THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE POLITICISATION OF INTERNAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
Nigeria, a microcosm of the African continent is a very complex country. With over 250 ethnic nationalities and several religious sects who strive to always work in outdoing each other in the polity, the country is a breeding ground for security breaches. As a result of this no love lost syndrome among the various groups, internal security issues are usually hijacked for political expediencies; thereby making it difficult and cumbersome to solving these internal security issues in the country. This paper intends to analyse the implications of the politicization of internal security in Nigeria, with the country at the brink of being overrun. It was discovered that lack of political will on the part of the country's leaders are responsible for the persistence of these crisis, especially terrorism from the second decade of this 21st century. Rather, political leaders in a bid to champion certain parochial interests, creates an avenue for the escalation of insecurity in the polity. The paper makes use of qualitative research methodology and consulted books, journal articles, newspaper publications, internet materials, etc in the course of the research. The paper concludes by recommending that until the government, religious leaders, and politicians desist from misinterpreting internal security issues to suit their whims, the country will continue to boil and degenerate further into anarchy. Government should be decisive in tackling and nipping in the bud, skirmishes of insecurity before they escalate and become subject of national debate.

Keywords: *Internal Security, Politicisation, Terrorism, Bandits, Secession.*

INTRODUCTION

A former Nigeria Military Head of State, Gen. Sani Abacha once quoted as saying authoritatively that "if insurgency lasts more than 24 hours, the government has a hand in it" (Daily Trust, June 8, 2021). This statement tallies with what Chief Oliseh Metuh, former PDP Publicity Secretary who asserted in the build-up to the 2015 general elections, that "we accept the reality of terrorism as a global phenomenon, however, the peculiar trend of the Nigeria version which subsists on a welter of nebulous demands and masked identities, hacking down innocent Nigerian women, children and the elderly in awful scorch earth fashion, and in an obstinate ridicule of dialogue, defies all reason and logic and only summarizes a well-considered agenda of national destabilization for a purely selfish political cause" (Premium Times, March 18, 2014). This then underscores the fact that there is an unseen hand in the various conflicts bedevilling the country.

Nigeria in recent times, especially from the second decade of this 21st century has witnessed an unprecedented level of insecurity. This has placed internal national security discourse at the centre of Nigeria's national debate. This insecurity takes the form of the various factors that affect the fabric of the country,

thereby easily given a colouration. If it's not religious insecurity, it will be for the advancement of parochial economic interests. If it's not for ethnic superiority, then it will be for the consolidation of segregated political interests. While it will be easy for the availability of political will to solving the previous trio, the latter is encapsulated in the prison of self-delusion. Due to irreconcilable ethnic conflagrations, political leaders play the ostrich, claiming to be tackling insecurity, while it is same political actors and opinion leaders that enhance the insecurity through their actions and inactions.

In Nigeria, the politicization of national security has constrained efforts to uncover the forces behind the activities of the various non – State actors that are responsible for the insecurity and conflicts rampaging the country. Any attempt by the government to decisively deal with the factors are perceived as anti-people and misinterpreted. In this paper, the implications of this politicization will be analysed on the internal security posture of the country. It will evaluate the views of the writer on the subject or related to it, situate the theoretical framework, and clarifies the concepts for easy digestion of the subject. Findings and recommendations will be discussed as a means of proffering solutions to the ugly phenomenon.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nigeria is no stranger to insecurity and security crisis that has continued to generate debate among policy makers, international security observers and experts on the country's polity, and scholars of high repute. It can therefore attest that literatures on this subject are ubiquitous. However, literatures on the specific subject of politicization of internal security in Nigeria are few or not available; hence this paper will contribute to the growing list of literatures on politicization of internal security in Nigeria. It is instructive to acknowledge that when politics is not handled satisfactorily but allow the infiltration of ethnic and religious biases, so that a peaceful environment subsists, then security becomes a problem for everyone. Okolie and Ugwueze (2015; 33) highlighted that certain reasons are responsible for this scenario, ranging from marginalization, neglect and pauperization, and the quest for power of places where minerals exploited. This means that indigenous citizens, in order to attract the attention of the Federal government, allow insecurity elements to fester in their localities kill, maim and destroy lives and properties for parochial reasons and self-advancement.

While we understand that Boko Haram's origin seem to lie when a group of radical Islamist youths who worshipped at the Muhammadu Ndimi's mosque in Maiduguri in 2002 declared the city and the Islamic establishment to be intolerably corrupt and irredeemable, and in need of cleansing (Anyadike: 2013; 16); the politicization of the Sect's insurgency has confined effort to uncover the forces behind the activity of the deadly Sect into the realm of speculation. Chikodiri Nwangwu and colleagues (2016; 42) acknowledged this fact by asserting that, "the seeming intractable status the sect has acquired since 2011 in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe, a hotbed of Boko Haram operations as a political ping pong". This politics were so glaring preparatory to 2015 General Elections, when all efforts by the then President Goodluck Jonathan to nip the sect's destructive activities in the bud, were viewed as an attack against Northern Nigeria. President Buhari in 2013 accused the then Federal Government of bias when he asserted that, "special treatment is given to the Niger Delta militants by the Federal Government, while the Boko Haram members were being killed and their houses demolished by government" (PointBlank News, June 2, 2013).

It is a well-established fact that security is often viewed as being the opposite of politics, in the sense that security framework legitimizes extraordinary powers and privileges enjoyed by experts and technocrats in politics (Hagamann, et al; 2018). For instance,

Aggestam and Bergman Rosamond's (2018) engagement with Swedish's feminist foreign policy shows how overlapping processes of de- and re-politicisation can shape security politics. At the core of their analysis lies the way these dynamics shape a specific political rationality of the state and its foreign policy. They argued that a re-politicisation of Swedish foreign policy led to a more politicized understanding of gender mainstreaming as can be observed in other international arenas. Following this interest in de- and re-politicisation, Dunn Cavelty and Leese (2018) discuss how privacy can foster the politicization of security. They emphasize the dimension of contestation which they define as the opening up of a space for deliberation. Importantly, they also demonstrate that the mere observation of the politicization of an issue does not tell us much about the de-facto impact of politicization.

Be that as it may, a focus on the everyday permits a rethinking of the underlying concept of politics in the context of the politicization of security and its implication in a society. Most instances of everyday politicization ultimately argue for the significance of these politicization moves by referring to the impact on policies or state actors. Focusing on emotions is one way to try to think about politicization by including

politics beyond or below the nation-state. This research allows us to consider how the politicization of everyday phenomenon like internal security can have negative effects for the society. It brings issues into the political arena which governments would rather suppress, but more generally in the way it traces how controversies emerge and can be situated.

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Conflict theory is associated with Karl Marx and Frederich Engels, which regards society as a theatre of conflict and power struggle. In their work, *Communist Manifesto,* they asserted that "the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggles" (Marx & Engels: 1987; 3). This focuses on a materialistic interpretation of history, dialectical method of analysis and insistence that social unity is a mirage based on suppression. However, while it is a truism that conflicts result when individuals or groups try to assert their authority or resist subjugation from a superior power; it is in this case, individuals or groups trying to incite or support dissidents in order to achieve a parochial interest. For instance, the farmers – herders security issues are struggle to control lands for farming and grazing, arising from the prevailing

desertification in many parts of Northern Nigeria, that is responsible for massive Southern migration in search of green vegetation. Hence, this theory is a perfect description of the reasons for conflict, but cannot fit into this study which is evaluating the implications of escalation of internal security in the Nigerian society, by the various ethnic and religious groups.

Consequentiality theory suits our argument and is appropriate for this paper. Consequentialism is a theory that says whether something is good or bad depends on its outcomes. It is a type of normative ethical theory and in its purest form; it holds that the moral quality of an action is completely determined by its consequences. Therefore, according to the theory, the end justifies the means in all circumstances. This is typical mindset of the various nationalities within the Nigeria context. Uche Chukwumerije observed this fact when he faulted Supreme Court treason sentence on MASSOB leaders against the lenient treatment melted to Odua Peoples' Congress (OPC), Niger Delta militants, and Boko Haram (Vanguard; April 30, 2013). He then reiterated that "youths are the teeth of the fangs of any disadvantaged group struggling for redress" (Vanguard; October 17, 2011). This position was reiterated by President Buhari when

in 2013, he criticized the declaration of State of Emergency in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States and the subsequent military offensive against Boko Haram Islamic sect. He said such action was a gross injustice against the North (ThisDay; June 3, 2013). These means Nigeria leaders and policy makers don't mind instigating crisis and/or supporting miscreants in order to score some political points.

Conceptually, the word 'politicisation' is derived from 'politics.' According to Nnoli (2003:12), politics refers to "all activities that are directly or indirectly associated with the emergence, consolidation and use of state power". However, politicisation in this context is used pejoratively to indicate that a given phenomenon which is meant to serve an altruistic and populist objective is perverted for the advancement of the private and self-seeking goals of certain individuals, groups, classes, parties, etc. Thus, the politicisation of Nigeria's internal security in this context means the use of and tacit support of insurgent group's operations as a basis for the pursuit and advancement of the selfish political agenda of some politicians, political parties, religious groups, and ethnic nationalities. This paper, hence, attempts to demonstrate, using some specific incidents, the various

ways in which all government's efforts to curb insecurity in the country has been trivialised and politicized, enhancing the persistence of security threats in the country and emboldening already established groups.

On the other hand, internal security is the act of keeping peace within the borders of a sovereign State or other self-governing territories, generally by upholding the national law and defending against internal security threats. In an Inaugural Lecture, Solomon E. Arase (IGP, Rtd) acknowledged in 2018 that;

Internal security has been widely defined within the context of the protection of the values, critical human and infrastructural assets, territorial integrity, and lives and property of citizens from threats. The principle underlying internal security is governed Thomas Hobbes' Social Contract Theory while the process is driven by the citizens and State's law enforcement agencies with the Police holding the primacy, under an ideal security architecture.

With the definition above, it means the citizens has a supportive role to play in ensuring internal security. When same citizens conniving with State institutions and agencies, to sabotage the efforts of sister or similar agencies, just to achieve certain primordial and parochial interests; then it means internal security has been politicized. At this stage, all efforts by the government to maintain and keep peace in the society will amount to nothing, because the corporations of the citizens are lacking.

ANALYSING THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE POLITICISATION OF INTERNAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA

It is worthwhile to highlight the internal security question in Nigeria, in order to grasp adequate understanding the reasons for its politicization and implications on the polity. The major threats to Nigeria's internal security in recent years are terrorism which is accentuated by violent religious extremism and fanaticism; separatist agitations and proliferation of ethnic militias engineered by perceived marginalization; kidnapping for ransom; armed robbery which at times, could be orchestrated by trans-border criminal networks; farmers – herders crises which is a particularly potent threat to national security because they can trigger ethnic and religious interpretation; cattle rustling and banditry; oil theft, piracy and militancy; amongst others. Some of these problems derives from and/or

are aggravated by economic and social conditions such as erosion of ethical and moral conduct in private and public life, corruption, ethnic and religious intolerance, deterioration of infrastructure and service delivery, steady rise in unemployment and mass poverty, widening social and economic inequality, proliferation of arms, drug abuse and climate change that leads to environmental degradation like desert encroachment, landslide and flood.

Nigeria's internal security condition is seen as one of the most fragile among other countries in the African continent. This fragility again and again threatens the territorial integrity of the country. Environmental concerns raise the most eye-brows of the masses in Nigeria due to the immediate impact on their daily lives. Oil exploration in the Niger Delta is responsible for militancy in that region and the harbinger of politicization of internal security. Also, the quest for green vegetation and arable land for agricultural practices is responsible for the farmers – herders' crises as both struggles to cultivate crops and rear animals in same piece land. Hence, creating a culture of mistrust and parochial satisfaction before of the fear of the unknown; and the quest to achieve personal safety and survival by any means possible. The circle has continued, to the extent that ethnic

nationalities have adopted it with no end in sight.

The scenario captured by Mbah & Nwangwu (2014; 67 – 78) is playing out in the build-up to the 2023 General Elections. Although it is inexorable that the current security record of Nigeria makes internal security an electoral issue as the country prepares for to the 2023 General Election, none of the political gladiators in the scenery has advanced an unambiguous alternative defence and security agenda for the country, or pay little attention to it. Instead, the daunting security challenges occasioned by the varying security crises has been reduced into a blame game by both the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC), who promised in 2015 to tackle insecurity in the country head-on and the leading opposition party – Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), on whose time in office the country's internal security architecture was brought to their lowest ebb – as well as their ever-surging army of apologists. These political parties are unrelenting in their quest to make political capital out of the insurgence which has primarily targeted innocent citizens, government institutions, security formations, telecommunications masts, banks, religious organizations, educational institutions, media houses, beer halls, markets and local communities.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The stability of the security architecture of any country is widely upheld as a prerequisite for political, economic, social and cultural sustainability of the counry. Besides the human casualties that have attended Boko Haram insurgence in the North-East, Unkown Gunmen in the South-East, Militancy in Niger Delta, Banditry in the North-West, Farmers – Herdsmen clashes all over the country, religious extremists in the North, Ethnic clashes in the Middle Belt, amongst others in the country; all facet Nigeria's society has remained the most adversely affected by the politicisation of internal security in the country. First, since 2011, Nigeria has experienced an unprecedented diversion of humungous scarce capital in the national budget for the procurement of hi-tech equipment. Thus, the proportion of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) devoted to military spending, especially purchasing of arms has increased exponentially. This has correspondingly denied capital projects in the education, health, agriculture and construction sectors that needed attention. For instance, the 2012 Report of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) indicates that in the 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011 fiscal years, the total expenditure earmarked for both internal security and defence in the approved budgets were N164.5 billion, N276.5 billion, N422.9 billion and N563.2 billion respectively (CBN, 2012). This and others have adversely affected the country's economic growth trajectory. The country therefore needs to look inwards by embarking on constitutional reforms that will devolve economic powers to the federating States, while the centre focuses on tackling the internal security challenges.

Second, the politicization of internal security has contributed to the decline in popular trust in government and widespread mutual distrust among Nigerians. This provides a favourable environment for communal groups to organise for their own security or political aims, creating dangerous competition that can easily erupt into violence. In his address to the Press after the formation of Amotekun (a security outfit established on January 9, 2020 by the six State Governors of the South-Western States, Lagos, Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Osun and Ekiti States), Dr Kayode Fayemi of Ekiti State said that the outfit was not a duplication or replacement for the Nigeria Police. But "is a complement that will give our people confidence that they are being looked after by those they elected into office" (Pulse; January 9, 2020). Similar thing posited by Ebonyi State Commissioner for Information, Orji

Uchenna Orji as the reason behind the formation of Ebubeagu (South-East internal Security outfit), even though he said "its function is to assist the police in carrying out lawful activities. It is not an alternate police force. They are to operate in utter obedience to the police force" (The Guardian; January 9, 2022). All these because the Nigerian Security agencies either abdicated from their responsibilities, choose to play the ostrich, or is being manipulated by unseen hands against the interest of the majority in favour of a section. In order to avoid political manipulation of these sectional security outfits and restore confidence of the people, certain aspect of internal security should be left in the hands of the federating states. The current unified policing system seems not to be working and is responsible for the mistrust between security agencies and the people.

Third, this issue has destroyed the social fabrics of Nigeria fragile society, dividing the citizens the more and halted the nation-building. For instance, in the memo which was not addressed to then President Goodluck Jonathan but his regional Governor colleagues, Muritala Nyako, then Governor of Adamawa State ostensibly wants to mobilise and incite the northerners against other ethnic nationalities, the Federal Government, and its security agencies who are engaged in the counter-terrorism operation in the north-east. He said that (Daily Post; May 19, 2014):

fulani communities in parts of the North who have been in their locations for over 100 years are now being raided and uprooted by paid killers within the Nigerian Army for the satisfaction of the federal administration instead of being protected as citizens with their rights and dignity safe-guarded. This has happened to those communities at Keana L.G. in Nasarawa State and Laddoga and Kachia in Kaduna State. It is presently extended to Benue, Zamfara and Katsina States. Furthermore, it is a well-known fact that virtually all the soldiers of Northern Nigerian origin recently recruited to fight Boko Haram have been deceived in that aspect. They are being poorly trained, totally ill - equipped, given only uniform and are killed by their trainers in Nigerian Army training centres as soon as they arrive in the Nigerian Army camps being used by so called Boko Haram insurgents. Virtually all the Nigeria soldiers killed/murdered in those operations so far are of Northern Nigerian origin.

It is pertinent to note that the then Governor's vituperation derives

expressly from his strong opposition to the emergency rule and subsequent deployment of military personnel in the troubled states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe. Such call which is not supported by any credible alternative security roadmap is an open endorsement of the activities of the Boko Haram insurgents. Thus, Nyako's criticism is not only diversionary but clearly shows his poverty of understanding of the fact that the operational tactics of the insurgents go beyond ethnic, religious, political and ideological considerations. By virtue of career antecedents and exposure, it is obligatory for Mr. Nyako to display an unmatchable commitment to nationalism. Alas, the extremely divisive letter which is meant to create disaffection among Nigerians, incite one section of the country against the other and polarise the country along ethnic lines exposes his dearth of history and inability to rise above parochial sentiments. Government needs to exhibit sincerity and decisiveness in tackling such issues in order to raise the peoples' confidence in the system.

Fourth, politicization has also permeated the cultural fabrics of the Nigerian society. The traditional value system of the Nigerian society like most African societies is characterized by such endearing features as collectivism, loyalty to authority and community, truthfulness, honesty, hard work, tolerance, love for others, mutual harmony and coexistence, and identification of individual with one another. Other distinctive features of Nigerian traditional society are abhorrence for theft and high value for live. Stealing was considered extremely disgraceful and lives were also highly valued. All of these values which made society secured and safe have all gradually been thrown away and lost. New values have taken over their place over the years, with the advent of 'modernity and civilization'. All our endearing values and morals have been traded off for western values. The evidence is more in the increasing rate of corruption without corresponding punishment among public officers. Rather, such punishment is perceived as victimization of the culprit, because of differences in the individual wielding the power. The judiciary needs to live up to expectation and be ready to dispense justice without fear or favour, ethnicity or religion, political and other petty alliances.

CONCLUSION
It is important to posit here that the current seemingly intractable internal security challenges in the country are direct consequences of the alienation of the policed citizens, absence of an internal security policy framework, and

poor understanding of the requirements and dynamics of internal security management by strategic actors including legislators, policy makers and political actors which engender evolution of ill – thought – approaches. Other militating factors include the failure to appreciate the dynamics of technology in crime and policing, and inability to evolve new security strategies and systems towards security governance in the country. But these are human and system factors that can be put in sharp with the right political will; compared to when the people on their own are sabotaging the little efforts and sacrifices shown by the Nigerian State represented by the Federal Government, for the purpose of achieving a sectional agenda against the interest of the majority. Or a situation where those who are fortunate control the security apparatuses of the Nigerian State use it to favour their ethnic, religious or sectional interest against the collective interest. Consequently, a new internal security architecture that is citizens-based, technology-driven, collectively-owned, generally-accepted, and system/institutionally-governed is proposed.

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