

# **PROJECTING NIGERIA'S SECURITY:** **OPTIONS FOR A VIABLE POLITY**

*BY*

**KAYODE ARE** *OFR*



## **THE QUEST**

Human quest for security is recurrent. Over the ages, emerging forms of human, social and political organization have stimulated a necessity for the protection and safety of the individual, family, community and the nation. As threats continue to transform and multiply, insecurity emerged as the most dominant fear of human beings. The fear of insecurity which manifests at the individual or group level can also be projected to institutions and corporate entities, countries and regional blocs. The manifestation of human insecurity can be mental, physical and procural. It is based on current agitations or the anticipation of future conditions and needs or both. In broad terms, security then is the basic condition of safety from harm and deprivation, which is applicable to a person, living things, an entity and inanimate objects.

We may appropriately start from the individual person as the base of the larger Nigerian entity. An aggregate of the fears and needs of the Nigerian yields a global appreciation of the security requirements of the country in its entirety. We could by the same argument articulate the peculiarities and needs of states, local governments and wards in order to appreciate what Nigeria needs to preserve its national security. Thus, appraising the requirement bottoms-up may yield a panorama with strands and shades, reflecting the differences or similarities across the spectrum. It may also yield a decision matrix on whether we can treat all administrative units and individual elements in the same manner or adapt security measures to suit

each peculiarity. Many believe that treating each according to their peculiarities is the best approach to enhancing security.

While the bottoms-up approach is useful, it may, contradict or create biases which complicate the well-being of the corporate entity. With Nigeria, the needs/expectations of the constituent parts have to be moderated by the higher consideration of the well-being of the whole Federation. Thus in considering the security of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the need of its constituent parts will be taken into consideration, but it is the goal, objectives and aspirations of the larger entity that takes precedence. A pragmatic resolution is to achieve a balance between the two approaches- the constituent-centered approach and central security dominance.

### **NIGERIAN CONDITION.**

Nigeria is an entity which exhibits durability and stability despite regular alarms of possible future balkanization and fragmentation. This is however a condition which cannot be taken for granted. The prediction of future arrangement could exert causative influence on security outcomes through self-fulfilling prophecy or the galvanization of those concerned to ensure things turn out differently.

Perhaps out of sentiments or sometimes curiosity, many continue to wonder how and why the foundations of socio-political arrangements in Nigeria have continued to sustain a contraption that was expected to have keeled over, long ago. Ironically, those who are optimistic about Nigeria are on the other hand confounded by the slow pace of consolidation and integration of the country, in all spheres, despite decades of social and political engineering. The result seem not to justify the various experiments and the experience which the country had gone through in its otherwise short existence; 50 years. For a country which has fought a civil war to be experiencing irredentist or secessionist tremors again is ironic.

Despite constant stress, it would seem the functions of convergence of interest are working all over the country, albeit unguided. Nonetheless, the

factors of divergence continue to nibble at the roots of stability and survival. Such factors include the high level of polarization among the elite, the lack of unity among various ethnic groups and the lack of concurrence within the polity on where the country should be headed or what her aspiration should be. The fact of the matter is that the forces at play in the conflation of the Nigerian condition do not lend themselves to coherent and rational analysis. Some query why this should be so.

Seeking to understand the socio-psychological underpinnings of the stresses which Nigeria faces in its struggle to survive is more realistic in confronting the challenges than pretending that the problems do not exist. Appreciating the real issues will allow the consideration of options which can bring about the optimal outcome. Consequently, the descent into chaos, disorder, lawlessness, or dismemberment, all elements of a failed state, which many believe that the current trends in Nigeria is approaching, is not inevitable. Indeed, the prognosis is that with the right remedies a viable polity can be achieved. Part of the impediments to stability are gray areas, omissions, and knotty issues, which were not prescribed, but left to time and circumstances to shape (for example, the formula for the application of Federal Character). Unfortunately, the succeeding generations of political actors in Nigeria have not been able to live up to the expectations of these informal and unwritten mores of national integration.

Understanding the matrix is, consequently, not that simple. The complexity of interrelated factors which influence the state of affairs in the country coupled with the under-current of unseen or relatively unknown forces at play, make prediction or projection difficult. More happens in the realm of nuances and behind-the-scene intrigues than through formal and legal structures. Despite democracy, politics and the formulation of public policy remain the preserve of a few. Sometimes, the changes and refinements which can make the Nigerian union more viable are so simple and obvious but the powerful few block them. To make the necessary changes becomes herculean in the face of competing entrenched interests.

These factors raise certain challenges among which are; the requirement for credible and accurate information for national planning and the robustness of countervailing structures and programs, both conventional and unconventional. Too often, solutions proffered to Nigeria's security problems utilize conventional state structures which tend to fail or disappoint. But it would require a strenuous act of faith to endorse unorthodox methods in managing security issues given the experience of the past. Unorthodox measures tend to encourage the violation of human rights and the encumbrance of rules. They may achieve spectacular results initially but the effects never endure. Nonetheless, adapting to change, unforeseen circumstances, new realities, and innovation are essential to the management of the Nigerian condition.

## **PROJECTING SECURITY**

Nigeria has a future which is tied to her security. That future depends on events which have shaped her history and are responsible for the present. The linkage of security to the future is predicated on the consequence of coping or not coping with current challenges. The repercussion of security failure can be grave, which then means that security deserves priority attention. But, security cannot outweigh the object it seeks to secure. Projecting Nigeria's security is to anticipate future scenarios and to formulate a framework that will be most effective in guaranteeing the attainment of the country's security objectives.

Two paramount issues; people and resources, demand the greatest focus in projecting security. People make a country. Character, culture, ethnicity, social status, religion, level of education, attitude, are attributes of the individual endowed by nature and shaped by nurture. As *Horace* remarked, "*the character of a man depends on his connections to the world*". The impact of people on security is demonstrated by the following examples. Universally, criminals use technology and specialist knowledge to commit crimes. Nigerian criminals, by their ingenuity, have beaten most law enforcement measures in the world to perpetrate credit card and bank frauds.

The resort to crime can be because of lack of opportunities or the under-employment of talent. Some have wondered where Nigeria could be in terms of development, if only the ingenuity exhibited by some of her citizens in perpetrating crimes, can be channeled into positive endeavors. Nigerians, can be unruly boisterous and hardy, unlike the citizens of other countries, even in West Africa, who are timid and law-abiding. Can the security framework aim to bring about change in behavior that is considered appropriate, or is the framework targeting the capacity to cope with the aberrant behaviors which are prevalent? Building on people to fortify their commitment to a common identity and interest is cardinal to projecting security.

National well-being depends on adequate resources. The protection of resources is therefore a cardinal security endeavor. Government is expected to establish basic level of economic and physical security, in general, for people to undertake their legitimate pursuits and to be able to aspire to personal attainments. Seemingly half of our national resources is depleted by pilfering and negligence, for example in the extractive industry, through bunkering and oil theft, and in the public and the private sectors, through revenue losses and corruption. The economic dimension of projecting security means seeking better systems of identifying, monitoring and protecting national wealth. It should not stop at protection but include positive transformation of the national wealth and increase in the gains to all, by identifying new opportunities.

The projection of security takes into consideration the prospect of uncertainty in human affairs and the dynamic nature of change, upheavals and unanticipated disaster. In the annals of Nigerian history, the nation had been caught flat-footed severally by sudden change of behavior or commitment on the part of leaders. Other unexpected developments fostered crisis and chaos, in the absence of adequate contingency plans, or intervention by superior authority. Foresight may allow the establishment of a framework which is robust and flexible enough for all seasons; in peace or war, crisis or normalcy never allowing the ship of state to sink in troubled waters. This presumes that

no leader or citizen is allowed to exploit the weakness of the state for their selfish pursuits at the expense of the larger society. By projecting security, the focus is looking forward rather than being pre-occupied with the past or in dalliance with the present.

The stridency of the current high crime rate may suggest that the security situation in Nigeria is deteriorating day by day. This may not be totally accurate. Improvements in crime incident reporting have made the data more available and the omnipresence of the media have pushed the facts nearer every home, by radio, television, GSM, or e-mail within minutes of occurrence. Projecting security means being able to cope with current and future demands through real time preventive law enforcement and protective services and not just latent, reactive, post mortem-oriented responses. The high incidence and sophistication of crime in our society, increased the demand for law enforcement and security. This demand cannot be met by the public sector alone. Ancillary services by certified private security practitioners must supplement the public security sector.

## **SECURITY INFRASTRUCTURE**

An appropriate infrastructure for governance, law enforcement, surveillance and protective service delivery creates the conducive environment for the projection of security. It begins with the basic issue of governance. History shows that there is correlation between the willingness of citizens to obey rules or bear the pains of economic or social adjustment dictated by public policy, and the level of trust they have in those who govern them. Good governance depends on good laws and effective instruments of enforcement.

The detection, and prevention of crimes against security and the enforcement of laws designed to protect national security can only be effective or efficient where adequate security infrastructure exists. Existing infrastructure is more or less a carry-over from colonial rule. The society has become more sophisticated, more urbanized and the patterns of relationship more intricate. The mega-cities we now have deserve no less intelligent policing than what

comparable cities in other parts of the world enjoy. The safe-city approach which covers major urban centers with CCTV and surveillance cameras is an essential modern security infrastructure.

What is adequate in terms of security infrastructure depends on many factors. Take for example the protection of borders and the maintenance of territorial integrity. Most countries have porous borders with the most dangerous traffic avoiding designated entry points. The futuristic border of Nigeria may be open because of anticipated integration of Africa into one political unit. It may also be progressively covered by functional designated entry points corralled by a perimeter fence, which is backed by technology, and integrated surveillance systems. Even within a larger unit, whether ECOWAS or AU, the need to protect and be responsible for our portion of the territory would remain, just like in the EU, but now keyed into a collective security network. Our security infrastructure should be aiming at being operable within a collective security umbrella under ECOWAS, in the not-too distant future. This arrangement has its own challenges.

Part of the modernization of the security infrastructure is the proper identification and documentation of persons, vehicles, transactions and processes. The integration of the various means of identification of residents and citizens into data bases which are accessible to law enforcement is imperative. Some of the information already exists in paper form scattered in various storage silos. Information has to be captured or recaptured into standard formats and the archives networked to communicate with each other. The anticipated modernization of the security infrastructure can support bio-metric applications and make all types of data easily available through secure communications to investigators, law enforcement agents, regulatory agencies and other authorities. A basic assumption is that the development of power, transport and communications networks will keep pace with the security requirements.

## PEOPLE

Emphasis on ancestry and place of origin leads to observations such as the description of fellow Nigerians as indigenes or settlers, by local authorities. The rights and expectations of these citizens in that part of the country are governed by their classification. In some states, indigenes pay lesser school fees than non-indigenes. A case of being a foreigner in one's own country. Those affected feel a sense of alienation and discrimination. To some Nigerians the crisis of identity is real. Who really is a Nigerian? Is she defined by place of birth, color of skin or ancestry? Some Nigerians with Caucasian or Asiatic features find it difficult to convince others that they are indeed Nigerians since they are not black. Effective security depends on citizen commitment. Commitment will be superficial where persons have doubt about whom they are and whether they want to identify truly with the country and promote her security and survival.

The nurturing of citizen commitment is an essential part of projecting security. It has positive and negative aspects. The positive aspect is to make the Nigerian love the country more. Patriotism is a product of perception. The perception of fairness, equity, justice, personal welfare, and self development will influence how a citizen feels towards his/her country. Nigerians ought to be nurtured in the right way, to give them the kind of character which disposes towards patriotism. The negative aspect is to remove all elements which can make the citizen begin to hate his/her country. This can be done through dialogue, accommodation of contrary views, and ultimately the precise containment of divisive or disruptive tendencies, which may spread, if uncurbed. Security is enhanced in a community where people care for the common good. **Richard Sennet** stated that “*a regime which provides human beings no deep reason to care about one another cannot long preserve its legitimacy*”. The absence of the bond of community is what leads to constant ruptures and clashes. When violence and rancor persist as social order, people begin to question the legitimacy of government and its institutions. This is gradually becoming the situation in some parts of the country.

A radical tendency states that Nigerian people do not belong together and that it is better for each group to go its separate ways. The issue affects security and has to be addressed. The first step is the appreciation of differences and the negotiation of solutions acceptable to the parties. Communities reject others whom they consider to threaten their livelihood and resources. Communities will appreciate each other when they know what they stand to gain by cooperating with others, within the same political space. The trend in the world is towards larger coalitions with small countries finding it difficult to survive. Is it probable then that the fate of Nigeria is to break up as some have suggested? Or would it get larger by attracting smaller neighbors who desire to join its federation? The better option is to make the Nigerian Federation more viable by fortifying the bonds which make her attractive to those parts of the country which feel agitated. If the people are happy because their interests have been catered for, their communities will be functional and be supportive of the overall national effort.

## **RESOURCE TRANSFORMATION**

Nigeria is blessed abundantly. Her burden is to transform the God-given resources into beneficial assets. Policies are part of the barriers to this transformation but the human element, perhaps, plays a greater role. It has been difficult to build and sustain an industrial base for Nigeria. Without a vibrant domestic manufacturing sector all the investments in infrastructure which modernization entails will only enrich others abroad. Yet the country is in dire need of putting to work millions of unemployed and underemployed citizens. The security burden can only be lessened with an integrated agrarian-industrial economy which provides income generation and means of livelihood for the majority.

The resource needs of the new economic powers- China, India, and Brazil are growing. They are increasingly looking towards Africa, especially Nigeria, for energy sources and other raw materials. The Nigerian market sustains

boom in other economies. Through effective mechanisms, the investment needs of the Nigerian economy can be tied to the interest her raw material is attracting. While entrenching and developing the attractiveness of her current exports, it is in Nigeria's interest to look beyond the benefits of trade in raw materials. Ensuring transformation of resources through value added is essential to projecting economic security.

## **PROMOTING PEACE**

Everybody desires peace. Without peace there can be no progress. Even those who cause the disruption of peace do so because their own equilibrium was unsettled. Instruments of conflict resolution have to be employed in bringing around the dissidents and the discontent and accommodating the excluded. It is important to recognize the multiple sources of irritation in inter-group and inter-personal relationships, in our circumstances and to have in place, adequate mechanisms for promoting peace and resolving conflicts in areas prone to crisis.

Peace is an attitude of mind. The culture of confrontation and struggle has long dominated the interface between government and the people, among ethnic groups and between institutions. Even in smaller groups there is always the tendency of fragmentation and factionalization. This trend is detrimental to security. A re-orientation away from these negative attitudes to that of cooperation, inter-dependence and conformity will promote peace, reduce violent politics and chaotic elections, and enhance security.

The maintenance of peace is a shared responsibility. Each individual has the responsibility to secure his/her possessions and cannot expect to depend on government or the public for everything. By the same token, the responsibility for peace and security is shared by every strata of government at the ward, local government, state and federal level. Part of the necessary reinvigoration of the security structure is to make each strata, aware of its security responsibilities. The development of structures, processes and the

capacity to ensure peace and security is the mandate of every government and is not limited to federal hegemony.

Government does not have the resources to shoulder the responsibility for security alone. The security need of the Nigerian society is growing and the private sector is expected to fill the gap. The development of a vibrant private security industry in Nigeria is inevitable. Activities of private security services providers have to be regulated and the quality of the services they render assured. The private security industry, has the potential to relieve an otherwise over-burdened public law enforcement sector, in the areas of investigations, personal protection, industrial and home security, and the protection of commercial transit.

Deterrence is essential to peace. People will not break laws if they know they will be caught and punished. Would-be aggressors will not violate the territorial integrity of a country they know has the wherewithal to repel the aggression and punish transgression. To keep the peace, the instruments of state power, must be functional. Most services are hardly able to fulfill statutory functions. The requirement for security is outstripping existing capacity. It is therefore essential to strengthen the institutional capacity of the security services while keeping in focus future demands. Nigeria's commendable role in the promotion of world peace and regional security is renown. Projecting power abroad to support an active foreign policy has costs which have to be planned for. Similarly, the credibility of Nigeria's leadership role in the world depends on her ability to sustain peace and security at home.

## **CONCLUSION**

The essence of projecting security is to visualize future requirements, and probable security frameworks on the basis of current challenges. Appraising the bigger picture gives a better understanding of what the country is going through and possibly what has to be done to remedy its vulnerabilities. Many problems have been identified which require solution. The fear of insecurity

can be overcome by maintaining balance between the requirements of individuals, components of the federation and the central government. The crisis had always been about whose interest is being served, and which interest should prevail.

Security cannot be considered in isolation. Many issues affect it. For example, the reduction of unemployment through the channeling of the abundant talent and human capital into productive ventures will reduce crime and criminality. Agitations, of all sorts, which weaken legitimacy can be reduced, when citizens have more faith and trust in governance because of the perception that their welfare and interest are catered for with equity and justice. Amendments need to be made to remove causes of dissension among Nigerians. A culture which enhances loyalty and commitment to collective welfare and a national purpose, is imperative to lasting peace and security. A credible enforcement machinery is the bastion of good security. The refinement of laws, the strengthening of institutional capacity and maintenance of the operational preparedness of security forces, for prompt response to any emergency, can deter crime, and public disorder disobedience. Above all, building a larger sense of community and commitment to common good among Nigerians, serves the security interests better, than all the forces in the world.