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NIGERIA AND AFRICA'S SECURITY IN THE 21 ST CENTURY.

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ABSTRACT

The paper contends that Africa's security in the 21st century is fundamentally non-military in nature. The repeated failure of African states to construct a stable, legitimate and developmental state has widened and deepened their vulnerability to non-military threats such as environmental degradation and pollution, crippling poverty, pandemic HIV and AIDS, perennial internal conflict, widespread corruption, incessant political instability and a host of others. This failure to transform the illegitimate and anti-developmental state bequeathed to the continent by the colonialists is substantially adduced to bad governance, which has remained the enduring characteristic of most African states. Although Nigeria is still in the throes of democratization, it is reasoned that the huge resources of the country, coupled with her enhanced diplomatic profile on the world scene raises considerable hope in terms of reversing the ugly situation on the continent.

Nigeria's democratization project, if successfully executed, could boost her international image and make her a critical continental actor and catalyst for the painstaking reconstruction of African state that is stable, legitimate and developmental, suitable for tackling the preceding challenges of security in Africa.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is arguably, Africa's most populous Black Country richly endowed with human and material resources, which are critical to the building of a stable, peaceful and progressive African continent. The popular expectation at independence in 1960 was that given its size and socio-economic and political profile, Nigeria had arrived to shape the destiny of Africa. However, this expectation turned out to be a misplaced one as Nigeria could promote neither her own developmental aspirations nor that of the continent. Nigeria's most crippling deficiency is indeed, not the lack of adequate resources but the dismal failure to carefully generate the necessary institutional capacity in both the public and private sectors to make effective use of available copious resources to fulfill the promise of independence. In other words, Nigeria's inability to significantly expand the frontiers of national

development and play a leading role in continental drive towards sustained progress could be adduced to what Joseph has aptly described as 'catastrophic governance.'[1] He used 'catastrophic governance' to refer to endemic practices that steadily undermine a country's capacity to increase the supply of public goods. The deconstruction of civil structure of governance, which was itself undemocratic and least responsive to the popular demands of the people by the military on January 15, 1966, was the beginning of catastrophic governance" in Nigeria.

The failure of Nigeria as a critical continental framework has profound implication for Africa. This was the voiding of key leadership role expected to be played by Nigeria in the continent's drive towards steady socio-economic and political advancement. There was in effect, a huge vacuum created because of Nigeria's inability to step into the continental leadership shoes. Closely related to this was the absence of a role model as a reference point in the enterprise of governance. Consequently, the continent became a good breeding ground for all kinds of dictators with acutely limited sense of accountability. This was partly aided and abetted by the cold war as the key actors (U.S.A. and the defunct USSR) made determined efforts to carve out spheres of influence in the continent. The imperative of the cold war impeded the construction of legitimate and viable states capable of executing considerable developmental responsibilities in Africa. Postcolonial African states were as undemocratic and illegitimate as the colonial state with no clearly articulated grounds of political obligations between them and their citizenry[2]. Consequently, a colony of dictators (both military and civilians) and plutocrats dominated the socio-political landscape of the continent at independence. The one party and military dictatorships in effect, poorly served Africa since 1960s to the late 1980s. African nationalists who wrested political power from the withdrawing colonialists were least tolerant of dissenting voices thereby denying the people, their fundamental freedom of expression and the right to determine how they should be governed. The voice of the people was in effect, stolen by this colony of plutocrats using the machinery of state.

The foundation of the current socio-economic decay, heavy debt burden, growing environmental degradation and pollution, proliferation of non-conventional militia, political instability, wide spread identity based conflicts and a host of others was laid between 1960s and 1980s. For instance, Oladipo has argued that because of the failure of the post-colonial states to fulfil the promise of independence, they became heavily oppressive and alienating as much as the colonial state.[4] It is because the postcolonial states in Africa have dismally failed to be responsive to the basic needs of the people that they have had to seek safety and fulfillments within their pristine socio-political groupings thereby heightening identity based conflicts in the continent. As if there were not enough crises to engage the continent, another grave social problem has thrown itself up. That is, the most dreaded and deadly HIV/AIDS epidemic which is "estimated to have claimed over 30 million Africans most of whom were in their productive age brackets"[5] All these problems have, in varying

degrees, impacted negatively on the socio-economic and political environment of the continent.

The paper argues that Africa's insecurity in the 21st century is largely a function of her persistent failure to construct legitimate, viable and developmental states with considerable capacity to tackle the multiple challenges as identified in the preceding paragraphs. Most of the existing states are not only weak but more fundamentally, ill equipped to frontally attack critical issues impeding their rapid and sustained people- oriented development. It is however, believed that a democratic Nigeria with an enhanced diplomatic profile holds tremendous promise of leading the continent out of the socio-economic dungeon. For instance, Nigeria has been in the forefront of global campaign for debt relief for the heavily indebted continent. It played a key role in the articulation and formulation of New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD) as an institutional framework for promoting the developmental aspirations of the continent and has been actively involved in the search for peace in conflict torn African countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote D'voire, Sudan, etc. It is expected that Nigeria would eventually, consolidate her democracy to enable her play an enhanced role that could narrow the range of threats to Africa's security in the 21st century.

The paper is structured into five sections. Section one offer introductory remarks. Section two discusses the notion of security in the African context. Section three takes a careful look at the emerging security concerns for Africa in the twenty first century. The expected role of a democratic Nigeria in addressing these security concerns forms the basis of section four. Section five draws a curtain by way of concluding remarks.

The Meaning of Security in the African Context:

The quest for security is no doubt, a known critical concern of every political community from time immemorial, Indeed, "the search for security might have been one of the several drives for people to aggregate into bands, tribes; kingdoms and nation-states to join international organizations."[6] During the early stage of man's existence, the quest for security was given expression in form of fruit gathering and periodic hunting expedition for the purposes of meeting the basic socio-economic requirements of the people. In addition, people's preference for a rocky and mountainous topography as shelter was largely informed by physical security consideration. Similarly, the traditional practice of building fortifying walls around residential structures was largely motivated by the physical security need of the people. However, modern society has witnessed, far-reaching transformation, which had created complicated security problem for it. For instance, while a heavily industrialized country like United States of America is more concerned about combating global terrorism as a key component of its national security arrangement, poorly industrialized countries like those in the African continent have obviously different security concern. They tend to worry more about their weak economies, poor technological advancement, food crisis, population explosion, environmental degradation and pollution, frequent eruption of identity based

conflicts, ravaging HIV/AIDS epidemic, etc. than the global terrorism which is the core concern of the United States of America.

Let us undertake a painstaking exploration of some theoretical arguments about the concept of security in its broad perspective before contextualizing it. Two major perspectives on security could be gleaned from the extant literature on the subject. These are classical or conventional and Revisionist or New thinking perspectives. These two contending perspectives only support Buzan's argument on the need to "habilitate" the concept of security because of its inadequate conceptualization and articulation. While the classical or conventional perspective equates security with massive military build-up, the Revisionist or new thinking perspective is socially based with strong emphasis on the desire to utilize the available resources of any nation to meet enduring welfare ends of the citizenry. Let us examine in detail, the arguments of these two perspectives on security in order to appreciate the extent of their divergence or convergence with respect to the meaning and comprehension of security.

The classical or conventional perspective on security is deeply rooted in the state-centric view of international relations. States as key actors in international relations are believed by proponents of this perspective to operate in a system that is devoid of a well-structured and centralized political authority. Waltz stressed the point that the anarchical nature of the international system makes it a matter of practical necessity for states to look out for their protection and survival in the system. He describes the system as a "self-help" one in which each state must take adequate and effective measures to provide for its own security largely conceived in terms of protection of territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty. Proponents of this perspective argue that nation- states compete for many of the same thing including self-preservation, national identity, sovereignty, status and wealth, which are acutely scarce. It is therefore, the acute scarcity of these values that provides strong motivation for sovereign states to build awesome military power to enable them compete with each 'other for the limited public goods. Security in this context is largely perceived as a function of power and that power is a demonstrable function of military capability. States are believed to have unfaltering faith in the efficacy of build up of strong military defense as a means of protecting the territorial or national integrity of the state from both internal and external violations. Concern about massive military build up has resulted in the painful neglect of the socio-economic and political aspirations of the people, especially those located in the developing world.

This militaristic thinking on the concept of security could be traced to the post world war II when the United States of America and the then Soviet Union were nearly inextricably locked up in ideological conflict which came to be known in international relations literature as 'East-West cold war". While the United States of America was determined to, not only shield the capitalist bloc but also expand its frontiers, the Soviet Union was also seeking to construct a vast sphere of influence for the socialist bloc. This ideological schism in the

Western part of the globe ignited what has become known in the literature of international relations as "arms-race" between the two blocs.

The revisionist or new thinking perspective stresses the non-military aspect of security. The new thinking perspective on security emerged and gained considerable currency with the demise of the cold war in 1989 and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union. Since the cold war itself was the basis for the militaristic conception of security, its demise has consequently cast a dark shadow of doubt upon the strategic relevance of security through massive build- up of a formidable military force. This perspective is evidently, a post-cold war peace dividend, which seeks to carefully redirect efforts towards expanding the frontiers of human-centred development. Emphasis in articulating a more inclusive notion of security is placed on building a well-contented, prosperous, freer and fulfilled citizenry radiating with considerable happiness. Proponents of the revisionist or new thinking perspective on security contend that the militaristic notion of security largely dictated by the dynamics of cold war has lost its soul with the demise of the cold war.[8] The perspective underscores the ability of a social entity for self- protection, development and the enhancement of the general well-being of the people, as a critical factor in the security equation. It is the ability to attain the enduring welfare ends of the citizens by the state that cultivates in them, the robust feeling of patriotism and deeper commitment to the security of the state. Security in this sense connotes a progressive elimination of objective conditions that limit or threaten to erode this capacity as well as reduction of fears and anxieties about their abilities to meet these needs. A state that is engaged in the provision of necessities of life for its citizenry would generate the kind of consistent public support necessary for it to thrive. In other words, such a state needs to have the ability to achieve a positive balance between its regulative and distributive functions.

It is however, misleading to assume that proponents of this perspective have stripped the concept of security of its conventional meaning, as military factor is still an essential component of security arrangement of states. The point of divergence between the 'classical' or 'conventional' and "Revisionist' or 'new thinking" perspectives on security is that the latter has shifted focus from the state-centric as upheld by the former to human-centred notion of security. The human security perspective asserts that the security of the state is not an end in itself but rather, it is a means of ensuring security for its people. In this context, human security and state security are mutually supportive.

Building an effective democratic state that values its own people and protects minorities is a critical factor for promoting human security.

What does security in the African context mean? Alternatively, to put the question more appropriately, which of these two competing perspectives examined in the preceding fits into the realities of Africa? Perhaps, the poignant view of McNamara would help us to figure out what should be the essence of security in the African context here. According to McNamara,

> *Any society that seeks to achieve adequate military security against the background of acute food shortage, population explosion, low level of productivity and per-capita income, a*

high rate of illiteracy, a fragile infrastructural base for technological development, inadequate and inefficient public utilities and a chronic problem of unemployment has a false sense of security.[9]

A careful consideration of McNamara's view shows clearly the bankruptcy of the conventional notion of security in the African soil. In a sense, using the conventional notion of security to promote continental security is an exercise in futility against the background of the hard realities confronting Africa in the 21st century. Security in the African context cannot be achieved without development. Again, McNamara contends that:

In a modernizing society, security means development. Security is not military force though it may involve it. Security is not traditional military activity though it encompasses it. Security is not military hardware though it may include it. Security is development and without development, there can be no security.[10]

Modernizing societies are usually characterized by weak and fragile economic base, which can hardly sustain any serious military offensive. Such technologically underdeveloped societies are also technologically impotent and this makes them to spend a great deal of their scarce but allocatable resources on acquisition of military hard wares from advanced countries. Exclusive focus on military security to the total neglect of human security expressed in socio-economic development of the citizenry and freedom from internal political violence amounts to what Renner refers to as "dismantling a house to salvage the materials to erect a fence around it."[11]

While there is no gainsaying the fact that external factors can significantly destabilize the peace and security of African states, it is a more fundamental truth that they are also insecure when their internal dynamics or structures are constructed in such a way that they frequently breed violence and conflict. When a state is weak from within due to widespread feeling of socio-economic, political and cultural malcontent deriving from extreme poverty and bad governance, it may fall easy prey to both external and internal subversive forces. Security in the African context needs to cover a broader spectrum to include anything that threatens to degrade the quality of life of the citizens and anything that threatens the state and the people against each other by seeking to eliminate possible causes of dissension and disaffection. Invulnerability of African states can best be promoted by overcoming cleavages whether religious, ethnic, regional or cultural in the society. When social cleavages become very pronounced as they are in the case of many African states now, both internal and external adversaries would find it easy to undermine, the integrity of the system. To be able to build enduring unity among diverse elements, social injustice, inequality and inequity must be wiped out from the society. This is so because separate development within the same society will, as Ochoche observes:

Stratify society, alienate majority of the people and destroy social cohesion necessary for peaceful and secure polity. The society not only lives in a state of siege and mutual distrust, which is itself, a condition of insecurity, but is highly

prone to violent explosions that could threaten the survival of the state right from its foundations.[12]

The foundation of security in Africa must therefore, be built on government's policies targeted at abating sources of deprivation, social discontent, inequalities and neglect. As Luard has argued, "no government in the face of widespread discontent, resignation and despairs can retain power whatever the balance of military forces may be thereby drifting the society into a state of anarchy and consequent self-destruction"

Against the background of the preceding, what can be identified as the emerging Security concerns for Africa in the 21st century? If combating global terrorism is the core and compelling security concern of the United States of America and other advanced western countries, what then are the emerging security challenges for Africa in the 21st century? Should Africa also commit herself to fighting global war against terrorism? Would this be a wise option for Africa in strategic sense? We now examine the nature of issues that could threaten Africa's security in the 21st century if not carefully identified and tackled.

Africa's Security Concerns in the 21st Century.

Africa has since the demise of the cold war in 1989, declined in strategic relevance. Quite unlike in the days of the cold war when she used to enjoy massive economic and military supports from both the Western capitalist and the defunct Eastern socialist blocs, Africa today has been consigned to the margin of international system. The dynamics of the cold war required the breeding of local dictators on the continent with the sole agenda of preserving the "sphere of influence" of the two contending ideological blocs. Consequently, opposition politics, which was critical to promoting good governance on the continent, was discouraged and political opponents were severely mistreated by the African brand of dictators competing for "gold medal". The implication of this for politics of development on the continent was that those opposition movements that were promoting patriotic and progressive agenda were driven underground because of the hostile environment carefully constructed by the dictators with a weak sense of patriotism and commitment to building legitimate, viable and developmental states in Africa. The cold war therefore, created many distortions in Africa whose unfortunate consequences still prevail. As Joseph observes, "the internal governance of countries mattered less to the external powers than their strategic value to them."[13] Since governance was of little interest to the external powers, considerable support was provided to the local dictators to sweep underground opposition movements pursuing the patriotic mission of national development in their various states

What the above means for the continent in the 21st century is that good governance is still far from being instituted because the necessary environment for it is yet to be put in place. For instance, in most of the countries in Africa, no significant progress has been recorded in the area of national unity and integration. This partly accounts for the frightening upsurge of ethnic strife in Africa. The failure of the state to generate and promote robust sense of

nationality has resulted in Africans clustering around primordial platforms to seek safety and social fulfillments. The distorted liberal democracy in Africa is now.
Inadequately responsive to the popular aspirations of the people. In most parts of Africa for instance, platforms of inclusion have remained acutely scarce. The situation in Sudan for example, presents concrete evidence in support of this. The implication of this is that, for a long time, some African states will remain fractured along primordial joints until such a time the culture of good governance is carefully and adequately cultivated to reverse the current negative trend.

The post cold war world order has indeed, further marginalized Africa. Evidence of this marginalization could be seen in the way the United Nations, a multilateral platform saddled with the sensitive responsibility of promoting world peace and security, has been responding to serious conflicts on the continent. The formation of ECOMOG, a sub regional military cooperation framework to tackle the Liberian civil unrest, was borne out of practical necessity arising from the attitude of insensitivity of the United Nations to the scourge of conflict in the continent. The same thing repeated itself in Rwanda, Burundi and presently in Sudan where more than a million people have been made to flee their traditional homes and several thousands of others have died violent death. The unfortunate thing is that the continental body, the African Union, seems grossly ill equipped to fill in this huge vacuum created by the conspiratorial insensitivity of the international community. Africans interest is not so much taken care of in the articulation of global agenda in the post-cold war era. The current anti-terrorism concern of the United States of America and other western countries could lead to hunting for friends in Africa once more to cooperate in waging the struggle against what the industrialized countries view as the most potent threat to their shared values and aspirations. It is genuinely feared that this development could once again, breed civilian dictators on the continent who may be willing to do anything to enjoy favour .from the U.S. government, which is leading the global war against terrorism. There is in the main, a patently weak western commitment to rebuilding Africa in compensation for the travails inflicted on it by the cold war geopolitics.

Africa is also plagued by the problem of environmental degradation and pollution, which threatens to narrow the range of her agricultural production. Multinational corporations, particularly those in the oil sector have been transacting business with no adequate consideration for the integrity of the environment of their host communities. The environment is steadily degraded and polluted by the extractive activities of these multinational corporations spread across .the continent of Africa. In the Niger Delta region in Nigeria for example, environmental degradation and pollution has pitched local communities against the global economic actors in the oil industry.[15] The problem of environmental degradation in Africa today is worsened by the phenomenon of globalization, which has the tendency of exerting severe pressures on land resource. The conflicts in Somalia and the Great lakes

region have been largely environmental in nature.[16] Continued environmental degradation could engender resource scarcity with consequent upsurge of resource-based conflicts on the continent. Africa has to be cautious in its response to the current anti-terrorism thrust of U.S. foreign policy because U.S. security is now defined as security from acts of terrorism in the post-cold war world order. Consequently, counter-terrorism has replaced anti-communism as the major preoccupation of American foreign policy at the dawn of the twenty-first century. The United States is now desperate about having military bases in Africa and elsewhere to effectively prosecute the anti-terrorism agenda of its foreign policy. This could have the tendency of once again, breeding African dictators to crush domestic opposition to such commitment. The scarce resources of the continent should be deployed to meeting the basic socio-economic needs of the people in order to reduce the frequent civil unrest resulting from widespread discontent with their conditions. The critical security concern of the continent should be how to make life freer and fulfilling to the vast majority of its people to enhance their sense of patriotism and commitment to the enterprise of nation building.

The most obvious and deadly threat to Africa's security in the twenty first century is the widespread HIWAJDS disease which has defied curative measures. There is hardly any part of the continent, which is impermeable to this deadly monster of HIV/AIDS. Mostly, victims of the disease are young men and women in their prime ages and this rob the continent of their productive energies. A multitude of children is rendered orphans with little or no emotional love and these children grow up to become mal-content in the society.

Nigeria and Africa's Security Concerns in the 21st Century.

Nigeria's successful transition from authoritarian rule to democratic rule has once again thrust up continental leadership role on her. Continental leadership role was to be shouldered by Nigeria at independence in 1960 but due to certain political convulsions, it could not organize itself enough to play out this role effectively. The protracted military rule, which was largely self-serving, rendered the country unfit for this serious responsibility. The excesses of the irresponsible and unfocused military dictators who foisted themselves on the country drifted the country to a pariah status, which dwarfed her diplomatic profile within the international community. This development robbed the entire African continent of a critical and progressive voice over global issues of considerable relevance to it. Now that Nigeria is under democratic rule no matter how imperfect, this could be, and with an enhanced diplomatic profile, what role can she play in shaping the destiny of the continent? In other words, how can a democratic Nigeria lend a helping hand to other African states in the area of building a legitimate, viable and developmental states imbued with considerable capacity to evolve culture of good governance towards promoting the developmental aspirations of the continent?

We do appreciate the fact that Nigeria now is still undergoing some reforms targeted at building a dynamic, virile and responsive state system. While we have this in mind, we also believe that given her size and

endowments, she could play active role in the rebuilding of African states in the 21st century to be able to effectively respond to their security concerns. Primarily, a democratic Nigeria is expected to assist m the construction and consolidation of African Union, a continental body that is focused, dynamic and adequately responsive to the existing security challenges of African states. Why primacy is given to this continental institutional framework is because of the poor economic, social and political security environment. The African Union if properly funded could fill in the vacuum created by the ill disposition of the UN to tackle violent conflicts, which are widespread in the continent today. Until the culture of good governance is carefully cultivated, conflict, which is the inevitable consequence of bad governance, will continue to erupt in some parts of the continent. A democratic Nigeria should be able to provide credible and progressive leadership for the African Union toward tackling some security related issues in the continent.

Nigeria's role in the articulation and formulation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in 2001 as Africa's collective strategy to halt the rolling back of the frontiers of development is no doubt, a good initiative. The NEPAD framework is a progressive one as it seeks to enhance the volume of foreign aid, investment and debt relief and the conscious creation of growth-friendly environments by promoting transparency, democracy and accountability. Although a score of African countries have expressed support for the NEPAD, the critical issue is the political will to embark upon some progressive socio- economic and political reforms that could create a sound environment, which promotes good governance on the continent. The campaign for debt relief if successfully prosecuted, could provide considerable respite for a continent which has for long, been weighed down by the huge volume of external debt estimated at over $300 billion[17]. This will mean freeing scarce resources for investment to boost development. Nigeria's exit from the debt cage in 2006 is a relieving development, as this would free her resources to enable her support other African countries, which are not viable enough to keep pace with the challenges of globalization. The NEPAD initiative is quite imperative against the background of the fact that since 1960, Africans have seen their income rise by Jess than one-half percent per year, leaving the continent with the worst development record and the highest concentration of countries with negative growth of all the regions of the world. If carefully and successfully implemented, it could reverse this unfavourable trend and generate a more favourable and robust investment climate that could attract foreign direct investment, which is critically needed to stimulate economic growth and development. It is observed that now, Africa loses $15 billion yearly to capital flight as a result of the poor investment climate inflicted on the continent through bad governance instituted by military rule. [18] This is indeed, a monumental and painful loss to a continent crying for investments.

The enhanced diplomatic profile of a democratic Nigeria should be positively invested in making Africa a safe place for both domestic and foreign direct investments. The most critical condition is however, creating the enabling environment for good governance to thrive. Good governance will hi turn

generate robust climate of peace and stability as key imperatives in the resolution of other crises in the continent. The peer review mechanism should in particular, be used as an effective tool of ensuring strict compliance with the core requirements of good governance such as transparency, accountability, mass participation in public affairs, observance of human rights and above all, ensuring the safety of the people.[11]

Concluding Remarks.

This paper has argued that Africa's security problem in the 21st century is critically a function of her persistent failure to institute policies that could lead to the construction of a coherent, legitimate and developmental states imbued with considerable capacity to respond to the challenges of development. The experience of the continent during the cold war period was contributory to its failure to develop the culture of good governance, which is critical to the enterprise of constructing coherent, legitimate and developmental states. The most pronounced of these challenges are political instability, identity based conflicts, environmental degradation and pollution, huge volume of indebtedness. A democratic Nigeria is at the moment, pushing the NEPAD framework which holds considerable promise of reversing the present ugly trend in Africa, if assiduously and painstakingly implemented to the latter. This could help in creating a congenial security climate on the continent in the 21st century for sustained socio-economic progress and human security.

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