

The Role of the Military in Maintaining Internal Peace and Security in Nigeria

¹John Kalama & ²Fada Doupere Paul

^{1&2}*Department of Political Science*

Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State, Nigeria

Abstract

The actual role of the military remains a source of debate among scholars and researchers across the world. While some believe that the military should be assigned limited roles in the society, realist scholars like Hans Morgenthau and Henry Kissinger (1971) thinks otherwise. It is in the light of this, that the study examined the role of the military in maintaining internal peace and security in Nigeria. The study is descriptive and adopted the rational choice theory of terrorism as its theoretical framework in order to explain why crime and criminality persist in most societies. It relied on secondary data while the analysis was based on the qualitative method and content analysis. Findings from the study shows that the Nigerian military under Section 217 and 305 of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is empowered by law to engage in internal security operations and carryout any other military duty assigned to it by the President and Commander in Chief of the Armed forces. The study also revealed that despite the presence of military task forces across the country (Operation Lafia Dole, Operation Python Dance, Operation Crocodile Smile, and Operation Pullo Shield etc.) crime, violence, insurgency and insecurity still persist due to cultural, religious, social and political factors. The paper therefore argues that military actions and operations alone cannot guarantee national peace and sustainable development hence; the enthronement of good governance, democratic values coupled with political and economic reforms should be integrated to complement existing military and para-military operations in Nigeria and other parts of the world.

Keywords: *Military, Internal peace, Security, Security operations, Military task force and Nigeria*

Corresponding Author: **John Kalama**

Background to the Study

The security architecture of a country is usually anchored on its national interest as well as its strategic calculations within the continent and in the international stage. For any nation to have a good and standard national security structure it must place emphasis on improving the socio-economic and political wellbeing of its citizens. This is imperative and fundamental because there is indeed a nexus between leadership, good governance and national security. This is true because what constitutes national power in a state is an embodiment of several forces and factors which must be utilized to achieve internal peace and security. In the case of Nigeria, there are several cases of insecurity which the military is yet to resolve. For instance, the Boko Haram Islamic uprising, farmer-herders conflict, the insurgency in the Niger Delta region etc. Thus, there is need for the Nigerian military to step up its game by restoring internal peace and security in the country. Some scholars have argued that the Nigeria military should be restructured to its constitutional role of defending the air, land and sea borders against external aggression while others believe that the military can still play a complementary role by engaging in internal peace support operations. The actual role of the military remains a major source of debate at the local, national and international level. Why the high rate of criminal activities in Nigeria? Why the rise in violence and insurgency in different parts of the country despite the presence of the military? These and other questions form the major thrust of the study.

Methodology and Scope

The study is descriptive and qualitative in nature while secondary sources of data (textbooks, materials from the internet and published journals, articles etc.) were relied upon. Data from these sources were qualitatively analyzed through content analysis.

Conceptual and Theoretical Analysis

The use of military force or power in national and international assignments has no doubt generated debates among scholars. While some see it as necessary and fundamental, others believe that its use should be regulated and controlled in order to protect the fundamental rights of citizens and also guarantee internal peace and security in the state hence, Osgood and Kissinger (1971) argued that the use of military power when controlled can be used to check the excesses of ruthless states within the international system. In the words of Robert E. Osgood:

The unstable, unregulated nature of the contemporary international system makes the capacity to wage war an indispensable instrument of national survival and of a just international order. Yet the immense destructive power of modern weapons makes war itself a highly volatile and potentially self-defeating instrument of policy. Therefore, the task of modern statecraft is to restrain military power and control it for legitimate political ends. (Osgood, 1971).

He went further to define military power as the ability of states to effect the will and behaviour of other states by armed coercion or the threat of armed coercion. According to him, by military power, we mean the ability of states to effect the will and behaviour of other states. This, therefore, implies that the size and quality of a nation's military determines its sphere of

influence within the comity of states at any level. On his part, Hans Morgenthau cited in Okoro (2002) argued that a nation must have the military capability to operate in order to make any meaningful impact in the international or regional arena. Implicit in this realist belief is that “might is Right” (Okoro, 2002). The view that military power provides the essential underpinning for regional and international political intercourse has been widely appreciated by scholars and researcher's decades ago. However, Azinge (2013) argues that the military should not be involved in internal civil matters as they are not trained for such purposes. He reiterated that the continuous deployment of the Nigeria military for internal security operations have always ended in the gross violation of the rights of civilians and innocent citizens. The concept of peace and internal security has also been viewed differently by different scholars. Some scholars are of the view that the concept of peace and security has always been associated with the safety and survival of the state, its institutions and citizens from any form of threat. Scholars in this school of thought therefore maintain that issues bothering on security and defence should be the prerogative of the state and its institutions (Zabadi, 2005). Section 217 of Nigeria's Constitution clearly states that the constitutional responsibilities of the military (Army, Navy and Airforce) will be to defend the country from external aggression, maintain its territorial integrity and securing its borders from isolation on land, sea, or air, checking quelling insurgency as well as acting in support of civil authorities to restore order when called upon to do so by the President and commander in chief. Section 217 of the 1999 Constitution also made it clear that the military in Nigeria can perform any other function as may be specified by an Act of the National Assembly. In the same vein, Section 8(1) of the Armed Forces Act further empowers the President to deploy the military for any assignment in the interest of the national peace and security (national interest). However, the military's involvement in internal security operations in Nigeria is specifically contained in Section 217 (c) of the 1999 Constitution as amended. It states that: suppressing insurrection and acting in aid of civil authorities to restore order when called upon to do by the President but subject to such conditions as may be prescribed by an Act of National Assembly.

It is therefore obvious to state that in Nigeria the constitution permits the military to participate actively in internal security operations hence, records have shown that the military in Nigeria is actively involved in several operations aimed at quelling internal insurrections and uprising in different parts of the country. From Operation Lafia Dolle in the North East to Operation Crocodile Smile and Python Dance in the Niger Delta and South-East respectively, the Nigeria military has demonstrated capacity to rise to the occasion whenever national security is threatened. In spite of the active presence of the military in different parts of the country conflict still persist. This study is therefore any enquiry into the issues and challenges confronting the Nigerian military in the maintenance of internal peace and security.

Theoretical Framework

The rational choice theory of terrorism was applied in the study in order to fully understand why insurrection, crime and criminal activities persist in the society despite the regular deployment of the military and security agencies. This theory according to Crenshaw (1992) assumes that terrorist acts usually emanate from rational, calculated, conscious decisions which represent an optimal strategy to fulfil the socio-political and economic goals of the

perpetrators. In other words, scholars in this school of thought argued that criminal activities and terrorism might not represent pathological or illogical behaviour but represents the best means to fulfil personal and group needs. In spite of the argument on the reliability of the rational choice theory of terrorism, a diagnosis of antisocial personality disorder would imply that individuals are motivated to learn members on their society yet on the contrary, many terrorists and criminals are perceived as individuals who risk their lives to enhance the welfare of their community hence, acts of terrorism and criminality becomes a pro-socially rather than antisocial act. This explanation is applicable to freedom fighters and nationalist separatist groups. From the above analysis, it is obvious that criminals and terrorist groups may adopt different strategies to achieve its target and mission but what is important is that they see and perceive their actions as rational not minding the havoc and impact of their actions. It will be recalled that the terrorist attack in France and the Al-Shabaab/Al-Qaeda attack in Kenya's Garissa University which left over (150) one hundred and fifty students dead shows that the perpetrators acted rationally and claimed responsibility for their actions and also warned that Kenya's involvement in the peace keeping operations in Somalia and French role in Mali was responsible for the attack.

This therefore means that terrorists can plan, organize, strategize and strike their targets and at the same time claim responsibility and also state their reasons. Within the context of this study the rewards and recognition given to militia/terrorist leaders explains why crime and criminality is endless in Nigeria and other African states. Although the theory is defective in some areas, it also shows that most terrorist actions are induced by the actions and policies of the state hence, compelling aggrieved members of a state or community to resort to crime and criminality to ensure survival and recognition. Despite the shortcomings inherent in the theory, consensus among scholars is that a combination of forces or factors influence criminal activities and terrorist actions and behaviour hence; analysis of crime, conflict, terrorist activities and actions should also be multidimensional in scope and approach. Advocates of the rational choice theory of terrorism include: Crenshaw (1992), Cooper (1948) and Victoroff (2005).

Analysis showing the Role of the Military in Internal Security and its Challenges

This section of the study x-rays the opinion of scholars derived from secondary sources of data. Okoli, A.& Orinya, S. (2013) posited that the prevailing security challenges witnessed in Nigeria in recent times have called for increased military intervention in internal security operations. They contended that the 1999 Constitutions also empowers the President to deploy federal forces to check domestic disturbances such as militia uprising and insurgency etc. They observed that whenever the country is faced with any form of threat, the military under the control of the President have always risen to the occasion to suppress acts of violence, riots, demonstration and acts of terrorism in order to restore peace, law and order. Section 305 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria also provides a legal basis for the intervention of the military in internal security operation.

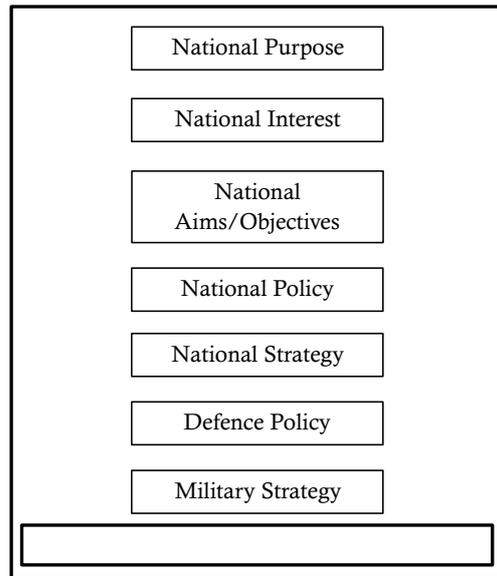
This section of the Constitution empowers the President to issue a proclamation of state of emergency in any part of the country especially when there is actual breakdown of public order and public safety in the federation or any part thereof to such extent as to require extraordinary measures to avert any such dangers. Right from the precolonial era when we had the Aba women's riot of 1929 to the colonial industrial welfare dispute of 1945, the military in Nigeria have always engaged in internal security operations in the interest of national peace and security. Recent events also show that the Nigerian military have also done well in national, regional and international peace support operations outside the shores of Nigeria. While performing its constitutional responsibilities, the military often suffer casualties in the process. For instance, over 300 people lost their lives in Gamboru-Ngala, Borno state following an attack from the Boko Haram Islamic group (The Punch Newspaper, 2014:13). The story is the same in the Niger Delta region where several people including the military have lost their lives while defending their father land. In the same vein, over 200 people were killed in a crowded terminus market in Jos the capital of Plateau state following a twin bomb blast which injured several others. Also on May 14, over 200 school girls were abducted by Boko Haram members from their hostels in the dead of the night from Government Secondary School Chibok in Borno state. This development attracted international condemnation and global assistance to rescue the school girls but so far all effort are yet to yield positive results (The Punch Newspaper, 2014:80).

The Boko Haram sect has continued to unleash terror on innocent Nigerians in the North-East and other parts of Northern Nigeria. Umaru however argued that the effectiveness of any military operation depends on the nature of a countries defence policy hence; he cautioned that the defence of a nation is a complex business and cannot be easily reduced to ideas that are rational. According to him defence is an expression of sovereignty and provides services to the general public (e.g. aid to civil power, aid to civil authority, protection of civilians in times of disasters as the case in China). He reiterated that a defence policy must in essence support the wider foreign and security policies of a country. In his words: A defence policy must be based on a vision that will ensure the use of power and influence to guarantee national survival and well-being based on key national values. The most important value for the nation is the ability to maintain its identity in terms of landmass, population and ethnic composition. Whatever will disturb the stability of a nation can easily be seen as a threat that must be dealt with through necessary means. The means may involve the use of the armed forces based on policy initiatives. The duty of government is to provide for common defence for all by allocating adequate resources to sustain collective interest based on the situation of a particular environment. He gave the following as the strategic environment that must be considered in the development of a defence policy framework:

1. Political
 2. Economic
 3. Military
 4. Physical
 5. Scientific and technical
 6. Social and cultural and
 7. Legal, ethnical and moral
- (Bassey, C.O & Dokubo, C.Q. 2011)

The table below shows factors that must be considered in the formulation and development of any national defence and security policy.

Table 1: Essential factors to be considered in the formulation and Development of a national defence and security policy



National Policy and National Strategy Connection

Source: Bassey, C.O & Dokubo, C.Q, 2011:p.41.

Apart from militia uprising and insurgency perpetrated by self-determination groups across the country, Okoye (2018) argued that there are new trends and tensions threatening peace and security in Nigeria and Africa. He noted that the conflict between farmers and herders constitutes one of the major threats to peace and development in Nigeria. In his words:

Traditionally, herders in Nigeria usually migrate from the Northern region down South during dry season at a time the farmers have harvested and gathered their crops into barns. Thus, there is little or no issue that can trigger conflict between them. Instead, while the cattle feed on leftover resources by the farmer: it in turn defecates on the farm which serves as source of manure to the farmers... interestingly, these clash which were originally restricted to the Northern and middle-belt regions of the country have in recent times spread to other parts of the country and South-East, South-South and South-West respectively (Okoye, 2018:p.1).

Table 2: Table showing timelines of Fulani herdsmen and farmers clashes in Nigeria.

Date	Casualties	Location
January 17, 2016	Three people were killed	Gareji village in Taraba state
January 23, 2016	Between 30 and 60 people including a police DPO were killed	Demsare, Wunamokoh, Dikajam and Taboungo, of Adamawa state
February 2, 2016	Seven people were killed	Agatu, Benue state
February 11, 2016	Two people were killed and some declared missing	Abbi, Enugu state
February 24, 2016	Between 300 and 500 Nigerians were killed	Agatu, Benue state
February 28, 2016	Nine people were killed	Agatu, Benue state
March 7, 2016	Eight people were killed	Mbaya – Tombo, Both in Benue state
March 8, 2016	12 people were killed	Mbaya – Tombo both in Benue state
March 17, 2016	15 more people were killed	Mbaya – Tombo both in Benue state
April 3-7, 2016	About 7 and 16 people were killed	Ohali-Elu, in Rivers state

Source: Okoye, 2018

He re-affirmed the fact that incidents of conflict wherever it occurs usually results in various types of havocs which is felt in the areas of social, economic and political upheavals. In his words:

Moreover, one of the fundamental consequences of the conflict is its negative impacts in the area of development...The point to note is that the conflict destabilizes peaceful and harmonious co-existence between herders and farmers (host communities). It also undermines societal development by creating objective conditions that leads as well as enhances poverty, unemployment and inequality (Okoye, 2018).

The above analysis clearly indicates that there are several threats to peace and security in Nigeria that makes the role of the military very crucial and fundamental.

Conclusion

From the forgoing analysis, it is obvious that the role of the military in internal and external security operations remains critical, fundamental and essential to the maintenance of national, regional and international peace and security. It will be recalled that right from the pre-colonial and colonial era, the military has continued to play a major role in the defence of the nation and its citizens and critical infrastructure. The study also observed that in the performance of its role, the military often derail from its constitutional mandate by interfering in purely civil matters including the violation of fundamental rights of citizens hence, prompting some citizens to advocate for a limited role for the military at all levels. Despite the rising rate of insurgency and conflict throughout the country and the ongoing debate as to the

actual role of the military in Nigeria, the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria empowers the military (army, air force, navy and the police etc.) to engage in internal security operations in addition to its constitutional responsibilities of defending the territorial integrity of the nation. It is therefore imperative and fundamental for all citizens and stakeholders in the security subsector to cooperate with the defence ministry(military) and its top hierarchy to enable it perform its constitutional responsibilities effectively.

Recommendations

The following recommendations will no doubt help to improve the level of peace and security in the country:

1. There is need for intelligence gathering and sharing among citizens and security agencies across the country. This is important because security should be seen as a collective responsibility of all (civilians and military personnel).
2. There is need to improve military-civil relations in the country to enable citizens to build trust in members of the armed forces hence, the collaboration going on between the military and members of the civilian JTF in the North-East should be encouraged.
3. Apart from monthly salaries and allowances paid to military personnel, there is need for the federal government to improve the welfare of military officers and their families by providing good shelter and housing schemes. Awards and special promotions should also be introduced to serve as motivation.
4. There is need to also ensure strict enforcement of the ban on open grazing in the country. This will help to check the farmers-herders conflict which has become a daily experience in the country.
5. There is need for regular training and re-training of senior and junior military officers to ensure professionalism and effectiveness in weapon handling, combat operations etc.
6. There is need for more and adequate funding for members of the armed forces and other military and para-military agencies such as the Nigeria Customs Service, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, the Nigeria Immigration Service etc. as their role in national security cannot be over emphasized.
7. Since records have shown that there is a nexus between good governance, leadership and development, there is need for Nigeria and African states to elect good leaders that will provide good governance at all levels. This will in turn guarantee the provision of basic social amenities and employment opportunities which will engage the people meaningfully. From the sociological perspective, it has been established that the absence of basic social amenities and good governance serves as a motivator and driver of violence, insecurity and crime and society.

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