
Enhancing National Security in Nigeria through the Advocacy of Civil Society Organisations

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ABSTRACT

The study which focus on security laid emphasis on enhancing national security in Nigeria through the advocacy of civil society organizations. It explains the relationship between civil society and security managements in Nigeria nation. In the context of this study national security is considered as confrontation of threats to peace in the society and as well perceives civil society as a self-supporting and voluntary groups determined to collaborate in the security management of the country. The social cohesion theory applied in the work explains the need for unity in any group while working towards a goal. Evident in their role in promoting national security are felt in their contributions on national issues such as terrorism, internally displaced persons, environmental degradation, irregular migration and the global pandemic Covid 19 which through their advocacy and humanitarian support lives were saved. However, despite the challenges that inhibit effective security management, the study among others recommends good governance, collaboration with boarder nations and national unity as approaches to achieve effective security management that could guarantee safety of life and property in Nigeria.

Keywords: National Security, Civil Society, Advocacy, Nigeria

Introduction

Globally, development is determined by the level of security in a nation. In the contemporary Nigeria state, hence security is a collective responsibility of the citizens, the relationship between the civil society organisations (CSO) and Nigeria's National Security will be examined. Civil society organisations in Nigeria consist of formal and informal groups who protect and defend their members and by extension through their advocacy contributes to ensuring effective security management in Nigeria.

In addition to explication of concept, the role of civil society in checking national security

issues such as terrorism, internally displaced persons, humanitarian problems, farmers, herders clash demonstrate their efforts in providing security management in the country. Among other things ethnic-religious conflict, unemployment, corruption and political intolerance constituent serious challenges against achieving improved security in our society.

Nevertheless, measures outlined to address issues of security management depends solely on good governance which will in-turn effect policies that could guarantee effective security management in Nigeria.

National Security

Brenan (1961) and Ray (1987) cited in Thomas (2018:86) differs in their ideas as Brenan assert that national security is the protection of national survival, while Ray is of the opinion that national security is the desire and capacity for self-defence. Similar to Ray's idea Goldstein (1999) perceives national security as the preservation of the borders of a state as mainly constrained in terms of the power to maintain a government's sovereignty within its territory as well as the avoidance of conflicts and the preservation of the lives of people in the state. However, Hare (1973) describes national security to mean the confrontation of threats to peace in the society. In the light of the above, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, former President of Nigeria explained that his strategy for national security is to strengthen the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and advance her interest and objectives, and contain instability, control crime and eliminate corruption (Okerie & Worlu, 2015:124).

Similarly, Brown (1977:198) cited in Thomas (2008) agrees with Ray (1987) and Goldstein (1999) but expanded his explanation as he assert that national security is the ability to preserve the nation's physical integrity and territory, to maintain its economic relations with other countries in the world on reasonable terms to preserve its nature, institution, and governance from disruption from outside, and to control its borders.

Civil Society

Scholars have defined civil society in different forms based on their understanding of the term. Among them, Diamond (1994:4; 1999:22) defines civil society as the realm of organized social life that is open, voluntary, self-generating, at least partially self-supporting, and autonomous from the state, and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules. Similarly, in a simple form Olukosin (1997:470) assert that civil society is a sector that is made up of voluntary, autonomous, professional or non-professional associations which has risen out of self-organizational efforts of various social forces.

Bayart (1986) cited in Kalu and Wapmuk (2020:24) in his argument explains civil society as a formal and institutional sector separate from the state aimed at defending right of people. Nevertheless, civil organisations in Nigeria include formal and informal groups or organisations such as religious groups, local communities and market women. From the above assertions, civil society as a concept could therefore refer to an organization or organized group of unarmed personnel and non-government officials bound by the

instrument of law for the purpose of protection and defence of people's right in the society resulting from any form of intimidation and suppression.

Theoretical Framework

There are several theories used in the study of civil societies in their role in promoting national security in Nigeria. Among them includes the social group theory, social identity theory, social cohesion theory and the collective behavioural theory. But, for the purpose of this work, the social cohesion theory is considered to be appropriate. The theory simply implies the tendency for a group to be in unity while working towards a goal or to satisfy the emotional needs of its members.

Social cohesion theory has some important aspects of cohesiveness including its multidimensional, dynamic nature, institutional basis and emotional dimension. It is on this premise that Schachater and Back (1950) cited in Kalu and Wapmuk (2020:5) propose that group cohesiveness is attractive to people who have the best care within the group.

Social cohesion theory in multidimensionality explains how cohesion is based on many factors. While its dynamic character refers to how cohesion gradually changes over time in its strength and form from the time a group is formed to when a group is disbanded. Its instrumental basis refers to how people cohere for same purpose, either for a task or for social reasons. And its emotional dynamic refers to how cohesion is pleasing to its members.

However, from the analysis of social cohesion theory in the context of study, it is agreed that civil societies in Nigeria, haven emerged as a result of many factors, performs much task including security functions. And in as much members are united, changes in Nigeria-state influences their desired goal and activities.

The Role of Civil Society in National Security Issues

Civil society in achieving national security, Nextier (2020:11) explains that plans towards it include management, decision making and oversight structure and institutions, as well as national policies strategies. He further state that

“National security architecture is a combination of national policies, strategies and plans for security life and properties in the country as well as the institutions and structure for their creation, management and oversight. It goes beyond the remit of any single security organisations to include everyone involved in defining a nation's security priorities.

The role of civil society in security management are greatly expressed on non-traditional security issues hence they offer support to the three tiers of government through their interventions in traditional and non-traditional security issues like terrorism, internal displaced people, proliferation of arms, humanitarian problems, farmers – herders clash and climate change. In their humanitarian role Ikolegbe (2011:7) explains that civil society has become across the world, the non-state emergent agent for providing critical social welfare, social services, humanitarian services, socio-economic empowerment, political participation, human capital development and productive economic activities.

Ensuring for a secured society through the civil societies in Nigeria is evident in the

increasing number of Internally Displaced Persons (IOP) in the northern parts of the country. This is associated to repeated attacks by the Boko Haram insurgency, herdsmen attack and that of the bandits in the three northern geopolitical zones. Consequent upon the destruction of life and property by the mentioned nefarious groups, Diakwa (2020) narrated that hence the government alone could not address the humanitarian challenges, International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs), National Non-Governmental Organisations (NNGOs) and United Nations (UN) agents provided support to five million displaced persons in Nigeria by the end of 2017.

Again, the outbreak of a global pandemic in 2019 known as Covid-19 which spread throughout the world from China threatened both human and national security. During the pandemic which crippled all sectors in Nigeria, Abubakar and Wapmuk (2020) clarifies that the Civil Society Organization (CSO) in Nigeria were very active in health prevention and awareness raising activities, service provision and advocacy particularly in the crisis zone (north east) of Nigeria. Non-governmental actors remains very significant in addressing people's security challenges of poor health because of their ability to reach out to the marginalized population. Through their advocacy they encouraged government to channel more funding to healthcare services which invariably implies that there are fewer resources to aid military actions.

Environmental security, especially climate change has been a serious challenge to national security. Its negative impact which include water stress, food insecurity, forced migration and violent conflict imposes multiple danger or threats on Nigerian's population. To address such issues, civil society organisations in Nigeria did not only embark on creating awareness but also to monitoring the implementation of government policies towards achieving security of the environment. A good example could be drawn from the Niger Delta environment where the adverse effect of oil multinationals are considered as major player to insecurity in the region.

However, it is evident that irregular or unauthorized migration and human trafficking for sexual exploitation and child labour are major security concern in Nigeria. As securitization of this issue relies on government led approaches and focused particularly on the law enforcement agencies without the inclusion of civil society organisations, such approach does not address the root of the problem. The irony of the government centered approach, as Kalu and Wapmuk (2020:33) explains that it opens up the possibility for corruption as traffickers are always ready to bribe the law enforcement agencies.

Impediments towards Achieving National Security in Nigeria

At present, Nigeria is confronted with several security challenges that are grouped into two; namely internal and external challenges. Paramount among them is ethno-religious conflict. Nigeria is country with multi-ethnic groups having different cultures and two major religions as Christianity and Islam. As a result of these differences the country operates as one at war with itself. Achebe (1982) in his *"The Trouble with Nigeria"* clearly argued that after Nigeria's independence most ethnic groups resort to whip ethnic and religious sentiments to checkmate their more illustrious colleagues. It is obvious that with the repeated numbers of ethno-religious crisis in the country it becomes impossible for

anyone to record an accurate enumeration of such conflicts. Such incessant occurrence of conflicts seriously threatens national security in a greater dimension.

Unemployment perceived as the condition and extent of joblessness by the citizens of a country imposes serious threat to national security. In our contemporary state, Nigeria politicians speak volume on employment during election campaigns, but thereafter its achievement remains a mirage

Unemployment ratio in Nigeria published by New Nigeria Labour Force Survey (2023) are listed below:

Year	Percentage
2020	33.3% in the 4 th Quarter
2022	5.3% in the 4 th Quarter
2023	4.1% in the 1 st Quarter

However, it is argued that for those unemployed group to have means of survival in Nigeria, they fall back to crime which invariably affect national security in Nigeria.

Similarly, corruption practices in Nigeria has also been considered as another major obstacle against achieving national security in the nation. Hence, World Bank (1996) defines corruption as the abuse of public office for private gains which manifest in different forms, the implementation is that the minds of the majority bleeds against such menace in our country. It is therefore not unreasonable to link various security threat from the boko haram sect, Fulani herdsmen, bandits, kidnappers and militants to high corruption on the privilege few incharge of political governance in Nigeria.

Again, incessant environmental degradation has been attributed as major obstacle against national security in Nigeria. For instance, at the hit of the Niger Delta crisis emphasis was more on environmental degradation and pollution resulting from the activities of multinational oil companies which the Federal government and multi-nationals remains the benefactors as against the host communities in the region (Okorobia, 2007:198). It was in an attempt to draw the attention of the Federal government to the needs of the Niger Delta people that gave rise to agitations – demonstrated in the form of militancy, kidnapping of expatriates and vandalization of pipe lines. Even in the south east region of Nigeria, environmental issues are traceable to security challenges as most agitations are focused on environmental erosion within the zone.

In our contemporary state, political intolerance in democracy is the greatest security threat to Nigeria citizens in upholding national security. At present, political differences in Nigeria are not only between the opposition parties and the ruling party, but also exist strongly within the ruling party. A good example is the experience of Rivers State since October 2023 where divisions in Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) as the ruling party threatens the security of the State through alleged impeachment move against the State Governor, bombing of the State Assembly Complex and also an allege firing of a life

ammunition on Governor Siminalaye Fubara on 30th October, 2023 by security men perceived to be anti the State Governor. Consequent upon this were various demonstrations organized by supporters of both factions which invariably affected security of life and property in the state.

It is also evident that poor leadership in Nigeria democratic governance has been attributed as a major challenge against national security. In democratic governance, it is assumed that those in leadership emerged through a credible electoral process whereby people choose their leaders without coercion. But in Nigeria situation, politicians use violence perpetrated by their trained thugs and cultists who brandish weapons during elections in a bid to ensure the victory of their master. Consequent upon this is the protection of political thugs and cultists as against the protection of life and property of the citizens.

Measures to Improve Security Management in Nigeria

On issues of security management in Nigeria, various scholars, such as Thomas (2018), Kalu and Wapmuk (2020), Okorie and Worlu (2015) and Mohammad (2015) have lamented on the preferred approaches to achieve effective security management in Nigeria, yet insecurity in Nigeria increases on daily basis.

In Nigeria, security is mainly under the control of the security agencies without collaboration of the citizens, informal security organisations and religions security organisations. This implies that for effective security management, there should be a collaboration between the security agencies and all informal security organisations who probably understand their environment better than the police and the Nigeria Armed Forces. Similarly, there should be a total cooperation with other members of the civilian population for information gathering.

Again, as Nigeria is bordered by other countries, namely Chad Republic, Benin Republic, Cameroon and Niger, there is absolute need for collaboration and cooperation with these border nations in-view of achieving effective security management in the nation. This approaches is deemed necessary hence it has been alleged that most kidnapped victims in the north east and North West are always taken to Niger and Chad Republic.

Also, there should be sense of national unity among citizens of Nigeria as against ethnic feelings by individuals or groups that consist the nation. A situation where an ethnic group threatens other ethnic groups for attack and destruction shows signs of ethnic war in a nation.

Traditionally, the Awortu's model should be adopted in all the 774 local government areas in Nigeria. This approach was first applied in Andoni Local Government Area of Rivers State in 2021 by the Council Chairman where peoples of the local government took oath dully administered and supervised by all priest of deities in the council area. Its outcome was a great success whereby security of life and property was guaranteed during his administration as a council chairman.

However, it is pertinent to state that for the above measures to be useful in addressing

issues of insecurity, there should be good governance where security of life and property shall be guaranteed. Under good governance, its policies will consider human development, employment opportunities, national unity and collaboration of both formal and informal organizations very crucial in Nigeria's security management.

Conclusion

Civil society organisations in Nigeria are popularly known as organized groups of voluntary, autonomous, professionals and non-professional associations whose aim is to protect and deferred the life of citizens through their advocacies and sensitization of the people. But with unabated issues of insecurity in the country, civil society organisations at present extend their role towards security management in Nigeria hence security is a collective effort. Their effort in security management has been demonstrated through several interventionist approach in all tiers of government. The study in considering challenges against achieving national security in Nigeria, however outlined some measures capable of addressing security issues in the country.

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