

11

ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND NIGERIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY: MAKING CONNECTIONS

By

Professor Olanrewaju Fagbohun*

*I*ntroduction

*I*n recent times the question of whether to identify environmental threat as falling within the definition of national security has assumed considerable importance. Hitherto, the traditional approach has been for environmentalists and security specialists to define their fields in specific ways, with neither seeking any nexus between such environmental problems as deforestation, erosion and loss of biodiversity on the one hand, and security problems such as non-proliferation, terrorism and civil conflict on the other hand.

Beginning from the 1970s, however, the debate gradually started within the academic community that the concept of “*national security*” must shift from the narrow traditional concept of “*organized violence*” or “*war system*” i.e. the pursuit by a state of security from violence organized by another state or states.¹ States predominantly organize this pursuit through military means that involve highly specialized organizations trained in the acts of killing and destroying. The advocates of re-conceptualizing the concept of national security argues that since Governments have

* LL.B (Hons); B.L; LL.M; Ph.D, Research Professor with the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies. He can be contacted at <fagbohun@elri-ng.org>.

1. Daniel Deudney: ‘The Case Against Linking Environmental Degradation and National Security’ Millennium 19.no.3 (Winter 1990):464.

fundamental responsibilities to protect their populations from violence and disease, the concept of “security” must of necessity enter the discourse when violence or disease prevalence reach levels that threaten materially to disrupt economic activity, weaken governance functions internally, and erode a state’s power and influence externally.²

By the 1990s, the shift in redefining the largely military sense of “national security” to one encompassing all manner of threats ranging from poverty to overpopulation and from ethnic and religious tensions to environmental degradation had taken a hold in the policy world. I will concentrate here on the consequences of extending the concept of national security to environmental degradation. In the face of shifting political, economic and ideological vulnerabilities, how analytical or normatively appropriate is the traditional definition of national security? If we are to construct an analytical approach that will identify environmental degradation as a threat to Nigeria’s national security in the 21st century, what should be our framework of analysis?

My central thesis in this chapter is that if redefining national security to include environmental degradation is not to end up as a meaningless rhetoric for Nigeria, she must: first, rethink the foundational premises of her national security strategy and develop within it a flexible, credible and coherent definition of national security, and second, look at her goals and in pursuance of these goals set thresholds that would help determine at what point an environmental problem rightfully constitutes a threat to national security.

2 David P. Fidler: ‘Transnational Threats to National Security: Daniel Deudney’s Case Against Linking Environmental Degradation and National Security’ <<http://www.docstoc.com/docs/22654285/Transnational-Threats-to-National-Security>> Accessed 25th October, 2010.

Today, Nigeria is yet to articulate such a foundational premises, nor do we have identifiable thresholds.

In my conclusions, I propose that we undertake a thorough assessment of the role of relevant regulatory agencies to ensure that we do not end up with disturbing overlaps, competing agendas and conflicting goals.

History and Development of the Concept of National Security

The basic notion of national security emphasizes the overall security of a nation and a nation state in the context of the protection or the safety of a country's secrets and its citizens.³ Over time and resulting from a variety of definitions, it became obvious that national security had become an attractive euphemism for a range of diverting political, social and economic agendas. The concept initially emphasized the freedom from military threat and political coercion to later increase in sophistication and include other forms of non-military security as suited the circumstances of the time.⁴

As early as 1943 for instance, Lippmann defined a nation as having security when it does not have to sacrifice its legitimate interests to avoid war, and is able, if challenged, to

-
3. Definition of "national security" from the Macmillan Dictionary (online version) <<http://www.macmillan.com/dictionary/british/national-security>> Macmillan Publishers Limited. Accessed 22 September, 2010.
 4. See, Romm Joseph (1993): *Defining National Security: The Non – Military Aspects* <<http://books.google.co.in/books?id=shxDnuVcy>>; Paleri Prabhakaran (2008): *National Security: Imperatives and Challenges* <<http://books.google.co.in/books?id=DMzcGeO-HQwC>> New Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill. pp 521. ISBN 9780070656864 <<http://books.google.co.in/books?id=DMzcGeO-HQwC>>. Accessed 23 September, 2010.

maintain them by war.⁵ By the 1960, Wolfers admitted that the concept is an ambiguous symbol meaning different things to different people, but saw it objectively as the absence of threats to acquired values and subjectively as the absence of fear that such values will be attacked.⁶ By 1996, national security was seen as an appropriate and aggressive blend of political resilience and maturity, human resources, economic structure and capacity, technological competence, industrial base and availability of natural resources and finally the military might.⁷ It was further viewed as the capacity to control those domestic and foreign conditions that the public opinion of a given community believes is necessary to enjoy its own self determination or autonomy, prosperity and well-being.⁸

The early origin of the concept of national security as a philosophy of maintaining a stable nation state can be traced to the Peace of Westphalia, wherein the concept of a sovereign state, ruled by a sovereign, became the basis of a new international order of nation states. Its narrow conception in the context of military security on the other hand has been traced to realist thought on international relations which has its emphasis on states as primary actors competing in a situation of anarchy for survival and power.⁹

5. See Romm Joseph (1993), *Ibid*, fn 2.

6. See Paleri (2008), *ibid*, fn. 2.

7. Definition from Proceedings of Seminar on 'A Maritime Strategy for India' (1996), National Defence College, Tees January Marg, New Delhi, India, quoted in Paleri (2008), *Ibid*, fn. 2.

8. Maier Charles: *Peace and Security for the 1990s*. Unpublished paper for the MacArthur Fellowship Program, Social Science Research Council, 12 June, 1990.

9. See David P. Fidler: *Ibid*, fn. 2. As with the traditional definition of national security, realism as a theoretical explanation of state behaviour is hotly debated and its historical dominance of international relations theory is contested.

The earliest mention of the term was made in Yale University in 1790, where reference was made to its relation with domestic industries.¹⁰ Its manifestations thereafter can be said to be intricately bound initially to developments in the United States, and then to the immediate post-Cold War period.

As relate to the United States, the concept became an official guiding principle of her foreign policy when the National Security Act of 1947 was signed on July 26, 1947 by U.S. President Harry S. Truman. Together with its 1949 amendment, the Act created important facets for American national security such as the precursor to the Department of Defence, subordinated the military branches to the new cabinet level position of the Secretary of Defence, established the National Security Council and the Central Intelligence Agency.¹¹ The objective of the Act was to advise the President on the integration of domestic, military and foreign policies relating to national security.

By the time the Cold War came to an end in the 1990s, there has been a conscious shift from a limited, largely military sense of security to one that encompass all manner of threats, with the result that new issues were continually being classified as security issues or threats to national security. Why, one may ask has the concept of national security managed to attract so much attention? It has been suggested that this may not be unconnected with the fact that the 1947 Act did not define national security. This conceivably was advantageous in that the ambiguity created

10. See Paleri (2008), *Ibid*, fn. 2.

11. See National Security – Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_security> Accessed 04 October, 2010.

made it possible for the phrase to be invoked wherever issues threatened by other interests of the state came up for discussion. A second reason is that over the years, there has been the realization that national security encompasses more than just military security. It will entail any measure put in place by a nation to secure its citizens and resources from danger and the risk of infiltration, sabotage and subversion.

In the words of General Maxwell Taylor,¹² a nation's valuables in the broad sense will include current assets and national interest, as well as the sources of strength upon which her future as a nation depends. Some valuables are tangible and earthy; others are spiritual or intellectual. They range widely from political assets such as the Bill of Rights, a country's political institutions and international friendships, to many economic assets which radiate worldwide from a highly productive domestic economy supported by rich natural resources. It is the urgent need to protect valuables such as these which legitimizes and makes essential the role of national security.

It was also along the above lines that Richard Ullman defined¹³ a threat to national security as an action or a sequence of events that; (1) threatens drastically and over a relatively brief period of time to degrade the quality of life for the inhabitants of a state, or (2) threatens significantly to narrow the range of policy choices available to a state or to private, non-governmental entities (persons, groups, corporations) within the state.

12. Taylor Maxwell (1974): 'The Legitimate Claims of National Security' <<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/24508/maxwell-d-taylor/the-legitimate-claims-of-national-security>>. Accessed 25 October, 2010.

13. Richard Ullman: 'Redefining Security', *International Security*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Summer 1983) pp. 129 – 153; see p. 133.

Following from the above, it can be said that national security is a nation's way of prioritizing its interests in order to ensure that national policies comprehensively address the national security interest already identified, and the threats to these interests. With particular reference to Nigeria, the concept of national security is mentioned in section 5(5) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, which empowers the President in consultation with the National Defence Council, to deploy members of the armed forces of the Federation on a limited combat duty outside Nigeria if he is satisfied that the national security is under imminent threat or danger. Premised on this, it has been contended that the national security goal of Nigeria has the state and military power as its primary focus.

The above position, however, becomes incongruous when considered together with section 14(2)(b) of Chapter II of the Constitution which declares that "*the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government*". Chapter II of the Constitution sets out the Directive Principles which are structured in the form of directives given to the government to guide the establishment of a just country. The Principles commit the state to promote the welfare of the people by affirming social, economic and political justice. They constitute fundamental obligations of the government in the governance of the nation.¹⁴ If the provisions of sections 5(5) and 14(2)(b) of the Constitution are considered in this context, it would be seen that national security will encompass not just physical security, but, also

14. O. Fagbohun: 'Legal Arguments for the non-Justiciability of Chapter II of the 1999 Constitution', in Azinge and Owasanoye (eds.) *Justiciability and Constitutionalism: An Economic Analysis of Law* (Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, 2010).

economic and social security. Indeed, anything that would create a distortion within the system and thereby promote instability and insecurity will come under the focal lense of national security.

Environment as an Element of National Security

Following the shift in thinking on what constitutes national security, one of the non-military elements of national security has been identified as environmental security.¹⁵ Environmental security deals with environmental issues which threaten the national security of a nation in any matter. However, while it is not the case that all environmental events can be said to be capable of threatening national security, such issues as climate change, deforestation and loss of biodiversity have been found as capable of threatening a nation's security. In similar vein, resource problems¹⁶ and environmentally threatening outcomes of warfare¹⁷ are issues that can seriously undermine the security of a nation.

-
15. Broadly stated, the other non-military elements can be identified as political security, economic security, and security of energy and natural resources – See Romm Joseph, *ibid*, fn. 4.
 16. Examples of resource problems are conflict or tension arising due to dispute over water scarcity or natural resources control, e.g. genocide in Rwanda caused indirectly or partly by increase in population and dwindling availability of farmland; water scarcity in the Middle East; conflict between North and South Korea in relation to timber and fishing grounds; damming of the Upper Mekony river in the North China plain and its impact on downstream agrarian communities in Indochina; water related conflicts between Israel and Syria over the Golan Heights; illegal immigration into the United States as a result of failure of agriculture in Mexico; and crisis in Nigeria's Niger Delta arising from agitation for a stake in the control of the oil wealth and environmental degradation due to oil spill and gas flaring.
 17. Examples of this are the destruction of the fields of Carthage by the Romans pouring salt over them; Saddam Hussein's burning of oil wells in the Gulf War; and the use of Agent Orange by the Americans in the

The United Nations has identified environmental degradation as one of six clustered threats with which the world must be concerned now and in the decades ahead.¹⁸ Environmental degradation is the deterioration in environmental quality from ambient concentrations of pollutants and other activities and processes such as improper land use and natural disasters. It is the erosion of the quality of the natural environment caused, directly or indirectly, by human activities. The United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction defines environmental degradation as the reduction of the capacity of the environment to meet social and ecological objectives and needs.

Environmental degradation is of two broad types: when natural habitats are destroyed or rendered unusable through pollution or contamination; or natural resources are misused, over-used, made scarce and eventually depleted. Either of the two situations can result in deprivation of the populace of such critical essentials like food, water, quality air and basic survival resources. Where the situation degenerates into one of desperation by the people for any source of relief, it may result in civil strife, instability and anarchy, and thus a threat to the security of the region and anyone who may interact with the region. This is the link between environment and national security.

Take the case of climate change, the impact of global warming and persistent drought and desertification has been identified as the primary cause of reduction of the inflow of

Vietnam War for defoliating forests for military purposes – See National Security – Wikipedia, *ibid*, fn. 10.

18. United Nations, *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*, Report of the Secretary – General's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (New York: United Nations Department of Public Information, 2004), 23.

water into the Lake Chad, causing the shrinking of the Lake and resulting in conflicts between the people living along the border of the Lake. The shrinking of the Lake has led to a reduction of land for cultivation (with serious consequences for food security) and also reduction of land for grazing. This development has, apart from intensifying the conflict between pastoralists, farmers and fishermen, has also led to the emergence of environmental refugees.

Reference can also be made to Ethiopia and Darfur region in Sudan, both of which have been experiencing serious droughts since the 1980s. The drought problem resulted in famine which in turn resulted in deaths and emergence of refugees. In July, 2004, the United Nations by way of further assistance agreed to support the Ethiopian government to develop an area called Oromiya under a 3-year plan for the purpose of resettling about 2.2million Ethiopians who are threatened by the infertility of their original place of habitation as a result of drought. In the case of the Darfur region, it has become a battleground between farmers and the nomadic population due to decreasing availability of land for farming and grazing.¹⁹ It is noteworthy in this regard that the United Nations has estimated that by 2025, two-third of arable land in Africa would have been lost to desertification unless urgent and concerted remedial efforts are taken.

In Nigeria, following incessant rains between June and August, 2010, hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced while properties running into billions of naira were destroyed. The worst affected are communities in Sokoto,

19. For a categorization of the conflict situations in Africa as a result of decreasing and dwindling natural resources, see Roger Blench: *National Resource Conflicts in North – Central Nigeria: A Handbook And Case Studies* (Book published with support of DFID, 2004).

Kebbi and Jigawa States in the northern part of Nigeria where the Goronyo dam in Sokoto State overflowed its banks, and in Lagos and Ogun States in the western part of Nigeria as a result of release of water from the Oyan dam by the Ogun-Oshun River Basin Development.

As noted by Ambassador Jan Kubis, Secretary General of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe:

... research suggests that – though conflicts have multiple causes – the degradation, depletion or mismanagement of natural resources linked to demographic change can harm local and international stability in two ways. The first is by reinforcing and increasing grievance within and between societies: where few alternatives remain or where perceived inequities or opportunities for enrichment are great, groups may compete for resources, creating opportunities for violence. The second is by weakening states – by providing revenue for insurgents and criminal groups, depressing economic productivity, or undermining the legitimacy of the state in the eyes of the citizens.²⁰

The summary of Kubis position is that environment degradation can cause people to lose faith in and become discontent with their leadership's ability to govern them, promote development, provide basic goods and services, and

20. Jan Kubis: 'Initiatives for Change', *Our Planet Magazine*, available from <<http://www.ourplanet.com/txtversn/154/Kubis.html>>. Accessed 12 February, 2006.

create a prosperous national economy. The moment government and leaders lose their credibility, it could result in a loss of legitimacy by the state, and invariably in internal conflict and regional instability. It is thus, of fundamental importance that policymakers have a clear view of the environment and security relationship, not only in the context of environmental issues that present immediate hazard to human security,²¹ but, also those that are likely to affect the health of the planet and its inhabitants, particularly humans in the future.²²

One of the first countries to make the clear connection between environment and national security was the United States when in 1990 Mr. Al Gore, then a Senator, placed environmental degradation on the national security agenda with his statement that environmental neglect threatens not only the quality of life but life itself.²³ In that same year, he initiated the Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program together with Senator Sam Nunn with the aim of redirecting military resources toward developing and analyzing the data needed for alerting the US public to possible security threats.²⁴ As noted by Nunn in his speech before approval of the initiative:

-
21. In terms of immediate hazard, reference can be made to such environmental problems as over fishing, flood and erosion, deforestation, land/air/water pollution, hazardous waste, population growth, waste management, habitat and biodiversity preservation, pesticides and agricultural management among others.
 22. Some examples of those that are likely to pose serious challenges for the future are global warming and ozone depletion.
 23. Al Gore: 'A Strategic Environment Initiative', *SAIS Review 10* (Winter – Spring 1990): 60.
 24. Sherri Wassermann Goodman, Deputy Under Secretary of Defence for environmental security, 'The Environment and National Security', Speech to the National Defence University, August 8, 1996.

I am persuaded that there is also a new and different threat to our national security emerging – the destruction of our environment. The defence establishment has a clear stake in countering this growing threat. I believe that one of our key national security objectives must be to reverse the accelerating pace of environmental destruction around the globe.²⁵

Since the above development, almost every National Security strategy document issued by the White House has acknowledged in varying degrees that environmental issues are a component of national security.²⁶ In the case of Nigeria, safeguarding the sovereign, independence and territorial integrity of the State has been the central pillar of its national security policy. In this regard, there is a National Security Agency (NSA) whose goals and objectives are articulated

<http://denix.cecer.army.mil/denix/Public/ES_Programs/Speeches/speech-22.html>.

25. Quoted in Paul Benjamin: 'Green Wars: Making Environmental Degradation a National Security Issue Puts Peace and Security at Risk', *Policy Analysis*, No. 369, April 20, 2000.
26. The Clinton Administration in particular was seen as one of those that placed high order on environmental threat as a national security issue. Both its 1994 and 1998 National Security Strategy reflected its recognition of the security threat that environmental degradation presents to the United States and the world, and for which reason the government embraced environmental issues as a key component of national security - See Don M. Snider and John A. Nagl: 'The National Security Strategy: Documenting Strategic Vision', *U.S. Army War College Guide to National Strategy*, Joseph R. Cerami and James F. Holcomb Jr. eds. (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2001) 4; also Williams J. Clinton: *A National Security Strategy for a New Century* (Washington, D. C.: The White House, October, 1998).

through such bodies of the Nigerian Ministry of Defence as the National Intelligence Agency (NIA), Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA), Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI), Directorate of Naval Intelligence Agency (DNIA) and the Directorate of Airforce Intelligence (DAI). Other relevant agencies of government are the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), State Security Services (SSS), Nigeria Police (NP), Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), Nigeria Customs Services (NCS) and National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA).

The core areas around which the national security considerations of Nigeria have centered are such issues as African unity and independence, regional economic development, security cooperation and non intervention in the internal affairs of other states through regional leadership. Following from this, the perceived and security issues of concern emanated from complex subjects such as political disorder through the struggles of the dominant nationalities for control of state institutions,²⁷ the imperfect or non-existent mechanism for the transfer of political power, ethnic and sectional strife, sectarian strife between muslims and christians, foreign support for islamist militant groups, frequent political crises punctuated by military coups and attempted coups, border clashes with neighboring Cameroon²⁸ and Chad, civil strife within surrounding smaller nations whose vulnerability to external influence and

27. The threat of cession by one of the dominant groups, the Igbos, resulted in the civil war which lasted between 1967 and 1970.

28. Nigeria has been embroiled in a dispute with Cameroon over control of the oil-rich Bakassi Peninsula. This culminated in a judgment of the International Court of Justice in favour of Cameroon in 2002.

pressure could adversely affect Nigeria's security,²⁹ organized labor and students unrest, human rights abuses, cross-boarder (financial and non-financial) criminal activities, human trafficking, corruption, poverty and the impoverished conditions of the people despite the wealth generated by the nation and, high rate of internal crime compounded by total breakdown of policing efforts.

The above is a mix of internal and external threats on the one hand, and immediate near-term and long-term threats on the other hand,³⁰ albeit, at varying degrees. In this regard, environmental degradation did not come unto the front burner as a major issue in Nigeria until 1988 following the dumping of toxic waste on a site in Koko, a small port town in the southern part of Nigeria.³¹ This led to the setting-up of the Federal Environmental Protection Agency in 1988. By the time the Report of the Vision 2010 Committee was published in 1997, it was acknowledged that Nigeria's

29. Nigeria has participated in United Nations (UN) operations and missions in Burundi, Ethiopia and Eritrea, Ivory Coast, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and the Western Sahara.

30. Internal threats can be classified as those that affect a nation's domestic tranquility, health or prosperity; external threats include international and transnational entities or actions that threatens a nation's interests such as free trade, commerce, diplomacy and national safety; immediate threats are those threats (most times physical) that pose an immediate danger to the population's well-being or livelihood. See further, Elizabeth M. Danmonte: 'National Security Strategy: What About the Environment', unpublished student academic research paper, The U.S. Army War College, March, 2006.

31. Olanrewaju Fagbohun: 'The Emergence and Development of Environmental Law in Nigeria (1960 – 2010)', in Azinge (ed.) *Law and Development in Nigeria: 50 Years of Nationhood*, (Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, 2010).

environment is faced with many problems across the length and breadth of the country. These include:³²

- (i) population pressure and the continuous exploitation of marginal lands, aggravating the process of drought and desertification in the north;
- (ii) severe gully erosion in Eastern and Northern states;
- (iii) coastal and marine erosion, and land subsidence in coastal and riverine states;
- (iv) flooding in low-lying belt of mangrove and fresh swamps along the coast, the plains of large rivers and short-lived flash floods in the inland river;
- (v) uncontrolled logging with inherent problems of the destruction of bio-diversity;
- (vi) inappropriate agricultural practices;
- (vii) destruction of watersheds;
- (viii) soil-crust formation caused by loss of water;
- (ix) destruction of vast agricultural lands;
- (x) creation of burrow pits associated with bad mining practices and road works;
- (xi) oil pollution from spillage and gas flaring related problems;
- (xii) urban decay and squatter settlements;
- (xiii) industrial pollution and municipal waste generation; and
- (xiv) climatic change and ozone depletion.

32 See *Vision 2010*, Report of the Vision 2010 Committee, Main Report, September, 1997.

Some of the above issues, particularly that relating to devastation and neglect of the environment in the Niger Delta has in recent times degenerated, giving rise to massive violent protests by the citizens and inhabitants of the Niger Delta, kidnaps (of expatriates of oil companies, government officials and their relatives), uncountable killings and destruction of entire communities. What is of significance in the above is that while Nigeria may not have formally identified its environmental challenges as an issue of national security, a country like the United States is already looking at these issues via its own national security strategy document to conceptualize its relationship with Nigeria³³ in furtherance of its foreign aid, diplomatic and national security policies. This clearly underscores the urgent need for Nigeria to properly identify environmental security issues as triggers of national, regional and global instability, and consequently, formally address them as part of its national security strategy.

Conflict and Controversies in the Conception of Environmental Degradation as a National Security Threat

Policymakers and environmentalists who debate the connection between national security and environmental degradation agree that there are important connections between a nation's vital security interests and environmental issues that deteriorate environment and human conditions. Where there have been heated and international publicized

33 The United States and Nigeria launched a new Bi-national Commission in April, 2010. The goal of this Agreement is to help forge a greater partnership in improving governance and transparency in Nigeria. It has a focus on the Niger Delta and also looks to increase Nigeria's food security and agricultural development.

conflicts and controversies is whether environmental issues should be formally recognized as part of national security. The significance of these conflicts and controversies which have philosophical, legal, political and economic bases is that their discussion provide important insights to what should constitute the theoretical grounding for classifying an issue as one of national security. Although the contexts of the different arguments will be separately discussed, it must be remembered that they are all inexorably linked.

The Existential Perspective

The contention of those who believe that environmental degradation and national security are existentially linked is that the value and absolute necessity for human life of functioning ecosystems necessitates that environmental protection and national security must be inseparable. They argue that environmental damage constitutes a security risk, and that environmental degradation will imperil a nation's most fundamental aspect of security by undermining the natural support systems on which all human activity depends.³⁴

The existential perspective in the way it proposes the elevation of environmental problems as a component of national security has been criticized as fundamentally flawed on the ground that its advocates are either engaged in double

34. See Jessica Tuchman Mathews: 'Redefining Security', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 68, No. 2 (Spring 1989), pp. 162 – 177; Norman Myers: 'Environment and Security', *Foreign Policy*, No. 74 (Spring 1989), pp. 23 – 41; Norman Myers, (1996): *Ultimate Security: The Environmental Basis of Potential Stability*, Norton, New York, USA; Michael Renner: *National Security: The Economic and Environmental Dimensions*, Worldwatch Paper 89 (Washington, D.C., Worldwatch Institute, May 1989).

counting or in rhetorical flourishes aimed at boosting public support for environmental protection.³⁵

The argument of double counting emanated from the fact that the impact of specific environmental problems can be assessed on specific national interests to the point when specific recommendations are made on how to solve the problem. For example, ozone depletion will affect public health and human lives, so there is a need to curb the production of chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) in the way it contributes to the destruction of the ozone layer. Also, environmental refugees has a connection to humanitarian concerns, migration and regional stability, thus, there will be the need to provide sustainable development assistance to the poor who will be affected. The advocates of double counting therefore argue that since specific environmental problems can be accounted for in this way, why put them forward as a “cluster” or “collective” to be solved by the antidote of national security. The fact that they are put forward as a cluster or collective under the national security label will not change the analysis. The appropriate level and form of remedy for the specific environmental problems will still be dictated by the interests affected, thereby rendering the security label unhelpful. It would simply mean that the interests affected is counted first on their own terms, and second on the ground that they constitute a national security interest.

If the above is not completely the case, the critics of the existentialist perspective argue that a further reason why the existential link have continued to endure is its usefulness in

35. Marc A. Levy: 'Is the Environment a National Security Issue?' *International Security*, Vol. 20 No. 2 (Autumn, 1995), pp. 35 – 62.

whipping up greater support for global environmental protection.³⁶ As Richard Stanley has pointed out:

It is encouraging that we increasingly hear some people discuss environmental issues as threats to security. In international relations, security issues are generally regarded as the stuff of 'high politics' while economic, social and environmental issues are considered 'low politics'. National leaders of course, give priority attention to high politics.³⁷

Premised on the above arguments, critics conclude that the existentialist view of environment as a security issue is far too blunt an instrument to generate appropriate policy responses. It obscures precise calculation of environmental threats and real cost of response strategies (in order to promote double counting), and discourages critical thinking about which environmental problems are serious and which are trivial.³⁸ Finally, that the existentialist view encourages the mistaken impression that all ecological problems are national security problems.

Few things can be said about the criticisms that have trailed the existentialist linkage of environmental degradation and national security. If we take the existential argument in the apocalyptic sense of environmental degradation putting a nation to peril or in the context of its resulting in conflict, it will come out in relation to some environmental problems more as an exaggeration of the case. The reason for this is

36. *Ibid*, fn. 1.

37. 'Environmental Problems: A Global Security Threat', Report of the 24th United Nations of the Next Decade Conference, June 18 – 23, 1989, p.10.

38. *Ibid*, fn. 33.

obvious: not all environmental problems can directly imperil a nation or result in conflict. However, while most environmental problems will not directly or exclusively be the cause of national instability, they do contribute significantly to such instability. Furthermore, nations that have been weakened by such other variables as repressive government, unjust social systems, and inefficient economies are easily susceptible to devastating calamities of environmental problems.

Environmental crisis engender conditions which render conflict and insecurity all the more likely. They can serve to determine the source of conflict, shape the nature of conflict and act as multipliers that aggravate the core causes of conflict. Invariably, not only can environmental problems contribute to conflict, they can also stimulate the growing use of force to repress disaffection among those who suffer the consequences of environmental degradation. Where environmental deficiencies are not tackled and curbed, they will degenerate in the not too distant future to undermine political, social and economic stability. The situation is worse where environmental resources form the core of a nation's earnings. Where such resources are wantonly depleted or mismanaged the security of the nation will be undermined.

Properly analysed, therefore, what the existentialist view does is to put environmental challenge under the national security label in recognition of the ultimate consequence of ignoring environmental problems. The expectation in the circumstance is that since a national security strategy will comprehensively address national security interests, all threats to these interests (short, medium or long term) will be addressed. This will not in itself take away the need to still identify within such national security strategy the appropriate

level and form of remedy for the specific environmental problems. Consequently, whether focusing on environmental issues as national security concerns give the issues feasibility is not what is important, rather, that the nation becomes more alert to the concerns and put in place effective solutions and strategies towards meeting the problems.

Definitional Considerations

Another controversy that the linkage of environment degradation with national security has given rise to is the contention that redefining “security” to include environmental issues present difficulties when applied to defining the boundaries of security as a discrete subject area. In this regard, it has been argued that if everything that causes a decline in human well-being is labeled as a security threat, the term loses any analytical usefulness and becomes a loose synonym of “bad.” Two dangers have been identified³⁹ as likely to arise from an ambiguity in definition.

First, there is the potential for militarization of environmental polices. This can manifest in at least three different ways: institutional tendency toward secrecy and control of information that ordinarily should be in the public domain (i.e. a propensity for conflictual thinking in the context of “them vs. us”);⁴⁰ potential for contravention of civil liberties as the military makes incursion into civilian affairs; and may lead to a diversion of defence funding and technology to the environment arena.

The second danger of redefinition it is argued, is that environmental security policies may actually reduce security. This can happen in one of two ways: the concentration on issues such as environment could distract the military from

39. *Ibid.*, fn.1.

40. *Ibid.*, fn 1 pp. 466 -468.

their traditional security activities with serious detrimental effects on the maintenance of peace. Furthermore, the execution of environmental security policy could exacerbate tensions between countries and result in war when diplomatic persuasion fails.

The problem with the above arguments is that they have their foundation in the traditional conception of national security as centered on military security against organized interstate violence. The arguments keep intact the narrow traditional conceptual framework of national security. This is in conflict with the idea of national security in the wider context of intelligence gathering, forecasting of risks, monitoring, and coordinating of responses in the different spheres of a nation's life; all aimed at ensuring the well being of that nation. In the words of David Fidler,⁴¹ arguments as above posed are a caricature of national security and does not do justice to the complexity of the exercise of national power in the face of shifting political, economic and ideological vulnerabilities. It is because the proponents of the idea of redefining the concept of national security found the traditional definition too narrow analytically and normatively that they question why the discourse about "security" cannot include security for other primal human needs, such as the need to eat, have shelter and reproduce.

The moment one comes to term with a re-conceptualized notion of how we should think about national security, what becomes striking is that the "national security" label is not itself the end point, but, a means to collate together anything that can be a threat to the stability and well being of a nation, and ensure that there is in place a coordinated response to

41. *Ibid.*, fn. 2.

either mitigate or respond to it. It will not in itself take over the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence in relation to physical security or that of the Ministry of Environment in relation to environmental problems, or of the Ministry of Agriculture in relation to food security. What it would do is to guide the President to keep every threatening issue on the security alert radar, and interface all the relevant ministries, departments, parastatals and agencies of government that are supposed to work together on any particular issue to tackle the threat. In this way, the potential for militarization of environmental policies or of a redefinition resulting in a threat to security will be minimal if not impossible as no agency or ministry will in playing its part compromise on its own duties or overreach on the activities of others.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that from the perspective of ensuring that all issues that can threaten the well being of a nation are given due attention, there is a need to have environment on the security alert radar for the purpose of interfacing all the relevant stakeholders to play their roles in anticipating the problem and putting in place protection measures. However, difficult it may be to demonstrate with empirical evidence that when environmental resources are degraded or otherwise depleted, so also a nation's security declines, it is much more difficult to demonstrate that the opposite is the case. What this means is that the position that have been and are being put forward by critics of a re-conceptualized notion of national security are seriously problematic and have clearly failed to appreciate the connection between the consequences of environmental decline and a nation's security.

National security is no longer about fighting forces alone. It extends to bio-diversity, climate, genetic resources, pollution of land, water and air, and other factors rarely taken into consideration by military experts and political leaders, but which taken together deserves to be viewed as critical and crucial to a nation's security just as its military prowess. As noted in the Brundtland Commission final report, "*The environmental problems of the poor will affect the rich as well in the not too distant future, transmitted through political instability and turmoil*".⁴² Environmental degradation without doubt is an underlying cause of many human population stressors, conflicts and regional instability. Thus, environmental security qualifies as a national security issue that deserves formal acknowledgement in any nation's plan for dealing with all security issues, namely, the national security strategy.

From what we have seen of the situation in Nigeria, notwithstanding the fact that she has indeed reflected a shift from the traditional narrow concept of national security, the concept is yet to be formally expanded to encompass environmental degradation. What our analysis have revealed of her current environmental conditions is that there exist sufficient basis for a linkage between environmental degradation and national security. Current efforts may be satisfactory to the critics of a linkage of the "environmental degradation" and "national security" discourse. The risk that Nigeria runs with such a situation is that environmental challenges, no matter how threatening they may be, will not be pursued at the same level as other non-military issues already captured as part of national security. It would also

42. World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, *Our Common Future*, Oxford University Press, New York, USA.

mean that such threatening environmental issues will not have the benefit of the harmonization and coordination of relevant stakeholders that a national security strategy will give across the board.

The above in view, what Nigeria urgently needs to do is to articulate her national security strategy to formally include environmental degradation. This must be done in a way that is sufficiently flexible to accommodate not only current issues, but, also issues that may subsequently arise. Further, since it is not every environmental issue that will qualify to be identified as threatening to national security, there is a need to identify the parameters that will be used to set clear measurable threshold beyond which an environmental problem will constitute a threat to national security and warrant intervention. While it must be acknowledged that there are complexities in defining a threshold of threat, not to have any guide will lead to distraction and create a problem for effective intervention. Finally, an appropriate national security strategy must properly delineate how the relevant agencies will play their role to ensure that we do not have competing agendas and conflicting goals.