

Responsive Governance and Decentralization of the Security Sector in Nigeria

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Abstract: *Responsive governance is one of the major attributes of good governance which governments that are elected through the democratic process seek to achieve. This is vitally important in the attainment of their priority responsibilities which is the security of lives and property and protection of the territorial integrity of their state. However, it is noted that though Nigeria is a federal state, it operates a highly centralized federal system which has affected the level of effectiveness of government in critical sectors. The security sector is one of the sectors where the government has fared very poorly in terms of meeting the expectations of the citizenry. The paper relied entirely on secondary data, which were content analyzed and used in the analysis of the situation of the Nigerian security sector. We argue in the paper, that the centralized nature of the security sector has hindered the ability of the various security agencies to proactively tackle threats to security. Given that decentralization encourages responsive governance, transparency and involvement of stakeholders, at various levels of government, we advocate the adoption of collaborative governance mechanism in the decentralization of the security sector, which would ensure that the state governors take total control of security at state level with greater involvement of non-traditional security related MDAs as well as civil society organizations.*

Keywords: *Responsive governance, decentralization, security sector, reform, Nigeria*

I. Introduction

Responsive governance is regarded as a major characteristic of good governance, which has emerged as an essential part of sustainable development since the latter part of the 20th century. Studies have shown that just as good governance ensures the well being of the members of a particular society, lack of it or bad governance can erode the ability of the society to sustain itself, especially in the area of provision of the basic needs of the poor, disadvantaged and marginalized sections of the society. UNHDR (2001) proposes that human deprivation and inequalities cannot be regarded as being the outcome of unfair economic factors alone, rather they are deeply rooted in social and political factors that border on the lack of good governance in any given society.

Several scholars have identified other seven attributes of good governance besides responsive governance, to include; participatory decision making, consensus orientedness, accountability, transparency, effective and efficient administration, inclusiveness and equity in allocation of resources, and adherence to the rule of law (Nweli & Ukaoha, 2010; Adelegan, 2009; UNESCAP, 2009; Adeyemi, 2006; UNESCO, 2005; Abdellatif, 2003), while UNDP, (1997 cited in Beh, 2009) include strategic vision as the ninth attribute of good governance. The government is expected to be responsive to the needs of the citizenry as well as involve them in the processes of policy formulation and decision making.

Government responding to the needs of the citizens is not just enough in the 21st century, as there is need for greater citizen involvement in the decision making and policy formulation processes. It is in the light of this new trend that scholars and practitioners advocate for collaboration between the government and its agencies on one part, and other stakeholders, including the citizenry and civil society organizations on the other part. Nwogwugwu & Iyanda (2015) write that “it is when this collaboration between government and various stakeholders exists that responsive governance takes place.”

When governance and decision making processes are centralized, it limits the capacity of the citizenry to make meaningful contribution to the way they are governed, as well as limiting the efficiency of government. Nigeria’s security sector is completely centralized, which has made the government unable to proactively respond to the needs of the citizens in terms of threats to security as well as actual breach of security.

While not engaging in conceptual clarification of what amounts to security or national security, a reflection on the proposition of Aliyu (2009: 12) that “the security of a state directly translates to its ability to protect its citizens, as well as national assets, from both internal and external threats. It also facilitates individuals and

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groups in carrying out their legitimate businesses without any significant undue hindrance” leaves one with the inclination that the Nigerian state has continually fallen short in this parameter. A consideration of the Anyadike (2013) position on national security will also highlight the inadequacy of the status quo in federal Nigeria, regarding meeting the national security needs of the country. Anyadike (2013) writes that:

in order to possess national security, a nation needs to possess economic security, energy security, environmental security, etc. Security threats involve not only conventional foes such as other nation-states but also non-state actors such as violent non-state actors, narcotic cartels, multinational corporations and non-governmental organizations; some authorities include natural disasters and events causing severe environmental damage in this category. Measures taken to ensure national security include: using diplomacy to rally allies and isolate threats; marshalling economic power to facilitate or compel cooperation; maintaining effective armed forces; implementing civil defense and emergency preparedness measures (including anti-terrorism legislation); ensuring the resilience and redundancy of critical infrastructure; using intelligence services to detect and defeat or avoid threats and espionage, and to protect classified information; using counterintelligence services or secret police to protect the nation from internal threats (Anyadike, 2013: 13).

When placed in the context of the fact that Nigeria has been facing some teething security problems which the security system has continually been found deficient to tackle over the last two decades, the need for decentralization becomes evident. The centralized traditional security mechanisms have been unable to effectively tackle different forms of security challenges in the country, ranging from ethno-religious conflicts, to militancy, to kidnapping and the Boko Haram terrorist attacks. This brings to the fore, the reality that in our continually globalizing world, Nigeria needs to think out of the box to be able to effectively curtail the many security challenges and effectively position its security mechanism to combat new threats that would emerge in the future.

The centralized nature of the security sector has been alluded to as being one of the reasons why the security agencies have remained inefficient in the face of rising security challenges in recent years. The paper examined the Nigerian government's emphasis on traditional security framework, in total neglect of emerging non-military security institutions, arguing that this primordial tendency incapacitates the state from being able to counter threats to and actual breaches of security in different parts of the country. We argue in the paper, that decentralization of the security sector will make the security agencies more efficient, better motivated, better equipped and able to rapidly respond to both threats as well as actual breach of security. The paper is subdivided into seven sections; introduction, theoretical framework, methodology, Responsive governance and decentralizing a federal state, Role of the government in the society, Proposal for reform of security sector through decentralization and conclusion.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical construct for this paper is the Collaborative governance regime.

Collaborative governance Regime

This is an interactive framework of collaborative governance propounded by Emerson, Nabatchi & Balogh (2011) as the output of their effort to synthesize the treatise of scholars from different fields, to see how they facilitate actual achievement of collaborative governance in given states. Other proponents of collaborative governance include, Sirianni (2009), Ansell & Gash (2008), and Bingham & O'Leary (2008). The aim of the proponents is to see how research from multi-disciplinary perspective can be integrated in the efforts to solve society's teething problems. It is believed that such efforts will provide the required synergy that will “illuminate the drivers, engagement processes, motivational attributes, and joint capacities that enable shared decision making, management, implementation, and other activities across organizations, jurisdictions, and sectors” (Emerson, Nabatchi & Balogh, 2011: 5).

The processes and structures of public policy decision making and management that engage people constructively across the boundaries of public agencies, levels of government, and or the public, private and civic spheres in order to carry out a public purpose that could not otherwise be accomplished (Emerson, Nabatchi & Balogh, 2011: 2). Ansell & Gash (2008) write that collaborative governance is strictly neither adversarial nor managerial in the traditional sense. This is because collaborative governance does not operate the principle of winner takes all. In the present context, there is no need for competition and hoarding of

intelligence by any of the security agencies. Even in situations where the stakeholders on the different sides of the divide have adversarial positions, the aim of the collaborative governance process is to transform such adversarial relationships into more cooperative ones. It is equally not managerial in the sense that whereas managerial approaches may take their decisions without the input of the stakeholders, and at times may consult the stakeholder, collaborative governance requires that stakeholders at various levels of government are an integral part of the decision making process.

Emerson, Nabatchi & Balogh (2011 cited in Nwogwugwu & Iyanda, 2015) write that the collaborative governance regime (CGR) and its collaborative dynamics and actions are believed to operate in a general system context, in which there is continual interaction among the component units to ensure that the entire system functions properly. Adoption of collaborative governance would encourage greater interaction between the relevant security agencies and affiliate organizations on the one hand and other stakeholders including the wider citizenry on the other, to ensure that security challenges that have become intractable are tackled effectively. Given the fact that the traditional system of security being implemented in the country has failed to meet the expectations of citizens in terms of proactive checkmating of threats to security; there is need to engage security agencies, security related ministries, departments and agencies, civil society organizations and stakeholders at different levels of government to work collaboratively in ensuring that the society is secured.

II. Methodology

This study being a library or desk research relied entirely on secondary data comprising scholarly peer reviewed journal articles, relevant books, official government publications and relevant materials downloaded from the internet. Data were content analyzed and integrated into thematic discussion of the issues bordering on the subject matter of the study.

Responsive governance and decentralizing a federal state

The United Nations (2007 cited in Nwogwugwu & Iyanda, 2015) write that responsive governance model emphasizes a government that is open and responsive to civil society and the private sector (both organized and informal), one that is more accountable, and better regulated by external watchdogs (both domestic and international and the law. The reference to law has the implication that both public officials and public institutions, including the security agencies as well as private citizens would adhere to the rule of law. This is vital in societies such as Nigeria, where in the past some officials and agencies have brazenly abused the rule of law with impunity. The expectation is that non-governmental actors would play a strong role through various civil society organizations (pursuing various citizen oriented programmes in different sectors of life) and community participation.

Decentralization is seen as the means of making the government to be closer to the grassroot, in terms of ensuring greater responsiveness by government and its agencies to the needs of the local populace. It ensures improved access to adequate and relevant services efficiently provided by public institutions, which are able to decipher the needs of the citizenry and to leverage on that knowledge to attend to such needs within the available resources.

Decentralization is a primary tool for attaining the various attributes of good governance, as it is argued to be a more effective and efficient governmental framework for delivering people oriented programmes. When a government decentralizes, it relies on local institutional structures which are closer to the citizens as the purveyors for delivering the programmes of the government.

Since the 1990s, as a result of the insistence by United Nations and its agencies as well as World Bank, that countries should ensure application of its principles of good governance in the management of their different states, governments in both developed and developing countries are experiencing increasing pressures from the citizens for greater involvement and participation of the masses in policy and decision making processes. As such, the old aristocratic order of things that dominated affairs of governments up to the mid 20th century before most third world countries obtained their independence has given way greater level of inclusiveness. Governments are therefore ensuring the transfer of power, authority, functions, responsibilities and resources over various critical sectors to lower levels of government that are closer to the citizenry.

There is a strong nexus between responsive governance and decentralization. Decentralization leads to transparency in the formulation and implementation of people oriented policies and programmes. It equally enhances the level of responsiveness of the policy makers to the needs of the citizenry, as well as ensures accountability by the implementers of the policies. Transparency an attribute of good governance which decentralization encourages, leads to enhanced flow of information from the government and its agencies to the citizenry. When public officials know that there is greater level of openness in terms of their discharge of their official responsibilities, they are more thorough and adhere to the books, knowing that their activities are continually open to public scrutiny.

Olomajobi (2013) writes that it is dysfunctional for Nigeria, to operate as a centralized federal state when it is composed of many nationalities with diverse ethnicities, cultures and religious affiliations. Notable divergent interests that he believes a centralized federalist government will experience difficulties grappling with. The author in making a case for decentralization of the Nigerian polity, writes that:

The present federalist arrangement in Nigeria, by the very negation of extant federalist principles that manifest in over-centralization and monopolization of power, is conterminous with divisive conflicts. The system has chronically underfunded the governance at the local level to this end, the component nationalities of the state should enter into a renegotiation of binding social contracts between themselves the Nigerian state, thereby restructuring opportunity for the grassroots people to ensure equal representation among different zones in Nigeria (Olomajobi, 2013: 272)

The views of Olomajobi (2013) and other scholars in this school of thought has been echoed and re-echoed by various advocates, politicians and groups; especially those who have felt marginalized in the operations of Nigeria's centralized federal state. In terms of the negative impact of the centralized system on different sectors of the society, the security sector is among the sectors that have suffered from high level ineffectiveness and inefficiency as a result of undue centralization of their command structures.

Role of government in the society

The main function of government is to provide public goods and social services which the private sector lacks the capacity to effectively provide for the society (Musgrave & Musgrave, 2005). As Adam Smith (1965) rightly observed, the basic duties of any given state can be categorized into three;

Protection of the citizens from external aggression; protection of citizens from other members of the country and administration of justice; and engagement of activities that are of benefit to the society as a whole because they are not profitable for individual efforts (Smith 1965 cited in Omolehinwa, 2001: 17).

In the light of the foregoing, policies and strategies of the government in delivery of public goods and services have the overriding objective of improving the well being of the citizenry. Though in developing countries such as Nigeria, government intervention is required in different critical sectors such as security, education, public infrastructure, health and environmental management, in this paper however, our principal focus is on the security sector. This sector is selected given its position in the hierarchy of duties and responsibilities of the state in any given society.

The military, police and other security agencies are traditionally saddled with the responsibility of managing the security of any given state. As a consequence they usually enjoy very robust budget, which in some cases are insulated from scrutiny because of the objective of ensuring that the territorial integrity of a state is not compromised. In Nigeria, the oversight functions of the national assembly are meant not to impede the operations of the agencies in any way but rather to ensure accountability.

Nigeria operates a traditional centric security management system in which the security initiatives of the government revolve around the traditional security apparatus; Office of the national security Adviser, the Defence Forces, Police, Department of Security Services, Intelligence Services, Customs, Immigration and Nigerian Civil Defence and Security Corps (NCDSC). These traditional security apparatus are all controlled centrally by the federal government. Other emergent security family members as recognized by Bali (2006) such as informal security forces (vigilante), civil oversight bodies (Ministries of defence and Justice, Legislature and the office of the President, financial management bodies (such as ministry of finance, budget office and auditor-general's office, foreign affairs ministry and its affiliate bodies, and civil and political society organizations, are completely ignored the official management of security in Nigeria. It is only at the state level that some state governors have recognized operations of the vigilante in areas where they are believed to be effective.

Several scholars have observed that over the years, the centralized security system of Nigeria has not been effective in combating security challenges such as the various ethno-religious violence, terrorist insurgency, militancy, kidnappings, amongst others (Olomajobi, 2013; Imobighe, 2003; Falola, 1998 & Roy, 1994). It is in the light of this high level of ineffectiveness of the security sector that we write that reform of the security sector of the country is an urgent necessity.

Proposal for Reform of Security sector through decentralization

Since the current centralized system of security management in Nigeria has failed to effectively combat security challenges across the length and breadth of the country, there is need for massive reform of the security sector to make the sector effective. This will involve the development of a new security framework that will proactively combat all forms of threat to security at local, state and national levels of the country. This will involve the devolution of powers from the centre to component units in line with Nigeria's federal structure. In line with figure 1 below, security at the state level should be controlled completely by the state governors, while the federal security apparatus in terms of domestic security issues will play complimentary role, especially where

inter-state crimes are involved. Security issues of national significance including combating external threats would continue to be the exclusive preserve of the federal security apparatus.

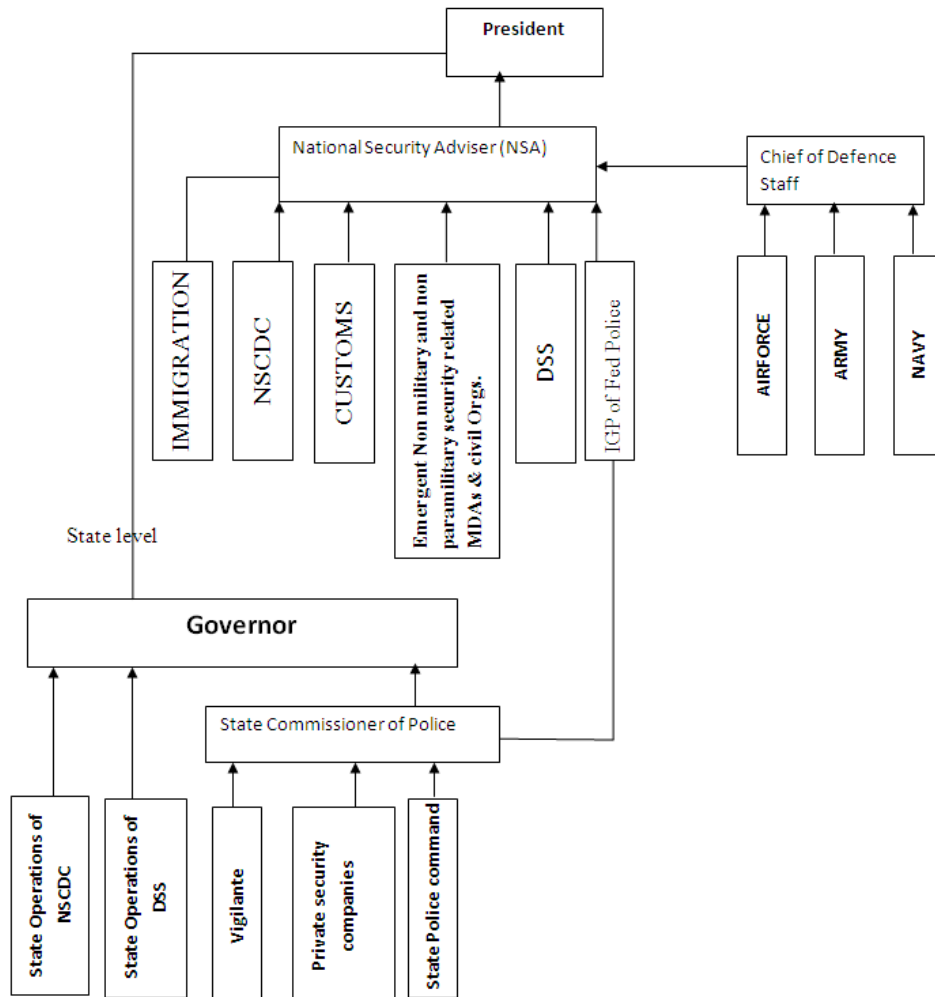
The envisaged new security framework at the state level will involve collaboration and building of synergy between the state police command, the state operations of the DSS, state operations of NSCDC, vigilante, private security or guard companies, relevant security related MDAs and civil society organizations. Such collaboration would include sharing of relevant intelligence information amongst the organizations and agencies thereby building a synergy that would be difficult to beat by any gang, sect or group.

The various state governors controlling the state security agencies and organizations within their domain would ensure that there is quicker intervention when there are intelligence reports on possible threats to security or breach of security, rather than the current dispensation where they have to get approval from Abuja before any meaningful action would be undertaken. It is only when the security challenge is of a national magnitude or has external implications that the federal security operatives would be mobilized. Though the state operational heads of the DSS and NCDSC would be reporting to the state government, they would have the mandate to report any issues of inter-state or international dimension to the federal Director-general or commandant, especially those in border states.

The vigilante groups would be built into an integrated network in each state and provided with requisite training on modern day policing responsibilities to eliminate incidences of jungle justice which had in the past marred the operations of some of them. Being the group closest to the people they would provide a veritable link for intelligence gathering at the grassroots level. The members of the civil society groups that are security minded in their operations and officials of the non military or paramilitary, security minded MDAs would also be provided with the requisite knowledge that they require to facilitate their playing their complimentary roles especially in the area of providing relevant intelligence to the traditional security agencies who would utilize their professional competence to screen such information and act promptly to nip the threats in the bud.

Figure 1: Proposed structure of national security network

Federal level



Source: Nwogwugu & Abioye (2015).

There is need to improve on the professional capacity of the security forces, at both the federal and state levels. This would involve skill development including counter terrorism strategies, rule reorientation, internal democratization and community relations. This would go a long way in creating a healthy security environment, especially with regards to security operatives gaining the trust of members of the public in the process of discharging their professional responsibilities. This would eliminate all forms of hostilities against the security operatives as they would be seen as working in the interest of the citizens.

There is need for training of the various security operatives on the need to respect the fundamental human rights of members of the public in the process of discharging their responsibilities. This would curb the incidence of allegations of human rights abuses in internal security operations especially when members of the military are involved. The police should also be given sufficient training on post insurgency policing to ensure that after combating terrorist insurgency, no new terrorist sects would emerge in the future to hold the country to ransom like the Boko Haram has done and is still doing presently.

There is need for greater transparency within the security sector at both the federal and state levels. When security agencies know that their operations are subject to review by the public, they will be less likely to engage in any form of activities that run contrary to the dictates of the law. Such transparency mechanism should include periodic review of operations by civil society organizations.

Tackling the proliferation of small and light weapons as well as combating terrorism have become major global problems. Their attainment by various states has become very complicated as globalization has facilitated linkages at international level between various terror groups operating in different continents, leading to sharing of resources amongst them. However, different countries have developed their unique system and structures for tackling them, such as the establishment of the department of homeland security in United States of America and the enactment of several anti terror legislation in the post September 11 period. In Nigeria, there is need for greater involvement of the civilian population at the local level, especially in terms of intelligence gathering. At the local or grassroots level, there is need to involve career professionals, local business people including operators and owners of “joints” and local vigilantes in such intelligence gathering and efforts to control small arms proliferation and terrorism.

There is need for governments at different levels to exercise political will to combat insecurity without regard to the status of those who are involved in sponsoring such activities. Lack of political will has been among the reasons some scholars including Ajayi and Nwogwugwu (2014) have identified as having led to the inability of the government and its security agencies to effectively tackle security challenges such as militancy and terrorism over the years. Political will by government to act promptly in line with rule of law would go a long way in ensuring the effectiveness of the security agencies in the country.

There is need for establishment of an elite corps that will function like the department of homeland security in the USA, which was established as a consequence of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. In the new security framework, such a department would fall within the non-military and non paramilitary MDAs and civil security organisations structure. Such a department would also have responsibility to assist the immigration service to effectively man the hundreds of unmanned illegal routes into the country, which may have been serving as entry routes for both terrorist and illegal arms runners who are the major agents of small and light weapons proliferation. The operatives of the department should also have adequate training on counter terrorism strategies. Such department would be expected to relate well with the populace to ensure effective information gathering to ensure that threats to security are nipped at the bud.

III. Conclusion

Nigeria's current centralized security management system, which has been based on the traditional security framework, has over the years failed to proactively combat security threats including the many ethno-religious crises, militancy, and terrorist insurgency amongst others. Valuable time has been lost as the security agencies look up to their high command for approval before they can react to threats. The implication is that the government has not been responsive to the needs of the citizens in terms security provision even though it is recognized that security is at the pinnacle of the duties of any government.

Many countries of the world are developing more dynamic approaches to combating security threats especially in the post September 11 era. Some of the strategies adopted by these countries have included granting of greater responsibility to emergent non military security related ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) with a view to facilitating greater intelligence gathering so as to proactively combat the threats to security before they become prominent.

In light of the fact that other federal states such as USA, whose federal system Nigeria claims to be copying, operate a decentralized security system which has been effective to a great extent, our position in this paper is that the way forward for Nigeria, is to decentralize its security sector in order to make the sector responsive to the needs of the citizenry. In the spirit of good governance, it is only through decentralization and involvement of the citizens in the decision making process through collaborative governance, which has been

seen to have worked in security management in some other parts of the world, that Nigeria would be able to meet the expectations of its citizenry.

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