CONTEMPORARY SECURITY CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA: ISSUES FOR POLICY CONSIDERATION

BY

PROFESSOR IBRAHIM A. GAMBARI, CFR, OCRT FOUNDER AND CHAIRMAN
SAVANNAH CENTRE FOR DIPLOMACY, DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT

PAPER DELIVERED

ON THE OCCASION OF

NILS PUBLIC LECTURE SERIES, ABUJA

DATE:

8TH OCTOBER, 2015

TIME:

10:00AM

CONTEMPORARY SECURITY CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA: ISSUES FOR POLICY CONSIDERATION

I. Introduction

The importance of security for the individual and society cannot be overemphasized. In Nigeria, as elsewhere in Africa and the world as whole, addressing the issue of security has engaged the efforts and attentions of governments and all segments of the society. In essence, there is a real nexus between security and peace, development and democratization. This was aptly captured by two UN Secretaries-General, both Africans, Boutros Boutros-Ghali and Kofi Annan. They both wrote seminal reports. Boutros-Ghali issued a report in 1992 called "An Agenda for Peace", in which he laid out a post-Cold War agenda and argued that there can be no development without peace and emphasized the need for preventative diplomacy and conflict resolution. He followed that in 1994 with "Agenda for Development", wherein he further argued that there can be no durable peace without sustainable development. In 2005, Annan issued "In Larger Freedom" in which he argued that there can neither be peace nor development unless people have the right to decide who will rule them and how, and the promotion of human rights is central to national activities. Furthermore, post 9/11 world, shows how the new scourge of terrorism, violent extremism, irregular armies and non-state actors were not envisaged complicates the efforts at promoting national security. Thus, combating these pose great challenges requiring timely intelligence, accurate and creative approaches, sound strategies at sub-regional, regional and global cooperation.

II. Concepts Relevant to security Challenges

2. It is important to briefly discuss some concepts that are relevant to security challenges in contemporary Nigeria.

(a) Peace and Security

3.   John Galtung (1969), a leading figure in peace research defined peace narrowly as "the absence of warfare" He distinguished "direct, personal or institutionalized violence" and "structural violence" as economic exploitation and/or political repression. However, our definition of peace should be wider, to include "positive peace", which includes elements of "human security". In this regard, traditionally, security was equated with the protection of territorial sovereignty and integrity, as well as national interests, by a nation state through political means and, if necessary, the use of force. However, in the 1990s, the concept evolved to include non military threats, such as environmental hazards, socio-economic conditions and transnational crime, affecting the individual, communities and states. In other words, while a state may be physically secure, there may be human insecurity within its border. Hence, the Human Development Report of 1994 explicitly recognized the interdependence between security and development as the two main components of human life and human dignity. It also listed seven dimensions of human security: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security.

(b) National Security

4.   The concept of National security has to do with the overall safety of a nation and the generality of its citizens. Security is relevant to all humans and nations irrespective of creed, colour, economic status, or geographical location, (Nwolise, 2013:3). Security is the primary concern and value of all humans and nations at all times, and in all seasons, as it is a pre-requisite for their survival, progress and happiness. Security is not just all about survival, but "there is also the focus on the attainment of peace and progress of individual, groups and the society". Thus, section 14(2b) of Chapter II of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, provides that, "the security and welfare of the people shall be

the primary purpose of government", in addition, "the security of a person, identity group, nation or the world is not only a sacred and strategic value, it is the utmost value." Security is the utmost value because as noted by Zabadi (2001:1 cited in Nwolise, 2013), "unless one can be assured of his physical security or safety everything else will be meaningless."

5.   Since the primary function of every government is the welfare and security of its citizens. Therefore, any government that fails in this primary responsibility should be seen as a failed government. The insecurity situation in Nigeria can therefore be partly seen as a pointer to the failure of successive governments. Indeed, "inefficiency of their government has often been identified as a crucial factor undermining security" especially in developing countries. Conversely, improvement in the quality of governance, among other measures, is necessary for "a qualitative improvement in national security".

(c) Political Leadership

6.   It is only a political leadership with sound understanding of social, political, economic and ecological challenges essential for the security and overall wellbeing of society and which also has the will power to rise above selfish interests in the pursuit of the security and overall wellbeing of society and country will be able to surmount these challenges. There can be no peace or human security without credible leadership. A country where corruption and human security are neglected give way to violent conflicts. On the contrary, national security will be enhanced when political power is held and exercised by people possessing an adequate understanding of what is good in the light of which they formulate policies and respect the rule of law and rights of the citizens.

(d) Peacebuilding

7.   The concept of peacebuilding was first introduced in 1992 when UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali launched the "Agenda for Peace". It gained institutional expression through the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission in 2005. It is

based on the understanding that peacebuilding involves a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacity at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development. Peacebuilding is seen as a broad policy framework that enhances synergy among the related efforts of conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping, recovery and development, as part of a collective and sustained effort to build lasting peace. Peacebuilding emphasizes local ownership, civil society engagement and community buy-in.

8.   As a matter of fact, in Nigeria and elsewhere, we should all be interested in peacebuilding for three main reasons; first at a basic level, conflict causes significant devastation and inflicts much suffering, and from both purely humanitarian perspective, as well as demonstration of our common humanity, it is a decent thing to help people who are suffering. But at a more fundamental level, conflict can be contagious, and if we fail to put out the fire in our neighbours's house, the risk are high that it could spread to ours. And third, peacebuilding efforts are aimed at addressing the root causes of conflicts such that peace endures.

III. The Nigeria Security Challenges

9.   The major security challenge facing Nigeria at the moment is the menace of Boko Haram. While in recent years, restiveness among the Nigerian people includes the Fulani-pastoral conflicts, the Niger-Delta militants, South-East Kidnappers etc,. They are however the common enemies of the Nigerian state. The emergence of ethnic militias in Nigeria is also a serious threat to the corporate existence of Nigeria. They are geographically spread with their accompanying nefarious activities. In the South West, you find the Oodua People's Congress, the movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra is found in the South East, the movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta in the South-

South and Boko Haram in the northwest that is presently on rampage. Some of these phenomena, unheard of in the past, are beginning to be a fact of daily life in Nigeria. But what is surprising is that such phenomena are rearing their ugly heads less than 45years after the end of Nigeria's traumatic civil war 1967 - 1970. The issues of insecurity, accentuated by violent extremism and insurgency which Boko Haram represents, though initially a Nigerian phenomenon, has since assumed regional and international dimensions. Boko Haram's war against the people of Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon may not attract as much worldwide attention as the wars in the Middle East but the suffering is just as great and the human cost is equally high, (Buhari, 2015).

10.   This is a war about values between progress and chaos; between democracy and the rule of law. Let be noted that guns and ammunition alone cannot stop terrorism but some level of dialogue. Terrorism is a warped ideology and one cannot kill it with gun alone. Hence, the continued threat to international peace and security posed by Boko Haram requires collective responses at the national, regional and global levels. Boko Haram should be made to know the collective will of the Nigeria people and of the region. Security should be everyone's business. As we live in a world where threats to national, regional, and global security are growing on a daily basis, a threat to peace and security any where should be seen as a threat to peace everywhere and thus demanding collective response. That is indeed, the essence of collective security which is at the heart of the goals and objectives of the African Union and the United Nations.

11.   As stated earlier, one of the greatest threats to the Nigerian state and National security is the menace of Boko Haram. This is because it represents the ill use of religion and uses sectarian violence to undermine the unity, sovereignty, territorial integrity of the Nigerian state. And to defeat it and thus strengthen the Nigerian State and our national security requires three differentiated but interrelated strategies;

a. The use of overwhelming force to degrade the military capacity of the terrorist group.

b. The mobilization of neighboring countries and the west African sub-region to collectively act to fight the scourge and

c. To drain the swamp-which is to embark not only on massive programme for the relief of the victims but on socio-economic recovery and reconstruction of the areas of our country that have been devastated by the activities of the terrorist group.

12. Furthermore, youth unemployment has to be tackled head-on so that extremist groups would not be able to recruit from a pool of unemployed youths for violent extremist actions. In a country with over 10 million unemployed (graduate) youths, it is not out of place to observe youths getting involved in several social vices, taking up arms and being restive in different parts of the country. It is difficult to exaggerate the fact that Nigeria needs intensified efforts at peacebuilding in various parts of the country. Hence, public policy must respond to and apply effective peacebuilding strategies to existing and emerging areas of crises in the country. An effective peacebuilding strategy is one that is not only holistic but carefully targeted in addressing structural causes of conflict and fragility.

13. Meanwhile, the crises of the Niger Delta may have receded, but there is still an unfinished peacebuilding agenda that ranges from repair of environmental degradation to economic revitalization of many of the communities in order to provide assured means of livelihood for the people. Meanwhile, in the North-East, as military victory over Boko Haram accelerates, it is not too early to start contemplating the nature and scope of the peacebuilding efforts that might be required. Consensus is evolving that peacebuilding efforts in the North-East must entail three components; de-radicalization of the youth through training and employment creation; supporting the re-integration of internally displaced persons; and undertaking the reconstruction and development of the conflict-affected areas. There was a consensus in the National Conference, at least in principle, on

the need to make appropriate budgetary provision available for the 3Rs in that region of Nigeria.

(IV) President Buhari's Administration's Approach to Addressing Security Challenges

14.   The visit of President Buhari upon assumption of office to Nigeria's neighbours of Cameroon, Chad and Niger plus Benin is commendable. The resolved by the leaders to work together to face this common threat within the regional framework of the Lake Chad Basin Commission will go a long way in building a robust strategy to defeat Boko Haram. The establishment of the multinational joint task force to confront, degrade and defeat Boko Haram is a welcome development. The international community is also expected to give support in the fight against Boko Haram. After all, Nigeria has contributed both human and material resources in peacekeeping operations in different countries of the world and helped in a reasonable extent to stabilize the polity. It is time now for the whole world now to rally round Nigeria in this critical moment. Nigeria needs help and there is no better time than now.   Furthermore, Nigeria should be ready and willing to partner with international agencies and individual countries on a bilateral basis to confront crimes and other threat to the nation's security. In particular, the global community must urgently redouble efforts towards strengthening the mechanisms for dismantling safe havens for proceeds of corruption which some time are used to finance terrorism and ensuring the return of stolen funds and assets to their countries of origin (Buhari, 2015). The fight against the proliferation of small arms, human and arms traffickers are two major evils that should be vigorously pursued.

V. Conclusion and Way Forward

15.   There is a need for the government to credibly deter, disrupt and dismantle threats to peace, before they are able to start internal crises, conflicts or launch deadly attacks that sow panic across the country, and reduce the Nigerian

peoples' confidence in their government. This is the essence of prevention. Hence, the Government needs to become more proactive by taking on and nib in the bud any potential crisis source before it buds rather than take the defensive approach which hasn't been so effective for Nigeria as a nation. Furthermore, what Nigeria as a nation needs are not merely more policies but more carefully calibrated adoption of a comprehensive approach in implementing them.

16. Meanwhile, the following steps need to be taken as a matter of urgency:

- Strengthen institutions to function properly and carry out their assigned duties. This will enable more accountability within the public sector.
- Foster independence of institutions through adequate and appropriate funding.
- An increase in the number of security officers especially within the police force as well as a closer look and review of the remuneration structure of the force.
- Government officials need to be held more accountable by citizen participation and involvement of organized groups like the civil society.
- An enhanced training of our security personnel with particular reference to internal security, intelligence gathering, helping the personnel's recognize the critical role they play in securing the nation.
- Provision of more effective equipment, not only on budget but to officers out on the field.
- The introduction of peace education in our institutions of learning is a desideratum. Fundamentally, peace education is about empowering people with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to achieve the following:
  - ✓ Build, maintain and restore relationships at all levels of human interaction.

- ✓ Develop positive approaches towards dealing with conflicts – from the personal to the international.
- ✓ Create safe environments, both physically and emotionally, that nurture each individual.
- ✓ Create a safe world based on justice and human rights.
- ✓ Build a sustainable environment and protect it from exploitation of war (Harris, 1998).

17. In summary, what is needed is an integrated and comprehensive, yet coherent approach that includes, in addition to political and military activities, transparent and urgent improvements in the areas of human rights, good governance, democratization, economic growth, poverty eradication, environmental protection and other measures. The prospects of enhancing state stability and national security in our country and continent would be greatly enhanced by addressing the issues of youth restiveness as well as national identity.

18. Finally, I wish to refer to the comment made by former UN-Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 2000 that; "Human security encompasses human rights, good governance, access to education and healthcare and ensuring that each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfill his or her own potential. Every step in this direction is also a step towards reducing poverty, achieving economic growth and preventing conflict. Freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom of future generations to inherit a healthy natural environment-these are the interrelated building blocks of human and therefore national security". Promoting sustainable peace requires a human security and a human development orientation. High-level political commitment and coordinated public policy and initiatives will play a critical role in overcoming continuing challenges to peace, security and human development.

References

Albright, M and Gambari, I (2015) Confronting the Crisis of Global Governance; Report of the Commission on Global Security, Justice and Governance. Washington: Stimson Centre and Hague Institute for Global justice.

Annan, K. (2005) "In Larger Freedom" New York: United Nations Publications.

Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) as Amended. Federal Government Press.

Ekanola, A.B. (2011) New Security Paradigms and the Imperative for Philosopher-kings in Political Offices in Nigeria. In Albert *et all* (2011). Democratic Elections and Nigeria's National Security. Ibadan: John Archers Publishers Ltd.

Galtung, Johan (1969), "Violence, Peace and Peace Research", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol.6, No.3.

Ghali, Boutros-Ghali (1992) Agenda for Peace: Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to the statement adopted by the Summit Meeting of the Security Council on 31 January 1992. New York: United Nations Publications.

Ghali, Boutros-Ghali (1994) Agenda for Development. New York: United Nations Publications.

Gambari, I. (1985) Concept and Conceptualization in Nigeria Foreign Policy since Independence. Nigeria Journal of Policy and Strategy, Kuru-Jos: NIPSS.

Gambari, I. (1989). Theory and Reality in Foreign Policy Making: Nigeria after the Second Republic. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, Inc.

Gambari, Ibrahim (2008). The Challenges of Nation Building: The Case of Nigeria. Abuja: Anniversary Lecture. Mustapha Akanbi Foundation.

Gambari, I. (2007). Nigeria At Home And Abroad: The Dynamics of Nation-Building: Selected Speeches of Professor Ibrahim A. Gambari, Edited by Thomas Okpaku.

Harris Ian (1998), *Peace Education Theory* [online], Notes from (PEC) Meetings of the IPRA 17th Conference, Available from: http:www.peace.ca/peaceeducationtheory.htm [Accessed 2 October 2015].

Ibeanu Okechukwu (2006), "Conceptualizing Peace", S.G Best (ed.), *Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies in West Africa: A Reader*, Ibadan, Spectrum Books Ltd.

Muhammadu, B. (2015) Address at the United Nations 70th Assembly.

Nwolise, OBC (2013) Is Physical Security alone Enough for the Survival, Progress and Happiness of Man? An Inaugural lecture. Ibadan; Ibadan University Press.

Nwolise, OBC and Ohaemesi, ORA (2001) *The Essence of Political Leadership*. Ibadan: CODAT Publications.

Okunade, Bayo (2008) Leadership: The Big Challenge. *An Inaugural Lecture delivered at the University of Ibadan*, Thursday 6th November, 2008. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.