

Taking the Wrong Aim: Policy and Strategy Issues in the Management of Contemporary Security Challenges in Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria has become a theater of violent insecurity in the past decades. The country is faced with a multiplicity of security threats that have threatened her existence and rendered the state's monopoly of the instrument of violence moribund. In an attempt to tackle the menace of insecurity, the Nigerian government formulated the National Counter-Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST) as well as the establishment of the Lake Chad Basin Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). These militaristic initiatives were directed at combating the Boko Haram terrorism that wreaked havoc in major parts of the North-East as of then. However, this extremely state-centric approach has not yielded the needed results owing to the fact that they failed to take cognizance of other security threats that do not subscribe to military strategy. It is against this background that this paper examined an alternative approach to military bombardment as a means to reduce insecurity to its lowest ebb in Nigeria. Relying on secondary data analysis, the paper argued that the prevalent lack of coherence between policy objectives and the actual security strategies implemented often leads to ineffective responses (state-centric approach) to complex threats such as terrorism, insurgency, and other organized crime. The paper therefore recommends adopting a human-centric approach to security, strengthening social protection programs, promoting inclusive governance and participation, promoting economic empowerment and livelihood opportunities, as well as fostering national reconciliation and social cohesion initiatives in order to effectively combat multiple threats and guarantee national security.

Keywords: National Security, Defense Policy, Strategy, State-Centric, Human-Centric,

Introduction

Across various universities and research institutes in the world, there abounds a plethora of studies done on issues of security, policy, and strategy. These demonstrate that there is a pressing need for policies and strategies that can prevail upon contemporary security dynamics at these times. Indeed, several security policies and strategies have been pursued for domestic and global peace, of which some have succeeded and some others not so much, due to the dynamics of the triggers and perpetuation of the security challenges. Contemporary commentators have argued that the seeming disconnect between policy, strategy, and insecurities can be explained in the seeming estrangement between academic social scientists and public policymakers, particularly

those charged with national security policy. In fact, that gap between the two worlds seems to be growing even wider (Leach, 2010). Consequently, there have been frequent calls for social scientists to become more involved with policy communities by conducting research of greater practical application. This issue perhaps suggests a larger question concerning the nature of the relationship between knowledge and power and theory and practice.

The world, all over, is plummeted with the avalanche of national security and other related threats that have necessitated numerous policy and strategic frameworks. For instance, the United Kingdom has faced various dangers and threats, such as terrorism, nuclear weapons, transnational organized crime, economic instability, political instability, civil emergencies, and state-led threats, which seemingly escalated in the early 2000s (UK Cabinet Office, 2018). In 2017 alone, between March and June, London and Manchester witnessed four attacks wherein men used knives, vehicles, and explosives to kill and maim members of the public; tourists, revelers, worshippers, a police officer, and children attending a concert were all targeted.

A total of 36 innocent people were killed in the attacks, and almost 200 more injured (Anderson, 2017). In response, the government set in motion a body of policy aims as accounted for by the UK Cabinet Office (2018) and encapsulated them as follows: countering terrorism, countering the threat of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, advancing multilateral agreements and reducing the risk from nuclear terrorism, confronting transnational organized crime, addressing global instability, conflict, and failed and fragile states, planning for civil emergencies and resilience building, and protecting the UK against state-led threats. The strategic approach to these policy responses included consolidating and reforming the international system, addressing climate change, tackling competition for energy and building energy security, tackling poverty, inequality, and poor governance, and responding to global trends. These do not imply perfectly efficient security management, but they project a practicable, compact, and enduring military and non-military security framework.

Conversely, on the West African front, the policy approach of the Chadian authorities to the Boko Haram terrorism in the Lake region has been solely military, and this heavy security response has come at a cost, especially in restrictions of movement imposed on a predominantly mobile population heavily dependent on cross-border trade. Many suspected Boko Haram members captured on Chadian soil have been imprisoned for long periods without trial. These instances highlight the consequences of human rights abuses and socioeconomic constraints on indigenous populations in a military-centric counter-terrorism approach (International Crises Group, 2017). Similarly, the Nigerian armed forces in recent time have been awakened to the changing dynamics of conflict and the consequent re-posturing of the military from traditional international belligerence to domestic operations other than war and global cooperation, with the need for minimal or complete absence of the use of force in their operations. This trend, albeit, has proven to be quite a struggle for men and women of the armed forces who are trained to derive morale in combat and the victory thereof. Currently, Nigeria calls significant attention from the global community with news headlines of a complex, audacious, and protracted terrorism quagmire (especially the emergence of Boko Haram) that has greatly weakened the country's national integrity as well as the wellbeing of its citizens (Eji, 2016; Reliefweb, 2022). The security vacuum created by this debacle has paved way for other forms of criminality and social unrests across the geographical length of the country – farmer-herder conflicts, banditry,

kidnapping, piracy, multiple (violent) protests, secessionist activities, to name just a few (Aigbe, 2022).

Against this backdrop, this study aims to unravel the misaims of the extant strategic and policy frameworks that have occupied the nadir of Nigeria's contemporary, security and conflict management initiatives. Also, it aims to provide an in-depth classical, contemporary and operational context to defence policy and strategy as an analytical guide for futuristic endeavors in Nigeria's defence community. The scope of this study would be the period between 2014 and 2021, indicating the surging prevalence of widespread violence across the Nigerian space. To achieve this objective, the research employs a qualitative methodology using secondary data, including academic articles, government reports, and case studies, to analyze Nigeria's security policies and strategies between 2014 and 2021 through thematic content analysis. This approach allows for a comprehensive review of existing literature to assess the effectiveness of these policies in addressing the country's security challenges.

Conceptualising Defence Policy and Strategy and National Security

Policy and strategy are often used interchangeably, just like the words national security policy and defence policy. Though this may be convenient, the terms have distinct connotations. According to Stolberg (2010), policy is "what to do" about something, not "how to do" it. The executing strategy provides the "how to do it." Policymaking, especially national security policy, whether in the 19th or the 21st century, is complex. It depends on a gamut of variables and often has had to rely on a bit of luck. The level of difficulty becomes even more distinct when considering a policy that must advance beyond grand conceptualization to actual implementation.

National security policy may be defined according to the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (Geneva: DCAF, 2015) as a documented projection of how a state aims to provide for its own security and that of its population: it establishes a national understanding of the threats and risks of the security environment and the values and principles that will guide the state in providing state and human security. While defence policy, on the other hand, can be regarded as part of a broader concept of national security policy or national security strategy. It encompasses defence planning and management, which often entails chronological steps towards practical execution of policy, down to actual command and control (Abiodun, Asaolu, & Ndubuisi, 2020).

Heffington, Oler, & Tretler (2019) asserts further that formulation and implementation of national security strategy require the ability to think even strategically. To them, this entails applying the following fundamental elements of strategic logic: analyzing the strategic situation, defining the desired ends (the projected outcome), identifying and/or developing the means (resources and capabilities) to bring to bear, designing the ways to use the means to achieve the end, and assessing the costs/risks associated with the strategy. Therefore, the lines that divide all these concepts or stages are often blurred in practice. In general, defence policy covers everything from ends to ways and means of achieving national defence aims and is guided by codes and principles that are embedded in national security policy.

The Concept of National Security

For a long time, the concept of national security, policy, and strategy was taken to merely connote the preservation of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and internal stability, with a focus on the coercive power of the state. According to Rothschild (1995), "... security was seen throughout the period as a condition both of individuals and of states. Its most consistent sense was indeed a condition, or an objective, that constituted a relationship between individuals and states or societies" (cited in Smiljanic, 2016). National security was defined as the ability of a sovereign state to cater for the protection and defence of its citizenry (Osisanya, 2021). In today's complex and interdependent world, however, there are many nontraditional threats like pandemics, climate change, refugee crises, human trafficking, and a gamut of such others. Therefore, the national security concept must be perceived from a more holistic approach. Such an all-encompassing view of national security demands that the determinant of security is not just the coercive elements of state power but its comprehensive national power, with the latter being a fusion of many factors across all facets of national life (Chandra & Bhonsle, 2015).

The whole concept of national security entails much more than traditional defence, to issues such as nation-building to enhance internal security, food security, a better health system, and economic security, which are paramount for national security, particularly in third-world countries (cited in Putri, Nasruddin, & Wahab, 2019). Thus, Osisanya (2021) argued that a national security policy can be conceived as a guide to action for the government and not necessarily a law, even though its implementation may require changes in the legal framework that governs security provision, management, and oversight in a given state.

Violent and Non-Violent Dimensions of Contemporary Insecurities in Nigeria

As Africa's most populous nation and largest economy, the potentials of the human and natural resources have been greatly handicapped by one too many bombardments of violent and non-violent conflicts. Currently, Nigerian news has been replete with headlines of a complex, protracted, and destructive quagmire of terrorism that has greatly weakened the country's national integrity as well as the wellbeing of its citizens. Among the other existing array of security challenges in Nigeria, terrorism is presently the greatest challenge. The activities of the jihadist sect popularly known as Boko Haram, and its offshoot, ISWAP, have assumed such unprecedented proportions that they have pole-vaulted Nigeria's ranking in the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) from the 16th most terrorized country in the world in 2008 to the third in 2015, and the Boko Haram terrorist organization as the world's deadliest (Eji, 2016).

Since the Boko Haram terrorist group retreated from urban centers during the 2015 offensive, the group has focused their operations on more desolate areas often referred to as ungoverned spaces, particularly in the Northeast geopolitical zone. Hereon, Boko Haram and its offshoot, the Islamic State in West Africa (ISWA), have assumed omniscient coverage across the country and across the Lake Chad basin of West Africa. Moreso, criminal gangs have exploited the security vacuum, particularly in the North East and West of Nigeria, kidnapping, banditry, raping, and killing with impunity, with the greatest concentrations in Zamfara, Niger, Kastina, and Kaduna states (Abiodun, Asaolu). The security vacuum has paved the way for other forms of criminality and social unrest across the geographical length of the country—farmer-herder conflicts, banditry, kidnapping, piracy, and civil unrests such as (violent) protests and secessionist

activities. The waves of violent criminal activity have not spared any region of Nigeria, and as a result, many Nigerians avoid traveling for fear of kidnapping, murder, or abduction. In the southeast, the operations of gunmen and killer herdsmen have resulted in several deaths and the destruction of numerous businesses. Killer herders and bandits who are high on drugs have attacked, kidnapped, and killed people over and over again in Nigeria, from the north to the south. These undaunted destroyers have wreaked havoc on farms, villages, cities, men, women, and children, and some of the victims of these horrific acts are often raped women. In the south-south of Nigeria, pipeline vandals and terrorists have carried out a number of assaults that have resulted in the damage of property, life, and infrastructure, to name a few (Adeniyi, October 14, 2022).

Furthermore, the militant Biafran separatists have revived secessionist activities that have intensified in recent years, resulting in violent clashes between Nigeria's security forces and militia groups – the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and recently, the Eastern Security Network (ESN), leading to dozens of deaths (Duerksen, 2021; Guardian, 29, March 2021). The Nigerian state has been criticized for assuming a belligerent posture rather than political, in its response. Human rights groups have documented the military and police using brute force against the pro-Biafra agitators, including killing 150 IPOB supporters in 2015 and 2016 (Duerksen, 2021). Other contemporary security challenges in Nigeria include farmer-herders' conflicts, piracy, cyberattacks, police brutality, and police-brutality-protests (#EndSARS), including ravaging floods. Thus, distinguishing these threats and understanding their socio-geographic contours is critical for constructing sustainable policy and strategy.

Table 1: Selected Cases of Contemporary Insecurities in Nigeria Since 2020

Date	Incident of Insecurity	Location	Perpetrator(s)
11 December 2020	Abduction of 344 students from Government Science Secondary School Kankara in Katsina State	Katsina State	Boko Haram
20 December 2020	Abduction of 80 students of Islamiya Schools in Mahuta, Katsina State	Katsina State	Bandits
26 February 2021	Abduction of over 300 students of Government Girls Secondary School, Jangebe, Zamfara State	Zamfara State	Bandits
11 March 2021	Abduction of more than 200 students of the Federal College of Forestry Mechanisation, Kaduna	Kaduna State	Bandits
26 October 2021	Attack on mosque, killing 17 worshippers, injuring many, and abducting 18 people in Maza-Kula village in Mashegu local government area of Niger State	Niger State	Armed Bandits
10 April 2022	27 people killed and 17 houses burnt as unknown gunmen invaded Ohagelede, Umuezeoka, Ebbiaji, and Ebbeta, all in Ezza or Effium and part of Ebonyi local government areas of Ebonyi State	Ebonyi State	IPOB/ESN
28 March 2022	Attack on the Abuja–Kaduna train, killing eight persons, injuring 41 persons, and kidnapping 168 persons	Abuja-Kaduna highway	Boko Haram in collaboration with some bandits
09 January 2022	Attack on a village in Zamfara State, with over 2000 cattle and other domestic animals stolen, and over 140	Zamfara State	Armed Bandits

persons killed

15 May 2022	Twelve soldiers and 20 civilians killed by non-state actors	Enugu State	IPOB/ESN
05 June 2022	Attack on church on Pentecost Sunday, shooting and killing over 50 worshippers at St Francis Xavier Catholic Church, Owa-Luwa Street in Owo, Ondo State	Ondo state	Unknown Gunmen
12 May 2022	The killing of a young Christian lady, Deborah Samuel, a second-year student of Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto, following an allegation that she had blasphemed the Prophet Muhammad	Sokoto State	Religious Mob
30 September 2023	Gunmen abducted 25 travellers along the Owo/Ifon/Benin Expressway. According to the report, the victims were members of the Choir of the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), Oke Igan, Akure, the state capital.	Ondo State	Armed Herdsmen
17 October 2023	50 people including children abducted, while three killed in an attack by gunmen in Bagega, Northwest, Zamfara State.	Zamfara State	Armed Bandits
29 February 2024	More than 200 victims, mostly women and young children abducted from the government-run IDP camp in Borno state	Borno State	ISWAP
7 March 2024	287 pupils kidnapped from LEA primary and secondary school in Chunkun, Kuriga Local Government Area of Kaduna state	Kaduna State	ISWAP

Sources: Ngwoke & Akabike (2022); ACLED (2024)

The table above reveals some selected cases of contemporary insecurity and obvious perpetrators in Nigeria. Between 2020 and the middle of 2024, several cases of insecurity have been recorded in the Nigerian domestic environment and across several states manifesting an unparalleled form of gruesomeness. As the table indicates, different categories of people have been targeted without recourse to law and order. Schoolchildren, young adults, women, and men, with security agencies inclusive, have been victims of this menace. The attacks are not perpetrated by one group alone, which lays credence to the fact that the country is faced with multi-level and multifaceted threats that demand alternative methods of conflict resolution. The majority of this insecurity has been prominent in the northern part of the country but has apparently spread to the south, which renders the whole of the country unsecured.

The Misaims of State Response to National Security Threats in Nigeria

Indeed, there have been state responses to the gamut of security threats bombarding the country's national security. However, the responses can be generally regarded as ambiguous and overly militaristic in approach. Like many modern states, Nigeria has a robust national security architecture. Central to this architecture are the Armed Forces of Nigeria (AFN), which include

the Army, Navy, and Air Force. These forces are primarily responsible for defending the country against external threats. The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) is tasked with maintaining internal security, law enforcement, and public order. Intelligence agencies, such as the Department of State Services (DSS), play a crucial role in gathering intelligence and preventing threats before they escalate. Additionally, the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) assists in protecting critical national infrastructure, while the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) handles foreign intelligence and counterintelligence operations. Despite the robust structure, the Nigerian security system faces significant challenges, including inadequate funding, corruption, and coordination issues among agencies. These challenges have often hindered the effectiveness of the security architecture in addressing the country's complex security problems (Olaniyan & Akinola 2022).

The constitution of Nigeria provides for Military Aid to Civil Authority in times of insurrection. The AFN can be deployed for internal operations in "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" (The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999:217). However, the term "insurrection" is not clearly defined. Suffice to assert that this lack of clarity on the term is largely responsible for the continued gross stretching of the AFN in internal security. Whereas, a good national security policy and strategy should aim to reduce the interventions of the AFN in internal or civil security operations.

In the quest for fortification of Nigeria's security architecture, the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) in Nigeria designed the National Counter Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST) in 2014 and subsequently reviewed it in 2016 (Counter Terrorism Centre, 2021). It represents a foremost policy and strategic document geared towards combating the menace of terrorism in Nigeria. It comprises such aspects as the nature of the terrorist threats that Nigeria faces, the policies, strategies, and mechanisms, and the roles of stakeholders, as well as institutions involved in countering terrorism. The policy is organised around five work streams, each with its key objectives and success indicators. They are: forestall, secure, identify, prepare, and implement. At the base of the policy is the expectation that all security agencies will work together by conducting threat analysis and developing their own contingency plan to address implementation streams (Counter-Terrorism Center, 2021). However, the sustainability of this defence policy and strategy has been highly questionable, as evident in current unabating insecurities across the country. In fact, the public depiction by policymakers appears rather contrary to what is obtained on ground (Onuoha & Ugwueze, 2020).

Secondly, in response to the escalating violence and brigandage being perpetrated by Boko Haram, the Nigerian state in 2015 launched a more ambitious and coordinated response by collaborating with neighboring countries and other partner entities to combat Boko Haram. This regional collaboration led to the establishment of the Lake Chad Basin Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) under the continental guidance of the African Union Peace and Security framework. This was in recognition by Nigeria and the AU of the need to ensure regional collaboration and integration in the fight against violent extremism that has the potential for mobility in terms of regional and continental migration. Comprised of a 10,000-strong force that made up troops from Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria, the initiative is primarily

funded by the Nigerian government with additional support from strategic partners like the United States and the European Union (Aniekwe & Brooks, 2023). The basic aim was to create and ensure a safe and secured environment by adopting a more militaristic approach that goes beyond the territorial boundary in Nigeria to a wider regional coverage and even continental coverage. This wider conventional military-centric approach, both locally and regionally, yielded remarkable success in terms of mitigating the influence of the Boko Haram terrorist organization. For instance, the Nigerian military, in conjunction with the MNJTF, was able to recover territories previously occupied in Borno State (Adepegba, 2021). Also, since its formation in 2015 and 2022, the Nigerian military asserted that over 14,000 Boko Haram fighters had surrendered and given up arms (Haruna, 2022). The Nigerian security operatives, while collaborating with the MNJTF, have continued to launch large-scale attacks on Boko Haram and ISWAP hideouts till date.

Despite the success of this strategic innovation in degrading the capacity of both Boko Haram and its offshoots (ISWAP, and banditry), their activities have continued to soar in the Nigerian state and other parts of the Lake Chad Basin (ACLED, 2024). Nigeria's counter-terrorism posture is more military driven as opposed to law enforcement or other non-military approaches. This strategy, even though successful to an extent, is reeled with an avalanche of setbacks. One critical and observable problem is the lack of clarity and the consequent inefficiency of the NACTEST policy document, and also the attendant collateral damage and human rights abuses, which have not only tended to alienate the military from the public but have also attracted condemnation, particularly from civil societies and members of the international community (Onapajo & Ozden, 2020).

According to Human Rights Watch (2023), over 300 people are reported to have been killed (since 2017) by airstrikes that security forces claimed were intended for bandits or members of the Islamist armed group Boko Haram but instead hit local populations. Notable among the erroneous airstrikes is the December 3, 2023 incident, which killed 85 people at a religious celebration and severely injured dozens of others in Kaduna State. The airstrike constitutes just one occurrence in a series of Nigerian military assaults that have mistakenly resulted in the deaths of innocent civilians. The assailants targeted individuals who had assembled for the Maulud, a religious ceremony observed by Muslims, in the Tundun Biri community located in the Igabi Local Government Area of Kaduna State (ACLED, 2024). Kaduna is one of the states in Nigeria's northwest region where criminal organisations, often known as bandits, engage in activities such as murder, theft, and kidnapping for ransom.

Furthermore, even the literature that understudied the NACTEST policy framework did not acknowledge the nature of distrust between the government and citizens in most developing states, which invariably poses restraints on the efficiency of government policies. It is noteworthy that there is a disconnect between the government and the masses in Nigeria, which has created a form of hostility between them. The implication of this is that terrorists tend to draw more sympathy from the people than state forces. The fact that some nefarious elements among the forces that were sent to restore peace engage in immoral actions and overbearing behaviours that negate their motives in the communities lends credence to this. As Knoechelmann argued, the utilisation of violence in Nigeria exerts a detrimental influence on the populace, fostering a heightened sense of distrust towards the government and maybe increasing

the inclination to align with terrorist groups (Knoechelmann, 2014:16). Corroborating this view, Eji (2016: 205) argued that the image given by the government seems to be different from what is done in practice. Additionally, the role of interest groups and security think tanks is often elitist and oligarchic in nature, which also hinders the practicality of the policies in the process of execution.

The perception of government and its security agencies to the gamut of security challenges is military threats and not socioeconomic threats, and as such, they have tackled the threats from a predominantly militaristic approach and without the same momentum asserted for human security aspects of national defence as a preventive strategy. Therefore, the frequent crackdowns and bombardments only displace the perpetrators rather than eradicate them, especially when the crackdown was not effectively coordinated. Thus, the government's counter-insurgency efforts have continued to be generally ill-defined, reactionary, and ad hoc. Some of the responses, predominantly military-centric, have rather created unanticipated negative consequences. This is worrisome considering the fact that huge amounts of money, estimated at \$11.96 billion, have been expended on the fight against terrorism between 2014 and 2019 alone (Abiodun, Asaolu, and Ndubuisi, 2020).

Towards a Humanistic Approach to Mitigating Multifaceted Security Challenges in Nigeria

Many theorists have associated national security with national defence, however, it is important to note that security comprises a significantly wider array of concerns, threats, and actions. Security encompasses multiple elements, but a fundamental requirement for maintaining a strong and advanced position is robust military preparedness. Without this, any discourse on security would lack significance (McNamara, 1968; Brown, 1977; and Mishra, 1988). Defence is a crucial component of a nation's comprehensive security. This is why the plethora of policy and strategic frameworks in many countries of the world, Nigeria included, have tilted towards the use of military power in the execution of counter-terrorism frameworks. Military security is the most conspicuous element of national defence, however, it is not the sole component (Singh, 2014). Thus, the formation and maintenance of peace are often confused with security. As Bhagat (1990) opined, the vanquished is preparing for the next round, and the victor is taking advantage of it. This forms the whole gamut of security contests among literature.

Conversely, security is a comprehensive and multifaceted concept that epitomises a state where one's survival is not believed to be at risk. It encompasses several facets of national and international interests and objectives. It is in this context that the UNDP (1994) conceptualized the term security from a humanistic point of view. As noted in the United Nations General Assembly resolution 66/290, "human security is an approach to assist member states in identifying and addressing widespread and cross-cutting challenges to the survival, livelihood, and dignity of their people." It is a proven analytical and planning framework that supports more comprehensive and preventive responses by the United Nations, cutting across sectors, developing contextually relevant solutions, and adopting partnerships to help realise a world free from fear, want, and indignity (United Nations, 2017). The term calls for "people-centered, comprehensive, context-specific, and prevention-oriented responses that strengthen the protection and empowerment of all people." To this extent, the approach provides for a framework that presents a comprehensive element that comprises human security. According to

the human security handbook (2016), human security is divided into: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security. Holistically, the aim of human security is to tackle the root causes of a phenomenon, which are categorised under the seven human security components (United Nations, 2017).

From the economic security point of view, it has been argued that there are some factors that serve as the root causes of violence in every part of the world. Some of these include factors like poverty, unemployment, and inequality in the distribution of economic resources. The dearth of these factors in a society serves as fertile ground for the growth of violent uprisings. According to the latest official household survey statistics from Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics, 30.9 percent of Nigerians lived below the international extreme poverty level of \$2.15 per person per day between 2018 and 2019 (World Bank, 2024). Also, according to the MPI (2022), sixty-three percent of people—133 million—are multidimensionally poor. With the removal of fuel subsidies, weak monetary policies, and the skyrocketing exchange rate, earnings have not kept up with the surging inflation. As the World Bank observed, this has further pushed another 10 million Nigerians into poverty in 2023. With the current trend, there is therefore a projection by the World Bank that by 2024, about 40.7 percent of Nigerians are estimated to live below the international poverty line by the end of 2024. This poverty trajectory has been aided by the increasing unemployment rate in Nigeria, particularly youths' unemployment. According to the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (2023), the percentage of youth Not in Employment, Education nor Training (NEET Rate) is 13.8%. These have become the weapons that mitigate efforts towards conflict resolution in Nigeria. Terrorism grows more rapidly in an environment where a large number of the population are economically disadvantaged. Thus, economic security requires an assured basic income from work or from the public aid of the state (UN, 1994).

Food security is inherently connected to economic security, as a guaranteed income is essential for accessing food. Coker (2015:289) states that food security may be seen in terms of three key elements: food availability, food access, and food adequacy. The UNDP Report of 1994 highlights that the mere presence of food is not enough to provide food security. Undoubtedly, individuals can still experience starvation if there is food accessibility but unaffordability. This predicament frequently arises due to issues in food distribution. Approximately one-third of the population in northeast Nigeria is currently experiencing severe food insecurity. Within the regions most impacted by Boko Haram, around 55,000 individuals are currently facing the imminent threat of hunger (Iba Omenka et al., 2017: 516). This is worsened by the incessant clash between farmers and herders in rural communities across Nigeria (Aigbe & Aihie, 2024). There is therefore an urgent need to ensure food security in Nigeria. On the third parameter, environmental security is defined by a safe environment that does not suffer from the negative impacts of desertification, pollution, and other threats that threaten people's health (Iba Omenka et al., 2017: 514).

Water and land scarcity provide the most significant environmental risks in developing nations (UN, 1994). Nigeria has had significant impacts from climate change over the past two decades (Nwokeoma and Kingsley, 2017: 173). Land scarcity and other environmental related challenges, including climate change, have been the lubricants that fuel the incessant crisis of transhumance and the resultant brigandage that involves attacks on farming communities by criminally bent

herdsmen (Aigbe, 2022). Numerous attempts to tackle the menace have proven abortive and without the needed result. Tackling the security challenges from this perspective in Nigeria will go a long way to mitigating them. However, climate change is not the sole factor that contributes to an increase in violence; it serves as an amplification factor for threats (Alex and Baillat, 2017).

The human security framework made provision for community security as part of a comprehensive nonmilitary approach to security management. To this extent, the United Nations (1994) identified community security as the need to respect the cultural identity and values of individuals and to ensure the preservation of these values. The absence of this framework in the Nigerian terrain has led to a preponderance of religious intolerance that has manifested in the lynching of individuals who have been adjudged to have blasphemed against some religious beliefs. In Africa, wars have been fueled by the marginalisation of religious, ethnic, and cultural groups (Botha, 2010:38). Presently, jihadists exploit religious disparities to indoctrinate and enlist individuals. Religion is a primary factor that can be attributed to Boko Haram's behaviour, as stated by Onapajo et al. (2012: 44). It is therefore incumbent on the government and the various stakeholders in the security management in Nigeria to engage a wider community consultation as part of a strategy to minimize the propensity for violent conflict. Political security that guarantees human rights, rule of law, and good governance constitutes a pivotal aspect of the human security frame. Poor governance is causally linked to the emergence of terrorism as it exacerbates grievances within the populace, making them more susceptible and willing to join terrorist organisations. Effective counterterrorism strategies require the assurance of good governance, as it has the potential to decrease grievances and facilitate socio-economic development (Eji, 2016: 213).

Conclusion

Based on the foregoing, it is evident that the management of contemporary security challenges in Nigeria is significantly hampered by misaligned policy and strategy. The prevalent issues include a lack of coherence between policy objectives and the actual security strategies implemented, often leading to ineffective responses to complex threats such as terrorism, insurgency, and organized crime. To this extent, the Nigerian state has utilised a militaristic strategic framework that strictly focused on bombardment. With the recognition of terrorism as the greatest threat to national security, the Nigerian government developed a robust counter-terrorism policy that further strengthened the military approach to combating insecurity in the country. This is in addition to the Lake Chad Basin Coalition forces that were established as part of regional cooperation means to combat the menace of Boko Haram. Over the years, this framework has yielded little or no results as Boko Haram, coupled with its splinter cell, ISWAP, has continued to wreak havoc on some states in the northeastern Nigeria. Beyond this, the advent of other security threats has rendered the militaristic approach less effective, as it becomes obvious by the day that non-conventional strategies need to be adopted if the protection of national security is to be achieved. This is where the human security approach comes in.

The paper aptly demonstrates that national security had been conceptualised as a state-centric phenomenon that extricated the human aspect of security. This conceptualization did not take cognizance of the multiplicity of threats that either impact human nature or the environment. Hence the lack of dept and the concomitant challenges that have nullified the combatant

strategies. These challenges are exacerbated by inadequate resource allocation, corruption, and a failure to address the underlying socio-economic factors contributing to insecurity. To improve the situation, there is a need for a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach that aligns policy with strategic actions, integrates various security agencies, and incorporates community engagement and socio-economic development initiatives. By adopting a holistic and well-coordinated strategy, Nigeria can better address its security challenges and work towards a more stable and secure environment.

Recommendations

By aligning security policies with the principles of human security, Nigeria can create a more holistic and sustainable approach to managing contemporary security challenges, ensuring that the safety and dignity of individuals and communities are at the forefront of security efforts. This can be attained through the following means:

Adopt a Human-Centric Approach to Security: The Nigerian government should shift the focus of security policies from a state-centric approach to one that prioritizes the safety and well-being of individuals and communities. This includes addressing economic, health, environmental, and personal security aspects. This means recognizing that security challenges often stem from human insecurity.

Promote Inclusive Governance and Participation: the government should formulate policies that will encourage the participation of local communities, civil society, and marginalized groups in the design and implementation of security policies. By involving a diverse range of stakeholders, policies can be more inclusive and responsive to the specific needs of different communities.

Enhance Education and Awareness: Education has been termed a key factor for the eradication of future crime. A knowledge society cannot be easily swayed to perpetrating crimes. As such, the Nigerian government should, as a matter of urgency, invest in education and awareness programs that promote human security and peaceful coexistence. Educating citizens on their rights and responsibilities, as well as on conflict resolution and peacebuilding, can empower communities to actively participate in creating a secure environment.

Promote Economic Empowerment and Livelihood Opportunities: Nigeria is made up of a very large population in which more than half is of youthful age. This creates an avenue for vulnerability, especially when they are not properly engaged. As a result, the Nigerian government should develop policies that support economic development and create job opportunities, particularly for vulnerable populations such as youth and women. Economic empowerment reduces the appeal of criminal activities and insurgent groups that exploit economic insecurities.

Implement Community-Based Security Initiatives: The government should support community policing and local security initiatives that empower communities to take an active role in their own security. Training local leaders and volunteers in conflict prevention and response can enhance trust between security agencies and the communities they serve.

Foster National Reconciliation and Social Cohesion: Nigeria is a secular state that is made up of over 250 ethnic groups with two major dominant religions. As a result, there is a high level of intolerance that has culminated in various religious, ethnic, and ethno-religious conflicts in the country. This then constitutes another dimension of insecurity that has thrived despite the military approach. Therefore, the Nigerian government should implement programs aimed at

promoting national reconciliation, social cohesion, and inter-communal dialogue. Addressing historical grievances, promoting tolerance, and building a shared sense of identity can reduce tensions and foster a more peaceful society.

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