"NO SAFE ZONE:"AN EXPLORATION INTO THE MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS OF SECURITY CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA, 1999-2022.

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Abstract

Nigeria is currently battling generalized insecurity. With hardly any of its six geo-political zones spared from one form of insecurity or the other, Africa's most populous country and erstwhile bulwark of stability in West Africa is now practically under the gun on all fronts. There is growing insecurity in Nigeria, despite the best efforts of the gallant members of the country's security forces and increased budgetary provisions. The cumulative effect of the generalized insecurity is that the fear among Nigerians is palpable as nowhere seems immune. This is especially so in rural areas which bear a heavier brunt, given the somewhat regular rate those areas are besieged. The debilitating security challenges are already also taking a toll on economic activities, particularly with regard to commerce and agriculture. The adverse effect is also felt in the education sector in many parts of the country. This is in addition to the humanitarian crisis occasioned by mass displacements in states burdened by security challenges. The unending sit-at-home order enforced by members of the Eastern Security Network (ESN), the armed wing of the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB), is negatively affecting trade in an area noted for its vibrant commercial activities. Further crackdown on such lawful business activities have drastically reduced individual and government revenue, thus fueling poverty and its attendant consequences, especially in the worst affected states of Anambra and Imo. The continued debasement of state legitimacy will embolden criminals and ultimately lead to the

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creation of a state within a state. In the North-West and North-Central, the sacking of hundreds of farming communities continues to exacerbate the looming spectre of hunger and starvation. The rapid spread of ISWAP cells, if untamed, could give the Islamic state an opportunity to turn Nigeria into the new Syria. The North Central, South West, and South South are equally burdened by growing insecurity in different forms. To arrive at such an understanding, the paper examines the major forms of insecurity in the six geo-political zones of the country, sketching their histories and dimensions, and mapping how they imperil life and property, magnify fault-lines, and hinder economic growth and national development. This paper explored the drivers and triggers of insecurity in the country. Secondary data is employed using descriptive and analytical lenses which identified eleven factors which provide the environment for insecurity.

Key words: Security, Criminals, States, Challenges, Country

Introduction

Nigeria's security challenges have persisted, threatening the country's corporate existence. While some of these difficulties predate the establishment of modern Nigeria[1], many more have emerged in recent years, exacerbating the country's conflict environment. Many contemporary forms of insecurity are directly related to socioeconomic and political inequalities, while others may be traced to ethno-religious crises, perceived marginalization, as well as actual and perceived injustice. Therefore, multiple factors have contributed to the intractable nature of security concerns.

Multiple types of instability exist throughout the six geopolitical zones, jeopardizing the country's stability and widening its fault lines. Bandits continue to rule communities in the rural areas in parts of North-West and North-Central zones, which have the unflattering label "ungoverned spaces", owing to lack of

government's presence. Separatist agitation is common in the South-East, manifesting itself in attacks on government institutions and the killing of citizens deemed to be not too sympathetic to the secessionist cause. Because of the Boko Haram insurgency, the North-East has been a battleground for almost a decade. Despite the split of the original group into ISWAP, JAS and Ansaru. [2]Lethal activities of the terrorists continue, resulting in abductions, murder, devastation, and grave humanitarian catastrophe.

The Jihadists have spread their tentacles to the formerly bandit-infested North-West. Thus, a partnership between jihadists and bandits is rapidly taking root, resulting in ransacking of towns, food insecurity, and widespread displacement.

The North-Central, also known as the Middle Belt, is home to an avalanche of ethno-religious confrontations, herder-farmer conflict, and growing terrorist acts because of expansionist agenda of some of the terrorist groups. The South-South is still a hotbed for militancy resulting in economic sabotage of the mainstay in Nigeria's economy – crude oil, while the South-West is witnessing a rise in ritual killings, cultism, and increased herder-farmer clashes.

The nature, pattern and trend of security challenges confronting Nigeria cannot be dealt with efficiently using military power alone: in reaction to the security challenges across the country, the federal government and state governments have continued to institute kinetic and non-kinetic actions to stem the trends. Through the military and other security agencies, the federal government has conducted security operations in all the thirty-six states of the federation and established task forces specifically to deal with insurgency, armed banditry, and militancy in the North East, North Central, North West and Niger Delta.

In addition, the federal government sought international collaboration through the multinational task force to combat insurgency while creating non-kinetic engagements such as humanitarian operation and operation safe corridor to encourage defection within the ranks of the insurgents. Establishment of the Niger delta Development Commission and, the North east Development Commission, and the Amnesty Programme are parts of the soft approaches the federal government embarked upon to ameliorate the effects of insecurity in Nigeria. At the sub-national level, some state governments have enacted various legislations to prescribe stiffer punishment for kidnapping and associated crimes, and open grazing as a way of stemming persistent farmers/herders' clashes. Some state governments established security networks to complement efforts of regular security forces, while others went into dialogues with armed groups to broker peace deals.

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the many facets of the drivers and manifestations of insecurity in Nigeria and to make recommendations towards finding solutions to the multi-dimensional challenges.

The methodology used for this paper is descriptive and analytic in nature. Statistics, graphs, and maps are used to depict patterns and trends of insecurity issues and their severity across the country. Moreover, the security challenges are examined based on issues rather than their geo-location. The aim is to create room for broader description and analysis of issues especially where they cut across geo-graphical locations.

Data for this paper was sourced from secondary sources such as accounts of prominent personalities and expert reports on the nature, patterns, and trends of insecurity issues in Nigeria.

Overview of Security Challenges in Nigeria.

Terrorism

Terrorism is an unconventional form of warfare aimed at destabilizing, disorgansing, or replacing the existing political order. An insurgency is a protracted political-military struggle directed toward subverting or displacing the legitimacy of a constituted government or occupying power and completely or partially controlling the resources of a territory using irregular military forces and illegal political organizations. The difference between terrorism and insurgency is rather blurred, because insurgents sometimes employ terrorist tactics to achieve their aims.

Terrorist groups such as Boko Haram, and their splinter group, Islamic States of West African Province (BH/ISWAP), have remained Nigeria's gravest security threats for over a decade.

The threat initially existed primarily in the North-East of Nigeria, particularly in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states. It had varying degrees of manifestation in several other states of the federation, with a recent expansion to parts of North-Central and North-West. There are indications that the groups are expanding into South-West Nigeria following a recent attack in Owo, Ondo state, which has been attributed to ISWAP. The Boko Haram insurgency is traceable to 2003 in Geidam Forest, Yobe State, where a group of youths known at the time as the "Nigerian Taliban' sporadically attacked security officials and installations to steal weapons. They also attacked isolated communities to instill fear in the local populace.

To fund their operations, recruit members, and purchase weapons and communication gadgets, Boko Haram insurgents have employed tactics such as kidnapping for ransom and cross border cash smuggling. The federal government of Nigeria (FGN)

focused its response on the terrorist threat with military actions aimed eliminating them.

Banditry

Among the many insecurity threats facing Nigeria, banditry is a cause for serious concern. Banditry is the actual or threatened use of arms, that is, any instrument of force/coercion/violence, to disposes people of their material belongings. In recent times, banditry has taken centre stage in Nigeria's conflict landscape, from its latter day beginning in Zamfara state in 2010. As indicated earlier, it is a problem with longstanding history in the region, dating back to the pre-colonial period.

There has been increased bandit activity in Zamfara, Kaduna, Niger, Sokoto, Kebbi, and Katsina states, an area whose combined 249, 143 km²is larger than the United Kingdom. More recently, the threat has expanded to states like Kogi, Taraba, Plateau, and Nasarawa, as well as the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Also, some parts of the South West have recorded incidents of banditry in recent times.

Banditry manifests in forms of kidnapping, armed robbery, murder, rape, cattle-rustling, arson, and the exploitation of environmental resources. Some of the factors that have led to the rise and persistence of armed banditry across the country are under-governed spaces, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, grim socioeconomic conditions such as poverty and high youth unemployment, cattle rustling, protracted inter-tribal crises and illegal mining activities, especially in Zamfara and Niger states.

The effect of armed banditry is extensive. In addition to complicating the general insecurity in the country, it has exacerbated forced migration and displacement, food insecurity, cattle rustling, destruction of property, health challenges, humanitarian crises, and death. Between 2018 and 2021, an

estimated 7,500[3] lives were lost to the banditry crisis, while nearly one million became internally displaced persons (IDPs) from 798 communities in the affected states. A total of 50,000[4] Nigerians were reportedly taking refuge in the Niger Republic, at the peak of the conflict problem.

Militancy
The economic war, predominantly in the South-South (Niger Delta Region), is the result of activities of militant groups. Perceived marginalization and struggle for oil wealth fuel violence between ethnic groups, leading to a near-militarization of the entire region by ethnic militia groups and government security forces.

Militancy is also driven by the restiveness of Niger Delta youth who are mostly unemployed and disaffected. Activities associated with militancy include economic sabotage in the form of pipeline vandalism, piracy, illegal bunkering, oil theft, kidnapping of mostly expatriates for ransom, targeted attacks, and killings, as well as communal clashes among others.

Oil Theft
Oil theft is another criminal activity that has been plaguing the Niger Delta region, with far-reaching impact on the national economy. Oil theft in the oil-producing region of Nigeria has increased significantly, despite the presence and counter-theft operations of security agencies including the Armed Forces and the National Security and Civil Defence Corps.

According to a report by the Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEIT), about $42 billion was lost to oil theft ad sabotage over a ten-year period. Given Nigeria's huge reliance on oil, the scale of theft of the commodity and loss in potential revenue is clearly an economic sabotage[5]. Indeed, a picture of the revenue the country has lost to oil theft can be gleaned from the many discoveries lately of hidden pipelines,

with an outlet in the sea, that siphon oil from major supply lines. One of these was described as being over four kilometer long and believed to have existed for years.

Cultism

Cultism is fuelled by unemployment, youth bulge, inconsistencies in the university system, proliferation of illicit arms, a breakdown of moral codes and values as well as other socio-cultural inadequacies manifesting in the country in recent times. Some of the known cult groups in Nigeria are Black axe, Vikings, Eiye and Aiye confraternities.

Cultism as a social menace does not exist in isolation, crimes such as extortion, intimidation, armed robbery, assassinations, targeted killings, drug abuse, sexual assault, murder, and bullying are associated with it directly or indirectly. Cult groups also serve as a pool for thugs employed by politicians to disrupt the safe conduct of free and fair elections. Despite the efforts of security agencies to curtail cultism, the menace remains a threat to national security because it constitutes a major source of recruitment for other criminal networks in the country.

Secessionist Agitations

Secessionist agitations are consequence of the Nigerian state's fragility with reference to perceived marginalization, injustice, exclusivist policies of government and the unequal distribution of national resources. Some secessionist agitation groups which have sprung up in recent times include the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Biafra Zionist Movement, Niger Delta Liberation Front and Oduduwa Republic agitators.

Some members of these groups have unleashed violence against security forces, attacking innocent civilians and employing hate speech to propagate their secessionist agenda. For instance, IPOB declared a"sit-at-home order" for individuals living in the South-East States and began attacking and killing citizens who violated this order, in total violation of citizens' rights and

constituted authority. This clearly has negative implications for national security.

In response to this threat, the federal government proscribed IPOB and declared it a terrorist group. The proscription has so far done little to tackle the challenge. Defiant members of the group intensified their attacks on civilians and began concealing their identities, leading to the alleged rise of the "Unknown Gunmen" phenomenon.

Inter-Communal Clashes
Inter-communal clashes are a recurring security challenge in Nigeria and the dynamics differ from one clash to the other. But they are mostly occasioned by boundary/land disputes, tussles over traditional leadership and titles, settler-indigene animosity, struggle over natural resources and religious intolerance. Other causes of inter-communal clashes are perceived dominance/marginalization governance, nepotism, corruption, inequalities, and injustice. There is a high incidence of inter-communal clashes across the country, with the most recurring ones being farmer-herder clash in Benue state, indigene-settler clashes in Zango-Kataf and other parts of Kaduna state as well as Jos, Mangu and other parts of Plateau state, Tiv-Juku crisis in Taraba State, as well as the Itsekiri-Urhobo crisis in Delta state. There are also occasional clashes between Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba in some parts of the South West, particularly in Sagamu, Ogun State, with the most recent incident in Shasha, Ibadan in Oyo state.

Herders/Farmers Clashes
Historically, the North West and Middle Belt stats are the fertile plains and grazing lands of Nigeria where nomadic pastoralist and sedentary agriculturalist groups coexisted and traded. They turned to local peacekeeping mechanisms when land disputes arose. However, desiccation and large land allocations to estate owners have pushed herders off their historical grazing routes.

Likewise, according to aerial analysis by the U.S. Geological Survey, land available for open grazing in Nigeria's Middle Belt declined by 38 percent between 1975 and 2013, while the area dedicated to farming nearly trebled[5].

These dynamics are being driven by climate shifts, exclusionary land policies, and population growth while demand for meat supplied by the country's herders is rising. The consequential effects of these problems are clashes between farmers and herders over land, which have spurred the formation of ethnic militias, vigilante raids, and extrajudicial killings in Adamawa, Taraba, Benue, Plateau, Kaduna and Zamfara states in the North East, the North Central and the North West geo-political zones. The violence has spread to the southern part of the country, with incidents of herder-farmer clashes recorded in parts of Ogun and Oyo states in the South West and Abia and Enugu States in the South East.

At the sub-national level and more recently, states like Benue and Taraba have placed a ban on open grazing as a response to the protracted conflict between farmers and herders. This is despite the numerous military deployments to the hotspots of this crisis. Recently, the federal government sought to implement the RUGA[6] policy, but it was met by severe pushback across the country, so much so that it had to be abandoned in favour of a National Livestock Transformation Plan[7].

Religious Fundamentalism
In Nigeria, the word fundamentalism has been synonymous with religious extremists since the Maitatsine Riot in Kano in 1980. Religious fundamentalism includes all sorts of religious extremist behaviours and is majorly situated in Northern Nigeria. One religious group that has the most confrontation with the state is the umbrella organization of Shites in Nigeria, called the Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN). It is largely domiciled in Zaria, Kaduna state, but it has a presence in most

states in Northern Nigeria. Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky is the spiritual head of IMN. The government views most of the group's activities as a violation of law and order while accusing the group of attempting to run a parallel government in a constitutional democracy.

The government has cited some of the group's unlawful activities to include blocking of highways during processions, illegal possession of firearms, harassment and intimidation of innocent citizens, and altercations with security forces.

Shite and Sunni sects have clashed in Nigeria for decades. Most of the violence revolved around religious processions and festivals. The Ashura processions (a day of mourning for Shite Muslims) have been marked by sectarian conflicts in Nigeria. Road blockades and heavy traffic on the Zaria highway, are usually condemned and sometimes lead to Shia and Sunni Muslim faithful pelting one another with stones.

The Kaduna State government proscribed the activities of the group, and the federal government successfully got a court ruling that declared it a terrorist organization. The group has challenged this declaration, arguing that it is a religious movement and that it has a fundamental right to freedom of worship that is recognized by national and international laws.

Religious clashes in Nigeria are also common between Muslims and Christians; this is despite a majority of Nigeria's population being either Muslim or Christian. Intra-religious conflict in Nigeria has been exacerbated by the rise of terrorist and extremist groups and other factors such as communal clashes, introduction of Sharia law, violent rhetoric from preachers and feelings of marginalization.

Some notable examples of religious crisis are the Kafanchan-Kaduna crisis of the 1980s and 1990s; the Kaduna Sharia riots of

2000 and the Bauchi riots in 2001, both caused by the introduction of Sharia law in those states, as well as the 2001 riots in Jos, caused by a governmental appointment. Hundreds of lives were lost, and properties destroyed during these conflicts and the effects reverberated beyond state borders. These conflicts threaten national security and stability[8].

Precursors/Triggers of Insecurity in Nigeria

Ineffective Criminal Justice System

Efficient criminal justice administration is key to curbing crimes in the society and ensuring long-term solutions to security challenges. Unfortunately, however, there are existing inadequacies and human indiscretions that make the system unable to fully rise to the challenge. Corruption in the law enforcement and justice sector aids escape of criminals from the law, which emboldens and imbues them with a sense of impunity and makes the wronged persons take the laws into their own hands for vengeance. Extortion and torture in the hands of security agents have been cited by many high-profile criminals as a reason for their indulgence in criminal activities or their extreme show of sadism.

There is also insufficient capacity and lack of deliberate effort to take apprehended high-profile criminals through the justice dispensation process. For example, the trial of Boko Haram suspects in Kainji, Niger State, which began in 2017, drew a lot of criticism for lacking sufficient transparency and rigor, and for the fact it had yet to cover a lot of suspects, relative to the number of persons in custody.

Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons

Arms proliferation is a driver of insecurity in Nigeria. Arms proliferation has been defined as the "excessive accumulation and illegal spread of weapons which could have a destabilizing effect on national security)[9]. The point to note here is that the illegal movement of arms from one place to another denotes

illicit arms availability for illegal use and by illegal persons or groups of persons.

Readily available arms are often incentives for people and groups with ill motives to conduct attacks, further exacerbating insecurity. Arms proliferation is a recipe for disaster, which further highlights the connecting line between the proliferation of arms and insecurity, as without access to arms it will be difficult, for criminal elements to operate. The implication for Nigeria is the high level of insecurity currently manifesting across the country.

High Incidence of Poverty and Unemployment

Nigeria was once described as the poverty capital of the world, by the World Poverty clock, an online real time aggregator. It is argued that four in every 10 Nigerians are living in poverty, with just 17 percent of Nigerian workers having the wage jobs able to lift people out of poverty[11]. As of the fourth quarter of 2020, the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics reported that the unemployment rate had risen to 33%, making it the second highest on the global list (Bloomberg 2021). According to the National Bureau of Statistics, 39.1 percent of Nigerians lived below the international poverty line of $1.90 per person per day (2011 PPP) in 2018/19. Yet a further 31.9 percent of Nigerians had consumption levels between $1.90 and #3.20 per person per day, making them vulnerable to falling into extreme poverty when shocks occur[12]. In addition, a high population growth rate, limited job opportunities, and the low value of the naira in the exchange/capital market have further pushed many Nigeria's below the poverty line. High incidence of poverty and unemployment expands the pool of possible recruits for criminal activities.

Climate Change

Climate change, emanating from global warming, orchestrated by human activities in the environment, has led to depletion of

the ozone layer. Scientifics have reached a consensus that global warming is real and that human activities are causing the warming trend[13]. Increasing global temperatures are having serious consequences on human lives with the world witnessing rising sea levels, changes in climate patterns, changes in the amount and pattern of precipitation, and more severe weather, including stronger tropical storms, droughts, and heat waves, floods, among others.

The effects of climate change are being felt across the globe, but in Nigeria, it has had a significant impact in increasing conflict and insecurity. Coastal erosion and flooding are now frequently experienced in Lagos, Kogi, and Benue states, among others, due to high precipitation. Drought and desertification have increased in recent years, negatively impacting the arid northern states. The Lake Chad, for example, has shrunk by 90 percent since 1960s[14]. Elsewhere, overflowing rivers and torrential rains have led to displacement of hundreds of thousands of people and destruction of large expanse of farmlands. These changes in climate have led to population displace and increased migration to safer and more prosperous locations.

Quest for Resource Control
Nigeria is rich in various natural solid and liquid mineral deposits. There is no region that lacks an important resource. Section 1 (1) of the Nigerian Minerals and Mining Act of 2007 gives the federal government ownership, control, and the right to mining of all mineral resources in the coutry[15]. Nevertheless, resource control has been the cause of insecurity in different parts of the country, including the Niger Delta, which is rich in crude oil.

The Niger Delta militants, for instance, argued that their cause was a form of reaction to the government's neglect of oil spillage as well as the ravaging activities of oil exploration in the Nigeria Delta[16]. Despite their argument, the activities of militants

threaten national security because they are a form of economic sabotage.

According to reports, an estimated 80% of mining in the northern region, particularly gold mining in Zamfara, is carried out illegally with militia support (Bandits)[17]. In Zamfara state, for example, the suspension and subsequent FG ban on all mining activities had no deterrent effect on illegal mining operations or crimes of banditry. Rather, it merely shifted the focus of attacks to vulnerable civilian communities and commuters, as well as movement to other state mines, most notably Katsina and Kano[18].

Easy Access to Illicit Drugs

Drug proliferation is a major problem in Nigeria, in 2018, a UNODC report stated that approximately 14.4 percent of Nigerians, or 14.3 million people between the ages of 15 and 64 years, used illicit drugs[19]. Drugs are often found in the possession of criminal groups across the country, and many criminals have often confessed to using drugs to enhance their boldness before conducting attacks.

The prevalence of illicit drugs can be attributed to the country's porous borders and the inability of the drug enforcement agency to effectively tackle the problem. Corruption has also contributed to the ongoing drug problem, as some government officials and civil servants who have responsibility to combat the menace are often found conniving with criminal drug networks. Criminal and terrorist groups have been known to conduct active drug smuggling operations as part of their funding sources, further perpetuating insecurity across the country.

Porous Borders

Nigeria's security situation is exacerbated by its porous borders, which allow for unchecked/unsupervised entry to the nation. According to the Nigeria Immigration Service, there were over

1,490 illegal entry routes to Nigeria as of May 2022, compared to over 80 supervised entry ports[20]. Nigeria has a land area of 923,769 square kilometers ad borders spanning 4,047 kilometres with Niger in the north (1.497km), Benin in the west (773km), Chad in the North East (87km), and Cameroon in the east (1,690km)[22].

The parlous state of the country's borders is starkly underlined by the largely unhindered crossings by traders and occasionally militia groups from Niger that have been recorded in the Northern state of Sokoto, Also, Ambazonia rebel fighters evading capture have crossed the Nigeria-Cameroon border to seek safety in border territories in the North East state of Taraba and the South-South state of Cross River[22]. Terrorist combatants and supplies have been observed moving through the Nigerian-Chad and Nigerian-Cameroon borders in North East Borno, demanding coordinated military operations to halt these trends. In the South West and the North West, smuggling of vehicles and other consumable such as food and even petrol from Benin and Togo is a continuous trend around Lagos, Ogun, Kwara, and Niger state.

Lack of infrastructure such as security, roads, electricity, healthcare facilities, education, and water supply in communities along the borders contributes to unemployment and thus restiveness. This has exposed many to the practice of trans-border crimes such as smuggling of contraband goods. Social ills like smuggling of Small Arms and Light weapons, money laundering, drug, and human trafficking, are also prevalent.

Socio-Political and Economic Grievances
There are also grievances from some parts of the country regarding socio-political and economic exclusion. For instance, since the end of the Nigerian-Biafra War in 1967, no south-easterner has ruled the country as either Head of State or as President. The cases of resource control and economic

marginalization equally fall under this section. These grievances cannot be ignored because they have been the sources of disaffection and some of the security challenges in the country.

Poor Land use Policies

Statutory land laws and/or land use policies in Nigeria date back to as far as 1910. The land tenure system land use, ownership, and rights are vested in the government. However, individual rights to land ownership have not been eliminated. It is important to note that land ownership, use, and right have been a source of controversy, thus necessitating strict government control. This led the government to promulgate the land policy instrument on March 29th, 1978, known as the Land Use Act (LUA). This was the principal Nigerian land policy regarding all land, designed to a great extent to unify the laws relating to land tenure in Nigeria[23].

Due to growth and development, there has been more demand for land, thus bringing about more challenges around land ownership and use in the country. The creation of more states has had people divided between states, leading to complications on border issues as well as in states of origin where kith and kin are divided between states. Again, the demand for better road networks, the establishment of industries, and the overall development of states has built pressure around land use. Like the border issue, land use is another controversial issue for the Nigerian state.

Socio-Political Imbalances

Distribution of government's resources, employment, and appointments in Nigeria has always been a source of controversy among the many regional ad ethnic groups in Nigeria. The cry of marginalization and perceived favouring of some groups against others come up every now and then. This gave rise to the concept of Federal Character[24] enshrined in the working laws of Nigeria. It is, therefore, both reaction as well as a system. The principle is

supposedly a positive reaction to correct the wrongs of the past in the conduct of public service and to exploit the great diversities of the country. Despite the principle in place, the practical implementation and interpretation of this policy have not sufficiently addressed the intendment of its framers[25]. Inequalities serve as the tinder for agitations by ethnic, regional, or religious groups.

Ineffective Security Architecture

There are similarities in the statutory roles of the various security services and agencies in Nigeria. It therefore makes it difficult for them to demarcate their constitutional responsibilities, which often culminates in clashes between different personnel on various security matters rather than a joined-up approach to fighting crime in a joint security environment.

One other factor that has worsened insecurity in the country is the inadequacies within the production of credible intelligence including the lack of synergy and poor usage of intelligence product.

Increased Use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDS)

The use of improvised explosive devices (IEDS) and similar devices is a common strategy of terrorists in Nigeria. With focus on Boko Haram, the terror group uses IEDs, including car bombs, ad suicide bombers to kill civilians at markets, transport hubs, schools, and other public institutions[26].

Proliferation of Irregular Security Outfits

As more communities got attacked with little to no response from the security forces, citizens began setting up local vigilantes and militia groups, tasked with providing community and state security. This has led to the proliferation of various armed groups across the country. These irregular security outfits pose a national security threat because they are armed, and their allegiance is not necessarily to the country, but to the interests

(tribes, local communities), they are protecting. That means at some point they could deem the state as the threat and conduct attacks against it. These outfits are not constitutionally recognized, and the operators are not trained to perform the specialized functions they engage in.

Recommendations

Tackling insecurity in a sustainable manner requires systematically correcting the drivers of insecurity and strategically and tactically combating their manifestations. Addressing only the manifestations of insecurity without tackling its drivers is akin to merely cutting off the tail of a poisonous and dangerous snake while keeping intact its head and the rest of its body. As explained earlier, the drivers of insecurity are those environmental conditions and regulations that have encouraged the commencement and continuation of insecurity.

Prioritize Dialogue and Soft Approach to Conflict Resolution: Much of the conflict manifestation seen across Nigeria, from Niger Delta and secessionist agitations, to armed conflict in Zamfara and much of the Middle Belt could be avoided if there was a constructive engagement of all stakeholders to address the underlying issues. Conflict mediation and resolution structures must be re-instituted at the community level.

Communicate More Strategically

Currently, Nigeria's adversaries dominate the information space. Nigerians are ill-informed and routinely disbelieve information from official sources. Information craft is crucial in addressing targeted narratives for state building.

The forum of spokespersons of Security Agencies should be revived and anchored in the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) for proactive engagement. It is recommended that the ONSA works with the Ministry of Information and the

National Orientation Agency to develop a Strategic Communications framework and operational concept.

Strengthen Judicial and Legislative Response

The importance of a strong judiciary in the fight against insecurity deserves utmost attention. Criminals cannot be prosecuted without the judiciary. However, the judiciary is in dire need of reform to strengthen it towards rendering justice swiftly, because justice as a deterrent against insecurity is presently lacking.

Criminal suspects are kept in prison for years awaiting trial, and even when trial begins, it takes ages to arrive at a sentence. The Chief of Defence Staff recently lamented that the weak judicial process was a hindrance to combating insecurity. Often the absence of justice or its belatedness has caused people to take laws into their own hands, judicial reforms are therefore imperative. As the popular saying goes, justice delayed is justice denied.

The legislature is vested with the constitutional powers to make laws and engage in oversight. Unfortunately, the legislature has been lacking in both regarding the security sector. There is an urgent need for the legislature to improve its use of oversight powers. Budgets, policies and conduct of the security sector and intelligence organizations deserve more scrutiny for better transparency and accountability and to foster inter-agency collaboration.

Strengthen Border Security

Significant clusters of security challenges in Nigeria are attributed to porous borders and inadequate boundary control systems. Uncontrolled border crossings make it difficult to determine who is a Nigerian citizen and who is not. Additionally, the porous borders allow for the smuggling of goods and services that are a threat to security.

It is recommended that a panel be set up to review the level of implementation of the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) National Border Management Strategy (2019-2023) and to work on the next five-year strategy within the broad objectives of: Enhancing National Security, and Contributing to National Economic Development.

Strengthen the Capacity of the National Boundary Commission

A conscious effort to review and revamp the capacity of the National Boundary Commission is recommended. To this end, the Presidency and the management of the National Boundary Commission should embark on a deliberate effort to strengthen the capacity and capability of the commission and its personnel towards meeting its mandate.

Constructive Engagement of Unemployed and Unskilled Youths through Education and Vocational Training

To prevent non-state armed groups in identified hot spots from the continuous recruitment of vulnerable unemployed, and out-of-school youths, we recommend that targeted employment, and vocational training opportunities be generated and sustained by each of the 36 states in Nigeria.

Security Sector Review

This should start with an urgent review of all Nigerian military, paramilitary, security forces and relevant ministries. This comprehensive Strategic National Defence and Security Sector Review (SDSSR) should produce a report which includes a comprehensive audit of security personnel, equipment, and facilities as a way of benchmarking what is available *vis a vis* what the country requires to deal with current insecurity manifestations. The various agencies' mission, organization, training, and doctrine should also be reviewed to reflect the national threat dynamics.

Strengthening Intelligence Management

Intelligence operations are currently service based and decentralized, and this is partly responsible for the inadequacies in the management of intelligence for effective security operations. Integration of all services intelligence resources and decentralizing of the management of such data is recommended. This could be done through creation of a national platform that would enable seamless collection and dissemination of intelligence. Other available resources must be integrated, like the recently introduced community police structure or state police if eventually created) for a more organic grassroots intelligence drive.

Regulation of Irregular Security Outfits across the Country

Local irregular security groups possess advantages that can be useful to the national security architecture. They have the trust of the locals whom they protect, and they possess ample knowledge of the grassroots terrain. Local irregular security groups such as the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) or hunters' associations have shown impressive operational effectiveness. However, their activities must be better regulated for government oversight.

This can be done by conducting a comprehensive audit of existing local and state level vigilantes. The aim of this audit is to provide a better understanding of the umber, size, strength, capacity and capabilities of these irregular security groups information derived from this audit will assist the federal government in determining how best to incorporate these groups into the national security infrastructure. For instance, some might be effective in border security, maritime security, forest security and/or counter insurgency forces. Another strategy could be the integration of these outfits into the private security sector which already has federal government regulation and oversight. The government can also investigate the possibility of merging these

volunteer forces and organizing them into something like the Pakistan Frontier Corps for effectiveness and efficiency. In addition, the local government areas should reactivate and empower local government security committees to enable a unified response at the local level.

Control of Arms, Light Weapons and Regulation of Local arms Industry

Illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons have contributed significantly to the killings of innocent Nigerians and existence of violent groups across Nigeria, while the porous border contributes significantly to this phenomenon, it is important to note that locally manufactured arms which are fabricated in small scale, ad local factories that operate without permits also account for a large percentage of arms in circulation across the country.

Therefore, it is important to establish policies for proper regulation, tracking and management of these weapons at each state of the weapons lifecycle including from production, sales/distribution, and stockpiling of local arms manufacturers. The vast weapons in circulation must be mopped up as part of security coordination efforts. Although this will involve kinetic operations such as armed raids, other non-kinetic options can be used as well, such as adopting a money/grant-for-arms approach. This is a sufficient incentive that could encourage citizens to turn in their arms for educational or business opportunities. In 2021, President Buhari approved the establishment of the National Centre for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (NCCSALW). The centre is domiciled in the Office of the National security Adviser (ONSA) and replaced the defunct Presidential Committee on Small Arms and Light Weapons. The centre is the institutional mechanism for policy guidance, research, and monitoring of all aspects of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Nigeria is faced with a myriad of security challenges. The visible security threats to the country are terrorism and insurgency, militancy, banditry, separatist agitations, kidnap for ransom, and lots more. The perpetrators of these crimes and insecurity in the country employ kidnapping and mass abduction, serial and ritual killings, pipeline vandalism and oil theft, destruction of farms, propaganda, and the laying of IEDs, among other strategies designed and employed to achieve their objectives and further polarize the Nigerian state. The outcome of these manifestations is a highly insecure Nigerian society. The people across all parts of Nigeria, particularly in the rural areas where the brunt of the security challenges is felt most, are unsafe. To address insecurity in Nigeria, this paper has presented a multi-sectoral and multidimensional approach that is layered and that seeks to block structural gaps that are the triggers of insecurity in Nigeria. Finally, it is certainly not escapist to say that all hope is not lost for Nigeria, if the necessary measures are employed in time and place, insecurity will be well addressed

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