

THE POLITICS OF REGIONAL SECURITY THREAT IN NIGERIA[©] ^Σ

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ABSTRACT

The study is an examination of the politicisation of security threats regionally in Nigeria, where all the six geo-political zones are currently involved in one form of security threat or the other, and the overall effect is a threat to national security and continuous co-existence. Nation-states strive to protect their territory by taking diligent care of security threats. One territory that failed to take adequate care of its political and socioeconomic security threats in Nigeria and that has manifested in the debilitating national and regional security threats that it is currently facing, which threaten to collapse the country. This study investigated how security issues are politicised regionally in Nigeria, where the six geopolitical zones in the country are all beleaguered with variant trends of insecurity ranging from Niger Delta militants to Boko Haram insurgents, farmers-herders clashes, rural banditry, and kidnapping, IPOB secessionist agitators and Igboho's separatist movement. The study used a qualitative case study approach where data were derived from both primary and secondary sources. The primary source was the specialised interview with identified relevant informants, while the secondary source consisted of documented materials. The data obtained were analytically coded, discussed and interpreted using content analysis. The study discovered that Nigeria is in a 'Hobbesian Warre of all against all' with all the six geopolitical zones involved in one form of guerrilla warfare or the other and the nature of the threats are different in some instances, state failure while in other cases, politicised. The study recommends among others, that the Nigerian State must approach all the regional security threats with a decisive action to avoid the collapse of the remnants of the state apparatus.

Keywords: Nigerian politics, regional security threats, within the state

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POLITIK ANCAMAN KESELAMATAN RANTAU DALAMAN NIGERIA

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ABSTRAK

Kajian ini adalah penelitian terhadap pempolitan ancaman keselamatan dalam negeri di Nigeria yang juga penglibatan kesemua enam zon geopolitik yang terlibat pada masa ini sebagai suatu bentuk ancaman keselamatan antara satu sama lain, dan kesan keseluruhannya adalah ancaman terhadap keselamatan Nigeria serta kelangsungan sistem negara untuk terus bertahan. Satu wilayah yang dianggap gagal untuk menghadapi ancaman keselamatan politik dan sosioekonomi secukupnya adalah Nigeria. Ini telah dimanifestasikan dengan kemunculan ancaman keselamatan negara dan wilayah yang melemahkan, yang mengancam untuk meruntuhkan negara. Kajian ini menganalisis bagaimana isu keselamatan dipolitikkan secara serantau di Nigeria di mana enam zon geopolitik di negara itu semuanya dibelenggu dengan pelbagai pola ketidakamanan yang terdiri daripada militan Delta Niger, pemberontak Boko Haram, konflik petani-penggembala, perompak luar bandar dan penculikan, pemisah IPOB dan pergerakan pemisah Igboho. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kajian kes kualitatif yang juga data diperolehi daripada menerusi pelbagai sumber primer dan sekunder. Sumber primer utama adalah temu bual khusus yang berkait rapat dengan sumber sekunder yang diterbitkan. Data yang diperolehi dikodkan secara analitis, selain dibincangkan dan ditafsir menggunakan analisis kandungan. Kajian mendapati Nigeria berada dalam "Perang semua terhadap semua" ala Hobbesian dengan semua enam zon geopolitik terlibat dalam satu bentuk peperangan gerila atau yang lain. Walau bagaimanapun, sifat ancaman adalah berbeza dalam beberapa keadaan, negara gagal dan dalam kes Nigeria, telah dipolitikkan oleh elit pemerintah. Kajian juga menyarankan agar Nigeria menguruskan semua ancaman keselamatan wilayah dalam negeri dengan tegas bagi mencegah situasi ketika ini menyerupai negara gagal.

Kata Kunci: politik Nigeria, ancaman keselamatan wilayah, dalam negeri

Introduction

Security discourse is a pivotal policy issue in national and international politics. For many centuries, nation-states set the security of their territories as a prime national policy paradigm, while the permutations of the interplay among nation-states necessitated a shift toward collective security regionally and globally (Morgenthau 2004; Kessinger 2015). But regional and global security could not be achieved without a structure of individual national security (Waltz 2000; 2001; 2009). The major security threat in the inter-War years is perceived as a traditional or military threat emanating from the devastation and existential threats that modern scientific weapons inflicted on mankind during the war' period (Burchard; Baldwin 1995;). However, the regime of terror and nuclear threat in the Cold War era ushered in a new security paradigm; non-traditional or non-military threats as manifested in terror, environmental hazards, climate change, food security, poverty, pandemics, political violence, economic constraints, terrorism and several other related concepts that threatened local and global security more than military threats (Buzan & Hansen 2009; Peoples and Nick 2014). In the post-Cold War, the threats of non-traditional security became more pronounced when instability in various states and regions of the world attracted the attention of global key players in security matters towards pursuing collective security (Collins 2019; Ghecu and Wohlforth 2018). Regional security alliances such as NATO, UN peacekeeping force, ECOMOG and other numerous regional security platforms were formed (Buzan and Schouenborg 2018; Francis 2008). The ambition of rogue states and other global powers will continue to affect global security (Buzan and Hansen 2009). but nation-states are responsible for their domestic security (Collier and Sambanis 2005, Hyden 2012, Clapham 1996). Inadvertently, global systemic shift translate into anew security opportunity and dilemma in many post-colonial Africa and Nigeria is not immune from the persisted menace of discord and resistance in taming the leviathan.

Africa is not an exceptionally bleak, yet limited records of outstanding political governance and terrible policy choices by the national leaders further unravelled the pervasive nature of the state crisis. In this regard, Nigeria, as one of the most significant political actors in West Africa, is contemporarily faced with multiple and renewed cycles of internal security challenges. Like many post-colonial African state formation and decay, contemporary and internal regional instability of the federal state of Nigeria faced both internal and external security challenges for several decades (Augustine and Wafulu 2010; Taylor 2010, Abrahamsen 2022). In short, past colonial injustices and present Nigerian leader's poor decisions shared fair blame for intrinsic vicissitude crises, madness, and present-day violence. The economic necessity pushed capitalists in search of a destination for exploitation and that resulted in the conquest and control of the African territory for over half a century by European colonisers (Burgis 2015; Dunn and Englebert 2019; Dun 2001, Hentz 2014). This set the foundation for security compromise where classes and alien institutions were

forcefully imposed that will later fail to work in the African environment leading to many crises, including national security threats. During the colonisation process, African territory was redrawn, restructured, and arbitrarily demarcated against any consideration of the culture, history, heritage or will of the native inhabitants (Abrahamsen 2017; Clapham 1996; Siollun 2021; Chomsky 2000). The reminiscence of this deliberately orchestrated plot was the incompatible merger of distant ethnic groups, religious faiths, and regions as new states. This manifested in post-independence when civil wars and ethnic, religious, and regional clashes erupted across Africa. Left with weak state institutions, a fragile and fragmented population, a battered economy, and incoherent political systems and institutions, most of the African states could not escape internal security challenges (Taylor 2018; Francis 2008; Collier and Sambanis 2005).

This article argues that contemporary Nigeria's present and past security predicament are interlinked and systematically determined and yet undermined by the current political decisions made by the ruling class or political elite of the country. Given the global state of the Covid-19 pandemic and recession ramifications upon the already fragmented Nigerian state's capability to mitigate crisis and violence, it is more pertinent than before to understand the tendency of the ruling class to politicise sources of chaos, disorder, and security. As such, an investigation on how security issues are politicised regionally in Nigeria, wherein the six geopolitical zones in the country are all beleaguered with variant trends of insecurity. This ranges from Niger Delta militants to Boko Haram insurgents, farmers-herders clashes, rural banditry, and kidnapping, IPOB secessionist agitators and Igboho's separatist movement. The discussion examined how internal regional issues, chaos, violence, security actors and threats may, in the long run, undermine Nigeria's central state authority to remain robust and rudiment. The subsequent discussion explores conceptual clarifications of Nigeria's internal regional security, the method adopted by this study, theoretical explanation, literature reviews and discussions of the study findings.

Nigeria's Internal Regional Security Understanding

Nigeria is a unique case of internal and external security challenges in the 21st century (Falola and Heaton 2008). The country which exhibited a recommendable leadership in its early statehood leading to the liberation of Apartheid South Africa, extinguishing the kindled fire of civil unrest in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Sudan, suddenly found itself battling internal security threats at all fronts within the national territory (Mimiko 2022; Leffler 1990; Othman 1990; Mimiko 2022; Devermont 2017). This has not to lack connection with the negligence of the early warning signs of non-traditional security threats by rulers in the country. The policymakers could not understand the urgent need for sound quality education, effective healthcare services delivery, infrastructure deficit, political volatility of the country and the mutual suspicion and hostile gesture of the diverse multi-ethnic and multi-religious composition in the country (Siollun 2018; Campbell and Mathew 2018). Instead, they become absorbed in squandering of the public treasury, looting, corruption, misplacement of priority, and neglect of productive sectors of agriculture,

manufacturing, education, and entrepreneurship for their selfish benefit. Gradually, these political and socioeconomic troubles could no longer be contained (LeVan 2015, 2018, 2019).

Nigeria presents a special case of study in global security because of the nature and dimension of the security threats that the country is facing (March *et al.* 2015). Initially, until 1960, there was no single entity known as Nigeria. What existed were the clusters of kingdoms, chiefdoms, organisations, societies, and other hamlets that lived in neighbourhoods independently but interdependently (Falola 2008). The British quick search for sources of raw materials to exploit guided it to these territories in the 1850s. The conquest started in 1856 and was finally sealed in 1902 for both the Southern and Northern territories. The establishment of various colonial origins of the common law set Nigeria on the path of political freedom under the federal structure with a British Westminster parliamentary style of governance (Campbell 2011, Campbell and Quinn 2021; Campbell and Mathew 2018). By 1960, the various territories were forced into an undesired marriage and named an independent Nigeria. The post-independence Nigeria became volatile, leading to the political crisis, violence, civil war, coups, and countercoups that later led to the abolishing of a parliamentary system in favour of the American style of a presidential system of government (Osaghae 2018). The agitations, dissatisfactions, protests, and controversies continued from various ethnic and religious groups and regions, leading to the split of the country into federalism with three tiers of government: federal, state, and local (Francis 2008; Obodunrin *et al.* 2017). The Federal Government is at the centre, with headquarters in Abuja, 36 states and 774 local governments with six geopolitical zones across the country (Siollun 2021). Nigeria now boasts of the sixth most populous country in the world with over 200 million projected population and it will be the third most populous country in the world with an estimated 400 million by 2050 (Akinola 2022). The country is the tenth largest oil producer in the world, has the biggest GDP of \$545 in Africa, is the largest black nation and one of the richest in terms of possession of mineral resources spread across the country (*United Nations Populations Fund* 2020)

The Nigerian state has been facing internal security threats since the 1963 mid-West regional crisis, the 1964 Census riot, Civil War (1967-1970), bloody coups and countercoups, political violence, and ethnic and religious clashes but the period 1990s to date present an entirely new perspective on regional security threats largely attributed to politics and the actions and inactions of politicians (Tanko 2021; *Council Foreign Relations* 2020; Mahler 2010). In the 1990s, the agitations for resource control coalesced in the formation of militants in the Niger Delta (Siollun 2021, 81). The farmers-herders clashes have been witnessed since the 1990s but in the last two decades, the conflict took a new dimension in Northern Nigeria, spilling over to the Southern part of the country with the bulk of the crisis centred in Northcentral Nigeria (Siollun 2009; Doron 2022; Kasim and Nwankpa 2018). The Boko Haram insurgency began in early 2000, but it later turned out to be unexpectedly violent and devastating in 2009 in Northeast Nigeria. The Northwest became afflicted with rural banditry and kidnapping, which escalated in 2011 (Campbell and Page 2018; Babayo *et al.* 2019).

The struggles for secession to establish a Biafran state in the Southeast, which culminated in the 1967 Civil War, was reinvigorated by various groups in the Southeast with the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) becoming violent and well-armed recently and the Southwest to is not spared because a separatist agitation movement led by Sunday Igboho resorted to violence (Heerten & Moses 2018; Campbell &Quinn 2021; Obadare 2019). Hence, this study found it expedient to examine the politics behind these front regional security threats, the motivation, nature, background, implications, and the future of the Nigerian state in terms of security of the national territory.

Method

The research design adopted for the study is a qualitative case study approach. Data were sourced from specialised informant interviews conducted in Abuja and documented sources. The specialised interview was conducted using unstructured interviews and most of the interviews were conducted through either WhatsApp calls or email, except a few of them that took place face-to-face. Due to financial constraints as the research is not supported by any grant or institution, it is not feasible to conduct large-N interviews across all the six geopolitical zones or even to undertake the interview with all of them all in Abuja because staying will cost lots and the researchers, and the authors could not afford. The questions were designed separately for each of the six geopolitical zones because the politics of insecurity differs from one region to another. Besides, Abuja is a centre that enables an opportunity for accessing all stakeholders of the six geopolitical zones. Resolving similar moral, political and ethical reflections from other African conflict case studies has guided this research's deliberation (Azman 2016). Nonetheless, researching politically sensitive issues requires moral imagination and careful planning solutions, which this study fieldwork has carefully designed. All relevant interviewed respondents cited in this article will be anonymised to protect them from potential backlashes and future political repercussions.

In conducting qualitative fieldwork, semi-structured interview and informal conversations are adopted in this study. Informants were identified and interviewed from five distinct groups. Four (4) undisclosed security personnel across the military and paramilitary agencies were consulted in the security sector. Three (3) renowned scholars on Nigerian security matters were interviewed in the academic section. Three (3) senior officials in the Ministry of Defence were consulted, five (5) members of civil societies, particularly those that are directly involved in humanitarian intervention in the respective geopolitical zones for those affected by the crises and some apologies of the cattle reapers, secessionist, separatist and militants four (4) of them because, at the time of the interview, all efforts to reach out to those from the areas of Boko Haram, banditry and farmers side could not be actualised. This made a total of nineteen (19) informants from various segments. The data obtained were transcribed, coded, and extracted for analysis using qualitative content analysis. A similar ethical and methodological consideration in researching Nigerian studies guides the actual data collection and analysis process substantiated by this study (see

Daly 2017; Demarest and Langer 2018; Nolte *et al.* 2016). The secondary documented source was integrated (as part of data triangulation) for a critical review of the existing knowledge in the field of study to enable a principle of validity and reliability in establishing a new contribution.

Literature Review

In this section, two key issues were examined critically and analytically. The discourse on the Nigerian security architecture and sources of threat.

Discourses on Security Debates

The security debates continued in the 21st century even when most of the actors met at a crossroads in accepting a consensus position. During the period of the First and Second World Wars, strategic studies emphasised paying all the attention to military threats, having witnessed the disaster caused by strategic weapons and the future ones that the world powers at that time were busy proliferating. They could not see any other threat greater than the traditional militaristic and state-centric approach. They quickly dismissed the possibility of individual actors and other threats as a potential to cause national and international security threats. However, the passing of the world wars and the resurgence of the war through the other way, the Cold War, could not alter the views of the traditionalist as it did to new perspectives presented by a new fresh thought (Baldwin 1996). The likes of Morgenthau (1948), Kissinger (2015), still maintained that military threats are what the nation-states should concentrate on as well as the scholars. They pose it that the proliferation of nuclear, threats of biological, chemical, and toxic weapons and the tension that any chance may result in a conventional war should not derail us from any other option or thought. They believed that the fact that powerful military countries in the world are arming themselves to the fullest irrespective of all the agreed treaties, such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and Strategic Armed Limitation Treaty (SALT) indicates an intention to attack when it has become the available option (Peoples and Vaughan-Williams 2014; Hentz 2014; Jones 1991)

Conversely, the alternative view presented by the likes of Wolfers (1964), Leffler (1990), Buzan (1983), Waltz (2000; 2001), Vaughan-Williams (2014), and Buzan & Hansen (2009) did not agree with the above views. They believed that after the end of the Second World War and in the wake of the Cold War ideological rivalry, a new dimension of security threats needed urgent attention. They believed that individuals and other political and socioeconomic as well as environmental issues could pose a security challenge nationally and internationally. While they could not dismiss entirely the potential of military threats, they emphasise that non-military threats are now paramount. If a nation's politics is volatile and weak, poverty, hunger, joblessness, pandemics, inequality, starvation, corruption, climatic change, cybercrimes, deprivation, and ethnic and religious matters are not addressed properly, they will explode into full security threats, and they may affect national security (Hantz 2014; Abrahamsen 2017; Francis 2008). Once a state is affected, other nation-states can be affected too because of the doctrine of the collective security paradigm.

In most African cases, some of the traditionalists later came to see the wisdom in the analysis of the non-traditional and vice versa but the staunch ones maintain rigorous debates to justify why their perception of security threats remain sacrosanct. This study

adopted a middle-level approach and accepted the positions of the two in explaining the security threats for nation-states. In essence, dismissing military threats is akin to a wild dream, considering how the US advanced its attacks on Afghanistan, Iraq, the NATO intervention in Libya, Syria, and several other territories. However, accepting wholeheartedly that only such a threat is affecting national security is far from being true. Most countries of the world today battle internally with threats of terrorism, cybercrimes, ethnic and religious clashes, political violence, poverty, hunger, pandemic, and effects of climate change which are causing internal security tension than the military aspect of national security (Collins 2019; Ghechiu and Wohlforth 2018; Peoples & Vaughan-Williams 2014; Mcnamee and Muyangwa 2021). The world itself is devising policies to contain natural disasters and other threats of insecurity more than military threats today.

Dynamic of Security Predicament in Nigeria

Nigeria emerged as an independent state in 1960, some few decades before the emergence of debates on non-military threats to national and international security. The path to Nigeria's nationhood has neither been smooth nor easy (see Levan 2019; Falola 2008; Osaghae 1995). The merged multi-ethnic groups could not unite in their national purpose or regional agenda. Disagreements and division heralded the process, and it continues to influence the process of nation-building (Levan 2018; Krause 2017; Sule *et al.* 2019). This study is appeased more with the new paradigmatic debates on security than the state-centric military threats tautologists (for similar views, see also Hentz 2014; Taylor 2010; Usman and Sule 2020). This does not imply that the military threat is suddenly irrelevant in the Nigerian environment, but most armed conflicts since 1960 seemed to be orchestrated by military threat factors and later cascaded into non-military or human security elements. For instance, the 1963 mid-Western Crisis was political, the 1964 Census Crisis was political and socioeconomic, and the 1967-1970 Civil War was political and economic. Most of the conflicts are also in the same line of thought (Campbell 2011; Krause 2017; Burchard and Simati 2019; Agbiboa 2018)

The current regional security threats are also more political, economic, social, and environmental than military. Nigeria is reported by World Poverty Clock (2020) as the poverty headquarters in the world with nearly 70% of the population in the poverty line spending less than \$2 per day. The unemployment rate in the country, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (*National Bureau of Statistics* 2021) hit 34%, while youth unemployment reached 54% and graduate unemployment has reached 50%. Political violence, electoral rigging and manipulation and other misgovernance portrayed Nigeria as one of the most fragile democracies in the world (Sule *et al.* 2020; Burchard and Simati 2019; Sule 2019). The elites utilised ethnicity, religion, and region to establish a wide chasm that impeded political and social cohesion, which is another permutation of security threats. The Lake Chad Basin, on which over 20 million Nigerians relied for sustenance, lost more than 95% of its total water reserve leading to the climatic conditions of shortage in food productivity in the Northeast zone and hunger (Frimpong 2020). Nigeria's budget for the health sector and education in 2020 allocated less than 5% for each of the sectors to showcase how unserious and negligent the policymakers are concerned with the welfare of its citizens. A share of the budget is less than what was allocated to the National Assembly with 460 members and their subordinates (*World Health Organisation* 2020). Nigeria has emerged as 146 in the 2021 Corruption Perception Index out of 179 countries studied (*Transparency International* 2021), revealing how deep corruption continues to bite hard in the

country. The Global Terrorism Index (2021) reported Nigeria as the 3rd most terrorised country in the world while the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) identified Nigeria as the country with the highest prevalence of sea piracy globally (*IMB 2021*)

Thus, the Nigerian security threats can be understood from the above few cited examples. With the above alarming and terrific figures, it is not surprising that regional security threats permeate the Nigerian state on all fronts. The windows are broken, criminals are nurtured and hatched by ill policies, victims exist, and sanctioning is minimal, in this situation, taking up arms is not difficult. All these are aided by the globalisation of terror and fuelling of fire of insecurity in Africa by the US and NATO, who geopolitically removed Ghaddafi in Libya, not minding the consequences (Ezemenaka and Ekumaoko 2021; Willett 2005; Mkandawire 2015; Tar 2022). Libya immediately became the umbilical cord for the spread of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa, where out of the over 500 illicit weapons in circulation, Nigeria is reported to have possessed 70% of it, according to the United Nations (2018) Thus, the outbreak of order is not unexpected in this type of setting and the repercussion is what the country is now facing.

Theorising Domestic Regional Security Threats in Nigeria: Securitisation Approaches

Existing theoretical explanations and empirical findings of understanding Nigerian politics and security are mushrooming. However, recent emancipatory and postcolonial discourses in security questioned the tendency of pretexting African lessons for validating western-centric security debate. Ezemenaka and Ekumaoko (2021), William 2007, Attuquayefio (2015) and Metelits (2017) argued for the importance of human security spectrum to balance the dominance of external-top-down traditional state-centric security policies in Nigeria and Africa elsewhere. Since they mostly reiterated Global North's international relations (IR) parsimony outlooks, which seem disengaged from the present day's security reality of Nigeria and negatively established the dilemma of the Global South's contribution to CSS scholarship. Retrospectively, eloquent security policy assessments in Nigeria must challenge the mainstream view of African agencies as passive bystanders in the global security structure. Furthermore, Nigerian security researchers' sacred task is to rescue and liberate local security dilemmas and dysconnectivity from the inherent state of the national elite and the modern institutional crisis of African state formation, order, and security wherein depends upon the logical fallacy of the neoliberal mantra of development, liberal peace, procedural democracy, and the global war on terror debate in imagining what may or may not work locally.

Therefore, it is pertinent to employ critical security studies (CCS) frameworks to explain and understand the state of chaos and disorder as a political instrument or governance, especially behind the politics of regional security threats in Nigeria (Vaughan-Williams 2014; Chabal and Daloz 1999; Ghechu Wohlforth. 2018; Taylor 2004). In light of this, the Copenhagen School of Security or Securitisation's vital assumptions and relativity in explaining the transition of the non-security object into a security object and its consequences (Usman 2018; Brown 2006; Dunn 2001; Siollun 2021; Buzan 1991; Buzan and Hansen 2009). In return, securitisation practice and normalisation of communal violence in Nigeria result from resisting state reforms and rudimentary gatekeeper's impunity, the prevalence of patronage politics, and the ruling elite's tendency to politicise sources of security threats when governing the internal regional security order of Nigeria (Bayart 2009; Sule and Gombe 2020; Mimiko 2022).

Through the famous maxim of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Bates' *When Things Fell Apart* (2008) argued that the plunged of Africa during the period of madness and systemic Nigeria's extraversion provides continued dependency incentive. Nigeria's political-economic relations with existing and emerging external actors (including China's scramble for resources and market) inadvertently pitted forces of reforms and accountability against impunity (Carmody 2016; Yahya 2007; Jedlowski 2017; Rufa'I 2021; Maier 2022; Wojuade 2019; Olaye *et al.* 2020; Milliot 2021; Nwalozie 2020; Walker 2016; Verjee and Kwaja 2021). Nevertheless, the blindspot of Nigerian policymakers is unwillingly contextualising the critical ramifications of 'becoming a security threat' is further exacerbated by preordained despotic structures of gatekeepers' brinkmanship games.

The Securitisation Theory emerged from clear yet rightly needed views that the future of global security and, by extension, collective domestic security rely on addressing critical political, socioeconomic, and environmental factors that undermine the peace and security of the post-Cold War's state-society relations. Pundits such as Buzan (1983), Waltz (2000; 2001; 2009), Buzan & Hansen (2009), and Buzan and Schouenborg (2018) are solidly behind this postulation. The primary epistemic assumption is that security threats shift tremendously from external military threats that bedevilled the state. Equally important, state survival relied on the policymaker's ability to ensure freedom from threats of poverty, pandemic, illiteracy, misgovernance, as well as natural and manufactured environmentally disasters, food crisis, terrorism, piracy, cybercrimes, ethnopolitics, migration, trafficking, and displacement. The ability or inability of policymakers, according to this theory, to attend successfully to these political, socioeconomic, and environmental security threats determine how secure or insecure a state may be.

Furthermore, understanding the transnational conditions that trigger new or renewed potential threats unravels the existing weaknesses of the traditional state's capability to be immune from multiple security threats. In the Nigerian context, the negligence of non-military threats turned Nigeria into poverty headquarters, a haven of corruption, misgovernance, political violence and other forms of crimes, which finally manifested in the current regional security threats (Campbell and Page 2018; Levan and Ukata 2021; Falola and Heaten 2022; Falola 2008). It is believed that this type of security threat that produced the current insecurity all over the country is politicised because the policymakers find it convincing to their insatiable lust for power to confine the ordinary Nigerian populace in deprivation perpetually.

For instance, taking the Niger-Delta conflict, which is the oldest of the conflicts, the oil-wealth region is enmeshed in critical environmental and health hazards coupled with socioeconomic and political crises. The region received an allocation higher than any other in the country, the elites continued to manipulate the subjects that they are being politically dominated by other parts of the country despite presenting an averagely of about 70% of the sources of foreign exchange for the country (Onoh 1983; Olaoyeh *et al.* 2020; Apitsa 2021). The sufferings in poverty, joblessness, illiteracy, diseases, hunger, and infrastructure deficit provided a ground for breeding militants who threatened the country through pipeline explosion, kidnapping of

expatriates and blockage of resources exploration and oil theft and bunkering. The farmers-herders clashes were recorded in the 1970s when the policymakers, particularly in Northern Nigeria, discovered easy money in the oil sector and neglected the agricultural sector (Mahler 2010; *Offshore Technology* July 6, 2021). The grazing routes, support for farming and other interventions were abandoned, leading to resource competition fuelled by climatic, socioeconomic, and political factors (Harvey 2021). The peak of the crisis was witnessed in the 2000s when the competition for land by farmers and grazing fields by herders led to a dangerously violent level emanating from the negligence of policymakers to provide the needed resources and support for the two groups to survive, and this has prompted for perceiving the crisis as political (Reitman and Hemen 2022). In the case of IPOB secessionist agitation, it was seen as an offshoot of a political crisis of the 1960s and 1970s when the Southeast part of the country dominated by the Igbos attempted to secede, leading to a bloody Civil War (LeVan 2019). The political factors and socioeconomic issues that pushed for Igbos' attempt at secession continued even in the post-Civil War, and therefore, the agitations also continued.

The Boko Haram insurgency is believed to have emerged from the spill over effects of political and socioeconomic negligence in Northeast Nigeria but, more importantly, a loose religious control (Comoli 2018; Kassim and Nwankpa 2018). The claim of Jihad by the sect could not be taken as the only cause but rather a multitude of issues involving poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, and other deprivations since the region is the poorest in the country (Zenn and Pieri 2018). Likewise, banditry in Northwest Nigeria is similar to the farmers-herders conflict as it is an intensified resources competition between the rural farmers and rural Fulani herders in the Northwest that resulted in the conflict aided by the activities of Boko Haram, which paved the way for the spread of terrorism in Northern Nigeria and the emergence of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in illicit hands (Tar 2022; UN 2018). The Southwest separatist movement of Sunday Igboho is considered political but with a security threat to the state because they are being accused of assembling weapons which in the long run may lead to a clash with the constituted authorities as is being witnessed in other regions. All of these helped to define that Securitisation or political and socio-economic perspectives of security threats is a feasible explanation and interpretation of the regional security threats in the Nigerian context (Othman 1990; Clapham 1996; Shaw 2019).

Discussions: Trends and Patterns of Regional Security Threats in Nigeria

In this section, an effort was made to identify and analyse the various trends and patterns of regional security threats, emphasising the motivation of the conflict, manifestations, impacts, and the politics behind it. These efforts enable a clear understanding and differentiation of the threats individually, even though the root cause and motive may be generalised as politics and the political, socioeconomic, and environmental factors.

The Niger Delta Militants

The conflict in Niger Delta takes economic, social, and political dimensions. The zone, geographically named Southsouth, has a reserve of crude oil worth billions of cubic metres untapped, which was discovered in the 1970s (Osaghae 1995). Oil quickly became the primary source of foreign exchange for Nigeria. The activities of the oil companies led to oil spillage, contamination of clean drinking water, environmental degradation, spoiling soil nutrients, thereby disenabling farming, pollution, the killing of aquatic animals which prevent fishing, ecological problems, and economic sabotage. In reaction to this undesired development, activists in the zone started agitating for their rights and even resource control. Unfortunately, the Nigerian Constitution mandated the Federal Government with an exclusive right to mining onshore and offshore, currency, defence, and other matters. The peak of the struggles reached its limelight when the leaders of Ogoni land, Ken Saro Wiwi and six others, insisted on resource control which subsequently led to their execution by the Abacha Administration (Dialoke and Edeja (2017). Given the crucial perplexity of Nigeria's rentier state and dependency on the oil revenue, the struggles henceforth intensified to the extent rise of militia groups who attacked oil fields and exploded oil pipelines, kidnapped expatriates and local workers, economic productivity and triggered a resource curse (Gboyega *et al.* 2011). The struggles of the leaders, activists and militants compelled the Nigerian government to make some concessions to the zone by enacting a derivation formula in 2000 of 13% share for the oil-producing states from the accrued oil revenue. Additionally, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) was established to boost regional development in the zone. Also, in 2007, the Yar'adua Administration offered Amnesty to the militants and initiated a programme of rehabilitation and reintegration of the militants (Oyinlola *et al.*, 2017).

The activities of the militants in the Niger Delta caused national insecurity economically and politically in Nigeria (Analysis 2022). For several months across many years, Nigeria hardly attained its proposed 2.5-barrel production per day because of sabotage. In most cases, less than 1.5 million is produced daily. The Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF), Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) and Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) were the most popular. According to one of the informants:

"Politics is linked to the activities of these militants because the weapons that they displayed are questioned being worthy of billions of Naira where do they get them; how do they access them and who finance them?" (Interview on June 12, 2021).

According to another informant:

"In some instances, the elders in Niger Delta cautioned against taking action on these militants, asking the Nigerian Government to treat them softly, which raised suspicion." (Interview on June 12, 2021).

The pictures of some of the leaders of the zone with top politicians revealed how romantic the militants are with the Niger Delta leaders:

"It is understood that the militants are being used unconsciously by politicians in the region to press for more revenue allocation that is often, not judiciously used because, despite the derivation allocation worth trillions to the region, no significant commiserating development is

recorded there.” (Interview on June 16, 2021).

The Niger Delta militancy resulted in the kidnapping of over 300 expatriates, Nigeria is losing about 70,000 barrels of oil per day and an organised mafia criminal gang was formed as a cartel for oil deals (Usman 2018; Burgis 2015; Ajakaiye & Jerome 2015)

Farmers versus Herders Conflict in Northcentral and other Parts of Nigeria

The farmers versus herders’ conflict in Nigeria is one of the debilitating security threats influenced by climatic factors and internal security negligence. The conflict is more pronounced in Northcentral Nigeria, affecting the Benue, Nassarawa, Plateau States and also Northeast, Northwest, and Southern parts of Nigeria. The Northern Regional Government 1965 established 417 grazing routes for the herders, which were obliterated by farmers’ encroachment, urbanisation, and the neglect of agriculture after discovering oil. It is deduced that banditry and kidnapping in Northwest Nigeria is an offshoot of this crisis (Verjee and Kwaja. 2021). Climate change, depletion of Lake Chad, poor agricultural policies, porous borders, and politics are the major drivers of the clash (Omeihe 2021; Milliot 202; Nwalozie. 2020). The conflict between farmers and herders cost Nigeria over 50,000 deaths between 2001 and 2004, according to (*BBC News*, July 26, 2021) report, with women and children accounting for 35,000 of the victims. The BBC report estimated the economic cost of the conflict in Benue, Kaduna, Nassarawa and Plateau States at \$14 billion annually. The total number of deaths from the conflict since 1999 is 1.2 million, and over 200,000 have been displaced (Nowosu 2017; Sambo and Sule 2021) reported that the farmers-herders conflict resulted in insecurity, food insecurity, ethnicity, banditry, economic sabotage, and politicisation of security matter. According to one informant:

“The farmers-herders conflict was politicised instead of being tackled with sincerity by many actors concerned. For instance, the people of Benue continue to accuse the Fulani herders of the crisis not taking into consideration that among the farmers that were affected are Fulanis too.” (Interview April 7, 2021).

Several other informants added that:

“...these herders, in their substantial number, are illegal cross-border migrants from Cameroon, Chad Republic, Mali, Central African Republic, Burkina Faso and Guinea who exploited the nature of Nigerian porous borders and their activities had affected their Fulani counterparts in Northeast and Northwest for many decades before they extended to Northcentral and other parts of Nigeria.” (Interview April 11, 2021).

“The crisis of farmers and herders was dishevelled and one-sided reported by the Southern media portraying it as if it is only the South that is targeted when the impacts are more felt in the North.” (Interview April 13, 2021).

“Some sections of the country even linked the crisis with official support just because the President is a Fulani man. With all the efforts that the Government is putting in arresting the menace, they presented their views to look as if the Government is not doing anything.” (Interview April 16, 2021).

“...in Benue State, where the Tiv ethnic group is proclaiming an assault by the Fulani herders, a high-profile bandit was captured who later turned

out to be a Tiv himself disguising as a Fulani herder unleashing terror on Benue inhabitants." (Interview April 15, 2021).

The movement by the Nigerian Government to establish grazing centres nationwide was met with top resistance by many states in Northcentral and Southern Nigeria, which further depicts how politicised the conflict is (Omeihe 2021). To display the politics, when the Federal Government pledged to offer some financial incentives for the states that embraced the programme, many states, including the Benue, which constituted itself as the staunch opposition of the policy, rushed quickly to declare acceptance. Simply, the motive for farmers-herders conflict is competition over scarce resources and politicisation of the conflict for personal gain.

The Boko Haram Insurgency

The Boko Haram insurgency is the deadliest regional security threat in Nigeria which started in Northeast Nigeria but expanded beyond the region into other parts of Northern Nigeria and transcended into regional collective security problems in West Africa, affecting Cameroon, Chad Republic, Niger Republic and also forging an alliance in faraway Central and North Africa (Usman 2022; McNamee and Muyanga 2021; Ikelegbe and

Okomu 2010). The movement began as peaceful but radical preaching against Western institutions and values as an infidel system that negated Islamic practices. Some sources believed that the early manifestations of Boko Haram's activities were recorded in the 2002 attack in Kanama Geidem, Yobe State of Northeastern Nigeria and the 2007 Panshekara attack in Kano State of Northwest Nigeria (Sule *et al.* 2019). The movement named itself 'Jama'atu Ahlul Sunnah Lil Da'awati Wal Jihad', but it earned the name 'Boko Haram' for the critical voice it lends against Western education by the leader, Muhammad Yusuf. The Boko Haram turned into a violent armed group in 2009 when its leadership was taken over by Abubakar Shekau after the extrajudicial execution of the former leader, Muhammad Yusuf. Poor monitoring of religious activities, socioeconomic conditions with the Northeast being the poorest region in the country, politics, inadequate state response and an alleged conspiratorial external sponsorship succeeded in causing the mayhem of Boko Haram (Sule and San 2020; Owojori *et al.* 2020) Between 2009 to 2020, the activities of Boko Haram have led to over 35,000 deaths, displacement of around 3 million, a serious humanitarian crisis involving women and children with around 1.5 inhabitants in the Northeast in a critical need of urgent humanitarian intervention, food insecurity, hunger and other disasters all from the consequences of the Boko Haram terrorism (*Council on Foreign Relations* 2021)

The Boko Haram insurgents encountered an internal schism and divided into the old faction led by Shekau and a new one by Abu Mus'ab Al Barnawi, a son of the former leader, late Muhammad Yusuf, known as Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP). Both Shekau and Al Barnawi were killed in 2021 June and August, respectively (Warner *et al.* 2022). Most of the recent writings on Boko Haram (Walker 2016, 2; Thurston 2018, 32; Allen 2019; Brechenmacher 2019, 6; Warner *et al.* 2022, 27) studied Boko Haram from various dimensions, including either out of misunderstanding, lack of deeper investigation or a deliberate attempt to perpetuate Islamic Jihadism motivation of the group. This has not been identified as such by local researchers. For instance, Sule & Sambo (2020) justified that Boko Haram is a misguided unIslamic foolish action of some few which is patronised by all faith.

Muslims and non-Muslims are apprehended severally in Boko Haram activities, including foreigners (Nolte *et al.* 2016). Additionally, portrays of Boko Haram as an assault only on Christians which is not also true. Through a Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) perspective, Owojori *et al.* (2020) demonstrate more nuanced tendency of vested interest and politicisation of terrorism in recent national electoral politics in Nigeria. The clandestine activities of the group are dominant in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe, the Northeast States with majority of Muslims. The majority of the victims are from these states. The modus operandi of Boko Haram consists of sporadic shootings, bombings, suicide attacks, kidnapping, abduction, blockage, and massacre. In essence, the Boko Haram insurgency differs slightly from other regional security threats because it looks religious and a pronounced Jihad by the sects. While others are more economical and political, Boko Haram is agreed to be religious but not dissociated from politics. The former President of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan, mentioned that Boko Haram was orchestrated to manipulate the downfall of his government by the Northern elites where many Northern inhabitants believed that Jonathan's Government was deliberately ignoring the conflict because it involved the North only (Owen and Usman 2015). The phenomenon of Boko Haram was heavily exploited by the opposition APC for the 2015 General Election, and it paid up because they convinced Nigerians to vote for them in return for the safety of their lives and properties. All the consulted informants accepted that Boko Haram is religiously motivated, but politicians used the insurgency for their political benefit.

Banditry and Kidnapping

Banditry, kidnapping, and school children abduction for ransom is now the current security threat that Nigeria is battling with more than others in a few years back. This phenomenon is dominant in Northwest Nigeria, but the Northcentral and other parts of the country too are not spared even though, not as devastating as that of the Northwest (Dialoke and Edeja. 2017; Wojuade 2019). The long-term mutual hostility between the Fulani herders and farmers in rural areas of Northwest Nigeria, particularly in Kaduna, Katsina, Sokoto and Zamfara States led to the attacks on farmlands which was later followed up by reprisals from the farmers who loot cattle. The Fulanis, devoid of any formal education, commercial establishment or farming land resorted to cattle rustling which later metamorphosed into full banditry that has within it a new dimension of kidnapping and abduction of school children for ransom (Omeihe 2021; Reitman and Hermen 2022). Banditry and kidnapping in Northwest Nigeria threaten to delink various parts of the country because the bandits block highways including the Abuja-Kaduna-Kano highway, kidnap travellers and demand ransom. In some cases, the bandit's massacre, rape and burn alive the victims without any abduction for ransom. From 2010 to 2021, rural banditry has cost the rural dwellers in the most affected areas over 100,000 rustled cattle and 6,000 deaths (Verjee and Kwaja. 2021; Ogbonnaya 2021) A recent report (*SB Morgen: Nigeria's Leading Intelligence Platform. Intelligence Report* 2021), indicates that rural banditry in Northwest Nigeria from 2011 to 2021 has cost at least more than 6,000 lives, over 2,347 were abducted or kidnapped by the bandits, a total sum of an estimated \$18.34 million (N8.98 billion) was paid within the period as ransom, more than 250,000 were now displaced, over 250,000 cattle rustled and around 225,000 hectares of farmlands remain uncultivated from the period especially in 2020 and 2021 between 2016 and 2018, Nigeria had lost \$900 (N353 billion) to the activities of illegal mining, criminal syndicate and banditry (Ogbonnaya 2021, 11)

Banditry and kidnapping in Northwest Nigeria have the effects on the political economy of gold mining in the Zamfara States and other illegal mining in the zone (Rufa'I. 2021). It was believed that politicians in collaboration with foreign companies armed and sponsor insecurity to enable their illicit activities undetected. It was believed according to an informant that:

"...politicians in the Northwest deliberately created mutual suspicion between the farmers and Fulanis for their political goal which escalated beyond control into the current banditry that we are all suffering from today." (Interview May 8,, 2021).

In another version, an informant reported that:

"...banditry and kidnapping have become a profitable venture for criminal gangs and taming it is practically difficult because the bandits are allegedly backed up by politicians and foreign miners." (Interview May 11, 2021).

In another view, an informant suggested that:

"...the failure of policymakers in Northwest to establish a robust economy, sound agricultural policies and other economic moderators caused a scorching poverty to push people into crimes which sadly turned into banditry." (Interview May 6, 2021).

The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)

IPOB is not a new group that is agitating for secession from Nigeria. The earlier movement known as Biafra led to a bloody Civil War in 1967-1970 that cost an estimated 3 million lives. The overpowering of the forces of Biafra by the Nigerian Government was attached with it in an effort for appeasing the warring faction and immediately 12 states were created to assuage the minority's feeling of domination. However, the Biafrans could not settle for anything except secession (Oyinlola *et al.* 2017) The IPOB agitations continued until the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign People of Biafra (MASSOB) in the 2000s was formed. This movement remained confined in political motives and could not wield any serious threats until recently in less than five years back when Nnamdi Kanu, an Igbo in diaspora, formed the IPOB (*S (Nextier Security, Peace and Development* 2021a). The IPOB initially appeared civil until the leader began to direct his members to invoke violence, sabotage and confrontation against the Nigerian security and innocent Nigerians. The IPOB laments marginalisation, economic sabotage, deprivation, and other factors as the reason for their agitation to secede (Emeka 2021). The violent activities of the group and the carrying of heavy arms led the Nigerian Government to arrest the IPOB leader, Nnamdi Kanu. While in detention, the group intensified violent attacks on public buildings, and security personnel, sit at the home declaration which forced people to stay indoors or face assault and killing, particularly in Abia, Anambra, and the Imo States in Southeast Nigeria. Many innocent souls are killed, public buildings are razed, security outposts attacked, and business establishments destroyed. Five months into 2021, 149 people have been killed in 36 attacks in Southeast Nigeria according to Nextier Security, Peace, and Development (SPD) violent conflict database (2021b)

Many observers and informants believed that the IPOB movement was not genuinely motivated by the need to secede. The perception of marginalisation from the seat of the

Presidency against the Igbos since 1966 was their grievance. The utterances and activities of the Igbo elders indicate that they are cajoling the Federal Government to manage IPOB members softly and to release Nnamdi Kanu, their leader, which generated suspicion that the movement has a political backing from politicians in the region. This is because while the IPOB insists on separation, the Igbo Governors and elders are insisting on the zoning of the Presidency to the region. As reported by the informant:

“Although the elders could not be seen supporting a violent secession after the experience of the Civil War, they could have intellectually declared support for IPOB’s action or denounced it. Political motivation is sensed here.” (Interview April 24, 2021).

Many experts fear that

“IPOB violence is gradually becoming a replica of Boko Haram in its earlier stage and if care is not taken, the Southeast will soon find itself in a similar mess like that of Northeast.” (Interview April 26, 2021).

Separatist Agitation

This agitation emerged lately from 2020 in the Southwest under the tutorship of Sunday Igboho, who pronounced that he is engineering a movement for establishing Oduduwa State in the Yorubaland of the Southwest. The movement was initially ignored by the Government as an empty threat until the confidential security investigation revealed that Igboho is amassing a large stockpile of lethal weapons, including rifles, explosives and other SALW (*BBC News*, July 26, 2021) The motivation for the movement was advanced in frustration with the activities of Fulani herders, according to the leader of the group. The Southwest Governors established a regional vigilante group known as ‘Amotekun’ which was criticised by their Northern counterparts as the politicisation of security issues. The Southwest Governors insisted that the activities of herders and other criminals necessitated the formation of the local security apparatus (Campbell 2021; Nnodim *et al.* 2021) The separatist movement under Igboho betrayed the politics in it when security operatives raided his house some months back in July 2021. The Southwest Governors openly cautioned the Federal Government against such an approach and demanded that such operations in future should be made known to them before they are executed, and this position made many analysts and commentators identify a political motive behind it (Majeed 2021) Some believed that it was all a business of the 2023 Presidency. The Southwest allied with the North to produce President Muhammadu Buhari under APC in 2015. It is expected that by 2023, President Buhari is leaving after serving two constitutional tenures and the next President should come from the South, specifically, the Southwest. However, some Southwestern politicians are sensing that there may be a plot by some cabals in the Presidency from the North who are trying to manipulate and present another Northern candidate and that has been responded to through the threat of separation. Most of the consulted informants perceived that view also, except one of them who differed in his opinion that:

“I could not say that politics is not part of the separatist agitation in the Southwest but there is more than that. People are frustrated with the collapsing security and are felt threatened which necessitated for internal defence.” (Interview May 2, 2021).

Conclusion

The study uncovered many issues from the investigation. First, it was realised that all the six geopolitical zones in the country are faced with one security threat or the other or many. Thus, Nigeria is currently at war with itself from all regions, stretching the national treasury in the defence budget and Nigerian security operatives. The study successfully linked the causes of Nigeria's current regional security threats to political and socioeconomic factors that were not addressed for many decades, which finally exploded simultaneously in a most inconvenient situation to contain them properly. Our study confirmed the politicisation of the security matters across the six geopolitical zones, as well as the effects of insecurity on the lives and properties of the affected victims. The study concludes that Nigerian security architecture is gradually collapsing, and the country is entirely collapsing from different fronts because of the internal regional security threat.

Therefore, this study suggested that the Nigerian government must procure advanced superior weapons above that of these armed groups to exert national sovereignty and secure its internal territory. Where the US and other European countries are foot-dragging in selling to Nigeria on the pretext of human rights and other trivialities, the country should refer to China and Russia as other substitutes because the country's situation is that of war currently. Secondly, while sustaining offensive and counteroffensive as an immediate solution, the country should refer back and reflect on the political and socioeconomic factors that ushered in these regional insecurities and remedy them by initiating sound public and foreign policies. Third, politics should be avoided, and leaders must acquire a political will to face security issues as matters of national security instead of politicisation. Fourth, where amnesty will work effectively, the government may save itself from the employment of coercion by adopting a peaceful negotiation. Fifthly, Nigeria needs to initiate strong national patriotic policies that will foster national cohesion and unity, mitigating mutual suspicion and hostilities. In the case of Boko Haram, policies that will censor irresponsible and radical religious movements should be designed to avoid the future.

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