competence to acquire military equipment? If security vote is meant to fund personnel cost, are the personnel not public officers who are entitled to emoluments as provided for by the law? Or are security votes spent on "area boys" in need of settlement? If security vote is expended on information, why do we have intelligence units in all our security outfits?

In many states and Local governments, a specific sum is appropriated or spent monthly as security votes. Does it mean that the nature and scale of security challenge remains static every month to justify spending the same amount every month to curtail the problem? Is it not correct to say that the receipt of security votes by the President, Governors and Local Government Chairmen amounts to triplication of government expenditure over the same problem? Does the president spend his security vote to curtail external aggression only? If part goes for internal security challenge occurring in specific states in specific months, is it justified for the Governors and Local Government Chairmen of those states to receive security votes in the months of Presidential intervention in those states? If security vote is partly spent on personnel; are the personnel who are members of the armed forces whose primary responsibility is to ensure security in the first place, not being doubly remunerated for discharging their primary responsibility?

Since the President, Governors and Local Government Chairmen are not signatories to the accounts of their respective governments and as such have to cause memos to be generated, can it be realistically said that the matters on which the votes are spent are within the exclusive knowledge of these heads of governments? If the money collected as security vote is not to be accounted for publicly, why should it be screened even from legislative investigation? If, as it has been argued, this practice is susceptible to abuse and it is antithetical to democratic tenets, ought we not insist on its abrogation?

⁴⁴ CBN, DMO Report; Leadership; Newspaper; 18 Feb; See also, DMO Official Website www.dmo.gov.ng/

⁴⁵ Some States like, Benue, Osun, Oyo are owing several months of unpaid salaries.

⁴⁶ See, Elombah, 27 March, 2013 available at elombah.com/index.php.

⁴⁷ See, Premium Times, 24 May, 2014.

⁴⁸ Sahara Reporters, 16 February, 2012 Saharareporters.com/2012/02/16/budget-2012-5-defence-sp. Last accessed on 27/7/2014.

In the Constitutional provision of sections 162, 163 and 168 dealing with public revenue, it is not stated that spending of public revenue need not be accounted for. Thus, is this practice not unconstitutional and must it be perpetuated even though there is no constitutional basis upon which it can be predicated?

From the above premise, it is legitimate to insist that if security vote must be paid to heads of governments, then, its spending must be made subject to some measure of accountability. Specifically, the legislature, if not at plenary, then at executive session, must have the competence to examine how the money earmarked as security votes is spent.

It is conceded that given the sensitive nature of security, nation-states have historically considered it undesirable to debate and agree on security matters and its funding in the global public space on the ground that disclosures may endanger national security. This must not constrain us, in a democracy, to insist that some measure of transparency is desirable also in the interest of the nation. It is interesting and heart-warming that this advocacy is not novel. Mike Ignini, has also expressed the same view. In this words:

"I do not subscribe to any form of appropriation that is not vetted; it may be done before or after it has been applied depending on its needs; but it should be susceptible to scrutiny if not by a large group but by at least a specialized group but by at least a specialized group; the core motivation of democratic leadership is the necessity to be accountable to the electors or the representatives of the electors."⁴⁹

Conclusion

This piece has unequivocally demonstrated that while the imperative need for adequate security in any nation cannot be doubted, the practice of spending money without legislative allocation or approval is clearly dubious, untenable and intolerable in any democratic environment. Money used as security votes can provide desperately needed infrastructure, especially electricity, and better healthcare facilities that can affect the lives of Nigerians of all stripes.

It is important to stress that national security transcends equipping the armed forces in readiness for battle as insecurity is often times caused by injustice, exclusion, discrimination, corruption, poverty and ethnicity. The modern conceptualization of national security is not exclusively about military defence of a nation's territorial integrity but includes socio-economic development which is a condition for self-actualization, and peaceful co-existence. According to an author.⁵⁰

In a modernizing society, security means development. Security is not military force though it may involve it; security is development and without development, there can be no security... the security of any nation lies not solely or even primarily in its military capacity; but equally in developing relatively stable patterns of economic and political growth.

Adamu⁵¹ has equally observed that security goes beyond the military factor. According to him, 'whether national or regional, security transcends the definitive rubric of military alert or valour. It extends to the interlocking realms of economic self-reliance, cohesion, and political stability'. In broad terms, Jega⁵², has itemized the meaning of national security as consisting of the following concerns: protection and defence of the country's territorial integrity, promotion of peaceful coexistence in the polity, containing/eliminating threats to internal security, ensuring systemic stability and bringing about sustainable and equitable socio-harmony; peaceful culture; nurturing civility, promoting good governance, transparency and structural reforms amenable to democratized.

Nothing short of this broader and holistic approach can take Nigeria out of the seemingly insurmountable insecurity confronting it today. If the above is appreciated, then the managers of our national resources will discontinue, without the slightest hesitation, this exhibition of unaccountable governance as it is perilous to national well-being.

To further demonstrate that Nigeria cannot afford and must avoid unaccountable governance which security votes represent, it is not only tempting but relevant to draw attention to the recent statistics on poverty in Nigeria. According to the National Bureau of statistics report released in February, 2014, the number of Nigerians living in poverty is 112.5 million representing 62.6 percent of this country's population. With many

⁴⁹ Mike Ignini, Vanguard, May, 15, 2003.

⁵⁰ Mc Namara, *The Essence of Security*, London: Haper & Row; 1968 at 147

⁵¹ A. Adamu, "Redefining West African Security" Paper Presented at the seminar on Global Changes and challenges to sub-Regional Maritime Security, NILA, Lagos, December, 1990.

⁵² A. M. Jega, *Democracy; Good governance and Development in Nigeria*; Ibadan, Spectrum Books Ltd, 2007 at 194.

Nigerians living in the outskirts of prosperity, it is, therefore, crucial to take urgent steps to redress this unpalatable situation. We cannot afford to celebrate because of the recent rebasing of the Nigerian economy which made the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the highest in Africa. Even if this rebasing is indefectible, it cannot justify recklessness in government spending.

Consequently, If Nigeria must surmount the enormous socio- economic challenges which have plagued it, then a number of measures must be taken urgently and committedly prosecuted in order to curb the abuse which security vote represents. First, there must be legislative provision regulating the receipt and disbursement of security votes if we must insist on this evidently dubious practice. Specifically, security votes must be appropriated. It must not be extra-budgetary spending. At the moment, some states including Lagos and Kano, make specific budgetary allocation for security vote. There is, therefore, no reason why this should not be done by every legislative assembly. With these, some measure of transparency and accountability will be achieved and corruption significantly minimized with the overall result that more money will be available to address and redress the various developmental challenges earlier spotlighted.

Second, the amount receivable as security vote by the various heads of government must be substantially reduced from the staggering, and alarming allocation which is currently collected.⁵³ Indeed, it has been rightly suggested that "the police should be better equipped instead of spending the money on security votes."⁵⁴ Third, any amount appropriated and expended as security vote must be subject to legislative scrutiny either by a select committee or the leadership of the appropriate legislature. Fourth, the spending of security vote should not be the exclusive prerogative of the President, Governor or Local Government Chairman as the case may be. Rather, the power to expend security vote should be a shared power between the heads of government and relevant Heads of all the security agencies established either by the Constitution or Act of the National Assembly. This is especially so because the protection and promotion of national security is the primary responsibility of the security agencies.

Indeed, it has been suggested that:

"Security funds ought to be sent to the police or agencies constitutionally charged with public safety and national security. If a president and governors are to spend security votes, let's insist that they account for where each Kobo spent-and why"⁵⁵

A pragmatic curtailment of the current regime of collecting and expending security vote holds the prospects of enthroning improved standards of living and facilitating the reduction of the multitude of problems buffeting Nigeria and Nigerians.

Importantly, the constitutional tools or the institutions charged with the primary responsibility for security, that is, the Army, Police and other Security Agencies must be well equipped, well-motivated and well trained to be able to nip in the bud any security challenge. Undoubtedly, it is more beneficial, less burdensome and result-oriented to prevent a problem than solving it.

⁵³ Cosmos Erhabor, State Governors and Their Security Votes I REPORTS – NG.Com. ireports-ng.com/2010/11/23/state-governors-and-their-security.

⁵⁴ Joe Okei- Odumakin, Vanguard, May, 15, 2013

⁵⁵ Okey Ndibe, quoted in Nairaland, Op. Cit.

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