

THE BASIS OF SECURITY CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR FOREIGN INVESTORS

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ABSTRACT: *The issues of security challenges in Nigeria has it's root in the cultural and political set up of the country. The ideology of different ethnic groups based on their historical background plays a major role. The Colonial masters were more interested in the economic gains that could be derived from the country rather than fashioning a united nation that evolved from different background. Potential investors in Nigeria must recognize these underlying forces that breed violence and map up strategies that can take care of them and thus enhance smooth operations of business activities.*

KEYWORDS: Security Challenges, Foreign Investors, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

It's no longer news that Nigeria has been experiencing series of security challenges at a scale that it could cause a serious concern to foreign investors who get to know about them from news feed and as such may not know the detailed conditions responsible for such occurrences. A few years ago news of kidnap of foreign expatriate and oil pipelines vandalization was common in all oil installations in all parts of the country especially the South-South, South-East and South-west regions, but stopped due to the "Reintegration and Rehabilitation of ex-militants of the "Niger Delta" into the Nigerian polity, raising oil production to full capacity, with the peaceful co-existence of all nationals in the Region. However it should be noted that the Northern Jihadist has from time immemorial strife to impose the Muslim religion on all, by politicking an Islamic state phenomenon through killing of uncountable Christians in all states of the North, with a new face called "Boko Haram".

Nigeria is a country that evolved from the combination of several kingdoms each distinctive in culture, language and occupation. Similarities between kingdoms exist in old civilization in the same geopolitical zones. Climate played a major role in the culture of the earlier settlers. The country extends northward towards the Sahara desert and Southward towards the atlantic ocean. The experience of little rainfall in the northernmost part dictates the landform, the vegetation ,kinds of farming and socialization. Apart from the two main rivers-River Niger and river Benue, there are many other rivers in different sizes, across the country. The distribution of river is not limited to any particular region of the country; this is why fishing is a traditional occupation in many parts of Northern and Southern part of Nigeria. The following are some of the prominent ancient kingdoms in Nigeria upon which the various ethnic groups derives their values and ideology from which inadvertently dictate their human relations with other ethnic groups.

The kingdom of Nri

The first documented ancient kingdom in Nigeria is the kingdom of Nri which lasted between 948AD to 1911AD ascribed as the West African medieval state of the Nri-Igbo (10). The operation of the kingdom was based on cultural communal leadership that respect the traditional religion which in today's world will be regarded as idolatry. The head of the kingdom is a priest-king referred to as eze Nri (10). The people look up to the head to direct them to fulfill the wish of the gods and there after get divine protection and increase in their farming. The eze Nri is also responsible for administrative diplomatic relations with neighbouring communities especially in terms of trade.

The kingdom was a relieve place for slaves and other people maltreated in their communities. Nri's culture had permanently influenced all of Igbo's culture, especially through religion and taboos(11). Modern Igbo's culture is predicated on Nri's kingdom¹(Griswold, 2000). Nri hegemony is dated back to 9th century as suggested by Archeological evidence² (Fasi, et al 1988).. The kingdom expanded around the region in a traditional cultural adherence and not by the use of force. The expansion of the Nri kingdom is recorded to go beyond the current Eastern part of Nigeria to the bank of river Niger across other popular ethnic groups like the Benin and south Igala areas. The political power of the Nri kingdom was quashed when the British troops in 1911 during colonization made the priest to renounce the ritual power of the religion known as 'kenga'³ (Lovejoy,2000).

The traditional authority of the kingdom enabled a peaceful co-inhabitant of the populace and mutual trust, thus made trade to flourish. People were honest in their work and trade transactions, because any misdeed is feared may attract the wrath of the god's. It's often said in some circles in today's Nigeria that if the traditional system of leadership was restored in the country, corruption will stop as the gods will not spare corrupt practices.

Kanem-Bornu Empire

In a chronological order, the next documented kingdom in Nigeria is the Kanem-Bornu Empire located in today's North-Eastern part of Nigeria and in the Chad Republic. The Arabian geographers documented the kingdom Kanem Empire from the 9th century AD onward and lasted as the independent kingdom of Bornu until 1900 when the empire was at its climax, the region was said to cover Southern Libya, Eastern Niger and northern Cameroun(2).

The people of the kingdom were nomadic farmers especially around the Lake Chad. They speak Teda Daza language. The kingdom was Islamized in 1068AD, this brought a lot of changes in culture, administration style and communication. Resistance to resist the new religion in favour of

the traditional religion was subdivided. The kingdom expanded, there were also many internal conflicts that lead to the movement of the Kanembu people to Bornu on the Western edge of lake chad (Smith, 1971).

Further expansion reached Kano, one of the prominent ruler was Mai Idris Alums (1564-1596), he was noted for astute military skills,. He made a lot of reforms during his leadership all based on Islamic injunctions, he was noted to have fought wars and battles in excess of 1000. And he had diplomatic relationships with established countries civilization like the Ottoman Empire and Egypt. His government was founded on tributes, and duties from the trans-sahara trade and sales of slaves. He was noted to take measures to improve commerce such as clearing roads, opening new farm lands and ensuring security for the activities of his subjects. Usman Dan Fodio led Jihad (Holy war) in 1808 eventually lead to the decline of the empire(13). The French soldiers finally took over in 1900 (Hallam, 1977).

The Benin Kingdom

The empire located in the current South South zone of Nigeria. The original people in this empire were refered to as Edo people , the initial rulers were refered to as Ogiso which translate to ‘kings of the sky’. There was a remarkable struggle for the king stool in the 12th century when the regime of the king (Ogiso) was old and succession plan was contested by the king son prince Ekladehran and his young paternal uncle. The resolution of the crisis led to the adoption of the king son as next inline by the king makers and the people who they consider as a natural successor (13).

Succession plan of the king’s son taking over the throne continue till this day in Benin kingdom. In many other parts of Nigeria, king makers (a committee of chiefs or elders) determines who the next king is after the demise of the king, such a candidate must be from the royal family but not necessarily the son of the king. The empire in rulership has close connection with the Yoruba kingdoms of Ife and Oyo.

The Edo settlement was well established and prosperous by the 15th century. The settlement expanded into an empire status by the twelfth ruler Oba ewuare the great (1440-1473), this was when the empire administrative centre (the city of Ubinu) was refered to as Benin City by the Portuguese, the new name was adopted by the locals (14). The prosperity of the empire saw their mixing with close ethnic groups of Itsekiri, and Urhobo who spoke a version of the Edo language of ‘Ubinu’ as ‘Bini’.

The system of rulership was based on military operations and royal protection in exchange of the use of resources and implementation of taxes paid to the royal administrative centre. Language and culture was not enforced and remained heterogenous and localized according to each group within the kingdom through a local “enogie” (dukes) was often appointed by the Oba for special ethnic areas (15).

A series of walls marked the incremental growth of the sacred city from 850AD until it’s decline in the 16th century. To enclose his palace he commanded the building of Benin inner wall, a seven-mile (11km) long earthen rampant girded by a moat 50 feet (15m) deep. This was excavated in the early 1960s by Graham Conrak. The first European travellers to reach Benin were Portuguese explorers in about 1485. A strong mercantile relationship developed, with the Edo trading tropical

products such as ivory, pepper and palm oil with the Portuguese for European goods such as manila and guns.

In the early 16th century, the Oba sent an ambassador to Lisbon, and the king of Portugal sent Christian missionaries to Benin City. The first English expedition to Benin was in 1553 and significant trading developed between England and Benin based on the export of Ivory, palm oil and pepper. Benin resisted becoming a British protectorate throughout the 1880s, attempts were made for Benin kingdom to sign a treaty with Britain, at the height of it, eight unknown British representatives were killed by the Benin people. A punitive expedition was launched in 1897 under the command of Admiral Sir Harry Rawson. The city was burned and lots of artefacts were stolen(16).

Oyo Empire

The Oyo Empire is another important old empire in Nigeria covering the South Western part of Nigeria. It was established in the 14th century, the first head of the empire locally called Oba (king) was Oranyan and the capital is located at Oyo, a town which existed till today. The leadership of the king was corroborated by a council. The kingdom has a military arm headed by the Bashorun and with the army the empire was able to fight war to expand the empire, tributary Armies were created. Oyo became the Southern emporium of the Trans-Saharan trade. Exchanges were made in salt, leather, horses, kola nuts, Ivory, cloth and sales⁴ (Strides, et al 1971). The empire also benefited greatly in Craft making and iron work (Strides, et al 1971).

The army towards the end of the 18th century had less job to do as there was no more territories to conquer so attention was shifted to regional trade, and Oyo acted as middlemen for both Trans-Saharan and Trans-Atlantic Slave trade⁵ (Smith, 1989). A disagreement among the ruling class led to the attack of the empire by the Fulani Empire in 1835 upon the invitation of one of the warring factions, the empire was subdivided and it collapsed in 1835⁶ (Oliver, 2001).

The Ijaw ethnic group

Another distinct ethnic group that is important to this research work is the Ijaws. They are indigenous to the Niger delta region in the South-South region of Nigeria. They spread across three states-Rivers, Delta and Bayelsa state, but some of their people are found in little numbers in Edo, Ondo, Akwa-Ibom and Cross River states, especially along the Coastal areas as Fishermen and Coastal traders. Total population now is about 3.4 million, historically, they were involved in trades as they have lived near trade routes and connected by trade to other areas(17). However their major occupation from history to the present time is fishing which is complimented with farming of food crops like paddy rice, yams and plantains. The Ijaws were reported to be one of

the ethnic groups that made contacts with Westerners(18). The first secondary school in Nigeria Hope Waddell was built in the region by the missionaries. 95% of the Ijaw are Christians(19).

There are many other ancient kingdoms and tribes in Nigeria, especially in the middle belt region of the country. The Kingdoms and tribes discussed present a ground to discuss the cultural evolution of the country Nigeria.

The Amalgamation of Nigeria and the birth of strife among ethnic groups

Nigeria can be said to be a collection of many nations with varying ideology on so many things, especially culture and religion. The different ethnic group still hold a lot of allegiance to the dictate of their cultural practice and even though the modern system of government premeditate on civilization will not give room for the cultural imperialism that was formerly the practice. Each ethnic group try to make effort to corner as much as possible any tangible benefit that exist in the name of Nigeria to their region at the expense of other region. Allegiance is to ethnicity not to the country. The Northern and Southern part of the country was colonized separately until 1914 when the two regions were amalgamated.

The first governor General of the country after amalgamation was Lord Lugard, somebody who was already in the country at about 1894 as an employee of an East Indian company Royal Niger Company before he represented the British government as Governor General of Nigeria (Akinjide, 2000). His interest was business and he ruled Nigeria on the basis of harnessing economic interest of the country to the British. There was no cultural integration or development of nationhood through brotherhood. Each region developed on it's own even after amalgamation and interaction among regions was only at political level. "When the amalgamation took effect, the British government sealed off the South from the North and between 1914 and 1960, the British allowed minimum contact between the north and South because that was the basis on which we got our independent in 1960 when I was in the parliament" (Akinjide, 2000).

A past leader of Nigeria (Obafemi Awolowo) who can be described as one of Nigeria's heroes described the non-nationality of Nigeria in the following words: "Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression. There are no 'Nigerians' in the same sense as there are 'English', 'Welsh' or 'French'. The word 'Nigerian' is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria and those who do not"(20). There seem to be a sort of competition among the different ethnic nationalities. The insecurity in the South South region of the country started when the people of the region complained that oil exploration activities was impacting negatively on their environment, especially as regard land and water contamination which inhibit their means of income which is agriculture and fishing. The people of the region were not getting enough revenue form the oil wealth and feared that other regions benefit more from it. In response to these allegation, the federal government initiated a lot of programs to ensure that the region is developed, more revenue from the federal government was given to the region and even a special ministry called ministry of Niger Delta was formed specifically for the region.

As expected, some other regions (especially the north), felt too much attention was given to the South-South region at the expense of other parts of the country. These malice couple with other social economic factors like high rate of unemployment, high rate of illiteracy and the selfishness of politicians makes youths in the North Eastern part of the region to carry arms against the state,

but on an ideal that is cultural to them which is religion. As explained earlier the Kanem-Bornu Empire is a long standing cultural civilization, so the people feel they have the right to self-determination based on their culture that has a strong historical background and they respect it more than the nationhood of Nigeria.

Mitigating against security challenges in Nigeria

From the above, it's now obvious that the security challenge in Nigeria has its root from the ethnic division of the country. To understand the security challenges, each region which have been politically grouped into the South West zone, South -South zone, South-East zone, North-Central zone, North-East zone and North West zone. All the zones however have their roots and cultural ideology from their formal traditional empires, four of which are discussed above. Nigerians are more apt to be motivated to take certain actions if prompted based on ethnical lining rather than on loyalty to the country. The neglect of companies social corporate responsibilities especially as it relates to the welfare and development of the oil production host communities was the beginning of hostilities among between oil companies and host communities

It's therefore important for foreign investors to approach risk assessment fundamentally on ethnic and cultural background on which other considerations like political, economic and the environment can be considered. Investors must be able to manage companies activities and activities of worker such that the break down of law and order can be avoided by making effort to create a balance work environment in a multi polar ethnic nation.

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