The Militarisation of Crime and Violence in Nigeria: Causes and Consequences

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While maintaining internal peace and security remains primarily the responsibility of the police, the scale of the current security challenges facing our nation requires the military to play a more decisive role in support of civil power – President Muhammadu Buhari, Address at the graduation of 174 military officers of senior course 37 of the Armed Forces Command and Staff College, Jaji, Kaduna State, 3rd July, 2015.
Background/Context

• The public space in Nigeria has witnessed a major transformation in the form of increased involvement of the military in the management of crime and violence, notwithstanding the fact that the police is primarily charged with the responsibility of managing internal security.

• What has become a part of everyday life in Nigeria today is the presence and involvement of the military in crime and violence prevention as well as the maintenance of law and order.
The Thrust of the Paper

• This paper examines the major factors that account for the militarisation of crime and violence prevention in Nigeria.
An Overview of Causes

• **Prolonged military rule:** Out of 55 years of independence, the country experienced 19 years of military rule. The emphasis on regime security rather than the security of the citizens, placed reliance on the military for the maintenance of law and order far and above the police.

• **Transformation of the country’s internal security landscape:** As a result of the emergence of militias, insurgents and terrorist, thereby making reliance on the military a part of everyday life. Here, the creation of STFs and JTFs is linked with the inability of the police to respond to these security threats.
An Overview of Causes (Contd)

• **Political economy that is linked to vested interests:** Increasingly there is a linked between crime, violence and vested interests that are driven my a political economy. Budgets on security and crime related issues keep rising largely due to corrupt practices.

• **Public disregard for the police:** There has been serious public concerns about the image of the police in the eyes of the public. This is linked to widespread inefficiency, corruption, unfairness in dealing with suspects, excessive use of legitimate force, bad temper, bullying and other abuses of citizen’s rights with impunity. The citizens see the military as the solution to such challenges.
Consequences of Militarisation

- **Shrinking roles between military and police:** Notwithstanding the provisions of section 4 of the police act, which states the functions of the police, the military are increasingly playing such roles – prevention of crimes, arrests of offenders, preservation of law and order among other.

- **Entrenched political economy of military involvement in crime and violence prevention:** Public outcry that the military officers take advantage of insecurity to make money.

- **Militarisation of the electoral process:** The military has become quite visible in the management of elections under the guise of providing security. In Ekiti and Osun states, over 70,000 personnel were deployed in each of the states.
Consequences of Militarisation (Contd)

- **Increasing loss of territory by the police:** As the military become present in the management of crime and violence, it leads to a withdrawal of the police. Even citizens prefer engaging the military in domestic issues.

- **Excessive use of force and violation of citizen’s rights:** Extrajudicial killings and excessive use of force by military personnel account is rampant – Odi, Zaki Biam, the North East among others.
Pathways and Options for Policy

• **Strengthen civil-military relations:** This will lead to more accountability, transparency and respect for human rights.

• **Transparency and accountability in military procurements and spending:** This has to do with addressing deficiencies in the way and manner military equipment and logistics are handled, which are often offered opportunities for self-enrichment to personnel involved in the procurement process.

• **Demilitarisation of Nigeria’s electoral process:** Since the justification for the involvement of the military in election related duties is hinged on their capacity to contain violence of high magnitude, it is the responsibility of the federal government to provide the police with all the necessary resources to function effectively and efficiently.
Pathways and Options for Policy (Contd)

• **Military and police reforms:** The goal of the reform should be geared towards making the military and police more professional, transparent, accountable, as well as demonstrate strong commitment to observing and respecting the rights of citizens in the discharge of their duties it relates to crime and violence prevention.

• **Protection of Human Rights:** There should be proper orientation and training of the military on human rights and international humanitarian laws as they are deployed to manage internal security.

• **The imperative of decentralising the police:** The decentralisation of police in a way that allows both the federal and state governments to control the police will go a long way in improving the management of internal security by the police. (More communities will be accessed with decentralisation).
Conclusion

• Notwithstanding the shortcomings associated with the involvement of the military in crime and violence prevention, they have contributed significantly to the restoration of law and order in the country.

• As reliance on the military for the management of internal security increases, it has both short and long term implications for the military in terms of their professionalism and relationship with the civilian population. This requires a very robust framework on how to ensure the police is better equipped and motivated to undertake its core mandate of effective and efficient policing.