

The Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) and the Promotion of Human Security in Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) is a para-military agency of the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria that is established to provide measures against threat and any form of attack or disaster against the nation and its citizenry. Using interpretative analysis this paper examines the extent to which the NSCDC has been contributing to human security since its inception in 2003. It discusses the concepts of national and human security with a view of setting the theoretical basis for the study. Based on the analysis, the paper suggests that the Government should provide strengthen the NSCDC with necessary operational gadgets and equipment so that it could further contribute to human and national security in the country. We argue that citizen-friendly operational strategy which the NSCDC has been using to carry out its statutory duties has enabled the Corps to contribute to meaningfully to human security in Nigeria. The presence of NSCDC officers dispels fear wherever they are deployed to carry out assignment. The tranquilizing effect of the presence of the NSCDC officers has greatly contributed to promotion of human security in

Nigeria. For this reason, people feel at home with the presence of the NSCDC officers than with the presence of Police officer

Keywords: National security, human security, citizen-friendly and NSCDC.

Introduction

Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) is a paramilitary agency of the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria that is established to provide measures against threat and any form of attack or disaster against the nation and its citizenry. The nucleus of today's NSCDC started operations as a voluntary organization; before it was appropriated as a statutorily security outfit by virtue of an establishing Act No. 2 of 2003 and amended by Act 6 of 4th June 2007, by which it was constitutionally mandated to bear arms. Its organizational growth, have traversed two other phases in the past - voluntary and statutory eras; it is now in its full-fledge stage of development which is the arm bearing era.

The NSCDC was actually established in Nigeria on May 23rd, 1967 during the Civil War in Lagos. It was initially referred to as the Lagos Civil Defence Committee with the fundamental responsibility of enlightening the Lagos Public on safety precaution during the Civil War. The Charter of April 6th 1968, however, made it possible for states that may wish to establish the Corps within their jurisdiction to do so. For about 36 years (1967-2003) the Corps operated essentially as a voluntary organization. But in 2003 it was established by an Act of Parliament as a statutory security outfit by the Federal

Government and brought under the supervision of the Federal Ministry of Interior. The day to day activities of the Corps is overseen by the Immigration Prisons Services Board established under the Immigration and Prisons Services Board Act, 1986, as amended. The Corps became the 66th member state of the International Civil Defence organization (ICDO) in Geneva Switzerland in 2004. The statutory responsibilities and functions of the Corps are contained in both Establishing Act (2003) and in the Amendment Act 6 of 4th June 2007.

This paper examines the extent to which the NSCDC has been contributing to human security since its inception in 2003. For the sake of analytical clarity, the reminder of this paper is divided into four parts, the first part, discusses the Nigeria security architecture by looking at the constitutional provisions and components of national security in Nigeria; this is followed by conceptual analysis of national Security and human Security, in the third part we give a close-shot analysis of how the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) has been promoting human security in Nigeria, the final part concludes the paper.

Constitutional Provisions on National Security in Nigeria

The Nigerian Constitution makes robust provisions for adequate protection of lives and property of citizens, which is the primary objective of the state, to wit: Section (14) of the Constitution states that: ‘the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government’, this provision encapsulates the main objectives of the state which are the assurance of national

security and the provision of welfare services. While the former will guarantee security of lives and property the latter is intended to dissuade citizens from engaging in criminal, sabotage or nefarious acts that may threaten security of lives and property.

The Nigeria's National Security architecture as enshrined in the provisions of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic makes constitutional basis for all security agencies in the country. As a matter of fact the Police Force derives its mandate from Sections (214) and (217) makes provision for military and other security agencies like the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Federal Road Safety Corps (Corps), Nigeria Customs Services among others, to wit:

214. (1) There shall be a police force for Nigeria, which shall be known as the Nigeria Police Force, and subject to the provisions of this section no other police force shall be established for the Federation or any part thereof.

217. (1) There shall be an armed forces for the Federation which shall consist of an army, a navy, an Air Force and such other branches of the armed forces of the Federation as may be established by an Act of the National Assembly.

While the military is basically mandated to repel external aggression, be it on the land, air or in the sea, the other security agencies are set up primarily to maintain law and order within the state. They are also to ensure that no group under whatsoever

name contests the monopoly of the use of legitimate violence within the state. With end of the Cold War era, most of the African states have been confronting gargantuan internal security challenges with corresponding less security threats from outside. The implication of this is that there has been more pressure on the security agencies whose primary assignment is to ensure law and order within the state. As they are now overburdened, the military especially the Army has been drafted to support the police in quelling internal security challenges. In point of fact, the national security framework as stipulated in the Constitution, is holistic and adequate, this is evident in provisions cited above. Recently, the Nigerian state is confronted with multifarious security challenges, emanating from the activities of criminals involving in oil bunkering, pipeline vandalism, kidnapping, armed robbery, oil militants and religious militants.

Conceptualizing National and Human Security

National Security

Conceptualizing national security has remain controversial essentially because of the disagreement between the traditional idea of national security that is state-centric and which focused basically on protecting the state from external aggression through military capability. This idea has been seriously questioned by dynamics of the contemporary challenges to national security. With the end of the Cold War era, activities of international terrorist groups and the insurgent groups within the state have compelled scholars to re-examine idea of national

security. Human security has therefore emerged as an alternative view to the traditional state-centric idea of national security. Scholars believe that human security, will adequately address the threats pose by insurgent groups; however, its ability to checkmate security threats pose by non-state actors is still debatable. As indicated in the introductory part above, for our purpose we shall discuss both traditional ideas of national security and human security with a view of crystallizing differences in the two perspectives.

The concept of national security has both traditional and contemporary perspectives. The traditional perspective is rooted in the realists' school of thought that is essentially militaristic while the other perspective is rooted in the idealist tradition, which emphasizes other non-military security issues such as human security, environmental security, energy security and others. In the contemporary world, threats to national security are not only caused by state actors but more by non-state actors like the militia groups, hostage takers, local terrorist groups, economic saboteurs who engage in pipeline vandals and others.

The traditional perspective of national security was the dominant idea after the Second World War and during the Cold War era, but following the end of the Cold War era in the early 1989 the contemporary definition of national security gained ascendancy. The early definitions of national security have been influenced by the prevailing realists view. For Farlex dictionary, national security is "the requirement to maintain the survival of the nation-state through the use of economic, military and

political power and the exercise of diplomacy." Lippmann (1943) contends that: "A nation has national security when it does not have to resort to war, or the threat of war, to preserve its legitimate interests." This definition depicts the motivation for arms race during the Cold War era. Nations acquire military capabilities in order to deter external aggression. In essence, the acquisition of military might is not to put it into use but to show-off readiness to repel any external threat.

Following similar tradition, Harold Lasswell, (1950) posits that: "The distinctive meaning of national security means freedom from foreign dictation." For Lasswell, therefore national security is the minimum requirement for the protection of a state against external invasion. As it can be seen he did not reckon with other non-state actors within a state that threatens its survival. For instance, Libya is country whose national security is being threatened by non-state actors within its borders before and after the killing Mohamed Ghadaffi. Harold Brown, who was former U.S. Secretary of Defense (1977 – 1981) in his 1983 book *Thinking About National Security: Defense and Foreign Policy in a Dangerous orld*, opines that national security is: 'The ability to preserve the nation's physical integrity and territory; to maintain its economic relations with the rest of the world on reasonable terms; to preserve its nature, institution, and governance from disruption from outside; and to control its borders.' But Charles Maier's (1990) gives a more encompassing view of national security when he asserts that:

National security... is best described as a capacity to control those domestic and foreign conditions that the public opinion of a given community believes necessary to enjoy its own self-determination or autonomy, prosperity and wellbeing.

From the foregoing, it can be seen that the holistic idea of national security is the contemporary one, that factors in security threats from within or outside the state. This contemporary perspective has both military and non-military elements, some of which are military security, political security, human security, energy security among others. Former Nigerian Head of State, General Abudusalami Abubakar (2004) observes that human security is needed for the attainment of physical and national security. According to him:

Recent international debates have also raised the need to see security in the broader sense as the struggle to secure the most basic necessities of life: food, fuel, medicine and shelter. This broader human security is important for the attainment of physical and national security and overall peace and development as social unrests arising from the absence of such basic human security can indeed lead to security problems and conflicts.

Be that as it may, military security has been defined by the *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, as a ‘condition that results from the establishment and maintenance of protective measures that ensure a state of inviolability from hostile acts or influences.’ This definition focuses more on

repelling external aggression but underrated internal security threats. On the other hand, political security, relates with the stability of the social order. The social order in a state is influenced by patterns and modes of interactions between different social groups in a state. For instance perennial violent protest by a particular section of a state will upset the social order and threaten national security. In Nigeria, Boko Haram insurgency, armed militia groups, hostage taking, bombings, and political or religious violent protest are some of the security challenges threatening stability of the social order. (Ajao: 2011)

Human Security

Human security is an emerging paradigm for understanding global vulnerabilities whose proponents challenge the traditional notion of national security of by arguing that the proper referent for security should be the individual rather than the state (state-centric). Human security holds that a people-centered view of security is necessary for national, regional and global development and stability. According to Thomas (2001:67), the concept emerged from a post-Cold War era, multi-disciplinary understanding of security involving a number of research fields, including development studies, human relations, studies, strategic studies and human rights. However, the United Nations Development Programme's 1994 Human Development Report is considered a milestone publication in the field of human security, with its argument that insuring "freedom from want" and "freedom from fear" for all persons is the best path to tackle the problem of global insecurity.

The 1994 *Human Development Report*, which was drafted and championed by Mahbub ul Haq, popularized the term human security. The intent of human security was to bridge the freedom from want and freedom from fear, freedoms that lay at the heart of the United Nations. As far back as June 1945, the U.S. Secretary of State reported this to his government on the results of the San Francisco Conference:

The battle of peace has to be fought on two fronts. The first is the security front where victory spells freedom from fear. The second is the economic and social front where victory means freedom from want. Only victory on both fronts can assure the world of an enduring peace.... No Provisions that can be written into the Charter will enable the Security Council to make the world secure from war if men and women have no security in their homes and their jobs' cited in Schnabel, (2001).

As the quotation suggests, the phrase 'freedom from fear' is intended to indicate freedom from violence, and the phrase 'freedom from want', implies freedom from poverty. It is important to bear this mental equation in mind, because of course people also fear poverty and destitution; they also want peace and police protection. Also, although Buddhism might arguably offer the most effective response to 'freedom from want', the envisioned responses are political, social, economic, and environmental in nature (Wikipedia: 2011). The UNDP's 1994 Human Development Report's definition of human security argues that the scope of global security should be expanded to include threats in seven areas to wit:

1. Economic security — Economic security requires an assured basic income for individuals, usually from productive and remunerative work or, as a last resort, from a publicly financed safety net. In this sense, only about a quarter of the world's people are presently economically secure. While the economic security problem may be more serious in developing countries, concern also arises in developed countries as well. Unemployment problems constitute an important factor underlying political tensions and ethnic violence.

2. Food security — Food security requires that all people at all times have both physical and economic access to basic food. According to the United Nations, the overall availability of food is not a problem; rather the problem often is the poor distribution of food and a lack of purchasing power. In the past, food security problems have been dealt with at both national and global levels. However, their impacts are limited. According to UN, the key is to tackle the problems relating to access to assets, work and assured income (related to economic security).

3. Health security — Health Security aims to guarantee a minimum protection from diseases and unhealthy lifestyles. In developing countries, the major causes of death traditionally were infectious and parasitic diseases, whereas in industrialized countries, the major killers were diseases of the circulatory system. Today, lifestyle-related chronic diseases are leading killers worldwide, with 80 percent of deaths from chronic diseases occurring in low- and middle-income countries. According to the United Nations, in both developing and

industrial countries, threats to health security are usually greater for poor people in rural areas, particularly children. This is due to malnutrition and insufficient access to health services, clean water and other basic necessities. In Nigeria, the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) indicates government's commitment to health security of citizens.

4. Environmental security — Environmental security aims to protect people from the short- and long-term ravages of nature, man-made threats in nature, and deterioration of the natural environment. In developing countries, lack of access to clean water resources is one of the greatest environmental threats. In industrial countries, one of the major threats is air pollution. Global warming, caused by the emission of greenhouse gases, is another environmental security issue. The government has set up different agencies on sustainable uses of environmental resources, especially in the oil-rich Niger-Delta region

5. Personal security — Personal security aims to protect people from physical violence, whether from the state or external states, from violent individuals and sub-state actors, from domestic abuse, or from predatory adults. For many people, the greatest source of anxiety is crime, particularly violent crime. Sociologists have argued that deviants, that are inevitable part and parcel of any society endanger the lives of fellow citizens; it is therefore the duty of the through its security agencies to curb deviants, prosecute and punish them according to the law of the land.

6. Community security — Community security aims to protect people from the loss of traditional relationships and values and from sectarian and ethnic violence. Traditional communities, particularly minority ethnic groups are often threatened. About half of the world's states have experienced some inter-ethnic strife. The United Nations declared 1993 the Year of Indigenous People to highlight the continuing vulnerability of the 300 million aboriginal people in 70 countries as they face a widening spiral of violence. Jos crises typify the idea of community security.

7. Political security — Political security is concerned with whether people live in a society that honors their basic human rights including political right to choose their leaders (democracy). With the last general elections in Nigeria, in which the ruling party Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) peacefully handed over to the opposition party (All Progressives Congress APC), having lost in a keenly contested presidential election, push up the ranking of Nigeria in terms of political security. In addition, the signing into law the Freedom of Information Bill by former President Goodluck Jonathan implies that Nigeria is joining the league of emerging nations where political security is guaranteed. Uprisings in the North Africa (Arab Spring) are traceable to long years of autocratic regimes that have denied people political security.

However, it must be stated that addressing the above seven threats to human security constitute just necessary conditions not sufficient conditions for peace and order; this is because in

advanced countries where these human security threats have been well taken care of, there are still security breaches, orchestrated by their deviant citizens or external terrorist groups. The key premises of the 1994 UNDP report are (i) its joint focus on freedom from fear and freedom from want, and (ii) its four emphases on universality, interdependence, prevention, and people-centeredness. These formed, and continue to shape, human security discussions.

NSCDC and Human Security in Nigeria

Arising from the conceptual clarification made above, it is clear that the core of human security is the freedom from fear and freedom from want. One of after effect of the long years of military rule in Nigeria is that it has made the Police to develop thick skin. They have turned against the citizens they are meant to protect. Instead of being friendly with the citizens that they are employed and paid to protect; they have on many occasions harassed, terrorized, scandalized, criminalized and extorted innocent citizens who could have work with them to enhance security.

The effect of the un-friendliness of Police is that, instead of Police presence to dispel fear (human security); their presence accentuates fear. The presence of law enforcement agents is supposed to dispel fear among the citizens. On the contrary their presence creates or multiplies fear. Without intention to water down the good work of the Nigeria Police, it must be stated here and now the in most cases the presence of the Police instead of dispelling fear, it generates fear among the people. This is not

supposed to be, in the advanced countries, the presence of Police dispels fear. However, in Nigeria, the moment a Police officer steps into a crime scene, people who could provide eye witness account would help the Police investigation will disappear from the scene because they did not have trust in the Police. They fear that the Police could use the eye witness account against to criminalize or scandalize them. As stated above, the prolonged military rule might have contributed to the dis-embeddedness of the Police from the society, resulting in fear among citizens rather than trust among them.

To be sure, the Police Authorities are aware that the citizens fear them and that their presence instead of freeing people from fear of violence, it is as a matter of fact adding to the fear. It is in recognition of this dilemma that the Police Authorities have been engaged in many trust-building activities such as encouraging and intensifying the spread of community policing. One of the popular slogans used to make people stop fearing the Police says: “Police is Your Friend!”

It is within the context of Police un-friendliness to the citizens and lack of trust in the Police that NSCDC was set up in 2003. At its inception, as a statutory paramilitary security agency, many assumed that the Corps was not strong enough to contribute meaningfully to the national security. However, with good leadership and the passage of the Amendment Act (2007); it has become clear to those who have reservation about the functionality and efficacy of the NSCDC that the Corps is well

suited to dispel fear in critical situations such as in crime situation, or during emergency or in cases of disaster.

Generally, people feel at home with the presence of the NSCDC officers than with the presence of Police officers, for two main reasons, people are very sure that by assisting or giving the NSCDC officers useful information for crime prevention or containment, they will not be scandalized at the end of the day; on the other hand, it is not very certain that by working or giving Police critical information on crime they will not be maliciously criminalized.

The argument is that citizen-friendly operational strategy which the NSCDC has been using to carry out its statutory duties has enabled the Corps to contribute meaningfully to human security in Nigeria. The presence of NSCDC officers dispels fear wherever they are deployed to carry out assignment. The tranquilizing effect of the presence of the NSCDC officers has greatly enhanced human security in Nigeria. In every disaster contexts, NSCDC officers are the most visible statutory security agents on ground working directly with the people. This actually the expectation of the nation and the people from the NSCDC, because ideologically the fundamental principle of civil defence duties is humanitarianism.

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