

Need for Security Sector Reform: Nigerian Perspective

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Abstract

Security as a concept is relative; this article dwells on safety of lives and property in Nigeria. The security system in Nigeria has not been enjoying the confidence of the citizens, based on how the sector is conducting its activities which have not in any way reflects professionalism. Therefore, the need for the reform of the sector to make it up to the task of securing of lives and property which it was established. The focus of this study is to examine the concept of security and security reform, take a historical look at civil-military relations in Nigeria, the challenges of security sector reform in Nigeria. Finally, the study concludes by recommending that the best approach to security sector reform is through extensive reconstruction, rehabilitation and reform of the security sector and the various institutions of government handling security issues.

Introduction

Security sector reform (SSR) emerged as a key concept in the late 1990s among the security experts and democracy advocates. It is a relative concept that is mainly aimed at provision of both state and human security within a sovereign and divined geographical entity with government. Security business is a collective business of the government and the governed. Hence, the primary task of the security sector is to ensure safety of lives and property, while the governed are to provide useful information that will assist the security sector in performing their duties, provided the safety of the formal will be guaranteed in the process of giving useful information. In Nigeria and in most of the third world countries generally, government security system has out leave their usefulness in such that private securities have taken over their roles. The fact remains that security is fundamental to people's livelihood for economic, social and political development, and self-esteem. Where there is safety development is automatically arrested. In a related submission, (Olaleye, 28, Sept. 2012) argues that, the security challenge of the 21 century in Nigeria has become almost intractable, especially given the onslaught of terrorism, a crime hitherto alien to the nation's security architecture. He further explains that this development clearly revealed that, the police and other security agencies were not prepared to take on the strangling challenge. The attitude and character of officers and men of the sector have not shown the structure of personnel with commitment to service.

Concepts of Security and Security Sector Reform

Security means the absence of threats. Emancipation in the freeing of people (as individuals and groups) from those human physical constrains which stop them from carrying out what they would freely choose to do (Booth cited by Mutimer, 1999: 83). The security of state and human is affected by the following factors: first is the economy which is the sub-structure which determines others factors of in the society. Second is politics which is mainly into the allocation of resources. Third is military that is constitutionally vested with coercive powers to maintain physical security in any given society. Forth is the environmental factor. This can be natural of caused by man in the process of invention. Therefore, security is when individuals, groups of individuals and a sovereign state is free from any kind of constrain which might restrain them from carrying out what they would freely choose to do from their free will, provided such act is not infringing on other peoples' fundamental human rights. SSR cannot be study in isolation of the state. Therefore, state is a geographical entity with internationally recognized boundary, population, constitution, government and sovereignty with a set of interconnected and coordinated institutions that are concerned with the organization and enforcement of power; formulation and implementation of the constitution, and formulation and implementation of public policy for coordination and ordering of society.

According to Midgal (1988:1), a state monopolizes certain powers and roles, namely the making and execution of building rules, the control and utilization of institutions of organized violence, the legitimate use of physical force, the extraction of resources, including taxation of citizens, the right to political allegiance of citizens, the right to adjudication and mediation in disputes between citizens and the right of representation in the international community. Another definition which is similar but narrow in perspective is that, security sector are those institutions which have been entrusted with the protection of the state and its citizens, based on monopoly of the use of coercive force, that is military, paramilitary, intelligence, police and penal forces (Ebo,2004:6). In the submission of Milliken and Krause cited in Ikelegbe (2000:121), “state can be strong or weak, fragile, in decline or decadent, failing or failed and collapsing or collapsed”. He explains further that the delineations are fluid and overlapping in such that weak and failing states may be fragile, just as fragile states are often weak and failing.

The indication of weak state is its failure of the state to perform critical and important state functions. In the view of Ndikumana(1998) a state can be referred to as weak when institutional framework of statehood and governance are weak, non-viable and ineffective, because vital institutions are subverted by hegemony, personalization, informalization and corruption or because public institutions are manipulated by privileged groups to perpetuate unequally, injustice, perversion and oppression.

Security sector is one of the institutions of government or a sector in an organized society that is conventionally or constitutionally empowered to perform the task of securing lives and property in a defined geographical environment. According to Williams (2000:5), “notwithstanding, the political and social importance of human society, qua institutions within the Africa context are the army, the police, the intelligence service, paramilitary organizations as well as guerrilla and rebel armies”. The environmental factors of Williams’ area of research (Nigeria and Sierra Leone) were major influence on his concept of security sector. In an organized and ideal society, security sector are those institutions of government that are constitutionally required to perform the role of security in one form or the other for the safety of such society.

SSR ideally addresses the dual challenge posed by security services and security sector on governance by transforming military forces to defend their country against foreign enemies while trying to institutionalize civilian oversight and/ or parliamentary control (Dehez, 2010:39). He argues further that, security sector reform aims to strengthen oversight and executive control of all security services from the army to border control and the intelligence services while trying to enhance their operational capabilities in maintaining a peaceful, co-existing and organized society. In the view of Williams (2000:1), “security sector reform can best be understood against both the backdrop of traditional military assistance to develop countries, and within the context of the new alignment of political forces that is occurring within the developed countries. Security sector reform is a process of creating a new image of the security sector through re-orientation of the sector and the citizens on security matters organize a well-equipped, well-trained and well-resourced security sector that could maintain both the government in power, institutions of government and the general citizen.

Why SSR in Nigeria

The main reason for the SSR in Nigeria is to create a secured society through a security sector that will be alert to its responsibilities is such that it will be pro-active to nip perceive crisis at the bud before snowball into a violent conflict; to create civil-military relation in a way that the civilian can confide in the security sector and to create a safe and conducive environment for both local and international investors. According to(DAC Guideline and Reference Series, 2012:15) security system reform is to create a secure environment that is conducive to development, poverty reduction and democracy. The deduction in this definition is that, it is only a conflict free environment that can allow for economic development that will bring about poverty reduction and by extension democratic growth and stability.

Over the years, the security situation in Nigeria has not been palatable, rather it is getting worst day by day to the extent that the country was captured by Purvis (2012:1) as “for the last two years, Nigeria was categorized as the 14th worst states out of 177 countries ranked by multiple factors in the Fund For Peace (FFP) Failed State index”. This submission vividly described the security situation in the country because of its inability to contain the unending ethnic and religious attacks of Niger Delta and Boko Haram respectively.

In Nigeria, there have been various violent conflicts ranging from religion, ethnic, political and resource allocation in the recent time and the security has not at any time shown professionalism by curtailing any of the conflicts from degenerating to loss of lives and property. The general decay in the country cannot encourage one to totally attribute the blame to the security sector, because the sector is part of the general society and is not immune from the effect of its challenges. Notwithstanding, the attitude and response of the security to crises situation have shown an ill-equipped, poorly trained and unprofessional security sector that need urgent attention to be refocused. For example, in the various elections conducted in the country in recent time, the security sector have been accused of being used by those in power and those that can afford to finance them to intimidate their perceived political opponents. This was attested to in the various post-election tribunals across the country.

The failures of the sector have allowed for its proliferation by various security outfits that are privately owned by individual and organizations for commercial purposes. The example of such includes, king's guide, lion fit, Ace Cop Security Limited, Adaptive Guards Limited, Alpha-Mega Security Limited and many others. Also, security outfits are being currently established by most state governments, to perform parallel function with the Nigerian Police Force, this development may be counter-productive. All the alternative security bodies lacks the capacity, capability and the required training to combat crises, their operations as a result of lack of the needed security skills have upshot to abuse and violation of rights of the citizens that are to be protected from violation. Hence, they have at various times taken laws into their hands by playing the roles of the police and the judiciary in arresting and prosecuting their adjudged offenders, these action have caused pandemonium in the society and subsequently wildly condemned.

Character of Nigerian security Sector

The security sector in Nigeria is not people-oriented; it is often disarticulated from the larger society and obsolete in structure. In a related submission on a similar situation about the security case in Nigerian is that "police and military officers were not regarded as a source of protection rather as entities to be feared" (Bekoe and Parajon, 2007:1). Hence, they cannot provide security for the populace. In the view of Ebo (2004:2) while reviewing the security sector, he argues that instead of the security sector functioning to secure lives and property, they are functioning as sources of insecurity and tools of oppression, dictatorships and maintenance of power at all cost. He further explains that, rather than being agent of law, their flagrant abuse of, and impunity and immunity to the rule of law has been the means through which they have brutalized and terrorized the very population which they are supposed to protect (ibid).

Given the expansive nature of the security community in Nigeria, the sectors have included the non-statutory actors whose illogical roles have been both to threaten and to provide selective security to some elements within the state. In another submission of (Ebo, 2004:6) on the civil-security relations in West Africa that by extension captures the situation in Nigeria is that, the protracted history of military rule in much of West Africa, the armed forces have traditionally operated without, and often against the fundamental democratic principle of civilian oversight. He further submits that, the end-result has been inverted civil-security relations characterized by a superiority complex on the part of the military and a debilitating incapacity complex on the part of civilian oversight institutions. Therefore, there is the need to empower the civilian to perform oversight function over the security sector; little attention has been given to the need to orient the security towards accepting the need for civilian oversight.

The lack of transparency, accountability and commitment of the security sector is a reflection of the major problem of the entire country, where there is no respect for the rule of law. The rule of law requires that the government, all institutions of the state and all the citizens must respect and uphold the laws.

Challenges of Security Sector

The proliferation, commercialization and unnecessarily expansion of the security sector that has not been achieving the primary purpose of securing lives and property, and guiding the state have posed a major challenge to its reform. The following among others will be discussed as the obstacles to security sector reform in Nigeria:

Political determination: perhaps because of the nature or democracy in the country, many of the state government do make use of private security that can be ordered around to do anything. Their recruitment is done under the guise of providing employment and the trend is now fast spreading in to all the states in the country. In order to legitimize this, the states have been advocating for state police that will be directly controlled by the states.

Funding: the Nigeria security sector is mainly controlled and funded by the federal government that is responsible for its recruitment. Based on this and the fact that the public has little or no input of control over them, the sector have seen itself above the citizen that they are established to protect. In another view, it has been severally reported that the sector has not been adequately funded, hence, the reason for their poor performance. This cannot be totally correct in the sense that two of the past Inspector General of Police are currently being drill for misappropriation of funds meant for equipment and welfare of the security sector for better performance.

Lack of modern equipment: the operationalization of the Nigeria security sector has also been plagued by the obsolete security equipment; this is directly related to the problem of funding. Lack of modern equipment is responsible for the mass recruitment of both qualified and nonqualified personals into the sector that requires qualified and well trained individuals. Hence, twentyqualified personal with modern equipment will conveniently and better perform the job of one hundred unqualified, ill-trained and withobsolete equipment.

Lack of committed men: most of the men in the sector are not there out of love and passion for security service, but as a result of the unemployment which is a product of the economic situation in the country. Therefore, this have paved way for the recruitment of mostly unqualified personnel into the sector that requires the best brains and minds to function.

Unethical conduct: the security personnel in the country have variously displayed poor ethics in handling official matters. It a common practice among them to rough handle a suspect when called upon; most of their junior officers are not always professionally dressed in a way that will command respect of the citizens; cases are not always professionally handled by some officers because of vested interest and; psychologically, some officers mostly junior once see themselves to be superior to the society they are paid to protect. Hence, their unethical conducts have made them to be the most dislike institution in the society.

Conclusion and Suggestions

The security sector reform is at its early stage in which a lot of work still need to be done in getting the security system back to its primary track, before a fully fleshed out and sufficiently capable and flexible approach can be developed and practicalised in such that the sector will be easily responding to security situations. The need to guarantee the fundamental and constitutional rights of the citizens while going about their lawful business is paramount to the reform of the security sector. Also, the conduct of security of any nation specks volume of its image, hence, the security sector as the image maker of any country needs reform to allow for good image making. There is also need to bridge the gap between the citizens and the security sectors to allow for cordial civil-military relations that will make the citizens see themselves as part of the security system and therefore be ready to volunteer useful information at any giving time without perceiving any risk in given information that will help in performing their duties.

However, the security sector reform entails a process by which the task of mending and reconstructing the battered and damaged image of the security sector in the country became the responsibility of all. This will include the government, citizens and the security sector.

Conclusively, the security sector has been used and abused by both government and its officials to victimize their perceived enemies in a way that negate both the traditional and constitutional roles that informed the establishment of the sector. Therefore, there is need for professionalism from both offices and men of the sector, in such that will not allow for their easy manipulation to act against the sectors expected roles as stipulated in the constitution.

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