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MULTIDIMENSIONAL SECURITY THREATS IN NIGERIA

DRIVERS, DYNAMICS & DEFICIENCIES IN RESPONSE

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**FRIEDRICH
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Executive Summary

Nigeria is faced with an unprecedented wave of different but overlapping multidimensional security threats. Almost every geo-political region of the country is facing one form of insecurity or the other that has impacted negatively on human security. Going by this trend, there are various dimensions to these security threats faced by the Nigerian state ranging from - terrorism, violent religious extremism, community clashes, militancy, kidnapping, banditry, and political insecurity. Despite the government's efforts, the security challenges confronting Nigeria have continued to rise sporadically with the emergence of new forms of security threats in different parts of the country, such as exponential population growth, increasing youth unemployment, widespread poverty, lack of physical and economic access to basic needs of life. Emergent national security threats also include cybercrimes (internet fraud, cyberbullying, cyber-attacks), piracy, non-state actors' attacks on civilians, inadequate or dysfunctional healthcare systems (new and recurrent diseases including epidemics and pandemics, poor nutrition). Others are environmental degradation (natural disasters, erosions, flooding, soil and air pollution), resource depletion, ethnic violence, individuals or gangs' crime, political or state repression, including torture, disappearance, human rights violations, detention and imprisonment. Combined, these threats have exacerbated the prevailing security crisis in Nigeria.

Activities of the Boko Haram Sect (BH) and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) have continued to aggravate the security situation in the North-east region. Bandits and criminal gangs have exploited the security vacuum and ungoverned spaces in the North-west region to perpetuate criminal activities such as kidnappings for ransom targeting educational institutions. The North-central part of the country has also been plagued with a series of violent conflicts - including the Fulani herdsman-farmers clashes which have resulted in violent conflicts that are expansive in terms of frequency, intensity, and scope. The South-east, which hitherto was perceived to be the most peaceful part of the country, has recently evolved into a hotbed of violence, targeting state security institutions in the region. In the oil-producing South-south region, security challenges are nothing new. Oil resources from the region have been Nigeria's biggest foreign export earner, and militants in the Niger Delta have long agitated for a greater share of the resources and dividends from the sector.

In addressing these threats to national security, experts allude to the fact that the diverse scope of Nigeria's security threats will require innovative solutions adapted to each context and region. This will entail understanding the local dynamics of each threat and integrating them into a multidimensional national security strategy with a view to finding lasting peace, security and sustainable development in the nation. Security sector reform and governance advocates have also suggested that Nigeria government should adopt non-kinetic approaches – such as dialogues, transitional justice mechanisms to address injustices; adherence to the rule of law in implementing security operations, structural and operational accountability within the security sector, citizens-led accountability, and oversight, as well as easy access to relevant information.





Introduction

In the light of recent security developments in various regions of Nigeria, it is safe to assert that Nigeria is faced with a myriad of multidimensional security challenges, which pose threats to the country's national security. These security challenges are complex in nature and continually impact all the country's socioeconomic development. Consequently, national security, public safety and criminal justice space has been impacted by these security challenges.

To further disaggregate the insecurity mosaic into specific regional contexts, the conflict in North-East Nigeria is now in its 11th year with over 7.1 million people affected¹. The activities of the Boko Haram insurgency have taken a new dimension with the emergence and activities of the splinter group that is aligned with the Islamic State, known as the Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP)². ISWAP's strength lies in creating a reliable ecosystem used to exert control and strong influence over the economy, justice,

education, and security, including taxation of local communities. The United Nations described ISWAP's attack on rice farmers in Jere, Borno state, as the most violent direct attack against civilians in 2020³. Other reports have also hinted that the internal power dynamics between Boko Haram and ISWAP may result in a stronger ISWAP force, as some Boko Haram fighters that had previously fled due to the onslaught by the Nigerian military on the terrorist groups in the region are returning to join the ISWAP group. It is important to consider that porous borders and extant ECOWAS freedom of movement protocols have significantly affected the security in the North-east region, thus aiding transnational terrorist and other criminal activities.

In the North-west, criminals loosely referred to as 'armed bandits' have resorted to the kidnapping of citizens for economic gains, especially school children, making alarming ransom demands and operating with little or no resistance from the security agencies. Between June 2011 and March

¹ <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/nigeria-humanitarian-response-strategy-2019-2021-january-2019-december-2021-december>

² <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/nigeria-diverse-security-threats/>

³ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/12/01/gruesome-boko-haram-killings-northeast-nigeria>



2020, at least \$18.34 million has been paid to kidnappers in ransom in Nigeria⁴. Armed bandits' attacks on the education sector have further worsened Nigeria's current 10.5 million out of school children⁵. In addition to abductions, bandits in the region engage in other criminal activities including village raids, sexual harassment, rape, killing, armed robbery, exploitation of environmental resources (illegal artisanal mining, lead poisoning) and large-scale cattle rustling.

In the oil-producing South-South, insecurity is a long-standing phenomenon, largely caused by the exploitation of crude oil in the region. The South-South region accounts for most pirates and sea armed robbers operating in Nigerian waterways, and the Gulf of Guinea. Notably, the crude oil from this region accounts for Nigeria's biggest foreign export and militants in the Niger Delta have long agitated for greater share of the resources and dividends from the sector.

. They argue that the majority of Nigeria's crude oil comes from their region and the environmental damage caused by oil extraction has devastated communities and made it impossible for them to engage in sustainable fishing and farming. For years, militants pressured the government by kidnapping crude oil workers and launching attacks on security personnel and crude oil infrastructures, like pipelines etc. To address this, the former President, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua launched a presidential amnesty program in 2009, which was to formally end the Niger Delta militant activity. But armed cult groups still pose severe security threat in the region, making industry officials to warn about the resurgence of militant groups in the region⁶.

The conflict between farmers and herders evolved from the North-central region into other parts of the country, with deadly attacks and loss of lives, displacements, and property⁷. Amnesty International 2020 report revealed that more than 1,500 people died in inter-communal violence, mostly between herdsman and farming communities, as well as in attacks by bandits, in the region⁸.

Nigeria's South-west and South-east region has also experienced security challenges with open grazing, leading to a series of farmers-herders clashes. In response to this growing security threat, state governments in the region had developed and signed into law - anti-open grazing bills⁹. Since of mid-2021, 5 of the 17 Southern states (Abia, Bayelsa, Ondo, Oyo, and Rivers states) have signed anti-open-grazing bills into law; Lagos, Ogun and Osun states have also completed the Legislative process and are

awaiting assent from the Executive Governors.

These states have taken a cue from their counterparts in Ekiti, Benue, and Taraba states who passed anti open-grazing laws in 2016, 2017 and 2018 respectively. Insecurity in the region is compounded

by the activities of the Yoruba nation secessionists, who are also fanning the flames of violence in the South-west region.

In the South-East, the resurgence of secessionist agitations is driven by decades of unaddressed structural injustice and social exclusion. This is evident in the growing attacks (or threats of) on crude oil infrastructures, security formations in the region and correctional facilities; assassinations by elements described as unknown gunmen; and heightened proliferation of small arms and light weapons¹⁰.



Photo Credit: TV Sense

⁴ https://www.sbmintel.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/202005_Nigeria-Kidnap.pdf

⁵ <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/education>

⁶ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-57860993>

⁷ <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/understanding-the-herder-farmer-conflict-in-nigeria/>

⁸ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/africa/west-and-central-africa/nigeria/report-nigeria/>

⁹ <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/08/southern-govs-open-grazing-ban-12-states-yet-to-comply-as-deadline-expires-tue/>

¹⁰ Nextier concept note- multi-stakeholders' consultative forum on peace and security in Nigeria



Despite the huge budgetary allocations to the security sector in Nigeria, minimal progress has been recorded so far, as these security challenges continue to re-emerge and expand, thus threatening the very fabric of the country's national integration. Significantly, there are strong calls from various stakeholders for the restructuring of Nigeria's security architecture to incorporate state and/or regional policing structures, given the abysmal failure of the current centralized policing. Many have argued that the current security threats in Nigeria are multidimensional and therefore require specific regional approaches to curb the hydra-headed monster. There are also suggestions for the recruitment and training of more security personnel and a rethink of the strategic deployment of the available security workforce to

towards addressing insecurity and propose workable solutions and recommendations for improved security across the country.

Beyond the central theme of the conference, other related topical issues were also discussed, further providing a multidimensional and holistic analysis of Nigeria's security threat. Papers were presented on a) "The rule of Law and National Security Provisioning in Nigeria," with focus on elucidating how the rule of law takes precedence over national security, while demonstrating how Nigeria's national security architecture could adhere to the rule of law in their operation under democratic governance. b) "The Prevalence and Consequences of Security Threats in Nigeria," with focus on providing a detailed and comprehensive mapping of multidimensional



Photo Credit: The Sun Nigeria

meet the emerging security needs of the country. The use of the Nigerian military for civilian police duties is considered counterproductive, as it also undermines the efficacy and funding of the Nigerian Police.

To this end, on the 4th and 5th October 2021, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Nigeria organized a **Two-Day Conference on Multi-Dimensional Security Threats in Nigeria: Drivers, Dynamics, and Deficiencies in Responses**. The conference which was designed to have four paper presentations, provided a platform for security sector experts, professionals, policymakers, development and human rights experts, academics, media, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) and other relevant stakeholders to interrogate the security challenges bedevilling Nigeria; the drivers, dynamics and effectiveness or otherwise of government's responses and/or strategies

security threats across Nigeria, vividly underscoring their impacts and implications for national development. c) "State and Non-state actors response to multidimensional security threats in Nigeria," with focus on a comprehensive examination of various measures adopted by the Nigerian state and other non-state actors to combat evolving security challenges in Nigeria, highlighting notable successes, gaps and setbacks and d) "Deepening accountability in countering multidimensional security threats in Nigeria," with focus on critically interrogate and proffer actionable measures or steps to ensure state and non-state security providers/actors adhere to the rule of law in the conduct/operations, including redressing excesses of officials or agents and ensuring judicious use of resources (monies, assets).

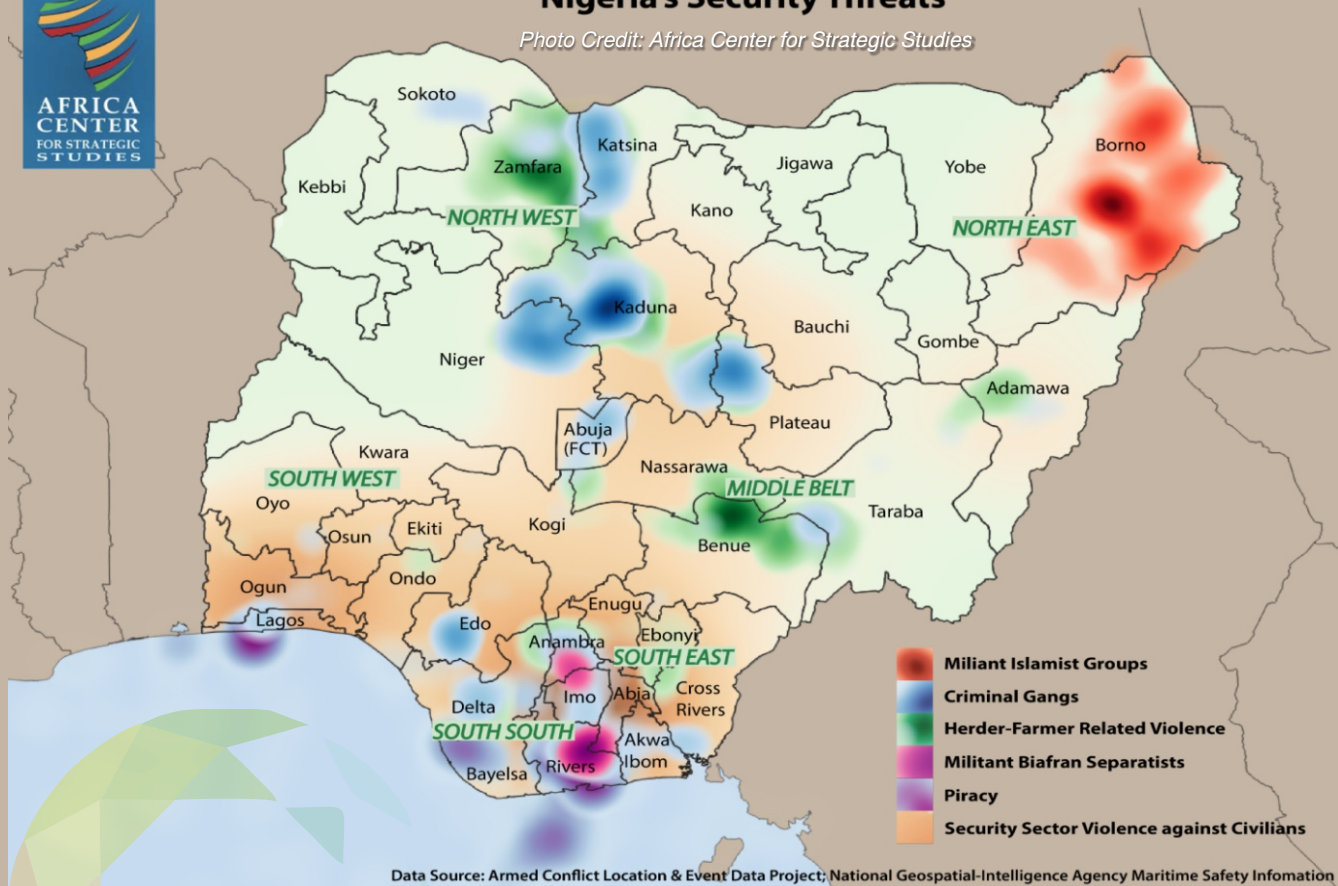
Discussants, and Participants were tasked with developing practical policy recommendations





Nigeria's Security Threats

Photo Credit: Africa Center for Strategic Studies



that would form the basis of a policy brief targeted at the Nigerian policymakers in the executive and legislative arms government and the security sector. This policy brief is the eventual outcome of the two-day conference.

Overview of the Current Multidimensional Security Threats in Nigeria

In the early part of 2021, President Muhammadu Buhari announced that Nigeria is facing “a state of emergency,” largely as a result of the ongoing insecurity¹¹. This emergency is commonly understood as the threat posed by Boko Haram terrorists in the country's North-east. However, this focus on Boko Haram, understates the complexity and multidimensional nature of Nigeria's security challenges, which impact every region of the country. Beyond Boko Haram, Nigeria is faced with a plethora of security challenges. These range from economic downturn, terrorism, violent religious extremism, armed banditry, community clashes, organized

crimes, militancy, and kidnapping. Other forms of insecurity and threats in Nigeria, include climate change (natural disasters, erosions, flooding, soil and air pollution), healthcare (new and recurrent diseases including epidemics and pandemics, poor nutrition), human trafficking, cybercrime (internet fraud, bullying, cyber-attacks), piracy and political security threats in the country. Drivers of these threats include increasing population growth, youth unemployment, electoral fraud, corruption, structural injustice, lack of accountability, weak governance and judiciary system, overcentralized security architecture, widespread poverty, state and non-state security sector attacks on citizens, inadequate or dysfunctional healthcare systems, environmental degradation, resource depletion, ethnic violence, individuals or gangs crime, political or state repression, including torture, enforced disappearance, human rights violations, detention and imprisonment. Combined or singularly, these threats have exacerbated the prevailing security crisis in Nigeria.

Security threats faced in Nigeria can be broken down into *man-induced and nature-induced security*

¹¹ <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/439064-insecurity-nigeria-in-state-of-emergency-buhari-tells-new-service-chiefs.html>



threats. Criminal gangs known as bandits, piracy, cultism, militancy, terrorism, separatism, kidnapping, arms proliferation, corruption, lack of accountability, unemployment, population explosion, pollution, election fraud, poverty, cybercrimes etc can be categorized as man-induced, while climate change (erosion, draught, flooding, desertification) diseases (pandemics and epidemics) can best be described as nature-induced.

Most of the man-induced threats are exploiting the security vacuum in the region or what we can describe as ungoverned spaces or territories to thrive. These 'ungoverned spaces' are defined as zones that lay beyond the reach of government and thus pose a significant threat to security and stability¹². They are often perceived as fertile grounds where terrorist and criminal organisations incubate and thrive, proliferating drug trafficking, criminal networks, and the presence of illegal migrants¹³. They include the Boko Haram camps in Sambisa Forest, bandit hideouts in Kwiambana and Ajjah forests in Zamfara, herdsman camps in BirninKogo forests in Katsina, havens for kidnappers in Guma forests between Benue and Nasarawa States, militant camps in the Niger Delta or emergence of paramilitary camps of the secessionist movement in the South-East¹⁴. These spaces are not a creation of these threats, they have been there and have long existed, albeit ignored¹⁵.

An examination of the drivers, dynamics and response of Nigeria's multidimensional security threats indicates that in most cases, these prevalent threats are sometimes active and sometimes inactive. They are cross-cutting, multisectoral, intersecting, and affect all but with varying degrees of impacts, depending on differences in economic class, gender, age, region, among others. Responses to these security threats are also contextual and have ranged from excessive militarization of specific areas to the

use of lethal force, and lack of accountability for human lives.

Prevalence and Consequences of Security Threats in Nigeria

The discourse on national security has become a daily staple on Nigeria's national table owing to numerous security threats facing the country with their far-reaching effects on national development¹⁶. These security threats have become rampant in the last decade, following consistent attacks on different



Photo Credit: The Guardian Nigeria

regions of the country that have resulted in the deaths of over 70,000 Nigerians¹⁷. More worrying is the frequency at which these attacks occur.

The security threats in Nigeria go beyond physical to human security threats. Between July and October 2012, flooding in Nigeria pushed rivers over their banks and submerged hundreds of thousands of acres of farmland. By mid-October, floods had forced 1.3 million people from their homes and claimed 431 lives¹⁸. In Northern Nigeria, desertification threatens 11 states and the livelihoods of over 40 million people such as livestock rearing and agricultural production, such as beans, soya beans, millet, sorghum, tomatoes, melons, peppers, and onions¹⁹ amongst other threats. Food insecurity has worsened due to insecurity and displacements²⁰. In October 2021, the Kano State Emergency Management Agency told journalists in

¹² <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/208946352.pdf>

¹³ <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/854201>

¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Security_Network

¹⁵ <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2021/03/12/nigeria-conflict-insecurity-rethink-how-authority-policy-works-ungoverned-governance-spaces/>

¹⁶ <https://www.cfr.org/nigeria/nigeria-security-tracker/p29483>

¹⁷ <https://www.dataphyte.com/latest-reports/security/at-60-the-changing-face-of-insecurity-in-nigeria/>

¹⁸ <https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/79404/flooding-in-nigeria>

¹⁹ <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2017/11/14/briefing-nigerian-farmers-can-t-fight-desertification-alone>

²⁰ <https://www.fao.org/emergencies/countries/detail/en/c/213439>



Kano, that 14,244 houses were destroyed across the state this year, noting that the state recorded a drop in the level of destruction when compared to last 2020 when 57,362 houses were washed away by flood²¹.

Both maninduced and nature-induced security threats confronting Nigeria fall under global security trends, further showing that Nigeria is not the only country encountering these kinds of multidimensional security threats across the globe. However, the impact of these threats on Nigeria's socio economic sectors is so high due to the fragility and vulnerability of Nigerian society and economy. Nigeria remains the poverty capital of the world, having recently overtaken India²². This trajectory has contributed to the widespread violence and conflicts that have enveloped the country. The inability of the political class to address the poverty and unemployment crisis in the country as a measure of nipping insecurity in the bud has been attributed to the lack of political will²³. The consequences of this failure are evident on Nigeria's poverty index, which currently stands at 40%²⁴.

The insecurity situation in Nigeria has also threatened Nigeria's democracy by making it almost impossible to hold elections in different parts of the country. A defining feature of Nigeria's preparation for elections has to factor in a strong security arrangement to ensure voters' safety, thereby leading to over-militarization of Nigeria's electioneering processes. Additionally, Basic education system is badly affected by the rising insecurity in Nigeria, with over 10.5 million children currently out of school²⁵. The increasing spate of school abductions have equally diminished parental confidence in the formal educational environment and system in Nigeria. There is a total onslaught on education in the

Northern region of Nigeria. While the North-east is faced with Boko Haram's anti-western education campaign, the North-west is hobbled by fears of abduction of school children from formal schools solely for profit-making purposes.

Additionally, the prevailing security threats and complex humanitarian challenges are orchestrating large numbers of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) across the country. According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) 2021 report, more than 2.9 million persons are internally displaced persons (IDPs) in North-east²⁶. Similarly, the increasing spate of IDPs in Nigeria has also been exacerbated by conflict-induced food insecurity and severe malnutrition. The conflict activities and the resulting mass displacement of people have led to reduced food supply from food producing areas and increased food demand in relatively safe (urban) areas; this in turn has led to sharp food price rises in local markets.

Rule of Law and National Security Provisioning in Nigeria

According to the World Justice Project, the rule of law is a durable system of laws, institutions, norms, and community commitment based on four universal principles of: accountability, Just Law, Open Government, Accessible and Impartial Justice²⁷. The



Photo Credit: The Guardian Nigeria

²¹ <https://guardian.ng/news/flood-kills-29-destroys-14244-houses-in-kano/>

²² <https://www.endpoverty.org/blog/nigeria-poverty-capital-of-the-world>

²³ <http://saharareporters.com/2020/12/27/president-buhari-lacks-political-will-tackle-insecurity-%E2%80%94-coalition-northern-groups>

²⁴ <https://theconversation.com/nigerias-poverty-profile-is-grim-its-time-to-move-beyond-handouts-163302>

²⁵ <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/education>

²⁶ <https://www.unhcr.org/nigeria-emergency.html>

²⁷ world Justice project



government as well as private actors, individuals are accountable under the law. This goes to say that national security provisioning and national interests should be operationalized within the ambits of the law.

In August 2018, President Muhammadu Buhari while flagging off the Annual General Conference of the Nigerian Bar Association in Abuja said that "the rule of law must be subject to the supremacy of the nation's security and national interest²⁸." This statement generated a lot of controversy. Yet, the bigger issue is understanding what impact, if any, this statement will have on the conduct of security operations in a democratic environment. In any constitutional democracy like Nigeria, the place of rule of law is indispensable. The rule of law is the political and constitutional principle that stipulates the supremacy of the law over public office holders, the governed and all decisions taken in the country. That makes the framework of the national security architecture an offshoot of the law. In the absence of rule of law, lawlessness, arbitrariness, abuse of power and near-dictatorship, as well as human rights abuse become the order of the day. This is largely because any individual with enough power and resources can determine what constitutes national security.

Relatedly, on May 18, 2021, Nigeria's number one law enforcement officer was quoted to have said: "If anyone accuses you of human rights violation, the report will come to my table and you know what I will do. So, take the battle to them wherever they are and kill them all. Don't wait for an order²⁹." Such emotive and sweeping statements and body language are usually misinterpreted by state security actors, further resulting in violations of the law, gross misconduct, human rights violations, extrajudicial killings and abuse of power and office. Flagrant disobedience of the law in the context of security provisioning is as a result of unguarded statements and bad governance, the lack of transparency and accountability and equality before the law, corruption in the security sector, culture of dictatorship arising from legacy of military rule, lack of democratic civil military rule, such as parliamentary oversight and appropriations, civil oversight and access to information. The Nigerian government needs to devolve power to enable citizens and the CSOs to actively participate in security

sector reform and governance, ensure accountability for the rule of law and judicious use of security resources and assets.

State and Non-State Actors Responses to Multidimensional Security Threats in Nigeria

Security is a fundamental preoccupation of every individual, group, community, organization, and state. State and Non-state actors have become key players in contemporary security matters. To provide context, state security actors include any person or group acting on behalf of the state. On the other hand, non-State security actors refer to a group of actors outside the formal security apparatus of the state, saddled with the responsibility of performing security and law enforcement functions on behalf of their communities. Also, Non-State actors include a diverse group of security providers, such as vigilantes, neighbourhood watch groups, private guard companies (PGCs), and private security organisations (PSOs). On the flipside, there are the activities of non-state armed groups such as the Boko-Haram, ISWAP, Egbesu Boys, Armed Herdsmen, the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), Eastern Security Network (ESN) and other splinter militant organisations that have also constituted a major threat to Nigeria's national security.

Non-state actors such as multinational corporations, CSOs, or Social Movement Organizations (SMO) which comprises of International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), tertiary institutions, Media, Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs), Cultural-Based Organizations (CBOs) - have played significant roles in supporting government to counter insecurity in Nigeria³⁰. They perform active functions in monitoring security policies and practices affecting their constituents and advocating for appropriate solutions.

In the wake of the 21st Century, the world has witnessed a huge rise in the activities of transnational terrorists and violent non-state actors. These threats erupted immediately after the Arab Spring. Series of armed non-state actors – specifically terrorist groups – claimed to be fighting for justice under the pretext of religious ideology or secessionist claims, thereby posing severe threats to global peace. The Nigerian government has responded to these threats through

²⁸ <https://guardian.ng/features/law/rule-of-law-versus-national-security-what-the-law-says/>

²⁹ <https://dailypost.ng/2021/05/23/igbo-groups-knock-igp-over-shoot-at-sight-order/>

³⁰ <https://securitysectorintegrity.com/institutions-and-organisations/civil-society-media/>



kinetic and non-kinetic approaches to address the hydra-headed problem of insecurity in the country. The government has conducted several operations, created policies and programmes involving state and non-state security actors to address the insecurity situation in the country, such as operation safe corridor, established by the Nigerian government in 2016³¹ to receive voluntary defectors from factions of the jihadist group Boko Haram other military operation. Others include Operation Python Dance, Crocodile Smile, and so on.

Despite all these efforts, there are still gaps with the response and policing mechanism of security architecture of the country – such as the problem of ungoverned spaces, corruption within the security sector, weak social and security programmes, lack of adherence to the rule of law, lack of accountability, government's ambivalence in naming and shaming sponsors of security breaches in the country, injustice and inequality in allocation of public values, over centralized policing and security architecture, privatization of security, compartmentalization of security responses, commercialization of security and communalization of security.

These gaps have heightened the security threats and

caused further setbacks to the security provisioning in the country. For instance, in a bid to carry out their responsibilities and mandates, state security actors have often been guilty of contravening the rule of law and grave human rights violations, further worsening the security situation in the country. The highlights of 2020 in Nigeria including the COVID19 pandemic, and the #ENDSARS protests provide a strong example of how security institutions exerted excessive force in engaging with citizens³². The COVID-19 pandemics exposed the vulnerabilities of systems and structures within Nigeria's context. Apart from highlighting the challenges within Nigeria's health sector and how it is ill-equipped to handle nationwide emergencies, it also presented significant policing and human rights challenges. The lockdown which was instituted to curb the spread of the virus resulted in an increase in human rights violations perpetrated by security agencies. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) between 30th March and 4th May 2020, received 209 complaints of brutality by security agencies from 27 states including allegations of extra-judicial killings, violation of right to freedom of movement, unlawful arrest and detention, seizure/confiscation of properties, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), discrimination, torture, inhumane and degrading treatment, and extortion.

Photo Credit: TV Sense



³¹ <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/b170-exit-boko-haram-assessing-nigerias-operation-safe-corridor>

³² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2020_Lekki_shooting



Measures to deepen accountability in Countering multidimensional security threats in Nigeria

Most of the security threats confronting Nigeria are largely internal with transnational colorations. These threats are mostly incubated in local communities, villages and the perpetrators in most cases are known by the community gatekeepers and the communities. Therefore, strengthening the effectiveness of security institutions' response to these threats requires improving trust with local communities and responding efficiently to citizens' security needs. Doing so requires systemic security sector reforms and governance (SSR/G) and accountability within the security sector, most especially the Nigerian Police. To achieve this, the Nigerian Police (NP) must adhere to the rule of law and follow the rules of engagement in confronting perceived threats. Security provisioning of non-state security actors must be monitored to ensure it falls under the framework of the rule of law. High handedness in the operationalization of security provisioning must be equally checked.

The Nigerian Police is often the first line of security interface with the public. However, low levels of public trust in the police inhibit the cooperation needed to be effective against these societally based threats, extortions, abuse of power, victimization, brutality, extrajudicial killings and commercialization of police services have amplified the lack of trust. Promotion processes within the police must remain protected from politicization and focus on meritocracy³³. There should be a transparent and accountable mechanism in place to ensure the judicious use of resources provided to the Nigerian Police. The Police Trust Fund (PTF) should be transparent, independent of the police and government bureaucracy.

Non-state actors such as the CSOs and the media are strategically important within the security ecosystem, as they serve as a channel through which citizens can participate in the development of public policies and provide citizen oversight of security sector institutions. Credible CSOs are vital to the democratization as well as reforming the country's security sector through and encouraging the development of policies that reflect the security concerns of all citizens in the country, irrespective of gender, age, religion, or ethnic group, including those living in remote rural areas.

The Judiciary is a key oversight institution that ensures accountability and transparency in a democratic society. Numerous monetary judgements have been awarded to victims of police brutality by the now defunct Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) group, and other security institutions through the judicial panels instituted across the country. However, these judgements have posed a source of frustration to victims awarded due to the cumbersome process of enforcing this judgement as encapsulated in the extant laws on enforcement of monetary judgement against government agencies.

The provisions of section 84 of the Sheriff and Civil Processes Act 1955, makes the consent of the Attorney General of the Federation or State a condition towards obtaining monetary awards from government institutions including security agencies³⁴. The implication of this provision is that no monetary judgement can be enforced against any public institution without the consent of the Federal or State Attorney General. Thus, this defeats the reason why courts award damages against erring parties, especially in relation to the kinetic approach by state security actors. Furthermore, it violates the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which under Article 2(3) calls on member states to ensure that victims of human rights abuse have an enforceable and effective remedy determined by a competent court.



Photo Credit: TV Sense

³³ <https://africacenter.org/publication/governance-accountability-security-nigeria-html/>

³⁴ <https://www.proshareng.com/news/Politics/Judgment-Enforcement-Frustrations-and-Impediments-in-the-Sheriff-and-Civil-Processes-Act/55606>





Conclusion

Pervasive insecurity has become a defining element of social life in the present day. There seems to be no coherent and comprehensive strategy by the government to tackle the growing insecurity in the country. Thus the Government's responses to these multiple security threats have seemed ineffective at best and counterproductive at worst. However, in the face of these multidimensional security threats, a heavy-handed or solely military response will not bring peace to the country and may be counter-productive. What is needed at this juncture is transparent and accountable security sector governance that adheres to the rule of law in operationalization of security provisioning.

The Nigeria Police as an institution of government is saddled with the responsibility of responding to internal security challenges and must be adequately supported by the government, society and the civil society organizations (CSOs) to effectively perform its statutory function of policing the nation. It is imperative to devise mechanisms that ensure that state and non-state security actors are held accountable for their actions in the conduct of security operations. The current practice in which the Nigerian

military is deployed to undertake civilian police and related internal security operations, only weakens the effectiveness of the Nigerian police in policing the society and maintaining peace, law and order. The scope of this anomaly, is evidenced by the fact that the Nigerian military is currently conducting operations in 33 states of the 36 states and Federal Capital Territory, thereby militarizing the civic space³⁵. What is urgently required, is to devise actionable ways to demilitarize the society and support the police in its internal responses to security threats.

Finally, the introduction of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes are common practice in countries emerging from violent conflict and Nigeria is no exception. Arguably, the most difficult aspect of any DDR programme, is the successful and long-term reintegration of former non-state armed combatants into civilian life. Despite this process of reintegration, we should hold these non-state armed actors accountable for their actions and ensure justice and reparation for victims of conflicts.

³⁵ <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/more-news/424791-insecurity-nigerian-army-involved-in-operations-in-33-states-ndume.html>



Recommendation

General:

- As of today, Nigerian citizens are all victims of the insecurity situation in the country Nigeria and have no alternative than to insist on the rule of law as a guiding document for the security operations of both state and non-state security actors. Government must be reminded at all times of the constitutional imperative in section 14 (2) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended), that security and welfare of the people must be the primary purpose of government.

Executive:

- The Executive Branch must collaborate with other arms of government to deepen and entrench the rule of law and accountability mechanisms in the conduct of security sector operations and governance across the country. Ramp up robust mechanisms for promoting, entrenching, and monitoring transparency regarding resources allocated to shore up national security in relation to capacitating the military, police, security and law enforcement institutions.
- We call for proper functioning of the existing multinational joint task force, improve collaboration and cooperation to curb transnational crimes by increasing border security and patrol at illegal and legal entry points.
- Refocus the conceptualisation and pursuit of national security to human security, by taking concrete steps to prioritize and right-size the deployment of available national resource to address the vulnerability of marginalized groups, especially the poor in vulnerable and isolated communities and review national framework and criteria for remuneration to radically redistribute national wealth in order to reduce structural inequality and inequities.
- The foundation of insecurity today are the children who have fled as a result of armed conflict and are currently growing without a home, shelter, or family. There should be a Special programme to identify, rehabilitate and integrate these children affected by armed conflict. The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes of the government should be closely monitored to ensure there is no infiltration into the programme by other categories of citizens just for economic benefits. In addition, the executive and all other arms of government must ensure accountability, justice and reparations for those that have been affected as a result of the multiple insecurity situation in the country.
- The Executive Branch should pay attention to the politicization of non-state security actors by politicians thereby exposing them to the risk of human rights violations and abuses. There is a need to ensure training and adequate supervision and framework under the law for the conduct and operations of non-state security actors in the society.
- Election is a matter of national security; therefore, the Executive and other arms of government must ensure a free, fair and credible electoral process in the selection of leaders including fair judgements in election tribunals.

Legislature

- Strengthening of oversight institutions and committees of the National Assembly to effectively carry out their responsibilities to establish trust between security actors and its citizens. Oversight institutions such as the National Human Rights Commission, Ministries of Police Affairs, Interior, Defence, Justice, Finance etc., Police Service Commission and others must be given the required support and autonomy (technical, financial, personnel etc) to effectively carry out their oversight mandates. They must be free from undue interference from other government actors, especially political influence, so they can administer unbiased redress measures against erring security institutions and personnel.
- Integrate the civil society actors into security oversight to provide policymakers with a wider range of perspectives, interests, information and alternatives while formulating laws that positively affect security sector reform and governance (SSR/G) in the community or State.



- Amend the provisions of section 84 of the Sheriff and Civil Processes Act 1955, which make the consent of the Attorney General of the Federation or State as the case maybe a condition precedent towards obtaining monetary awards from government institutions including security agencies is a stumbling block for access to justice, and effectively ensuring adherence to the rule of law by state security actors. The implication of this provision is that no monetary judgement can be enforced against any public institution without the consent of the Federal or State Attorney General and obtaining said consent is near impossible. This thus defeats the purpose for which courts award damages against erring parties, especially in relation to its punitive nature which serves as a deterrent to government agencies.
- The legislature should establish a special court to try suspected terrorists, bandits whose activities have a direct negative impact on human security. This process will give timely judgement.
- Nigeria is witnessing a major shift in the logic of security provisioning from the state to non-state security actors. In a sense, state inadequacy in the provision of security to its citizens has created a yawning vacuum that non-state security actors are filling hence the privatization, commercialization and communalization of security services giving rise to vigilantes, neighbourhood watch groups, private guard companies (PGCs), and private security organisations (PSOs). There should be a security framework in place to guide the operations of these non-state security actors.
- CSO cooperation with the parliament should be encouraged because it enables democratic governance of the security sector governance by providing information on the current security climate, human rights abuses, and expertise on budgetary oversight to committee hearings.

Police

- Devolution of the overtly centralized security architecture to regional or community-based policing for effective policing and community police relations. The Nigerian Police should be more transparent and accountable in the management of the welfare of the officers of the force.

Economy

- Restructure the nation's economic base through conscious efforts at developing strategic sectors: revitalising the manufacturing, agricultural and construction sectors to create more employment opportunities for the teeming youth population. Government should therefore build strong resilient economic institutions and those already in place should be strengthened to create jobs for the youths. The power sector demands immediate attention for power is the heartbeat of the nation, the informal and formal sector to drive the economy. Efforts should be made to encourage vocational, technical and entrepreneurial education in Nigeria for self-employment.
- Government should check terrorism financing by ensuring that changing of foreign currency at the local markets known as Bureau-de-Change (BDC) is done with identity cards and proper documentations.

Civil Society Organizations

- Civil society organizations should be encouraged at all bureaucratic levels to reduce tensions and strengthen relations between security agencies and members of the public. CSOs play a fundamental role in building and consolidating an efficient democracy which is based on setting up of effective and competent institutions that respect the rule of law, respond to the needs of the population, and are accountable to that population. They serve as a conduit pipe for citizens' input on security sector reforms and governance. Therefore, CSO groups and the media must be supported to ensure human rights violations by state and non-state security actors are reported and erring state and non-state security actors are held accountable.





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