NATIONAL SECURITY THREATS

Nigeria faces a rapidly changing world with a diverse range of threats. The threats are multifaceted and less predictable with blurred boundaries between external and internal risk factors. Threat factors that manifest at the global, regional and domestic levels are usually mutually reinforcing. Therefore, they require an integrative national strategy and cooperation within a framework of regional as well as international organisations and institutions.

Several challenges are likely to drive Nigeria’s security priorities in the next few years with both short and long-term implications. These challenges can be grouped under the following security threats: terrorism and violent extremism, armed banditry, kidnapping, militancy and separatist agitations, pastoralists-farmers conflicts, transnational organised crime, piracy and sea robbery, porous borders, cybercrimes and technology challenges. Others are socio-political threats, fake news and hate speeches, environmental threats, public health challenges, economic challenges, regional and global security challenges.

TERRORISM AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM

The threat of terrorism and violent extremism has continued to challenge our security forces over the last decade. The splintering of BHT into two factions has compounded the complexity of the threat environment. The objective of the factions is to undermine the public trust in government. This is in consonance with the rise in global terrorism as a strategic threat with significant increase of its logistical, financial and operational capabilities. While the activities of terrorists have largely been degraded by the combined efforts of the Armed Forces of Nigeria and other security agencies as well as the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), there are still concerns that these terrorist groups remain a threat.

The Boko Haram Terrorist and Islamic State West Africa Province have continued to carry out intermittent attacks on isolated targets with the ultimate aim of creating an Islamic Caliphate in the North East. The effects of his terror campaign include mass displacement and migration, creation of a large number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), undermining governance, rule of law, national cohesion and economic activities. Others include destruction of infrastructure and human rights violations.
Armed Banditry and Kidnapping
The criminal activities of armed bandits and kidnap gangs are the preeminent threats confronting us today. Their major activities include kidnapping and cattle rustling which are on the increase due to the high economic pay-off in terms of derivable financial benefits. They also thrive on the twin elements of fear and surprise and constitute a grave threat to personal security. Trend analysis suggests a correlation between armed banditry, militia groups, kidnapping and cattle rustling, in what appears to be a convergence of various illegal networks. This has led to a loss of lives and property, which ultimately undermines peace with grave implications for human security.

Militancy and Separatist Agitations
Militancy in the Niger Delta and separatist agitations in the South East as well as other places have persisted and become significant security concerns. Separatist agitations threaten our national cohesion. These agitations have specific regional and national security implications, including the chance that the mobilization of protesters could potentially escalate into armed violence. Appropriate strategies need to be articulated, to nip the challenges in the bud.

Pastoralists and Farmers Conflicts
Violent conflicts between pastoralists and farmers are widespread with severe consequences in terms of loss of lives, property and disruption of the normal functioning of society. These conflicts undermine the fabric of our corporate existence as they exacerbate the various fault lines with grave implications. At the heart of these conflicts, are the quest for land, grazing routes, water and other resources. Climate change, population explosion and growth of new settlements are veritable sources and causal factors of most of these conflicts. The significant threat posed by pastoralists-farmers conflict makes it a critical issue that needs to be addressed quickly and comprehensively.

Transnational Organised Crime
Transnational organised crime such as illicit financial flow and money-laundering, drug and human-trafficking, proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) as well as proliferation of Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosive (CBRNE) weapons have a direct impact on our national security. Illicit financial flows and other crimes remain a major concern as they are increasingly linked to terrorism. This is despite the determined efforts of relevant institutions saddled with the responsibility of protecting the economy and its financial institutions and systems from misuse or abuse.

Piracy and Sea Robbery
Sea robbery in Nigerian territorial waters and piracy in adjoining seas in the Gulf of Guinea (GoG) constitute a menace to international shipping. These include the hijack of merchant oil tankers and fishing vessels, the kidnap of mariners as well as increased piracy along major shipping routes and Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs). These incidents have resulted in a negative global assessment of the Nigerian Maritime Environment (NME). Indeed, Nigerian waters and the adjoining GoG have been designated as a ‘High Risk Area’ and one of the most troubled global waterways.
POROUS BORDERS
Nigeria's extensive land and maritime borders continue to be a major source of concern, as they are largely porous and inadequately manned. This has aided irregular migrations and other transnational organised crimes. In the East along the Nigeria/Cameroon border, there has been an upsurge of refugees from the restive Cameroon Anglophone region crossing into Taraba, Benue, Cross-River and Akwa Ibom States. Along the same axis, criminal gangs and pirates actively operate within the border areas. In the North, cattle rustlers and bandits operate freely across the international borders contiguous to Zamfara, Sokoto, Katsina, Adamawa and Taraba States. Additionally, the porous border areas between Nigeria and Benin Republic in the South West are known for smuggling vehicles and food commodities, which undermines our economy. Tackling illicit cross border activities and strengthening border security are critical to addressing the threats of terrorism and transnational organised crime.

CYBERCRIMES AND TECHNOLOGY CHALLENGES
Nigeria uses information technology and networked capabilities in the quest for national development and is thus vulnerable to cyber-attacks. Cyber threats are inherently asymmetrical with an increasing range of actors engaged in espionage and warfare. The proliferation of such actors both within and outside Nigeria has heightened the threat profile and demands increased security measures. This will require technical and intellectual capacity and the protection of systems and structures against all forms of cyber-attacks. The four major areas of cyber threats with significant capability to cause considerable damage to our security and economy include cybercrime, cyber espionage, cyber conflict and cyber terrorism. These threats have serious implications for the nation's stability. The country's readiness in securing its cyberspace requires coordinated efforts from all stakeholders at various levels.

The potential use of emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things (IoT), Big Data, Block chain Technology and Cloud Computing could change the shape of future cyber threats. As a nation, we must be prepared for the disruptive impact of these emerging technologies, particularly as regards possible implications for our socio-economic development. The threat of disruptive technologies and innovation require a government-led approach in close collaboration with the organised private sector.

FAKE NEWS AND HATE SPEECH
Recently, Nigeria has witnessed an increase in fake news and hate speech which are exploited to distort socio-political, cultural and economic relationships. They consist of deliberate misinformation spread via print and electronic media sowing distrust and inflaming our fault lines. The increasing incidence of fake news especially as disseminated through social media has undermined journalistic norms and become a potent force of misinformation. Fake news spreads quickly due to its mode of propagation, thus constituting a threat to national security. This is particularly evident in the on-going counter-terrorism operation in the North East as well as the activities of hostile non-state actors. Hate speech and fake news promote prejudice and hate which undermine social cohesion. Thus, it is imperative for Nigeria to mitigate the propagation of fake news and hate speech.
ENVIRONMENTAL THREATS
Our environmental threats stem from prevailing systemic defects in overall environmental factor management such as population explosion and unplanned human settlements, periodic environmentally induced human conflicts among which are pastoralists-farmers conflicts and water resource conflicts as well as environmental disasters caused by natural and human factors. The most prominent threat factor is climate change with the associated global warming, which causes high sea levels, ocean surges and coastal floods. Climate change is associated with environmental degradation. Desertification in the North and both erosion and floods in the South threaten food security. Desert encroachment is partly responsible for the loss of grazing reserves and obliteration of grazing routes, which is directly linked to pastoralists-farmers conflicts. Climate change has also contributed to excessive flooding across the country causing huge human and economic losses. Natural and man made hazards including natural disasters, pollution and related threats from within and neighbouring countries constitute national security threats. Although Nigeria is not located within the major seismic zones of the world, over the years, several earth tremors have occurred across the country with the latest happening in Mpape-Abuja in September 2018. These environmental threats undermine national security and underscore the need for adequate containment strategies and contingency plans.

PUBLIC HEALTH CHALLENGES
The global impact of climate change has altered the dynamics of disease patterns and incidences across the world with the resurgence of viral haemorrhagic fevers such as Ebola, Lassa fever and Monkey pox, among others. Nigeria’s prompt and robust response to the Ebola outbreak of 2014 in West Africa remains a watershed in the management of public health emergencies in the world and currently the COVID-19 Pandemic which has seen millions of people infected and millions dead. Nigeria, being an attractive destination for commerce, is therefore not isolated from global pandemics, which occur with some degree of unpredictability. The global trends of anti-microbial resistance and substance abuse exacerbated by influx of counterfeit drugs remain a potent threat to Nigeria. This phenomenon is further reinforced by the activities of fake drug cartels and globalized criminal networks. We will continue to promote the ideals of International Health Regulations (IHR) while working with relevant agencies to stem the tide.