

TERTIARY EDUCATION SECURITY CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA

BEING PAPER PRESENTED BY

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INTRODUCTION

I feel very honoured and privileged to have been invited to this august gathering and to be given the opportunity to make a presentation. The theme of the presentation is considered highly salient in that as the paper will later highlight, there is a succinct correlation between education (including tertiary) and security, especially in a developing economy such as ours. This correlation assumes sharper relief when viewed against the backdrop of the mandate of your Council Board, which is to superintend over the delivery of technical and vocational education and training in Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

2. It is important that we have very clear understanding of the concept of security as used in this paper. Since you deal with tertiary education, it will be presumptuous of me to attempt an explanation of that concept to you.

SECURITY

3. Scholars are diverse regarding the meaning and definition of security. To the individual/family, ***security means freedom from physical harm by criminals, terrorists and the forces of nature.*** At this level, the satisfaction of Maslow's hierarchy of needs which comprise food, shelter, a safe family and self-actualization is a more pertinent concern to this group than fear from external military aggression.

4. On the other hand, the focus of state security is freedom from external aggression or internal rebellion or conflict. According to Zacarias A. (1999), ***Security is traditionally taken to mean the absence of threats,***

especially military threats to states. This view is predicated on the assumption that insecurity of people living within a given state can only come from outside. The legitimate concerns of ordinary people for whom security connotes protection from the threat of disease, hunger, unemployment, crime, social conflict, political repression and environmental hazards are often forgotten or ignored in this approach. Therefore, in the traditional approach, security is conceived of as the state's ability to preserve its core values, to defend itself from potential aggressors or to have strong military capability to match or deter the power of the external enemy.

5. However, with changes in global politics and security, it has become clear that ***the greatest threat to a nation-state lies not in external invasion but in internal forces.*** This is borne out by the fact that governments across the globe have more often been undermined or brought down by a coalition of angry and hungry citizens, than by the might of an external aggressor.

6. Consequently, in contemporary usage, security is all encompassing and has diverse strands in governance and basic tenets of democracy. It involves access to education and health care, ensuring that each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfil his or her potential (UNDP, 1999). Every step in this direction is also a step towards reducing poverty, achieving economic growth and preventing conflict. It also means freedom from want, freedom from fear and the right of future generations to inherit a healthy natural environment.

7. Kofi ANNAN affirms this position thus "We must also broaden our view of what is meant by peace and security. Peace means much more than the absence of war. Human security can no longer be understood in purely military terms. Rather, it must encompass economic development, social justice, environmental protection, democratization, disarmament and respect for human rights and the rule of law".

8. Flowing from the above, the current emphasis is on human, health, economic and environmental security. Human security emphasizes the importance of citizens as the objects of state and national security.

SECURITY CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA

9. Nigeria's security is determined by developments in the social, political and economic realms. The security environment is influenced by both external and domestic factors. Accordingly, we can delineate Nigeria's national security environment and the resultant challenges into external and domestic dimensions.

EXTERNAL DIMENSION

10. No nation can exist in isolation. Nigeria's location on the Gulf of Guinea, straddling western and equatorial Africa, its extensive land and coastal boundaries, and its offshore oil deposits and marine resources define the country's regional geostrategic situation. It is also an active member of the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), ECOWAS, OPEC etc

and signatory to numerous international treaties and charters.

11. The interchange between Nigeria and its international allies/organizations ultimately impacts its national security environment, the summation of which is that the country is not immune from the fallouts of insurrection and conflicts in the international domain, since there are always geographical, socio-political or religious connections with any of the affected nations. Other sources of external threats include local conflicts, civil strife and unrests in neighbouring countries with the spillover effects impacting Nigeria. Resultantly, Nigeria must contend with the following threats from the external domain:

- i. Transnational crimes/banditry;
- ii. Climate change/desertification;
- iii. Nuclear/biological weapons threats;
- iv. Cyber attacks;
- v. Drug trafficking;
- vi. Smuggling; and

vii. Illegal weapons trade.

DOMESTIC DIMENSION

12. Nigeria's domestic national security environment is characterised by various tendencies. The socio-political environment is defined by youth unemployment, social inequality, poverty, economic recession, terrorism, separatist and resource control agitations, among others.

13. Arising from these, Nigeria is currently facing some of the most significant threats to its national security since the end of the civil war in 1970. From the activities of Boko Haram terrorists, cattle rustlers, herdsmen/farmers conflicts in the north, to those of Niger Delta Militants, Biafran agitators and armed robbery/smuggling in the south, no region of the country is spared in the current wave of insecurity.

14. Aside the existential threat of Boko Haram which has been extensively degraded since the advent of the present administration, other specific domestic threats include:

- i. Corruption;
- ii. Kidnapping and violent crimes;
- iii. Separatist agitation (IPOB);
- iv. Niger Delta Militancy;
- v. Herdsmen/farmers conflict;
- vi. Cattle rustling;
- vii. Proliferation of small and light weapons;
- viii. Ethno-religious clashes;
- ix. Boundary dispute;
- x. Unemployment/youth restiveness/cultism;
- xi. Prostitution and human trafficking;
- xii. Adulteration and counterfeiting; and
- xiii. Illegal bunkering and oil theft.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TERTIARY EDUCATION AND SECURITY CHALLENGES

15. It was a former US Secretary of Defence, Robert McNamara who clearly illustrated the nexus between security and development thus: "In a modernizing society, security means development. Security is not military hardware,

though it may include it. Security is not military force, though it may involve it. Security is not traditional military activity, though it may encompass it. Security is development. Without development, there can be no security. A developing nation that does not in fact develop simply cannot remain secure".

16. McNamara amplifies further "Development means economic, social and political progress. It means a reasonable standard of living and the word 'reasonable' in this context requires continual redefinition. What is 'reasonable' in an earlier stage of development will become 'unreasonable' at a later stage. As development progresses, security progresses. And when the people of a nation have organised their own human and natural resources to provide themselves with what they need and expect out of life and have learned to compromise peacefully among competing demands in the larger national interest, then their resistance to disorder and violence will be enormously increased".

17. The critical question now is: how do you ensure and secure development in a society such as ours. As Nelson Mandela said "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world". It is in cognisance of this reality that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) recommends a minimal investment of 26% on education.

18. Undoubtedly, most of the security challenges earlier highlighted have economic and development underpinnings and only education (especially tertiary education) can provide the needed panacea. We are a nation of about 192 million (according to the latest UN estimates). This is a compelling element of national power. But this statistic only becomes a critical national asset after a significant portion of the youthful element has been exposed to education and particularly tertiary education. This educated portion will form the vital middle class that will provide an internal market and provide the pool of talents from which leaders can be recruited for both the private and public sectors.

19. In the specific context of technical and vocational education, its place in the strategic management of security challenges cannot be over-emphasized. A number of informed analysts have posited that unemployment is the greatest threat to national security. To impact positively on the unemployment indices will require a quantum leap in technical and vocational education which will equip the array of unemployed youths with the needed skills, knowledge and competencies not only to work as employees but also to become employers. These youths will form the backbone of the micro, small and medium scale enterprises (MSMSE) community. As studies have indicated, it is this community that constitutes the largest pool of employers in developed economies, and represent the pivot for sustained economic development. The criticality of technical and vocational education for the current Administration's economic diversification efforts cannot be over-emphasized.

20. Further, the results of research efforts from the tertiary institutions will provide vital inputs for policy formulation as

well as operational utilization in industry. This is crucial in the context of Nigeria's economic and industrial ambitions, not just in the short and medium terms, but critically in its long term aspiration to be a leading global power.

COLLABORATION BETWEEN SECURITY AGENCIES AND TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

21. Given the interface between security challenges and development and the criticality of tertiary education in driving the development agenda, it is in the enlightened self-interest of security agencies to collaborate with tertiary institutions in the management of existing or emerging security issues. This has been successfully done in the past especially in the management of cult-related issues and other issues bordering on students restiveness. I want to assure you of the continued resolve of the Department of State Services (DSS) to assist you in your institutions in the management of security-related issues.

CONCLUSION

22. It is well taken that security challenges have their roots in socio-economic developments. It is also a given that education (and especially tertiary education) is critical in impacting, positively, the socio-economic indices of a nation, sustainably. In recent times, the emphasis is on STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) education as the most impactful way to leapfrog the economic, technological and industrial indices of a nation, sustainably. Happily, as the Chairmen and members of the Governing Boards and Principal Officers of Federal Polytechnics, you are well placed to properly rebirth and reinforce STEM education in Nigeria, and necessarily positively contribute to economic development and the effective management of Nigeria's security challenges. The long term success of this Administration's economic diversification efforts, the modular refineries initiative, and even the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan, may well depend on the

envisaged meaningful impact of tertiary education, and in particular technical and vocational education.

23. In this vein, I wish you very productive deliberations and highly successful tenures in your various institutions.

Thank you very much and God bless Nigeria.

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