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The challenge of national security, in a heterogeneous state: using Nigeria as a case study

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Abstract: The issue of national security has always been a determining factor for every government and it has always been an interest that is of topmost priority to every government. The issue of National Security in every political administration cannot be overemphasized, as it is a determining factor in the assessment of a political administration as to whether a government is responsible or not.

The government owes every citizen of her state security as to their lives, properties, etc. It is as of right -legal right of the citizens to be protected by their government. Using Nigeria as a case study, if the government is not responsible enough to protect its citizens, economy and other institutions, the Fundamental Rights enlisted under Chapter IV of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) can never be in any way attainable, thereby making such government irresponsible. In a heterogeneous state like Nigeria where there are diverse cultures, ethnicities, religions, languages, different sensitivity traits and patterns, etc., the issue of National Security has always been a primary concern. Although of primary significance, it has its challenges amidst its differences, which is what this paper seeks to highlight. This article examines the multifaceted challenges of national security in Nigeria, a nation grappling with a myriad of threats including insurgency, ethnic conflicts, banditry, and organized crime. Historical context reveals how past events, such as civil wars and military coups, have shaped the current security landscape. The rise of Boko Haram and its offshoots, coupled with communal tensions driven by resource scarcity, underscores the complexity of the situation. The government's response, including military interventions and community policing initiatives, is

analysed for effectiveness. Additionally, the socio-economic factors contributing to insecurity, such as poverty and youth disenfranchisement, are explored. By evaluating these dynamics, the article underscores the necessity of a holistic approach to national security that integrates economic, social, and political reforms. Ultimately, this case study of Nigeria offers insights relevant to understanding and addressing security challenges in similar contexts globally.

Keywords: Challenges, National Security, Heterogeneous, case study, Insurgency.

Introduction: Security is the ability of a country's Government to protect its citizens, economy and other institutions. And beyond the obvious protection, i.e. against military attacks, national security in the 21st century includes several non-military missions, which includes economic security, energy security, homeland security, cybersecurity, human security, etc.

To ensure national security, government rely on tactics, including political, economic and military power along with diplomacy.

Prior to this age, national security was strictly a matter of military power and readiness, but with the beginning of the nuclear age and cyber threat it became clear that defining national security in a context of conventional military warfare had become a thing of the past.

Beyond merely maintaining domestic order, national security is relevant and important. And its importance extends to the health and prosperity of the people who make up the population as well as the relationships between all nations on a regional and international scale. National security is a critical component of statehood, encompassing the strategies and measures that a nation employs to safeguard its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the well-being of its citizens from various threats. In Nigeria, national security challenges are particularly acute, shaped by the country's complex socio-political landscape, ethnic diversity, and historical legacies. As Africa's most populous nation, Nigeria faces a multitude of security issues that not only threaten its stability but also undermine the development and safety of its people.

The rise of Boko Haram, a militant Islamist group founded in 2002, has been one of the most significant challenges to Nigeria's national security. Boko Haram aims to establish a strict interpretation of Sharia law and has been responsible for numerous violent attacks, abductions, and terrorist acts, including the infamous 2014 abduction of over 200 schoolgirls in

Chibok (Zenn & Pantucci, 2019). The group's activities have led to thousands of deaths and the displacement of millions, creating a humanitarian crisis in northeastern Nigeria (International Crisis Group, 2020).

In addition to insurgency, Nigeria grapples with ethnic conflicts that arise from competition over resources and political power. The tensions between pastoralists and farmers, particularly in the Middle Belt region, exemplify how resource scarcity—exacerbated by climate change—can fuel violence (Akinwunmi, 2018). These conflicts often take on ethnic dimensions, as different groups vie for control over land and water, leading to cycles of violence that further destabilize the region (Ribadu, 2021).

Furthermore, banditry and kidnapping for ransom have become rampant, particularly in northern Nigeria. Criminal gangs engage in violent theft and abduction, creating a pervasive atmosphere of fear. According to Human Rights Watch (2020), these acts not only pose immediate threats to lives but also disrupt economic activities and hinder development. The government's response to these security challenges has included military operations, yet critics argue that these measures often lead to human rights abuses and fail to address the underlying socio-economic factors that drive insecurity (Amnesty International, 2019).

The interplay of these factors highlights the need for a comprehensive understanding of national security challenges in Nigeria. Addressing these issues requires not only effective law enforcement and military strategies but also socio-economic reforms that tackle poverty, unemployment, and youth disenfranchisement. By examining Nigeria as a case study, this article aims to shed light on the broader implications of national security challenges, emphasizing the necessity of holistic approaches that integrate economic, social, and political dimensions to foster stability and peace.

Purpose of National Security

By purpose in this context, it refers to the aim behind national security or the goal that national security is meant to achieve. The purpose of national security to every government is of primary concern because it is a fundamental responsibility of any government and it encompasses a wide range of activities, including diplomacy, defense, intelligence, law enforcement and more. In Nigeria, Section 14(2)(b) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), states that welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of Government.

DEFINITION AND CLARIFICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

The subject matter under review requires definition and

clarification of the following concepts:

‘Challenges’ in this context simply means something that is difficult and that, which tests someone’s ability or determination⁵

‘National Security’ can be defined as the ability of a country’s government to protect its citizens, economy and other institutions. National security encompasses the measures taken by a state to protect its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and citizens from internal and external threats. In Nigeria, this includes addressing terrorism, insurgency, and organized crime, which threaten social order and political stability (Adebajo, 2016).

‘Heterogeneous’ here simply means different individuals or species. It means differing in kind; having unlike qualities; possessed of different characteristics; i.e. dissimilar.

It means being diverse in kind or nature; composed of diverse parts

It also means composed of parts of different kinds; having widely dissimilar elements.

‘Case Study’ is research performed in detail in a single individual, group, incident or community as opposed to, for instance, a sample of the whole population.

‘Nigeria’ As Africa’s most populous country, Nigeria faces unique security challenges due to its ethnic diversity, economic disparities, and political instability. The country’s wealth in natural resources, particularly oil, has also fueled corruption and conflict (Fukuyama, 2018).

‘Insurgency’ Insurgency in Nigeria, particularly from groups like Boko Haram, represents a significant challenge. Insurgencies involve organized movements aimed at challenging established authority through violent means. Boko Haram has disrupted social cohesion and displaced millions (Baker, 2019).

‘Boko Haram’ Founded in 2002, Boko Haram seeks to impose a strict interpretation of Sharia law in Nigeria. The group gained international notoriety for its violent tactics, including the 2014 Chibok schoolgirls’ kidnapping. Its actions have not only caused widespread violence but also humanitarian crises (Zenn & Pantucci, 2019).

‘Ethnic Conflict’ Nigeria is home to over 250 ethnic groups, leading to competition for resources and power. Conflicts, such as the clashes between herders and farmers in the Middle Belt, highlight how ethnic identity can exacerbate tensions, especially in the face of resource scarcity (Akinwunmi, 2018).

‘Banditry’ In northern Nigeria, banditry has emerged as a serious security issue, characterized by kidnappings

for ransom and violent thefts. These activities are often linked to larger socio-economic issues, including poverty and unemployment (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

‘Organized Crime’ Organized crime in Nigeria includes drug trafficking, human trafficking, and smuggling, facilitated by corruption and weak law enforcement. These activities undermine the rule of law and contribute to a culture of impunity (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018).

‘Community Policing’ Community policing strategies focus on building relationships between law enforcement and communities to enhance public safety. In Nigeria, initiatives aimed at engaging local communities have shown promise in addressing security issues and improving trust in the police (Udom, 2021).

‘Socio-Economic Factors’ Socio-economic challenges, such as high unemployment rates and poverty, play a critical role in fueling insecurity. The lack of opportunities, particularly for youth, can lead to disenfranchisement and vulnerability to extremist ideologies (World Bank, 2021).

‘Regional Stability’ Nigeria’s security challenges have regional implications, affecting neighboring countries through the spillover of violence and refugee flows. Collaborative efforts within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are crucial for addressing these issues (Aning & Okyere, 2016).

‘Security Challenges’ The diverse range of security challenges facing Nigeria includes terrorism, ethnic conflict, and criminal activities. These challenges hinder governance and development, requiring comprehensive strategies to enhance national security (Obi, 2017).

‘Government Response’ The Nigerian government’s response has included military operations against insurgents and policies aimed at addressing the root causes of insecurity. However, critiques often point to issues of human rights abuses and a lack of effective community engagement (Amnesty International, 2019).

‘Terrorism’ Terrorism in Nigeria, primarily associated with Boko Haram and other extremist groups, poses significant threats to civilian safety and national stability. Efforts to counter terrorism must address both immediate security needs and long-term socio-economic development (Hassan, 2020).

‘Resource Scarcity’ Competition for resources, particularly land and water, has led to violent conflicts between agricultural communities and herders. Climate change exacerbates these challenges, highlighting the need for sustainable resource management (Adetunji, 2020).

‘Youth Disenfranchisement’ A significant portion of

Nigeria's population is youth, many of whom face high unemployment and lack opportunities for meaningful engagement. This disenfranchisement can drive young people toward crime or extremist groups as alternative avenues for agency (Pew Research Center, 2019).

THE IMPORTANCE OF NATIONAL SECURITY

National security is a foundational element of state governance, representing the measures a nation takes to protect its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the well-being of its citizens from various threats, both internal and external. Understanding the importance of national security is crucial for grasping its implications on a nation's stability, prosperity, and overall functioning. In fact, national security is a vital aspect of governance that impacts all facets of a nation's existence. It ensures the protection of sovereignty, the safety of citizens, and economic stability while promoting social cohesion and contributing to regional and global stability. As new threats emerge, nations must continuously adapt their security strategies to safeguard their interests and foster a secure environment conducive to growth and development. In Nigeria, addressing the complex interplay of security challenges is essential for achieving long-term peace and prosperity.

However, the importance of National Security can be summarily highlighted below:

Protection of Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity: Sovereignty is the cornerstone of national security, ensuring that a state can govern itself without outside interference. This includes the protection of territorial boundaries against military aggression from other states or non-state actors. The importance of sovereignty is underscored by historical instances of invasions and conflicts, which have often led to significant loss of life and resources. For example, the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) was a pivotal moment that tested Nigeria's unity and sovereignty, highlighting the need for effective national security measures to prevent similar conflicts (Fukuyama, 2018).

Safety of Citizens: The primary goal of national security is to ensure the safety and security of citizens. This involves protecting individuals from crime, terrorism, and other forms of violence that disrupt social order. A secure environment allows citizens to pursue their daily activities without fear. When citizens feel safe, they are more likely to engage in productive endeavors, which in turn contributes to social stability and economic development. For instance, the heightened threat of Boko Haram in Nigeria has led to widespread fear and displacement, illustrating how insecurity can undermine societal well-being (Baker,

2019).

Economic Stability and Growth: Economic stability is intrinsically linked to national security. Threats such as terrorism, civil unrest, and organized crime can deter investment, disrupt markets, and destabilize economies. A secure environment fosters economic growth by attracting foreign investment and facilitating trade. According to a World Bank report, countries with strong national security frameworks tend to have higher levels of economic prosperity due to enhanced investor confidence (World Bank, 2021). For instance, the impact of kidnappings for ransom in Nigeria's oil-rich regions has deterred foreign investment, thus affecting the country's economic growth trajectory.

Social Cohesion and National Unity: National security also plays a critical role in promoting social cohesion. By addressing grievances that could lead to conflict—such as poverty, inequality, and ethnic tensions—national security strategies can help build a sense of unity among diverse populations. In Nigeria, where over 250 ethnic groups coexist, effective management of national security can mitigate tensions, fostering a sense of belonging and collective identity (Obi, 2017). For example, inclusive policies that ensure equitable resource distribution can reduce the likelihood of conflicts, particularly in resource-rich regions.

Global and Regional Stability: The implications of national security extend beyond domestic boundaries; they encompass regional and global stability as well. A secure nation contributes to the overall peace and security of its region. Conversely, nations facing severe security challenges can destabilize their neighborhoods, leading to conflicts that spill over borders. Nigeria's security issues, particularly those related to Boko Haram and banditry, have implications for West African stability, necessitating cooperative efforts among neighboring countries to address common threats (Aning & Okyere, 2016). Collaborative security initiatives within frameworks like ECOWAS demonstrate the importance of regional cooperation in maintaining peace.

Response to Emerging Threats: In today's interconnected world, national security must evolve to address new and emerging threats, including cyber warfare, transnational crime, and environmental challenges. These threats require comprehensive responses that integrate military, economic, and diplomatic strategies. For example, the rise of cyber threats poses significant risks to national security, as evidenced by various cyberattacks on government and private sector entities worldwide (Libicki, 2020). As technology advances, nations must prioritize cybersecurity to protect critical infrastructure and

sensitive data.

KEY EVENTS THAT HAVE SHAPED SECURITY ISSUES IN NIGERIA

These key events have profoundly shaped Nigeria's security issues, creating a complex interplay of violence, socio-economic challenges, and governance failures. Addressing these interconnected problems requires comprehensive strategies that integrate immediate security responses with long-term socio-economic development and effective governance reforms. Collaborative efforts among the government, civil society, and international partners are essential for building a secure and stable Nigeria.

Nigeria's security landscape has been profoundly affected by various key events that reflect its complex socio-political and economic dynamics. Below is an in-depth examination of these pivotal moments:

Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970)

The Nigerian Civil War, often referred to as the Biafran War, was a major conflict that arose from ethnic, political, and economic tensions. The southeastern region, primarily composed of the Igbo ethnic group, declared independence as the Republic of Biafra, leading to a brutal war against the Nigerian Federal Government.

Causes: The conflict stemmed from deep-rooted grievances over political marginalization, resource allocation, and ethnic tensions. Following a series of coups and violent pogroms against the Igbo people, Biafra sought independence, leading to war.

Impact: The war resulted in the deaths of an estimated one to three million people, largely due to starvation and military conflict. The humanitarian crisis, exacerbated by a blockade imposed by the Nigerian government, drew international attention and highlighted the need for humanitarian intervention. The legacy of the war left lingering ethnic divisions, fueling distrust among various groups and influencing future conflicts, particularly in the context of resource control and political representation.

Formation of Boko Haram (2002)

Founded in 2002 by Mohammed Yusuf, Boko Haram initially started as a religious movement advocating for the establishment of Sharia law in Nigeria. Over time, it evolved into a violent insurgency.

Radicalization: By 2009, Boko Haram had begun its armed rebellion, particularly after the killing of Yusuf during a confrontation with the police. This marked a significant escalation, leading to widespread violence across northeastern Nigeria.

Impact: Boko Haram's insurgency has led to tens of

thousands of deaths and the displacement of over two million people. The group's activities have not only destabilized northeastern Nigeria but have also impacted regional security, leading to concerns about the spread of extremism across West Africa.

Chibok Kidnapping (2014)

One of the most infamous events linked to Boko Haram was the kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls from Chibok in April 2014. This event garnered international attention and condemnation.

Global Reaction: The hashtag #BringBackOurGirls became a rallying cry for global advocacy against terrorism and for the rights of girls to education. The incident highlighted Nigeria's security vulnerabilities and the plight of women in conflict zones.

Impact: The kidnapping underscored the challenges the Nigerian government faced in combating terrorism and protecting citizens. It also triggered international military assistance and discussions on global security cooperation.

Fulani Herdsmen-Farmer Conflicts

The long-standing conflict between Fulani herdsmen and predominantly agrarian communities has intensified, particularly in the Middle Belt region.

Drivers of Conflict: Factors such as climate change, desertification, and population growth have exacerbated competition for land and resources. The mobility of Fulani herdsmen in search of grazing land often leads to violent clashes with settled farming communities.

Impact: These conflicts have resulted in thousands of deaths and displacements, further complicating Nigeria's security situation. The ethnic and religious dimensions of these clashes often escalate tensions and provoke retaliatory violence, creating a cycle of conflict.

Rise of Banditry and Kidnapping (2010s-Present)

In recent years, banditry and kidnappings have surged, particularly in northern Nigeria, where armed groups operate with relative impunity.

Nature of Banditry: Bandit groups often engage in mass kidnappings for ransom, violent robberies, and clashes with security forces. The lack of effective law enforcement in rural areas has allowed these groups to flourish.

Impact: The rise of banditry has created an environment of fear and insecurity, significantly affecting economic activities and community relations. Many families are forced to pay ransoms to secure the release of kidnapped relatives, perpetuating a cycle of crime and violence (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

#EndSARS Protests (2020)

The #EndSARS movement emerged in response to widespread police brutality, particularly against the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), which was notorious for extortion, torture, and extrajudicial killings.

Protests: Beginning in October 2020, the protests drew massive public support and attention, highlighting broader issues of governance, corruption, and accountability within the Nigerian police force.

Impact: The government's violent response to the protests, including the Lekki Toll Gate shooting, exacerbated public distrust in security forces and highlighted the need for comprehensive police reform. The protests reflected deep-seated frustrations regarding governance and public safety, showing the connection between security issues and citizen rights.

COVID-19 Pandemic (2020-Present)

The COVID-19 pandemic has had profound socio-economic impacts on Nigeria, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and security challenges.

Economic Consequences: Lockdowns and economic downturns have increased unemployment and poverty rates, pushing more individuals towards criminal activities as alternative means of survival.

Security Implications: The pandemic has also strained government resources, complicating efforts to address security threats and leading to a rise in crime rates. Increased desperation among youth has made them more susceptible to recruitment by extremist groups and criminal organizations.

Military Operations and Counterinsurgency Efforts

Nigeria has engaged in numerous military operations aimed at countering insurgency and banditry, such as Operation Lafiya Dole and Operation Puff Adder.

Challenges: While these operations have achieved some tactical successes, they have often been criticized for human rights violations and a lack of sustainable impact. Issues such as corruption within the military, inadequate training, and poor coordination among security agencies hinder effective responses (Obi, 2017).

Public Sentiment: The perceived failure of the military to secure communities against Boko Haram and banditry has led to growing public frustration and calls for reform within the security sector.

THE IMPACT OF NATIONAL SECURITY

The impact of national security cannot be overemphasized as it is essential for maintaining a country's stability, prosperity, and the wellbeing of its citizens. However, some of the impact of national security in some key affected areas are:

Political Stability: Strong National Security helps maintain political stability by protecting against internal and external threats. It ensures that government institutions can function without undue disruption.

Economic Growth: Effective National Security measures protect infrastructure, promote investor's confidence, and reduce the economic cost of crime and conflict. Businesses are more likely to thrive in a secure environment.

Social Cohesion: National Security Efforts can enhance social cohesion by creating a sense of safety and trust among citizens. However, excessive security measures can also lead to civil liberties concerns and social division.

International Relations: A Country's National Security Policies affects its relationships with other nations. Strong security can lead to strategic alliances, while security issues can cause tensions and conflicts.

Crisis Management: Effective National Security Systems are crucial for managing crises, such as natural disasters, pandemics, or terrorist attacks, ensuring a coordinated and efficient response.

Protection of Human Rights: Balancing National Security with human rights is essential. Overemphasis on security can lead to infringement on personal freedoms and privacy.

FACTORS THAT AFFECT NATIONAL SECURITY, ESPECIALLY IN A STATE LIKE NIGERIA

Nigeria is faced with an unprecedented wave of different but overlapping security crises from kidnapping to extremist insurgencies, almost every corner of the country has been hit by violence and crime.

The factors that affect national security especially in Nigeria are:

Political Instability: Political Instability, corruption and weak governance can undermine national security by fostering unrest and weakening institutional effectiveness.

Economic Conditions: Economic disparity, unemployment, and poverty can contribute to social unrest and make individuals more susceptible to extremist ideologies.

Ethnic and Religious Tension: Nigeria is a diverse country with numerous ethnic and religious groups. Tensions and conflict between these groups can lead to violence and disrupt social cohesion.

Terrorism and Insurgencies: Groups such as Boko Haram and other extremist organizations like the Niger Delta Militants pose significant threats through acts of terrorism and insurgency, impacting both security and

development.

Even a separatist group called the indigenous people of Biafra (IPOB) has been clashing with Nigeria's security agencies. IPOB want a group of state in the South East, mainly made up of the people from the Igbo Ethnic group, to break away and form the independence nation of Biafra (Aliyu T. 2012)

Criminal Activities: Organized crime, including drug trafficking, kidnapping, banditry and armed robbery, can destabilize regions and strain law enforcement resources.

Border Security: Nigeria's Borders with several Countries can be porous, allowing for the smuggling of arms and illegal migrations, which can exacerbate security issues.

Inadequate Infrastructure and Resources: Inadequate Infrastructure including poor transportation and communication networks, can hinder effective response to security threats and emergencies.

Climate and Environmental Factors: Environmental Challenges such as desertification and flooding, can lead to resource conflict and displacement of populations, further straining security.

Foreign Policy (International Relations): Nigeria's Foreign Policy and its relationship with neighboring countries and global powers can influence its national security, both positively and negatively.

Internal Conflict: Regional and Local Conflict such as those involving herders and farmers. There has been violent dispute between nomadic herders and farmers in Nigeria for many years. But disagreements over issues of land and water as well as grazing route have been exacerbated by climate change and the spread of the Sahara Desert as herders move further South looking for pastures. Thousands have been killed in clashes over limited resources (Aliyu T. 2012)

CHALLENGES OF NATIONAL SECURITY

The Challenges of National Security in a heterogeneous state like Nigeria is complex and multifaceted. Some of the challenges includes:

Ethnic and Religious Diversity: Nigeria has over 250 ethnic groups and a roughly equal split between Muslims and Christians. This diversity is a challenge to National Security as it can lead to tension and conflict between group.

Insurgencies and Militancy: Groups like Boko Haram and Niger Delta Militants pose significant security threats.

Corruption: The challenge corruption poses on national security cannot be over emphasized. Corruption undermines security efforts and fuels

insecurity.

Regionalism: Regional identities and interests can lead to tensions and conflicts as security officials are more loyal to their various regions than national interest.

External influences: External actors can exploit Nigeria's diversity and security challenges for their own interest.

EFFECTS OF NON-PRIORITIZATION OF NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA

The non-prioritization of national security in Nigeria has resulted in a multitude of adverse effects that undermine societal stability, economic growth, and the overall well-being of the population. To address these challenges, Nigeria must adopt a comprehensive and integrated approach to national security that encompasses effective governance, socio-economic development, and community engagement. Only through such measures can the country hope to break the cycle of violence and achieve lasting peace and prosperity

The non-prioritization of national security in Nigeria has resulted in profound and multifaceted consequences that permeate various aspects of society, governance, and economic development. Below is an in-depth examination of the key effects of non-prioritization of national security:

Escalation of Violence and Insecurity

Increased Terrorism and Insurgency:

The failure to prioritize national security has facilitated the expansion of terrorist groups such as Boko Haram and ISWAP. Initially focused on opposing Western influence, Boko Haram has morphed into a brutal insurgency, launching coordinated attacks on military and civilian targets. This transformation has resulted in thousands of deaths and massive displacements (International Crisis Group, 2020). ISWAP has adapted tactics to focus on military targets and engage in governance, further complicating the security landscape. This adaptability underscores the lack of a cohesive national security strategy (U.N. Office of Counter-Terrorism, 2021).

Rising Crime Rates:

The proliferation of violent crime, including kidnapping for ransom and armed robbery, has become a hallmark of insecurity in Nigeria. Criminal gangs exploit the weak law enforcement framework, targeting vulnerable populations and creating a climate of fear (Adewale, 2020). According to a report by the Nigeria Security Tracker, kidnappings have surged, particularly in northern states, undermining public safety and trust in law enforcement (Nigeria Security Tracker, 2021).

Humanitarian Crises

Displacement and Refugee Crises:

Continuous violence has resulted in significant internal displacement. As of 2021, over two million Nigerians have been displaced due to conflicts, particularly in the northeast, where humanitarian conditions are dire (UNHCR, 2021).

Displaced individuals often face inadequate shelter, food insecurity, and lack of access to healthcare, exacerbating the humanitarian situation and placing additional burdens on already strained local governments and NGOs (World Food Programme, 2021).

Food Insecurity:

Ongoing conflicts disrupt agricultural activities, leading to severe food shortages. Violence against farmers, particularly in the Middle Belt, and disruptions in supply chains due to insecurity have created alarming levels of food insecurity, affecting millions (World Bank, 2021). The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that over 12 million people in Nigeria are currently facing acute food insecurity due to conflict-related disruptions (FAO, 2021).

Economic Decline

Decreased Investment:

High levels of insecurity deter both foreign and domestic investment. Investors often seek more stable environments, leading to significant capital flight from Nigeria. According to the World Bank, Nigeria's foreign direct investment has declined markedly due to the prevailing security concerns (World Bank, 2021). The absence of investment hinders job creation and economic growth, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and unrest.

Disruption of Economic Activities:

Violence and insecurity disrupt markets and trade routes, causing severe economic losses. Small businesses often close due to the inability to operate safely, leading to job losses and decreased economic productivity (Akinola, 2018). The National Bureau of Statistics reported that insecurity has adversely affected key sectors, including agriculture and commerce, reducing overall GDP growth (NBS, 2021).

Erosion of Trust in Government

Loss of Public Confidence:

The government's failure to adequately address security concerns has led to widespread disillusionment among citizens. Many feel abandoned, fostering a perception that the state is unable or unwilling to protect its citizens (Okeke, 2019). This disillusionment can lead to decreased civic engagement and increased support for alternative

security arrangements, including local militias and vigilante groups, further undermining the authority of the state.

Weakening of Governance:

Corruption and inefficiency in security institutions thrive in an environment where national security is not prioritized. Resources intended for security are often misappropriated, resulting in poorly equipped and trained personnel (Human Rights Watch, 2021). This mismanagement contributes to a governance crisis, as citizens lose faith in institutions meant to provide security and public safety (Nigerian Economic Summit Group, 2021).

Social Fragmentation

Ethnic and Religious Tensions:

The neglect of security issues exacerbates existing ethnic and religious tensions. Conflicts between different groups, especially between herders and farmers—have intensified, leading to violent clashes (Akinola, 2018).

The politicization of ethnic identities further complicates these conflicts, creating an environment ripe for violence and social unrest (Osaghae, 2010).

Rise of Militant Groups:

As the state struggles to maintain order, non-state actors often rise to fill the security vacuum. These groups can become increasingly militant, challenging government authority and contributing to further instability (U.N. Development Programme, 2021).

The proliferation of such groups often leads to cycles of violence that are difficult to break, as they become entrenched in local communities.

Impact on Development Goals

Hindrance to Social Services:

Insecure environments hinder the provision of essential services such as education and healthcare. Schools are frequently targeted, leading to a significant increase in out-of-school children, particularly in conflict-affected areas (World Bank, 2021). The inability to provide basic services contributes to long-term developmental setbacks, as entire generations may miss out on educational opportunities.

Obstruction of Economic Development Initiatives:

Focus on immediate security concerns often diverts attention and resources away from long-term developmental initiatives. Critical sectors such as health, education, and infrastructure suffer as funds are redirected to military and security operations (Nigerian Economic Summit Group, 2021). This neglect can entrench poverty and underdevelopment, perpetuating

cycles of violence and instability.

Other effects of non-prioritization of National Security include:

Insecurity: Ethnic and religious tensions, insurgency, and terrorism have led to widespread of insecurity.

Political Instability: Nigeria's political landscapes is often unstable, with ethnic and religious considerations influencing political decisions.

Economic Underdevelopment: Insecurity and instability hinder economic growth and development.

AN OVERVIEW OF NIGERIA'S SECURITY CHALLENGES/ CHALLENGES OF NATIONAL SECURITY

Nigeria faces a complex array of security challenges that undermine its stability, development, and overall governance. These challenges are deeply intertwined, rooted in the country's socio-economic conditions, historical legacies, and diverse ethnic landscape. A detailed examination reveals several key security issues which include:

Insurgency and Terrorism: The rise of Boko Haram has been a significant security concern since its emergence in the early 2000s. Initially focused on opposing Western education and governance, the group has evolved into a brutal insurgency, engaging in widespread violence, bombings, and kidnappings.

Impact: Boko Haram's actions have resulted in tens of thousands of deaths and the displacement of over 2 million people, creating a humanitarian crisis in northeastern Nigeria (International Crisis Group, 2020). The insurgency has not only destabilized communities but has also hindered access to education and healthcare, further exacerbating poverty and insecurity.

Response: The Nigerian government has implemented military operations, such as Operation Lafiya Dole, aimed at dismantling Boko Haram. However, challenges remain, including a lack of coordination among security forces, insufficient funding, and allegations of human rights abuses by military personnel (Baker, 2019).

Ethnic and Communal Conflicts: Nigeria's rich ethnic diversity often leads to tensions and violent clashes, particularly over resources like land and water. The conflicts between Fulani herders and agrarian communities, especially in the Middle Belt region, exemplify this issue.

Drivers of Conflict: These conflicts are fueled by competition for land, exacerbated by climate change and desertification, which push herders southward into predominantly agricultural areas. The increasing frequency of violent encounters has resulted in

significant loss of life and property, with thousands displaced (Akinwunmi, 2018).

Implications: Such ethnic conflicts not only threaten lives but also disrupt social cohesion and hinder economic activities, leading to a cycle of violence that can further escalate tensions between different groups (Ribadu, 2021).

Banditry and Kidnapping: In recent years, banditry has surged, particularly in northern Nigeria, characterized by violent robberies and rampant kidnappings for ransom.

Nature of Banditry: Armed groups operate with relative impunity, often exploiting local grievances and socio-economic conditions. Kidnapping for ransom has become a lucrative business, with reports of dozens of abductions occurring weekly (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

Consequences: This wave of crime creates a pervasive atmosphere of fear, significantly impacting communities and disrupting daily life. Economic activities, especially in agriculture and trade, have been severely affected, leading to increased poverty levels in already vulnerable areas (Adetunji, 2020).

Organized Crime: Nigeria has become a significant hub for various forms of organized crime, including drug trafficking, human trafficking, and cybercrime.

Drug Trafficking: The country is a key transit point for drugs entering Europe and other markets. Organized crime networks exploit Nigeria's geographical location and weak enforcement mechanisms to facilitate drug trafficking (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018).

Human Trafficking: Nigeria is also one of the largest sources of human trafficking, with individuals exploited for forced labor and sexual exploitation both domestically and abroad. These criminal activities undermine the rule of law and exacerbate existing social vulnerabilities (U.S. Department of State, 2021).

Corruption and Governance Issues: Corruption remains a significant impediment to effective governance and security in Nigeria. **Impact on Security:** Corruption within security institutions leads to misallocation of resources and lack of accountability, undermining efforts to address security challenges. Reports of funds intended for security operations being siphoned off have been widespread, contributing to the ineffectiveness of military and law enforcement responses (Obi, 2017).

Public Trust: High levels of corruption erode public trust in government institutions, making it challenging to implement effective security strategies and community engagement programs (Amnesty International, 2019).

Socio-Economic Factor: High levels of poverty, unemployment, and youth disenfranchisement significantly contribute to Nigeria's security challenges.

Economic Instability: With over 40% of the population living below the poverty line, economic instability fosters environments where crime and radicalization can thrive. Disenchanted youth are particularly vulnerable to recruitment by extremist groups or involvement in criminal activities (World Bank, 2021).

Long-Term Solutions: Addressing these socio-economic issues through inclusive policies, education, and job creation is crucial for long-term stability. Sustainable development initiatives can help mitigate the factors that drive individuals towards violence and crime.

Nigeria's security challenges are deeply interconnected, requiring comprehensive and multifaceted approaches for effective resolution. Addressing these issues necessitates not only immediate security responses but also long-term socio-economic reforms that tackle the root causes of instability. Collaborative efforts among government, civil society, and international partners will be essential in fostering a secure environment conducive to peace and development.

Resource Competition: Nigeria's Oil Wealth has fueled competitions for resources, leading to tension between regions and ethnic groups.

In the oil-producing South, security challenges are nothing new. It is Nigeria's biggest foreign export earner, and militants in the Niger Delta have long agitated for greater share of the profit. They argue that the majority of the oil comes from their region and the environmental damage caused by its extraction has devastated communities and made it impossible for them to fish or farm.¹²For years, militants pressured the government by kidnapping oil workers and launching attacks on security personnel and oil infrastructure like pipelines (Aliyu T. 2012)

Weak Institutions: Nigeria's Security Institutions are often weak and ineffective exacerbating security challenges. Looking at the Security Agencies in Nigeria shows the existence of the following: Nigeria Police Force, a creation of the 1999 constitution, (as amended) under section 214; State Security Service (SSS), created in the National Security Agencies Act (cap N74 LFN, 2004), Armed Forces of the Federation provided under section 217 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended), among others. However, these bodies often perform below expectation on related security matters. This occurs from inadequate equipment, both in terms of weaponry and capacity training. Also, the altitudinal and poor behavioral disposition of

personnel (Ebiziem et al.,2021)

INTERNATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF NIGERIA'S SECURITY CHALLENGES

Nigeria's security challenges significantly impact not only the nation but also the broader West African region and the international community. These implications encompass issues of regional stability, global terrorism, economic ramifications, humanitarian concerns, and geopolitical dynamics. The security challenges facing Nigeria have profound international implications that extend beyond its borders. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated efforts among Nigerian authorities, regional partners, and the global community. By implementing effective strategies that integrate security, development, and human rights, stakeholders can contribute to fostering a more stable and secure Nigeria, ultimately benefiting regional and global stability.

REGIONAL STABILITY:

Cross-Border Threats

Insurgency Spread: The activities of extremist groups such as Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) pose significant threats to the stability of neighbouring countries, including Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. These groups have conducted cross-border raids, leading to regional instability and insecurity (International Crisis Group, 2020).

Security Cooperation: The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), comprising troops from Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon, and Benin, is a regional response to combat these threats. However, the effectiveness of this force is often hampered by differing national priorities and resource limitations (International Crisis Group, 2020).

Refugee Crises

Displacement Dynamics: The conflict in northeastern Nigeria has resulted in over 2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) and millions more who have sought refuge in neighbouring countries. This influx strains local resources and can lead to tensions between host communities and refugees (UNHCR, 2021).

Humanitarian Challenges: The increase in displaced populations creates significant humanitarian challenges, requiring international support and intervention to address the basic needs of affected individuals (U.N. Development Programme, 2021).

GLOBAL TERRORISM CONCERNS:

International Terrorism Networks

Connections to Global Terrorism: Nigeria's security challenges are part of a broader global threat landscape. Groups like Boko Haram have pledged allegiance to ISIS,

establishing connections with international terrorist networks. This raises alarms regarding the potential for transnational terrorism (U.S. Department of State, 2021).

Counterterrorism Collaboration: Nations such as the United States and European countries are increasingly involved in counterterrorism efforts in Nigeria. This includes training and equipping Nigerian forces, sharing intelligence, and providing financial assistance to combat terrorism (U.S. Department of State, 2021).

Counter-Radicalization Strategies

Lessons Learned: Nigeria's experience with radicalization provides valuable insights for other countries facing similar issues. Successful counter-radicalization programs can serve as models for international efforts aimed at preventing the spread of extremism (Baker, 2021).

ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS:

Impact on Trade and Investment

Investor Confidence: Ongoing insecurity in Nigeria deters foreign direct investment (FDI), crucial for economic development. Investors often view instability as a significant risk, leading to decreased capital inflow and hindered economic growth (World Bank, 2021).

Economic Disruption: Security challenges disrupt trade routes and local markets, increasing transportation costs and limiting access to goods and services. This economic strain affects not only Nigeria but also its regional partners reliant on Nigerian trade (International Monetary Fund, 2021).

Regional Economic Growth

Key Economic Player: As Africa's largest economy, Nigeria's stability is vital for regional economic cooperation and integration. Instability can disrupt the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) initiatives, which aim to enhance trade across the continent (African Union, 2021).

HUMANITARIAN CONCERNS:

Human Rights Violations

Atrocities Committed: The conflict has led to widespread human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings, torture, and displacement. Reports of abuses by both state security forces and militant groups draw international condemnation and concern (Amnesty International, 2020).

International Scrutiny: These human rights violations prompt international organizations and governments to impose sanctions or other diplomatic measures, complicating Nigeria's foreign relations (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

Humanitarian Aid Needs

Rising Needs: The ongoing violence and displacement have resulted in a growing humanitarian crisis, with millions in need of assistance. The international community is often called upon to provide humanitarian aid, which can strain global resources and response capacities (OCHA, 2021).

SDGs Impact: The insecurity in Nigeria undermines progress toward achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to poverty alleviation, education, and health (U.N. Development Programme, 2021).

GEOPOLITICAL DYNAMICS:

Foreign Policy Interests

Strategic Importance: Nigeria's vast oil reserves and its role as a regional power make it a focal point for international interests. Instability in Nigeria can influence the geopolitical landscape, affecting relationships between major powers like the U.S., China, and European nations (U.S. Department of State, 2021).

Military Cooperation: As insecurity persists, there is a tendency for foreign powers to enhance military cooperation with Nigeria. This can involve arms sales, military training, and intelligence-sharing agreements aimed at bolstering Nigeria's capacity to manage its security threats (Eme, 2020).

Great Power Competition

Influence Dynamics: The involvement of foreign nations in Nigeria can lead to increased competition for influence in the region. Countries like China and the U.S. may engage in strategic partnerships, seeking to enhance their geopolitical foothold in Africa (Nwanosike, 2021).

CONCLUSION

Nigeria's heterogeneous nature poses significant challenges to national security. By addressing the challenges highlighted above, Nigeria can harness its diversity as a strength and build a more secure and stable nation. This article highlights the complexities and vulnerabilities inherent in managing national security within a diverse society. It underscores that Nigeria's ethnic, religious and cultural diversity, while a source of richness, also poses significant challenges to cohesion and stability. The article emphasizes the need for inclusive governance, effective conflict resolution strategies and community engagement to address these security challenges. Ultimately fostering unity and understanding among Nigeria's diverse populations is crucial for enhancing national security and promoting lasting peace.

Nigeria's security challenges are deeply rooted in a

complex interplay of socio-economic factors that perpetuate violence and instability. The country faces significant issues such as widespread poverty, soaring unemployment, regional inequalities, and inadequate access to education and healthcare. These factors not only diminish individual and community well-being but also contribute to a sense of disenfranchisement and frustration among the populace.

The persistent high poverty rate, particularly in the northern regions, creates a breeding ground for criminal activities and recruitment into extremist groups. Unemployment, especially among the youth, exacerbates this situation, as many young people find themselves with few options for legitimate livelihoods. Furthermore, the educational disruption caused by ongoing violence limits opportunities for personal and professional development, making it easier for individuals to fall into cycles of crime and militancy.

In addition to economic issues, systemic corruption and weak governance further complicate Nigeria's security landscape. Corruption siphons off resources that could otherwise be used for development, while weak institutions fail to address the grievances of citizens effectively. As a result, many people turn to non-state actors or violent means to assert their rights and seek justice, leading to further instability.

Ultimately, addressing Nigeria's security challenges requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach that prioritizes socio-economic development alongside traditional security measures. The focus should not only be on immediate military responses but also on long-term strategies aimed at addressing the root causes of insecurity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Invest in Education

Increase Funding: The government should allocate more resources to the education sector, especially in conflict-affected areas. This includes improving infrastructure, training teachers, and providing educational materials.

Promote Access: Implement programs aimed at increasing school enrollment and retention, particularly for girls and marginalized communities, to ensure equal educational opportunities.

Enhance Economic Opportunities

Youth Employment Programs: Develop targeted job creation initiatives that focus on vocational training and entrepreneurship for young people. Collaborating with the private sector to provide internships and apprenticeships can create pathways to employment.

Support Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs): Provide financial support and access to credit for SMEs,

which are crucial for economic growth and job creation. Encouraging local businesses can stimulate regional economies and reduce dependency on illicit activities.

Strengthen Healthcare Systems

Improve Infrastructure: Invest in healthcare facilities, particularly in rural areas, to enhance access to essential services. This includes ensuring the availability of basic medical supplies and personnel.

Address Mental Health: Develop programs to support mental health, particularly for those affected by violence and conflict. Providing psychological support can help communities heal and rebuild.

Combat Corruption

Implement Transparency Measures: Establish strict anti-corruption policies and practices that promote accountability in government spending and resource allocation. This includes creating independent bodies to oversee and audit government contracts and expenditures.

Public Awareness Campaigns: Educate citizens about their rights and the importance of holding government officials accountable, fostering a culture of transparency and integrity.

Promote Community Engagement

Foster Dialogue: Initiate community-based programs that bring together government officials, security forces, and local leaders to address grievances and foster trust. Regular dialogue can help mitigate tensions and create collaborative solutions to local issues.

Empower Local Governance: Strengthen local governance structures to ensure that communities have a say in decision-making processes. Empowered local leaders can better address the specific needs and concerns of their communities.

Enhance Security Sector Reforms

Training and Resources: Provide adequate training and resources for law enforcement agencies to ensure they can effectively combat crime while respecting human rights. Building trust between communities and security forces is essential for effective policing.

Intelligence Sharing: Encourage inter-agency collaboration and intelligence sharing to improve responses to security threats. This can enhance operational effectiveness and prevent violent incidents.

By implementing these recommendations, Nigeria can work towards addressing the multifaceted security challenges it faces. A comprehensive approach that integrates socio-economic development, education, healthcare, and governance reforms is essential for creating a more stable and secure environment. Through collaborative efforts involving government,

civil society, and international partners, Nigeria can build a foundation for sustainable peace and development, ultimately allowing its citizens to thrive in a secure and equitable society.

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