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Governance and defense sector management in Nigeria: X-raying legislative oversight of the defense sector

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Abstract

Nigeria's fledgling democratic experiment requires a security sector that is under the watchdog of a legislative body, as the nature and character of a nation's security sector are critical to the establishment of democratic values and ethos in a polity. Largely, the logic of operation and responsiveness of the security sector of any nation is a function of the quality of governance by the executive and the oversight functions exercised by the representatives of the people as legislatures, as it concerns military procurement and logistics, and double faced-operations in the face of rising security threats. This study decomposed governance into executive control and legislative oversight governance. This study adopted the Rational Actor Model to interrogate governance and defense sector management in Nigeria. The study adopted survey research design to elicit data from 40 respondents drawn from members of the national assembly, the security forces, serving and former members of both the House committee on defense and the Senate committee on defense. Judgmental sampling technique was deployed to ensure the right respondents were surveyed using structured questionnaire of 5 point Likert scale and for content validity and reliability. Finding from this study submitted that legislative oversights and executive governance do not have significant effects on defense management in Nigeria. The study therefore recommends that legislature should push for a Security Sector Reform that will bring the defence sector into the basket of accountability via transparent budgetary. The study also recommends that the executive should ensure the accountant General and the Auditor General of the Federation apply all measures to ensure accountability of the Defence and security sector as seen done in developed clime where the military are grossly accountable to civil structure and not an instrument of power perpetuation.

Keyword: Defense Sector Management; Executive Absolutism; Legislative Oversight Governance; National Security

1. Introduction

The nature and character of a nation's security sector are critical to the establishment of democratic values and ethos in a polity. Largely, the logic of operation and responsiveness of the defence sector of any nation is a function of the quality of control exercised by the three arms of government; particularly by the executive and the representatives of the people as emplaced in the National Assembly (NASS) over the defence sector in Nigeria. Indeed, the importance of the defense sector to the well-being of a nation cannot be overemphasized. Despite maintaining an increasing military expenditure over the decade, Nigeria Defence sector has not justified both the confidence of the populace nor resources place at her disposal as approved by both the NASS and the executive.

The Corruption Perception Index (2023) ranks Nigeria public official as corrupt on a critical scale of 145th of the 180 countries alongside Liberia, Madagascar, Mozambique this pattern of corruption is seen both in authoritarian and democratic leaders undermining justice. There is no gainsaying that the Nigeria Defence is vulnerable to corruption,

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due to the risks from high levels of secrecy, complex technical procurements, and exploitation of the hierarchical nature of the military (Abiodun et al., 2020). In rich countries the corruption tends to be concentrated in defence procurement, whilst in poorer countries defence corruption tends to be everywhere else: in asset sales, in secret budgets and budget deception, in salary theft, in illicit use of military intelligence.

The scandals surrounding so-called “security votes”, which allow politicians to appropriate millions of dollars behind closed doors simply by evoking “national security” (Adejoh and Ukhammi (2021). Nigeria former president Sani Abacha is estimated to have allegedly siphoned off more than \$1.1 billion using 60 “security votes”, leaving the Nigerian military extremely under-resourced. The Dasuki-gate of about \$2.1 billion is an example of the endemic corruption that bedeviled Nigeria's defence spending (Onapajo, 2017). All these and more fraudulent activities in the Nigeria Defence sector including non payment and under payment of allowances s of military boys in the battlefield slowdown the response to Boko Haram's terror cells expansion, IPOB heinous activities in the Southeast and terrorism in the Lake Chad basin.

Furthermore, the poor legislative approach to a responsive defence sector could be seen as the Nigeria Red Chamber flagged down prayers by Senator Adams Oshiomole not only to focus on more funding for the military, but rather be alive and responsive to its constitutional responsibility of oversight to investigate judicious utilisation of previous funds appropriated to the Nigerian military forces. As past military chiefs failed to expend operational funds on purchase of military hardware and equipment and spent much funds in building universities and other military institution (Opalana, 2024).

Disturbingly, many of the leadership of the executive and legislature have no desire to address the corruption, whether because they are benefiting, complicit, fear the consequences or feel powerless to affect it. The tendency of a weakened executive control could be seen when the Defence and the security sector are left uncontrolled due to the scare or possibility of staging coups against democratically elected government (Oluyemi, 2024). Leadership caught in this line of thought are found to abdicated the good governance responsibility to enable Security Sector Reform for the fear of incurring the wrath of the “security boys” (Roberts et al., 2024). The Government Defence Integrity Index (GDI) shows Nigeria on the band E having a very high risk of corruption in defence, security institutions and defence establishments alongside Niger, Nigeria, Palestine, Bangladesh, Mali, and others (Government Defence Integrity Index, 2020).

Nigeria's fledgling democratic experiment requires a security sector that is under the watchdog of a legislative body that is alive to the performance of its oversight functions over the nation's security forces. The hypothetical base is that poor legislative oversight could mean ineffective defense sector management. That in turn could be translated to mean corruption in the military, unaccountability and insecurity of lives and properties as well as compromised security architecture. It is important to note that one of the major constraints to achieving security sector governance in Nigeria has been the inability of the nation's legislative body, the National Assembly, to effectively perform its oversight functions over the nation's security sector. This is largely due to the fact that the presidency, rather than representative of the people, the National Assembly, is almost exclusively in control of the nation's security sector.

Unarguably, the Nigerian military have completely isolated itself from subversive regime change, but that is not all, the security forces particularly the armed forces and the police have largely been an instrument for regime security rather than an instrument for the promotion of human security (Egbadju et al., 2024). The truth of the matter is that “the ruling political elites replicated the instrumental approach of their colonial predecessors to state power, by engaging the security forces who continued to serve the interests of the ruling elites rather than the security requirement of the people (Rule, 2024).

It is a given that, one of the major constraints to achieving security sector governance in Nigeria has been the inability of the nation's legislative body, the National Assembly, to effectively perform its oversight functions over the nation's security sector. This inability in due in part on a number of factors; chiefly, corruption, poor management of resources, the military constitution of 1999 and the style of democracy practiced in Nigeria. This study contributes to the struggle for democratization in Africa especially in the post cold war era, which is of course a great initiative due the global access of democratization. This paper desires to contribute meaningfully to democratization through legislative governance and National security management.

1.1. Statement of the Hypothesis

- Legislative oversight governance has no significant impact on defense sector management in Nigeria
- Executive control on military has no significant impact on defense sector management in Nigeria

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conceptual Clarifications

2.1.1. *Legislative Oversight Governance*

Legislative sector governance involves the management and oversight of a country legislative branch of government; in the case of Nigeria, the National assembly, which is made up of two houses; the house of Representative, and the house of Senate. This branch is responsible for making, amending, and repealing laws, as well as providing checks and balances to the executives and judicial branches. Effective legislative sector governance is essential for upholding the principles of democracy and ensuring representation of the people.

Parliamentary oversight basically refers to the responsibility of the legislative arm of government to supervise, using its law making prerogative and its allied functions over governmental institutions and bodies to promote compliance with constitutional provisions and good governance. The legislature exercises parliamentary oversight by making laws that define and regulate the activities mandate, operations and finances of state institutions and agencies for the achievement of the collective goal(s) of the state.

To that extent, parliamentary oversight of the security sector refers to the role of the parliament in passing laws that guide, regulate and define the various agencies of the security sector including their power and functions. It has been held that nothing is improper about subjecting the military to legislative accountability; in fact, it is being held in opinion that the parliament can as a matter of national security summon heads of security agencies to account for their activities without intruding into operational matters (Erinosho et al., 2024)

2.1.2. *Executive Absolutism*

Akin to the above is the fact that the constitution gives the President almost absolute control over the defense and security sector without much consideration of the National Assembly which is the elected representatives of the people (Edet et al., 2024). The Nigeria 1999 constitution is fashioned in the Military style and in the character of the nation's security sector as well as the mindset and composition of its leadership. As an instrument of terror. Essentially under the military, the Nigeria's security sector was exclusively under the control of the Head of State whose primary interest was to secure his regime and prevent take-over of his regime through another Military Coup. To that extent, the security forces were governed without recourse to the rights of the people and their inputs in its workings.

Following its return to democracy in 1999, Nigeria, under the leadership of Chief Olesgun Obasanjo had endeavored to transform the security sector of the nation in line with democratic norms, principles and practice. However, Obasanjo's efforts were largely directed at enhancing professionalism at the expense of the governance segment of the security sector reform project. Consequently, it is compelling that the nation's security sector which is largely characterized by governance deficits to completely become transformed to achieve the much desired people's ownership of the nation's security sector.

2.1.3. *National Security Management*

This refers to the comprehensive set of strategies, policies and actions a government employs to protect its nation sovereignty, citizens and interest from various threats, both domestic and international. It involves activities such as intelligence gathering, defense planning, cyber security, counter terrorism and diplomatic efforts to maintain stability and safeguard the nation's security. Defense management encompasses the planning, organization, and execution of a nation's defense policy and military capabilities, it is a critical aspect of national security, ensuring that a country can protect itself from external threats and maintain its sovereignty.

It covers military strategy, resource allocation, force structure, technology and innovation, training, logistics and supply chain management, strategic planning, crisis management, and civil military relations. The defense or security sector encompasses all those state institutions which have a formal mandate to ensure the safety of the state and its citizens against acts of violence and coercion and the non-statutory actors which have emerged as important actors in the security network (Ball & Fayemi, 2008).

2.1.4. *Understanding the defense policy and Defense Sector of Nigeria*

The defense policy of Nigeria has been a subject of serious debate and controversy, since after the political independence of the Nigerian State. What accounts for these controversies stems basically from two issues, the first is, the nature of

the subject matter, that is the meaning and scope of defense policy and the second is, the manifest disharmony arising from the policy responses of different administration since independence. Conventional approach to the analysis of defense policy of Nigeria has proceeded largely from considerations of the structural properties of Nigeria's security environment, threat, assessment, and the adequacy of institutional parameters developed to meet these challenges.

The defense sector, often referred to as the defense industry, encompasses a range of activities related to the development, production, and maintenance of military equipment, technology, and services to support a nation's and national security. It plays a crucial role in maintaining a country's security and sovereignty. Some key aspects to understand about the defense sector: defense contractors, military procurement, research and development, defense budget, global arms trade, military complex, dual-use technologies, security and national interest, geo-political considerations.

Holding the military accountable through legislative oversight, which is crucial to advancing civilian supremacy and democratic governance. The legislative committees in charge of defence, utilise this power to give voice to citizens' needs and concerns on security. One of the legislature's most important mechanisms for controlling the executive is the budget. As defence sector organisations take up a substantial share of the State's budget it remains essential that NASS monitors the use of the State's scarce resources both effectively and efficiently. Through the budget and annual reports, NASS can monitor the availability or adequacy of trainings and implementation of critical issues such as observance of human rights and gender sensitivity by the armed forces.

See: Festus Keyamo v President, Federal Republic of Nigeria and 4 others (Suit No.FHC/ ABJ/CS/611/08), which set aside as unconstitutional, the Armed Forces Modification Order, 2008, No. 50, made by late President Yar'Adua purportedly pursuant to S.315(2) of the Constitution, which sought to dispense with NASS confirmation of appointment of Service Chiefs. Since NASS members are elected representatives who often have direct and regular contact with their constituents, they can improve the opportunities for informed and open debate on defence issues and subsequently raise citizens' security concerns at plenary sessions and ensure that they are reflected in defence policies or laws. It is therefore important for NASS to ensure that the decisions and actions of the military are at all times consistent with the constitution, international humanitarian and human rights law.

2.2. Empirical Review

2.2.1. Legislative Oversight Governance and Defence Sector Management

Adejoh and Ukhammi (2021) investigated defence economics and national security by exploring and interrogating the utilization of and utility derived from resources meant for defence and security in Nigeria. Despite challenges regardless of the resources allocated to addressing these challenges the country seems to be sinking deeper into insecurity. The study engaged qualitative research design. Results that emanated from the study showed that Nigeria defence expenditure is not determined by specific defence and security needs and weak oversight functions by legislature sustains this narrative hence the prevalence of corruption, misappropriation, mismanagement, inflated and phantom contract, lack of responsibility and accountability, as the major challenges of defence and security management in Nigeria.

2.2.2. Executive Control and Defence Sector Management

John and Yelwa (2024) examined the Impact of militarization on governance and democracy in African countries, particularly of how military intervention has a negative impact on democratic underpinnings, as seen by coups and power seizures. The study employed mixed method approach to gather information. Result from the study showed the significance of civilian monitoring and institutional balance, illuminating how power disparities can obstruct the development of strong democratic institutions. The study also emphasizes how important security sector reform is to maintaining accountability and coordinating military operations with democratic ideals.

2.3. Theoretical Framework

2.3.1. The Rational Actor Model

The rational actor model assumes that a rational actor will develop goals that are based on self-interest, and the actor will make the choice that best supports the goal. Alternatives are the different options for courses of action. The rational actor will identify all the options that could lead to obtaining the goal. The Rational Actor Model posits that individuals and organizations make decisions based on rational calculations aimed at maximizing their own interests. When applied to the military and defense sector of a nation, this model helps explain how institutions may engage in practices such as

coups scare tactics, opaque security votes, and unverifiable military expenditures to evade legislative oversight, civil control, and accountability.

Firstly, coups scare tactics involve military leaders or factions within the defense establishment subtly or overtly threatening to intervene in governance through coups or other forms of political destabilization. This threat creates a deterrent effect on civilian oversight bodies such as legislative committees or executive authorities, discouraging them from scrutinizing military activities too closely. By maintaining an aura of unpredictability and instability, military leaders can justify increased autonomy and reduced transparency in defense spending and operations, citing national security concerns.

Secondly, opaque security votes serve as discretionary funds allocated ostensibly for security-related purposes but often lacking clear accountability or oversight mechanisms. These funds provide a convenient way for military and defense officials to finance activities without detailed public scrutiny or legislative approval. Such practices can be rationalized as necessary for responding swiftly to security threats or emergencies, yet they also create opportunities for misuse or misallocation of resources, shielding decision-makers from external scrutiny (Etzrodt, 2024).

Thirdly, unverifiable military expenditures involve budget allocations and spending by defense agencies that are not subject to rigorous auditing or public disclosure. This lack of transparency enables military leaders to allocate resources according to their own priorities, sometimes without regard for broader national development goals or civilian oversight. By keeping expenditure details vague or classified, the military can justify its actions as crucial for national security, thereby reinforcing its autonomy and minimizing external interference.

In conclusion, the Rational Actor Model helps elucidate how the military and defense sector of a nation strategically employs tactics such as coups scare, opaque security votes, and unverifiable expenditures to maintain autonomy and evade legislative oversight and civil control. These practices reflect rational calculations aimed at preserving institutional power, securing resources, and shielding decision-making processes from external scrutiny. Addressing these challenges requires strengthening accountability mechanisms, promoting transparency in budgeting and spending, and fostering a robust civil-military relationship grounded in democratic principles.

3. Methodology

The study adopted survey research design to elicit data with five point likert structured questionnaire from the study population of 40 respondents drawn from members of the security forces, Defence Headquarters, Ministry of Defence, Budget Office, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, the Central Bank of Nigeria, former and serving House committee and Senate committee on defense. This study was carried out in Abuja, Nigeria's federal capital territory as all major arms of the study are domicile in Abuja. Judgmental sampling technique aided the study on profiled surveyed respondents. The survey validity and reliability was established by Cronbach Alpha, which adjudged the questionnaire was accurate, consistent and fit. The data gathered was analyzed using the simple regression analysis.

Table 1 Data Analysis: Demographic representation of the respondents

Demographic	Total	Percent (%)
Gender		
Male	35	87.5
Female	5	12.5
Total	40	100.0
Age		
35 - 45 years	5	12.5
46 - 55 years	20	50.0
56years and above	15	37.5
Total	40	100.0
Academic qualification		

OND/NCE	13	32.5
B.Sc/M.Sc/Ph.D	27	67.5
Total	40	100.0
Marital status		
Unspecified	4	10.0
Married	36	90.0
Total	40	100.0
Number of years in the national assembly		
Military (DIA, NIA, NA, NN, NAF)	10	25.0
House of Rep (Committee)	10	25.0
Senate (Committee)	5	12.5
Communities	15	37.5
Total	40	100

Source: Field work, 2024

Table 1 shows the demographic information of the respondents. Out of the respondents surveyed, 35 respondents accounting for 87.5 percent were male while 5 respondents accounting for 12.5 percent were female. This shows that both committees of the green and the red chambers have more of more male representatives than female. Also, the age range of the respondents was also shown in the table. Out of the 40 respondents, 5 (12.5%) of them were within the age range of 35 – 45 years, 20 (50%) respondents were within the age range of 46-55 years, while 15 (37.5%) respondents were within the age 56 years and above.

The academic qualification of the respondents was captured in the table, 13 (32.5%) respondents are OND/NCE holders, and 27 (67.5%) respondents were B.Sc, M.Sc, and Ph.D holders. 4 (10%) respondents were single while 36 (90%) respondents were married. Lastly, respondents' were clustered into their various groups. In the military, comprising the Army, Defence Intelligence Agency, Nigeria Intelligence Agency, Navy and Air force, a total of 10 respondents returned, accounting for 25 percentages of respondents. The same goes for members of House of Representative committee, with 10 respondents accounting for 25 percentage of the sample size. The senate had 5 respondents, accounting for 12.5 percentages while selective communities had 15 respondents, accounting for 37.5 percentages.

Table 2 Descriptive statistics of variables

Descriptive statistics of legislative oversight governance and defense management				
Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Military(Officer Cadre)	40	3.37	0.693	0.480
Legislative Oversight (Defence ctees)	40	3.94	0.732	0.536
Executive Control	40	4.00	0.504	0.254
Defence and Terrorism	40	4.04	0.567	0.322
Defence matters and Internal security	40	4.01	0.584	0.235

Source: Author's analysis using SPSS, 2024

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics on the responses on legislative oversight governance and defense management in Nigeria. The report covers data obtained from 40 respondents. The Military, Legislative oversights (Defence committees), Executive control, defence and terrorism, defence matters and internal security were used to measure both executive control and legislative oversight governance.

The military was measured using seven constructs, with a mean score of 3.37. This shows that constructs had a positive response from the respondents. The standard deviation which is less than one indicates that up to 68 percent of the variance is grouped around the mean, while the variance shows that the data spread is adequate.

The Legislative Oversight Governance (LOG) was measured using ten constructs. The variable had a mean score of 3.94 showing a good response to the questions. The standard deviation is less than one, indicating that up to 68 percent of the variance is grouped around the mean. The variances show that the data spread is adequate. Executive Control (EXC) was measured using eight constructs. The variable had a mean score of 4.00 showing a weak response to the questions. The standard deviation is less than one, indicating that up to 68 percent of the variance is grouped around the mean. The variances show that the data spread is adequate.

Defence matters and terrorism was measured using ten constructs. The variable had a mean score of 4.04. This means that the response of the respondents to the questions were not good. The standard deviation is less than one, indicating that up to 68 percent of the variance is grouped around the mean. The variances show that the data spread is adequate. Defence matters and Internal security was measured using fifteen constructs. The variable had a mean score of 4.01 showing a woolly and non-impressive response to the questions. The standard deviation is less than one, indicating that up to 68 percent of the variance is grouped around the mean. The variances show that the data spread is adequate.

3.1. Test of hypotheses

Table 3 Model showing effect of legislative oversight governance and defense sector management

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.894 ^a	0.799	0.794	0.281
a. Predictors: (Constant). LOG, EXC				

Table 4 ANOVA^a showing effect of legislative oversight governance and defense sector management

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	48.709	4	12.177	154.268	0.522 ^b
	Residual	12.235	155	0.079		
	Total	60.944	159			
a. Dependent Variable: Defense sector management						
b. Predictors: (Constant); LOG, EXC						

Table 5 Coefficients^a showing effect of legislative oversight governance and defense management

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.486	0.445		3.340	0.001
	LOG	0.683	0.034	0.773	19.866	0.608
	EXC	0.113	0.054	0.096	2.110	0.536
Dependent Variable: Defense Sector management						
Independent Variable: LOG, EXC						

4. Result

The multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the four hypotheses. The estimated function of legislative oversight governance on defense management in Nigeria indicates a positive intercept represented by the constant term. The R value (89.4 percent) in table 3 explains the correlation between the dependent and the independent variables. The R-squared indicates that 79.9% of the total variation of the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variables and 20.1% of the total variation is left unexplained by the independent variables.

The overall P-value of the model shows that there is no significant effect of the independent variables on the dependent variables as the P-value (.522) is more than .05. The P-value of the model on Legislative Oversight Governance shows that there is no significant effect of the independent variables on the dependent variables as the P-value (.608) is more than .05. while

the P-value of the model on Executive Control shows that there is no significant effect of the independent variables on the dependent variables as the P-value (.536)

Therefore, the result of the regression requires that the two null hypotheses be rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted. The results are summarized as follows:

- Legislative oversight governance does not significantly affect defense sector management in Nigeria
- Executive control does not have a significant effect on defense sector management in Nigeria.

5. Conclusion

The study revealed that the increasing defence challenges that increases Nigeria's vulnerability as seen in secessionism narratives driven from outside the shore of Nigeria, terrorism affiliation with international organisation, and internal security being affected by untidy defence sector despite increase in military expenditure from year to years. Nigeria being rated as the third most corrupt Nation in Military Assets procurement, all are reflections of the inability of the legislature to bring into accountability the military, the defence sector and the security agencies. The study therefore conclude that the nexus between defence budget and defence outcomes in Nigeria clearly shows the missing link between the Nigeria legislature and the Nigeria's defence sector management. This the lack of effective oversight function of the National Assembly to effectively exercise its mandate over the nation's defence sector has resulted to secessionism being driven from outside Nigeria shores and terrorism from neighbouring and international affiliation. Findings of this work align with the work of Adejoh and Ukhammi (2021)

The study also submit that the skewed perception of the Executive to regard the military as their source of power stability as against good governance which also accounted for the inability of the executive to implement an informed Security Sector Reform in Nigeria, as done in neighbouring African countries. This position also aligns with earlier work of John and Yelwa (2024)

Recommendations

The Legislature should push for a Security Sector Reform that will bring the executive into the basket of accountability that compel the defence ministry to open itself up to oversight and publish the defence budget in full, including off-budget defence expenditure. Such that the National Assembly should work hand in hand with re-invigorated civil society to galvanize support for an effective legislative sector.

The Executive should ensure the accountant General and the Auditor General of the Federation apply all measures to ensure accountability and access to accounts of the intelligence services, other secret programmes, stronger controls to monitor procurement cloaked in secrecy. So that the military will be grossly accountable to civil structure and not an instrument of power perpetuation.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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