

The Role of Security Sector in Management of Conflicts and Promotion of Democratic Governance in Nigeria

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Abstract: Nigeria with a population of over one hundred and forty million people is multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-cultural and multi-lingual. This plural political state has witnessed multiple escalated conflicts that threatened its survival and present its characteristics as a country with negative peace, insecurity and weak political order. Nigeria's democracy remains nascent and its unity challenged by intractable threats to lives and property. In the midst of these, the security sector is often called upon to pro-actively nip the threat to peace and democratic governance in its bud. This study therefore examines the role of the security sector in the management of conflicts and the promotion of democratic governance in Nigeria. The conceptual clarification provides the needed literary focus for the study. The various dimensions of escalated conflicts in Nigeria from 2009 to 2011 were highlighted also. Furthermore the role played by the security sector in sustaining democratic governance was chronicled. Lastly the extent to which the resultant social order promotes democratic governance was evaluated. The study concluded with policy options for the effectiveness of the security sector in managing conflicts and sustaining democratic governance through appropriate reform processes.

Key words: Democracy, democratic governance, escalated conflict, security sector, sustainability

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is a plural state comprising different ethnic, cultural and religious people group that are essentially heterogeneous. The development and escalation of conflicts are thus expected. Conflict arises from pursuit of divergent interest, goals and aspiration by individuals and groups in Nigerian defined social and physical environment (Otite, 2004). The changes in the social environment, such as contestable access to new political positions in Otite (2004) words is a fertile grounds for those who are interested in using these new resources to achieve their goals. Therefore, based on the understanding that conflicts in a heterogeneous and competitive setting beckon on the security sector to sustain social and political order through the resolution, transformation and management of the conflicts (Otite, 2004), they thereby sustaining democratic governance. The non-usurpation of political power by the military from 1999 to 2010 by its antecedents in the political history of Nigeria is supportive of democratic governance.

In this study therefore, efforts were made to show how the security sector managed the dynamics of conflicts in Nigeria and consequently support democratic governance. To realise this objective, conceptual clarification of essential concepts was done, the dynamics of various escalated conflict in Nigeria from 2009-2011 were chronicled. Furthermore, the preservation of the social order and democratic consolidation in Nigeria were discussed. The obvious challenges to the sector in the management of conflicts in Nigeria were also captured as

the basis for security sector reform. The paper proposed policies that could enhance the effectiveness of the security sector in managing conflict and promoting democratic governance in Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL CLARRIFICATION

- **Defining the security sector:** While it is true that the security sector has no universal definition, two broad perspectives have been adopted by Zabadi (2007). First from the broader security perspectives, the sector includes all those state institutions, which have a formal mandate to ensure the safety of the state and its citizens against acts of violence and coercion such as the armed forces, the police paramilitary forces, the intelligence services, border and customs guards as well as judicial and penal institutions. Second, from the perspective of government, it covers the elements of the public sector responsible for the exercise of the state monopoly of coercive power such as the elected and duly appointed civil authorities responsible for management and control of the security forces such as the executive government, the relevant ministries, the parliament and its specialised committees. From the foregoing, an exclusive security sector focus on the armed forces is no longer appropriate. Ball (2007) and Fayeye (2007) reinforced Zabadi (2007) position by identifying the security sector family as embracing defence, paramilitary and uninformed security forces. Also included are the

intelligence services, customs enforcement, civil oversight bodies, financial management bodies, judicial and correction system, foreign affairs as well as the civil and political society organisations. This long list of security sector family shows that the security sector is wider than the national security actors.

- **The concept 'security':** Broadly, security is seen as freedom from danger or threats to a nation's ability to protect or defend itself, promote its cherished values and legitimate interest and enhance the well-being of its people (Imobighe, 1990). However, Mijah (2007) shows that in modernising society, security means development. It is not military force, though it may involve it. Security is not traditional military activities, though it may encompass it, neither is it military hardware, though it may include it. Security is development and without development, there can be no security. This perspective emphasises human security. It implies the maturation of the structures and processes that can engender and guarantee political space and sufficient conditions for the realisation of personal, group and/or national aspirations.

Emphasises in this study is therefore on human security. It is a movement away from traditional and state-centric definition. It encompasses the personal and communal state of being secured from a wide range of critical and pervasive threats, including but not limited to all forms of violence, injustice and violation of human rights (Timothy, 2002; Fayeye, 2007, 2011). This orientation leaned heavily on Annan (1998) position that security means far more than absence of conflict but that lasting peace requires a broader vision encompassing areas such as education, health, democracy and human rights, protection against environmental degradation and proliferation of deadly weapons. Annan (1998) noted that there is no security amidst starvation, peace building without poverty alleviation and no true freedom built on the foundation of injustice. These pillars that form the concept of human security are said to be interrelated and naturally reinforcing.

- **The concept 'conflict':** Coser (1956) cited in Otite (2004) defines conflict as a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralise, injure, or eliminate their rivals. It is further conceived as conscious act involving personal or group contact and communication. It is a normal process of interaction particularly in a complete society in which resources are usually scarce. It may generally exist whenever incompatible activities occurred and may result in a "win-lose" character (Otite, 2004).

- **Conceptualizing democratic governance:** According to Aluko (2011) democratic governance refers to a system of government controlled by representatives who are elected by the people of a country. It is synonymous with good governance which involves among other thing the enthronement of due process, constitutionalism, rule of law, transparency and accountability in the conduct of public affairs. Similarly, UNDP (2009) presents democratic governance as the capacity of a society to define and establish policies and resolve conflicts peacefully within the existing legal order. This is a necessary condition for the rule of law along with the separation of powers and a legal system that ensures the enjoyment of individual freedom and rights-civil, social, political and cultural. This requires institutions based on the principle of equity, freedom, participation in decision making, accountability and promoting the inclusion of the most vulnerable sector of the society (Fayeye, 2011).

- **Understanding democratic sustainability:** According to Nwolise (2006) sustainable democracy requires that:

- Elections be conducted peacefully, freely fairly and regularly.
- An incumbent democratic government defeated in office through a free and fair electoral process should accept the results.
- The society enjoys longevity of regular democratic elections and government.
- The society progressively develops its capacity to nurture and consolidate democratic culture and democratic governance.
- There should be no threats to abort or actual abortion of democratic governance and culture.

DIMENSIONS OF ESCALATED CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA 1999-2010

According to Albert (2011), Nigerian fourth republic was brought into place by a democratic election in 1999. It was basically meant to avert the collapse of the Nigerian state following the series of problems that followed the annulment of the June 12 presidential election in 1993. Since the birth of the fourth republic (in 1999) Nigeria has witnessed several conflicts that threatened her very existence.

First, violent conflicts during and after the 2003, 2007 and 2011 elections became escalated and posed great challenges to security and stability of the Nigerian state. Sources of the violence were traced by Karim (2011) to high stake financial returns to politician,

proliferation of political parties, poverty and unemployment among others.

Second, Adedayo (2011) noted that the socio-political systems since 1999 seemed to have brewed violence and insecurity in Nigeria through the “political stakeholders”. Political assassinations in Nigeria spread through the six geopolitical zones.

Third, Ojo (2006) survey of religious crises in Nigeria showed that:

- Intra-religious disturbances occurred between different denominations or sects
- Inter-religious conflicts were prevalent between adherents of different religious beliefs but assuming socio-ethnic dimensions
- Inter-religious conflicts which, though, have socio-economic origin, ended up in the form of religious conflicts. These conflicts are worrisome development which threatened harmonious co-existence and jeopardise the unity of the Nigerian nation-state and democratic consolidation.

Fourth, the strict interpretation of the sharia law in some northern states in Nigeria were politically manipulated leading to loss of compromising and accommodating culture (Adedayo, 2011) as well as communal conflicts that have their origin in ethnic sentiments and religious practices. Through these, lives and properties were lost and Nigerians displaced.

Fifth, though it looked as if resource control is a political response of the southern governors to fight political Sharia put in place by most Northern governors (Aghalino, 2006), the realities of the overall oil-led development in the Niger Delta presented damaged wetland and the environment of the oil producing communities. (Akpuru_Aja, 2007). The adoption of negative conflict resolution strategies further escalated the resultant conflicts. Lives were lost, national economy suffered, democracy and natural security were threatened. The development of the militant culture gave birth to kidnapping, hostage taking and armed confrontations.

Sixth, the large influx of small arms and light weapons fuelled inter or intra communal conflicts, ethno-religious crises and threat to peace, development and security. State of emergency had to be declared in some states to sustain democratic governance.

Seventh, the protracted and perennial conflicts in Jos drew the attention of the nation to the indigene-settler concept in Nigeria. Attack and reprisal attacks decimated human and material capital and the ability of the nation to stem the tide of the conflicts is still being stretched.

Eighth, the development of Boko Haram Islamic fundamentalist in Borno State which took-off as a faceless mob-group. Its metamorphoses through a social movement to a terrorist cum revolutionary squad has threatened democracy and the very survival of the Nigeria

nation. Its on-slaught and strategies exposed Nigeria to the world as a weak and fragile nation moving towards a political-precipice.

The above chronicling of Nigeria escalated conflicts is by no means exhaustive. It merely shows the gravity of their threats to security, democracy and Nigeria nation-state.

SECURITY SECTOR, SOCIAL ORDER AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

Within the challenges to national security and democratic governance in Nigeria, the security sector in its efforts to sustain the social order must articulate the following realities in the Nigeria state which this paper adapted from Hutchful (1998):

- The Nigerian State and her plural population
- The Nigeria State and her territory (the conflicts within its borders)
- Resources and property regimes of the Nigerian state
- Nigeria state, state functions and institutional capacities

Member of the security sector family, in the light of challenges to security and democratic governance in Nigeria, had participate by its mandate to sustain democratic governance. Fayeye (2011) identified the following area of security sector contribution to democratic governance:

- Collaborating as Joint Task Force (JTF) to manage location, areas, zones, or state where there are escalated conflicts or breakdown of law and orders. Examples include Kaduna, Kano, Jos, Borno, Niger Delta among others.
- Protection of public institution building installation and infrastructures such as pipe-line, flow-lines oil exploration in prospecting zones etc.
- Protection of border posts and national waters and air spaces that are strategic to the security of the nation through appropriate deployment and surveillance schemes.
- Routine maintenance of law and order via patrol, beat management, force deployment and sporadic or rapid response to distress calls.
- Active surveillance on foods, drugs and control of standard practice in chemical consumption and utilisation through appropriate strategies.
- Investigation, detention and management of financial transaction in respect of public funds administration and corrupt prosecution. The role of Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices and Allied Matter Commission (ICPC) are relevant in these respects.

- Participation in regional and international defence through peace keeping or support operations.
- Cooperating with other international security organisations in managing and controlling international crimes.
- Networking in the security sector to control ethnic conflicts, local insurrections, criminal syndicates among others.
- Management of disarmament process of the militants in the Niger-Delta zones through the National Amnesty Programme.
- Enforcing curfews and other declared state of emergencies in States and disaster zones.
- Non-interference of partisan politics. The democratic sustenance in Nigeria is a mark of respect and loyalty of the security force to the Nigerian Nation.

CHALLENGES OF THE SECURITY SECTOR IN MANAGEMENT OF CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA

The security sector is not an island. Its effectiveness and efficiency are contingent upon certain benchmark performance by other sectors in the Nigerian political space.

In the execution of its mandate, the security sector has to contend with the following pathogens of insecurity identified by Nwolise (2006) as being capable of aborting the democratic process. They include

- Military coups and rule of force which overthrow the democratic orders and can spiral violence or war
- Electoral fraud which can generate violence and lead to war
- Intra-party and inter-party conflicts which generate political intolerance and political assassinations; armed politics including thuggery and activities of ethnic militias
- Inability of political gladiators to play the political game according to the rule
- Unwillingness of political leaders and gladiators defeated in free and fair elections to accept their defeat
- Manipulations of ethnic, regional or religious cleavages by politicians
- Terrorism engendered by electoral injustices; and rebellions, insurrections, revolution or civil war generated by unbearable socio-economic hardships facing the people, unjust sharing of national resources including political positions etc.

The above prevalence pathogens often overstretch the capacity of the security sector in responding effectively to their mandates. In Nigeria's fourth democratic republic, the security sector had manifested the following ineffectiveness in the face of threat to democratic governance.

- The Nigerian security has a record of not being able to unravel the mysteries behind the various cases of political assassinations in the country (Akinwale, 2011).
- Complicity and collusion of security operatives with political godfathers or money bags leading to electoral frauds and related manipulations as in the case of Anambra, Oyo among others.
- Non-prosecution of electoral offenders who violate electoral laws. It has been asserted that there is no reported case of prosecution of electoral offenders in Nigeria (Akinwale, 2011).
- Corruption of security operatives arising from demanding and accepting financial inducement for responsibilities and legally defined duties (Akinwale, 2011).
- Poor and intrasingent regime of conflict handling styles present operative as tactless. The age-long method of "an eye for an eye" is appreciated by 'trigger-happy' security operatives who have adapted 'fire for fire' rather than 'water for fire' approach.
- Professional incompetence in intelligence gathering that under-estimate or over-estimate security distress issues resulting in poor response and insipid or timid actions from political class.
- Prioritisation or over-emphasis of reactionary, over responsive mechanisms in conflict management. The development and application of security strategies to track crimes and violent conflicts are yet to be properly articulated.
- Poor security collaboration and networking. The lack of integration and proper networking in the security sector family result in ineffectiveness. The sector remains 'a coat of many colours' lacking in blend and beauty.

The above are by no means exhaustive. Some of these failures are tied to the national deficiencies manifesting in

- Poor national road network transportation system
- Inadequate communication facilities
- Ailing and slow national economy that heighten poverty
- Lack of political will by key role of players
- Absence of social justice
- Weak loyalty to national progress and survival

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that Nigeria is multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-party and multicultural. This plural nature generates conflicts which in turn threaten democratic governance. This security sector remains indispensable in promoting the stability of the socio-political order. In the face of obvious challenges, the sector is consistently called to live up to its mandate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Nwolise (2006) aptly proposed that the Nigerian government and people must work hard against six basic elements that threaten sustainable democracy and national security.

- Armed politics especially thuggery, assassination and personal militia which frighten opponents and intimidate voters.
- Armed trafficking fuelled by cross-border crimes
- Inability or refusal of politicians to play the political game according to the rules.
- Mass illiteracy and political ignorance
- Ethnic-cum religious manipulation by politicians

All these should normally be followed up with;

- Building and strengthening the professional capacity of the security sector family
- Strengthening the capacity of the authorities to develop policy and manage the sector
- Enhancing the capacity of the civil society to monitor security sector policies
- Intensifying national confidence building mechanism
- Sustaining programmes for the support of weapon collection in all communities.
- Encouraging speedy dispensation of justice
- Promoting gender-balance in the security sector.

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