



**Deconstructing Nigeria's security
architecture in the 21st century: The
dilemma of a nation at war on all fronts**

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Abstract

The 21st Century has been uniquely marked by untold degree of insecurity with attendant horrendous consequences on man, and his environment. Viewed from its multi-faceted perspective, security as a concept has several dimensions including economic security, energy security, physical security, environmental, food, border, as well as cyber security. Most disturbing is the fact that man has remained the prime cause, and at the same time, the ultimate source of solution to the numerous security challenges that have bedeviled him. Within the Nigerian context, and with emphasis on physical security of lives and properties of citizen, that the nation's security challenges have ever-stretched the capacity of Nigeria's security agencies is to say the least. Consequently, the cloud of social instability in terms of emerging terrorist activities, religious fundamentalism, extreme violent crimes, official corruptions, vandalization of oil pipe lines among others threaten the peace, security and viability of the Nigerian nation. While a wide range of literature have examined overall consequences of Nigeria's Security challenges on Nigeria's citizenry, very little attention has been given to the historical background to the security challenges in Nigeria. Besides, existing literature also tend to downplay the causal relationship between the breakdown of Nigeria's security architecture and the raging wars between Nigerian armed forces and secessionist ethno-regional militant groups.

Deploying various secondary sources of data collection, the paper establishes a nexus between the historical evolution of Nigeria as a political unit and the current myriad of security challenges, while at the same time suggesting ways of curbing security challenges in Nigeria.

Keywords: Challenges, community policing, criminality, insecurity, security, violence.

Introduction.

The worsening cases of insecurity in Nigeria have dominated public discourse more than ever before. The phenomenon is not only alarming, but has equally defied all solutions. Unfortunately, the weak security architecture has proved incapable of stemming the tide of insecurity in the country. Put differently, the weak internal security revealed by increased spate of bombings, kidnapping, killings, political thuggery, ethno-religious crises, rape, and armed robbery incidence prevalent in Nigeria today are all pointers to the decay of our societal values (Amakiri, 2019).

In specific terms, when one considers the spate of kidnapping in virtually all parts of the country, when one ponders over the bombings of oil facilities in the Niger Delta region by militant groups, when one reflects on the loss of lives and destruction of properties by secessionist groups in part of the country, when one ruminates over the nefarious and atrocious activities of the marauding bandits and Fulani Herdsmen across the lengths and breath of Nigeria, it would not be out of place to continuously make the issue of Nigeria's security challenges a topic of public discourse until lasting solutions are found. In the light of the above therefore, this paper undertakes a historical analysis of the historical background of Nigeria's security challenges amidst the myriad crises that have defined the country's nationhood since independence. The paper asserts that if these

myriad of security challenges are to be successfully nipped in the bud, the knowledge of their historical background is germane.

In furtherance of the need to stem the tide of security challenges in the country, the paper indentifies root causes of security challenges, and then espouses critical recommendations that could assist policy makers in nipping the menace in the bud.

Conceptualization of Security

Security simply put is freedom, or resilience against potential harm caused by others. The term is also used to refer to acts and systems whose purpose may be to provide security (e.g security companies, security forces, security guards etc). The security context is the relationship between the individual and his environment. From this perspective, security and insecurity depend first on whether the environment is beneficial or hostile to the individual. However, Imobighe (1990) quipped that security has to do with the freedom from danger, or with threats to a nation's ability to protect and develop itself, promote its cherished values and legitimate interest and enhance the well-being of its people. Thus, internal security could be seen as the freedom from or the absence of those tendencies which could undermine internal cohesion and the corporate existence of the nation and its ability to maintain its vital institutions for the promotion of its core values and socio-political and economic objectives, as well as meet the legitimate aspiration of the people.

Flowing from the above explanation, it becomes abundantly clear that the promotion of national core values, actualization of the socio-political and economic objectives are only predicated on the prevalence of workable internal security of the nation. Buzan (1983) expatiates the concept of security to include three levels of analysis;

namely, individual level, the national, and international levels. Whereas, a detailed analysis of these various levels may not be necessary here as they do not fall within the scope of this paper, the knowledge from it further accentuates the importance of workable security in any society. It is within the above contextual framework that the Nigeria's security challenges is premised.

Background to Security Challenges in Nigeria.

Nigeria as a nation has been confronted by one form of security challenge or the other. This is partly due to its peculiar historical evolution and partly due to several other socio-economic and political factors that emanated in Nigeria's post-independent existence. For a better understanding of the current security challenges in Nigeria therefore, a proper retrospective survey into the peculiar circumstances that culminated into Nigeria's independence and the socio-economic cum geo-political trajectories of post-independence Nigeria is necessary. It is instructive to recall that the deliberate lumping together of distinct ethnic groups that had existed independently into one "indivisible entity" called Nigeria, the emergence of ethnic cleavages between majority and minority ethnic groups, the uneven rate of development among the regions and states of Nigeria, the ceaseless disagreements and rancor among the political elites, all of these were combined precursors to the protracted security challenges that have defied all solutions till date. It is therefore, not surprising that soon after Nigeria's independence in October 1st 1960 "those latent divisive elements within Nigerian Politics came to the forefront and this period witnessed political conflicts that eventually led to the takeover of government by the army" (Erhagbe, 2002) That the security of the nations was grossly undermined during the period under review is to say the least.

It could be recalled also that between 1966 and 1999, the military held sway within Nigeria's political landscape. When Nigeria was eventually returned to democratic rule in 1999, the nation's body polity had already been poisoned and polluted by the evils of high level corruption, nepotism, embezzlement of public fund, ethno-religious bigotry, intolerance and hatred, with its attendant breakdown of law and order. It is worthy of note that there was high level of insecurity through Nigeria during the long period of military rule.

The above background is necessary to the extent that it does not only shed light on Nigeria's historical past, but also illuminate our understanding of how this ugly past has undermined our present collective sensitivity thereby jeopardizing the security of the land

Causes of Insecurity in Nigeria.

The level of insecurity in Nigeria is multi-faceted; as such, no single factor can account for the security challenges that bedeviled the entire nation. However, this study has been able to identify the following causes:

(a) Federal Government's Monopoly of Security Architecture.

Without prejudice, it is obvious that the federal government of Nigeria has exhibited ineptitude in tackling the security challenges confronting the nation. The danger with such glaring ineptitude can better be appreciated when one realizes the fact that the responsibility for the protection of lives and properties in Nigeria is solely on the exclusive list of the Federal Government. As such, the Federal government of Nigeria

controls the nation's security architecture, as it retains monopoly of force. This ought not to be in a federal system of government. In advanced climes where federalism is operational, each federating unit, state or region has its own security structure which compliments that of the central government.

The real danger with such monopolistic tendency of the federal government over the nation's security architecture lies in the utter impossibility for the states and local governments to initiate security policies and programmes that could curb insecurity at the grassroots level. In the Nigerian scenario, the much states and local government councils could do is to set up unofficial state security and local vigilante groups which in essence lack constitutional backing. With such legal and logistic limitations, local vigilantes suffer from both professional incapacitation and legal authorization. Cases abound where criminals who, after their arrest by local vigilante, and handed over to conventional security agents, are left off the hook under the guise of one professional procedure or the other.

Worst still, the post civil war era in Nigeria has been characterized by horrendous violent conflicts of intra-state character and kind. The far-reaching consequence of such violent eruptions is the proliferation of arms across the length and breadth of Nigeria. In the light of the above, the Federal government of Nigeria has since lost her monopoly of arms. Such arms are now in the hands of non-state actors, who use same to rob, kidnap, assassinate, terrorize, raid, or rape unsuspecting citizens of the country. All these violent crimes have posed serious security challenges to the entire nation in recent times.

(b). Poor Remuneration of Security Personnel.

Nigerian security personnel are not only poorly remunerated, but they are also ill-equipped to function effectively. Despite the huge annual budgetary provision for the security sub-sector, the remuneration of Nigeria's Security personnel is still very poor. Same applies to procurement security equipments, gadgets and general armory required to effectively secure the lives and property of Nigerians. In the face of poor remuneration and lack of equipments, the Nigerian Security personnel usually lack the morale and motivation required for effective service delivery. Little wonder then that most of them take to their heels upon sighting menacing armed robbers, bandits, kidnappers or terrorists, whose fire power is usually better than that of Nigeria Security Personnel. Evidence abound where security operatives in Nigeria succumb to the superior fire power of criminal elements.

(c). High Level of Corruption Among Security Personnel.

The evil of corruption like a cankerworm has pervaded across various segments of the Nigerian society; from the political office holders, security agencies, civil service and even the judiciary. This widespread corruption has its adverse effects on the security situation in the country. It comes in different guise ranging from nepotism, bribery, embezzlement and sectionalism. That explains why monies meant for the procurement of modern security gadgets, arms and ammunition end up in private bank accounts, leaving the security personnel with obsolete equipments to confront myriad security challenges. That explains why recruitments, appointments, and promotions of security personnel/officials are based on who you know and not by merit. Thus, mediocrity has

taken the place of merit within the security apparatus of the nation. Cases of internal sabotage in recent times become rift in Nigeria's security system. The domination of Nigeria's security agencies by one particular section of the country has been the bane of Nigeria's security challenges as officials from other sections of the nation are either discriminated against or victimized. A situation where the huge annual budget for the security sector is not reflected in the provision of enabling environment and facilities for security personnel is the phenomenon that has led us to where we are today.

(d) Social Exclusion/Deprivation: It has been argued that one of the reasons for conflict escalation in parts of Nigeria is social exclusion or deprivation of some segments of the nation from socio-economic entitlements. A case in point is the agitations by the Niger-Delta militant groups over perceived government's neglect of the region, in spite of the huge oil revenue generated by the Niger Delta region. Similarly the South-eastern region has erupted in violent agitations over their perceived exclusion from key positions in government and other Federal government agencies or parastatals. All these social movements, protests, and conflicts arising from exclusion and, or deprivation have further exacerbated the already bad security situation in the country.

(e) Inter-communal conflicts

No doubt inter-communal conflicts have contributed to the worsening security challenges in the country. When communities have conflict over land, trade routes, water ways or fishing pond, location of oil wells, or siting of government project; the overall implication of such conflicts impact negatively on the nation's security sector. This, to a great extent provide some justification in the postulations of Ikeleghe (2021) when he

asserts that; the hegemonic struggle for resources has undermined the crisis in the Niger Delta with the attendant crisis of insecurity. The contentions over resource control, off-shore oil revenues, derivation criterion of revenue allocation and special development attention constructed a terrain of violent conflicts and insurgency conducted by youth militias in many parts of the Niger Delta until 2009. Even in the West and Northern parts of Nigeria, Inter-communal conflicts have erupted with dire consequences on the nation's security, as there are tendencies of hoodlums taking advantage of the communal clashes to perpetuate crimes, thereby compromising the national security.

(f) Religious Extremism

Within the context of conflict studies in Nigeria, religious extremism is one of the major causes of conflict in Nigeria. In fact, the ongoing Boko Haram terrorist activities in North-eastern Nigeria can only be explained in terms of religious extremism. This submission is in tandem with that of Ehimatie (2021), who asserts that: "This of course, is the case of the present Boko Haram terrorist group in Nigeria where a group of Islamic fundamentalists are hiding under the cloak of Islamic fanaticism to perpetrate violence of high magnitude in the country on the whole, it is apparent that religiously motivated terrorism is much more devastating due to the fact that it tends to provide some moral justification for such dastardly act, and its grave consequences on national security is unspeakable. The ravaging effect of the Boko Haram terrorist act on Nigeria's security is too obvious to be ignored. Unfortunately, all measures put in place to curb the menace have proved abortive.

(g) Porous Borders

The porosity of Nigeria's borders with her neighbours has made the fight against insecurity a daunting one. In specific terms, Nigeria borders with Niger, Chad and Cameroon are the most porous borders, given rise to cross-border crimes ranging from kidnapping, terrorist attacks, armed robberies and other forms of cross-borders violent crimes. It should be borne in mind that the ongoing Boko Haram terrorist acts has been so exacerbate due to the fact that mercenaries and foreign terrorists criss-cross easily across Nigeria's porous border, and perpetrate their nefarious crimes unchecked and unhindered. Such porous borders constitute an easy channel through which crimes of different kinds and characters could be committed by foreign intruders, to the detriment of innocent Nigerian citizens. This has greatly undermined the security system in Nigeria thereby putting the Nigerian State and its people in grave danger.

From Ethno-Religious Agitations to Shooting Wars: Nigeria's Dilemma.

Judging by the avalanche of security challenges in the midst of numerous ethno-religious agitations, all of which combined to undermine the protection of lives and properties in Nigeria, it goes without saying that the cooperate existence of Nigeria as a political unit in hanging on the precipice. In virtually all the regions that make up Nigeria, heightened ethnic cleavages, defined by formation of armed militia, and threats of secession have become the order of the day.

Ikelegbe (2021) captures it more succinctly; The more extreme forms of the manifestation of crisis of nationhood are centrifugal tendencies and an expanding formation of insurgencies, insurrection, self-determination and separatist and

secessionist forces conducted by militants, terrorists, islamists and radical ethno-regional and youth groups. The seeming dissatisfaction by constituent groups with the Nigeria nation is also indicated in the unending agitation for state reforms, federal restructuring, resources control and regional autonomy.

In the light of the above, Nigeria today is replete with cases of dissatisfied constituents forming separatist movements under different warlords. In the West, we have the Oduduwa Separatist Movement under the leadership of Sunday Igboho, in the East, the Indigenous People of Biagra (IPOB) under the leadership of Nnamdi Kanu; in the South the Niger-Delta Militants are holding sway under the leadership of Asari Dokubo and other militant warlords. In the North, we have the Islamic Fundamentalists Groups like the Boko-Haram under the leadership of Boko Haram and other Islamic sects leaders. At this juncture, the agitations have metamorphosed into outright warfare, as these secessionists' militant groups have often engaged the Nigerian military in shooting wars on monumental scale. Even the arrest and detention of the secessionist warlords like the case of Nnamdi Kanu, Sunday Igboho and a host of others does not mitigate the ferocious activities of the secessionists groups.

In the midst of these seemingly unending wars, the federal government of Nigerian seem to be more engrossed with holding on to political office, than giving a listening ear to the substance of the numerous agitations across the country. There is therefore some form of justification in the postulations of Ikelegbe (2021) when he described the hegemonistic tendency of Nigerian leaders as not being rooted in superior material, intellectual, cultural, technological and productive capabilities or the creation of a superior socio-political order. It has rather captured and appropriated the state and

deploys it for material capabilities and dispersal of benefits to incorporated elites. Thus far, its form of hegemony and mode and style of exercising it has been brazen and blatant, disregarding issues of equity, fairness, justice, inconclusiveness, broad and equalitarian benefits.

However, these dangerous trends and tendencies could be ameliorated if only the leadership of the country could leverage on the abundant human and material resources in the country to re-direct and re-order the course of governance for the good of all.

Curbing Security Challenges in Nigeria: Whose Duty?

It is often said that security is everybody's responsibility. This is true to the extent that everyone has a role to play in ensuring effective and efficient security of lives and properties in a given geographical environment. To further buttress the above understanding, relevant sections of the Constitutive Act of the African Union (AU), and the United Nations' (UN) Charter, make provision for the doctrine of collective security. However, this paper has come up with the following recommendations as panaceas for curbing security challenges in Nigeria.

(a) State Police

The call for the establishment of state police has taken centre stage at several public fora. It is therefore a well considered opinion of this paper that the establishment of state police in each of the 36 component states of the federation and Abuja (the Federal Capital Territory), is a sure way of stemming the tide of insecurity in the country. Under a federal system of government, each federating state should operate a police system that suits its

peculiarities. This is the only way to ensure an effective and efficient security system in the nation. Crime prevention mechanism should be seen from a holistic perspective. In doing so, the bottom-up approach should be adopted, so that crime could be tackled from grassroot. The local population should be engaged because they are more familiar with the local environment. This present state of affairs where vigilante groups are set up is a good approach. But the National Assembly should come up with a law for the establishment of state police outfits, as well as giving legal backing for the establishment, supervision, function, and funding of the local vigilante groups.

The above suggestions are apt in the face of woeful failure of the Nigeria Police Force under the strict control of the Federal government to effectively address enormous security challenges ravaging the country. For the police force to be decentralized, the various constitutional procedures should be reviewed or amended to remove the inherited colonial structure that is inherently hindering effectiveness. Buttressing the need for such constitutional review, Ojong and Bern (2020) observe that; the constitution makes no pretence as to who really is the overall boss of the Nigerian Police. The provision of section 215 (4) is unequivocal that a state commissioner of police shall be at liberty to refer a directive given by a state governor to the president before acting on them. In Nigeria where most government decision are influenced by politics, a governor's directive to the state commissioner of police is prone to constant veto. The bureaucratic bottleneck that characterize the Nigerian Police formations and command structure obviously delay quick responses from police officers to quickly avert crimes.

(b) Effective Border Patrol.

Boundary and Border Management among African States for the purpose of peaceful coexistence and interdependency has always taken centre stage at the level of African Union's General Assembly. However, such borders, when not effectively managed could become security risk to inhabitants on both side of the border. In the case of Nigeria's borders with her neighbours, the porosity of the borders has compounded Nigeria's security challenges. In the wake of the Boko Haram insurgency and banditry in Nigeria, the porous borders have provided escape root for fleeing terrorists, while at the same time serving as pathway for external terrorists into Nigeria. The result is that the act of banditry and terrorism in Nigeria has become so clumsy and complex that the phenomenon has over-stretched the capacity of Nigeria's security apparatus. It is therefore, Imperative for Nigeria's Security agencies to improve on their capacity as to be able to carry out effective and efficient border patrol at the various land and maritime borders. This is a sure way to check the influx of foreign criminal elements.

(c) Individuals Security Consciousness and Commitment.

As citizen of Nigeria, it is part of our civic responsibility to promptly report any crime and criminality within our locality to the law enforcement agents. Failure to do so is tantamount to aiding and abetting crime. That is why it is often said that security is everyone's responsibility. The idea behind community policing is that all citizens have a role to play in effective policing mechanism. Crimes and criminalities thrive in an environment where they are detected and condoned. Conversely where such incidence is promptly reported, the security agencies could respond swiftly and nip such crime in the

bud. Therefore, individual awareness, consciousness, participation and commitment is required to collectively secure our environment.

(d) Restructuring.

The concept of restructuring has dominated public discourse in recent times. Perhaps the most commonly used word in Nigeria today is restructuring, as most Nigerians particularly those that fall under the marginalized region believe that only restructuring would ensure the continuous existence of Nigeria as one entity. The argument has been that Nigeria's Federal structures have not been structurally configured to reflect true federalism. Under a properly structured federal system of government, each region and state that make up the federating units ought to retain a level of autonomy. In other words, there ought to be devolution of powers to the federating units, so that each region or state could develop at its pace in all sphere of governance. A holistic restructuring that involves fiscal restructuring, political restructuring, economic, educational, and even restructuring of the security system. In this way, each state and region would manage its resources, security, system, educational system etc, and pay royalty to the federal government, as obtainable in other advanced nations that operate a similar federal system of government. It is argued that under such arrangement, there would be competition among states and the nation at large would develop at fast rate. In all, the entire security agencies, at the local, state and federal levels should leverage more technology-driven solutions, and intelligence collaboration for an improved security architecture.

Conclusion

This paper has been able to provide a background and historical overview to the security challenges that have bedeviled the Nigerian nation for decades. The major causes of insecurity in Nigeria has also been examine, and the consequences are equally highlighted resulting to complex crisis situations, separatist, agitations and outright warfare. Finally, the papers posits some panaceas for curbing security challenges in the country.

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