

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

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THEME: Nigeria’s Security Challenges and the Quest for National Cohesion: A New
Paradigm for Internal Security Architecture

By

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Introduction

It is with great honour and a profound sense of responsibility that I address this distinguished gathering at the 7th Annual Public Lecture of the Just Friends Club of Nigeria.

I feel honoured and privileged to deliver this keynote address, drawing upon six key sub-themes as requested by the organizers. Security, within our national context, fundamentally concerns the protection of lives, property, and the well-being of society, as enshrined in Chapter II, section 14(2)(b) of the Nigerian Constitution (1999), which states that “the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government.”

Despite increased budgetary allocations and the deployment of military resources across all geopolitical zones since 1999, the anticipated improvements in security have remained elusive. This raises critical questions: Why do threats persist despite significant investments? How can we modernize security institutions while upholding civil liberties and human rights? Is it possible for Nigeria to develop an inclusive, intelligence-led internal security framework that reflects the country’s socio-cultural diversity and history? What role should non-state actors play in peacebuilding: as threats or partners? To address these questions, it is essential to first understand the nature and scope of Nigeria’s security.

I look forward to engaging in a thoughtful exploration of these pressing issues with you today

Understanding Security

Security must be approached from a comprehensive and holistic perspective. Since 1994, the global community—guided by the United Nations Human Development Report—has redefined security as a concept centered on people rather than territories and on investment in human development rather than armaments. This modern perspective emphasizes human security, a broader construct that extends beyond traditional military concerns to encompass the protection of individuals’ lives, property, and their overall well-being.

While military security remains state-centric, human security is fundamentally people centric. Military security is primarily concerned with protecting a nation’s territorial integrity and sovereignty against external threats, typically using armed forces and defence strategies. Being state-centric, it focuses on safeguarding the state from military aggression, invasion, or armed conflict. In contrast, human security is people-centric and encompasses a broader range of concerns. It emphasizes the protection of individuals’ lives, properties, and overall well-being.

Human security addresses threats such as poverty, illiteracy, disease, unemployment, corruption, and environmental degradation, issues that cannot be resolved by military force alone but require effective governance and social investment. In the Nigerian context, these threats pose significant human security challenges.

As articulated by former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Anan, human security encompasses human rights, good governance, access to education and healthcare, and the creation of opportunities for individuals to realize their potential. Progress in these areas is essential for reducing poverty, fostering economic growth, and preventing conflicts. Ultimately, human security is defined by freedom from fear, freedom from want, and the assurance that future generations will inherit a healthy natural environment.

Nigeria's Security Challenges

Nigeria is confronted with a range of complex security challenges that demand a robust and adaptive internal security architecture. Foremost among these are threats to the safety of lives and property, which have instilled a pervasive sense of fear across homes, markets, places of worship, and farmlands in the region. This “freedom from fear” has been eroded by the activities of groups such as Boko Haram, bandits, IPOB, Yoruba Nation agitators, militants, urban criminal gangs, and other violent offenders engaged in armed robbery, murder, and ritual killings.

In addition to physical threats, Nigeria faces significant human security challenges that undermine its survival and livelihoods. Issues such as poverty, unemployment, hunger, disease, and illiteracy have denied many citizens their “freedom from want.” Despite its abundant resources, Nigeria continues to rank low on the United Nations Human Development Index. For instance, extreme poverty is expected to rise from 30.9% in 2018 to 46% in 2024, with approximately 90 million Nigerians living below the poverty line. Multidimensional poverty, encompassing deprivation in health, education, and living standards, affects 63% of the population and is exacerbated by inflation, economic stagnation, insecurity, regional disparities, and inadequate social protection. Population growth further compounds these challenges, with projections indicating that Nigeria's population will exceed 400 million by 2050, and over 70% of the population is young, including approximately 10 million out-of-school children.

Emerging security threats have also arisen from technological advancements, particularly in the field of information and communication technology (ICT). While Nigeria is a leader in Africa's tech startup ecosystem, it faces increasing risks related to cybercrime and money laundering, as highlighted by recent reports from the Nigerian Police Force's National Cybercrime Center.

The proliferation of firearms is another grave concern. Driven by porous borders, regional instability, and illicit local production, the widespread availability of unregistered and unmarked weapons has fuelled insurgency, banditry, armed robbery, and other violent crimes in Nigeria. Reports indicate that Nigeria accounts for a significant share of illegal weapons in West Africa, with the Lake Chad region remaining a hotspot for arms trafficking and local manufacture of arms, including components used by groups such as Boko Haram. This undermines the rule of law and disrupts socioeconomic development.

Root Causes, Triggers, and Drivers of Insecurity

The persistence of Nigeria's security challenges can be attributed to a complex interplay of root causes, triggers, and drivers. A significant factor is the tendency to oversimplify complex issues, often influenced by emotions, sentiments, and the denial of reality. Religious and ethnic intolerance frequently clouds objective reasoning, leading to a fragmented national perspective and undermining collective efforts to address insecurity.

Key drivers include poor governance, inadequate welfare for security personnel, insufficient coordination among security agencies and underdeveloped criminal justice institutions. Additional factors, such as limited legislative oversight, corruption, inconsistent enforcement of law and order, an overstretched military, misallocated police resources, underutilized civil defence units, and the absence of a comprehensive strategy for rural security, further exacerbate the situation.

Addressing these multifaceted issues requires a coordinated approach involving government agencies, community leaders, and regional and international partners. Military solutions alone are insufficient; a multidimensional strategy that incorporates social, economic, and governance reforms is essential for sustainable security in Nigeria.

Why Nigeria's Security Threats Persist Despite Investments

What type of security investments does this question refer to? Our perception of security is mostly in the realm of the kinetic, and we often neglect the significance of non-kinetic security. Furthermore, even when the focus is on kinetic investments, we need to interrogate how and on what these investments are made. We must understand the tactical, operational, and strategic significance of these investments. Nigeria's budgetary process is hardly transparent and is rarely implemented in full. Considering our broader definition of security and the challenges I mentioned, investments in security must go beyond kinetic or forceful measures. We cannot depend on bullets and boots to solve Nigeria's security challenges because there are other security issues outside the realm of traditional military security that only the involvement of society (whole-of-society approach) and specific government-related actions can address.

Poor Governance

Poor or bad governance, specifically in the context of security governance, is another major reason why Nigeria's security threats persist. Nigeria's global rating or ranking in governance is loud. For example, the World Economic 2025 report gives Nigeria a grade D on an A – E scale and assessment based on corruption perception, rule of law, press freedom, and political rights. Likewise, the Global Governance Index (2024) ranks Nigeria 169th among 191 countries assessed, with Nigeria scoring 33.63% compared to the global average of 43%. Chandler Good Government Index 2025 ranks Nigeria 116 out of 120 countries assessed, with an index score of 0.289. Coming home to Africa, the 2024 Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance ranked Nigeria 33rd among 54 African countries. This rating does not support the claim that Nigeria is the “giant of Africa,” probably in terms of population only. Specifically, on the governance of the security sector, the World Internal Security and Police Index (WISPI) ranked Nigeria 122nd out of 125 countries in 2023. Key factors include weak oversight, corruption, and lack of capacity and resources within security institutions.

Gaps in Nigeria's National Security Strategy (2019)

The 2019 National Security Strategy, while intended to address Nigeria's multifaceted security challenges, contains several critical gaps that hinder its effective implementation.

- **Insufficient Focus on Cybersecurity:** Despite Nigeria's increasing reliance on digital infrastructure, the strategy pays limited attention to cybersecurity and digital threats.
- **Limited Integration of Human Security:** The approach remains predominantly state-centric, with inadequate emphasis on human security issues, such as poverty, unemployment, and social marginalization.
- **Weak Inter-Agency Coordination:** Although inter-agency collaboration is mentioned, there is no clear framework for effective coordination among the numerous security agencies and levels of government.
- **Underestimation of Socio-Economic Drivers:** Key drivers of insecurity—such as youth unemployment, poverty, and education deficits—are not sufficiently integrated into security planning.
- **Neglect of Environmental and Crime-Related Risks:** Environmental security is only broadly referenced, with limited strategies for addressing climate change, resource scarcity and environmental degradation.
- **Top-Down Approach:** This strategy lacks emphasis on community-based approaches, local intelligence, and grassroots participation.
- **Inadequate Monitoring and Evaluation:** There is little guidance on monitoring, evaluating, and adapting strategies, making it difficult to assess effectiveness and ensure accountability.
- **Limited Focus on Education and Social Development:** Investment in education, vocational training, and social services—essential for empowering communities and reducing susceptibility to radicalization—is insufficient.
- **Insufficient Use of Technology:** The strategy does not adequately incorporate advanced analytics, artificial intelligence, and surveillance tools for improved threat detection and responses.
- **Other Gaps:** Additional shortcomings include limited attention to governance and political stability, health security and pandemic preparedness, and policies to address inequality, and promote social inclusion.

Climate Change Impact

Longstanding herder-farmer conflicts in Nigeria have been significantly exacerbated by climate change. Environmental degradation, particularly the depletion of land and water resources, has intensified competition between communities, leading to frequent disputes and violence, such as the violent clashes in Benue, Plateau, and Kaduna states.. Inadequate responses to shifting climate patterns have resulted in resource shortages, which, in turn, contribute to secondary challenges such as disease outbreaks, hunger, and unemployment. Despite the severity of these issues, there remains limited understanding among the population,

hindering the development of effective solutions. Climate change has a profound impact on security in Nigeria by intensifying existing vulnerabilities and creating new sources of conflict, such as resource scarcity, displacement and migration, economic hardship, and health and social challenges. Climate change has also impacted crop yields and threatens food security because of lower harvests, increased hunger, and greater vulnerability to recruitment by criminal and extremist groups. Likewise, as arable land becomes scarce, communities are forced to migrate in search of better living conditions, often leading to tensions and competition within host communities.

The Challenge of National Cohesion

A fundamental obstacle to addressing Nigeria's security challenges is the persistent lack of national unity. Divisions along ethnic, regional, and religious lines continue to undermine collective efforts to confront the insecurity. Some elites promote narratives that question the legitimacy of Nigeria's unity, encouraging followers to view national issues through narrow regional or religious perspectives rather than as shared challenges requiring unified action. Unfortunately, violent non-state actors who appear as insurgents, secessionists, or terrorists take advantage of this gap to carry out their dastardly acts against the people. At times, political leaders have deepened these divides through strategies that prioritize regional or group interests over national unity. The tendency to treat insecurity in the north as a northern problem and in the south as a southern problem exemplifies this lack of cohesion. Additionally, religious tensions have been amplified by both domestic and foreign actors, sometimes resulting in the mischaracterization of security incidents as targeting specific faith groups, despite their widespread impact.

An example is the recent propaganda, amplified by some US congressmen and supported by some Catholic clergymen in Nigeria, that there is Christian genocide. Donald Trump, the US President, has declared Nigeria a "Country of Particular Concern," and that he has given the US Department of War to prepare for possible operations to defend Nigerian Christians. Whatever that means, we shall see in the coming weeks or months. The Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism are regional issues that are pervasive in the Sahel and Lake Chad regions due to the affiliations of the various groups operating in these regions. For this reason, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) was formed to contain and decimate their activities. Borno and Yobe are the front lines of the Boko Haram insurgency and at least 80% of the population is Muslim, and thousands of them have killed or wounded, with millions displaced, in addition to denying their children to attend schools, and the parents to go to the farms. Most of these casualties are the aged, women, and children, whose lives do not seem to matter if they are not Christians. In the more than ten years of US presence in Niger, where it maintained two military bases, what did the US do to prevent the growth of security challenges? It is also on record that at the initial second coming of the Trump administration, US Congressmen accused USAID of terrorism financing in Africa. I think the US is looking for an opportunity to establish an alternative base in Nigeria, a country known to protect only its interests by any means possible, including the use of force. Unfortunately, they have willing partners in Nigeria.

It is clear that there is a lack of national cohesion in facing a common enemy to address terrorism and criminal violence in the country. Otherwise, how do we explain the terrorist attack of Kano Central Mosque in November 2014 where more than 200 people were killed or

an earlier attack in April 2007 when Sheikh Jafar Adam, a high-profile Islamic cleric, was spread with bullets right inside the mosque he preached, where he died instantly or the murder of Sheikh Muhammad Albani, a renowned Islamic cleric in Zaria, who was gunned down by suspected elements of Boko Haram alongside his wife and son or the incident of January 2013 when the convoy of the late Emir of Kano, Alhaji Ado Bayero, was attacked by terrorist killing four of his palace guards? Within the last two weeks, worshippers in various mosques in Borno, Zamfara, and Katsina have been gunned down while praying inside the mosques. Who do we hold responsible? A significant percentage of Muslims in the northeast and northwest have been killed, wounded, and displaced from their homes, including women and children. How do we explain this in the context of Christian genocide in Nigeria? It is a known fact that terrorists, secessionists, militants, bandits, and insurgents attack individuals and communities regardless of their faith or ethnicity.

The lack of national cohesion in finding solutions to security challenges in Nigeria is a major reason for the intractable herder-farmer conflicts. Rather than joining hands to confront the root causes of these conflicts, we have turned them into indigene-settler and ethno-religious conflicts. It is a well-documented fact that the impact of climate change is a major contributor to conflicts not only in Nigeria but in the whole of the Sahel and Lake Chad regions. This is why Nigeria is a signatory to the 1998 Protocol on the Movement of Transhumance. Instead of joining hands to fight climate change, which is the root cause of land degradation, resulting in a scarcity of land and water resources, and as this scarcity increases, competition over use and control between herders and farmers increases, thereby leading to conflicts.

Modernizing and reforming the security sector

There are several reasons why Nigeria's security sector needs to be reformed. Although Nigeria's democracy has been uninterrupted since 1999, the impact of colonialism and over 30 years of military rule is still being felt within the security environment. Militarization of the security environment; lack of capacity to protect communities; over reliance on military force; misuse of police resources; focus on regime security; shift in warfare; and protection of civil liberties and human rights are a few of the reasons why we need this reform and modernization. Efforts have been in the past to reform the security sector and it is important to refer to them.

Past Efforts at Reforms

There is no doubt that Nigeria's security sector requires reforms to tackle its existential security threats, bearing in mind the situation in the last 15 years. Since the civil war in 1970, there have been no comprehensive, integrated, and harmonious reforms in the security sector. Only former President Babangida attempted to reform the intelligence sector by establishing the National Security Agencies Act, which replaced the National Security Organization (NSO) and created three agencies: the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA), National Intelligence Agency (NIA), and State Security Service (SSS). However, both the NIA and SSS were responsible to the President, while the DIA was responsible to the Chief of Defence Staff, although the National Security Adviser, who is a principal staff officer in the office of the President, is the coordinator of their intelligence activities.

Several unsuccessful attempts have been made to reform the police, and to date, the Nigeria Police has not undergone any successful reforms. Professionalism in the police has declined to almost the lowest level due to poor welfare, equipment, discipline, and training. In the case of

the military, former President Obasanjo attempted to carry out reforms in it when he started by retiring all military officers that held political appointments and subsequently contracted a US-based private military company, Military Professional Resources Inc. (MPRI) to conduct audits and re-professionalize the Nigerian military. This attempt was also short-lived.

Security sector reforms must include all organizations, institutions, and personnel engaged in providing, managing, and overseeing security, involving both military and non-military entities, as well as state and non-state actors. This sector includes providers such as the military, police, paramilitary forces, intelligence services and private security agencies. It also covers management and oversight bodies, such as ministries, departments, agencies (MDAs), parliament, statutory oversight institutions, elements of the justice sector, and civil society groups involved in public security provision, including women's and youth organizations and media outlets. There has been no attempt to carry out reforms that will integrate and harmonize the activities of the entire security sector for effective and efficient coordination, cooperation, and collaboration; as a result, each sector has been conducting its business in a silo.

Militarization of the security environment

Policing the environment has been militarized, with law enforcement agencies wielding assault rifles in public, which often scares the people they are meant to protect. Ordinarily, policing agencies are to use non-lethal force when enforcing law and order, but our situation today is such that non-state actors are equally armed while carrying out their criminal activities. The monopoly of violence or the use of force is no longer the peculiarity of government-policing agencies.

Lack capacity to protect

It is evident that Nigeria lacks the capacity to protect people and property against criminal attacks, especially in rural communities. The lack of capacity to protect is both in the ability to monitor threats in real-time and the ability to respond to emergencies. This challenge was demonstrated in the terrorist attack on the Abuja-Kaduna train and kidnapping of passengers on March 28, 2022, and the Kuje prison attack only four months later on July 5, 2022. Whenever IPOB gives a sit-at-home order, for example, every resident in the southeast obeys, showing the extent of their influence over the people of the region. People are afraid to disobey such orders, even though they are illegal, because the government cannot protect them. Likewise, Boko Haram and the bandits operating in the northeast and northwest, respectively, invade rural communities at will and impose taxes on the people. Recently, communities in Zamfara and Katsina decided to sign agreements with the bandits to avoid their attacks, and by implication, the people are now relying on the bandits for protection.

Over-reliance on Military force

The military's primary responsibility is defined in Section 217 of the Constitution; yet, it is deployed for internal security operations in all the states and the FCT, despite the limited resources available, including personnel. The military is overstretched and somehow trapped conducting the war on terror, banditry, and secession within Nigeria, fighting its own citizens involved in insurgency and violent criminal activities against the state, which sometimes leads to collateral damage, with citizens crying aloud against it. In many instances, the military is engaged in carrying out routine policing duties with their deployments at checkpoints and mounting roadblocks, thereby making them vulnerable to accusations of corruption and human

rights abuse. Organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have beamed their searchlights on the military's operational activities, although sometimes exaggerated.

Misuse of Police resources

Current police priorities appear to center on VIP protection and other significant individuals, which may compromise overall law enforcement efforts. Factors such as these distractions, along with politicization, have contributed to calls for the establishment of state police. The challenges facing the Nigeria Police include a lack of professionalism resulting from inadequate leadership, training, discipline, equipment, welfare provisions, and corruption. Consequently, there is a deficit of public trust and confidence in both the police and the Department of State Services (DSS), with allegations relating to limitations on civil liberties and human rights violations. While police resources are misapplied and misused, civil defence resources are underutilized. This raises the question of why the government is keen to create the so-called forest guards, a situation that will further thinly split the resources.

Regime Security vs. National Security

Since 1999, democratically elected governments in Nigeria have often prioritized regime security over national security, as evidenced by resource allocation and institutional conduct within organizations such as the police and the DSS. Presidential appointments of key security officials are frequently influenced by considerations of political loyalty, regional affiliation, ethnicity, or religion, with appointees generally serving at the president's pleasure. The security environment and security agencies have been politicized. This has resulted in security agencies focusing their activities on monitoring political adversaries rather than confronting criminal or insurgent threats. This clearly focuses on regime security rather than upholding constitutional obligations or promoting public welfare. According to the 2008 Electoral Reform Report, Nigerian politicians are becoming

“...more desperate and daring in taking and retaining power, more reckless and greedier in their use and abuse of power, and more intolerant of opposition, criticism, and efforts at replacing them...”

Shift in Warfare

Another compelling reason for security sector reforms is the shift in warfare and the deployment and/or application of technology in warfighting. First, conventional inter-state warfare is gradually being replaced by asymmetric intra-state warfare involving non-state actors. The war of attrition has been replaced by an asymmetric war, especially in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency battles in the northeast. Nigeria is fighting an internal enemy that is blended with the environment and is extremely difficult to identify. This is why it is extremely important to have an intelligence-led security sector. Second, the use of drones is becoming cheaper and much easier to hit targets at a distance. This is likely to replace the use of humans by terrorists for suicide bombings. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is already at our doorstep, and autonomous weapons are being created. These weapon systems can make tactical, operational, and strategic decisions independent of human intervention. Leveraging artificial intelligence and surveillance technologies can improve threat detection and response

capabilities while respecting privacy rights. Any security sector reforms must consider this technological development in modern warfare.

Protecting Civil Liberties and Human Rights

After more than three decades of military regimes, their impact is still being felt in our security agencies. Unlike military regimes, where the constitution is suspended and rule by decree takes over, a major presumption in democracy is the protection of civil liberties and human rights. With democracy firmly rooted after more than twenty-five uninterrupted years, modernizing or reforming the security sector should automatically reinforce respect for civil liberties and human rights. These are the fundamental tenets of democracy. Furthermore, there are laws designed to protect these rights, starting with the constitution itself, as enshrined in Chapters II and IV, which provide details of the rights and freedoms of all citizens. The security and welfare of the people, freedom, equality, justice, human dignity, adequate means of livelihood, free and accessible quality education, accessible quality healthcare services, and a quality environment are some of the constitutional rights.

In addition to constitutional protections, there are Acts passed by the National Assembly (NASS) to safeguard civil liberties and human rights by ensuring due process of law, such as the Administration of Criminal Justice Act 2015, the Nigerian Correctional Service Act 2019, Cybersecurity Laws and Regulations 2025, Terrorism (Prevention and Prohibition) Act 2022, and Money Laundering (Prevention and Prohibition) Act 2022. Likewise, the National Human Rights Commission of Nigeria Act 1995 (as amended) was established in line with Resolution 48/134 of the UN General Assembly to serve as an extrajudicial mechanism for the promotion, protection, and enforcement of human rights.

The rules governing the use of minimum force or rules of engagement during conflicts are also meant to protect civil liberties and human rights. They are crucial for ensuring that military actions are lawful, ethical, and effective while protecting civilians and minimizing collateral damage. The legislature and judiciary are entrusted with ensuring the protection of civil liberties and human rights. The former must carry out effective oversight of the sector to ensure accountability, while the latter ensures both adherence to the rule of law and the delivery of justice.

A new paradigm for internal security architecture

A new paradigm for Nigeria's internal security architecture calls for a shift from traditional, centralized, and military-focused approaches to a more holistic, community-centered, and intelligence-led framework. This involves empowering local communities through community-centered policing, decentralizing security operations to regional and local authorities, and integrating advanced technology and intelligence across agencies. The approach also emphasizes the need for stronger legal frameworks to address modern threats such as cybercrime, enhanced inter-agency collaboration, and public education to raise awareness about security and preventive measures.

Additionally, the paradigm advocates for investment in prevention and rehabilitation programmes to deter youth from criminal activities and constructive engagement with non-state actors as partners in peacebuilding. This highlights the importance of inclusivity, transparency, and accountability in governance, as well as the integration of local customs and

practices into formal security frameworks. By adopting these strategies, Nigeria can build a more resilient, cohesive, and effective internal security system that addresses the complex and evolving nature of its security challenges.

Overall, to reimagine Nigeria's security architecture, it is essential to consider a paradigm that not only protects civil liberties and human rights but also integrates modern strategies and addresses current challenges.

The role of non-state actors in peacebuilding

Non-state actors (NSAs) play complex roles in peacebuilding, acting as both threats and potential partners. They encompass a variety of entities, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society groups, private actors, and even multinational corporations. Their roles and impacts are multifaceted and deeply influence peacebuilding processes in conflict-affected societies.

- **Potential Threats:** Non-state actors can be perceived as threats in several ways. For instance, there is skepticism regarding NGOs potentially acting as fronts for specific national interests rather than noble causes, as they might undermine national solidarity and the stability of the state system. Additionally, the presence of international organizations and donors may lead to the adaptation of local civil society agendas to align with external priorities, sometimes excluding critical local voices. This alignment with international agendas can result in top-down approaches that potentially misrepresent local notions of peace.
- **Role as Partners:** Conversely, NSAs can play constructive roles as partners in peacebuilding efforts. A crucial area where this is evident is civil society's participation in peace negotiations. The active involvement of civil society has been positively correlated with the sustainability of peace during the peacebuilding phase. Engaging these groups in peace negotiations, directly or indirectly, can significantly reinforce the durability of peace agreements. Furthermore, the recent shift towards digital international relations has highlighted the potential of NSAs to enhance critical agency across various networks and scales, contributing to peace reforms.
- **Influence in Security Sector Reform (SSR):** In the context of Security Sector Reform (SSR), non-state actors also play an essential role. The involvement of diverse security actors within and beyond the state can lead to patterns of cooperation or contestation within reform programs, thus affecting peacebuilding's effectiveness. The multiplicity of actors and the tensions between them complicate peacebuilding efforts but also offer opportunities for more inclusive and reflective SSR processes that consider local contexts and norms.
- **Challenges and Opportunities:** Despite these potential contributions, challenges remain. Non-state actors often operate under the constraints posed by entrenched power structures and may face issues related to legitimacy and representation. Civil society's involvement in peacebuilding is considered vital by entities such as the United Nations;

however, the discourse surrounding their engagement sometimes positions them as labourers rather than equal partners in the peace process.

In summary, non-state actors are pivotal as both potential threats and partners in peacebuilding efforts. Their involvement can either support or complicate peace processes, influenced by their interactions with state-centric systems, international agendas and local contexts. Maximizing their positive impact requires inclusive and context-sensitive approaches that recognize and respect local agencies and knowledge.

Developing a coherent, inclusive, intelligence-led framework

Developing an inclusive, intelligence-led internal security framework in Nigeria is challenging but achievable. The country's federal system has helped manage ethnic diversity, evolving from three regions to 36 states to improve national cohesion. Persistent issues such as corruption, political conflict, and economic inequality highlight the need for reforms that promote accountability and inclusivity. Recognizing local socio-cultural dynamics, especially in diverse regions such as Taraba North, is vital because governance structures vary widely. Security issues, such as those in the Niger Delta and herder-farmer conflicts, require blending traditional methods with modern, intelligence-driven approaches. The rise of vigilante groups reflects the current gaps in state security, underscoring the importance of community-based policing and justice systems that respect local customs. Recent reforms have focused on transparency and citizen engagement to strengthen governance. A holistic security strategy should include environmental and infrastructural concerns and address risks in unregulated areas. By building on its federal structure, confronting corruption, and integrating local practices into policy, Nigeria can move toward a more coherent and resilient internal security system

Summary and Conclusion

The security challenges facing Nigeria are complex and multifaceted, requiring a comprehensive and coordinated approach that goes beyond traditional military response. Key priorities for improving Nigeria's internal security architecture include the following:

- Strengthening governance and addressing the root causes of insecurity, such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of social services.
- Enhancing intelligence sharing and coordination among security agencies.
- Implementing community-centered policing approaches to build trust among local populations.
- Investing in technology and modern capabilities to address evolving threats is essential.
- Reforming the security sector to improve professionalism, accountability, and respect for human rights.

- Promoting national unity and social cohesion across ethnic and religious divides is also important.
- Engaging constructively with non-state actors as potential partners in peacebuilding efforts.
- Developing a coherent national security strategy that considers Nigeria's socio-cultural diversity.

Addressing Nigeria's security challenges will require sustained commitment, adequate resourcing, and a whole-of-society approach involving government, security forces, civil society and local communities. With concerted effort and the right strategies, Nigeria can progress toward building a more secure, stable, and cohesive nation. However, this will be a long-term endeavour, requiring patience, political will, and the active participation of all Nigerians.

Key Takeaways

1. Security requires a comprehensive, coordinated approach
2. National unity and social cohesion are essential
3. Everyone must participate for lasting change