

A History, Growth and Development of Non-State Actors in Security Management in Nigeria¹

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Introduction

The phenomenon of non-state space and non-state actor is common to most organised community in every culture the world over. This is if we adopt the perspective that define non-state space as any space outside state-controlled space and non-state actor as any actor outside state-controlled actor. However, in its modern reconceptualisation, non-state space and non-state actor carries western imprimatur for the most part.

Arguably the idea of non-state actors having and playing a part in security management in Nigeria is both novel and evolving and/or on the threshold of creation. This is because the terrain described as security is exclusive and protective in its name and work that it excludes the non-state actors to some measurable degree.

The reasoning behind this position is not farfetched. The military and the military rule it birthed is constitutionally saddled with the task of defence of the country. In its political role, during military rule, the military employed and deployed the term security alongside defence which it used synonymously in its task of governance and self-invitation of aiding civil authority in the maintenance of law enforcement inside Nigeria. In all of these tasks, the military did not share its turf with any group or groups in the realm of non-state. The need to consider sharing its turf was occasioned by evolving circumstances. The military was compelled to acknowledge the presence of other actors in what is conventionally called security challenges.

Under civil rule of the last two decades, security has become the preferred term for use in describing the name and work of the military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE)³. In their statutory enabling laws, their traditional tasks are described as defence (land, sea and air), intelligence and counterintelligence (for policies and operations inside, outside Nigeria and of defence type inside and outside Nigeria) and law enforcement of the type that put the police

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³ For the MILE acronym, read Adoyi ONOJA, *Methodological Issues in Security and Security Studies in Nigeria* (Monograph 4), Jos, Eiuwa Press, 2020

in the lead with other agencies in specialised areas. In all of these, these laws did not make provision for sharing tasks and/or envisage role for non-state actors. To this extent, there is a history, growth and development of non-state actors in security management in Nigeria.

On Security, the Nigerian Security Type and the Concept of Security Management

In their etymologies⁴, histories and philosophies, security⁵ and national security⁶ are not confined exclusively to the name and work of the executive agencies of the military, intelligence and law enforcement as it is the practice in Nigeria.⁷ From where the ideas of security and national security originated, security and national security apply to anything and to all things that affect the wellbeing of the peoples in the countries concerned.

Indeed, to use security and national security to classify issue or issues, in the countries of origins of these terms, represent the highest designation available to which the weight of the countries, in resources, personnel and priority, is deployed to address the issue or issues. This is not the case in Nigeria. Nigeria is not only notorious for borrowing ideas and taking these ideas out of their original contexts. Nigeria is notorious for turning ideas upside down often designed to suit individual and group interests. Of these ideas, federalism, military industrial complex (MIC) and security represent a few. Thus, there are several areas of Nigeria's history and in particular history of ideas that are in dire need of subaltern voices, revisionist and counter hegemonic narratives. Security⁸ is one such idea.

⁴ Read Adoyi ONOJA, *Security: A Policy Note for Nigeria* (Monograph 5), Jos, Eiwā Press, 2020

⁵ In its evolution, security was a European creation in the 15th century. Security history and philosophy was embedded in the over 900 year collapse of western civilisation. Security was used to describe the condition they seek to create for themselves after emerging from the all-round darkness represented by this collapse. Security seek to free Europeans from care, provide Europeans with something which secure, create conditions of being secure for European and reduce or eliminate feelings of apprehension in their lives. Security was not confined to one sphere even as this spheres – military, intelligence and law enforcement gained prominence in their international relations in their search for the resources that bring security. Read Ibid and Adoyi ONOJA, *Methodological Issues in Security and Security Studies in Nigeria* (Monograph 4), Jos, Eiwā Press, 2020

⁶ Unlike security which represented European contribution to the development of the idea, national security is American in creation. The history of national security began after the Second World War following the passing by Congress of the National Security Act of 1947. Read For the histories of national security, read Douglas T. Stuart, *Creating the National Security State: A History of the Law that Transformed America*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2008 and Michael J. Hogan, *A Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State 1945-1954*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008; Ken Booth, *Theory of World Security*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007. Unlike the United States where national security was carefully crafted and represented all spheres of America's life and in particular is invoked in America's global enterprises of every kind, as the most coveted idea in the developing world, national security describes the safety of the state in the hands of the military, intelligence and law enforcement and is completely inward looking. In Nigeria, national security and security although ensconced in the MILE worldview represented two areas of practice as capture in the Constitution and in the practice. Read Adoyi ONOJA, *What is Security: Perspectives of Nigerians* (Monograph 1), Jos, Eiwā Press, 2018; _____ *What is National Security in Nigeria?* (Monograph 2), Jos, Eiwā Press, 2019; _____ *The 1999 Constitution and the Fifteen (15) References to "Security"* (Monograph 7), Jos, Eiwā Press, 2021

⁷ Read Adoyi ONOJA, *"SECURITY": the Known Unknown in Nigeria*, Jos, Eiwā Press, 2022

⁸ For idea of security, I have been consistent in arguing in the direction of retiring security built in the image of the military and military rule in tandem with their limited defence mandate and for the construction of security in the image of civil rule democracy in tandem with their mandate to govern the entire realm. I am working on a compendium entitled *Security in Nigeria: A Revisionist and Counter hegemonic history*.

The Nigeria security type is exclusively associated with the name and work of the military, intelligence and law enforcement (MILE). Beyond the association with and/or description⁹ of the MILE, security and security's securitised twin called national security carries no other existential weight in governance in Nigeria. Indeed, most Nigerians do not see, think or use security outside this perspective. This owes to their socialisation under the military whence this security became common on the one hand and on the other hand that security and studying security is not a subject of study in the school system. Even with the gradual incursion of security into the school system, the curriculum has been heavily influenced and confined to most things related to the name and work of the military, intelligence and law enforcement.

Not even the onset of civil rule democracy enabling environment, two decades down the road, has caused the need for rethinking and reviewing ideas, persons and institutions, in tandem with this framework. In fact, the uses of security and national security, in the direction of these institutions, have gained more traction and legitimacy, under civil rule democracy than was the case when military was on the saddle as the government. This is not unrelated to the political economy of security¹⁰ in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. If the political economy thesis provides for the symbiotic relationship between the MILE class and the political class on security, it should also provide room to accommodate other actors in the enterprise called security. This is in the spirit of civil rule democracy enabling environment.

Arising from what is arguably the seeming availability of space to accommodate other actors, aside from the main actors (for now the political class and the MILE class) in the Nigerian type security, the issue of security management should be of priority for the partners. This is in order to address the nature, meaning, purpose and roles of actors to avoid ambiguities. In the paper on conceptualising the nature of non-state actors in security management, I defined non-state actors are quasi profit and non-profit entities occupying governed and ungoverned spaces representing interests and pursuing issues supposedly of public goods that reflect the gamut of societal concerns. They cut across non-governmental organisations, civil society, armed groups and others in the media, labour, religion, lobby, right/liberation movements, aid agencies etc. They have grown and widened in terms of the issues/interests' areas they occupy and have continue to proliferate as engendered by the demands of the time.

In relation to this, I argued that non-state actors occupied and played indirect and associational role in security management. They are either working positively i.e., reducing and/or negatively i.e., increasing whatever constitutes security issues as defined by the statutorily body and agencies – the political executive and the MILE – with the lead role in security. This is depending on where their interests and those of their sponsors reside. To this end, they – non-

⁹ See 1999 Constitution as amended especially the provisions of Section 5 subsection 5 and Section 14 subsection 2b and Adoyi ONOJA, *The 1999 Constitution and the Fifteen (15) References to "Security"* (Monograph 7), Jos, Eiswa Press, 2021

¹⁰ Read Adoyi ONOJA, *The Making of A Political Economy of "Security" in Nigeria's Fourth Republic* (Monograph 11), Jos, Eiswa Press, 2024

state actors – contribute directly and/or indirectly to the sustenance of the political economy of “security” thesis of the last two decades’ Nigeria.

On the History of Non-State Actors in Security Management

The phenomenon of non-state actors in security management in Nigeria is tied to the kind of security that resonates in Nigeria. Thus, what is a history, growth and development of non-state actors and their involvement in this security, is closely linked to the history of this security, in Nigeria. There are phases in the evolution of the history of this security and thus the growth and development of non-state actors in security management in Nigeria. The beginning of the making of this security can be traced to the beginning of the military’s incursion into politics. There are two distinct phases of this incursion.

The first phase of the military’s incursion occurred few years after independence. This was at the height of the Cold War. The Cold War enabling environment defined what constituted political, economic, social, cultural and environmental issues of the time. As long as countries were aligned to one of the two ideological camps, even if they professed non-alignment and, as long as these countries were not part of the frontline states in the geopolitics of the two superpowers, they were left alone.

Nigeria did not fall into the orbit of the ideological powers and did not have value of the type that interested the powers. If Nigeria attracted interests at all, it was because of its opportunistic leading role in the decolonisation of the rest of Africa. Non-state actors were not prominent in the period as they were limited by the Cold War environment.

The second phase of the military’s incursion into politics began from the early to mid-1980s down to the late 1990s. Although the Cold War environment continued, there was significant shift to the right of the political spectrum in the major centres of power such as Britain and the United States on the one hand and on the other hand the emergence of the reform-minded administration in Moscow following the introduction of perestroika and glasnost. Both developments affected the fortunes of developing countries significantly. This followed the large-scale mismanagement of governance or the effective and efficient utilisation of human and material resources¹¹ for the benefit of most people that characterised most countries in Africa in the two or more decades after political independence.

In most countries of sub-Saharan Africa, the economic, political and social conditions arising from the ineffective and inefficient utilisation of human and material resources for the benefit of most people had become toxic. These were the environments for the introduction of the first major Bretton-Wood inspired economic reform called structural adjustment programme in most of these countries. This was the environment that made room for the emergence of

¹¹ For this perspective of governance, see *World Bank, Sub Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth*, Washington DC: The World Bank, 1989

non-state actors and by extension their presence in security management – if security management was underpinned by the toxic environment left behind by the collapse of services and the rise of disenchantments and disgruntlements amongst the population.

The mid-1980s onward represented a turbulent phase in Nigeria's history. Nigeria's economic conditions had deteriorated. The military governments had demonstrated its inability to contain the crises amidst coups and attempted coups reflecting the instability within the military itself. The corresponding social conditions were not better. The public sector was purged; inflation devalued the naira; public services were commercialised as subsidies were either reduced or eliminated completely and; there were corresponding poor services particularly of public utilities.

There was palpable hardship everywhere. There were destitutions everywhere with widespread novel and dangerous crimes. The resources of the police were thought to be inadequate in meeting the evolving social manifestations of the time. By this time, the military had invoked the relevant section of the constitution, if it ever did, extending what is now a permanent invitation to itself to support civil authority (the police etc.) in the management of law and order. The widespread deployment of the military into law enforcement duties which was an addition to their governance role increased the currency of security amongst Nigerians. These enhanced the perspective of security as the name and work of the military, intelligence and law enforcement.

The end of the Cold War unlocked the new world order which was characterised by one major power, multiple centres of powers¹² and formidable non-state spaces and actors. The new world order came in phases occasioned by different incidences with worldwide ramifications. The United Nations also gave voices to global issues including minorities, climate and women through its declarations. All of these would represent the grounds on which non-state spaces and actors would operate at both the international and national levels.

In Nigeria, the post-Cold War period marked the beginning of the history of non-state spaces and non-state actors. These were enabled and supported first by the western-inspired push/pull of economic and political reforms, second by the political, social, economic and environmental conditions unleashed by the reforms and third, by the deteriorating governance conditions inside Nigeria under military rule often occasioned by a combination of incompetence, corruption and the implementation of the reforms. The non-state spaces and actors would manifest in the economic, social, political, health, cultural, environmental etc. arenas of the

¹² For perspective on this, read Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003

period. Their activities would influence positively and/or negatively the environment which would cumulatively create the security environment to which they are significant influencers.¹³

Growth and Development of Non-State Actors in Security Management

The Cold War and the aftermath of the Cold War created the conditions for the prominence and reemergence of non-state spaces and actors worldwide. This environment is also responsible for the emergence of the local equivalent in the different countries of the world including Nigeria. In the history part of this discourse, I alluded to the unfolding of the post-Cold War worlds, underpinned by economic and political reforms that engulfed the world, as creating some of the local conditions on the one hand and on the other hand, the poor governance under military rules and the heightened desperation this unleashed amongst most Nigerians, as responsible for the birth of non-state spaces and actors, with their activities activating positively or negatively the security environment.

In the 1980s, Nigeria and most Nigerians confronted challenges like no other since their independence in 1960. These challenges arose out of economic, political, social and demographic mismanagement that characterised governance both civil and military types. They created myriads of ungoverned¹⁴ spaces and revealed the inadequacies of the hitherto governed spaces.

There are two phases to note in the growth and development of non-state actors in security management in Nigeria. The first phase that is worth noting is the military rule phase. This era could be regarded as the period of the emergence and growth of non-state spaces and actors in the security management. The second phase to note is the civil rule democracy phase. This phase is serving as the era of the development and consolidation of non-state spaces and actors in security management in Nigeria.

At the political level and with the wind of democracy blowing across regions and countries, military rule was intensifying inside Nigeria. Successive military rulers particularly Generals Babangida and Abacha attempted to sway their transition programmes to benefit them. For instance, General Ibrahim Babangida commenced his transition programme in 1986 and it collapsed under the weight of self-inflicted contradiction in 1993. This not only increased the country's public debt amidst a failed and painful economic reform. The failed transition deepened and widened Nigeria's fault lines pushing Nigeria to brink of collapse.

¹³ In the original conception of my thesis of the making of a political economy of "security" (Read Monograph 11 in Ibid), I had initially anchored this on the unwritten understanding between the elites of politics and the MILE which advanced and protected their interests captured in "security". With this new insight, I am reviewing the thesis to include non-state actors particularly the non-state armed groups as the third leg of this unwritten alliance on "security".

¹⁴ I am working on my next monograph which is on ungoverned spaces. In this, I will link non-state spaces and actors with ungoverned spaces and actors. I will also discuss what I classified as ungoverned governed spaces and governed ungoverned spaces.

These developments were against the democracy tidal wave. The western world's push for democracy opened opportunities for the emergence of numerous non-state actors canvassing for the withdrawal of the military from politics and the end of military rule. Some of these non-state actors not only pushed for democracy. They acted as entities representing different majority and minority groups and campaigned for different rights including political, economic, social and environmental rights. There were the nonviolent non-state actors and non-state armed groups in these endeavours. Incidentally, the military and following in their footsteps the prevailing democracy governments used and are using non-state spaces and actors as special purpose vehicles (SPVs) in their Machiavellian politics.

In the social spheres, there were different conditions unleashed by the combination of worsening economic reform, poor governance and the lack of progress politically. Most Nigerians were pauperised. They were in need of assistance which the government cannot and/or was unwilling to provide. There were glaring inadequacies in the so-called governed spaces in their inability to contain the new manifestations in the condition of the people. There were new ungoverned spaces opening up. Non-state actors emerged to fill these spaces particularly in the health and social services sectors often with the backing of their sponsors in the developed world.

In the environmental sphere, the impact of global warming had started manifesting with reduced rainfall, rising sea level and the encroachment of desert. Rain-fed agriculture became increasingly inadequate in meeting the need of farmers. These triggered conditions of all types including reduced pastures for pastoralists and encroachment on farms by pastoralists in search of pastures. There was the intensification of herders-farmers conflicts. The consequences of unsustainable exploration and exploitation of mineral resources was beginning to manifest with the rising environmental consciousness. Nigeria has exploited hydrocarbon for decades while at the same time neglecting the environment. The Niger Delta area, from where oil and gas were exploited, had endured the negative consequences of the activities of the oil companies. Their water and air were polluted and their land filled with spilled oil. They not only endured numerous health problems. Life and living was becoming increasingly difficult for inhabitants.

These conditions became raw materials for the emergence of non-state actors concerned about the environment, the activities of the governments and the government-backed multinational oil companies. They keyed into the concerns generated, supported and funded by international non-state actors. The local non-state actors focused on addressing the environmental, health and social hazards created by the neglect arising from the exploitation of oil and gas. There were equally non-state actors concerned with political issues such as the control of resources, minority right and the quest for self-determination. The Niger Delta region became the host for all types of non-state actors including the non-state armed groups. Other regions of Nigeria also keyed into the issues of environment as it affected their areas creating non-state

platforms to address these issues. Collectively, there was significant growth of non-state actors contributing to security management under military rule.

If the military rule era witnessed the growth of non-state spaces and actors of all types, the return of civil rule democracy in 1999 facilitated the development and consolidation of non-state spaces and actors as major component of the system. The democracy environment seemed made for non-state actors as they have emerged every day and championed issues including those affecting the personal fortunes of politically exposed persons in their personal capacity and/or occupying offices, to those concerning groups, issues of public governance, political parties, minority/religious/ethnic rights and whatever issues that fancied their interests.

In the unfolding civil rule democracy environment where the mantra is to ORGANISE, non-state spaces and actors represented the most organised with the most concentration of organised entities, in most spheres of human endeavours. The civil rule democracy environment is receptive to non-state spaces and actors of every persuasion including the non-state armed groups. Their role in security management, if security is management is defined as creating the conditions that activate the work of the military, intelligence and law enforcement, has grown consequentially and exponentially, in all of the geopolitical regions of Nigeria.

The non-state actors have developed various expertise in different spheres of human endeavours to which they have deployed to advance their causes and interests. In the so-called security spheres, the spectre of kidnapping, terrorism, insurgency and banditry are driven by non-state actors. They have engaged and contested the turfs with the state actors in the past two decades. The non-state armed groups have fiercely contested and continue to contest spaces with state actors in regions such as the north, east and the Niger Delta. This situation is seemingly becoming the new normal and/or condoned in the spirit of the political economy of "security". It is also the case that Nigeria's political parties have aided the emergence of non-state actors in the form of armed wings or fronts to assist in mobilisation, defending and protecting their interests against those of their opponents.

In the political spheres, non-state actors are advancing and/or defending the interest of politically exposed individuals vying for office amidst charges that could potentially undermined their prospects. They have advanced and defended individuals occupying public offices and under attacks that threatened their hold on power. They have advanced and defended persons supposedly denied certain rights and privileges. They have campaigned for or against persons whose tenure elapsed due to age or years in service. They have campaigned against countries and/or actions from countries that undermined the interests of the government in power. In most of these instances, these individuals and governments have used their resources to bankrolled non-state actors to work on their behalf. Political parties and

groups inclined to different political interests have coalesced under non-state group to drive their agendas.

In the spheres of championing of rights whether ethnic, cultural, religious, environmental etc., non-state actors have been in the forefront of advancing and defending these causes. For instance, and in the environmental rights areas, non-state actors played critical role in nationalising and internationalising the Niger Delta in order to address the willful neglect by the ever-transient Nigerian state. There are actors focusing on cleaning up oil spill on land, rivers and the atmosphere particularly the issue of gas flaring. There are actors focused on health challenges arising from different types of pollution in the area.

In all of the geopolitical regions of Nigeria, there are non-state actors defending the interests of the region by peaceful means or by armed means. Indeed, with the exception of the Middle Belt region, all other regions have at one time or the other used nonviolent non-state actors and violent non-state actors or non-state armed groups to canvass for the balkanisation of the country.

Conclusion

This discourse provided a perspective on the history, growth and development of non-state actors in security management in Nigeria. This phase of the history, growth and development is of recent making. It is a reflection of modern Nigeria in the grip of post-colonial crisis of the state characterised by weak state institutions, elite state capture, economic challenges and lack of legitimacy.

The notion of non-state spaces and actors can and do represent the critiques of authority or state space and actors and manifest in various contexts across history, cultures and times. In this respect, it is a recognition of diverse social structures and the acknowledgement of non-state spaces and actors' roles in human endeavours. The prevalence of non-state spaces and actors challenges the traditional ideas of power, state sovereignty, authority and governance in most spheres of human endeavours thus creating the prevailing security environment in the context of what is security, whose security, what is a security issue.