The Sea Factor in Nigeria's National Security

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Abstract

Nigeria is a maritime nation that has not made full use of the potentials of the sea. The ocean environment is very important to the habitats surrounding it. It is worrisome that littoral Nigeria is yet to see the significance of the sea to its security, something which is a source of concern to the author of this paper. To secure Nigeria's maritime interest and assert the nations sovereignty within its maritime environment, Nigeria should have a virile maritime force for its National Security. Nigeria also has some obligations under the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) convention to establish systems of search and rescue, securing oil pipelines, control of pollution at sea including the dumping of radioactive wastes. The sea represents the common denominator- the great common heritage of mankind upon which nations that inherits it can secure themselves from their adversaries. By opening new vistas of opulence and influence for states, the sea arouses covetousness and incites commercial rivalry. The sea has made big and small nations secure significant commercial and political hegemony for themselves. The aim therefore for this paper is to identify the factors that make the sea vital to the nations National Security. How important is the sea to Nigeria's National Security? Why does Nigeria need a maritime approach to its security?

Keywords: National Security, Maritime Power, Naval Force and Piracy

INTRODUCTION

At sea, there are no hedgerows, no bamboo borders nor iron enclosures. There is no foliage for cover. Indeed, there is no place to hide. Anything which can float and be put to sea like fishing trawlers, merchant ships, research vessels, and even canoes can be dangerous to users of that maritime environment. At sea, however, the requirements for maritime security are esoteric and generally beyond the grasp of the layman or the average politician. Most of the great works of naval forces occur out of the sight of men who normally are based on land. The success of any naval force manifests itself only by enabling the general public to go about its daily life uninterrupted. However, the race to understand in perfect details the conditions and characteristics of the ocean, its water, its floor and the air above it for both developmental and military applications is a universal one.

The nation that has control of its immediate and external seas is in a good position to choose how much or how little of sea resources it wants. Many countries like India, China, Britain, and The United States of America know the strategic importance of the sea and do not treat its own maritime security with kid gloves. Maritime defence is a vital element of National Security, for those whose aspirations are to have a portion of the global economy. A virile naval force provides the teeth for the management of maritime security. With adequate readiness of the naval force, the projection of power in the pursuit of regional objectives becomes available as an option which national security decision makers can consider. Nigeria is a sub-regional power and with this status comes certain responsibilities which might occasionally require the use of force to promote peace and stability in the region.

In a democracy, National Security is determined by elected officials and not the security operatives whose input will nonetheless be cardinal to the articulation of national security policies.¹ Ideally, national security is defined in terms of what is best for the country without partisan, sectional or selfish consideration. It is to be emphasized that national security is just one of the important interests and values upon which the survival of a country depends. Whilst a threat to National Security is any act or intention which has the potential to inhibit peace, disrupt law and order, or affect adversely, in any form, the interests of the country.² Transnational threats are menaces without borders. These include kidnapping, oil theft, drug trafficking, piracy and illicit trafficking of arms and ammunition. Other transnational threats are associated with the globalization of threats that causes insecurity to a state. However the assessment of threats is the responsibility of the security agencies.

As with other aspects of the democratic experiment, the national security process is gradually evolving. Nigeria has played and will continue to play a weighty role in the sub region, Africa and to some extent the rest of the world. In the context of National Security, the sea is an important element for attaining the principal objectives of war, realizing the nation's economic objective and defining the framework for peace. Putting these into cognisance, a focus for a maritime approach to Nigeria's military strategy is hereby advocated for this nation.

CONTEXTUALISING WHAT THE SEA FACTOR IS

The defence of the sea lanes and marine resources cannot be properly assessed without knowing the various roles of the Navy, Air force and Army to any nation. It is in this light that the study will therefore set out for the armed forces what are its constitutional roles. In that case the Nigerian Navy's duty is to protect Nigeria's territorial waters especially, the maritime flank of the country, from sea borne attack. The naval command of Nigeria is also to protect the Economic Exclusive Zone (EEZ), secure our sea lanes and overseas shipment; offer maximum security to Nigeria's offshore oil rigs and fishing resources.³ It is likewise required to mount amphibious operations in the riverine areas, in close union with the Army and Air force. The Navy's concept of operation is to establish Nigeria's presence North and South of the Atlantic, and to dominate the West Coast of Africa.⁴ The Nigerian Navy is also to provide a squadron of strike coastal defence force as part of the Rapid Deployment Force.

Whilst, the Nigerian Air Force is to provide air mobility for the Army and Navy on land and at sea. The Air Force is also to provide air mobility for the Rapid Deployment of Nigeria's Defence Forces in support of government internal and external programmes. It is to maintain air superiority always, and to serve as a deterrent force against possible internal and external subversion. Its concept of operation is to provide, primarily, air defence by detecting and destroying the enemy, before he reaches his target or his weapon release point.⁵ The Nigerian Air Force is to apply direct pressure on the enemy's military capability by attacking his vital military, industrial and economic centres;⁶ this is where the Nigerian Army becomes relevant. The Army is organised to defend, on land, Nigeria's territorial integrity. The Nigerian Army is required to keep and maintain a rapid deployment force proficient on land and during maritime operations.⁷ This contingent is to be part of a mixed force in which the Navy and Air Force would contribute and participate.

Even though, Nigeria's territory on land is significant to National Security; the strategic importance of the territorial sea to the Nigerian land space takes a force like the Nigerian Navy into the front burner of the geostrategic power relations between these armed forces. In this context, maritime security has to be seen in strategic terms as a part of the larger campaign on land. There must be harmony in the military strategy used by the Nigerian Armed Forces in their theatre of operations so as to achieve both land and sea objectives for the nation's national security. Land power and sea power should not be in opposition, but their relationship should remain in tandem with one another, in this case, the sea becomes a direct and vital factor than it could not be for those countries that are non-littoral powers. Maritime strategy should serve the interests of the state and in terms of security; the type of strategy a maritime force is to support the land objectives of the nation's land forces. The Nigerian Navy is a major constituent of the Nigerian maritime force. Naval power is valuable to any littoral state, because it gives the state the power to reach the asset of its maritime resources. Maritime forces could not defeat land forces on their own but, in conjunction with an allied virile land force, they could determine the outcomes of wars. Maritime forces of a state are important to the protection of a country whether in wartimes or peacetimes.

Maritime Nigeria is heavily dependent on the sea as its lifeline with the outside world. The nation's maritime environment is important for the import and export of oil, petroleum resources, vital food items, industrial machinery and raw materials for the country's survival and industrial growth. Acts of "piracy", sabotage, terrorism or similar interruption of smooth passage of ships into or from our ports would need to be resisted by all means and at all costs. Nigeria has derived enormous benefit from developing its ports. The internal waters of Nigeria are in law assimilated to its land territory and Nigeria's sovereignty over them is total. These are water areas, salt and fresh, which lie on the landward side of the baseline from which the territorial seas and other zones are measured.⁸ Nigeria is known to abound in hydrocarbon, sand and gravel. Crude oil brings over 90% of Nigeria's external revenue. The strategic importance of crude oil to Nigeria's economy can only be measured against its economic and fiscal pressure. Conversely, Nigeria has been undergoing a decline in the sale of her crude oil in this 21st century. Nigerian hydrocarbons are strategically important because it is the primary source of the nation's wealth. Nigeria's marine resources are also significant to the nation's economy.

A credible maritime security system is well linked together to the defence of Air and Land. In fact, they are all closely interrelated with each other. Nigeria's National Security is associated with its maritime trade with other states. The point therein is that in terms of security, Nigeria should have an effective maritime surveillance of the security system of the country. By this, I mean an effective coordinated security umbrella for Nigeria that would require the cooperation of other armed security forces. These forces should include, apart from the Army, Navy, and Air force; organisations, like the Customs and the Police that are sometime necessary to secure the nations' maritime environment. Maritime security is very important to the development of Nigeria otherwise the nation will be at the mercy of other countries.

Prior to independence in 1960, the security of Nigerian waters was the responsibilities of the colonial Nigerian Marine deployed on patrol to prevent incursion from the waterfronts into sheds and stocking areas. Then kidnap, oil theft, and piracy were largely unknown. By the middle of the 1970s, Nigerian Ports witnessed

unprecedented congestion brought about by the "Cement Armada", oil boom and explosion in commerce.⁹ This period witnessed unparalleled attacks on ships, particularly along the sea lanes. So devastating was the situation that they had adverse effect on the economy and National Security.¹⁰ Records show that between 21/12/79 and 8/4/81 about 60 ships were attacked in our waters and goods carried away.¹¹ The lives of dock workers were daily endangered by threats from criminals. Ship owners demanded increased freight rates for import commodities because of stringent insurance conditions.¹² Undoubtedly, this freight and insurance increase was passed onto the Nigerian consumers.

Piracy could breed insecurity in the politics of a nation. Sea piracy is the equivalent of armed robbery on land. Unchecked activities of pirates make territorial waters very insecure. This could generate panic amongst the people, and countries with ulterior motives, could invade another country under the guise of piracy. This viewpoint was in the Daily Times of 14th February, 1982, entitled "Foreign Fishing Boats invade our waters' Fishing trawlers from neighbouring Republics and foreign countries have turned Nigerian Territorial Waters into "a fishing area".¹³

In order to adequately bring to justice those offenders who commit piracy, there is a need to first of all ensure that an appropriate legal framework to do this exists. It will appear that the only legal provision for this can be found under the Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, in the year 1958. However in 1967, the Gowon Government promulgated the Territorial Waters Decree which stated that "the Territorials Waters of Nigeria shall for all purposes include every part of the open ocean within 12 nautical miles of the coast of Nigeria."¹⁴ This 1967 decree was amended to increase the limit of Nigeria to 30 nautical miles, but was finally limited to 12 nautical miles once more in 1978. On October 2, 1978, the Exclusive Economic Zone Decree was promulgated.¹⁵ It stated that the Exclusive Economic Zone shall be an area extending from the external limits of the territorial waters of Nigeria up to a distance of 200 nautical miles from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial waters is measured and in this EEZ, the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall exercise "Sovereign and Exclusive rights with seabed, sub-soil and subjacent waters."¹⁶ It can now be seen that with a coastline of 415 nautical miles, territorial waters limits of 12 nautical miles and an EEZ of 200 nautical miles, Nigeria lays claim to an area of 4980 nautical square miles where it exercises full and functional jurisdiction and an area of about 80,000 nautical miles where she exercises functional jurisdiction. The length of Nigeria's coastline is 415 nautical miles.¹⁷ Her EEZ extends to 200 nautical miles southwards. Nigeria is blessed with fertile agricultural farmlands and maritime environment rich in living and non-living resources. Oil forms a major source of Nigeria budgetary revenue yearly. Gas, another source of revenue, is mostly got through Nigeria's maritime environment. The economic importance of oil and gas notwithstanding, about 90% of Nigeria's commerce is carried out through the sea. Apart from shrimps, crabs, fish and other marine crustaceans; manganese nodules, gold, aluminium and nickel is another source of wealth from the Nigerian EEZ.

The expansion of Nigeria's maritime power is not confined only to a naval force such as the Nigerian Navy. The following aspects of maritime occupation should also be considered: the Merchant Navy, the fishing industry, oceanography, hydrography, boat building and docking facilities. The expansion of these aspects of maritime power will lead to the realisation of the nations' economic goal. The continued relevance of Nigeria's maritime power to national security cannot therefore be questioned. The government need to be interested in the exploitation of Nigeria's maritime environment considering the prominent role it plays in national security.

In lieu of this fact, Nigeria must integrate into its military strategy, a plan for the protection of its vast maritime environment. The importance of the sea to Nigeria's economy and military strategy is of no doubt. In terms of Nigeria's economy, the sea is the most significant element to the nation's development. This is because of its resources and its use for the exportation and importation of goods. Correlate the sea factor to military power, it is correspondingly not the case as the prominent role played by the sea in the economy of the nation. Nigeria seems to look more onto the land for its defence rather than it adapting a maritime approach to its military strategy. The fundamental goal of maritime strategy is to deny the enemy the use of the sea while asserting own forces control of essential portions of the sea, and projecting its land forces on the Nigerian land space or the enemy's territory. Maritime power confers on nations an asset of unimaginable potentials never before contemplated.

Assenting to the concept that a nation's military doctrine is always rooted in a proper analysis of its historical experience and its perception of what constitutes threats to its survival, security, and prosperity: Putting into cognisance realities such as national geography, logistics, military technology, the capabilities of the enemy, and the skills of one's own military organisation. A nation's military policy is closely interwoven with its military strategy and doctrine. In other words, a nation's military policy must encapsulate that country's strategy and doctrine. However, it is the nation's military doctrine that propels the strategy to be adopted for war. Hence, in the view of some scholars, it is military doctrine, more than anything else that actually prescribes how battles are fought and won.

Doctrine set priorities for military forces and prescribes how the forces should be structured and employed to achieve the goals of policies. Just as tactics constitute the basic and fundamental means of achieving a postulated strategy, doctrine guides the troops by providing a well synchronised and methodical concept of fighting for the optimal fulfilment of the objectives of strategy.¹⁸ In the case of the Nigerian Military, the development of individual doctrines by each of its military services as well as a joint doctrine applicable in cases of joint operations between the forces is a confidential rule for the Nigerian Armed Forces. Furthermore, the Nigerian security policy, defines, clearly, what force structures the nation must maintain, and at which level of mobilisation such force must be maintained, in order to achieve Nigeria's National Security.

With Nigeria's defence policy objectives, the overall strategy is to deter any attack on our territorial integrity and should deterrence fail, to repel or defeat the enemy and end the conflict on terms favourable to Nigeria.¹⁹ Added to these, is to sustain the Nigerian Army at the battlefront, the strategic capability to open the sea lines of communication for the land troops, and allies in peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations so as to promote international peace and national security. These are traits that are maritime in terms of strategy. It must be obvious by now that Nigeria cannot hope to attain the stature and play the role envisaged in the new world order, both by its leaders and its people, unless we take a strategic look at the sea and make it a focal as our number one source of strength in maritime areas. In this regard, our military strategy cannot be divorced from Nigeria's national policy. We need to re-examine our military strategy and doctrine and ensure that they are properly aligned with the emerging realities of international security, especially within our immediate West Africa sub-region. The sea interconnects most of the sub region states except for the landlocked states.

NIGERIAN NATIONAL SECURITY: A CASE FOR THE MARITIME APPROACH

Corbett defines maritime strategy as "the principles which govern a war in which the sea is a substantial factor."¹⁹ Naval strategy, however, is that part of maritime strategy, which determines the movement of the fleet, when maritime strategy has determined what part the fleet must play in relation to the action of other armed forces.²⁰ The maritime approach is the derivation of a national security that is based on the use of the sea for the purpose of directing in 'security terms' land objectives. In this sense the nation has resolved to see itself as a maritime power not as any other type of power. This means that the nation's focal strategy is driven from the use of sea.

There are two levels of strategy, namely, Grand Strategy and Operational Strategy. Grand Strategy is the art and science of optimally utilising the resources of a nation or a coalition of nations, including their financial, economic, industrial, demographic, political, diplomatic, psychological and even military resources as a last resort, for the realisation of stated objectives in the best interest of the nation or a group of nations.²¹ Operational strategy is defined as the art and science of optimally utilising military resources to maximally achieve stated military objectives.²² Maritime Strategy must embed both levels of strategy, for it to be appropriate for the security of the state. Nigeria's National Security should therefore relate its military means to its civil ends, in both periods of war and peace. This broader perspective moves us away from seeing strategy as solely concerned with war, an intertwine of the purposeful use of military power in peacetime and wartime. The Nigerian Maritime Strategy must therefore be able to undertake any of the strategies of Attrition, Annihilation, and Disruption; any of which the military high command chooses as its stratagem. It becomes important for the maritime strategy of a maritime power to accommodate any of these strategic approaches. The challenge before any nation's armed forces is to focus its approach in order to achieve any of these strategies mentioned.

At the highest levels of military command, a strategy of Attrition involves the gradual destruction of the enemy's military and non – military systems, through military and non - military means.²³ While that of Annihilation seeks the rapid destruction of the enemy, including its economic bases, and is predicated only on military might.²⁴ A strategy of Disruption entails the disruptive psychological dislocation of the enemy, using the concept of manoeuvre warfare to unhinge the command from its forces thereby destroying their communication system.²⁵ The overall objective of Nigeria is to deter any attack on its territorial integrity and should deterrence fail, to repel or defeat the enemy and end the conflict on terms favourable to the country. Maritime power is all about some magnitude and it can only be relevant if there is a directional purpose. No power exists that is of value without a purpose. The purpose of Nigeria is to keep its territory protected from attack from foreigners, taking into cognisance its internal order. The significance of the maritime approach lies in the political, strategic and economic value of the sea to Nigeria. Nigeria needs to be interested in the exploitation of its maritime environment considering the prominent role it plays in National Security.

Nigeria's maritime force (as the Nigerian Navy) has been operating its Trident Strategy for some time now. It is based on effective coastal defence, sub regional sea control in peace and war and the provision of adequate sea lift and gun fire support in amphibious operation. This is a welcome strategy that would transform the Nigerian Navy into an Ocean – going navy. However, the argument that this study proffers is that the sea should be made the principal element for Nigeria's military power. The maritime approach to strategy is the best approach for Nigeria, considering the other advantages of other types of power of achieving the same goals. Nigeria is a littoral state and it must not neglect the sea.

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THE ORGANS OF NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA

The highest organ for Nigeria's National Security is a central organ for coordination, control and supervision. This organ is managed by the National Security Adviser on behalf of the President, through the National Security Council, the Joint Intelligence Board (JIB) and the Intelligence Community Committee.²⁶ The National Security Adviser has the status and enjoys the privileges of a Federal Minister. He advises the President on National Security. He directs the State Security Service on policies approved by the President.²⁷ The National Security Adviser is the principal officer of the National Security Council. The National Security Council comprises the President of Nigeria, Vice President, Chief of Defence Staff, Minister of Internal Affairs, Minister of Defence, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Inspector General of Police, and other persons as the president may in his discretion appoint.²⁸

The National Security Council has the power to advise the President on matters relating to public security including matters relating to any organisation or agency established by law for ensuring the security of the Federation.²⁹ The State Security Service is in charge of Internal Security. The National Intelligence Agency provides external intelligence to Nigeria. The Armed Forces, the Police and Para- military organisations have responsibilities for specific aspects of national security. They are tasked through the relevant ministries, service councils, and established chain of authority.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The face of the West African sub region and indeed Africa as a whole is fast changing. Military rule is almost dead and buried and, a new wind of democratization is now all over the continent. With democratization and peace in the sub region, economic activities are expected to be on the upswing. This on its own depends on the maritime prowess and maritime security system a maritime nation like Nigeria could uphold for its growth and development. Therefore, the maritime operational environment that bears the brunt of the movement of economic goods will be dictated by the need to protect Nigeria's territorial waters. We must think of how to conduct military operations in such a way as to give reasonable probability of accomplishing desired political goals at acceptable terms. The days when wars can be won by sheer bravery and perseverance are gone. Also, attrition warfare belongs to another age.³⁰

Strategy and doctrine must anchor on a balanced force that can effectively apply maritime power across the gamut of using sea platforms to achieve strategic air and sea roles and land objectives. While the individual Nigerian armed services may have evolved some operational doctrines, Nigeria is yet to come out with sound joint operational doctrines that should guide joint service action based on the nation's threats and vulnerabilities. We must exploit the synergistic effects of joint action in any joint operational doctrines must formulate sound joint doctrines that will give the pride of place to the sea platforms. Such joint operational doctrines must be honed to perfection through joint training and planning. The sea must be the platform that drives the security of Nigeria's airspace, sea space and land space. In locations where the nation has the sea, the Navy must be made the number one security force of that geographical area. For instance, a Nigerian state that has the sea situated within it should have the Navy as its principal line of defence in the joint security strategy of that enclave. It is only when this is done that Nigeria's security aspirations can be achieved through the best course. Nevertheless, this should include Nigeria's foreign policy, political and economic ambitions.

The Nigerian Navy weapon systems must integrate modern surveillance techniques. It must acquire satellite and reconnaissance aircraft. The introduction of maritime surveillance aircraft equipped with Inverse Aperture Radar (ISAR) capable of providing a clear picture of any receiving station, permits surface ships to launch long range missiles. The requirement for the Nigerian Navy to project Nigeria's maritime power is Speed, Long range, accurate detection capability, and anti- submarine capability at maximum depth. It is a known fact that the sea remains the most important medium of cargo transportation. The ordinary tankers, bulk carriers, container ships, and general cargo ships will continue to be engaged in sea-borne commerce. Sea commerce and port related activities are second to the Petroleum and Gas Industry in Nigeria. Finally, the relevance of Nigerian maritime power is core to the strategy of the nation's National Strategy. A reversal of the Nigerian thinking towards the maritime approach to security is what this study postulates for this nation.

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