Civil - Military Relations in Nigeria: A Study of Okuama Community, 1999 -2024

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Abstract

This study examined Okuama tragedy, an assessment of Nigeria civil - military relations, 1999 -2024. The central aim was to investigate the relationship that exists between the Nigerian military and civilians in Okuama community. The study adopted The Agency theory of Civil-Military Relations, which was able to demonstrate the very essence of civil military relations. The survey research design was used to accomplish this purpose. The questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. For the survey aspect, 300 questionnaires were distributed and retrieved forming the basis for the questionnaire analysis. The questionnaire data collected were presented in frequency tables and five-point Likert scale. The study found that the relationship between the Nigerian military and the civilians in Okuama community is not as cordial as it should be. It further reviews that effective and positive civil-military relations improve security. The study concludes that the business of securing the territorial borders of any nation relies on the military. This task is as a result of the critical training the military has received over time. On the internal scene, it is the duty of the police to maintain internal law and order among citizens. The inability of the police to handle these internal crises in the country led to the call for assistance from the military. The powers

wielded by these military officers eventually led to the overshadowing of the activities of the police who were trained to relate with civilians. It was therefore recommended that: the military should take the issue of community relations seriously. This community relationship building should involve treating the issues of civilian maltreatment by the military as an ill that need to be eradicated.

Introduction

Studies on civil-military relations in Nigeria have increasingly transcended the traditional focus, on who controls the government (civilian or military), when, and how, to accommodate the societal dynamics of the subject. The growing strength, responsibilities, and record of internal security operations of the Nigerian armed forces have brought rapid increase in the number of military bases, in order to accommodate personnel and project their operations. The Nigerian military maintains more than 100,000 personnel, whose interactions with the civil population in host communities of its bases constitute civil-military relations at the grassroots. The military is estimated to have between 250 and 330 bases for commands, operations, and logistics across Nigeria, with more concentration in theaters of conflict, where personnel are massively deployed and involved in internal security operations. Military bases (with or without operations) have generated both positive and negative impacts for human development and security, which are most felt by their host communities. These developments have attracted mixed public reactions, including mobilization for and against the military, its bases, and their operations in Nigeria. Extant literatures are dominated by critical review of the uneasy relationship between the military and host communities of its bases. Most studies on protracted conflicts, such as in the Niger Delta and North East of Nigeria, indicate that military bases and their operations have had negative impacts on human development and security (especially human and environmental rights) in host communities, and consequently attracted (both civil and militant) counter-mobilizations and resistances in the regions.

Similar concerns are often raised in other cases of military deployment and operation, such as electoral security management and riot and uprising control, across Nigeria. Beyond the records of tensions and prevailing critical perspective

on this subject, there are also indications of mutual benefit and cooperation between the military and host communities of its bases in Nigeria. Despite the enduring concerns against the Nigerian military, its bases, and their operations, studies have shown some of their contributions and relevance to the security of lives and properties of millions of people who are threatened by the terror of proliferating armed groups and incessant record of unnatural disasters across the country. Moreover, the contributions of Nigerian military to the socioeconomic development of the host communities of its bases, most especially in the areas of job creation, poverty alleviation, infrastructure, education, and health, have received little or no academic attention. These, among other things, have sustained or increased the attraction and support for the military, its bases, and their operations in some host communities across Nigeria. It is against this background that this study seeks to examine civil military relations in Nigeria with special emphasis in Okuama community between 1999-2024.

Civil-Military Relations: Theoretical Perspectives

The access to the instrument of violence on one hand and policy influence by the members of the armed forces suggests that the military is always crucial and important factor in the democratic system. This does not indicate that military are expected to directly intervene inpolitics, but they have key role to play in the sustainability of the democratic governance. Since the 15th of January 1966, when the army seized power from the democratically elected government in Nigeria, the country had witnessed more military rule than the democratic governments. Civil-military relations can take up any form in a state. Finer (1962) describes four types of civil-military relations. The first is that the military officers can exercise their legitimate power on the civilian government like every other pressure group to achieve certain ends such as increased budget and infrastructural development. Although, the military may be able to exert considerable policy influence as an interest group but, it is restricted by the recognition of the fact that it cannot challenge the decision of the civilian government. Secondly, the members of the armed forces can use the treats of some sanction or blackmail to achieve some goals. This is mostly in theory because any use of threat by the Nigerian military against the civilian government is considered as an act of treason and attracts death penalty. Thirdly, according to Finer (1962), the military may displace a civilian government and replace it with another civilian government. This may

happen if the former civilian regime has failed in its national duty. Finer (1962) is of the opinion that the military officers may decide to overthrow a civilian government and take charge of state affairs. As an organization that can use coercion and force to achieve a goal of the state in term of defence, military activities create a major concern. The concern is how the civilian control over the military can be sustained given the violent training of the military.

The mechanisms and methods by which the civilian can control the military have been categorized into two by Huntington (1957) as 'objective' and 'subjective' mechanisms. The objective mechanism describes a form of relation in which there is a clear division between the political and military roles as well as responsibilities. The essence of this approach is to keep the military out of politics to a greater length as it may be possible. The subjective mechanism on the other hand, dictates that the military is formally subordinate to civilian leaders and therefore stands in no way to challenge civil authority. The subjective and objective civilian control lays emphasis on the ideological control which will eventually maximize civilian power. In a nutshell, the subjective and objective framework suggests that an ideological military will see themselves as professional military rather than political militaryIn examining the exertion over the civilian control over the military, Desch (1999) delved into the structural theory of civil-military relations which predicts that the strength or weakness of the civilian control is based on the degree of internal and external threat faced by the state. In this case, a country that faces strong external enemy will want to ensure a very strong military and involve it in the decision making process, while a country with little or no threat will want to reduce the capacity of the military and give it limited role. Either way, civil-military relation is affected.

However, it should be noted that civilian control of the military irrespective of the capacity of the military does not render the military politically inactive. Feaver (2003) utilized the principal-agent theory to describe civilmilitary relations. In his analysis, he stated that the civilian employs the military to work for them. Therefore, it is expected that the civilian being the principal should be able to exert maximum control over the military which is the agent. The relationship is therefore that of an employer and employee. The employee is expected to carry out his assigned responsibility based on the terms agreed on. In this regard, a

state's civilmilitary relations will depend on a number of factors regarding the constitutional roles of the military that posit the military as professional in nature and not an executive or political dependent military.

History of Civil-Military Relations in Nigeria

The first republic witnessed a resentful military in Nigeria. According to Ademoyega (1981), the military were not happy with the political class and the fact that the British deliberately created a tripartite political condition in the country. The Nigerian military at that time had some revolutionaries who were ideological. In essence, there was no synergy between the military and the civilian leaders as most of the soldiers that participated in coup claimed that they were oblivious of the political situation of the country. That was the reason the military claimed they executed the coup to save Nigeria from collapse and disintegration. They even considered themselves as nationalists carrying out nationalistic role.

The second republic was truncated after merely four years of democratic rule. It might not be out of point to say that the military during the second republic were in hurry to return to power. The military officers at that period perceived the civilian leaders as corrupt individuals who cannot steer the nation's ship to desired destination. This implies that the military still had their reservation toward the civilian rule. During the third republic, the military retained their hegemony despite the transition to democratic rule at the state level. The then military president, General Ibrahim Babangida, rather than handing over to the acclaimed winner of the June 12, presidential election, handed power over to an interim administrator, Chief Ernest Shonekon. The system of government in the third republic could be described as diarchy in which the civil and military rules were ran concurrently. The third republic therefore witnessed the military control of the civil rule. It generated multiple reactions and the questions into the roles of the military in the sovereign Nigerian State.

Theoretical Framework

The Agency theory of Civil-Military Relations

The basis of our discussion depends on the Agency theory of civil-military relations, which was introduced in the 1970s by various scholars, including Mitnick (1973) and Jensen & Meckling (1976). Feaver (2003) adapted and refined

the Agency theory in his book "Armed Servants," portraying civil-military connections as a fundamental agent of relationship, where civilian authorities oversee the activities of their military agents, the armed servants of the nation-state. The basic idea of the theory suggests that civil-military relations consist of a set of strategic interactions between civilian leaders, who act as the principals, and their military subordinates, who serve as the agents. The theory is based on several key assumptions.

1. The military will avoid their responsibilities as long as they are not subject to oversight by the civilian authorities (principal)
2. The military's performance improves when the military's objectives are in consonant with that of the civilian population.
3. The military can still function effectively even without constant monitoring if there is a strong expectation of punishment for misconduct or negligence. (Feaver, 2003).

The Relevance of Agency Theory to the Study

In every part of the world, a relationship inevitably exists that connects the military leadership - the body tasked with the nation's protection of civilians to civil leadership. These groups, as leaders and followers, are connected and interact in ways that fulfill societal needs. The establishment of the military is a response to the security needs of a community, society, nation, or country to defend against potential external threats, similar to the expected harmonious relationship between an organization's leaders or owners and its employees. The interaction between civilian authorities and the military should also be marked by understanding and cooperation to maintain societal peace. This is where the Armed-servant relationship comes to stay. In modern-day Nigeria, the military's expanded role has led to the civilian authorities offering various welfare packages as incentives for optimal performance. As a result, the military, now shouldering increased duties such as maintaining internal security in a democratic society like Nigeria, must foster a positive relationship with civilian superiors or principals, as applicable. The Agent theory helps to expose how the nature and character of the civil-military relationship is supposed to be. It defines the structure and boundaries of the relationship – the military as Armed servants of the civilian

leaders. Regardless of the high-end role of the military, their subordination to civil rule must mark the relationship

Methodology

The researcher used descriptive research survey design in building up this project work. The descriptive survey design has many advantages over others hence its selection; these include:

i. Its empirical nature which allows the collection of large quantity of data statistically from a large number of people in a relatively short time.
ii. It is based on sampling since it is not possible to study the entire population due to constraints in time, finance and nature of study.
iii. The survey design allows for the use of various data collection methods like questionnaire and interview which can be either structured or, unstructured.
iv. It allows for inference which helps us to deduce or conclude that findings from the sample are likely to be true of the entire population.
v. The individual in a survey design is usually the unit of analysis as he is among the respondents answering the questions.

Table 1 Administration and Retrieval of Questionnaire

community	Copies Distributed	Copies Returned	Percentage Returned	Unreturned Copies
Okuama	**300**	**273**	**90.9**	**27**
Total	**300**	**273**	**90.9**	**27**

Table 4.1 above indicates that 300 (three hundred) copies of questionnaire were administered to respondents, 27 copies were not returned, while the remaining 273 were dully completed and returned making 90.9% of the total number of returned questionnaires and used for the study.

Research Question One

What is the nature of civil military relations in Okuama community? To answer research question one, four structured questionnaire items numbering 1-4 on the nature of civil military relations in Okuama community were used to generate

answers to the question. The respondents' responses on the subject matter are presented in a table below using 5-point Likert scale.

Table 2 Mean Analysis on the nature of civil military relations in Okuama community

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	U	D	SD	MEAN (X)	STD DEVIATION
1	Relationship between the military and civilians in okuama community is not mutual	139	101	24	6	3	4.35	0.264
2	Relationship between the military and civilians in Okuama community is not cordial	110	105	40	10	8	4.10	0.278
3	Relationship between the military and civilians in Okuama community is antagomistic	130	120	20	3	0	4.49	0.278
4	The Nigerian military doesn't relate well with civilians in Okuama community	140	100	25	5	3	4.35	0.264

Source: Field Data 2024

Table 2 above illustrates the response rate on the nature of civil military relations in Okuama community measured on a 4 item instrument and scaled on a 5-point likert scale. From the data, the first question item shows a mean of 4.35 which is on the strongly agreed range of the scale. The 2nd, 3rd and 4th items with mean score of 4.10, 4.49 and 4.35 respectively indicate that the respondents are more inclined to the strongly agreed range of the scale used in the measurement.

4.1.2 Research Question Two

How have civil military relations enhanced security in Okuama community? In response to research question two, four structured questionnaire items numbering 1-4 on how civil military relations have enhanced security in Okuama community were used to generate answers to the question. The respondents' responses on the subject matter are presented in a table below using 5-point Likert scale.

Table 4.6 Mean analysis on how civil military relations have enhanced security in Okuama community

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	U	D	SD	MEAN (X)	STD DEVIATION
1	Civil military relations have not led to the security of lives in Okuama community	150	105	10	8	0	4.45	0.274
2	Civil military relations have not led to the security of properties in Okuama community	120	110	35	5	3	4.24	0.255
3	Civil military relations have not led to the reduction of cult activities in Okuama community	160	90	20	3	0	4.44	0.278
4	Civil military relations have not led to the reduction of inter communal conflict between okuama and neighbouring communities	120	110	35	5	3	4.24	0.255

Source: Field Data 2024

Table 2 above illustrates the response rate on how civil military relations have enhanced security in Okuama community measured on a 4 item instrument and scaled on a 5-point likert scale. From the data, the first question item shows a mean of 4.45 which is on the strongly agreed range of the scale. The 2nd, 3rd and 4th items with mean score of 4.24, 4.44 and 4.24 respectively indicate that the respondents are more inclined to the strongly agreed range of the scale used in the measurement.

Discussion of findings

Challenges of Civil-Military Leadership in Addressing the Security Challenges in Nigeria

Weak Parliamentary Oversight of the Military

The parliamentary lapse of the National Assembly has failed to monitor and enforce adherence to laws by governmental bodies, contributing to the principles of good governance (Aluko, 2015). The National Assembly (NASS) is instrumental in democratization and upholding civilian supremacy over the military. The 1999 constitution, in Section 218, empowers the National Assembly to exert substantial and active supervision over the military. The Constitution bestows extensive obligations and powers on them to oversee military matters. As highlighted in Part 1 of the second schedule, the NASS possesses legislative authority over defense, procurement of arms, ammunition, explosives, and the different military branches (Army, Navy, Air Force) and related matters. As per Ukase (2014), this section essentially links the subsistence of the military to the NASS, as it can legislate on their very existence. Furthermore, the NASS can in uence the military's capabilities by legislating resource allocation for defense (Adhima, 2016). The Assembly's duty in approving the national budget further emphasizes its authority and supervisory role over the armed forces

Tension between the Military and Civil Society

While the military has achieved some progress in its efforts to counter insurgency, including the recapture of previously held territory and the liberation of hostages, its use of kinetic methods has raised signi cant concerns regarding the protection of civilians. This has led to tensions involving civil society and the military, particularly regarding matters related to civilian casualties and human rights abuses. Although the table below does not provide an exhaustive list, it presents

examples of instances where issues have arisen between civil society and the military (Onuoha & Okafor, 2019).

Weak Communication between the Military and the Civil Populace

The persistent belief among the populace that the military operates beyond civilian control contributes to a misunderstanding between civilians and the military. This issue has its roots in the era of military rule, with the military still grappling with total submission to civilian authority (Ukase, 2014). A distinct lack of trust and collaboration, crucial for robust civil-military relations in Nigeria, is evident. Despite the military's respected status due to its rigorous training, discipline, and function in national defense, open dialogue between civilians and military personnel continues to be challenging (Olo n, 2019).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study underscores the value and irreplaceability of a subordinate civil-military relationship in Nigeria. A relationship that should not only be cordial but constitutional and professional. It's critical to underscore that the military is essential in sustaining democracy. As such, it should actively collaborate with civilian authorities while adhering to the rule of law, transparency, and accountability. The military's principal duty is to safeguard the populace and the state, and it must display the utmost level of professionalism in fulfilling this role. However, the current situation in Nigeria shows limited engagement involving civilians and the military, emphasizing the necessity for increased military accountability. The parliament's oversight of the military remains ambiguous, and the military's participation in business activities lacks transparency and comes with various complications.

Thus, the Paper recommends the emergence of a robust civil-military leadership where the military realizes its subordination to the civilian government that is transparent and accountable to the Nigerian people. A leadership that dares to direct the military on the most appropriate measures to take and the Armed servant role they must live out as they address the rising security matters bedeviling the nation.

The lack of cooperation, interagency rivalry, and superiority have hindered the Nigerian security architecture from effectively gathering and sharing intelligence, which is crucial for preventing conflicts. The security challenges faced across different regions of the country demand a coordinated approach involving the cooperation and collaboration of civilian and military leadership. All parties need to work together to address these crises. While carrying out their duty, the military is encouraged to adhere strictly to the Constitution.

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