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International and Regional Organisations in Peace and Security Governance: Lessons from Nigeria's Security Challenges

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Abstract
The security situation in Nigeria is dominated by a range of complex and transnational challenges such as terrorism, violent extremism, armed banditry, farmer–herder conflicts, maritime insecurity, separatist agitations, and organised crime. These challenges have revealed the inadequacies of Nigeria's security architecture and highlighted the salience of regional and global peace and security governance. The article investigates the extent to which regional and international organisations have been able to engage with Nigeria's current security dilemmas and draws lessons for future governance collaboration in West Africa. Based on Regional Security Complex Theory, the research adopts a theoretical discourse analysis of academic literature, policy papers, and official reports of the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union, and the United Nations. The article asserts that, despite the constraining impact of institutional coordination problems, resource limitations, sovereignty concerns, and the changing nature of transnational security threats, these organisations have been able to add value in the areas of preventive diplomacy, mediation of conflicts, peace support operations, humanitarian assistance, and counter-terrorism operations. The report also illustrates that integrated military, governance, socio- economic, preventive diplomacy and community-based peacebuilding approaches are required for sustainable peace and security. It recommends that intensified institutional collaboration, robust early warning and intelligence sharing mechanisms, commitment to preventive peacebuilding, and people-centred security governance are vital for augmenting regional peace and security governance not only in Nigeria, but the larger West African sub-region.

Keywords: *African Union, ECOWAS, Nigeria, Peace and Security Governance, Regional Security Complex Theory, United Nations.*

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I. Introduction

Today's global security environment is progressively complex, as states have to deal with security challenges not only at home but also beyond their national borders. Beyond traditional conflicts between states, non-traditional security threats exist. These include terrorism, violent extremism, organised crime, cyber insecurity, maritime piracy, irregular migration, conflicts, climate change and unconstitutional changes of government. These threats have reshaped the global peace and security governance architecture. Thus, peace and security are maintained through collaborative efforts among national governments, regional organizations, and international organisations through preventive diplomacy, conflict management, and other forms of collective security (United Nations, 2023).

These security challenges continue to test the capabilities of regional and global security governance in Africa. While the continent has experienced a great deal of democratic advancement, it is however, confronted with armed conflicts, terrorism, violent extremism, electoral violence, humanitarian disasters and unconstitutional changes of government. In the Sahel and West African sub-region, extremist groups capitalize on weak governance, porous borders and socio-economic hardship to operate beyond national boundaries. These challenges have brought into fore the relevance of collective security arrangements spearheaded by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union (AU) and the United Nations (UN), particularly to strengthen assistance to conflict prevention, mediation, peacekeeping and post-conflict peacebuilding in the region (UNDP, 2023; AU, 2024).

Nigeria sits at the core of this regional security architecture because of the size of her population, economic clout, and her status as a long-time leader in African peacekeeping and diplomacy. Yet, Nigeria is now confronted with one of the most challenging security landscapes it has known since gaining independence.

Terrorism, insurgency, banditry, kidnapping, farmer–herder clashes, separatist agitations, maritime insecurity, transnational organised crime are prevalent security challenges. These challenges contribute to a fragile national security with severe humanitarian and socio-economic implications. Since many of these threats are transnational in nature, responses to them must be coherent and sustained across domestic institutions, regional organisations, and the international community.

Nigeria's security challenges have expanded the literature on regional and international governance of peace and security and its effectiveness. Although ECOWAS, AU and UN have made significant contributions to conflict management, peace support operations, humanitarian relief and democratic governance, continued instability raises concerns on the effectiveness and relevance of these bodies in meeting emerging security challenges. Although existing literature considers the mandates and operations of these regional and international organisations, limited attention has been given to how contemporary Nigerian security threats can inform and strengthen regional and international peace and security governance. Filling this gap is essential given the strategic significance of Nigeria to the region and the increasingly transnational nature of insecurity in West Africa.

To address this gap, this paper examines regional and global peace and security governance through the lens of Nigeria's current security threats. Specifically, the paper aims to:

a. Explore the evolving nature and trends of security challenges in Nigeria;
b. Examine the contributions of regional and international bodies in addressing these security challenges;
c. Identify the institutional and practical limitations impinging on the efficacy of regional and global peace and security governance; and
d. Analyse policy implications and propose actionable recommendations to strengthen cooperative peace and security governance in Nigeria and the West African sub-region.

Conceptualising Peace and Security Governance

In recent years, peace and security governance has gained prominence in international relations. This is driven by the recognition that military responses rarely achieve lasting peace in persistent conflicts. Traditional security literature focused primarily on state sovereignty and defence against external threats. However, contemporary scholarship asserts that lasting peace depends on a broader array of political, economic and social factors. This is in line with the United Nations (2023) view that effective governance for peace and security calls for enhanced focus on conflict prevention, democratic governance, human security, socio-economic development, institutional robustness and the protection of human rights. This comprehensive conception of security reflects the evolving nature of contemporary security threats, many of which occurs across borders and requires collective responses beyond individual states. It is in this context that regional organizations, international bodies, and non-state actors have become essential in the promotion of collective security and the maintenance of lasting peace.

Collective peace and security governance are predicated on cooperation, common norms and strong institutions as opposed to the unilateral conduct of states. In this regard, peace and security includes not only the peacekeeping and military intervention aspects but also preventive diplomacy, mediation, early warning, peacebuilding, humanitarian aid, post-conflict reconstruction and the promotion of constitutional governance. This multi-faceted understanding expects that sustainable peace will be achieved through a combination of responsive governance, inclusive political processes, respect for the rule of law, and addressing both the immediate manifestations of conflict as well as its root causes (United Nations, 2018).

The definition, conception and scope of Africa's peace and security has over the years been expanded to reflect emerging threats including terrorism, violent extremism, unconstitutional changes of government, communal conflicts, piracy, environmental security, and trans-border crime. To that effect, the AU has institutionalized continental peace and security governance by developing the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and Regional Economic Communities such as ECOWAS, have witnessed an expansion of their mandates to encompass conflict prevention, mediation, peace support operations as well as democratic governance. These regional efforts are complemented by the UN through partnerships in peacebuilding, humanitarian assistance and technical support (African Union, 2020).

For this paper, peace and security governance is defined as the joint planning, implementation and coordination of peace and security activities among states, regional bodies, international organisations and non-state actors, in order to align policies and interventions in conflict prevention, institutional capacity building, human security, and sustainable peace. This definition informs the analysis of the roles of ECOWAS, the AU, and the UN in addressing Nigeria's current security dilemma.

Theoretical Framework: Regional Security Complex Theory

This paper is based on the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) of Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver (2003). The RSCT holds that security is regionally concentrated: the security of neighbouring states is tightly linked; thus, it is neither possible nor desirable to separately analyse or manage security of an individual state in

isolation without considering that of other neighbouring states. A regional security complex is 'a group of states whose major security concerns link together so closely that their national securities cannot be considered apart from one another' (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 45). Thus, conflicts and security threats are often cross-border in nature, leading to common vulnerabilities, which in turn necessitate common responses.

As opposed to traditional state-centric security views, RSCT acknowledges that contemporary threats increasingly engage both state and non-state actors across borders. Borders are often porous and governance weak in areas which are at the epicentre of terrorism, violent extremism, organised crime, illicit arms trafficking, maritime piracy, and irregular migration. Singular, national-based and reactive responses to these threats are inadequate. The theory thus places emphasis on regional collaboration, institutional harmonisation, intelligence sharing and collective security arrangements as key in dealing with transnational security challenges (Buzan & Wæver, 2003).

The tenets of RSCT are particularly clear in West Africa, where the proliferation of violent extremism, organised crime, and cross-border insecurity are a manifestation of regional security (ACSRT, 2024; UNODC, 2023). These realities are the basis for the establishment of regional bodies such as the ECOWAS, whose security regime is founded on the 1999 Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacemaking and Security (ECOWAS, 1999). At the continental level, the AU promotes collective security through the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), and the UN supports these efforts through relationships that enhance peacebuilding, preventive diplomacy, and conflict management (African Union, 2016; United Nations, 2018).

The RSCT provides a suitable analytical framework for this study because it shows that Nigeria's insecurity problems are not merely domestic, but also have regional dimensions. This therefore makes the theory an excellent lens to examine the functions of ECOWAS, AU, and the UN in furthering regional peace and security governance, and institutional challenges that hinders collective response to regional insecurity.

Nigeria's Contemporary Security Challenges

Nigeria's security challenges have evolved significantly from communal conflicts to a plethora of other threats. Terrorism and violent extremism are the most endangering to peace and security in Nigeria. Since the beginning of the insurgency in 2009, communities in Nigeria especially the north east geo-political zone, have suffered massive casualties, displacement on a large scale and the destruction of essential facilities (UNOCHA, 2024). This is manifest in the activities of Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). Bombings, mass grave sites and abducted school girls demonstrate that Boko Haram is not just alive and well, but deadly.

Persistent cross-border crimes in the Lake Chad Basin indicates that terrorism and violent extremism are a regional security issue that Nigeria cannot solve alone and therefore requires collective responses. The geographical expansion of the activities of the insurgents indicates that successful counterterrorism should involve sustained cooperation between Nigeria, her neighbours and regional security architecture, to combat threats that emanates beyond national boundaries (ACSRT, 2024; UNDP, 2023).

Additionally, armed robbery, kidnapping, conflicts between farmers and herders, separatists' agitations, piracy at sea, and transnational organised crimes are undermining national unity and regional peace. Criminal groups are taking advantage of increasingly porous borders to engage in arms trafficking, human trafficking, illegal mining, maritime crime, among other illegal businesses, hindering domestic efforts to quell (UNODC, 2023; International Maritime Bureau, 2024). Meanwhile, farmer-herder rivalry and separatist activities have significantly intensified socio-political tensions and eroded public confidence in state institutions (International Crisis Group, 2023; World Bank, 2023).

The above threats have exposed the insufficiencies of nation-based security responses. They also indicate that Nigeria's insecurity is not merely a domestic governance problem but a regional concern that must be addressed at the regional level, and therefore implies a greater need for regional and global cooperation. Thus, there is the need to strengthen cooperation between Nigeria, ECOWAS, the AU, the UN, and other critical stakeholders whose mandate it is to promote peace, security, and regional stability.

International and Regional Responses to Nigeria's Security Challenges

The evolving security challenge has necessitated concerted efforts with the ECOWAS, AU and the UN. While Nigeria remains primarily responsible for her national security, regional and international collaboration have become more important as a result of the transnational nature of terrorism, violent extremism, organised crime, maritime insecurity and cross-border trafficking (Buzan & Wæver, 2003; United Nations, 2023). These organizations have taken on complementary roles, and thus have become central within the range of regional peace and security actors, in such fields as the prevention of conflict, mediation, counter-terrorism, humanitarian aid, and peace building. Yet these efforts have been hampered by barriers to day-to-day implementation (Williams, 2021).

Preventive diplomacy and conflict management have been most significantly mainstreamed by these bodies. ECOWAS has applied mediation, political dialogue and election observation to address political crises and defend constitutional rule of law through a mechanism for the prevention of conflicts based on the 1999 protocol (ECOWAS, 1999). These are supported by the AU through the Peace and Security Council and the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA); and the United Nations in terms of diplomatic, technical, and normative assistance to regional undertakings (African Union, 2002; United Nations, 2018). However, these and other forms of rule-based control have sometimes been battered by factional insurgencies, institutional weaknesses and chronic socio-economic deprivation in Nigeria (Williams, 2021).

Counter-terrorism efforts have also been championed by regional. A prominent example is the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) battling Boko Haram/ISWAP in the Lake Chad Basin. With the backing of the AU and the UN, the MNJTF is actively revitalizing cooperative military engagements and intelligence sharing. The existence of porous borders and weakly controlled spaces that can be exploited by violent extremists necessitated the importance of "four walls" namely: security, reforming governance, socio-economic development, and building community resilience (AU 2024; UNDP 2023).

Additionally, assistance has been provided by the ECOWAS, the AU and the UN for humanitarian relief and peace building, as well as the rejuvenation of local economic activities, among others, in post conflict rehabilitation (UNOCHA, 2024). Yet the effectiveness of these interventions remains constrained by inadequate resources, duplication of mandates, coordination challenges, intelligence gaps, and a patchwork of political commitment across the states (ICG, 2024; Williams, 2021).

The experiences of ECOWAS, the AU and the UN in this regard, suggests that peace and security governance in Nigeria is a shared concern. While considerable advances have been achieved in the areas of conflict prevention, counter-terrorism and peacebuilding, there is still a need to consolidate institutional coordination and cohesion, preventive diplomacy and intelligence sharing, and governance reforms in order to respond to the evolving security challenges facing Nigeria and the broader West African region.

Lessons for International and Regional Peace and Security Governance

The modern security challenges in Nigeria present valuable insights into the enhancement of regional and global peace and security governance. Firstly, the ongoing challenges of terrorism, violent extremism, organised crime, and related cross-border insecurity show that the threats of security today are both regional and domestic. In line with the Regional Security Complex Theory, these challenges manifest that "how" to respond effectively relies on embedded cooperation, intelligence sharing, and collective responses between and among neighbouring states and regional institutions (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). The MNJTF's experience demonstrates the advantages of harmonized security arrangements but further brings to the fore the requirement for greater political will, sustainable funding, and institutional cooperation (UNDP, 2023; Williams, 2021).

Secondly, the Nigerian case shows that military solution cannot be the sole means for achieving sustainable peace. Although security operations have degraded insurgent groups, the achievement of lasting peace requires a response to the governance gaps, poverty, unemployment, social exclusion and institutional weakness that are a source of insecurity (UNDP, 2023; World Bank, 2023). This highlights the need to combine security interventions with governance reforms, inclusive development and community resilience.

Thirdly, peace and security governance emphasises the need to enhance early warning, preventive diplomacy and institutional responsiveness. While ECOWAS and the AU have put in place mechanisms for the prevention of conflicts, the effectiveness of such mechanisms depends on the ability of member states to act promptly in a timely fashion, on the availability of sufficient resources and on the enhancement of cooperation among member states (AU, 2002; ECOWAS, 1999; Williams, 2021). Developments in digital technology and intelligence sharing also creates additional avenues to bolster regional responses to emerging threats.

In conclusion, the case of Nigeria has brought to fore the need for more inclusive partnerships where governments, regional bodies, international actors, civil society organisations and local communities engage. Coordinated, adaptive, well-resourced, and responsive institutions are the bedrock of sustainable peace and must evolve with the security challenges they face. Together, these lessons renew the call for a peace and security governance tailored to the West African context, incorporating preventive, collaborative and people-centred strategies that address both the symptoms as well as the root causes of insecurity.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

The result of this paper demonstrates the importance of convergent peace and security governance in the case of Nigeria and the West African sub-region. In light of the transborder nature of today's security threats, national security strategies ought to be bolstered by increased cooperation among ECOWAS, the AU, the UN, and member states. Existing mechanisms such as the ECOWAS Early Warning System and the MNJTF, must be supported by political will, predictable funding, better intelligence sharing, and greater operational coordination.

Preventive diplomacy requires regional organisations to translate early warning into early policy and early operational response. Some degree of synergy would also be necessary between ECOWAS, the AU, and the UN in the areas of mediation, peace support operations, humanitarian assistance, and post-conflict peace building, among others, to prevent institutional redundancies.

The results also suggest that military interventions alone cannot bring about sustainable peace. Governments need to tackle the root causes of insecurity by promoting good governance, education, youth employment, poverty alleviation, social protection, and community-based peacebuilding. More space for civil society organisations, traditional institutions, women and youth groups would consolidate local ownership of the peace process and social cohesion.

Additionally, regional and international organisations should take advantage of digital technologies to enhance early warning, intelligence sharing, and conflict monitoring. This should be done without abuse of human rights. Finally, there should be reforms at the institutional level to enhance the ability of the region to hold itself accountable, to coordinate, and to secure sustainable financing for peace and security.

The above recommendations will help regional and international organisations to anticipate and react to Nigeria's dynamic security challenges and, through this, help bring lasting peace not only in Nigeria but West Africa and the world at large.

II. Conclusion

Nigeria's situation is both a checklist of these challenges and an illustration of the increasing multi-dimensional peace and security in West Africa. The steady prevalence of terrorism, violent extremism, organised crimes, piracy at sea, and a host of other transnational threats demonstrates the inability of state-centred security solutions to adequately address these threats and consequently, the necessity for harmonised regional and international approaches. From the Regional Security Complex Theory perspective, this paper has revealed that Nigeria's security agenda is inseparably tied to those of its neighbours, and as such, collective action is imperative.

The analysis further shows that the ECOWAS, the AU and the UN have substantially contributed to conflict prevention, mediation, counter-terrorism, humanitarian aid and peacebuilding. Yet they remain hampered by institutional, financial, political and operational barriers in tackling threats to security. The paper also shows that lasting peace is the product of a holistic approach that integrates security measures with good governance, socio-economic progress, institutional robustness, and peacebuilding at the community level.

In general, Nigeria's experience offers useful pointers for the development of regional and international peace and security governance mechanisms. Dealing with today's insecurity requires enhanced multilateral cooperation among institutions, effective preventive diplomacy, better intelligence-sharing, and long-term commitment to tackling the underlying causes of conflict. With transnational threats further developing, it is imperative that regional and international organisations become more adaptive, collaborative and people-centred to support sustainable peace and regional stability.

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