

Security Agencies and the Management of Media's Early Warning Report

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Abstract

One of the sustainable factors that keep a nation from impending danger is early warning. In the world of information, the media assists the security agents to gather information through information-sharing and dissemination to keep the world out of impending dangers. Both the press and security agencies need each other in the process of gathering important information that touches on the political security of a nation. With the wave of terrorism, nuclear proliferation, insurgency and environmental hazard which pose threat to national security, the world needs quick information on escalating developments, be they slow and gradual or quick and sudden, to react timely and effectively, if possible, leaving them time to employ intelligence and other non-coercive or military preventive measures. Since these measures require information, therefore, the press and security roles are interdependent, hence an attempt by this paper to highlight the importance roles of security agencies and the media in early warning. It adopts persuasive communication theory and unified theory of acceptance and use of technology and derives its data from observation and desk research. The paper concludes that, if early warning signal is well reported by the media and intelligently processed by the security agencies, it will help a nation to combat crimes, promote peace and be ready to face future threats.

Keywords: Media, Intelligence, Early Warning, Security.

Introduction

Judging the probability that certain events lead to violence or other crisis, reliable information is needed on a range of possible common events, such as border crisis, nuclear threat, disintegrating regime,

probable terrorist attack or where they are most likely to emerge (Lund 1997). Undoubtedly, a nation needs security to sustain its stability. Within the context of security is information-gathering and dissemination and the agents for these among other, agents are the press, intelligence agents, police, immigration officers, private security agents and others. Intelligence agents' source for information through open and secret sources. The open-source, without doubt, comprises the media from which information is gathered by the security agencies for onward transmission to the government for policymaking (Bartholomees, 2010). In this era of globalisation, information has reduced the world into a technological village, where events happening in any part of the world can easily be shared in other parts through the media.

With the current international political diversity, national security is based on surveillance and information data collection on any impending issue that may likely pose threat to national security in which the media and intelligence agents are the sole custodians of such information. Early warning on impending danger or reoccurrence is promptly spread through information by relaying it through television, telephone, digital camera, broadcasting and internet browsing and from both local and international journals. In view of this, the interrelationship of the government with the media and security agents on national security is a sine qua non (Gill and Phythian, 2012: 103-104). Given this, if the authorities are to make decisions and get them accepted as binding and put them into effect, solidarity must be developed not only around some set of authorities themselves but around some of the major aspects of the system within which they operate. For security sustenance in early warning, therefore, the major aspects of the system within which the authorities may be operating are the media and the security agents to detect threats and maintain national security.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Early Warning and National Security

In contemporary international affairs, there are lots of issues that constitute threats to national security. There are natural disasters such as famine, disease, earthquake, flood and manmade disasters like

violence, war, nuclear threat, insurgency, terrorism and others. The need for quick information intervention and dissemination by the press to intelligence agents are of prime importance (Robert, 2003). According to Acharya and Dewitt (1997), early warning involves the monitoring of developments in political, military, ecological and other areas, such as the effect of refugee flows, threats of famine and spread of disease, that may lead to the outbreak of violence or major humanitarian disaster.

Almond and Coleman (1960) supporting the imperativeness of information dissemination between the media and the security agents and the need of any national government to maintain internal security, posit that “all functions performed by the political system—political socialisation and recruitment, interest articulation, interest aggregation, rule-making, rule-application and rule-adjudication— are performed through communication.” This informed that the main motive of information-gathering and dissemination to government and the security agencies by the media and security agents is to maintain national security in all ramifications. Thus, security through early warning is not limited to military security alone but to all aspects of national and world security that touch war, insurgency, diseases, famine, natural disaster, weather forecast, environmental pollution and so on. This is why Galtung’s definition of security supports the motive of early warning in maintaining general security when he opined that security is the result of a state positive peace— that is, security is found not in terms of a nation’s might but in terms of a holistic understanding that moves beyond the currency of military power with states as key actors (Galtung, 1975).

In line with the roles of early warning, a state as a security manager in all aspects of military, political, economic, social and human activities possesses the power that keeps the government of a nation and its security moving. This can be made possible by adhering to early warning signs against impending threats through information from the media to the security agents for an early response (William, 2008). Lack of government commitment to early warning sometimes leads to intelligence failure as manifested by the 9/11 terrorists attack against America and the Second Gulf War (Jervis, 2010; Strasser and Whitney, 2004).

A nation is also a security community. Schmid (2000:74), applying the definition of Deutch, defines a security community as “a group which has become integrated in the sense of having attained within a territory a sense of community strong and widespread enough to assume dependable expectations of peaceful changes among population.” Among the chief aims of any community is the protection against both internal and external threat in which one of the protective measures against the threat is early warning. The importance of early warning to security can be seen from the postulation of McCarthy (1997:15) when he opined that, “early warning involves a process of communicating judgments about threats early enough for decision-makers to take action to deter whatever outcome is threatened or to manage events in such a way that the worst consequences are mitigated.”

Early warning possesses the following identified requirements enunciated by Jongman and Schmid (1994). Early warning refers to the prognosis (forecasting) or projection based on collected and processed information. More clearly than monitoring, it is designed to have an alerting function, identifying critical situations with a high escalation potential so that timely actions can be taken to reverse the trend or, at least, to soften its impact through contingency planning. The warning should be issued by a source that has authority with target groups, otherwise, it might be ignored or the wrong sort of action might be taken.

Early warning covers any activity that may threaten the national security environment or cause escalation within the national settings. Early warning addresses various issues in diverse areas that bother on national security. It also addresses areas, where an early response is imminent. Such areas are internal, intrastate or international conflict, genocide, refugee flow across the border, internal displacement of persons, complex humanitarian crisis, state failure, famine, diseases epidemic, minority risk and so on (Chester *et. Al.*, 2006). Early warning must be timely and should not be overtaken by events. To forestall insecurity, early warning requires a methodology to be applied, such as field monitoring which requires systematic intelligence-gathering through a cultural study of the potential conflict region by local experts, natives and foreigners. It

also requires indicators monitoring, which rests on statistical indicators of the events and model-based forecasting (Bolden, 2013).

Theoretical Framework

Two theories are germane to this study. They are Persuasive Communication Theory and Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology. Nwanwene and Thomas (2005) opined that persuasive communication is a conscious attempt by an individual to change the behaviour of others through message transmission. They also made one understand that the decision-making by individuals is central to social action in persuasion. This persuasive communication embraces society, individuals, group and the world at large.

Nwanwene and Thomas (2005) highlighted five stages of adopting persuasive communication. The first stage is the Awareness Stage. This is when individuals are exposed to the information and the idea therein. This may come from printed, broadcast or internet source rather than a public speaker or personal source. They opine further that although individuals may lack complete information, they are not motivated to seek additional information. This connotes that the awareness of idea is central to their immediate reaction. The second stage is the Interest Stage. This is the time when individuals are interested and allow themselves to receive further information for their actions. Next is the Evaluation Stage. This is when the receiver now evaluates the importance or the implication of such information to his life. Fourth is the Trial Stage: The receiver subjects himself to trial with interpersonal communication. The final stage is the Adoption Stage: If the trial was persuasive and reassuring from the public or opinion leaders, individual then will be persuaded to adopt the innovation.

Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology explains why users apply information system and the usage behaviour associated with it. The theory holds that the usage behaviour from media information system (like internet, radio, newspaper and others) is predicated on four key constructs, namely performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence and facilitating conditions, which are direct usage intention and behaviour. Again, what moderates the four impact key constructs on usage intention and behaviour are age,

gender, experience and voluntariness of use (Venkatesh *et. Al.*, 2003). Theory of Unified Acceptance was coined form eight models by researchers to explain Information Sources (IS) usage behaviour, such as theory of reasoned action, technology acceptance model, motivational model, planned behaviour/technology acceptance model, model of PC utilisation, innovation diffused theory and social cognitive theory. The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) was validated in a longitudinal study and found to account for seventy percent (70%) of the variance in usage intention.

The relevance of Persuasive Communication Theory and Unified Theory of Acceptance and use of technology to this paper is predicated on the need to understand the extent that news can motivate citizens to take action positively or negatively against the government in power. It also raises the level of attitudinal behaviour of people to what they had read or seen which can eventually persuade them into taking action. Again, the voluntariness of the use of the internet has shaped the behaviour of the masses, developed their cognitive mentality to socio-political issues of their environment. It is also a source of technological innovation to persuade people towards positive or negative reaction on issues that affect their civil liberties

The Media's Role in Early Warning History

It is pertinent to trace the history of early warning that supports security events in world history. Historically, the concept of early warning had been imported into conflict prevention field from the readiness requirements posed by the Cold War's nuclear deterrence policy. Distant early warning American line radar and visual observation posts stationed in Alaska and Canada near 70th parallel were to detect incoming Soviet aircraft and missiles orbit and to discover underground silos in which intercontinental ballistic missiles were stored. The broad definition imported into the conflict field is signalling the period before a situation in which tensions develop into conflict (Schmid, 2000). Before the outbreak of the First World War, spy and counter-espionage activities had provided an early warning in the secret plan of German to invade England. This was revealed in the novel by Erskine Childers and William Le Queux. *Childers's*

Adventures, ‘The Riddle of Sands’ revealed German invasion of England. Le Queux’ book, *Secret Service* was serialised in *Daily Mail* warning that there were German soldiers in Britain masquerading as waiters and tourists.

He also warned that a group of I traitors had formed an organisation called ‘The hidden hand’ and ready to betray their nation into the hand of the Germans (David, 2004). In the 2nd World War, a war warning had been sent to Washington on November 27, 1941, and to the American commander in the Pacific, when Japan had suddenly changed the radar call signs of all its ships which were difficult for American communication intelligence in Pearl Harbor to intercept for appropriate defensive deployment. Failure to intercept for early response led to the bombing of the American fleet in Pearl Harbour (Nathan 1989). Closely following the Pearl Harbour disaster during the 2nd World War was the early warning danger which the effect of America’s nuclear weapons to be used against Japan will pose to world security. The bombing of Pearl Harbour was followed by America’s retaliation by using the atomic bomb to seal the fate of Japan in the war. The scientists who invented the bomb immediately sent early warning signal to President Truman in April 1945, thus: “We remind you of the report sent to President Roosevelt in 1940. It spoke of the danger of radiation which will kill men, women and children for several miles around the explosion...” (Ferriby *et. Al.*, 2000: 248).

The end of the 2nd World War ushered in the Cold War in which intelligence and early warning played a vital role between the defunct U.S.S.R. and the United States of America. Undoubtedly, fear and suspicion divided the United States from its Soviet ally even before the guns of World War II had cooled down. In early 1945, a left-wing magazine, *Amerasia*, devoted to Asian affairs revealed an article on American-I rivalry in Thailand which was quoted verbatim from a classified document from the Office of the State Security. This early warning of American Intelligence secret document leakage gave the Intelligence agents early response to secure a warrant against *Amerasia*. The Iran contra affairs of 1986 were blown open in the newspaper and television screens with the antecedent early warning and security threat that will likely pose to American citizens. In place

of the Americans taken hostage by Iran, a settlement of weapons trade was about to be made by Iran and America to release the hostages.

This attracted early warning revelation that called for a congressional probe as the nation watched breathlessly on the covert operation (Nathan 1989). On the application of biological weapons on the Iran Kurdish in 1988 during Iraq and Iran war, *Washington Times* reported an early warning from the Britain M16 intelligence service three years later that Hussein had ordered an all-out effort to develop nuclear weapons. This seriously raised the issue of the Second Gulf War by America to apply early warning response against its use by Hussein (jewishvirtuallibrary.org/). Intelligence inefficiency and failure was seriously blamed on the American Federal Bureau of Intelligence on the issue of Al Qaeda's attack of 9-11-2001. Christopher (2008:138), attesting to the role of early warning and the failure of American intelligence agencies in taking early prevention, said, "another reason why the pre 9-11 dearth of American intelligence on Afghanistan still shocks is that open sources readily displayed the magnitude of the problem of foreigners entering Afghanistan for guerrilla and terror training— *New York Times*' Sunday Magazine reporter, Tim Weiner, drew attention to the tens of thousands in training there."

This shows that, in recent times, modern democratic states have often proven that outright negligence about their security, arising from ignoring early warning can be catastrophic. Nowadays, some states may even decline to raise a large military while some seem distasteful on the hiring of the press or spies to play important roles in early warning.

The Importance of Media in Information Dissemination

Chapman and Slaymaker (2002), stressing the usefulness of information in exposing governmental activities on how they rule over their citizens argued that: industrial society has moved into an era of advanced information technological innovation, affecting the way developed countries run their businesses, their institutions, and lead their lives. One of the areas in which these technological advances are dramatically influencing people's lives is that of information and communication technology— hence the claim that we are in the midst

of a digital revolution that is driving us towards an information society. Barry (2012), quoting the Declaration of Principles issued at the end of 2003 World Summit in Geneva and Tunis, emphasise the commitment and the rights of citizens in acquiring knowledge, protecting their civic rights and sustainable development through information technology in the following manner: “We declare our common desire and commitment to building a people-centred, inclusive..., create access and share information and knowledge, enabling individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential in promoting sustainable development and improving their lives.”

Barry asserts further that the media has reduced uncertainty and anxiety. The internet, among others, has helped to bring society together. The internet has also established a network of communication between community members and the outside world to improve the institutional context of their communities. All over the world, the internet allows access to new communication tools with the provision of medium for discussions and exchange among various communities and organisations. This enhances their knowledge about their environment and development therein. Expressing the geographical sphere of media influence, Kamath (2008) opined that internet news, newspaper or news has no geographic boundaries and seen by many as a compilation of facts or events of current interest or importance to the readers. Highlighting the implication for internet news or any news, it may be said that without consciously realising it, most people read only part of the newspaper they buy or the internet news they browse. Their readings are selective and they read only what interests them. What interest most readers are internet news characterised by novelty captivating pictures at the background expressing discontentment, crime, conflict, power struggle and religious conflict. This is to attract widespread attention, interest, society determinism, moulding public opinions for the promotion of pre-determined objective (Chigozie, 2014).

With the new revolution in information technology, Aborisade (2012) citing Avgerou (2008:133) reiterated the history impact and the potential of information system in the following words:

Undoubtedly, the pace and direction of information and communication technology (ICT) innovation and concomitant organisational change which comprise the object of study of Information System (IS) field, are set by the advanced countries of the World-North America and Europe. Nevertheless, international literature includes an increasing number of studies of IS innovation experiences in other regions of the world, mainly the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Avgerou (2008) discussed further how developing countries have benefited from information and telecommunication technologies from three processes namely: (a) A process of technology knowledge transfer and adaptation to local social conditions; (b) A process of socially embedded actions; (c) A process of transformative techno-organisational intervention associated with global politics and economics. Highlighting how information technology such as internet was adopted among Iraq citizens, it was concluded that information technology expanded the options and the reach of citizens in the war-ravaged areas and enabled them to have a wider choice of action. According to Leiner *et. Al.* (2003), internet technology has enhanced the mass participation of citizens in news production more than any other technology before it. The internet has revolutionised the computer and communications world (Aborisade, 2012).

The Security Agencies' Role in Managing Early Warning Media Report

The Forum for Early Warning and Response (FEWR 1997:1) defines early warning as: "The systematic collection and analysis of information from areas of crisis for the purpose of anticipating the (a) escalation of violent conflict; (b) the development of strategic responses to these crises; and (c) the presentation of options to critical actors for decision making." From this definition, the main task of detecting threat against national security stands clear. It is also the systematic collection and analysis of information. The advantages that follow are anticipation of violence, strategy against the violence and the presentation of options to the actors who are government or its agencies for decision making. Security agencies usually combine to form security communities, such

as the American Intelligence Community comprising Federal Bureau of Intelligence, National Security Agency, Military Intelligence, Homeland Security and so on. Examples may also come from Israeli's Intelligence community comprising the Mossad and the Shinn Bet as well as the Nigerian intelligence community which include the Department of State Security and the Defence Intelligence Agency, to mention but a few.

However, other agencies saddled with security responsibilities are numerous all over the world such as the Police, Civil Defence, State Peace Corps, and Homeland Security in America and other nations' security all over the world. Security has to do with the management of threat by these security communities and organisations and the promotion of peace without let or hindrance. With concern to early warning intelligence collection from the media and its dissemination, every intelligence community of any nation plays a vital role. It is worthwhile. Therefore, to examine the roles of these security outfits together in the management of media early warning report.

Systematic Collection and Analysis of Information

The intelligence community of any nation embarks on systematic collection, analysis and dissemination of intelligence on intending threat that may likely befall a nation. Intelligence is defined by Schmid (2000:50) as: "Knowledge resulting from detection, collection, integration, evaluation, analysis and interpretation of information used for decision-making for diplomatic, military and other operations." The reliance of the security agents on intelligence gathering from the media cannot be underestimated in early warning. Intelligence agents must detect and collect genuine information on the foreseeable danger by systematic collection of information from the media. Herman (1997:15), narrating the interrelationship of the press and intelligence in information gathering, claims the newspaper for a long time remained 'intelligencers' and diplomats continued to speak of political intelligence.

On information gathering, therefore, the roles of media and security agents are synonymous. The media gather information through investigative journalism while the security agents embark on information-gathering through intelligence surveillance by secret and

open sources. Raw information on early warning must undergo some elements of professional and systematic procedures of integration and evaluation with a view to fishing out genuine and unbiased report. Therefore, it is the duty of intelligence agents relying on the media source or other sources to see that information collected so far are genuine. The media before passing the information for public consumption should try to undergo the bureaucratic procedure to see that wrong information is not reported. Towle (1987:86), enumerating the importance of the media as a source of information, said: 'There was some regular continental interest in peacetime military intelligence and the development of printing and gradual liberalisation of press and publication laws that made books and newspapers increasingly available as sources of foreign information.' Till date, Security Departments could still consider newspapers, books and intelligence agents' reports for intelligence-gathering.

More striking is the early warning intelligence-gathering, which becomes the stimulation of the new technical sources of information gathering from the media sources of information gathering such as radio interception or communication while the other was airborne photography known as imagery. These enable intelligence and media, who are specialist information collection agencies to concentrate on a particular kind of information collection and thereby meeting the needs of all parts of governmental activities. Another element of the media and security agents is the sharing of the gathered information on an early warning. Media reports on early warning threats are read by the security agents and investigation starts immediately to know the extent of early warning going by the media. This information can be found through newspaper reports, television and radio communication. Radio communication is also a replica of signal intelligence. The real impetus for modern signal intelligence came early from the introduction of radio. Radio is electromagnetic radiation in free space, how widely it radiates depends on its technical characteristics. According to Herman (1997:67), 'use of radio provides their opponents with commensurate intelligence opportunities. Radio interception was the basis of war's big signal intelligence successes.' Again, pictures of events on early warning by the media can be relayed

and put into intelligence analysis through imagery intelligence to make intelligence forecast on early warning possible and precise.

Information Analysis

It is a cardinal principle of early warning intelligence gathering that collectors must do adequate analysis on information collected not to send the wrong signal to the affected nation. Analysis identifies significant facts, comparing them with existing facts and drawing conclusions. The work of the media is that of a historian who relays quick information to the public on impending threats. Though the media may not require rigorous data analysis before passing information to the public, to a certain extent, the rigour of investigative journalism should guide him to a logical conclusion. Intelligence agents, as security officers in early warning, need to acquire inputs from all types of problems emanating from analysis. They must be close to their collectors to examine their collections and know the pitfall of various sources when their collectors are carried away by professional enthusiasm.

The difference between media and intelligence in early warning analysis can be seen in Carr (1964:123) when he opined that “the historian’s craft involves the capacity to rise above the limited vision of his situation in society and history. Intelligence needs this same ability to get outside its preconceptions, in short- as well as long-term analysis.” The difference in analysis and the consequences can also be seen in Gazit (1988:35), when he said, “the journalist can entirely ignore his own mistakes. They’ll be forgotten by the time tomorrow’s headlines appear. Not so much into the intelligence analysts. If he proves to be living on a cardinal issue, he will doubtless hang for it.’ However, the media stand as the vehicle which gathers information for analysis for the security agents on intelligence gathering.

Interpretation and Development of Strategies

All sourced intelligence materials extend to many non-intelligence sources which include open materials that are publicly available as well as information by the government through non-intelligence means. Most of these non-intelligence materials such as diplomatic telegrams, news agency reports and mass media coverage can flow directly into all source stage. It is the responsibility of intelligence

agent to jointly access all sources of information and interpret them to a logical conclusion to achieve proportionality and rationality in their judgment. The essentials of interpretation are to enable intelligence security agents to know how to categorise their reports types either on current reportorial which is based on what has happened recently and is still happening now or basic-descriptive report which centres on relatively fixed facts of a situation and speculative-evaluation which deals with future and also assessing what intelligence means to the users. Various strategies are, therefore, recommended against the threats through rapid deployment of force or task force, conflict resolution committee, general immunisation against impending flu or epidemic, striking bargain with adversary or strategy to control arm flow and so on.

Presentation of Report to Decision-makers

If preventive action is going to be imperative more often in the future, it is necessary that reliable intelligence advice from security officers emanating from the report of the media be provided to decision-makers as to what is likely to happen if they adopt a certain course of action in a given situation. This responsibility does not isolate the media which give direct solutions to the government through publication or intelligence agents who give secret professional advice and strategies to the government and also predict future implications. These responsibilities are necessary so far in intelligence, where few existing analyses of specific conflict situations try to or can back up what they recommend to policymakers with a sound or, at least, plausible analysis of whether the recommended actions are likely to work and why. The policy prescription must also rely heavily on informed judgment and reduce uncertainty. Nevertheless, security intelligence policy advocacy that is based on evaluating past actions and their results in a given context would be an improvement in decision-making (Buckley, 2014; Fingar, 2010).

Media's Early Warning and the Security Implication

The essence of early warning is to get a quick response to any impending threat that may likely affect national security. Given this, early warning enables nations to get a quick response to impending

danger. Moreover, it helps in forecasting the future threat. Threat may emanate from various sources either from security or politics against democracies and a good forecast of the threat will enable nations to act quickly to checkmate such threat which is the most enviable positive implication for achieving the security of a nation. Citizens are quickly aware of impending danger through early warning and solution is proffered (Lock 2013: xiv). Early warning media report collection assists in the application of counter-intelligence. Counter-intelligence is to counter the enemy's capability in applying dangerous means in attacking the nation through the application of more advanced intelligence against the enemy's intelligence. Early warning promotes good, quick and standard information for government and public consumptions. It affords a nation the readiness to combat threats that may likely affect national security. It also aids national and contingencies planning in the areas of national needs and the danger that may likely affect national security (Stuat *et. Al.*, 2008).

However, a media report on early warning may be faced with shortcomings, wrong data may be collected which may likely result in a wrong decision on the issue at stake. Early warning report may lead to exaggeration by the media for economic gain that may likely arise through the sales of the news. It may be an object of political propaganda against the government of the day to show its ineptitude and the consequence of the current threat that may likely pose danger to its citizens. Media propaganda as a weapon of information dissemination may lay too much emphasis on common rather than security information from early warning thereby denying security intelligence officials the honest attempt to fulfil a vital role in giving information that can promote national security.

Conclusion

For a nation to sustain its security against internal and external threat, the role of security agencies in the management of media early warning cannot be set aside. It keeps a nation out of danger and safe its citizens from unforeseen threats. It is also a mechanism that any government of a country should apply in its intelligence gathering in monitoring threat against national security. It should be noted that contemporary threats, such as terrorism, nuclear proliferation and

various environmental hazards, demand an early warning intelligence gathering. In as much the role of early warning cannot be left out on national security, therefore, early warning, if well reported by the media and intelligently processed by the security agencies, can help a nation to combat crimes, promote peace and be ready to face future threats.

From all indications, a nation should try to pay adequate attention to media early warning report to sustain its security. Again, early warning security report should be one of the focus of the security agents and intelligence analyst in their threat analysis. Moreover, governments should take heed of early warning information gathering from the media and its intelligence report from the security agents rather than reducing it into mere political debate based on partisan politics. Citizens should endeavour to give adequate information to the media on any impending threat that may likely affect national security and also assist the security agencies in preventing such future occurrence.

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