

The Military and Internal Security in Nigeria: The Issues and Challenges

¹Johnson Alalibo
Sinikiem &

²John T. Kalama

¹*Institute for Peace and Conflict
Studies, University of Ibadan,
Nigeria*

²*Department of Political Science,
Federal University Otuoke,
Bayelsa State, Nigeria*

Abstract

In most societies the actual role of the military (army, navy and the air-force) remains a source of debate hence; this paper examined the military and internal security in Nigeria: The issues and challenges. The study adopted the descriptive method and the rational choice theory of terrorism as its theoretical framework. Data for the study were obtained from secondary sources while analysis was done qualitatively. Findings from the study show that relevant sections of Nigeria's constitution empower the military to participate in internal security operations alongside the police and other para-military forces. The study further observed that lack of trust; inadequate funding and political interference constitute the issues and challenges confronting the military in Nigeria. However, to enhance productivity and operational capacity of the military, the paper recommends increased funding, discipline and strict adherence to professionalism and the rules of engagement in the recruitment and operation of all military activities within and outside the country.

Keywords:

Military, Internal security, Nigeria, Security operations, Issues and challenges.

Corresponding Author:

Johnson Alalibo Sinikiem

Background to the Study

Cases of insecurity and insurgency across the nation necessitated this research hence, instances of insecurity and other forms of uprising will be examined in the course of this study. Despite the presence of the military in Nigeria, crime and criminal activities still persist in different parts of the country. In the North-east for instance, the Boko Haram Islamic sect and other Islamic groups have continued to threaten national peace and security. In the South-east and South-south, the Niger Delta militants have continued to attack critical national infrastructures despite the presence of several military taskforces in the Niger Delta. The story is the same in the South-west where members of the Oodua People's Congress (OPC) also operate freely. The above development explains why the federal government set up the following military taskforces across the country: Operation Python dance in the South-east, Operation Pullo Shield and Crocodile Smile in the South-south and Operation Lafia Dole in the North-east etc. to check insurgency and threat to national peace and security.

In spite of active military presence in different parts of the country, criminal activities and threats to national security still persist. Thus, this study will interrogate and evaluate the actual role of the military and also proffer solutions to the issues and challenges confronting the Nigerian military in the performance of its responsibilities.

Theoretical and Conceptual Analysis

The need for an analytical framework in an investigation was stressed by Lieber (1992). According to him, behind every concept or an analysis, there is a theory or viewpoint which makes it possible for the presentation and interpretation of facts. Thus, this study adopted the rational choice theory of terrorism in order to explain the subject matter. Scholars who aligned themselves with this theory argue that acts of criminality and terrorism usually emanate from rational, calculated and conscious decisions which represent an optimal strategy to fulfil the socio-political and economic goals of the perpetrators. This theory posits that those who engage in crime and acts of terrorism have good reasons or motives hence; their action is perceived as rational. In most cases, groups and organizations involved in acts of terrorism and criminality use it as a source of negotiation and bargaining as it is the case with separatist self-determination groups who often claim to be freedom fighters. In most societies, state policies and actions such as exclusion and marginalization of minorities from the affairs of the state often compel aggrieved members of the state or community to resort to crime and criminality in order to survive and get recognition from the state. This theory sounds defective but it also shows that most criminal or terrorist actions are induced by the state. The rational choice theory of terrorism, crime and criminality clearly shows that several factors accounts for terrorism and criminality in the society hence, analysis of crime, criminality and terrorist acts and actions should also be done taken into account these complex and multi-dimensional factors. Scholars in this school of thought maintain that this is the only way the menace of crime and terrorism can be eradicated from the society. Rational choice theory of terrorism scholars and advocates include: Crenshaw (1992), Cooper (1948) and Victoroff (2005).

Conceptual Analysis

This aspect of the study examined the views and opinions of scholars and researchers on the subject matters. According to Okoli and Orinya (2013) the prevailing security situation in Nigeria call for visible military operations. Referring to the 1999 constitution, they argue that the military has a constitutional responsibility to intervene and participate in internal security especially during uprisings and insurrections against the state. Specifically, they maintained that sections 305 of the constitution empower the president and commander-in-chief to deploy and mobilise the military to any trouble spot in the country to avert any danger or threat. The involvement of the military in internal peace support operations dates back to the pre-colonial era. For instance, during Aba Women's riot of 1929 and the colonial industrial welfare dispute between the colonial government and the railway worker union, the military played a major role in quelling these conflicts hence, the military in Nigeria have continued to participate in internal security operations in order to protect critical national infrastructure in the country. In the process of performing their constitutional role of defending the air, sea and land borders of the nation, the military often suffer casualties. For instance, several soldiers lost their lives in Gamboru-Ngala, Borno state, following an attack from Boko Haram fighters (The Punch Newspaper, 2014:13).

The situation is worst in the Niger Delta and other parts of the country. What has become a national embarrassment was the abduction of several students from the Government Secondary School Chibok in Borno state. According to a report published in the Punch Newspaper, over 200 school girls were abducted by Boko Haram fighters from their hostels in the dead of the night from Government Secondary School Chibok in Borno state. Even with international support, the search for the Chibok school girls have not yielded the much desired result (The Punch Newspaper, 2014:80). Despite the presence of several military taskforces in the North-east, the Boko Haram Islamic sect has continued to operate freely with sophisticated weapons and rocket launchers. Scholars have continued to ask why the military has not been able to put an end to the Boko Haram insurgency despite the huge budgeting provisions made in the appropriation Act annually.

Dike (2011) summarised the challenges facing the Nigeria military to include inadequate funding, logistics and the inability to acquire new weapons. According to him:

Emerging challenges from our external and internal environment have necessitated the acquisition of some new platforms to replace decommissioned assets or upgrade our capacities in some vital areas ... of course the problem of dearth of fund has also taken its toll on our logistics capacity and infrastructure. Finally, there is the problem of lack of military radar coverage. At the moment, the NAF has no capacity for identifying aerial intruders since none of the radar stations acquired in the early 1970s is currently functional (Dike, 2011 cited in Bassey and Dokubo, 2011:p.373-374)

The need to strengthen the military through policy measures was stressed by Umaru (2011) who posited that the effectiveness of any military action depends the viability of the country's defence policy. While stating the need for nations to maintain a viable and flexible defence policy he stated thus:

The defence of a nation is a complex business and cannot be easily reduced to ideas that are rational. Defence is an expression of sovereignty and provides services to the general public. Defence policy must in essence support the wider foreign and security policies of a country ... A defence policy must be based on a vision that will ensure the use of power and influence to guarantee national survival and wellbeing based on key national values (Umaru, 2011 cited in Bassey and Dokubo, 2011:p.41-42).

The Military in Internal Security in Nigeria: The Issues and Challenges

From the above analysis, scholars are of the view that the 1999 constitutions also empowers the President to deploy and mobilise 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 extra-ordinary 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 country's 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. The need to strengthen the military through policy measures was stressed by Umaru (2011) who posited that the effectiveness of any military action depends on the viability of the country's defence policy. While stating the need for nations to maintain a viable and flexible defence policy he stated thus:

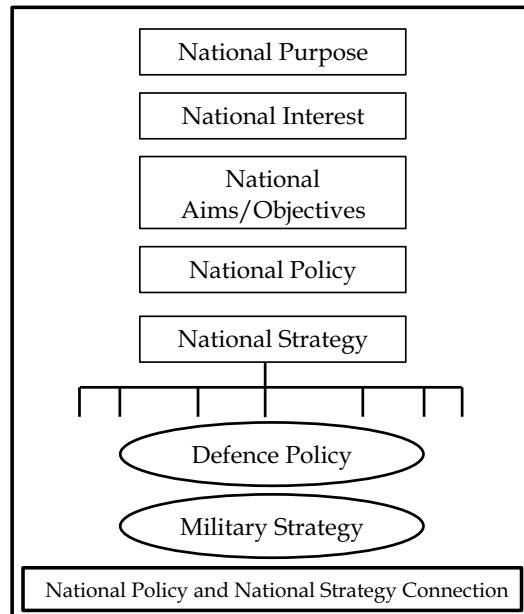
The defence of a nation is a complex business and cannot be easily reduced to ideas that are rational. Defence is an expression of sovereignty and provides services to the general public. Defence policy must in essence support the wider foreign and security policies of a country ... A defence policy must be based on a vision that will ensure the use of power and influence to guarantee national survival and wellbeing based on key national values (Umaru, 2011 cited in Bassey, and Dokubo, 2011:p.41-42).

He therefore cautioned states and leaders to note the following strategic factors that must be considered in the formulation and drafting of a defence policy:

1. Political
 2. Economic
 3. Military
 4. Physical
 5. Scientific and technical
 6. Social and cultural and
 7. Legal, ethical and moral
- (Bassey and Dokubo, 2011:p.41)

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



Source: Bassey and Dokubo, 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:p.2.

He reiterated 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:p.2). In the light of the above analysis, it is obvious to state that there are several threats to peace and security in Nigeria that makes the role of the military very crucial and fundamental.

Conclusion

The study examined the military and internal security in Nigeria: The issues and challenges with a view to explain why crime and criminality persist in different parts of the country despite the presence of military taskforces. The study adopted secondary data and the rational choice theory of terrorism as the theoretical framework to guide the study. The study was descriptive hence; the analysis was done qualitatively. The study observed that the role of the military is very important and fundamental to the survival of the state. In the case of Nigeria, relevant sections of the 1999 constitutions as amended empowers the military to perform internal security and other external responsibilities. The study further observed that several factors influence the military in the performance of its responsibilities. Such challenges confronting the military include funding, political interference, lack of motivation etc. These factors no doubt frustrate the military in its operations and activities. However, the importance of the military was stressed by Dike (2011) who posited no nation can survive without a strong and effective military high

command. In his words: Military power plays a crucial role in international politics because states coexist in a condition of anarchy. If a state is attacked, it has to defend itself with whatever means it can muster. Because no authoritative agency can be called on to resolve disputes among states, leaders find it convenient, and often times necessary to threaten the use of force or actually employ it. Though its importance varies from era to era, military power brings some order to international politics and helps make and enforce the rules of the game (Dike cited in Bassey and Dokubo, 2011:p.363).

Recommendations

The importance of the military at the local and international level cannot be over emphasised hence, these recommendations are hereby proposed:

1. Prompt payment of salaries, allowances, pension and other benefits to serving and retired military officers will go a long way in motivating younger officers. A situation where these benefits and entitlements are not pay can lead to mutiny or rebellion which will in turn threaten the peace of the state.
2. Beyond the payment of monthly salaries and allowances 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.
3. It is important and fundamental 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.
4. Regular training and re-training of senior and junior military officers should be made a priority to ensure professionalism and effectiveness in weapon handling, combat operations etc.
5. 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 emphasised.
6. It is a fact that there is a nexus between good governance, leadership and development hence, 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.
7. Intelligence gathering and sharing among citizens and security agencies across the country should be improved upon. This is important because security should be seen as a collective responsibility of all (civilians and military personnel).
8. Military-civil relations in the country should be improved upon 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.

References

- Achebe, C. (1984). *The trouble with Nigeria*. London: Heinemann Educational books.
- Amadu, S. (2003). *Civil wars, child soldiers and post conflict peace building in West Africa*, Ibadan: College press and publishers Ltd.
- Azinge, E. (2013). *Military in internal security operations: Challenges and prospects being a paper presented at the Nigerian Bar Association 53rd Annual General Conference on the 28th August at Tnnapa, Calabar*.
- Bassey, C. O. (2005). *Contemporary strategy and the African condition*, Lagos: Macmillan Nigeria Publishers.
- Bassey, C. O. & Dokubo, C.Q. (2011). *Defence policy of Nigeria: Capability and context: A reader*, United States: Author House.
- Benneth, R. J. (1900). *The roots of war: The man and the institution*. Boston: Little B and C.
- Claude, I. L. (1971). *Swords into ploughshares*, New York: Random House.
- Clausewitz, C. (1976). *On war*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Dike, P. (2011). Nigerian Airforce: Challenges and response" in Bassey, C.O. & Dokubo, C.Q. (2011), *Defence policy of Nigeria: Capability and context, a reader*.
- Kalama, J. T. & Eseduwo, F. S. (2015). *The United Nations' role in international relations: Theory and practice of collective security in a dynamic world system*, Calabar: University of Calabar Press.
- Kalama, J. T. (2012). *Conflict resolution without violence: Emerging trends in Nigeria's political development*, Port-Harcourt: Pearl Publisher.
- Knorr, K. (1967). *On the uses of military power in the nuclear age*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Morgenthau, H. (1973). *Politics among nations: The struggle for power and peace*, New York: Alfred A Knof.
- Okolo, P. O. (2014). *The Niger Delta struggle misdirection: Implications for youth development. Monograph Series No. 8 Department of Political Science, Niger Delta University*.
- Schelling, T. (1960). *Arms and influence*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

Umaru, N. (2011). Formulation and implementation of defence policy” in Bassey, C.O. & Dokubo, C.Q. (2011) *Defence policy of Nigeria: Capability and context, A reader*, London: USA

Wright, Q. (1964). *A study of war*, London: University of Chicago Press.

Zabadi, S. (2005). *Understanding security and security sector dynamics*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.