

The Military in National Development: An Appraisal of the Nigerian Armed Forces

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Abstract- *The main argument of this paper is that military roles in the state goes beyond deployment for internal security operations (ISOs). The paper argued for involvement of the military in development activities. It drew appropriate examples from some countries where it is practiced. It appraised the roles of the Nigeria military and argued that the Nigerian military have continually maintained the traditional roles being deployed for internal security operations. The paper argued that these operations often results in collateral damage and violation of human rights which creates public resent and distrust of the Nigeria military. It therefore suggested that such narrative could be changed when the Nigeria military is equally assigned development roles in order to enhance national development in Nigeria.*

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I. Introduction

All over the world, the military have always played important roles in the process of nation's development over the past centuries. However, their involvement in politics in the 19th and partly 20th century in South America, Asia and Africa created a global resentment of the military in domestic politics hence a global call for liberal democracy. It is a phenomenon Koonings and Kruijt described as political armies.¹ The end of the Cold War and collapse of authoritarian regimes in Eastern Europe in the 1990s which ushered in widespread acceptance of liberal democracy across the world finally created the framework for resentments of military incursion in politics.² This transformation of the global political terrain radically ended the question of the role of the military in politics which was in scholarly agenda throughout the Cold War eras. It instigated an interrogation of military budget and supported cut in military spending and a shift of resources to projects that addresses human needs.³

However, the emerging paradigm shift from military security towards human security in the current world order has substantially reawaken interest in development and security studies. It has necessitated the need to establish the linkage between security and development which seem to now dominate global security agenda with a focus on seeking a defined role for the military in the development agenda. Specific examples could be obtained from developed countries like the United States of America (USA), Germany, France⁴, and China among others whose militaries aside from responding to external threats also have set-out developmental instruments such as engineering, medicines, agriculture among others.⁵

In Nigeria there is still a strong dislike of the military involvement in politics. Consequently, any attempt to propagate the involvement of the Nigeria military in developmental activities could be misinterpreted by the public as an attempt for the military to usurp civilian powers. Most scholars in Nigeria would not want to engage in any discourse that suggests charting developmental roles for the Nigerian military. This mind-set is considered protectionist and averse to common good of the larger society. This paper therefore aims to suggest ways the Nigeria military could be involved in development activities. The premise of my argument for a 'military for development' model is hinged on the fact that the military receives huge resources; people,

¹KOONINGSKEES AND KRUIJT DIRK, "INTRODUCTION", KOONINGSKEES AND KRUIJT DIRK (EDS), POLITICAL ARMIES: THE MILITARY AND NATION BUILDING IN THE AGE OF DEMOCRACY, (LONDON, ZED BOOKS, 2002), P.1.

²Mohaned Talib Al-Hamdi, "Military in-and-out of Politics: A Theoretical Approach to Military Disengagement", International Journal of Humanities and Social Science, Vol. 4, No. 8(1); June 2014.

³ International Peace Bureau, "Opportunity Costs: Military Spending and the United Nation's Development Agenda", 2012, file:///C:/Users/JOHN/Downloads/1111_5190_Opportunity%20Costs.pdf, accessed 4 August 2018.

⁴ Republic of France, "Defence and National Security Strategic Review 2017", <file:///C:/Users/JOHN/Downloads/DEFENCE+AND+NATIONAL+SECURITY+STRATEGIC+REVIEW+2017.pdf> accessed 6 August 2018

⁵ Peter B. Riddleberger "Military Roles in Developing Countries: An Inventory of Past Research and Analysis", Special Operations Research Office, The American University, Washington, D.C., March 1965

equipment, money among others which it uses for security operations but they can as well serve civil purposes.⁶This becomes imperative more so that some commentators have often criticised the huge budget of the military having perceived it as a drain on the national economy. The paper therefore looked at the general theoretical explanations of military in development roles, the overview of the Nigeria military in development roles and provides examples of countries where the military is involved in development roles. Thereafter, the paper suggested areas where the Nigeria military can contribute in national development before the conclusion. The data used for this paper were sourced mainly from secondary sources and they were analysed descriptively while the paper specifically focused on the Nigerian military.

II. Conceptual Definitions and Theoretical Explanations

This section attempts a conceptual definition of the key variables used in this paper which are development and military before establishing the relationship between them. It thereafter adopted a theoretical framework on which the entire paper is underpinned.

a. Development

In this paper, the economist perspective of development is considered. The economist see development as a process whereby the real per capita income of a country increases over a period of time, subject to the condition that the number of people below an absolute poverty line does not increase and that income distribution does not become unequal.⁷The economic model is more attractive, if not more superior in the sense that indices of development like Gross National Product (GNP), per capita income and mortality rate can be quantified.⁸ Thus, by using economic parameters, economists are more accurate in identifying which countries are developed or underdeveloped.

b. Military

The military otherwise referred to as armed forces is a professional organization formally authorized by a sovereign state to use lethal or deadly force and weapons to support the interests of the state.⁹ It typically consists of branches such as an Army, Navy, and Air Force and in some countries the Marines and Coast Guards. The military by their constitutional responsibilities are engaged in defence of the state, and its citizens, and the prosecution of war against another state. However, the military may be saddled with additional responsibilities which may include the promotion of a political agenda, protecting corporate economic interests, internal population control, construction, emergency services, social ceremonies, and guarding important areas.¹⁰

c. Relationship between Military as an Institution and National Development

The relationship between the military and development is hinged on the assumption that the military by its profession serve as the guardian of the society against any form of internal and external threat. By this role, the military is conversely a promoter of social mobility because the peaceful atmosphere it creates enable citizens move freely to engage in productive activities. Since the military promotes social mobility, it then follows that the military is also involved in economic development and serves as political institution builders. Governments world over have begun to fashion their military strategies to include plans for development. This dimension is due to the increasing acceptance of the idea that development brings peace and stability. More so, literature has it that the military in most societies represent the best-organized, most highly-disciplined, and well educated/civilised segment of the citizens. At the same time, the nature of their profession which demand unflinching sense of national loyalty makes them an asset to national developmental efforts. These attributes are therefore considered essential ingredients that could engender national development.

Historically, military institutions have played crucial roles in the shaping of political systems even in Europe prior to the 19th century. Lucian Pye, views the military as a modernizing agent and a vigorous champion of change and development. He observes that in industrialized countries, the military played an important role in providing technical training in the development of their industries. In Germany, military personnel were designated foremen in steel mills and other industries. The argument therefore is that the huge

⁶ Mary Kaldor, "The Military in Development", *World Development*, 1976, Vol. 4, No. 6, pp. 459-482. Pergamon Press. Printed in Great Britain.

⁷ Ann Harrison, ed., *Globalization and Poverty*, National Bureau of Economic Research Conference Report (University of Chicago Press, Fall 2006).

⁸ Dani Rodrik, "Growth Strategies," in P. Aghion and S. Durlauf, eds., *Handbook of Economic Growth*, Vol. 1A (NorthHolland, 2005).

⁹ Herbert Edeh, Ugwueze Michael Ikechukwu, "Military and Politics: Understanding the Theoretical Underpinnings of Military Incursion in Third World Politics", *September 2014 Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 5(20).

¹⁰ Understanding the Military: The Institution, the Culture, and the People", https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/military_white_paper_final.pdf, accessed August 2018

technical resource in the military that were developed through tax payer's money could as well serve civilian purposes such as in housing, schools, utilities, logistics, health and medical, law, food production, finance and banking. When this happens especially in developing economics, it helps to reduce the incidence of poverty and inequality in the society and by extension, it promotes national development.

d. **Civil Military Relations Theory**

Traditionally, civil-military relations theory originally focused on the direct seizure of political power by the military usually through coup d'état. It was on this context that the works of Huntington¹¹ and Janowitz¹² focussed on military effectiveness. Huntington discussed civil-military relations as an explanatory variable, and argues that their nature has an important impact on military effectiveness. However, the manner in which he formulates this relationship is problematic. Janowitz on the other hand discussed military effectiveness was not clear on the aspect of civil-military relations which not only serves as the platform through which the potentials of the military in national development can be explored but the basis for this discourse. With the remarkable spread of democratic governance over the past several decades, the traditional suspicion of the military by the civil populace in terms of coup seems outdated.

More traditional works on civil-military relations tend to focus on military professionalism discourses as postulated by Huntington and Janowitz. However, emerging literature have progressed beyond traditional civil-military relations.¹³ The argument is that most countries now employ some sort of constitutional and administrative restraints that legally bind the military in a subservient position.¹⁴ The focus now is on how to maximize the military resources (skills, expertise and infrastructure) for the betterment of the society. This is a framework that seeks military professionalism in a democracy and how the military can become a development instrument.¹⁵ The new civil-military theory rejects the idea of reducing the military to a mere command and control structure and propagates for a functional structure where the military equipment such as communication platforms, medicals, logistics among others could be employed for both military and civil use. This new civil-military relations theory is still undergoing several debates especially in Latin America¹⁶ and Africa where it is yet to be embraced because of the experience with authoritarian military regimes.

III. Overview of Nigerian Military in Development Roles

Like most developing countries, Nigeria happened to be among the countries in Africa that witnessed series of military regime shortly after gaining independence in 1960. Between 1966 and 1999, the Nigerian military held power in Nigeria without interruption apart from a short-lived democratic government from 1979-1983. Since May 1999, the country has witnessed a steady democratic leadership for almost 18 years.

However, since 1999, the Nigeria military have been involved in series of Internal Security Operations (ISOs) established to contain violent escalation of conflicts in Nigeria. Section 217 (c) Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 forms the basis of involvement of the Nigeria military in ISOs in Nigeria.¹⁷ Section 8(1) of the Armed Forces Act provides that the President shall determine the operational use of the Armed Forces.¹⁸ Operational use is further defined as the use of the armed forces which includes for the purpose of maintaining and securing public safety and public order".¹⁹ Some of the ISOs the Nigeria military have conducted include Operations MESA, FLUSHOUT I, SAFE CONDUCT, FUTURE GAIN I-VI, SECOND ELEVEN, RESTORE HOPE, SAFE HEAVEN, LAFIYA DOLE and ZAMAN LAFIYA in the northeast amongst others.²⁰

These efforts by the Nigeria military are all geared towards ensuring peace and stability in Nigeria that would foster economic activities for enhanced national development. However, it is pertinent to state that the constant deployment of the military for ISOs creates avenue for public distrust of the military which is detrimental for national cohesion. The collateral damages and other cases of human rights violation that follows

¹¹ Huntington SP. 1957. *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press

¹² Janowitz M. 1977. *Military Institutions and Coercion in the Developing Nations*. Chicago: Univ. Chicago Press

¹³ Feaver PD. 1997a. *The civil-military problematique: Huntington, Janowitz, and the question of civilian*

¹⁴ Damrosch L. 1995. *Constitutional control over war powers: a common core of accountability in democratic societies?* Univ. Miami Law Rev. 50(Oct.):181-99

¹⁵ Boëne, Bernard. 1990. "How 'Unique' Should the Military Be? A Review of Representative Literature and Outline of a Synthetic Formulation." *European Journal of Sociology*. 31: pp. 3-59.

¹⁶ Johnson, John J. *The Military and Society in Latin America*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964.

¹⁷ Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, Publication of the Federal Government of Nigeria.

¹⁸ Armed Forces Act,

¹⁹ AOkoli. & S Orinya "Evaluating the Strategic Efficacy of Military Involvement in Internal Security Operations (ISOPs) in Nigeria" *IOSR Journal of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) Vol.9, Issue 6 (Mar-Apr 2013 P.23)*.

²⁰ S Zabadi and DE Bot, "The Role of the Military in Managing Internal Conflicts", in GA Adedeji and IS Zabadi (ed); **The Military and Management of Internal Conflict in Nigeria** (Abuja: National War College, 2005).

such operations creates public resentment of the military and further aggravates the conflict. It is for this reason that it becomes imminent that other developmental roles be assigned to the Nigerian military in order to also present it in good light before the public and change the narrative that the military is a suppressive instrument of government. This emphasis my argument that civil-military relations undermine the military's developmental roles. The examples of some countries' military's involvement in development could serve as lessons for this study in particular and Nigeria in general.

IV. The Examples Of Countries' Militaries Involvement In Developmental Roles

There are several countries across the world where their respective militaries are involved in development roles. Pakistan, Israel, Guatemala, Burma, Turkey, among others have benefitted immensely from their respective military professionals in agriculture, healthcare services, education, engineering among others. The Pakistani Defence Force established and still partly administers sugar mills and engages in manufacturing breakfast food, rubber and shoes. In Israel, the Nahal Corps is used for agriculture works.²¹ In Guatemala, the military used its medical clinics as centres to conduct research on nutrition in the rural areas, thus opening the possibility of improving the general standard of health thereby remedying nutritional deficiencies. The Burmese military authorities through the Burmese Economic Development Corporation control enterprises as diverse as steel production, pharmaceutical manufacture and shipping.²²

The military for development model as being practices in the examples states above have however received some criticisms. The main argument against the military for development roles is that the private enterprise would be more efficient in these services. Finally while it may be true that officers in the military acquire certain professional management skills through their routine command and control training and experience, there are considerable differences between the management of military resources and commercial concerns. However, in a country like Nigeria where there is huge deficit of technical and professional skilled labour, employing the services of the military could suffice in this regard.

V. Suggested Developmental Roles For The Nigeria Military

In view of the discourse from the overview and the examples of countries where the military is involved in development roles, some development roles could be suggested for the Nigeria military. The suggested roles are discussed in the subsequent paragraphs.

a. Educational Roles

Education is the process of facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, values, beliefs, and habits. It is an essential index for development. In the northeast Nigeria, a lot of schools have been closed down due to the conflict. The Nigeria military through its robust education corps could be deployed to the affected areas in local public schools where they can support the efforts of government in ensuring continuous education for the young children. More so that the terrain is not safe to the civil populace. The retired military personnel with requisite qualifications could be recalled for this initiative since they are already familiar with the operational environment. This effort can also counter the narrative of the insurgents that are bent on discouraging young children from acquiring education. Finally, it will foster civil military relations which are highly desired in the socio-economic growth, stability and national development of the nation.

b. Agriculture Roles

Agriculture is primarily about providing food for the population. The Government of Nigeria is currently pioneering an agriculture diversification initiative. This programme could as well be extended to the Nigeria military where personnel could be used as agriculture extension services officers in rural communities. The presence of the Nigeria military in these rural communities could also serve defensive purpose, especially in this era where herdsmen are constantly attacking local communities.

c. Coordination of Humanitarian Roles

Humanitarian aid is material or logistical assistance provided for humanitarian purposes, typically in response to *humanitarian* crises. The primary objective of humanitarian aid is to save lives and alleviate the suffering of the people. Humanitarian aid as it is practiced in Nigeria has been reduced to mere provision of materials to internally displaced persons in their camps. Usually, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) carry out this responsibility. However, literature have revealed the sharp practices of some NGOs in Nigeria in delivering of these materials. The reason for this is because humanitarian aid in Nigeria is not coordinated. Involvement of the military in humanitarian activities could lead to proper coordination of the humanitarian

²¹Militaria. 8/2, 1978 (H. R. Heitman, The Potential Role of the Military in National Development), p

²² M. Janowitz: The Military in the Political Development of New 45 Nations, (London, 1964) p 82

activities. It could also increase support for the local population which further fosters civil- military relations and a better understanding of the nature and dynamics of the conflict.

d. Post Conflict Reconstruction

The Nigeria military is well-endowed with professionals with technical and engineering skills and medical professionals. In this regard, the Nigeria military engineering corps could be used for post-conflict reconstruction in areas affected by the insurgency. The medical corps of the Services could also contribute to the promotion of health and hygiene in the reconstructed communities as health is not only desirable in itself, but also on economic grounds. It is generally recognized that improved health in conjunction with better nutrition improves the productivity of individuals.

VI. Conclusion

This paper suggested ways the Nigeria military could be involved in development activities while remaining a professional military institution. The increased need for improved civil-military relationship has necessitated the need to extend military roles from purely rendering defence and security roles to developmental roles. This is particularly imperative in this era when the Nigeria military is constantly being deployed in ISOs where such operations make the public to resent the military.

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