DEMOCRACY & DEVELOPMENT

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State Governors, Oligopolies of Violence and Peace Deals in North-western Nigeria

Gbemisola Animasawun

Abstract

Akin to the northeast, Nigeria's northwest is now a theatre of multiple military operations against oligopolies of violence who sprouted from the mismanaged land-use conflict between Fulani nomads and Hausa farmers depicting the criminality-insurgency nexus. Despite combined (non)kinetic responses; including the suspension of telecommunication service, oligopolies' parallel governance has multiplied. Within this morass, some governors' peace deals with insurgents yielded short-lived respite which has crumbled with attendant hike in criminality and terror in the zone. So, cognizant of the characteristic non-linear trajectory of negotiation with insurgents, a rethinking of negotiation rather than a jettisoning is canvassed in the face of limited kinetic capacity of the Nigerian state and worsening residents' insecurity.

Keywords: Sub-national leadership, violence, conflict resolution, Nigeria, Inter-ethnic conflict

Introduction

> There are three potential trajectories: 1. A slow return to peace; 2. Criminality and banditry persist in rural areas and increasing fragmentation and factionalisation of Armed Opposition Groups (AOGs); and 3. A total collapse of peace deal and return to high levels of violence, proliferation of groups and, potentially, attempts by AOGs in northeast Nigeria to link with AOGs in the northwest (Nagarajan 2020: 4).

> … those who claim that talks alone end terrorism are just as wrong as those who insist that government must never negotiate with terrorists: under certain conditions talks are necessary but not sufficient element of counterterrorism (Cronin 2011: 3-4).

Akin to America's long war in Afghanistan (Hooker and Collins Jr 2015), insurgency since 2009 can be described as Nigeria's long war in apparent fulfillment of the prediction that Nigeria's Fourth Republic will be an age of insurgencies (Oxford Research Group 1999). Like boxers in the same weight category losing and reclaiming titles, roving and stationary oligopolies of violence, often localized in geo-political zones have consistently contested the exclusive control of territory, governance, and violence by the Nigerian state in the Fourth Republic. So much that after twenty years of transition to civilian rule or

electoral democracy, Nigeria still bears the features of a violent democracy (Arias and Goldstein 2010) based on widespread fatalities arising from both anti-state and non-state violence. Now in its twilight, insecurity in Buhari's second term reminds one of the questions posed at the birth of the government by Ewi (2015) on whether the defeat of Jonathan was a victory for Boko Haram (insecurity) given the invincibility of the Boko Haram under Jonathan or a victory for democracy because an opposition party won the election? A tentative answer will be that post-Jonathan Nigeria has produced, mutual zombification, that is, a state of powerlessness of the ruler and the ruled (Adebanwi 2022); neither a complete neutralization of Boko Haram nor a more secured country.

The powerlessness of the Nigerian state is evident in its inability to curtail the proliferation of spaces of dual authorities inaccurately called ungoverned spaces, where insurgents invade, (un)install existing traditional rulers while punishing resistance and late compliance with violence as a way of governing lives and territories. The continued loss of military hardware and alleged buying back same from insurgents, loss of high and low-ranking personnel; all call to question the battle capabilities of the military (Adebowale 2021). The existence of Nnamdi Kanu's IPOB, Buharindaji or Aleru dictating and determining terms and conditions of living and freedom of movement in different parts of the country is indicative of abridgment of state's authority and dominance. On the other hand, the limited power of the insurgents is apparent in their inability to establish absolute durable control in seized territories. These can be verified mostly in the north-west, north-east and parts of southeast and the north central. All of these have caused to wane citizens' sense of security and gradually creating an impression that the country is fast-becoming unsecurable.[1]

The proliferation of oligopolies of violence negates the Weberian stance that only the state should have the monopoly of violence. Oligopolies of violence are in two main categories (Mehler et al 2010) - The first category comprises oligopolies of violence who have seized territories within a country where they control the extraction of natural resources leading to the emergence of many community warlords, community armouries and alternative forms of governance with 'conflict (war) economies' sustained by 'producing, mobilizing, and allocating resources to sustain violence (Le Billon 2005). In the second category are complementary oligopolies (Idler and Forest 2015) that complement the efforts of government forces such as the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) operating across the insurgency-affected communities of north-eastern Nigeria.

This article opts to describe the outlaws in the northwest as oligopolies of violence because they have demonstrated the capacity to impose their terms of rule on communities and to go after hard targets including military formations, personnel, and facilities (see Nguyi and Katumanga 2014). However, they profess no ideology based on any revelation and no stated grievance against the state although there are

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[1] https://www.premiumtimesng.com/opinion/483831-nigerias-false-dichotomy-between-bandits-and-terrorists-by-gbemisola-animasawun.html

plausible indications of alliance with the Boko Haram in the northeast. The rest of the article continues with an analysis of how mismanaged communal conflicts led to the emergence of the oligopolies of violence in the northwest, a reflection of the kinetic state responses and an inflection on the use of amnesties and peace deals by state governors in Nigeria towards teasing out how to make peace deals work in the face of failing and obviously inadequate kinetic capacity to rein in the oligopolies of violence.

Communal Conflicts, Criminality and Northwest's Oligopolies of Violence Emergence

One of the implications of mismanaging communal conflicts is radicalization into insurgency, violent extremism and warlordism (Boas and Dunn 2017). Rural communities peopled mainly by the Hausa and Fulani ethno-linguistic groups in the northwest is a context that illustrates this assertion. From emic (insiders') (Rufai 2021) and etic (outsiders') analyses (Barnet and Rufai 2021), land is the crux of the conflict between the Fulani herders and the Hausa farmers. This became worsened by environmental degradation, intensified competition for diminishing natural resources, increase in population and proliferation of small and light weapons linked to the instability in Libya. In addition, changes in land use and resource access, growing social inequalities, waned trust between communities and loss of confidence in traditional dispute resolution processes and institutions heightened fragility and mutual demonization between hitherto actively cooperating neighbours (Brotem 2021). With the Fulani having the short-end of the stick owing to cattle rustling, shrinking spaces for grazing, and perceived bias by the government, they felt defenceless, striped of their investments and livelihoods especially from 2011-2014 which made many herders available and convinced to join criminal gangs and/or pastoralist militias (Nagarajan 2020). Vigilante groups (Yan Banga and Yan Sakai) were also perceived as Hausa-aligned and being supported by the government (Nagarajan 2020). Each side found justification in self-defence, ethno-linguistic solidarity, and economic opportunism. Overtime, these groups became aligned to different warlords conducting raids and counter-raids which informed their designation as bandits. By 2014, the conflict had spread across Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, Plateau and Zamfara states (Ogbonaya 2020). The struggle to control artisanal and illegal mining activities made Zamfara state its epicentre. The sponsors of illegal mining also funded banditry and rustling of cattle in mining communities which further exacerbated the relationship between the cattle breeders and rearers (Ogbonaya 2020).

Reign of the Oligopolies of Violence

> One bandit leader, Dogo Gide, regulates farming through neo-feudal
> sharecropping arrangements. Another, Turji, builds mosques in local
> villages while dispensing harsh justice against petty criminals. In another

part of Zamfara, the bandit Dankarami holds court with local politicians, hearing their petitions like a Saxon king. The examples are plentiful.[2]

The northwest (Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Jigawa, Sokoto and Zamfara) provides an apt context for understanding how vigilantes, militias, bandits, and insurgents all functioning as oligopolies of violence can sprout from mismanaged communal conflicts, state absence, abdication of responsibilities and mutation of issues from 2009 to 2016. Since 2017, these oligopolies of violence have routinely demonstrated their capacity to secure and terrorize communities so much that in communities like Dansadau in Maru local government area of Zamfara state, residents at a time celebrated two months of no attacks given the frequency of attacks until they reached a pact with the insurgents (Maishanu 2022). This was also the case in Sabon Birni where "the bandit leader celebrated Eid El-Maulud (Commemoration of the birth of the Holy Prophet) in Makwaruwa and declared himself the District Head. The event took place in the presence of the bona fide District Head (Hassan-Wuyo 2021). On February 4, 2022, at least 30 people were reportedly killed while performing Juma'at prayers and several others abducted in Nasarawa Mai Fara in Tsafe Local Government, Yar Katsina Village in Bungudu Local Government, and other parts of Zamfara state on the orders of Ada Aleru[3] because of their failure to pay the ransom of forty million naira he imposed on them (Ashishana 2022). Earlier in Kwarin Mai Saje community in November 2021 in Tsafe Local Government Area of Zamfara State, the refusal to pay a three-million-naira levy by Ada Aleru precipitated punitive attacks during which the village was ". . . was looted and women raped in their houses. They also kidnapped six people" (Babangida 2021). According to the report of the committee set up by the Zamfara state government in 2019, over three billion naira had been paid as ransom for 3,672 kidnap victims, 4,983 women were widowed, 25,050 children orphaned, and 190,340 persons displaced. From June 2011 to May 29, 2019, Fulani herders lost 2,015 cattle, 141 sheep and goats, 2,600 donkeys and camels to rustlers while 147,800 vehicles, motorcycles and others were burnt at different times and locations within the period (Babangida 2022). In June 2019, the theatre commander of the military's Operation Hadarin Daji, Major General Jide Ogunlade, said: "Jihadists and terrorists have now infiltrated the ranks of bandits that are operating in the bushes of Zamfara" and "banditry is now heading towards terrorism." Indeed, Major-General Ogunlade's prediction of 2019 came to pass as "jihadization of banditry and the banditization of jihad" (Barnet et al 2022).

Despite ongoing military operations in the northwest, the oligopolies of violence have waxed stronger by maximizing all the factors that make insurgency thrive. These are protracted communal conflicts, state weakness, state abdication of responsibility and proximity to the Islamist insurgents of the northeast

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[2] https://newlinesmag.com/reportage/the-bandit-warlords-of-nigeria/

[3]   https://thunderblowers.com.ng/armed-bandits-in-their-hundreds-surrounded-tsafe-town-over-alleged-arrest-of-father-of-ado-aleru-a-bandit-leader/

leading to a convergence (Matfess and Miklaucic 2016). As of 2021, the Nigerian state had clearly lost its monopoly of violence going by the emergence of a surfeit of oligopolies of violence, that is, male-headed violent non-state groups that subvert the ability of the Nigerian state to provide security. According to the African Centre for Strategic Studies (2021), there are about 62 groups of roaming insurgents mostly stationed in Zamfara each made up of estimated membership of 28 to 2500 men operating across the northwest.

Kinetic Responses in the Northwest

In response, the military launched Operation Sharan Daji in 2016 and on November 22, 2017, President Buhari ordered the deployment of a Special Forces battalion in Zamfara state sequel to attack on communities in Shinkafi and Maradun LGAs. To facilitate the implementation of the new mandate, a full battalion of Special Forces and the operationalization, in the new Order of Battle (ORBAT), of the newly established 8 Division of the Nigerian Army in Sokoto was approved. Presidential approval was also given for the movement of the 1 Brigade of Nigerian Army from Sokoto to Gusau upon the take-off of the 8 Division. After a National Security Council Meeting on 6 June 2018 attended by security chiefs and the president, the Inspector General of Police announced that 2,000 special security personnel comprising the military, police and civil defence would be deployed to Zamfara. So, on July 31, 2018, operation Diran Mikiya an intensive air operation aimed at locating and neutralising armed bandits and other criminal elements in the North-West stationed in Katsina was launched. On November 7, 2018, the then Chief of Air Staff (CAS), Air Marshal Sadique Abubakar, said Operation Diran Mikiya targeting at Zamfara bandits at Dajin Rugu shall be extended to cover, Birnin Gwari (Kaduna), Sokoto and Katsina axis" (globalsecurity.org).

From 2019 to mid-2020 the oligopolies of violence fleeing Zamfara and Katsina states after a peace deal became sources of terror in contiguous states of Sokoto, Kano, Niger, and Kaduna leading to the establishment of operation Harbin Kunama III.[4] The abduction of hundreds of schoolboys from Kankara while the President was on a visit to his home state in December 2020, by known kingpins in the area Awwalu Daudawa in conjunction with Idi Minorti and Dankarami who also have huge followings on the instructions of Boko Haram which was dispelled by the governor of Katsina state, signalled the possibility of an alliance between the two. Also, in July 2021, a military fighter jet was shot down on the border between Zamfara and Katsina states. Despite the deployment of both air and land power, and the use of vigilantes as well as other non-kinetic measures like the suspension of telecommunication services and sales of petrol in jerricans, the oligopolies of violence were not significantly weakened as they still

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[4] https://army.mil.ng/?p=3112

conducted daring attacks on hard targets like the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA) and numerous soft targets.

So, on January 6, 2022, President Buhari declared the activities of Yan Bindiga and Yan Ta'adda (Hausa description of gunmen) "as acts of terrorism and illegality" while promising to speak to them in "the language they understand", the President's euphemism for indicating the removal of kid gloves. This ended the debate within the security commentariat on whether the conduct of the oligopolies were valid grounds to declare them as terrorists or not. However, hundreds of lives were still lost in attacks carried out by the terrorists by the end of January 2022 according to multiple media reports with the most occurring in Zamfara state.[5]

As candidly put by Governor Masari in an interview that "Even members of the armed forces have limited capacity in terms of the equipment available to them and the money given to them"[6], the military cannot kinetically secure victory and restore security in the northwest. Therefore, it is ponderable to keep negotiation open as an option given it once yielded dividends albeit short-lived. A look at the immediate, medium, and long-term outcomes of talking to groups that use violence Quiney and Coyne (2011:17) shows that:

> Even if it does not result in a resolution to the conflict, engagement can save lives by mitigating the impact of violence on the population . . . Even low-level engagement can be valuable because it allows for a presence in the conflict zone that monitor humanitarian conditions.

This is direly needed in the states of the northwest as a zone but particularly in Zamfara and Katsina states that evidently have been the worst affected in the area. Although, the breakdown of past deals plausibly explains the waning confidence in the process by the governors, nonetheless, such should serve as lessons learnt for future engagements.

A further exploration of talks deserves more trials because Nigeria has responded to insurgency and groups using violence mainly through internal security operations and targeting of high value members of such groups both of which cannot be seen to have effectively dealt a final blow on any group using terror (Animasawun 2018). Examples include the killing of Mohammed Yusuf, Akwaza Terwese also

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[5]https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/death-toll-attacks-nigerias-zamfara-state-around-200-residents-2022-01-08/

[6]https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2020/06/15/masari-explains-militarys-inability-to-stop-banditry/

known as Gana in Benue state and Commander Nonso of the Indigenous People of Biafra in Imo state[7], none of which ameliorated the situation. The least tested counter-terrorism option so far deployed by the Nigerian state is the use of talks or negotiation. So, given that negotiation between the state and oligopolies of violence is not always linear (Powell 2014), going back on the deal by a part in the negotiation as seen in the northwest should not be seen as abnormal. Therefore, rethinking the negotiation that led to the peace deal between the northwest insurgents and state governors where such had broken down should not be foreclosed as one of the options of restoring security or counter-terrorism.

State Governors and Talks with Oligopolies of Violence in Nigeria

Although they are referred to as Chief Security Officers of their states, governors in conflict-affected and terrorized states of Nigeria have continuously expressed their frustration and helplessness to the point of asking residents to buy guns and defend themselves.[8] Perhaps as a domino effect of the Amnesty programme declared by the federal government of late Musa Yar'adua in response to militancy in the Niger Delta in June 2009 (Obi & Ruustard 2011) amnesty programmes and peace deals by State governors in Nigeria have produced outcomes that are typical of negotiating or talking to groups that use violence. According to Quinney and Cronin (2011) in certain instances, there can be a logical conclusion of the process. In some cases, negotiation drags on without remarkable success or outright failure while in some instances oligopolies of violence can cease to exist for other reasons which may or may not be linked to the talks. There could also be a scenario where talks continue with intermittent interruptions, successes, or setbacks (See Alden et al 2013).

Talks between the federal government and militants of the Niger-Delta came to logical conclusion. Similar attempts with the Boko Haram did not progress typical of religion-based terrorists that believe they answer only to God (Taiwo 2012; Jenkins 2021). At the state level, Governor Nyesom Wike of Rivers state in 2016 offered amnesty to stem the tide of killings by rival cults and preventing the perpetrators from being prosecuted if they embrace the amnesty offer (Ezea 2016). Many notable cult members and leaders openly denounced the act and submitted various types of weapons. Until he was killed in circumstances suggestive of high value targeting by the military in September 2020, Terwase Akwaza alias Gana had benefited from amnesty granted by Governor Samuel Ortom.

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[7]https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/413503-controversy-trails-killing-of-benues-most-wanted-criminal-gana.html; http://saharareporters.com/2021/04/27/how-esn-commander-ikonso-was-killed-which-nigerian-government-lied-about%E2%80%94ipob

[8] https://www.sunnewsonline.com/insecurity-were-frustrated-governors-cry-out/; https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/503013-insecurity-buy-guns-defend-yourselves-nigerian-governor-tells-residents.html

In Katsina state, Governor Bello Masari signed two separate peace deals with the oligopolies in his state. The first was on January 15, 2017, which spanned two years and the second was between September 4 and 9, 2019 (Sardauna 2020). The deals caused a decline in the frequency of raids on communities in Faskari, Batsari, Sabuwa, Danmusa, Dutsin-Ma, Kankara, Kurfi and Safana Local Government Areas; places where hundreds of lives had been lost. However, by June 2020, the governor reasoned that:

> Even if we were not able to meet their demands 100 per cent, we were able to meet up with between 70 and 80 per cent. But the peace accord from my records, did not last for more than six to seven months, then it broke down again and that is the position we are in at the moment. The governor described the marauding bandits as being worse than wild animals in the forest, saying they kill indiscriminately without any purpose or reasons.

This was contrary to his view in January of the same year when he expressed optimism as he recalled that:

> When we started this process in 2016, what was on ground then was cattle rustling. By the time, around 2018 going to 2019, we saw resurgence of invasion, banditry, kidnapping and rape. When we started exactly on 30th of August, we saw the reduction and stoppage of invasion of villages and communities by bandits.[9]

When he was reminded of the resurgence of banditry and the spate of kidnapping during the interview, Governor Masari observed that:

> The problem we are having, like somebody said about Batsari and Jibia, simply because those leaders who live in the forest of Zamfara, who are very close to Batsari and Jibia, did not join the peace deal. Gang leaders like Dan Karami, and to some extent Dan Gote, did not.

Governor Masari traced the prevailing insurgency and banditry at that time to porous borders between the state and Zamfara, and that:

> 70 percent of the bandits crossed over from Zamfara State. Ninety percent of the notorious ones who refused to embrace peace live in Zamfara not in Katsina. We have our own number one gang leader, Dan Gote, who resides in Katsina State. We know where his camp is, and

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[9] https://peoplesdailyng.com/katsina-peace-accord-is-yielding-result-gov-masari/

we've sent a word. We are determined. We have a responsibility, we are not afraid, neither are we ready to shy away from that responsibility.[10]

By June 2020, Governor Masari unequivocally stated that the State government was pulling out of the peace deal with the outlaws because "The armed bandits have betrayed our trust in them, following a peace agreement earlier negotiated with them, in our quest to find a lasting peace in the state" (MaiShanu 2020b). However, from then till 2022 there was no significant improvement in the efficacy of the deployed security asset to address insecurity.

In Zamfara state, using talks to complement the kinetic efforts of the federal government culminated in an arms-for-development agreement in October 2016. By 2018 after the death of Buharindaji (Buhari of the forests), there was a resurgence of insecurity in the state and across the geo-political zone as his foot soldiers spread across the zone. So, in 2020, Governor Bello Matawalle came up with a new proposal. This entailed the exchange of cows in exchange for guns returned, ordered the disarmament of the Yan Sakai, and pledged to construct rural grazing areas with veterinary services (Hassan 2021). However, these were not enough to discourage the attacks and raids and by September 2021, Governor Matawalle asserted that "My administration will no longer grant amnesty to bandits as they have failed to embrace the peace initiative earlier extended to them."[11] From the time when the two governors gave up on amnesty and peace talks because of the deceptive nature of the oligopolies of violence, no meaningful improvement could be seen even after the President Buhari declared them as terrorists.

Why Parties Dumped Peace Deals in Katsina and Zamfara

The governors of Katsina and Zamfara have been unequivocal in placing the blame of the failed peace pacts on the door of oligopolies of violence. However, some of the oligopolies of violence Usman Idris alias Ruga Kachalla have a different view. Kachalla commands fear as a leading kingpin in Safana Local Government Area (LGA) of Katsina State. According to residents and security agents, he controls a sizeable army of bandits under him who routinely kidnap people for ransom and rustle cattle without restraint. According to him:

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[10] https://dailytrust.com/amp/why-banditry-is-resurfacing-in-katsina-gov-masari

[11] https://thenationonlineng.net/zamfara-rules-out-peace-overtures-with-terrorists/

I was among the first people that accepted the peace dialogue in Katsina. But I was poorly treated and given only a rickety motorcycle while the other repentant bandits were given preferential treatment. That is why I returned to the forest. I went on my own round the forest and convinced bandits operating in my domain and beyond to accept the peace dialogue. Despite all these efforts, the Miyetti Allah leaders betrayed me and eventually blocked my little incentives coming from the government.[12]

However, officials of Katsina government would rather trace the breakdown of the pact to the unorganised nature of the bandits operating in the forest traversing Katsina and Zamfara states and not its failure to satisfactorily implement its own part of the deal as agreed. Similarly, in Zamfara state, the failure of government to fulfil its promises to the disparate armed groups, including offering rehabilitation and reintegration programs to those who had signed up and repented and the arrest of one of Buharin Daji's close associates as reasons why the deals collapsed (ICG 2020). In addition, the Zamfara state government's "dysfunction prevented it from making the regular payments to Daji" (Hassan 2021). Upon his death, there arose a leadership vacuum and the rise of more splinter groups that made negotiation more complex. As one of the outcomes of negotiation, breaches should not translate to collapse. So, irrespective of which side breached the terms of agreement, making peace should be seen as a process which is not unusual to be dogged by hiccups. In the face of continued loss of lives and mutually hurting stalemate being suffered by the government and the people on one side and the oligopolies of violence on the other hand, reactivating talks should not be foreclosed. However, this should be guided by lessons from past experiences.

Conclusion: Looking Back and Moving Ahead

The protraction and proliferation of oligopolies of violence and attendant military operations in northwest Nigeria have shown that military edge alone cannot be the decider within an irregular warfare. The views expressed by the governors and the oligopolies of violence have revealed the gaps in the expectations of both sides which is not atypical within the context of negotiation in irregular wars. Although Barnet and Rufai (2021: 2) argued that the "governor-initiated amnesties were not even formally documented but simply existed as gentlemen's agreements" as one of the factors that accounts for its collapse. However, this is not unusual when negotiating with the type of oligopolies described by Zartman (2008: 256) as

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[12] https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/481699-exclusive-notorious-bandit-sets-conditions-for-peace-in-katsina.html

barricaders who "are more frequently mentally imbalanced, kidnappers, extortionists (criminals) or militants" (Zartman 2008:256). Such agreements are described as instrumental peace agreements whereby the agreement is just a phase in a complex and flexible ongoing process (Arnault 2006). For the instrumental school, contact and communication based on the agreement matter more than the lacuna, precision, or inaccuracies in the framing. However, for the constitutive school, the contents of the agreements would determine its failure or success at the implementation stage. So, even if it was not documented, it is not sufficient to jettison it if seen from the instrumentalist's position.

The sequence of events between the governors and the oligopolies of violence in the northwest have taken a common phased sequence as spelt out by Clarke and Paul (2014) in the common trends of negotiating agreement within the context of an irregular war. First is a mutually hurting stalemate or military stalemate seen in the inability of the military to achieve a decisive victory. Next is accepting insurgents as legitimate negotiators, brokering, or committing a ceasefire, followed by official agreements or concessions all of which we have seen in Zamfara and Katsina states. The moderation of insurgents' leadership or shifting of grounds by different kingpins of the oligopolies of violence has also occurred in the two states.

Discernibly, the peace talks in the two states are instrumental in nature deserving continuous nurturing guided by these negotiators and peacebuilding technocrats or experts in the two states should get more innovative and strategic in using patience, determination, intelligence, tact, and resilience. This should be done in anticipation of the likely emergence of splinter groups, their use of negotiation to buy time and mask real intents, emergence of new sponsors, new demands, and spoilers which are characteristic of talks within an irregular warfare. Existing insecurity and the proliferation of communities governed by or on terms and conditions of the oligopolies of violence cannot be seen as the best alternative to a negotiated settlement (BATNA). Rather it has proven to be the worst alternative to a negotiated agreement (WATNA) given the protraction of raids on communities and attacks on military assets that have remained unabating.

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Securitizing Zoonotic Diseases for Nigeria's National Security in the Aftermath of COVID-19

Ayodeji Adegbite

Abstract

Besides knee-jerk and rarely coordinated national responses, animal to man diseases (zoonotic) that (in)directly threaten public health in many African countries including Nigeria rarely make the list of national security priorities even though they date back to colonial days. Despite the thousands of fatalities consistently recorded from zoonotic diseases like monkeypox, Lassa fever and yellow fever which affect the poor mainly, it has taken the outbreak of covid-19 and attendant fatalities and disruption as well as vaccine nationalism from the Global North to expose the near absence of functional institutionalized safeguards and the marginal place that public health especially zoonotic diseases occupies in our national security calculus. This article canvases for the securitization of safeguards and responses to zoonotic diseases as public health and national security emergency from the standpoint of a One Health perspective that synchronizes with national health system and local demands and realities using Covid-19 experience as lessons learnt.

Keywords: COVID-19, Epidemic Response, Infectious Diseases, National Security

Introduction

> Neglected Tropical Diseases are indiscriminate weapons of mass destruction in slow motion. Pairing landmines and (r)emerging, Neglected Tropical Diseases is instructive. Indeed, neglected tropical diseases are the landmines of global health, because like landmines that "kill, burn and damage limbs…causing lifelong impairments…destroy livelihoods and impede national economic recovery," NTDs equally kill and maim thousands annually (The Guardian 2021).

> Nigeria…depends too much on foreign aid for disease surveillance. It is difficult for the country to coordinate assistance programs that are funded and run by international NGOs and other partners with defined objectives. This result in a haphazard and uneven development of the national disease surveillance system and failure to establish a national functional laboratory network" (The Conversation 2019).

Animal to human diseases constitute a major percentage of diseases described today as Neglected Tropical Diseases, Emerging and Remerging diseases that threaten public health in many African countries. According to the World Health Organization, Emerging Diseases are diseases that either "have never occurred in humans before", or had previously occurred but "only affected a limited number of people" in affected places or have occurred throughout history but have only recently been identified as distinct

due to an infectious agent (WHO 2012). While re-emerging diseases are those that were once major public health problems globally for a significant period and for a large portion of the population and are only resurfacing in the international scene. Around 73% of currently emerging and re-emerging pathogenic agents cause zoonoses (Omitola et al 2020). Neglected Tropical Diseases are diseases that are chronic, disfiguring and disabling diseases affecting over 1.7 billion people in the world (Hotez 2012). Zoonotic disease and their outbreaks are not unusual in human history; indeed, many human pathogens have animal origins. Common infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS and malaria, and more recent pandemics like Ebola an Covid-19 are also known to have emerged from animals (Quammen 2012, Yakubu 2011, Gebretadik 2015) NTDS are known are known to afflict mainly the poor which explains why they are understudied (Hotez 2009, Liese 2014).

Zoonotic diseases in Nigeria include anthrax, plague, Lassa fever, Monkey Pox, yellow fever, rabies, trypanosomiasis, salmonellosis, taeniasis, toxoplasmosis, tuberculosis, and influenza, most of which are considered endemic in the country (Musa et al 2007, Coker 2000 and Testimony et al 2020). In the World Health Organization African Region, Nigeria alone reports more than five public health events per year. Between 2016 and 2018 alone, the country reported more than twenty public health emergencies and infectious disease outbreaks most of which are of zoonotic origin or environment related. This remerging and emerging diseases such as Lassa Fever, Monkey Pox, Yellow Fever, Cerebrospinal Meningitis and polio are a regular feature in the Weekly Epidemiological report of the Nigerian Center for Disease Control (Testimony et al 2020, NCDC 2022). Intermittent outbreaks of Lassa fever and yellow fever kill thousands yearly even as they raise considerable fear of turning into a full-blown pandemic. In addition, Nigeria is battling with fifteen NTDs out of the twenty that are identified by the World Health Organization, with millions of poor Nigerians at the risk of contracting NTDs (WHO 2012, Neglected Tropical Diseases Nigeria Multi – Year Master Plan 2015 – 2020, 2015, Testimony et al 2020).

Zoonotic diseases represent a significant threat to global public health and national security so much that combatting their emergence and managing the impact of their outbreaks should be a national security priority going by their long history and widespread devastations. The Black Death that killed over fifty million in Europe was caused by a zoonotic bacterium usually found in small mammals and their fleas called Yersinia pestis. Approximately 60% of the 1,500 or more infectious viruses and bacteria that are known human pathogens are recognized as zoonotic (Yakubu 2011). The factors responsible for (re)emergence and spread are increasingly documented in literature (Morse et al 2012, Grubaugh 2019, Giles-Vernick et al 2013, Allen et al 2017).

Despite the thousands of fatalities consistently recorded from zoonotic diseases like plague, yellow fever, monkeypox, and Lassa fever, which mainly affect the poor, it has taken the 2014 Ebola outbreak and the COVID-19 pandemic for the Nigerian state to inadvertently treat zoonotic diseases as major public health security concern. Zoonotic diseases and their outbreaks have not been considered as priorities for national

security in most African countries (Bardosh 2016). This article traces this relegation to the dominance of a global health perspective that has reduced African countries including Nigeria to mere suppliers of data for the countries in the Global North and promoted a top-down technocratic model of international health systems that over-prioritizes the concerns of countries in the Global North (Lakoff 2010, Bardosh 2016, Crane 2013). Perhaps compelled to pander to the sensibilities and preferences of the Global North, many African countries have surrendered the plot in the ordering of their public health priorities to the dictates of the Global North (Fassin 2012, Geissler 2014, Dry 2010). Moreover, because most of them are donor-dependent, these African countries have continuously had their public health strategies influenced by this global public health security perspective.

In a shift that dates to outbreaks of SARS, influenza on the back of the 9/11, a collaboration between the tripartite of FAO-WHO-OIE produce a One Health perspective in global health (Borio et al 2002, Dry 2010, Bardosh 2016). This is because One Health emphasizes the need for a collaborative and multisectoral approach to zoonotic diseases that "cut across human-animal-ecosystem interface" to confront the complex problem of zoonotic disease (Bardosh 2016: 9). One Health emphasizes the need for a collaborative multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral approach, which is meant to help guide the tracking and monitoring of zoonotic diseases. Within these complex formations diseases like Lassa fever has emerged "from unknown to known" from neglected disease to "priority pathogen" (Wilkinson 2016: 119).

Indeed, a collaborative and effective surveillance mechanism for zoonotic disease control should be part of Nigeria's national security agenda using the One Health perspective in furtherance of a national security apparatus that is anchored on the principles of human security (UNDP 1994, Heyman 2007). This is because, like armed conflict and insurgencies, zoonotic outbreaks do not only kill millions of Nigerians yearly, but they also weaken state capacity, and threaten the peace and security of the nation. The economic disruption wrought by zoonotic diseases as seen with SARS, Ebola and Covid-19 cost the world billions of dollars. In 2006, the first avian influenza pandemic in Nigeria was at a huge cost to both the federal government and international agencies (Richard 2013) besides its toll on individual farmers. An efficient zoonotic early warning and preparedness mechanism would reduce the economic cost of these outbreaks. Furthermore, a functional public health security system would reduce the availability of pliable individuals for acts that are inimical to national security; given that economic distress and food insecurity that arise from the outbreak of zoonotic diseases is a major push into crime and violent extremism.

With the huge number of Nigerians dependent on livestock and wildlife for livelihoods, their health and transmittable diseases cannot be ignored as a top national security concern because of the wide ramifications of its implications. The outbreak and consequences of Ebola, influenza flu and Covid-19 as well as the protracted farmer-herder conflict across the country are telling examples of why securitizing zoonotic diseases as a public health security concern is important. Public health and national security

should be considered inextricable because they are both concerned with the protection and preservation of lives. This article engages both primary and secondary sources, including national budget, policy documents and reports of the Federal Government of Nigeria, as well as medical journals in making its case.

This first part of article describes the existential threats posed by zoonotic diseases to the Nigerian state. In recognition of these threats, I lay bare the extent of public health security measures that the Nigerian government has in place based on the global health framework. This is followed by how the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC) is gradually tilting towards the One Health agenda in practically enhancing safeguards to zoonotic diseases in Nigeria. After the examination of the safeguards so far put in place shows using the health budgets, it is obvious that the federal government is still paying lip service to the adoption of a One Health for its public health security. Beyond transcending the One Health paradigm and its Western bias, the government must enhance the country's vaccine capacity, build functional and standard laboratories as well as enhance research on the environmental determinants of zoonotic disease as part of its efforts towards beefing up national security.

Zoonotic Diseases as Public Health Security Risks and Potent Threats

How else can we canvass for mass-drug administration campaigns, for diseases which put over 122 million Nigerians at risks? NTDs cause illness in more than one billion people globally (including more than 500 million children) and 500, 000 deaths yearly, yet receives only 0.6% health fund of official development assistance (WHO 2012). Guinea worm, a serious NTD has never had a diagnostic, vaccine or medical solution, while about 50 million persons are at risk for Onchocerciasis with over 114 million Nigerians at risk of lymphatic filariasis. 43 million and 35 million persons need treatments for schistosomiasis and nearly 20 million persons are at risk for trachoma (Neglected Tropical Diseases Nigeria Multi - Year Master Plan 2015 – 2020, 2015). Almost all the "A – Z" of Diseases on the NCDC website are zoonosis, including avian influenza, cholera, Ebola, guinea worm disease, Lassa fever, leprosy, malaria, measles, meningitis, monkeypox, pertussis, rabies, soil-transmitted helminths, viral haemorrhagic fevers, yellow fever. (NCDC 2022).

Take the case of Lassa fever for example. Since its "discovery" in the village of Lassa in 1969 (its first appearance in medical record) there have been countless outbreaks of various magnitude and severity across West Africa and Nigeria. Lassa fever went from NTD to emerging disease, to being identified by WHO as a likely cause of a future pandemic (WHO 2005b, Mehand et al 2018, Bardosh 2016: 121). In the meantime, Lassa fever records high morbidity and mortality with an estimated 300,000-500,000 cases and 5,000 related deaths annually in West Africa (NCDC 2019). In 2018, Nigeria had the highest case of Lassa Fever cases in history, as the disease spread to states in the country, where it was absent in the past,

recording over 170 deaths (NCDC 2018). In 2019 fatality rates of Lassa fever reached 23% (World Economic Forum, 2020, see also figure 3 below). A total of 2787 confirmed cases and 516 deaths were reported in Nigeria from December, 2016 to September, 2020 (Yaro et al 2021). As at March of 2022, 112 deaths had been reported. With the predominant age range for Lassa fever death as 21-30 years (NCDC 2022), Nigeria is currently dealing with what is turning out to be the world's largest epidemic of Lassa fever affecting the youth, with poor people living in rural areas at the greatest risk.

While the treatment is available for Lassa fever, at the microlevel, early diagnosis is still difficult in almost all Nigerian health care institutions and there is no vaccine. At the macro level, there remains a lack of coordinated effort that is specifically inward-facing and recognized the disease as a national security threat. By the time Covid19 pandemic broke out in Nigeria in 2020, cases of Lassa fever had seen a sudden rise - from 64 in 2015 to 774. Fatality rates of Lassa fever reached 23%, compared to then 2% for the coronavirus (World Economic Forum, 2020).

Lassa fever cases in Nigeria have risen sharply since 2015
2020 represents the first nine weeks of the year

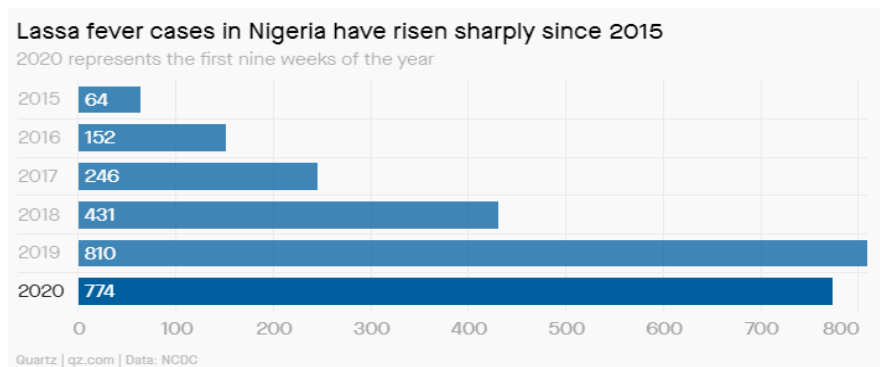|	
2015	64
2016	152
2017	246
2018	431
2019	810
2020	774

Quartz | qz.com | Data: NCDC

Fig 1- Lassa Fever Cases in Nigeria since 2015. Source: World Economic Forum 2020

Yet for long Lassa fever was left to the whims of international and humanitarian assistance (Bardosh 2016: 121). Nigerian and globally acclaimed virologist Professor Oyewale Tomori, in the wake of persistent Lassa outbreaks expressed disappointment about increasing mortality deaths in Nigeria (The Conversation 2020). He challenged the global and national response mechanism to both Lassa fever and COVID-19 while arguing that the Nigerian government needs to rely more on home-based researchers and regional institutes instead of foreign governments and international nongovernmental organizations— who have ignored diseases like Lassa fever and other zoonotic diseases and favoured a knee-jerk approach to COVID-19—in combatting environmental determinants associated with the spread of zoonotic diseases in Nigeria. According to Tomori,

> The country responded successfully to the deadly Ebola outbreak of 2014 – yet it seems unable to do the same when it comes to bringing Lassa fever under control...this is true not just of Lassa fever, but of other diseases too, such as yellow fever, Cerebrospinal meningitis as well as monkey pox. There is

currently an active yellow fever outbreak as well as 311 suspected cases of monkey pox in 26 states.[13]

Zoonotic outbreaks like Ebola and Covid-19 mainly become an emergency when they affect the Global North. The reason for swift action of the government in the containment of the Ebola outbreak of 2014 and for attention directed at surveillance and response towards Covid-19 was because of its impact on the Global North. NTDs had only attracted 0.6% of available international development funds, in contrast to almost 37% allocated to HIV/AIDS (Liese 2014). While Only 1% of developed drugs are targeted for tropical diseases, with an even smaller fraction devoted to NTDs (Maurer 2004). Professor Tomori explains why some zoonotic diseases are securitized within the global health framework and why some are not:

> One point I will like to raise is, how did we succeed with Ebola? Because we were scared. The fear of Ebola made the government put so much resources to stop the spread of the disease. But they do not have respect for these other diseases because they don't affect people at the top. Almost on a daily basis during the Ebola outbreak, the Minister of Health was always giving the number of cases because they were scared. Self-preservation made us deal with Ebola.[14]

So, in fatalities and spread zoonotic diseases constitute potent threat to both national and human security of Nigerians which makes it compelling to examine the safeguards, if any, that are available in the country.

Existing Safeguards to Zoonotic Diseases as Public Threats in Nigeria

The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, Nigeria's national public health institute, was established in 2011 to take charge of preparedness, detection and response to infectious disease outbreaks and public health emergencies. The establishment of the agency was endorsed as far back as 2007 at the 51st National Council on Health, in coalition with some departments at the Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH) such as the Epidemiology Division; the Avian Influenza Project and its laboratories; and the Nigeria Field Epidemiology and Laboratory Training Programme (NFELTP) to form the frame of the country's health security outfit (NCDC, 2022a). The NCDC Act of 2018 gave the agency the mandate to promote, coordinate, and facilitate the prevention, detection, and control of communicable diseases in

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[13] https://theconversation.com/why-nigeria-is-battling-to-control-disease-outbreaks-like-lassa-fever-111771

[14] https://www.premiumtimesng.com/health/health-interviews/274730-interview-why-nigeria-cannot-start-producing-vaccines-now-professor-of-virology.html

Nigeria and other events of public health importance (LawNigeria.com, 2019). The main components of NCDC include public health, laboratory services, emergency response activities, disease surveillance, and risk communications.

The NCDC provide regular updates on diseases affecting Nigerians. It helps coordinate the national program on infectious diseases in the country. It is at the heart of the country's National Action Plan on Health Security (2018 – 2019). The agency has leveraged on the social media to sensitize and educate the public on important public health events in the country. In the wake of the COVID19 pandemic, the agency coordinated surveillance, travel guidelines, and international communications needed to combat the pandemic. It partners with eHealth Africa, London School of Tropical Medicine, UCDC, Africa CDC, WHO, UNICEF, BILL and Melinda Gates Foundation amongst others to fight against pandemics and health security globally and in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, the NCDC coordinate zoonotic diseases and zoonotic surveillance through the Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response (IDSR) platform. Information on zoonotic diseases such as LF flows from the health facilities, through the ward focal persons to the Local Government Area (LGA) Disease Surveillance and Notification Officers (DSNOs), to the State DSNOs, to the State Epidemiologist and then to the NCDC, and the Federal Ministry of Health. All states in Nigeria including FCT report through the IDSR (Okoro et al 2020). Weekly reports on number of confirmed cases and deaths from Lassa fever are published in the weekly epidemiological reports by the NCDC.

The NCDC has wholesomely embraced the One Health perspective to strengthen zoonotic disease management in Nigeria. The transdisciplinary and multisectoral approach to human and animal health management means the participation of critical stakeholders in the health sector including professionals from human, animal, and environmental health departments in its activities. The One Health programs are carried out through series of workshops sponsored by the USAID and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (USCDC). The USCDC developed a One Health Zoonotic Disease Prioritization (OHZDP) method that was adopted by the One Health participants in Nigeria in 2017 (Ihekweazu 2021). The collaboration ranked rabies, avian influenza, Ebola Virus Disease, swine influenza and anthrax as the five priority zoonotic diseases in Nigeria. In 2018, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) workshopped one of such events that included fifteen West African countries to "prioritize endemic and emerging zoonotic diseases of greatest regional concern that should be jointly addressed by One Health ministries and other partners." It was the first regional One Health event. The ECOWAS states based on the OHZDP agreed on a list of seven priority zoonotic diseases for the region including "Anthrax, Rabies, Ebola and other viral haemorrhagic fevers (for example, Marburg fever, Lassa fever, Rift Valley fever, Crimean-Congo Haemorrhagic fever), zoonotic influenzas, zoonotic tuberculosis, Trypanosomiasis, and Yellow fever" (Goryoka et al 2021).

The goals of the OHZDP were to use a multisectoral One Health approach to rank endemic and emerging zoonotic diseases of greatest regional concern. The criterion for prioritization includes severity; prevention and control; epidemic or pandemic potential; ability to detect; and socio-economic and environmental impact. Individual countries in West Africa also workshopped the OHZDP. The Nigerian government has since adopted the One health paradigm through a 5-year strategic plan (2019-2023) "to prevent and control zoonoses and other emergencies" (One Health Strategic Plan 2019 OHSP). Adopting the One Health paradigm seem inevitable for Nigeria. The country is rated among the 10 countries with the highest burden of infectious and zoonotic diseases globally (Ihekweazu 2021).

Securitizing Zoonotic Diseases: Nigeria's Need to Transcend the Lip Service to One Health

Since the establishment of the One Health Strategic Plan by the Nigerian government in 2019 and the regional ECOWAS One Health programs, intermittent outbreaks of zoonotic infections like Lassa fever, Cerebrospinal Meningitis, cholera, measles, monkeypox and yellow fever have continued unabated. Like other regional zoonotic disease mechanism such as the Mano River Union Lassa Fever Network (MRU-LFN) formed with the assistance of the Office of United States Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) in collaboration with the WHO, the European Union and Sierra Leonean, Liberian and Guinean government, the basic principle undergirding this global security mechanism is to detect and contain zoonosis (e.g. Lassa fever) for the public health security of population in the global North (Dry 2010, Bardosh 2016). The One Health workshops and NCDC zoonotic efforts need to be conceived as a complex problem deserving of engagement with a broader configuration of zoonosis, that transcends tracking and surveillance to incorporate policy social and environmental drivers of zoonosis (Bardosh 2016, 132) and within a securitizing agenda from the national to the local government level.

So far, the collaboration has lacked a hands-on engagement with the real victims of the diseases and the environments that enable zoonotic diseases to thrive. Indeed, the government zoonosis management as informed by One Health paradigm fails to capture what evolutionary epidemiologist, Rob Wallace calls the circuit of capital, that produces and recycles zoonotic diseases in pursuit of profit by multinational corporations (Wallace 2014, 2020). Wallace was concerned here with industrial models of agriculture and livestock production which in pursuit of profit contribute to deforestation and landscape transformations that creates the environments for zoonotic diseases to emerge and thrive. Wallace's view runs in contrast with the vision of the Nigerian government that recently, in a bid to revamp the agricultural sector of the country to enhance foreign exchange earnings, canvassed for largescale investment in agriculture (Review of Agricultural Transformation 2017). Such investments usually do not come with requisite mechanism for stopping the emergence of zoonotic outbreaks, nor in controlling them when they emerge from landscape transformations attending largescale agricultural investments. Needless

to say, 'prevention, based on understandings of environment-human-rodent interactions has been relatively neglected and…poorly understood' as elaborated by Wilkinson in Bardosh (2016:118) that:

> Education in laboratory sciences…remains constrained so the production of scientific knowledge for Lassa fever is geographically anchored in the Global North, to where samples need to be shipped from 'field stations' like the Lassa lab (in Kenema Seirra Leone). This has implications for science-policy process as field contexts, and the complexities of the disease-environment interactions, fade from view.

As observed in the management of Lassa fever in Sierra Leone, even when it became recognized as a 'national disease' in the country, laboratory, a key node in zoonotic disease management was unavailable. As at 2007, there were only 20 biosafety level 4 (BSL-4) laboratories (BSL-4 pathogen requires highest level containment facility) in the world and, when research on Lassa began, none of these was in West Africa (Bardosh 2016: 119). In Nigeria, it is only Irrua in Ebonyi state that has a functional laboratory for Lassa fever even though it is not at the BSL-4 level. Laboratory capacity and other infrastructures has remained ineffectual. Basic infrastructures are not provided resulting in several nosocomial outbreaks. Although Lassa fever is turning into a 'national disease' with increasing outbreaks and spread in Nigeria with attendant international recognition it generates, like other NTDS and emerging and reemerging diseases, it has not led to the strengthening of laboratory capacity and local vaccine production because facilities like the Yaba laboratory that had in the past produced yellow fever vaccines remain moribund, buried in avarice of government corruption and greed (Tomori 2006).

On paper, One Health galvanizes support for research and production and distribution of vaccines but with a bias for bioterrorism potential of zoonotic diseases which are not top priorities for a country like Nigeria. At the OHZDP workshop, it was "argued that 'bioterrorism potential' was not a major concern in Nigeria's setting" and is therefore not an immediate concern (Ihekweazu 2021). Efforts of the international community are also not integrated by government at the regional and national level. Within the country a lack of coordination amongst local, state and federal government continue to affect response mechanism and the One Health paradigm. Over the years, the FGN has failed to incorporate new models of surveillance mechanism for detecting the prevalence and increase in zoonotic diseases into a national security structure within the country's federal structure. According to Tomori:

> (in the past) Each of the states had its own disease surveillance department, epidemiology. So, problems were sorted before it became federal. Federal were only to provide support after they are not able to handle it. So now, all the states abandoned their responsibility and it became a federal thing and then, the federal was overwhelmed… In those days, states and even local government areas have
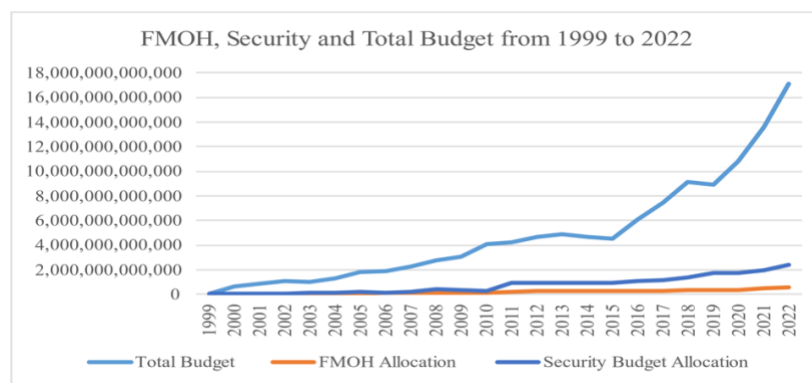
health department. Before it even gets to the state level, the local government level has already sorted it out"[15]

The Nigerian framework of One Health needs to be incorporated into a health securitization framework that supports effort from the federal government against zoonotic diseases with adequate funds to facilitate research, local vaccine production, surveillance, and improvement of primary healthcare services. Uncritical adoption of elegant global health paradigms without tailoring it to Nigerian health security needs has little value for poor sufferers of zoonotic diseases.

The Need to Increase Funding for Zoonotic Diseases

In 2022, a paltry 4.3% of the entire federal budget was allocated for health while the total budget proposal is 711.2 billion from an annual estimated total of 16.3 trillion (FD Budget, LawNigeria.com 2019). In the 2022 appropriation bill submitted to the National Assembly, the president proposed a capital expenditure of 194.6 billion for the Ministry of Health and 516.6 billion for recurrent expenditure comprising personnel and overhead costs. However, not only does the plan have a grossly inadequate estimated budget for health, but the allotted portion for zoonotic disease is also significantly low as figure 2 shows.

The national security budget of the federation has continued to dwarf the allocation to the federal ministry of health and the NCDC and National Primary Healthcare and Development Agency (NPHDA) as seen in figure 2. The graph shows that over the past decades the government has deprived the major institutions of Nigerian health security the necessary fund to build capacity and carry out its project of securing health amidst rising public health crises and zoonotic outbreaks.

[15] https://www.premiumtimesng.com/health/health-interviews/274730-interview-why-nigeria-cannot-start-producing-vaccines-now-professor-of-virology.html

Increasing fatality and threat of zoonotic diseases has not inspired the government to securitize public health in Nigeria. In the case of conventional security, the government has proportionally increased the security budget over the years. For example, the budget on security increased from US$1.44 billion in 2009 to US2.81 billion in 2018 (Onuoha et al 2020: 1 see also figure 2). The lack of financial commitment by the Nigerian government allows foreign bodies to dictate the rhythm of public health for the country. Vaccines are produced from countries in the global North and majority of consultants come from there. The Vaccine Alliance (GAVI), which was set up in 2000 to create equal access to vaccines for poor countries, has also not lived up to expectation. According to Tomori:

> (in the past) GAVI fund is spent on these consultants that come to the country (to) stay in Transcorp Hotel. Most consultants don't even know anything about what they do and then you put them in hotels. The payment for each day they spend is all part of the $1 billion they are giving us. GAVI has been boasting that they gave us $800 million over a period of 10 years.

In making a stronger case for increased funding by the federal government, Professor Tomori opines that:

> We should be the one giving GAVI money if we spend our money well. Even the money GAVI gives to us, we misuse it. How much is GAVI putting in for the 10 years? About $1 billion. That was during my first meeting GAVI. The amount is nothing compared to Dasuki's $2.3 billion (amount for arms procurement former National Security Adviser Sambo Dasuki allegedly mismanaged) … Add up all Magu (the then Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC chairman) has recovered, it's more than what the donors are giving us.. So we don't need donor money, we can do all this with our money if we spend well.[16]

There is a need to focus on the national government as a result of failing global commitments. In Figure 3 we see that the portion allotted to NCDC in the budget of the Federal Ministry of Health has remained insignificant since the creation of the NCDC. The amount of budget available to the NCDC will go a long way in determining how the agency securitize health.

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[16] https://www.premiumtimesng.com/health/health-interviews/274730-interview-why-nigeria-cannot-start-producing-vaccines-now-professor-of-virology.html
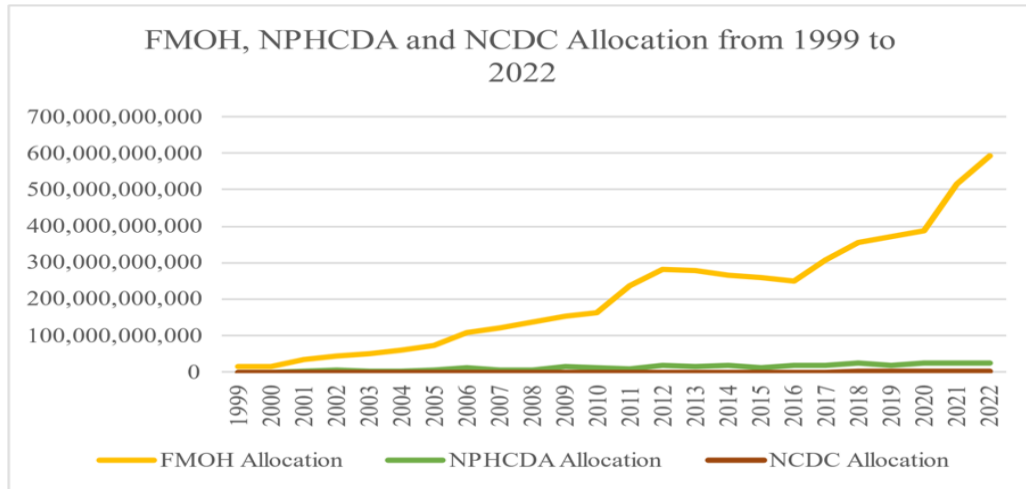
Fig 3- Nigerian Federal Budget Allocations for the Ministry of Health (FMOH), National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA) and Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) from 1999 to 2022

While the federal government has failed to meet its commitment to the health sector at home, it has also laid a bad example at the continental level. Case in point is the April 2001 'Abuja Declaration' where African governments committed to dedicate at least 15% of their annual budget to the securitizing health and fighting infectious diseases (WHO 2011). Yet, the FGN budget for the health sector for the past two decades is less than 6% and the total health sector budget for the last 20 years has averaged below 6 per cent of the total FGN budget. While the COVID-19 pandemic raged on there was significant decrease in Nigeria's health budget. The health budget of 2022 is a paltry 5% of the annual budget, while that of 2021 was roughly 7%. Both falls below the 15% pledged at the Abuja Declaration. The budgetary provision for public health assigned to the NCDC is 3 billion from a national budget of 17 trillion with a security allocation of 2 trillion.

As the budgetary analysis has shown, the FGN has failed to prioritize health security in Nigeria amidst increasing zoonotic outbreaks and infections. with scant consideration for their adaptability to local peculiarities. Not integrating zoonotic disease plans into health security agenda means that Nigeria continues to allow foreign governments and international communities to dictate the rhythm, pace and pattern of pandemic response. The One Health paradigm therefore can only be successful if Nigeria contextualizes and operates it within a Nigerian national security agenda that prioritises health security. Pursuing this becomes an emergency cognizant of the fact that the world lives in an era of unprecedented climate change, characterized by significant land-use change that exacerbates issues of landscape changes creating chances for new diseases to break.

Conclusion

Millions of slow deaths are caused by NTDs and other zoonosis with the potential of zoonotic pandemic originating from Nigeria and spreading to the rest of the world. Over the years, the FGN has failed to incorporate new models of surveillance mechanism for detecting the prevalence and increase in zoonotic diseases within a national security frame. The government has failed to prioritize laboratory and vaccine production within the national budgetary and security framework leaving global health agencies to establish its own agenda within the country. Lack of adequate framework for health security would often lead to militarization of health emergency. Securitizing health does not mean militarization, as seen with the deployment of military during the 2014 Ebola crises in Liberia, and COVID-19 in Nigeria which led to loss of lives, and injuries to citizens. It means instituting health within the national security framework to enhance faster and easy mobilization and the provision of health care facilitates for easy response and detection.

Nigeria mounted a swift and aggressive response to Ebola and COVID-19, leveraging on its existing epidemic preparedness and learning from other parts of the globe where transmission began earlier. A rapid, holistic, cohesive, whole-of-government approach that encompasses civil society and local-communities needs to be incorporated in public health response generally. Securitizing public health should entail mobilizing resources and strategy for zoonotic preparedness and public health to ensure equitable access to vaccines, and adequate government funding. It includes supporting and expanding laboratory and vaccine manufacturing capacity and education in Nigeria. Health security must be part of a holistic multisectoral approach to national security because Covid-19 has shown that spending to protect a country's core national values and her territorial integrity is no longer sufficient to deter threat to citizens and her corporate existence. Therefore, given the known vulnerabilities of Nigerians to zoonotic diseases, our national security thinking and spending should have a place for it.

Furthermore, regional multidisciplinary approaches to the control of zoonotic infections should be encouraged in West Africa. Problems associated with bureaucracy, lack of well-established historical epidemiology and surveys, incomplete and unavailable health statistics should be tackled hands-on. Information and surveillance of zoonotic diseases and their risk factors and appropriate interventions should be shared within the states and amongst regional bodies. Lastly, even with the One Health paradigm, the global north must come to terms with inequalities, local complexities, and contingencies in public health in Africa. Therefore, it must empower the country to localize and prioritize zoonotic as a national security concern.

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Kinetic Responses to new Biafran Agitations in Nigeria: Limits and Alternatives

Fisayo Ajala

Abstract

Evidently, state responses to the activities of proliferating violent non-state actors seeking to exit, subvert or abolish the Nigerian state since 1999 have been ineffectual. The characteristic state responses have been kinetic resulting in internal security operations across every geo-political zone with attendant strains in civil-military relations, hike in unbudgeted military spending, preventable loss of military and civilian lives, operational fatigue, and militarization of everyday street-level contact with the state. In responding to the now proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Police actions and internal security operations have been consistent especially since 2015. This article examines how these solo kinetic responses have shaped the conduct of IPOB's separatist agitation, the quest for re-establishing order in the zone and explores plausible alternatives resolving the new/resurgent Biafran agitation.

Keywords: Biafra, Secessionist Movements, Non-State Actors, Violence,

Introduction

> Of all the upheavals that have marked Africa's transition from colonialism to political independence, none has been more tragic than Nigeria's civil war, either in terms of the immediate human suffering it has caused or the shadow it has cast on the continent's prospects for harmony and prosperity. After two years of inconclusive warfare and the collapse of three major initiatives toward negotiations, genuine peace in Nigeria seems very far away (McKeena 1969)

The excerpt above comes against the backdrop of a series of events that occurred less than a decade into Nigeria's independence. The ethnically coloured January 15, 1966 coup, Ironsi's Decree 34 that abrogated the Federal system, the May 1966 mass killings of Igbos living in northern Nigeria, the July 1966 counter-coup and the refusal of the Federal Government headed by General Gowon to uphold the Aburi accord of January 1967 were the supervening events that culminated in the 30 months secessionist war that hardened Biafran agitations (Falola and Heaton, 2008). The defeat of the Biafran Army, the "No Victor, No Vanquished" refrain, and the 3Rs of Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Reconciliation did little to stem the Biafran ideology of self-determination formed during the war.

So, the return to civil rule which has been described as a "shadow democracy" (Adebanwi forthcoming) in 1999 created an operating space for different ethnic militias and separatist groups to challenge the continued corporate sanctity of the Nigerian State. However, twenty years down the line, some of these groups' activities have been suppressed, redirected and in some instances replaced by more brazen forms of organized violence. For instance, the Oodua People's Congress has largely been confined to vigilante activities in urban and semi-urban parts of Southwest Nigeria and commemoration of cultural festivals. But for occasional picketing and stand-offs with security agents, violent mobilization by the militant groups in the Niger Delta have been punctuated by the Amnesty peace agreement (Ajayi & Adesote, 2013). In place of the Arewa Youth Consultative Forum (AYCF), the vociferous youth wing of the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF), there has been the emergence of violent terror and bandit groups operating in the region.

Across, Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo states that constitute the south-eastern geo-political zone, ethno-political agitations have tied to the Biafran aspiration lend credence to the observation that the "Biafra (has) lasted than it was imagined" (Bourne 2015: 146). At the centre of the post-1999 Biafran resurgence was the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), arguably the first post-1999 Biafran group that pushed for the realisation of the Biafran struggle. While other Igbo groups existed between 1970 and 1999, these groups were largely socio-cultural associations that advanced the political and economic rights of the Igbo nation.

Established in 1999 by Ralph Uwazurike, the MASSOB was founded on a principle of non-violence and outlined a 25-strategy plan to achieve Biafra nationhood. It had large followership among the subalterns of the Southeast region and adopted different civil disobedience strategies, including rallies protests, and encouraged boycotts of civic activities, like elections. Government forces frequently targeted its leaders and members. Uwazurike was sentenced for treason but later released on bail (Onuoha, 2011). Internal and external issues relating to leadership styles, engagement strategies, and resource management factionalised the MASSOB and necessitated the emergence of other neo-Biafran groups, like the IPOB (Oyewole, 2019). The IPOB, is a separatist movement that came into national prominence in 2012 with a lone agenda of causing the exit of the Igbo ethnic nationality from the Nigerian state thereby joining the ranks of non-state ethnic groups that have seemingly called to question, the corporate existence of the Nigerian state since the return to democracy in 1999.

Of critical note in the trajectory of ethno-nationalist movements and struggles in the Nigerian state is their engagement with State agents at different phases of their lifespan. The clashes with state agents come with a repertoire of actions, including but not limited to indiscriminate arrests, detention of group members, clamping down of associational freedoms, gross abuse and violation of human rights, and "unlawful" proscription, as was the case of the IPOB. This use of state force and power have precluded the possibilities of exploring non-kinetic ways of responding to these groups. It has affected the response-ability of security agencies in the country. The characteristic state responses that have been kinetic has

resulted in attendant strains in civil-military relations, a hike in unbudgeted military spending, preventable loss of military and civilian lives, operational fatigue, and militarisation of everyday street-level contact with the state.

Within the preceding explanation, this paper seeks to critically examine the limits and explore alternatives to the ongoing security operations and use of military force against the new Biafran agitations, championed by the now proscribed IPOB in Nigeria. Besides the introduction, this article is divided into four sections. The second section discusses IPOB's separatist agitations in the Southeast. The third section and fourth section examine the Nigerian state's responses to the violence, and explores the use of non-kinetic force in ending the violence in the region.

"It is either Biafra or Death": IPOB Separatist Agitations in South-East Nigeria.

IPOB was founded by Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, a British - Nigerian national, in 2012. The trajectory of IPOB's formation has been explained in the introductory section. Its leadership organogram comprises the founder, publicity secretary, and regional coordinators selected from Nigeria's Southeast, Niger Delta, and Middle Belt regions. The group has huge followership among Igbo youths in Southeast Nigeria comprising petty traders and artisans, early school leavers, unemployed and under-employed graduates. Other educated Igbo elites in support of IPOB belong to its coterie of patrons and donors, grassroots, and diaspora mobilisers. The group claims to have a huge following of 40 -100 million members worldwide (Obasi, 2015; Nwangwu et al., 2020).

The group has utilised digital transmission and social media platforms as its broadcast channels and agenda-setting strategies for propaganda intents as it was admirably and effectively used to sustain the Biafra war while it lasted from 1967-1970 (Davies 1995). Its internet radio station, Radio Biafra, established in 2009 and whose transmission the federal government unsuccessfully tried to jam, has promoted inflammatory anti-Nigeria messages that also reveal its vehement intent as reflected in the caption of this sub-section (Oyewole, 2019:11).

Beyond its media messages, IPOB has also adopted militant and aggressive tactics against the Nigerian government. These approaches follow a similar strategy adopted by the forerunner group, the MASSOB, in spite of its proclaimed non-violent leanings (Onuoha, 2011). The strategies (public protests, sit-at-home orders, and other (non)militant confrontations with the State) adopted by IPOB have, for the most part, crippled social and economic activities in the Southeast region, as is shown later in this study. These methods contrast with those of other Igbo political classes like the Ohaneze Ndigbo that seek a gradualist and non-confrontational approach to political integration into the Nigerian project (Nwangwu et al. 2020).

The IPOB has a paramilitary wing, the Eastern Security Network (ESN) which was established to protect and safeguard the forests and farmlands of the Southeast from killer herders and other criminal groups alleged to have laid siege on the region (EASO, 2021). The ESN has carried out attacks against security personnel police stations and targeted unarmed civilians in Southeast Nigeria. Officers and men of the Nigerian Police Force have been victims of IPOB's attacks and atrocities. In April 2021, it masterminded a prison break in Imo state, freeing up to 1,800 prisoners (Osae-Brown and Alake, 2020).

Though the emergence of ESN may have formally signaled the militarization of IPOB, the group and its members have been involved in violent confrontations with the Nigerian state before ESN's formation in December 2020. Instances of its clashes with security operatives have been captured in media reports (Mamah et al, 2017). The next section examines how the Nigerian state has responded to IPOB's agitations.

State's Kinetic Responses to IPOB and other Dissents across Nigeria: In Whose Interest?

A government's internal security strategy goes a long way to reveal how and what is interpreted as a threat to public peace and security and whether the priority is on regime protection or safety and security of the citizens. This helps to know whether a government is being proactive-reactive or coercive-reactive (Oshita and Ikelegbe 2019). The consistent deployment of kinetic power to dissenting but non-violent agitations in Nigeria has come with dire consequences for State-society relations just as it has provided social capital in form of pity and a level of legitimacy for dissenting groups some of which eventually take up anti-civic stance violently. The manner, timing and extent of deployed kinetic power also reveals whose interest the state is prioritizing as national security. This is because the ready excuse given for unleashing kinetic power on dissenting voices is that they constitute existential threat to the country's corporate existence, that is, national unity and national security. Based on this, state power is deployed in manners that are disrespectful of the constitution (Buzan, Ole and de Wilde, 1998). This was made amply clear by President Buhari in 2018 at the 58th national conference of lawyers in Nigeria that "Rule of Law must be subject to the supremacy of the nation's security and national interest" (Okakwu 2018). So, for a government whose consistent response to all forms of public protest, agitations, expression of grievances and demonstrations has been repressive, the human rights and security of citizens is assured in as much as they are not seen or known to be making agitations for self-determination even when such is not violent. This can be gleaned as the stance of President Buhari made known to the gathering of lawyers which can be interpreted as its security strategy aimed at regime protection and even deification.

These reactive approaches and their outcomes have strained the country's fragile and tense state-society relations owing to the indiscriminate and excessive use of force in these operations, the attendant human rights violations, extra-judicial killings, and militarisation of society. It has also triggered desires for

vengeance and motivation to join extremist groups among victims of security abuses (Amnesty International, 2016).

The Boko Haram conflict (2009-date) provides a fitting example to capture the variegated impact of coercive-reactive state responses, as the extra-judicial killing of Mohammed Yusuf and the indiscriminate use of force in the early months and years of the group's emergence was partly responsible for the group's expansion from a fringe Islamist sect into a militant terror group. In the case of IPOB, the state bore its fangs when a series of protests organised by IPOB from August 2015 to May 2016 culminated in clashes between the Nigerian military and IPOB youths in several states of Southeast Nigeria. These protests degenerated into mass shootings, deaths and injuries of unarmed protesters. On 30 May 2016, a day celebrated in honour of Biafra's declaration anniversary, there was a protest that erupted into a major clash between the Nigerian military and IPOB youths. This protest led to at least 60 deaths and 70 injuries (Amnesty International, 2016). These protests, triggered by the initial arrest of IPOB leader, Nnamdi Kanu in October 2015, have degenerated into wide-scale violence, economic sabotage, destruction of security and public infrastructure, loss of lives, and militarisation of the South-East region over the past six years.

Widespread breaches of public peace and order involving the IPOB in the southeast geo-political have precipitated the initiation of counter-insurgency operations led by the Nigerian Army in the Southeast region. To date, there have been series of counter-insurgency operations conducted in the region. They include Operation Iron Fence (2015), Operation Python Dance I, II and III (2016, 2017, 2018, 2019), and Exercise Golden Dawn (2021). These exercises are targeted at combating criminal elements and stemming the tides of waves of insecurity in the region. It is necessary to state that these military exercises are not limited to the Southeast alone; they are also conducted across other geo-political zones. For instance, Operation Python Dance III was done across the country ahead of 2019 (Momodu, 2019; Onuoha et al., 2020). The recurring use of the military in internal security operations and other national exercises are indicative of how the government interprets dissent.

The prolonged military presence in the region has meant frequent clashes, attacks and reprisals between the secessionists/protesters and Nigerian security forces. An instance of this was the invasion of Nnamdi Kanu's residence by soldiers of the Nigerian Army during the Operation Python Dance II exercise in September 2017. The clash, which resulted in the death and injury of several protesters, led to the sudden disappearance of Nnamdi Kanu in 2017. In August 2020, members of the IPOB and the Nigerian security forces (comprising detachments of the Department of Security Services (DSS), Nigerian Police, Army and Airforce) clashed at a gathering of IPOB members in Enugu State, Nigeria. This violent confrontation resulted in the deaths of both members of the Nigerian security forces detachment and the outlawed separatist group. Likewise, in mid-September, attacks on security agents were perpetrated, though IPOB denied responsibility (Eze, 2020). The invasion of Kanu's residence is synonymous with similar operations like the invasion of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria in December 2015, which resulted in the

death of over 350 members of the movement and the invasion of the residence of the Yoruba nation agitator, Chief Sunday Adeyemo on July 1, 2021.

Shortly after the ESN's emergence in December 2020, members of the group engaged the Nigerian military in Orlu, Imo state. This confrontation resulted in a dusk to dawn curfew and a land and air deployment of Nigerian military troops to search for ESN members and destroyed their camps in the Orlu LGA. The stand-off, which lasted for seven days (January 22 – 28, 2021), was temporarily halted following a unilateral cease-fire by the IPOB. Attacks, clashes and killings between Nigerian security forces and members of the IPOB/ESN have continued unabated from the first quarter of 2021 to the current time of writing (March 2022). These killings, some of which were perpetrated by faceless killers, labelled as "unknown gunmen", have resulted in countless deaths of security personnel, prominent individuals, and other civilians, as well as the destruction of public buildings belonging to the Nigerian Correctional Service, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) among other public agencies in the region (Amnesty International, 2021; Punch Newspapers, 2022).

Non-Kinetic Responses

On the heel of the 2017 military invasion of Kanu's residence came the pronouncement of IPOB as a terrorist group by the Nigerian military and the banning of the group by state governors in the Southeast geopolitical zone. These were the initial forms of non-kinetic responses to the IPOB violence. The reasons given by the military for its proclamation was the group's formation of its security units, disturbance of public peace and order, possession of dangerous weapons, and confrontation of troops on lawful duty (Ibrahim, 2017). Though this pronouncement by the Nigerian military was criticised as it (the military) lacked the executive powers to do so, it expedited the formal proscription of the group under Section 2 of the Terrorism (Prevention) Amendment Act 2013 (as amended). This presidential proclamation and gazetting of the order proscribing IPOB made the group outlawed under the Act after Boko Haram and the IMN in 2013 and 2015, respectively (Ejeh et al., 2020).

The resort to judicial processes to criminalise and outlaw the activities of groups seeking self-determination not minding whether they have become militant or not, forms part of non-kinetic state responses. However, the apparent haste and timing of declaring IPOB a terrorist organization raises more questions against the backdrop of the views expressed by President Buhari that revealed his innermost views about the Igbo ethnic nationality. This dates to the early days of his administration in 2015 when he wondered why the constituencies that gave him 97% of votes and those who gave him 5%, that is, the southeast would expect equal treatment from his administration. The fact that the designation of the Yan Bindiga and Yan Ta'adda and bandits groups terrorizing communities and downing military jets in the northwest region of Nigeria came much after the designation of an IPOB seeking self-determination calls to question the rationale and criteria for designating a group as a terrorist and when to initiate kinetic

operations given that the terrorists operating in the northwest who are largely of Fulani ethnic extraction were in 2018 rated as the fourth deadliest terrorist group in globally. The proscription order shows how the state's executive and discretionary powers are utilised for political ends, as they override constitutionally guaranteed fundamental freedoms of assembly and association.

The Southeast governors, on the other hand, have equally attempted to respond to the group in both (non)kinetic ways, even though their initial responses – curfew and bans on the group's activities – were lacklustre, and had no significant impact on the activities of the group. Perhaps, the closest to a kinetic response by the political leadership in the region was the establishment of Ebube-Agu, a regional joint security vigilante outfit in the zone. However, ESN issued a statement signed by Emma Powerful that:

> Any other security outfit formed in South-East will crash because ESN is already on ground and living up to expectations. . . Forming another regional security outfit is suspicious, and a needless waste. The governors failed our people when they needed their protection. It's already late.[17]

The Ebube-Agu, translated to "fearsome aura of a Lion" in Igbo, is moulded in the form of Amotekun, the regional security outfit in Southwest Nigeria. Whereas Amotekun was established as a response to the security crises in Southwest Nigeria, Ebube-Agu, on the other hand, is both a response of the Southeast regional leadership to the domineering and combative ESN, the militant arm of the outlawed IPOB and the security failures in the region (Nwoko, 2021). It is also important to note that since its announcement in 2021, is still in its deliberative stage, as it has yet to be passed into law by the respective assemblies of the different Southeast states.

Exploring the (Im)Plausibility of Alternatives to Kinetic Exchanges between IPOB and the Nigerian Government

Tellingly, the security tensions in the Southeast have been exacerbated by Nnamdi Kanu's re-arrest and trial and consequent sit-at-home order imposed by the IPOB on residents in the Southeastern states in 2021. In addition, the alleged targeted killing of high ranking members of IPOB by the military and impact made by attacking hard targets like police stations, freeing detainees from correctional facilities, and torching democratic symbols like the office of the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) as well as the viral videos of ESN mobilizing children into the group that went viral, are indicators that the Nigerian state maybe in for a longer war than envisaged and as quoted at the beginning of this piece that the search for genuine peace continues. In between this ding-dong between the military and the IPOB are the

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[17] https://www.newtelegraphng.com/prepare-to-meet-your-ancestors-if-you-join-ebubeagu-to-spy-on-esn-ipob-warns/

communities whose daily life became imperiled because they were forced to obey a "sit at home order" for which non-compliance was punished until IPOB suspended it (Ayodele, 2021).

Indeed, the situation in the southeast mirrors what Zartman (2008) described as a mutually hurting stalemate between two warring sides. This implies that any resultant outcome will only be a "victor's peace" which is never sustainable (Höglund & Orjuela 2011) as 30% of them barely last for more than five years (Adekanye 2007) based on global trends. While the government may have hastened the radicalization into violence of IPOB through its initial application of military force, opportunities to explore non-kinetic measures still exist, and it is imperative for the Federal government, Southeast political leaders, and stakeholders to explore the available opportunities for seeking lasting peace in the region.

In activating alternatives to kinetic operations, it is opined that the ceasefire that preceded the November 6 2021 gubernatorial election in Anambra state, one of the foremost states in the region indicates that a ceasefire can be reached. However, a ceasefire in this context must be respected by both sides in the conflict within a broader context of negotiation between the two. Using a backchannel for negotiation between the two provides an avenue for frank talks, confidentiality and concessions which may not be deemed popular by either side especially given the political implications of such concessions. Urgently needed in this context are facilitators, negotiators, guarantors, and mediators all of which would spend considerable time using back channels of conflict resolution. In the meantime, the ongoing trial of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu should be conducted in a conflict-sensitive manner and fairly within the limits of the rule of law.

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Mass Surrender of Boko Haram members in Nigeria's North-East: Matters Arising and Implications for Security

Saheed Babajide Owonikoko

Abstract

Federal government's claim of "mass surrender" of those described as "repentant terrorists" cannot but have implications for residents, post-insurgency life of perpetrators and victims in the terror-affected communities and Nigeria's war on terror. Findings from primary and secondary sources revealed that the reintegration process is stoking fear, feeling of abandonment by victims, and a perception that the federal government is rewarding insurgency. Therefore, this article canvasses a perpetrator-focused deradicalisation programme for the returning Boko Haram members and victim-focused rehabilitation programme for residents towards addressing the needs and fears on both sides. Also, escapees should be distinguished from active fighters in using the frame of "mass surrender" so that residents would know that not all returning are active or willing members of the Boko Haram. All of these would produce a socially constructed and mutually owned security that leaves no side feeling short-changed or in fear as the zone recovers from insurgency.

Keywords: Boko Haram, North East, Insurgency, deradicalisation, reconciliation

Introduction

Nigeria's war against the Boko Haram has spanned over a decade since 2009 when full-blown counter-terrorism operations began. Since then, the group has used terror tactics to advance its engagement with the Nigeria state. Victims have cut across combatants and non-combatants while the group has also recorded loss of high-value members like Mohammed Yusuf, Abubakar Shekau and Kabiru Sokoto amongst others. Seven years into the life of the administration of President Buhari that was voted largely because of its expressed determination to deal decisively with the Boko Haram, lived realities of Nigerians in the northeast call to question the ability of the government to live up to its promise. While pitched battles, ambushes, hit and run attacks have largely replaced the hitherto control of territories by the Boko Haram, the Nigerian state cannot be seen to have achieved security dominance in the area. The sustained efforts of the Nigerian military and Multinational Joint Task Force ((MNJTF), and acquisition of better weapons have arguably made the Boko Haram weaker than it was pre-2015. There were also other factors that culminated in the weakening of the Boko Haram. Some of these include internal splits, and diminished supplies of everyday needs (Bukarti & Bryson, 2019).

In maximizing the gains of its efforts and mindful of the fact that within the fold of the terrorists are active fighters and those conscripted into the group besides hostages, the federal government came up with the

idea of a safe corridor. As an initiative comparable to Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programme, a similitude of the safe corridor was first mulled by the President Jonathan in 2013 as an amnesty programme which was snubbed by the Boko Haram. However, when the initiative was mulled by the Buhari administration, it elicited disparate opinions. While some praised the decisions other criticize it as rewarding criminality against the state.

As the disparate opinions about the initiative swelled, a report cited Nigerian military and justice officials as saying that as many as 7,000 fighters and family members have left Boko Haram in mass surrender (Maclean and Alfa, 2021). This is the largest wave of defection by far since the beginning of Boko Haram insurgency in 2002. Recently also, Borno State governor—Professor Babagana Zulum—explained that so far, over 30,000 Boko Haram/ISWAP members have surrenders since 2002 (Angbulu, 2022). This wave of mass surrender has generated a lot of reaction from public analysts, policy makers and stakeholders. These reactions have shown the different perception of the people about the mass surrender. While some believed that the mass surrender and implementation of deradicalisation programme raises hope that the end of Boko Haram insurgency is near, others believed that the mass surrender calls for more caution from the government of Nigeria (Daily Trust, 2020; This Day 2021). The former is usually expressed by policy makers and government personnel.

This article takes on the mass surrender of Boko Haram members. It discusses matters arising from the surrender and the implications it will have for stability and security in the northeast and Nigeria's war on terror as its motif. The first section of the article conceptualises "surrender" in armed insurgency. The second section gives reason for mass surrender of Boko Haram insurgents. The third section explains Operation Safe Corridor and the deradicalisation of surrendered Boko Haram members for reintegration. The fourth section examines the implications of mass surrender, deradicalisation and reintegration of ex-Boko Haram members as future determinants of security and stability in the zone. The last section is the conclusion. Data for the paper were sourced from primary and secondary sources.

Understanding Mass Surrender in Insurgency

Regular and irregular armies are often torn between desertion and surrender in many instances. However, whether in the context of inter or intra-state war, surrendering is symbolic as a performed act signifying victory for one side and the end of war. The most recognised in modern history is the one signifying the end of World War II symbolized by the Japanese Foreign Minister on behalf of the Japanese government (Rueschhoff 2010). In both regular and asymmetric wars, surrender can occur under certain conditions. First, when the two parties have reached a mutually hurting stalemate as popularized by (Zartman 1978; 2001). This arises when two warring parties exert themselves to a point of exhaustion with no imminent victory for either side. Second, surrendering can be an option in inter-state conflict when one of the parties is battle exhausted and does not have the means to sustain the war as Philip Effiong had to do on January

12, 1970 to mark the end of the Biafran war. Thirdly, surrendering can also be attained when one of the parties feels that continuing the war is fruitless because of its cost compared to the outcomes. According to Lehmann and Zhurkov (2017), mass surrender in inter-state conflicts is based on a dataset of conventional battles in all interstate wars from 1939 to 2011 mass surrender is unlikely.

However, inter-state wars have since been replaced by new wars (Kaldor 2012) - civil wars, militancy, terrorism, banditry, and insurgency – that are fought without a defined theater which makes security operations prone to errors leading to unintended consequences. The irregular armies use hit and run on both hard and soft targets indiscriminately. In determining the factors that could determine mass surrender between a regular army and an irregular army, military ability and political will have been found to be the main determining criteria. For a regular army, military ability would determine if mass surrender would be contemplated or not while for an irregular army, the will to fight matters more than military ability (Lehmann and Zhurkov 2017).

Mass Surrender of Boko Haram Members or Escape of the Forcefully Conscripted?

The explanation of mass surrender of Boko Haram is a subject of intense debate as to why it happens. There are two major perspectives explaining the massive surrender. One part of the explanation is that those surrendering are members affiliated to Jama'at Ahl as-Sunnah Lid-Da'waj wa'l-Jihad (JAS). Boko Haram has split into two since 2016 largely due to leadership style of Abubakar Shekau, the erstwhile leader of Boko Haram, and disagreement over who should be the legitimate target of attacks of Boko Haram. While Shekau was of the view that Muslims who do not support the cause of Boko Haram can be a target of attack by the group, other fringe leaders of Boko Haram vehemently oppose this. For instance, Nur disagreed with Shekau's approach arguing that the focus of insurgency should be the true infidels and that rather than attacking mosques or killing Muslims, military barracks and bases and true infidel (defined as non-Muslims) should be attacked (Sahara Reporter, 2016; Mahmood and Ani, 2018:11-14; Salkida, 2021). This ideological difference led to the division of the group into two major opposing groups.

On the one hand is the mainstream Boko Haram led by Abubakar Shekau known as Jama'atu Ahlissunnah Lidda'awati wal Jihad (JAS). On the other hand, is the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP) led by Abu Musab al-Banawi and aligned to Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The division of the group into two brought intense rivalry and frictions between the two groups. Following from an order from the leader of ISIS, fighters of ISWAP went after Abubakar Shekau and captured him with the intention of forcing him to voluntarily relinquish power and to declare allegiance to ISWAP authority. While he was expected to issue a statement to this effect, he blew himself up (Abdullahi and Adebajo, 2021). Therefore, with the death of Shekau, the whole of Sambisa Forest has come under the control of

ISWAP and those who are loyal to Shekau do not want to succumb to the al-Banawi-controlled ISWAP are the one surrendering massively to the Nigerian State.

Another perspective is that the mass surrender is just a continuation of tit-bit surrendering of insurgents that began long ago and for which Operation Safe Corridor was established. This perspective holds that many people who were coerced, deceived or forcefully conscripted into joining Boko Haram (Akum et al, 2021) seized the opportunity provided by the crack within the ranks of Boko Haram to escape.

On a closer scrutiny of what the government describes as "mass surrender" it is discernible that they are mostly women and children with some aged people. These are not the real fighters of Boko Haram. This therefore means that it may have no significant effect on the strength and potency of the group. Even if they are part of the core fighters of the group, Boko Haram has many fighters in thousands. Some say its members are in the region of 40,000 to 50,000 (New York Times, 2021) but only few thousands are involved in the "mass surrender". Meanwhile, the group still recruits from the pool of poor people in the Lake Chad. This has continued to swell the rank and file of the group. For instance, in April 2021, ISWAP invaded Gujba town to recruit by giving each household 20,000 naira (Adebajo, 2021). So, while the government celebrates the optics of "mass surrender", the insurgents (ISWAP and Boko Haram) have been consistent in recruiting and swelling its ranks. This explains why despite the "mass surrender" Boko Haram, especially the ISWAP faction has continued to strike on both hard and soft targets claiming fatalities of both (non)combatants such as the reported killing of Brigadier-General Dzarma Zirkusu in November 2021 (Vanguard, 2021). While neither the actual number of active Boko Haram fighters nor their ranks can be ascertained, their escape or return is not in dispute. This explains why attention is paid in the next section to Operation Safe Corridor meant to hold them on return from the insurgents.

Operation Safe Corridor and the Deradicalisation of Surrendered Boko Haram Members for Reintegration

Operation Safe Corridor was established in 2016 "to deradicalise, rehabilitate and reintegrate surrendered willing repentant insurgents…" (Operation Safe Corridor, 2020:20), especially those who fall into the category of "low risk" Boko Haram members who have surrendered. Entry into the Operation Safe Corridor deradicalisation programme starts with surrendering to military at the battlefront. Such surrendered ex-combatants will then be taken to Giwa Barrack where they will be screened, profiled and documented to determine the extent of their risk. If they are profiled to be low risk, they are conveyed to Operation Safe Corridor headquarters in Gombe State where the process of deradicalisation will begin. Those who are of high risk are arraigned in the court for terrorism. If found guilty, they are sentenced and after completing sentence, they are then admitted to Operation Safe Corridor but where they are not found guilty, they are taken to Operation Safe Corridor for deradicalisation as shown in Figure 1

Ex-Boko Haram Member surrenders or he is captured

↓

Taken to Giwa Barrack for screening, profiling, documentation and Classification

High Risk Ex-Boko Haram Members — **Low Risk Ex-Boko Haram Members**

Arraigned and prosecuted for terrorism in court

Convicted and Jailed

Release or finished jail term

Discharge and acquitted
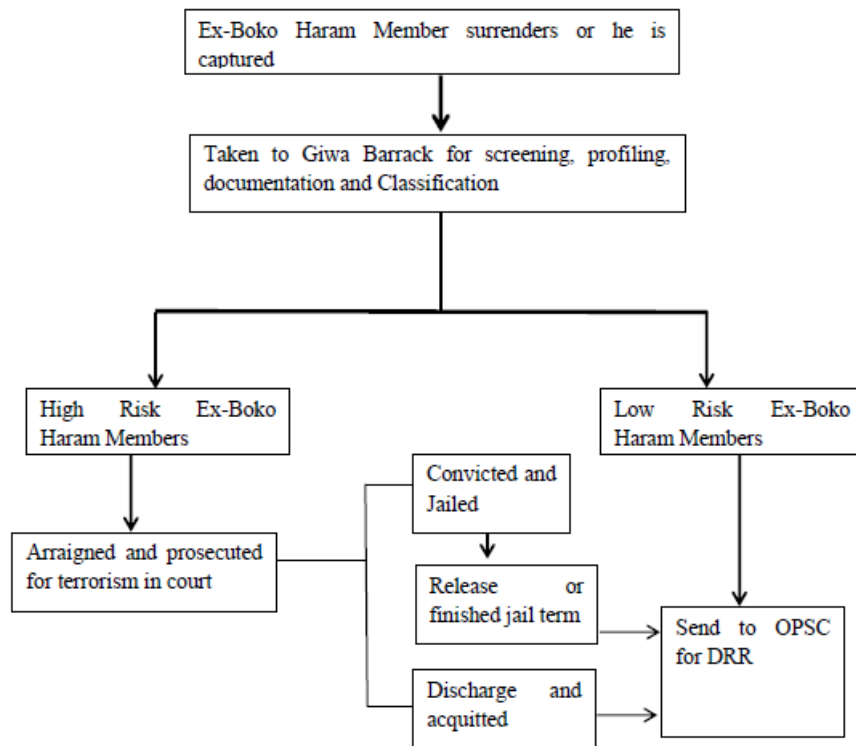
Send to OPSC for DRR

Fig 1- Process leading to admission of Ex-combatants in Operation Safe Corridor. Source: Adapted from Owonikoko, 2022:9

There are five processes of reformation that surrendered Boko Haram members go through in Operation Safe Corridor. After profiling such Boko Haram members and are taken to Operation Safe Corridor Camp in Borno State, the next stage is the debriefing and buy-in stage. At this stage, they are orientated on why they are at the camp and are debriefed with the aim of building trust of the ex-combatants in the programme and staff of the programme. Experts of the OPSC engage them in a large auditorium to explain the aim of the programme and role of all stakeholders in the programme and the need for them to see benefits in the programme. This is followed by team-to-group engagement in which a group of expert engages with lesser number of ex-combatants, to personalise the process for greater interaction and better observation of the clients and their needs. In doing this buy-in, the role of the clergymen especially the Imams is very significant in engaging the ex-fighters who had been radicalised by religious reasons to join Boko Haram.

The third in the stage is deradicalisation. This is engaged simultaneously with fourth stage- rehabilitation. These two stages address purging ex-Boko Haram members of radical ideology and re-orienting them to be better members of the society. Three key areas are targeted in the de-radicalisation and rehabilitation stages. These are: religious ideology, structural/political grievance, and post-exit trauma. The focus on

religious ideology deconstructs the Boko Haram's religious ideology used by the set to indoctrinate its members. In doing this, the Imams develop counter narratives from Islamic textual materials and also engage the ex-members on Islamic and religious concepts. Addressing structural/political grievance such as poverty, unemployment, marginalisation and literacy, clients are trained in vocations of their choice by officials of the National Directorate of Employment. The essence of this is to ensure that the ex-member of Boko Haram gets an alternative livelihood after reintegration. This aspect of the OPSC is considered very vital because it provides economic empowerment for ex-combatants, which enables them to settle down well in their communities after reintegration. With this, the chance of returning to insurgency will be slim. Furthermore, they are taught basic literacy, numeracy, and civic education. The content of civic education is to imbue in the ex-Boko Haram members, patriotism, and loyalty to their country rather than a ragtag groups like Boko Haram. Post-exit trauma seeks to address trauma faced by the ex-combatant while in the jungle of Boko Haram members. This involved giving of therapies such as psychotherapy, psycho-spiritual counseling, social therapy, etc.

The last and the most important in OPSC's process of reformation of ex-Boko Haram members is the reintegration and reconciliation. This stage does not only ensure that ex-combatants are re-admitted into their communities, but they are reintegrated and reconciled with their communities that may have been aggrieved because of the heinous act of the ex-combatants. In the Deradicalisation, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) stream, reintegration is the most important part. This is because if not properly done, deradicalised ex-combatant may abandon the DDR process and reintegrate with colleagues in the bush and this may enhance the activities of the insurgents which may portend further security threat to the state. However, it is usually the most difficult part of DDR to implement because it requires meticulous and proactive commitment of the implementers as well as the buy-in of communities who are going to live with the ex-combatants. In most cases, communities find it very hard to accept them back because of the heinous act they have committed.

"Mass Surrender" and Reintegration of Boko Haram Members: the Disconnect between Government's Intention and Residents' (Mis)Perception

Understandably, the thinking of government is that creating a reintegration programme for insurgents who have surrendered may encourage more to surrender and make it difficult for those who have surrendered to rejoin the group. Thus, it may help to depopulate insurgent groups. However, this inadvertently gives the impression that the victims of insurgency has been abandoned. In a study carried out on community receptivity to the reintegration of surrender Boko Haram insurgency in North East Nigeria, it was revealed that most respondents considered deradicalisation and reintegration programme for repentant Boko Haram insurgent "a bad initiative" not only because they believe that it is inadvertently rewarding insurgents or showing the weakness of the state in handling or dealing decisively with the

insurgents but largely because it prioritise reformation of insurgents over victims of their attacks and communities (see Owonikoko, 2022:13). This comes with a possibility of making violent extremism attractive as found out in many countries across Africa by UNDP (2017). One of the victims of Boko Haram interviewed expressed thus:

> What is government trying to tell us by abandoning us and giving all their focus to those members of Boko Haram that surrendered? Is government saying we should have joined them when they came to our community to recruit (referring to Boko Haram members who were undergoing deradicalisation exercise in Gombe)? I am sure that if I had joined Boko Haram when they came to our community and few days later I surrendered, I would have been enjoying like those at the deradicalisation camp now. They almost killed me and destroyed all what I have and today I am just starting again picking from the rubbles of what is left and government does not think that we deserve assistance (Anonymous, IDI, 33, Yola, Adamawa State, 2020)

Given the fear, suspicion, and resentment in many communities as expressed in the view above, it is yet to be seen how the surrendered insurgents will be reintegrated into their communities without making violent extremism attractive. This may create a situation whereby surrendered insurgent may feel that it would have been better if they remain with their insurgent group in the forest. Rejection by communities might also deter those in the forest but are already nursing the intention of surrendering. This therefore will mean that drying up the pool of members of insurgent group will be a mirage. The point therefore is that the management of the surrender Boko Haram members as well as the nature of community receptivity to their reintegration will have significant impact on security in northeast.

Besides inadvertently making terrorism and violent extremism attractive based on optics from the way the "repentant terrorists" are treated, many residents are in doubt of the genuineness of their repentance. According to Owonikoko (2022:13) 97.5% respondents in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States said they would not allow or accept surrendered Boko Haram members back to their communities. They hinged their rejection on doubting their true repentance, possibility of initiating other innocent youths in the community into violence as well as government giving more attention to ex-combatants of Boko Haram, while neglecting the victims.

There are many non-combatant victims of Boko Haram whose lives have been in a quandary owing to the pain inflicted on them by the insurgents. Many have lost livelihoods, breadwinners, loved ones and suffered other irreparable losses from which they need healing and recovery. Seeing people who have made them suffer this enduring trauma getting more attention of government while they are overlooked makes reintegration tough. This has already been seen in communities like Shehuri South and Gonge

where graduates of the Operation Safe Corridor are facing physical attacks, stigmatization, ostracisation as well as imposition of socio-economic blockade and other forms of discrimination. In a seeming correlation of the fear nursed by communities against the reintegration of the "repentant terrorists" residents around a camp within Maiduguri metropolis where the repentant Boko Haram returnees were housed expressed serious doubts about their repentance. This came after a protest in Maiduguri Wednesday 17th November, 2021 when the repentant terrorists rioted to demand their right to slaughter cows for meat. This riot prompted residents of the city of Maiduguri to come out with their weapons ready to kill any ex-BHMs who rioted out of the camp (The General New, 2021). As one of the interviewees in a report said, "we are afraid, we don't know their minds" (Maclean and Alfa, 2021: para 4).

Conclusion

Beyond the euphoria of celebrating the "mass surrender", the entire defection of Boko Haram insurgents and the disposition of government towards the management of surrendered Boko Haram members and victims have a lot of security implications for Nigeria especially ending Boko Haram insurgency. The mass surrender may be massive in terms of insurgents that defected, it does not in any way show that Nigeria is in control of insurgency in the northeast neither does it show that this will reduce the capability of the insurgent group to continue to wreak havoc on the Nigerian state. Rather than basking on the euphoria of the number of insurgents that surrendered at a time, it should be seen as a call to improve efforts on curtailing the activities of insurgents. Nigeria needs to force more surrender as well as make it difficult for the insurgent group to recruit into its ranks.

Also, it is important for the government to strike a balance between its intent and expectations of both the victims and the Boko Haram returnees. It is imperative that government embarks on victim-focused rehabilitation programmes and carry communities along in the reformation of surrender Boko Haram members. This is important to erase the impression that government is focusing on perpetrators and abandoning victims which currently loom large in the minds of victims and communities. Finally, it is also recommended that community-level transitional justice and reconciliation programmes should be set up to reconcile surrendered Boko Haram members and their victims to ensure the desired stability and reintegration of the returnees.

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Piracy and the Challenges of Nigeria's Maritime Domain

Samuel Oyewole

Abstract

Piracy has become one of the biggest threats to Nigeria's maritime domain owing to the sophisticated organisation, capabilities and strategies of pirates operating therein on one hand and state's loss of capacity on the other hand. Not a-historical, piracy as a threat, dates to the transatlantic trade of the precolonial era which re-emerged in the 1970s, as colonial order gave way to the crisis of post-colonial states in the region. In an upward swing since the return to democracy in 1999, piracy has had negative consequences for maritime transportation, food, trade, investment, security, and image of the country. Accordingly, this article examines the causes, nature, and implications of piracy for Nigeria and explores ways to restore order to this maritime domain.

Introduction

Nigeria's absolute dominance of her geographical territory and exclusive control of the means of coercion has been confronted with multiple security threats from armed non-state groups, especially since the return to civil rule (popularly known as the country's Fourth Republic) in 1999. On the land, there are internal and transnational security threats, such as Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism in the Lake Chad region, banditry and terrorism largely localised across the geo-political zones of the north (north-east, north-west, and north-central); secessionist mobilizations and uprisings in the south-east and south-west; and militant attacks on critical state infrastructures in the oil producing Niger Delta region. The emergence of alternative sovereigns imposing their reigns through militant and criminal activities like abductions, kidnapping, smuggling and armed robbery nationwide have justified the citizens' waning sense of security and trust in the capacity of the state to protect the people (Animasawun 2021). In the maritime domain, Nigeria is confronted with piracy, armed robbery against ships, smuggling as well as illegal and unregulated fishing (Okafor-Yarwood, 2020; Oyewole, 2016a). Out of the aforementioned, piracy and armed robbery against ships constitute the biggest threats to Nigeria's maritime domain and national security.

In 2020, 35 piracy events were recorded off the coast of Nigeria (IMB, 2021). However, this must be taken as fraction, because ship owners are incentivized to playdown incident figures to avoid high insurance premiums. Although the precise total attacks are rarely known, there are strong indications that some of them are linked to the armed militant groups that operate(d) in Nigeria's oil-producing region of Niger Delta who buoyed by the arms and speedboats in their possession ventured into boarding international ships in the Gulf of Guinea and retreated to their coastal bases with hijacked ships and

kidnapped crew from where they negotiated ransoms mostly paid from abroad (Duerksen 2021; Ukiwo 2007).

Piracy has found opportunities to exist and endure in Nigeria due to the weaknesses of state institutions to govern territorial spaces, especially the land and maritime domains, and advance the welfare and security aspirations of the population under its sovereign jurisdiction. Accordingly, motivations and capabilities for piracy has developed around widespread poverty, inequality, youth unemployment, ethnicity, corruption, declining moral values, and militarization of the society by the state as well as proliferation of small arm and light weapons (SALW) in the country. The operation of maritime pirates and robbers in Nigeria's territorial waters and beyond range from low-key boarding and theft of properties at ports to offshore attack/firing, boarding, hijacking, ship/cargo theft and product siphoning, hostage taking and kidnapping for ransom. These developments have challenged the advancement of maritime exploration, food, transportation, insurance, trade, investment, tourism, and the international image of the country.

It is against this background that this article seeks to examine trend, characters, causes, and consequences of maritime piracy in Nigeria. The main question for this study is: what are the implications of piracy for Nigeria's maritime domain? This necessitates the following specific questions: what are the causes of piracy in Nigeria's maritime domain? How has piracy evolved in Nigeria's maritime domain? What is the nature of piracy in Nigeria's maritime domain? What are possible ways to control maritime piracy in Nigeria? To address these questions, this article is further divided into five sections. Beyond the introduction, the section that follows clarifies relevant concepts, the third section provides perspectives on the origin, causes, and nature of piracy in Nigeria's maritime domain. The next section interrogates the consequences of maritime piracy in Nigeria, while the subsequent section provides the concluding thoughts on the subject matter.

Conceptual clarification

The concept of piracy broadly describes two forms of criminal activities. One of the usages of the term, which is not related to the focus of this study, is the violation of copyright of a person or an organisation through illegal use of one's intellectual property without permission. The alternative usage of the term piracy involves armed robbery, hijacking and associated taking of hostages on the high seas. The latter conception of piracy is an important subject of security concern in maritime domains across time and space. Maritime domain can be broadly defined as the oceans, seas, bays, estuaries, islands, coastal areas, and the airspace above these, including the littorals (DOD, 2016).

Maritime piracy is clearly defined and criminalised by the international law, as evident in the third United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOSE III), which was adopted in 1982. Article 101 of the convention describes piracy as any illegal acts of violence or detention, or any act of depredation, committed for private ends by the crew or the passengers of a private ship or a private aircraft, and directed

on the high seas, against another ship or aircraft, or against persons or property on board such ship or aircraft in a place outside the jurisdiction of any state (UN, 1982). The convention explicitly or implicitly excluded similar illegal acts committed within the jurisdiction of a state, committed by armed groups that are motivated by political ends rather than private ends, and that are committed by a state outside its jurisdiction, as act of piracy.

The attempt to differentiate piracy from armed robbery against ships explains the reason why the internal jurisdiction of a state is excluded in the convention. The International Maritime Organisation (IMO) defined armed robbery against ship as illegal acts of violence, detention, or depredation, committed for private ends, against a ship inside a state's internal waters, archipelagic and territorial waters (IMB, 2021). The assumption is that state has sovereignty over its jurisdiction, which is highly respected in international law. As evident in UNCLOSE III, the maritime domain of a coaster state generally covers its territorial waters (12 nautical miles away from the coast), contiguous zone (24 nautical miles away from the coast), exclusive economic zone (EEZ) (200 nautical miles away from the coast), and the continental shelf (350 nautical miles from the coast) (UN, 1982). Nevertheless, International Maritime Bureau's (IMB) data are broadly gathered and presented to cover both piracy and armed robbery against ships. With the growing trend of state failure in the global-South and rising operational capacity of groups involved in both piracy and armed robbery among other crimes, the jurisdictional demarcation of these concepts is becoming increasingly challenging.

The UNCLOSE III further indicates that a state cannot commit an act of piracy. Article 102 of the convention states that a warship, government ship or government aircraft can only be said to have committed act of piracy when its crew has mutinied and taken control of the ship or aircraft to participate or facilitate illegal act of violence, detention, or depredation against a ship or aircraft on the high seas for private ends (UN, 1982). Accordingly, ships and aircraft that belong to the government or the armed forces of a state cannot be accused of committing piracy unless they and/or their actions are declared or found to be unsanctioned by constituted authority. In this case, such acts can be considered as a sign of hostility or a state of war, which is a condition with legal status in international relations (Oyewole and Duyile, 2021). However, this has not stopped scholars from studying state complicity, that is, explicit or implicit involvement of government and security officials, in maritime piracy (Murphy, 2009).

The UNCLOSE III also indicates that piracy is an illegal violence on the high seas that is motivated only by private ends. As such, politically motivated violence on the seas tends to be excluded from this conception. To differentiate maritime piracy from maritime armed groups that are involved in terrorism and insurgency, some scholars have observed that the ultimate objectives of the former are criminal rewards, while that of latter are political or policy change (Murphy, 2009). Hence, the same crime that is

interpreted as maritime piracy can become maritime terrorism and insurgency, depending on whether the armed groups involved have clearly defined and strategically communicated political ends or not.

Also, pirates can be categorized into subsistence and organized pirates (Whitman and Saurez 2012). The subsistence pirates are mainly disaffected residents of coastal communities who engage in low-level localized by targeting fishers at sea, robbing vessels at port and who take to providing vigilante services when not able to operate because all they want to do is supplement their incomes. Organized pirates are sophisticated and vicious because they hijack, kidnap, steal and hold cargos, vessels and crew for ransom. They are also involved in drug trafficking, arms smuggling, money laundering, and human trafficking which aid their transnational and global operations.

Piracy in Nigeria's Maritime Domain

The history and nature of piracy in Nigeria's maritime domain can be understood from the knowledge of the origin, threats, organisation, capabilities, and strategies of pirates that operate(d) in her waters.

The Origin of Piracy in Nigeria's Maritime Domain

The origin of piracy in Nigeria's maritime domain predates the existence of the country as it is known today and modern-state system in Africa generally. Most of the costal precolonial states in modern Nigeria and the rest of the western coast of Africa had little or no capacity to claim and control or challenge the dominance of imperial navies and privateers in their maritime domains, or enforce law and order against slave trade, piracy, and armed robbery at sea (Ajayi, 1989; Mahan, 1890; Reader, 1997). As such, most records of piracy in precolonial era are associated with state and non-state sanctioned criminal European merchants that dominated the Atlantic, while their African equivalents were involved in armed robbery in their internal waters.

The rise of industrial revolution, consolidation of state power and the renewed colonial interests in Europe between late 18th and early 20th century encouraged the war against piracy, slave trade and related criminal enterprises in the Atlantic. The threat of piracy was minimised, if not neutralised, in West coast of Africa, with the colonial order imposed on the continent by European powers, which maintained law and order at seas and on land (Oyewole, 2015).

Europe emerged from the two world wars weakened and was compelled to let go of her empires by post-war realities. This development encouraged the wave of agitations for independence in Africa, including that of Nigeria in 1960. However, the post-colonial state has failed to advance the development and security aspirations of majority of the people, as well as enforce law and order on the land and at sea. Decades of bad governance had truncated the welfare of the vast majority of Nigerians, like other Africans, pushing many to margins and making them resort to all forms of crime and resistance as some of the options of fulfilling their aspirations (Ukeje and Ela, 2013). It is not surprising, therefore, that

Nigeria and the West Coast of Africa re-emerged as leading hotspots of piracy globally starting from 1970s and 1980s. As such, the region accounted for 63% of the total incidents of piracy recorded globally in 1983/1984 (Oyewole, 2016a:135).

<u>Emergence of Nigeria as a Hotspot of Regional and Global threats of Piracy</u>

The threats of piracy in Nigeria have undergone dramatic changes since the turn of 21st century. Between the 1990s and early 2010s, the global threats of piracy in Nigeria's maritime domain and the West Coast of Africa were considerably matched by those in Somalia and East Coast of Africa as well as East Asia. However, piracy in the East and West Coasts of Africa were the most sophisticated, deadliest, and threatening in the world (IMB, 2001-2021; Vreÿ, 2009). For instance, in 2010, Africa accounted for 58.2 % of the global incidents of piracy. However, the pirates of the region accounted for 88.9 % of attack with guns, 92.5 % of hijacking of ships, 88.7 % of hostages seized aboard, 85 % of cases of kidnapping with victims held offshore, 81 % of cases of injuries and all the cases of killing in piracy and armed robbery against ships globally (see IMB, 2011). Meanwhile, the threats of piracy in the East Coast of Africa have declined with the international naval campaign in the region, dropping from 237 incidents in 2011 to 75 incidents in 2012, 15 incidents in 2013, 11 incidents in 2014 and to zero in 2015 (IMB, 2012-2016; Oyewole, 2017). However, the threats of piracy in Nigeria and the West Coast of Africa have endured in the face of national and regional countermeasures (Onuoha, 2012; Oyewole, 2016a).

The century opened in 2000 with Nigeria accounting for 1.9% and 28% of the total global and regional incidences of piracy respectively. With 554 cases, Nigeria recorded 8.8 % of the total incidences of piracy globally and 51.6 % of the total incidences in the Gulf of Guinea between 2000 and 2020 (see figure 1). However, the threat of piracy has remained relatively constant and steadily rising in Nigeria over the last two decades, and notably since 2011 when it started to decline globally. As of 2020, Nigeria accounted for 18% of the global incidences of piracy, 17.6% of hostages, 46 % of kidnapping and 42.3% of guns usage by pirates globally (IMB, 2021). Meanwhile, it is important to note that cases of piracy and armed robbery against ships in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea are underreported, as lack of confidence in the security institutions and corporate safety record and image often discourage reporting of cases. In addition, many cases of armed robbery against ships in neighbouring waters and piracy in the Gulf of Guinea involved Nigerian based pirate groups, as several documented cases of kidnapping of seafarers and hijacking of ships by pirates in the region have been traced back to Nigeria (Oyewole, 2016a&b).
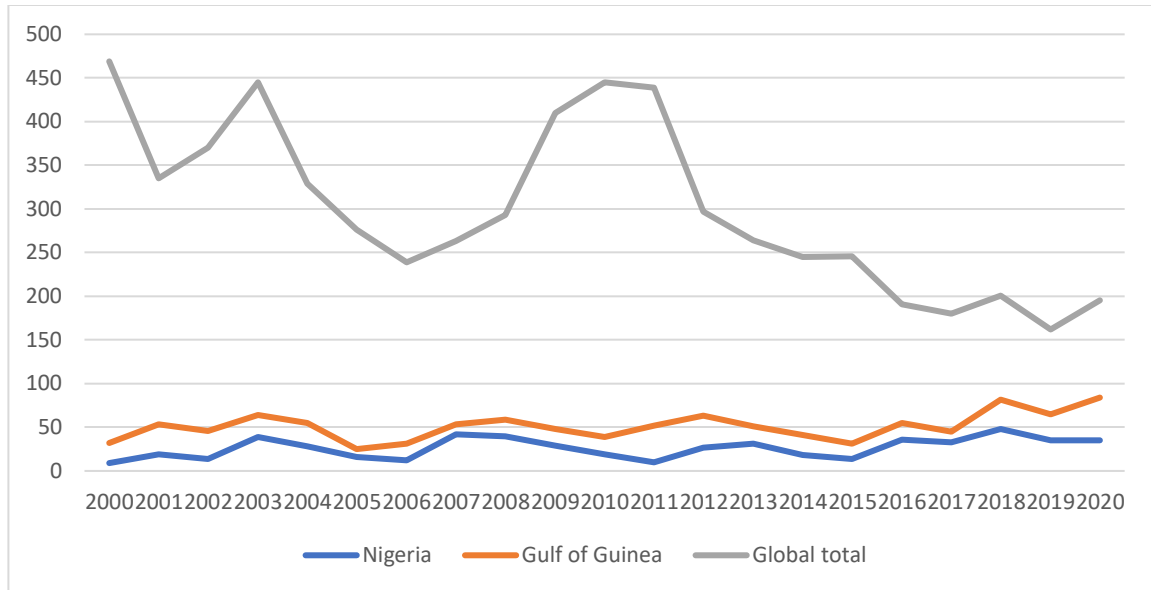
Fig 1- Piracy and armed robbery against ships in Nigeria, Gulf of Guinea, and globally, 2000-2020. Source: IMB, 2001 – 2021

The Types, capabilities and strategies of Nigerian Pirates

The types, capabilities and strategies of maritime pirates and robbers of Nigeria can be broadly categorised into three (Carnimeo and Oyewole, 2020). The least among them are opportunist thieves. These are robbers, who may be loosely or centrally organised as criminal groups, with fewer membership, of between two and ten, and operate around ports and internal waterways, such as rivers, canals, and creeks. They often use knives, cutlasses, and occasionally guns to subdue their targets, with the main aim of stealing from them. The second category are criminal elements of (ex-)militant groups in the Niger Delta, which operate in internal waterways and offshore along the coast and deep to the edge of Nigeria's territorial waters (Obi and Oriola, 2018; Oyewole et al., 2018). Such groups usually employ sophisticated weapons and carryout daring operations, which involve firing against ships, boarding, hostage taking, kidnapping, hijacking, siphoning of oil, gas and other valuable products from vessels. They often maintain a considerably large membership of between ten to 50 individuals for their operations and logistics.

In the third category are syndicate networks, operating in Nigeria and its neighbouring territorial waters and the international waters in the Gulf of Guinea. The networks usually involve loosely or closely connected and coordinated groups dedicated to pirate enterprises. Such network is made up of two or more groups, which may engage between 50 and 100 persons, who may be directly or indirectly connected. A network usually includes sponsors and investors, and teams that are involved in recruitment, training, intelligence, operations, procurements, logistics and supplies, storage, marketing, negotiation, and political affairs. A network can include leadership or few members of registered companies, in different sectors, ranging from shipping to banking, warehouse and storage, and sales, whose staffers may or may not be aware of their covert involvement in piracy and related criminal enterprises. Some

politicians, bureaucrats, traditional rulers and security personnel in Nigeria are involved in pirate syndicate networks as sponsors, investors, cover, protectors and informants. Although the pirate networks are dominantly based in Nigeria, their membership and operations have become increasingly transnational across the Gulf of Guinea (Oyewole, 2015).

The Consequences of Maritime Piracy in Nigeria

Maritime piracy in Nigeria's maritime domain has had negative consequences for lives and properties, national economy, food security, internal security, and image of the country. The lives and properties of many nationals and foreigners have been affected by the enduring threats of maritime piracy in Nigeria over the years (Bala, 2013; Montclos, 2012). Extracted data from IMB (2011-2021) shows that the country recorded 306 incidences of piracy and armed robbery against ships, where 247 hostages were seized, 346 persons were kidnapped and held offshore, 70 persons injured and six killed between 2010 and 2020. Records of Ocean Beyond Piracy (OBP, 2013-2018) also show that 8,744 seafarers were attacked by pirates in the Gulf of Guinea, from where 33 were killed, 1,362 were taken hostage and 365 were kidnapped for ransom between 2012 and 2017. In addition, many individuals have been disposed of their valuables by Nigerian based pirates and robbers in ports, waterways, coastlines, territorial waters and beyond.

The threats of maritime piracy have affected Nigeria's economy negatively, as evident with transportation, trade, labour, investment, and insurance. Between 2012 and 2017, the value of goods stolen by pirates in the region was estimated to be between US$45.9 million and US$146.7 million, while ransom paid to secure the release of kidnapped victims was estimated to be US$4.84 million. As result of pirate threats, the cost of hiring security guards/escort and installing security equipment aboard ships in the region was between US$1.27bllion and US$1.38bllion, besides additional insurance cost of between US$628.3 million and US$642.3 million as well as hazard payment for labour between US$386.4 million and US$461.4 million. With these, the total economic cost of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea was estimated between US$4.38 billion and US$4.95 billion within this period (OBP, 2013-2018). In September 2021, the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) announced that the economic cost of piracy in the region stood at N422.2 billion (US$793.7 million) (Oritse, 2021).

The implications of maritime piracy for Nigeria's national and maritime security cannot be ignored. It provides many onshore militant and criminal groups the opportunities to raise funds that sustain their subversive activities that undermine national security in Nigeria. The enduring threats of piracy has become one of the indicators of weakness or failure of the state and un/under-governed spaces in Nigeria. It continues to undermine the political economy of national security in Nigeria, with its impacts on lives, properties, and the economy as mentioned earlier. Piracy and associated kidnapping for ransom have

allegedly funded campaigns and elections of some politicians that are involved in pirate networks as sponsors, investors or covers. Some of the sophisticated pirates also feature in political violence, as instruments of riots, uprisings, and electoral violence, and hired assassins and kidnappers of political opponents for their benefactors. They are equally involved in offshore crimes, such as armed robbery, kidnapping, assassinations, assaults, oil bunkering and vandalism, and illegal oil refining. Their involvement in hijacking and siphoning of crude oil have further connected them to illegal refinery. These among others have undermined Nigeria's internal security. Pirate attacks and armed robbery of fishing boats and businesspeople that are transporting agricultural and food products from rural communities to urbans or markets in creeks, rivers, coastlines and beyond have had negative implications for food security in Nigeria.

Nigeria's international image has also not been spared of the consequences of maritime piracy. Ships that are owned by different companies, registered, crewed by nationals, and sailing to/from ports, of different countries across the world have been attacked and, in some cases, hijacked, with records of hostage taking, kidnapping, killing, assault and thefts of cargos. These attacks have portrayed Nigeria's maritime domain as risky waters among community of nations and is treated like a war zone by shipping firms and crews and their insurance companies. These have increased the cost of importation and exportation in Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea.

The activities of Nigerian-based pirates have been dire for international markets of oil, gas and other major commodities produced and exported through the Gulf of Guinea. For instance, Nigeria has 37.5 billion barrel (2.2% of world) proved oil reserve and produced over 2 million barrel of crude oil per day (2.2% of world total) in 2018. It also produced 49.2 billion cubic meters (bcm) (1.3% of world total) and exported 27.8 bcm (6.5% of world total) with 5.3 trillion cubic meters (2.7% of world total) proved natural gas reserve in 2018 (BP, 2019). Angola, Congo, Chad, Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea are other major oil producing countries in the Gulf of Guinea, while Europe, US, China, Japan, India, Brazil, Mexico, Argentina and South-east Asian countries are major consumers of region's oil and gas. Indeed, piracy in Nigeria affects the international markets, and particularly the economies of countries that depend on the country and the region for their supplies.

Conclusion

This article provides insights into the evolution of piracy in Nigeria's maritime domains from pre-colonial to post-colonial eras. Furthermore, it examines the threats of piracy in Nigeria's maritime domain, with attention to its causes, natures and consequences. It is observed that weak institutional capacity of the state to govern, enforce law and order, and advance human welfare are providing pirates and other armed/criminal groups with their desired opportunities, motivations and capabilities to exist and endure

in Nigeria. Attention is given to the threats, types, capabilities, and strategies of the pirates of Nigeria in the last two decades. These shows that Nigeria is home to three categories of pirates, the opportunistic thieves, sophisticated criminal elements of (ex)militant groups and criminal syndicate networks. The activities of these groups have made Nigeria a major hotspot in the global map of maritime piracy and armed robbery against ships. These have had negative consequences for lives and properties, national economy, food security and internal security of Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea, with extended effects on the country/region's international image and trade.

To address the threats of piracy and armed robbery against ships in Nigeria's maritime domain, it is important for the government and peoples of the country, their neighbours in the Gulf of Guinea and their partners in the international community to appreciate the threats and device committed policy measures to address the challenges. Among these, there is a need to strengthen state institutional capacity for good governance, enforcement of law and order (rule of law), and advancement of human welfare in the country. Political will and committed policy measures to combat human poverty, inequality, youth unemployment, corruption, culture of impunity, declining moral values, ethnicity, proliferation of weapons, violence, and criminal enterprises are essential in this case. These will neutralise, or at least minimise, available opportunities, motivations and capabilities that underscore the organisational existence and strategic endurance of the threats of piracy and armed robbery in Nigeria's maritime domain.

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