

The Military and Internal Security in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects

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Abstract

Since the return to democratic rule in 1999, Nigeria has witnessed different forms of conflict ranging from sectarian to ethno-religious crises, whole sale abduction, hostage taking, arson, incidents of cattle rustlings and terrorism in the North. Our nascent democracy has also been tested by rampant crimes of armed robbery, baby factories and kidnappings in the East, pipeline vandalism, crude-oil theft and civil unrest in the South; abduction, hostage taking and ritual killings in the West. All these have had severe consequences on human and material resources of the nation hence the inevitability of military involvement in internal security of the country. This study seeks to investigate the extent to which the military have been involved in the nation's internal security and the prospects and challenges associated with it. The study predominantly utilized secondary data and in the final analysis, the findings indicated that today's Nigeria is witnessing a higher level of aggression and wanton destruction of lives and properties and as such the role of the military in the internal security of the nation cannot be over emphasized. Therefore this study recommends that the military should remain an indispensable partner in the internal security network of the country.

Keywords: Internal security, Military, Constitution, Challenges and Prospects

1. Introduction

A nation's national security is predicated on her national interest as well as her strategic calculations within the region and in the global arena. For us to have an effective and result-oriented national security therefore, the socio-economic terrain and the entrepreneurial needs of the nation must be well enhanced, as these are catalysts that propel growth and development, which in turn assures the well-being of the citizenry. This cannot be achieved by one sector alone, a combination of all elements of national power and our strategic alliance would have to be harnessed. Thus the military remain a vital element in the overall national security strategy.

Military involvement in the internal security operations is inevitable as the need for higher level of aggression continues to reveal itself. Although, this has been the case ever since Nigeria was formed and it also continued throughout the colonial period, the recent occurrence of terrorism witnessed in the country has further justified the need for military participation in internal security operations. This move however, is not without challenges of its own as the military is not particularly trained for internal security operations unlike the civil authorities and as a result, consistently engage in acts which are not civil enough (Azinge, 2013:2). In view of the above assertion, this paper seeks to affirm the need for the military to maintain a frontal role in the internal security of the country so as to meet the challenges inherent in today's Nigeria.

2. Conceptual Clarifications

Security is the enduring yet elusive quest. Today most of us similarly seek security, yet our quest is tempered by the reality that while humans have sought safety history, they say have usually failed to achieve that goal for long (Rourke & Boyer, 2002:243). Most scholars agree that security is a 'contested concept'. There is a consensus that it implies freedom from threats to core values (for both individuals and group) but there is a major disagreement about whether the main focus of enquiry should be on 'individual', 'national', or 'international' security (Baylis & Smith, 2001:300).

Some security experts argued that the concept of security has always been associated with the safety and survival of the state and its citizens from harm or destruction or from dangerous threats. This conception generally holds that the state is the only institution with the primary responsibility and power for the safety of its territory and its people (Zabadi, 2005:3). The concept of security in this paper is operationalized within the context of a nation hence the concept of internal security.

Civil war writing was dominated by ideas of national security which was largely defined in militarized terms with scholars and statesmen advocating on the military capabilities of states to deal with threat that face them. More recently, however, this idea of security has been criticized for being ethnocentric (culturally based) and too narrowly defined. A number of contemporary writers have argued for an expanded conception of security outward from the limits of parochial national security to include a range of other considerations. Buzan (1992) in his study, *People, States and Fear*, argues for a view of security which include political, economic, societal, environmental as well as military aspect and which is also defined in broader international terms as in the case of security, the discussion is about the pursuit of freedom from threat. When this discussion is in the context of the international system, security is about the ability of states and societies to maintain their independent identity and their functional integrity (Baylis & Smith, 2001:300).

Security is often viewed in terms of the basic survival, welfare, and protection of the state existing in an international system characterized by self- help (Viotti, P. & Kauppi, M. 2009:15).

As Ozoemena (2009) argues, security is all about national interest and involves "the sum total of actions and measures, including legislative and operational procedures, adopted to ensure peace, stability and the general well-being of a nation and its citizens" (Ozoemena, 2009).

3. What is Internal Security Operations?

Internal security Operations are those acts carried out by the domestic security agents such as the Police, Customs Services, Immigration Services, and others for the purpose of containing domestic threats to the security of the country. These threats often relate to dire cases of riots, demonstrations, strikes, communal clashes, terrorism, and the likes, which normally fall outside the constitutional duty of the military (Azinge, 2013:4).

Affirming this, section 4 of the Police Act of Nigeria provides the general duties of the police as the preservation of law and order, the protection of life and property and the due enforcement of all laws and regulations with which they are directly charged within the society.

Internal security operations are therefore designed to handle internal conflicts in a country. In Nigeria, communal /ethnic clashes, religious conflicts and recently acts of terrorism have necessitated their involvement in internal security operations.

4. Constitutional Bases for Military Involvement in Internal Security

The 1999 Constitution of Nigeria which provides for the military in its section 217 makes it clear that the duties of the military, that is the Army, Navy and Air-force will be to defend Nigeria from external aggression, maintain its territorial integrity and securing its borders from isolation on land, sea or air, suppressing insurrection and acting in aid of civil authorities to restore order when called upon to do so by the President but subject to such conditions as may be prescribed by an Act of National Assembly. The military is also to perform such other functions as may be prescribed by an Act of the National Assembly.

Although the main functions of the military is to protect the nation against external aggression or threats, occasionally the military may be required to assist the civil authorities to deal with internal violence and suppress internal tension. For instance, the military may be required to assist the police in restoring law and order in any part of the country. Section 217 (c) 1999 constitution forms the basis of involvement of the military in internal security operations in Nigeria. It provides thus in relation to the functions of the military in Nigeria: "suppressing insurrection and acting in aid of civil authorities to restore order when called upon to do so by the President but subject to such conditions as may be prescribed by an Act of National Assembly".

Section 8(1) of the Armed Forces Act provides that the President shall determine the operational use of the Armed Forces. Operational use is further defined thus:

"In this section, "operational use of the armed forces" includes the operational use of the armed forces in Nigeria for the purpose of maintaining and securing public safety and public order". The security challenges witnessed in the country have called for more of military intervention in the form of internal security operations and it has been observed that the military is increasingly involved in internal security operations (Okoli, A. & Orinya, S. 2013:21).

In Nigeria, the supreme law of the land which is the Constitution empowers the President to use federal forces to combat domestic disturbances. These disturbances only serve as threats to the rights of some individuals or groups in some particular areas of the nation; these are not threats to the national security. Section 217 of the 1999 Constitution is

to the effect that the military under the directive of the president can act in the aid of civil authorities to restore law and order.

Pursuant to this section, the military has often been called upon to suppress acts of riots, demonstrations and terrorism in order to restore peace, law and order. Section 305 of the same constitution which empowers the president to issue a proclamation of state of emergency is another basis for military internal security operations. This section provides that state of emergency shall be declared in the following situations:

- * 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 restore peace and security.
- * Also, if there is clear and present danger of an actual breakdown of public order and public safety in the federation or any part thereof requiring extraordinary measure to avert any such dangers.
- * Or there is an occurrence or imminent danger or the occurrence of any disaster or national calamity affecting the community or a section of the community in the federation, or there is any other public danger which clearly constitutes a threat to the existence of the federation.

These provisions above all refer to the breakdown of public order and public safety and the need to restore same. Though the duty to restore law and order within the country is that of the civil authorities which is the Nigerian Police, but the provision of section 217 of the 1999 constitutions comes in to play here as it is to the effect that the military can be called upon to aid civil authorities to restore public order in any part of the country. In connection with this provision in the constitution, the military always performs internal security Operations under states of emergency.

5. Some Instances of Military Involvement in Internal Security Operations in Nigeria

The military has always been involved in internal security from the days of colonialism. In August 1914, as the First World War gathered pace, an Egba revolt was militarily crushed by ten companies of troops from the newly created "Nigeria Regiment". In 1929- 1930, the regiment was called upon for a major internal security operation against Igbo women, mainly at Aba (Omoigui-Online). The Nigerian Air-force similarly participated in Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) against the Maitasine elements in Kano and Maiduguri, against the Taliban in the Mandara Mountains and in Panshekara and are active with the Special Task Force-Operation Safe Heaven on the Jos-Plateau (Azinge, 2013:5). Corroborating this, the then Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Bاده opined that the air-force was fully involved in security operations in all the states of the nation. He added that the involvement dated back to the period of Joint Task Force in the Niger Delta. Similarly, the Nigerian Navy was deeply involved in the management of the Ijaw- Itsekiri crises in the Warri Metropolitan area.

Both services, where they maintain a presence have over the course of several decades actively cooperated with the Nigerian Army in Internal Security Operations geared towards restoring peace to various parts of the volatile federation.

These include, but are not limited to the Tiv and Western Nigerian crises of 1962-1965, the post-election violence of 1983 in Western Nigeria, Ife-Modakeke conflict of the 1990s, the 2000 Sharia crisis in Kaduna which claimed thousands of lives. The Nigerian Army also had to intervene in Yelwa-Shendam, Jos and Kano crisis in 2004 to restore peace after well over a thousand persons had been killed in ethno-religious violence between Hausa- Muslims and indigenous Christian peoples in the central highlands and reprisal killings which followed in Hausa- Muslim dominated Kano thereafter. The crisis was so serious that a rare state of emergency was declared in Plateau state in 2004. The then President Olusegun Obasanjo declared a state of emergency in Plateau State on the 18th May 2004 following the Tarok Christian tribe militant massacre of over 600 Muslims in the small town of Yelwa-Shendam earlier that month. This in turn led to reprisal killings of Christians in the northern city of Kano.

The former President Obasanjo sacked the then Governor Joshua Dariye, whom he accused of failing to act to end a cycle of violence between the Plateau State's Muslims and Christian communities. The blood- letting had claimed more than two thousand lives since September 2001. The then President also dissolved the Plateau State legislature and appointed a retired army general, Chris Ali, as an interim administrator for six months (Daily Trust Newspaper, 2004:3).

Some years later, serious ethno religious violence broke out and reprisal killing followed thereafter and across broad swathes of northern and eastern Nigeria in that order, occasioned by perceived indiscretion on the part of a Danish cartoonist in 2006.

In 2011, post- election violence again broke out in some disaffected segments of Northern Nigeria leading to the deaths of over 800 people. It took the intervention of the Nigerian Army to restore normalcy to the restive parts of the federation.

The immediate cause of the State of Emergency in the three states of Nigeria was the Boko Haram activities which

started as a post-election violence and has metamorphosed into an insurgency with trans-boarder terrorism growing out of control and leading to the declaration of State of emergency in the key states of the North-East, that is, Borno, Yobe and Adamawa.

The Boko Haram group in Nigeria though not well understood are known to be very dangerous with parochial interest and has constituted itself into a major security threat and has also exhibited no sign of abating despite governments efforts to crush their activities, which include bombing of Churches, Mosques, Police stations, Government properties, Markets and crowded places (The Punch Newspaper, 2014:22).

Today, the group has grown from strength to strength as it is fighting with renewed energy and ruthlessness and has carried out deadly attacks at the key states under state of emergency as well as some other Northern states in the country including the Nation's capital Abuja (ThisDay Newspaper, 2014:16).

On May 13, 2014, over 300 people lost their lives in Gamboru-Ngala following an attack from the Boko Haram group (The Punch Newspaper, 2014:13)

On May 14, 2014, over 200 school girls were abducted from their hostels in the dead of the night from Government Girls Secondary School Chibok in Borno State. This singular action drew international condemnation and global assistance to locate and rescue these girls but so far all efforts has proved abortive as the group continue to unleash mayhem on innocent citizens as well as the security forces (The Punch Newspaper, 2014:80).

On May 20, 2014, over 200 people were killed in a crowded Terminus market in Jos the capital of Plateau State following a twin bomb blast and several others were injured.

On May 21, 2014, Boko Haram attacked Chikon-gudo killing over 25 people and setting the village ablaze. Another attack occurred on the 25th in Yobe where 54 people were killed and several others injured. Two days later, 48 people were killed in Borno and several others sustained various degrees of injury.

On the 31 of the same Month, 40 people were killed in Mubi by members of this group.

On 23 July, 2014, Twin suicide bombers in kaduna targeted at the former Head of State General Muhammadu Buhari and Sheik Dahiru Bauchi killed 82 people with several others injured (The Nation Newspaper, 2014 :4).

In addition, as it stands today the Boko Haram group are currently overrunning and taking over territories which it has declared their 'Caliphate' in the key states under emergency rule.

The few instances of deadly attacks highlighted above further buttress the need for the military to remain in frontal role in Nigeria's internal security networks.

Table 1: Below Chronicles Nigerian Military Engagements: 1999 –Date

Government	Period	Area of Action
Chief Olusegun Obasanjo	May 29, 1999- May 29,2007	*Odi crisis,1999 *Onitsha disturbances,2006 *Niger Delta crisis 1999-2009 *Ife/Modakeke crisis 1999-2000 *Ikeja Bomb blasts,2001 *Plateau State (Jos) crisis 2001 *Sharia & religious-related crisis in Parts of Northern Nigeria
Alhaji Umar Yar'Adua	May 29, 2007-May 25, 2010	*Quelling of Islamic Insurgency in Borno(Maiduguri) 2009 *Jos crisis,2008,2009
Dr. Goodluck Jonathan	May 5,2010-Present	*Boko Haram crisis(till date) *Jos crisis(till date) *Post-election crisis(April 2011) *Fulani-herdsmen/Farmers (2012 till date) in Benue, Nasarawa & Taraba *Unknown gunmen attacks in Kaduna, Katsina & Zamfara States (2014)

6. Challenges of the Military in Internal Security Operations in Nigeria

The involvement of the military in civil operations informs the need for the military to adjust to the demands of the internal security operations. The military usually encounter problems when engaged in civil operations. Some areas where these problems stem from have been highlighted as follows:

- (i) Orientation: Military orientation dictates that a potential threat is an enemy and as such should be eradicated. Having this type of mindset during internal operations could be dangerous as defence against external aggression should be differentiated from the defence employed against 'enemies' within.

Related to the above is the perception of the Military when called upon to engage in internal security, some soldiers are of the opinion that they have a more-noble role than this and even some think they have been called upon because of the incapacity and inefficiency of the police in maintaining law and order. The resultant effect is that the military usually take over operations from the police instead of aiding the civil authorities as provided for in sec. 217 of the 1999 constitution. Instead of lending support to the police or other civil authorities concerned the military end up taking leading roles. This can give rise to jealousy and distrust between the police force involved in the operations and the soldiers deployed for the internal operations. This is capable of causing unhealthy rivalry which can eventually undermine security efforts. This has caused the Nigerian Army to advocate for a centralized system to coordinate the activities of the Joint Task Force Operations in the country as such system would prevent order and counter order by various Heads of Security Agencies.

- (ii) Training: Since the primary function of the military is to defend the country in times of war, military training is usually based on inflicting maximum damage and destruction on their opponents and defeating them in the shortest possible time within the rules and the laws of armed conflict. Meanwhile, internal security operations only require restraint and the use of minimum force which is in contrast to what is usually required of soldiers in conventional warfare. The requirement for minimum force is because, they are now-maintaining law and order among their own people in their own country. The arbitrariness associated with the military while in internal security operations can be attributed to the kind of training undergone by the soldiers. There is therefore the need for the military to undergo proper training to deal with internal operations. This fact was also acknowledged by the former Chief of Army Staff, Lt-General Onyeabo Ihejirika, who said that the Nigerian Army must refocus its logistics training to cater for internal security operations in aid of civil authority.
- (iii) Equipment: Most times, the soldiers involved in the internal security operations are not properly equipped for the task. Soldiers engaged in internal operations who are only equipped with guns will definitely use it if their lives are threatened by a hostile mob. Similarly, the Nigerian Army was quoted as saying the insurgents now use anti-aircraft guns mounted on trucks to fight the nation's soldiers, likely outgunning the country's overstretched forces (Vanguard Newspaper, 2013:7).
- (iv) Strategy and Tactics: Military strategy and tactics are essential to the conduct of warfare. Strategy is planning, coordination, and general direction of military operations to meet overall political and military objectives. Tactics implement strategy by short-term decision on the movement of troops and employment of weapons on the field of battle. Armies all over the world have strategies and tactics employed in times of war. Some of the most commonly cited principles are the objective, the offensive, surprise, security, unit of command economy of force, mass and maneuver. According to history, a famous example that illustrates most of these principles occurred during World War 2 when the Allied forces eventually agreed on the objectives of defeating Germany first with a direct offensive against the European continent.
- (v) Mode of operation of the military during internal security operations: The Nigerian military has engaged in peace keeping operations in foreign countries on a number of occasions and has been commended for its noble conduct during those occasions. Sierra Leone and Liberia are very good examples.

It is wondered why this is not the case when internal security operations are concerned. The problem of high – handedness and insensitivity to the nature and characteristics of civilian dominated areas is always pointed as a flaw. A number of features are associated with the military engagement in internal security operations most of which are negative.

- (a) Excessive use of force: The Nigerian military has been accused of excessive use of force which is against the precepts of human rights. Excessive force refers to a force that is above that which is reasonable and a prudent law enforcement officer would use under normal circumstances. The military in internal security operations has been reported on several occasions as using excessive force. A popular case in point is the Odi massacre. An attack carried out on November 20, 1999 by the Nigerian military on a predominantly Ijaw village of Odi in Bayelsa state. The attack came in the hills of the conflict in the Niger Delta over the indigenous rights to oil resources and environmental protection. Prior to the massacre, twelve (12) members of the Nigerian Police were murdered by a gang of youths near the village in Odi. In an apparent revenge, the military acting on the directive of the Federal Government, invaded the village and raided it. This attack was characterized by intense and excessive use of force. In effect, scores of unarmed civilians including women and children were killed. All the buildings in the village, except the bank, the Anglican Church and the community Health Centre, were destroyed, leaving the village in a woeful state of desolation (Okoli & Orinya 2013:23, Azaiki, 2009:14).

- (b) Extra judicial killings: Military in internal operations have been characterized with extra judicial killings. The Borno state Governor Kashim Shettima, said in April 2013 that over 100 people were killed in Baga during a clash between officers of the Joint Task Force and insurgents over the weekend. Residents of the village said they buried 185 people after the battle, while Red Cross said 187 people were killed (BBC News)
- (c) Degrading Treatment of citizens-rape, torture: Under normal circumstances, soldiers are not meant to be seen all over the place but there is a departure from this in situations where military perform internal security operations as they are deployed to affected areas. Soldiers reportedly extort citizens after intimidating them. It is now common sites for civilians to be seen frog- jumping at check points. Women and girls are sometimes raped on a number of occasions whether or not during conflict.
- (d) Arbitrary arrest: Soldiers involved in internal security operations also effect arbitrariness. For instance, at Jos, many young people were arrested and falsely accused of being mastermind of the death of some security personnel.

7. Prospects of Military in Internal Security Operations

The increasing role taken by the military in internal security operations have been criticized by people who are of the opinion that the military are not that trained to manage internal operations like other civil authorities such as the police. However, it must be said that the involvement of the military in internal security operations has had its advantages notwithstanding the negativity associated with it. The military will also go a long way in providing aid to civil authorities if the proper mechanism necessary for civil protection and internal operation are put in place. Based on this we proffer the following recommendations:

- There is the need for domestic legislation to regulate the operations of the military during internal operation.
- The rules of military engagement should be given a legal status and cease to operate as a mere guidelines.
- There should be re-orientation of the soldiers involved in internal security operations and the populace as well. The military has been tagged with the label of terror and an average Nigerian encountering soldiers on the road is likely to be subjected to unnecessary and unwarranted fear.
- Soldiers should be knowledgeable in conflict management
- The military should be made to undergo trainings geared towards internal operation before engaging in same as well as re-training to meet with the recent challenges of today's sophisticated global threat.
- The Nigerian Army should procure modern days equipment in order to withstand the challenges of modern threats.

8. Conclusion

The role of the military in internal security operations cannot be over emphasized. The military is one of the most consistent sub-sector of the Nigerian federal structure. Right from independence to the present period of democratic rebirth; the complex task of keeping Nigeria one, and of protecting the nation from external and internal aggression and attacks undoubtedly rest primarily on the military. They have come to remain an integral part of the nation's internal security structure given the magnitude of current threats in the North –Eastern region as well as the outskirts of the nation's capital. Notwithstanding the dissenting voices against their role, the 1999 constitution which is the supreme law of the land gives them the backing and the higher aggression of insurgency in the nation today justifies their involvement. Therefore, Nigerians should assist the security agencies in the fight against terrorism and insurgency with credible information to curb security challenges in the country.

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