Internal Security in Nigeria: A Critical Review of Security Framework, Challenges and Prospects

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Abstract
Internal security remains a critical component of national stability, development, and governance. In Nigeria, the persistence of terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, communal conflicts, militancy, cybercrime, and other security threats continues to challenge the effectiveness of the country's security architecture. Although existing studies have extensively examined individual security threats and the responses of the military and police, comparatively less attention has been given to other security agencies and an integrated assessment of Nigeria's internal security framework that simultaneously considers governance, human security, socio-economic conditions, institutional accountability, technological innovation, and community participation. This gap limits a comprehensive understanding of the structural and institutional factors that shape the effectiveness and sustainability of internal security in Nigeria. Against this backdrop, this paper examines the framework of internal security in Nigeria, reviews recurring scholarly and public perspectives on the contemporary security situation, and explores prospects for strengthening the country's internal security architecture. The study adopts Social Contract Theory, Human Security Theory, and Securitization Theory as analytical frameworks. It argues that while significant efforts have been made through military and law-enforcement operations, sustainable internal security requires a holistic approach that combines effective governance, socio-economic development, technological innovation, institutional accountability, and community participation. The paper contributes to the existing literature by bringing these dimensions together in an integrated analysis of Nigeria's internal security challenges and institutional responses. It concludes that strengthening existing institutions and adopting people-centred security policies are essential for achieving lasting peace and stability in Nigeria.

Keywords: Internal Security, Security Framework, Human Security, Nigeria Police Force, Armed Forces, National Stability.

Introduction

Internal security is fundamental to the maintenance of peace, public order, national unity, and sustainable development. It encompasses measures undertaken by the state to protect citizens, institutions, and property from threats arising within national borders (United Nations, 2004).

According to the United Nations (2004), internal security refers to the protection of a state's citizens, institutions, and territory from internal threats while ensuring public order and safety. Similarly, Singh (2011) defines internal security as the condition in which a nation is able to maintain law and order and protect lives and property against threats such as crime, insurgency, terrorism, and civil disturbances.

The Nigerian National Defence Policy identifies the Ministry of Interior as the lead ministry for internal security, while the Nigeria Police Force serves as the principal agency responsible for maintaining internal law and order (NNDP, 2017: 37). Intelligence support is provided through the Intelligence Community Committee and Joint Intelligence Board. Where serious crises, insurgency, or insurrection occur, the Armed

Forces of Nigeria may be deployed in aid of civil authorities. Section 217(2)(c) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria empowers the Armed Forces to suppress insurrection and restore order when authorized by the President (CFRN, 1999). State Security Councils coordinate internal security measures at the state level.

Notable internal security operations in Nigeria include Operation Hadin Kai, Operation Safe Corridor, Operation Fansa Yamma, Operation Delta Safe, and Operation Whirl Stroke, Operation Rainbow, Operation Enduring Peace, amongst others.

Objectives of the Study

a. The objectives of this study are to:
b. Examine the framework of internal security management in Nigeria.
c. Analyze recurring perspectives on the current internal security situation.
d. Identify factors contributing to persistent insecurity.
e. Suggest measures for strengthening internal security operations and governance.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative and descriptive research design. The paper relies primarily on secondary sources of data, including books, scholarly journal articles, government publications, policy documents, constitutional provisions, conference papers, official reports, and publications of international organizations. Relevant literature on internal security, national security management, policing, military involvement in internal security operations, and human security was reviewed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject.

Data collected from these sources were analyzed using the content analysis method. This approach enabled the identification and interpretation of key themes, recurring perspectives, challenges, and prospects relating to Nigeria's internal security framework. The qualitative method was considered appropriate because it facilitates an in-depth examination of security issues, institutional arrangements, and policy responses within their socio-political context.

The study is limited to an analysis of Nigeria's internal security framework, prevailing security challenges, and possible strategies for enhancing internal security operations and governance.

Theoretical Framework

Social Contract Theory

Social Contract Theory is associated with the works of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The theory posits that individuals voluntarily surrender certain freedoms to the state in exchange for protection of life, liberty, and property (Hobbes, 1996; Locke, 1988; Rousseau, 2012).

The theory argues that security is one of the principal reasons for the existence of government. Consequently, a state's legitimacy is largely determined by its ability to guarantee the safety and welfare of its citizens. In the Nigerian context, the theory suggests that citizens expect government to provide security and maintain public order. Failure to fulfill this responsibility may weaken public confidence in state institutions and undermine the social contract between the government and the governed. Moreover, when people have lost interest in government, they resort to self-help which is vented in the ubiquitous cases of jungle justice in society of nowadays.

Human Security Theory

Human Security Theory gained prominence through the United Nations Development Programme Human Development Report of 1994. The theory broadens the concept of security beyond military concerns to include economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security (UNDP, 1994). The theory is particularly relevant to Nigeria because many security challenges are linked to poverty, unemployment, inequality, illiteracy, and social exclusion. Therefore, addressing insecurity requires not only military and law enforcement interventions but also policies that improve the quality of life and well-being of citizens.

Securitization Theory

Securitization Theory was developed by Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and other scholars of the

Copenhagen School. The theory argues that issues become security concerns when political leaders and institutions define them as existential threats requiring extraordinary measures (Buzan et al., 1998).

This perspective helps explain why terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, separatist agitations, and cybercrime have attracted extensive security responses in Nigeria.

Relevance of the Theories

The Social Contract Theory emphasizes the obligation of government to provide security and maintain public trust. Human Security Theory highlights the socio-economic dimensions of insecurity, while Securitization Theory explains how threats are identified and managed within national security frameworks. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive basis for understanding Nigeria's internal security challenges and prospects.

Internal Security Framework in Nigeria

Nigeria's internal security architecture comprises several institutions responsible for maintaining peace, law and order.

a. The Ministry of Interior is the lead ministry in internal security. The agencies under the ministry include, Nigerian immigration Service, Nigerian Correctional Service, Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corp and Federal Fire Services. The Nigerian Police corp is under the ministry of police affairs but is the lead agency as captured by the Nigerian National Defense Policy, NNDP (NNDP- 2017). Many scholarly contributions erroneously circumscribe internal security to police and the military but this review contradicts such point of view.
b. The Armed Forces are constitutionally responsible for defending Nigeria against external aggression but may be deployed internally to assist civil authorities during emergencies and serious security crises. The constitution is explicit that the armed forces can be deployed to contain or 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 the National Assembly; and can also perform other functions as may be prescribed by an Act of the National Assembly, 217(2)(c) (d) - (CFRN, 1999).

Perspectives on the Current Internal Security Situation in Nigeria

Protracted Military Involvement

Military deployment for internal security operations is traditionally expected to be temporary. However, military involvement in Nigeria's internal security has become prolonged and increasingly permanent, raising concerns about the effectiveness of existing strategies and the preparedness of civil security institutions.

Limited Impact on Insecurity

There are divergent views regarding whether insecurity is declining or worsening. Despite extensive security operations, terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, and communal conflicts continue to threaten lives and property. This situation suggests that the current security architecture may be overstretched. Recruitment has remained a constant approach to strengthening security architecture, while fears of infiltration of the agencies by bad elements has continued to gain traction.

Accountability of Security Agencies

Although security is often described as everyone's responsibility, agencies constitutionally mandated and publicly funded to provide security must be held accountable for their performance. Effective security governance requires transparency, professionalism, and measurable outcomes.

Structural and Historical Challenges

Some analysts argue that the rise of guerrilla warfare, terrorism, and other asymmetric threats exposed weaknesses in the preparedness of security institutions. Others contend that prolonged military rule constrained the development of democratic security institutions and professional procurement systems.

Globalization and Cross-Border Threats
Globalization has facilitated transnational criminal activities, illicit arms trafficking, cybercrime, and terrorist networks. Consequently, security agencies increasingly confront threats that transcend national boundaries and require international cooperation (United Nations, 2004).

Weak Intelligence Coordination
Poor intelligence sharing and inadequate inter-agency collaboration have sometimes undermined security operations, resulting in delayed responses and operational inefficiencies. There have been divided opinions, too, about whether state police or community policing is the best to complement the present federal security structure; and, there are fears about advantages that the state policing has gained pertaining to how states may exercise their powers when granted.

Socio-Economic Drivers of Insecurity
Poverty, unemployment, inequality, social exclusion, and poor governance have created conditions that facilitate criminality and violent extremism (UNDP, 1994).

Politicization of Security
Security issues are sometimes influenced by political considerations, resulting in allegations of selective deployment of resources, inconsistent implementation of security policies, and declining public confidence in security institutions.

Toward Improved Internal Security Operations
To strengthen internal security in Nigeria, the following measures are recommended:

i. The need to strengthen technological capabilities for intelligence gathering, surveillance, and rapid response operations.
ii. Security management is better with improved intelligence sharing and inter-agency coordination.
iii. State policing and community policing are can complement security mechanisms but must be well managed to avoid friction amongst the agencies belonging to different tiers of government or community backgrounds.
iv. The Nigeria Police Force and other paramilitary agencies need to be well equipped before they can have the capacity to collaborate with other agencies and the community networks.
v. Demand for increased investment in security infrastructure and personnel development should be seen as urgent issue.
vi. Balance on military responses with broader human security initiatives should be properly driven.
vii. Promotion of merit-based appointments in security institutions.
viii. Prioritization of security research, innovation, and development.
ix. Continuous review and modernization of the national security architecture.
x. Continuous review of de-radicalization, rehabilitation, and reintegration programmes.
xi. Modernization of correctional facilities must be prioritized to serve as measure against reoffending/recidivism and jailbreaks.
xii. There is an urgent need for a comprehensive and sustained strategy to prevent the infiltration of violent extremists, criminal elements, and other enemies of the State into the Armed Forces, paramilitary agencies, intelligence organisations, and the wider public service. Such a strategy should include rigorous recruitment screening, continuous personnel vetting, enhanced background investigations, periodic security clearance reviews, counter-intelligence operations, and integrity testing. It should also promote ethics, professionalism, and loyalty through regular security awareness programmes, while encouraging the timely reporting of suspicious behaviour. These measures will help safeguard national institutions from internal compromise, preserve operational effectiveness, and strengthen Nigeria's overall internal security architecture.
xiii. Border security and regional cooperation must be given topmost consideration.
xiv. There is need to address poverty,

unemployment, and social inequality as part of a comprehensive security strategy.

In summary, there are significant prospects for improving internal security in Nigeria through advances in surveillance technology, artificial intelligence, geospatial intelligence, drones, biometric systems, intelligence reforms, regional security cooperation, policing reforms, and community engagement initiatives towards offering opportunities for strengthening security governance. Similarly, increased emphasis on human security, sustainable development, and inter-agency collaboration also provides pathways for long-term peace and stability.

Conclusion

Internal security is fundamentally designed to maintain law and order, protect lives and property, and promote national stability. However, the persistence of insecurity in Nigeria has generated differing perspectives regarding the effectiveness of the current security framework. The theoretical perspectives discussed in this paper demonstrate that security challenges are not merely military concerns but also governance and development issues. Social Contract Theory emphasizes state responsibility, Human Security Theory highlights the welfare dimensions of security, while Securitization Theory explains state responses to perceived threats. Although Nigeria has established an extensive security architecture and undertaken numerous security operations, persistent security challenges indicate the need for continuous reforms. Strengthening institutions, improving intelligence capabilities, promoting accountability, addressing socio-economic grievances, and encouraging citizen participation are essential for enhancing national security. If properly implemented, these measures can significantly improve Nigeria's internal security landscape and contribute to sustainable peace, development, and national cohesion.

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