

NIGERIA’S SECURITY CHALLENGES: IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL SECURITY

Solomon Eloka Ifesi

*Department of History and International Studies,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka*

Abstract

Nigeria is confronted with myriad of complex security issues that pose serious implications for internal security. This paper examines the multifaceted nature of these challenges, which include widespread insurgency, terrorism, communal clashes, banditry, and kidnapping, militancy, armed robbery, Herdsmen-Farmers. The implications of these security threats on the country’s internal security are profound. It leads to loss of lives, destruction of property, displacement of communities, and undermining of socio-economic development. This paper explores the root causes of these security challenges, analyzes their implications on Nigeria's social fabric and economic development, and highlights the urgent need for cohesive and sustainable security strategies to safeguard the country's internal stability. By delving into the interplay between these security threats and their implications for internal security, this paper aims to shed light on the pressing need for holistic interventions to address Nigeria's security predicament and pave the way for a more secure and resilient nation.

Keywords: Terrorism; Militancy; Herders-Farmers Conflict; Nigeria

Introduction

National security issues which verge on border, economic, energy, physical, environmental, food, and Cyber security have dire consequences to any nationⁱ. A country is deemed worthless in the comity of nations if it cannot provide its own security. No wonder the former UK Prime Minister, Theresa May, said that “National Security is the first duty of government.”ⁱⁱⁱ A nation is expected to protect its territories and borders from internal and external aggression. It is also expected of an ideal and well-performing government to create an enabling environment for economic prosperity and prevent its ecosystem or physical environment from abuse. An up-and-doing government sows the seed of social and political stability, and most importantly, it ensures adequate protection and promotion of the fundamental rights of its people or citizens.

In Nigeria, national security has been a herculean task for the government. The national security objectives of Nigeria are:

- i. Security and welfare of its people;
- ii. Sovereignty and defense of its territorial integrity;
- iii. Peace, democracy, economic growth and social justiceⁱⁱⁱ.

As a nation, Nigeria has several security agencies saddled with the responsibility of helping in realizing the objectives of the country's national security objectives. Some of these agencies are the Nigerian Police Force (NPF), the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, the Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC), the Nigeria Prison Service (NPS), the State Security Services (SSS), the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Nigeria Customs Service, the Nigeria Immigration Service and so forth. Regardless, Nigeria still grapples with the problems of insurgency and terrorism in the North East, militancy in the Niger Delta region, kidnapping, armed robbery, sectarian conflicts, piracy in the maritime domain and serial violence between pastoralists (Fulani herdsmen particularly) and crop farmers across various farming communities and villages in the country^{iv}.

One striking fact about Nigeria's security challenges or problems is that they are man-made. From militancy to terrorism, from armed robbery to farmers-herdsmen crisis, one would notice the 'human factor'. Besides, the security challenges of the country cause sleepless night for all and sundry. They are idiomatically and sadly a fly in the country's ointment. Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan acknowledged this. While writing the forward of the National Security Strategy, November 2014, Jonathan, then President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria notes:

The security of the nation remains not just the primary concern of this government but the number one and most important concern. From the beginning of time, security has always been an issue and will continue to be an issue. Indeed, the emergence, development and dynamics of organized society, and by extension the nation-state, have made issues of security more complex, necessary and urgent.

It is, however, incontestable that the insurgency waged by the Jama'atu Ahlus Sunna Liddawati wal Jihad (commonly known as Boko Haram), is characterized by mindless violence, which undermines our freedom, way of life and sovereignty, by far remains the greatest threat to our collective security as a nation.

We equally have had security challenges in the South-South, South-East, North-West, North-Central and South-West, suggesting that no part of this country is immune to insecurity^v.

Security Challenges of Nigeria

Insecurity in Nigeria is a plight that has raised concern in different quarters in the country. It has prompted the government to allocate a good portion of the national budget to combating insecurity. Efforts have been made by the government to facilitate security in the country. First, the government attempted to criminalize terrorism by passing the Anti-Terrorism Act in 2011. Secondly, the government went into installation of Computer-based Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) in some parts of the country in a bid to scare crime off. It also saw the need to empower various security agencies in the country. It did this by providing the necessary security facilities and ammunitions for combating crime. On national television and radio stations and newspapers, the government sponsored the broadcast of security tips^{vi}. Despite the efforts, crime and insecurity, to an appreciable extent, remain unabated; it soars almost every day. Some of the crime and/or security challenges that have endangered true peace and prosperity in the country include:

Terrorism

In Article 2(b) of the 1999 International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism^{vii}, the United Nations considered terrorism to be any act intended to cause death or serious bodily injury to a civilian, or to any other person not taking an active part in the hostilities in a situation of armed conflict, when the purpose of such act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, or to compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act. In the OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism, July 1999^{viii}: "Terrorist act" is any act which is a violation of the criminal laws of a State Party and which may endanger the life, physical integrity or freedom of, or cause serious injury or death to, any person, any number or group of persons or causes or may cause damage to public or private property, natural resources, environmental or cultural heritage and is calculated or intended to:

- (i.) intimidate, put in fear, force, coerce or induce any government, body, institution, the general public or any segment thereof, or to do or abstain from doing any act, or to adopt or abandon a particular standpoint, or to act according to certain principles; or
- (ii.) disrupt any public service, the delivery of any essential service to the public or to create a public emergency; or
- (iii.) create general insurrection in a State.

In Nigeria, terrorism has taken root^{ix}. Boko Haram terrorists are and remain the major extremist group whose activities have heightened or exacerbated the nation's security problem^x. The group makes use of suicide bombers in attacks. Other of their tactics includes, but not limited to, hostage taking, abduction, killing, attacks on worship centers,

attacks on embassies and so forth^{xi}. It is important to note that terrorism has cost the Nigerian state a lot. In the 2019 report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)^{xii}, it was captured that, between 2007 and 2016, Nigeria encountered destruction of 598.8 million dollars' worth of properties and over 18,000 fatalities in 3058 terrorist attacks. The economic impact of terrorism in Nigeria stood at 97 billion dollars in 10 years. This accounted for 89% of the total 109 billion dollars economic cost of terrorism in Africa within the same period of time.

Some effects of terrorism in Nigeria include the following:

- i. Mass displacements and migrations;
- ii. Creation of refugee populations and other forms of inhuman conditions;
- iii. Undermining of agricultural and other economic activities with potential for famine;
- iv. Destruction of infrastructure and undermining the rule of law, public safety and security, and national cohesion;
- v. Enabling crime and instability;
- vi. Exacerbating community tensions and increasing the threshold of violence;
- vii. Constituting an obstacle to development;
- viii. Diverting resources away from critical areas of need;
- ix. Creating conditions for aggravating human rights violations and abuse;
- x. Undermining investment and tourism;
- xi. Encouraging of violent response to grievances;
- xii. Contributing to the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs);
- xiii. Entrenching fear and insecurity^{xiii}.

Militancy

Militancy in Nigeria is mostly predominant in the Niger Delta region. The region is very rich in oil. The activities of various oil companies in the region have led to degradation of environment. The adverse effect of the activities of the oil companies in the region has triggered a feeling of frustration, anger and aggression among the people. It equally led to peaceful protests, which later degenerated into forceful agitations and violent protests^{xiv}. The agitation goes as far back as the 1990s when Ken Saro-Wiwa, an Ogoni-born environmental activist, established the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People. Through the Movement, the Niger Delta people of Ogoni peacefully protested and campaigned for the sustainability of their environment. They called for environmental justice^{xv}. The protests by this Movement took a violent dimension following the arrest, incarceration, unfair trial by a kangaroo court and unfortunate execution of their leader, Ken Saro-Wiwa, and eight of their kinsmen in November 1995 by Gen. Sani Abachaa's administration^{xvi}.

Since 1995, several belligerent groups, as Prof. Sherrif Folarin and Faith Oviasogie tagged them, have sprung up in the Niger Delta region. Some of these groups include the Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF) led by Alhaji Asari Dokubo, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) led by Henry Okah, the Martyrs Brigade, the Niger Delta Vigilante Force (NDVF) led by Ateke Tom, the Bush Boys^{xvii}, the Tombolo Boys (TTB), the Joint Revolutionary Council (JRC) and the Icelanders Coalition for Military Action (ICMA)^{xviii}. The quest for greater control of the oil resources in the Niger Delta region by the people, fair allocation of the revenue from oil exploitation, the need for compensation for the decades of ecocides, the call for physical and infrastructural development of the region and the need to end the oil spills and gas flaring underscore or provide the basis for the violent activities of the groups^{xix}. Just like Boko Haram terrorist group, militant groups in the Niger Delta operate on a number of tactics. They include kidnapping, killing, bombing, hostage taking, and destruction of oil and gas facilities, pipeline vandalism and illegal oil bunkering^{xx}.

Herdsmen-Farmers' Conflict

Herdsmen-farmers' conflict is another security challenge that has jeopardized national peace and harmony in Nigeria. The conflict is almost nationwide. It is, however, more intense in north-central states of Benue, Jos and Taraba^{xxi}. Fulani herdsmen are pastoralists, mostly nomadic. They move with their cattle foraging for pasture. They are believed to be one of the most itinerant groups in the world^{xxii}. The farmers, on the other hand, are sedentary. The nature of their occupation does not require them to move from one state to another as in the case of their herdsmen counterpart. They are mostly found in the north-central, south-west and south-east. The major cause of the conflict between these two agricultural groups is land and the resources in it. Originally, Fulani herdsmen moved within the core northern states for grazing. Since environmental changes [drought, flood and desertification] started, the herdsmen had to move beyond their immediate environment into agrarian states in the south and in north central. Prior to the southward movement by Fulani herdsmen, Lake Chad served as a very important source of water for the people living around it and for the cattle of the herdsmen. But the environmental changes affected the lake to the point that it shrunk to ten per cent of its original size. In the 1960s, for example, the size of the lake was 25,000 km² but in the 1980s and 1990s the size of the lake reduced to 2500 km²^{xxiii}.

The adverse environmental changes forced the herdsmen to move southward where they started competing with the farmers over grasses in their farmland. Host farming communities argue that the cattle of Fulani herdsmen, in the process of grazing on their farmland, destroy their crops and thus, make their harvest poor. Retaliation by the farmers resulted in the death or killing of their counterpart's cattle.

The herdsmen-farmers conflict has been a serious threat to security in Nigeria. In a 2017 Global Terrorism Index report, it was revealed that between 2007 and 2011, there occurred 67 clashes between the two groups. Between 2012 and 2018, Nigeria recorded 716 clashes^{xxiv}. In casualty terms, it was reported that the clashes led to the death of 80 people between 2010 and 2013. In 2014 the clashes led to the death of 1229 people^{xxv}.

Armed Robbery

Armed robbery is one of the most serious threats to Nigeria security. It became prevalent in the aftermath of the Nigeria Civil War. From the 1970s upward, armed robbery appeared to be one of the most common and feared crime in Nigeria because of its regularity^{xxvi}. In fact, in the annals of crime in the country, armed robbery is among the top three most serious^{xxvii}. There are various statistics that proved the regularity and intensity of armed robbery in the country. The Nigerian Police Annual Report (NPAR), for example, showed that a total of 2704 armed robbery offences were reported in 2005. In 2006, the same report revealed 2,863 cases; in 2007, 2327; and in 2008, 2340. Again, in a 2008 report by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) revealed that the Nigerian states of Kano, Ogun, Oyo, Delta and Cross River were among the states with the highest armed robbery incidents. The statistics provided by the Centre for Law Enforcement Education in Nigeria (CLEEN) in 2012 shows that the trend has been that of a steady rise from 11% in 2010 to 17% in 2012^{xxviii}. The most disturbing of all armed robbery cases in Nigeria is the one perpetrated by the notorious Anini and his group in the 1980s. Lawrence Anini, alias 'The Law', was a boy who orchestrated dreadful criminal acts in his 20s. He mostly operated in the old Bendel State (now comprising of Edo and Delta States). He started as a tout in motor parks in Benin and later created a gang of criminals which included the likes of Monday Osunbor, Ofegbe and others. Anini and his gang hijacked cars robbed vehicles and even killed many police officers who stood in the way of their activities. In August 1986, he perpetrated a fatal bank robbery which claimed the lives of police officers and other people. Within the same month, he shot two police officers on duty who were trying to stop his car. The August 1986 bank robbery was at First Bank, Sabongidar Ora, where Anini and his gang made away with the sum of #2000. They left many people killed in that attack. The following month, i.e. on September 6, Anini's gang snatched a Peugeot 504 car from Albert Otoe, the driver of an Assistant Inspector General of Police, Christopher Omeben. They killed the driver and hid his corpse in the carjacking process. It was not until three months later that the skeleton of the driver was spotted 16 kilometers away from Benin, along the Benin-Agbor highway^{xxix}.

The armed robbery cases of Anini were so resounding that they were even discussed at the State Security Council meeting. Anini was diabolical and daring. He was so diabolical that the police found it almost impossible to apprehend him. He was also daring to the point that he could attack a bank, steal some cash and spray wads of naira notes on the ground for free

pick by market men and women in a village near Benin. The reckless audacity of Anini even made him to write numerous letters to media houses “using political tones of Robin Hood-like words to describe his criminal acts.”^{xxx} The news of Anini’s armed robbery was national. The then military head of state of Nigeria, General Ibrahim Babangida, found it worrisome. He ordered a massive manhunt for Anini and his gang. He was finally arrested on December 3, 1986 by the courageous Superintendent of Police, Kayode Uanreroro in Benin City^{xxxi}. As at the time of his arrest, Anini, with his gang, had already killed, maimed, kidnapped, robbed and raped their victims. He was responsible for the death of 20 persons – eleven (11) policemen and nine civilians. Justice Omo-Agege, Chairman of the First Benin Robbery and Firearms Tribunal, who handled Anini’s case said while sentencing the criminal kingpin:

Anini will forever be remembered in the history of crime in this country, but it would be of unblessed memory. Few people if ever, would give the name to their children.^{xxxii}

Aside from Lawrence Anini there were a plethora of other notorious armed robbers who terrorized the Nigerian state at different periods. Such include the likes of Shina Rambo (who operated in South West in the 1990s), Ishola Oyenusi (alias ‘Doctor’ Oyenusi, operated in the early 1970s in Lagos, Okwudili Ndiwe (alias Derico Nwamama, operated in Eastern Nigeria in the early 2000s) and Isiaka Busari (alias Mighty Joe, operated in South West)^{xxxiii}.

Implications of Insecurity on Internal Security

Insecurity has a negative impact on internal security. The negativity reflects in business investments. In Nigeria, insecurity is responsible for the loss of goods. It discourages business investment in the sense that local and foreign investors consider it unwise to commit their funds in setting up businesses in chaotic places, places of hostility, killing, kidnapping, robbery, terrorism, violence and corruption. Writing on the implications of insecurity for business activities in Nigeria, Okonkwo R. Ifeoma, Ndubuisi O. Purity and Anagbogu Threasa note:

Insecurity discourages business investment as it makes investment unattractive to business investors. This is because it accelerates the cost of doing business either through direct loss of goods and properties or the cost of taking precautions against business risks and uncertainty. These costs could have a negative impact on business development and progress. The thick arrow connecting the insecurity environment and business investment means that insecurity can be a huge blockade to business investment... This situation has the damaging consequence of giving signal to the international community that Nigeria is not a safe and secure place and as such not suitable for investment and business activities.^{xxxiv}

In similar manner, Prof. I.C. Achumba, O.S. Ighomereho and M.O.M. Akpor-Robaro made it clear that in an atmosphere of insecurity, an atmosphere of crisis and confusion, no business enterprise thrives. Insecurity adversely affects production and supply. Painting a picture of the impact of insecurity on production in Nigeria, the scholars write extensively:

Business enterprises rely on availability and regular supply of raw materials for production. Security problems can cut off supply of such raw materials. When a firm is unable to access raw materials needed for production due to insecurity in the source, it can disrupt production activities. There is no doubt that businesses whose source of raw materials are in the North would be faced with that threat, if the insecurity situation becomes worse.^{xxxv}

The brutality, frequency and level of destruction of most of the security problems in Nigeria have jeopardized peace, unity and progress in different parts of the country. The herdsmen-farmers' conflict, for instance, have made people in states such as Benue, Plateau, Niger, Taraba and Kaduna to abandon their homes for internally displaced persons (IDP) camps. The movement to IDP camps was necessitated by the people's search for safety and security and due to the scaring outcomes of the conflict^{xxxvi}. In fact, the conflict has, to an appreciable extent, reduced the worth of life in various communities. Life is originally sacred; but it is not so any more in various aggrieved communities. The crisis has set the nation on the path of the Hobbesian State of Nature. Host farming communities where the herdsmen violent attacks are now rampant only understand the language of retaliation. Bishop Dogo, for example, after an attack on ECWA Church in Zaria in June 2012 said in an interview, "it is high time for our people to revenge because most of the attack is purposely targeted on us, so I see no reason for us not to retaliate." Another person, Zakka by name, equally emphasized the need for retaliation when he said, "Retaliation is the only solution for now because the government fails to address the insurgency caused by terrorists"^{xxxvii}.

Another manifestation of the havocs of insecurity on national security of Nigeria was shown in the 'call to arms' made by many groups and prominent Nigerians such as Afenifere (a Yoruba socio-political and cultural group), Ohanaeze Youth Council, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Ben Nwabueze (a Senior Advocate of Nigeria), Ayodele Fayose (former Governor of Ekiti State), Senator Shehu Sani, Lt. Gen. Theophilus Danjuma (Retd), and Paul Unongo (former Minister of Steel). Danjuma, a former Chief of Army Staff, speaking at the Maiden Convocation and 10th Anniversary Celebration of Taraba State University on Saturday, March 24, 2018, said:

The armed forces are not neutral; they collude with the armed bandits. They facilitate their movement; they cover them. We must resist it, we must stop it. Every one of us must rise. If you are depending on the armed forces to stop the killings, you will die one by one. This ethnic cleansing must stop in Taraba State. It must stop in all the states of Nigeria, otherwise what happened Somalia would be a child's play^{xxxviii}

Summary and Conclusion

Insecurity is a problem that is peculiar to most African countries, Nigeria inclusive. There are various security challenges confronting the Nigerian state. The nation is faced with the problem of terrorism, Boko Haram terrorism particularly, ethnic and religious crises, armed robbery, militancy, kidnapping, and secessionist agitations. What this paper did is to attempt to analyze some of the security challenges of the country. Terrorism, Niger Delta militancy, armed robbery and herdsmen-farmers' conflict are the major challenges examined. This paper equally looked at the implications of the security problems. It is important to point out here that Nigeria is boiling; lives are at risk; businesses crumble and relocate out of the country everyday because of insecurity. The government, therefore, needs to review the country's national security strategy as the protection of the lives and properties of the citizenry remains the primary essence of an ideal and responsible government.

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