



**INSURGENCY AND COUNTERINSURGENCY IN NORTH EAST NIGERIA:  
PRECIPICES AND PROSPECTS**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Insurgency in North East Nigeria has created more lethal situations in the insecurity quotient in Nigeria. The reoccurring violence has left many lives (civilians and military) lost and property destroyed. The violent activities of the insurgents (Boko Haram) made the Nigerian state to embark on counterinsurgency. The Air Force, Army, Intelligence, Multinational Joint Task Force and Civilian Joint Task Force are deployed for the operations. These operations have recorded some achievements but more needs to be done as the violence still smolders. The study adopts The “Gold Standard” and, “Modern Warfare” Theories and Practices. Content analysis is used for inferences. Socio-Economic and Political Exclusion, Influence of Politicians and Religion are conditions that catalyze the insurgency. Allegations of Human Rights Abuses in Military Operations, Elusiveness of insurgents, Concealment of insurgents’ identity, the fluidity of the insurgents and rigidity of the counterinsurgents, International Law on War and Complex Military Operations are some challenges of counter insurgency in North East Nigeria. It is recommends that counterinsurgents must win ‘hearts and mind’ of the civilian population,*

*punitive measures be meted on insurgents and those abating their violent activities, robust strategy that involves multi-security agencies collaborating needs to be established. The study concludes that Nigeria cannot afford to be releasing insurgents indiscriminately otherwise the end to the insurgency may not be in sight.*

**KEYWORD: Insurgency, Counter-Insurgency, Violence, Military Operations**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The return to democratic rule came with the euphoria that peace and security would be the hallmark but Nigeria dived into an orgy of catastrophic violence such as ethno-religious conflict, armed robbery, kidnapping, Fulani militia and insurgency. The insurgent group Boko Haram (Jammatu ahlus biddah sunnah, alwa jihad), has become a threat to both internal and international security, dislodging communities, killings civilians, abducting, attacking security personnel and formations and worship centres. These insurgency transverses into nations sharing frontiers with Nigeria through North Eastern States where it is hugely concentrated. The violence escalated to a height that the entire North Eastern States were overrun and overwhelmed though with highest preponderance in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe.

Since July 2009, suspected members of Boko Haram, an armed Islamic group, have killed at least 1,500 people in northern and central Nigeria (Human Rights Watch, 2012, p.5). Similarly, the jihadists have been responsible for roughly 10,000 deaths since its founding in 2001 (Allen, 2013).

Section 217(c) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended which states that “the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic shall be employed in suppressing insurrection and acting in aid of civil authorities to restore order when called upon to do so by the President.....” Consequently, the military has had to place its men and equipment at the disposal of nearly all states to support internal security operations under the umbrella of Operation MESA. The aim of these deployments is to assure a secured environment that would

allow citizens to go about their activities. Operation LAFIYA DOLE was created also to deal with the insurgency perpetrated by the Boko Haram terrorist group in the North Eastern part of Nigeria. The pulling of military assets and deployment of same for forays and offensive operations to stamp out the insurrection remains an issue of evaluation as to the successes or otherwise of the counterinsurgency. The ever changing patterns in operations of the insurgents from community depredation, over run of military camps, land mines implant, detonation of Improvised Explosive Device (IEDs) in soft targets to kidnapping/abduction for ransom.

The complexities are between fighting conventional warfare which the military is wont and asymmetric or unconventional warfare tactics used by the Boko Haram insurgents is what the counterinsurgents grapple with.

In an effort to curtail the ravaging effects of the Boko Haram insurgency, on 14<sup>th</sup> May, 2013, the Nigerian Government declared a state of emergency in the three north eastern states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe. Consequently, Operation Move was to pave way for military operation and subsequent humanitarian and reconstruction efforts in the areas worst affected by the scourge of the insurgency. In the same vein, Nigeria and other member countries of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), (Niger, Chad and Cameroon) including Benin Republic under a multilateral collaboration, established the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). The MNJTF supports the Nigerian Armed Forces, Joint Task Force Operation Lafiya Dole deployed to combat the threat in the North East. The coordinated operations of these forces have continued to maintain pressure on Boko Haram especially in the Lake Chad region where the Abu Musa'ab faction was and the Sambisa Forest, where Abubakar Shekau was hiding.

Though limited cases of asymmetric attacks by the group persists especially at the border areas with Niger, Chad and Cameroon, the dynamic operations conducted by the Nigerian Armed

Forces and the MNJTF through airstrikes and ground operations have significantly degraded Boko Haram's operational capability. The ongoing operation in North East and the Lake Chad region has achieved remarkable successes. Several major offensives were conducted which led to the successful dislodgement of Boko Haram from their strongholds.

Fighting unconventional warfare may as well affect the communities who have been suspected to be inhabited by the Boko Haram. A military foray on these areas always draws condemnation even with evidence of having real Boko Haram members killed. According to Dietrich(2015) security is admittedly difficult in such an asymmetric environment, the response to the Boko Haram threat from the Nigerian armed forces, regional militaries, and allied non-state armed groups has been heavy-handed. In fact, counterinsurgency operations often do more to harm the civilian population than to keep it safe. Though the military force is more trained than the insurgent, the insurgents have the advantage of being elusive and invisible. Pennekamp (n.d.) says that this back-and-forth between insurgent and counterinsurgent seems straightforward, but two complicating factors are:

- i. that although enemy insurgent goals (the overthrowing of a constituted government) might be easy to identify, the exact identification of insurgents—as opposed to innocent civilians—is a notoriously difficult task; and
- ii. that insurgents typically use asymmetric warfare tactics that can be difficult for conventional military forces to counter. It has become an area of focus to unravel their elusiveness by the military operations.

The deployment of Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance assets of the Troops Contributing Countries (TCC) has afforded better situational awareness of the battle space. The MNJTF now has a better understanding of Boko Haram Terrorists tactics; techniques and

procedures; layout of their camps along the borders and routes used from some of their safe havens. Despite this, better intelligence sharing amongst the members of the LCBC and the international community is required to be always one step ahead of the insurgents. The operations by the Multi National Joint Task Force(MNJTF) have also led to the successful rescue of civilians held captive by Boko Haram, particularly a substantial number of the adopted Chibok school girls. According to Bassey (1987) “Defense policy in Nigeria can only succeed with a combination of the foreign and domestic defence policies as Nigeria cannot rely completely on her military power to determine her defense(p.83).

## **CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS**

### **Insurgency**

The United States Department of Defence (2007) defines it as organized movement that has the aim of overthrowing a constituted government through subversive means and armed conflict (Cited in Hellesen, 2008, p.14). This definition suggests that insurgent groups employ unlawful means towards achieving an end, which could be political, religious, social or even ideological. The goal of insurgency is to confront and overthrow an existing government for the control of power, resources or for power sharing (Siegel, 2007, p.328).

Insurgency is the organized use of subversion and violence to seize, nullify, or challenge political control of a region. It is primarily a political struggle, in which both sides use armed force to create space for their political, economic and influence activities to be effective. Insurgency is not always conducted by a single group with a centralized, military-style command structure, but may involve a complex matrix of different actors with various aims, loosely connected in dynamic and non-hierarchical networks. To be successful, insurgencies require charismatic

leadership, supporters, recruits, supplies, safe havens, and funding (often from illicit activities) in order to operate successful. Depending on the situation, insurgent group may receive local or foreign support from state or non-state actors based on their interests. It is also important that the regime understands the insurgents' sources of inspiration, support, and fundamental grievances in order to conduct a successful counterinsurgency operation (U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide, 2).

According to Thomas (2009, pp. 17-20) as insurgents grow stronger, the neutralization of the military becomes their objective with the aim to achieve strategic stalemate. Violence is critical to insurgencies, but it is not the most important element. The "cause" of the struggle is the most important element. Violence is an enabler for "the cause" to advance. The scholar listed five questions a counterinsurgent effort must ask of any irregular challenge: What is the political content of the movement, who are its domestic allies, how is it using violence, how is it using non-violence and what is it doing internationally?

External support received by an insurgency from state or non-state actors can prolong the war, intensify the scale and lethality of its fight, and may even change a civil conflict into a global war. The effects of external support can be both positive and negative, or unpredictable. Even though concrete overthrow of an enemy government is comparatively uncommon, the assistance provided to an insurgency can regularly produce a number of less determined benefits, such as weakening an antagonistic government and strengthening a rival group's bid for control or simply representing support for tribal kin (Daniel, et al. 2001).

Insurgency, however, could be generally viewed as the actions of a minority group within a state who are intent on forcing a political change by means of a mixture of subversion, propaganda and military pressure, aiming to persuade or intimidate the broad mass of the people to accept such a change.

## **Counter Insurgency**

According to the US Department of Defence, Counter Insurgency operations comprise of all political, economic and military actions undertaken by a government to defeat an insurgency. This view is founded on the tripod of politics, economic and military efforts which must be developed equally and simultaneously to avoid imbalance which could be exploited by the insurgents to advance their cause. For example overarching efforts towards economic sphere with inadequate security would create targets for the insurgents. Similarly, support for security to the detriment of political consensus or governance would elicit self-defence leading to evolvment of capable armed groups. This notwithstanding, where the insurgency is already deeply rooted, military operation is a prerequisite to pave way for the application of other instruments of national power in countering it. COIN is therefore the “military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency” (David, 1964, p.3). COIN involves all political, economic, military, paramilitary, psychological, and civic actions that can be taken by a government to defeat an insurgency.

The Report of Defense Science Board Task Force on Defense Intelligence( Department of Defense, United State of America, 2011, outlines the attributes of COIN: Political primacy (and a clearly-defined political objective),it is a struggle for the population, not against the population, the relevance of legitimacy, intelligence drives operations, unity of effort (the requirement of a coordinated government structure), neutralize the insurgency and isolate the insurgents from their support, prepare for a protracted campaign, security under the rule of law is essential, hand over responsibility to the local forces as soon as practicable, learn and adapt quickly.

**The “Gold Standard”: Theory and Practice :** In Galula’s acclaimed book *Counterinsurgency: Theory and Practice*, he outlines three laws that encapsulate many of the tenets commonly found in 20th century COIN doctrine, as he views it: Support of the population is as necessary for the counterinsurgent as it is the insurgent. To achieve this end, the counterinsurgent must seek out the “active minority for the cause” and “a neutral majority” to derail the momentum of the insurgency. Support from a large portion of the population is conditional. In order to achieve this, the counterinsurgent must “demonstrate that he has the will, the means, and the ability to win.” Intensity of effort and vastness of means are essential (Geneva Convention, Protocol III. Additional Protocol I).

To operationalize these in a campaign, Galula breaks down the process into three segments: re-establish authority; isolate the population from the insurgent by physical means; and gather intelligence for the elimination of insurgent political cells (Geneva Convention, Additional Protocol II). Intelligence is one of the core areas of COIN in North East Nigeria(it works on the strengths, weaknesses and strategy of the insurgency). Their hide outs, identity, movement, supplies are truncated via intelligence instruments used by both Army, Air Force and the Defence Intelligence. Most depredation and foray on Boko Haram insurgents are via the instrumentality of intelligence. The unraveling of the invisibility, fluidity and seeming unpredictability of the insurgents are made possible by intelligence.

Galula asserts that contact with the population is a delicate matter, but must be affirmed through requests, and if necessary, orders. Any orders given must be backed by ability and willingness to enforce compliance escalating on scale and as needed. Nigeria’s troops may have been taking all populations settlements as innocent. They can’t be free from complicity as some attacks on the Nigerian security operatives can only be understood from an insider compromise within the civilian population.



Employment of force is critical to this endeavor. Galula explains that a grid of troops should be established to protect political teams, and mobile reserves must be positioned (Leslie, 2008). Due to practical resource constraints in terms of troop numbers and the ability to control vast supply lines, Galula asserts that certain desolate and sparsely populated areas should be modified into “forbidden zones”—a predetermined and sanctioned area where trespassers can be arrested or shot on sight. As security increases, the static reserve forces should spread out to a point where “only a few men will be left to provide the core for self-defense units” (Geneva Convention, Additional Protocol II).

According to Micheal (2006) heavy installations should be prohibited; only construction of installations for what is “strictly necessary” should be allowed. In further isolating the population from the insurgency, careful control over the population should be established by conducting a thorough census, establishing curfews, imposing a strict pass system, and maintaining staunch border security. Lastly, political resolve was very important to Galula, as he viewed politics as central to meet a successful end-state.

**Modern Warfare:** Trinquier (2006) posits that other methods—such as stagnant military outposts, autonomous commando groups, isolated ambushes, and wide-range sweeps—rarely obtain the goals for which they were intended. He often uses the term “static mission,” to emphasize the protracted nature of such operations. Even so, all zones under the counterinsurgents’ control should make conditions untenable for the insurgent to operate (Geneva Convention, Amended Protocol II). This is to say the ‘Super Cat’ camp adopted by counterinsurgency in North East has given the insurgent an easy win to cause colossal damage to the military assets stationed there. This is because it an easy target susceptible to on the spot attack. The elusiveness of the insurgents is given fillip by their ability to build cells and

sanctuaries in randomized and cluster locations. That makes pinning them down in one spot, difficult (notwithstanding their elusive mobility).

Stagnant outposts were of particular concern to Trinquier, believing they come “at great expense in areas to be pacified, [and] are in general not successful. Outposts serve as beacons to what COIN operatives are doing, and do not prevent the guerilla from subjecting the inhabitants to their will” (William, 2005, pp. 741-749). The only tangible benefits, states Trinquier, are that “they enable the forces to maintain open roads and protect supply convoys” (Prosecutor v. Boskoski, Case No. IT-04-82-T, 2008). With stationary camps being built by counterinsurgents in North East makes for easy overrun by the insurgent hence the camps are visible, not elusive, stationary and not unpredictable.

Trinquier believed that the best way to provide security and stability in a populated area was to arm the population (e.g. home guard or militia). He stated that “no one shall be able to avoid this service, and each person at any moment will be subject to the orders of his civil or military superiors to participate in protective measures”(Yoram, 2010). The adoption of Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in the COIN is in consonance with this model. This arrangement has been producing successes as they are also occupants of these towns and villages where the Boko Haram insurgents live and can effortlessly identify and track their movements. By this order the population is swiftly purged of the insurgents who lurk within the innocent civilian population.

## **OVERVIEW OF BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY**

This is an Islamic sect known as Boko Haram founded by Mohammed Yusuf in 2002. The sect has later been led by Abubakar Shekau after the death of its founding leader, Mohammed Yusuf,

in 2009(Cook,2009). Their main goal was to "purify" Islam in northern Nigeria. Since March 2015, the group has been aligned with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (BBC, 2015).

Its unexpected resurgence, following a mass prison break in September 2010 in Bauchi, was accompanied by increasingly sophisticated attacks, initially against soft targets, but progressing in 2011 to include suicide bombings of police buildings and the United Nations office in Abuja. The government's establishment of a state of emergency at the beginning of 2012, extended in the following year to cover the entire northeast of Nigeria, led to an increase in both security force abuses and militant attacks (Nichols,2015).

Boko Haram acquired military training from within and outside Nigeria and obtained such weapons as General Purpose Machine Guns, Rocket Propelled Grenades, rocket launchers, AK 47 rifles, SAM-7 anti-aircraft and anti-tank missiles, and bombs. It also acquired the rudimentary technology of Improvised Explosive Devices (Ewa, 2017). Armed with these weapons, Boko Haram unleashed a most ferocious, savage and terrorist war against the Nigerian state and people, mapping out the entire northeastern Nigeria as its immediate base and area of operation.

In general, the operations have been targeted against Nigerian military and police barracks and stations, government establishments; markets, schools, churches, mosques, motor packs, shopping malls, and international establishments. Kidnapping of people, raping of women, hostage taking and killing of foreign nationals, arson, looting of banks, and smuggling as well as human trafficking have also been the hallmarks of Boko Haram insurgency. By mid-November, 2014, Boko Haram had, in what seemed like lightning operations, conquered and brought under its control about 21, 545 square kilometres of territory in northeastern Nigeria.

In mid-2014, the militants gained control of swaths of territory in and around their home state of Borno, estimated at 50,000 square kilometres (20,000 sq mi) in January 2015, but did not capture the state capital, Maiduguri, where the group was originally based(Telegraph,2015).

According to Global Terrorism Index (2015, p.41) Boko Haram was the world's deadliest terror group have carried out mass abductions including the kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls from Chibok in April 2014. Since the current insurgency started in 2009, Boko Haram has killed tens of thousands of people, displaced 2.3 million from their homes (Pisa & Humes).

## **COUNTER INSURGENCY IN NORTH EASTERN NIGERIA**

### **1 Military Operations: Nigeria Army Component**

The Nigerian Army (NA) has re-strategized its operations in the North East leading to the restructuring, introduction of new platforms and equipment which has considerably changed the tide against the insurgents and has led to so many successes recorded in the theatre of operations. Some of these strategies include:

#### **i. Coordinated Strategic Communication and Information Operations**

According to Buratai (2017) this is the integrated employment of media and psychological operation during military operations in concert with other Lines of Operation. This is done to influence, disrupt, corrupt, or usurp the decision-making of adversaries and potential adversaries while protecting own troops and allies. In line with this, the NA has aggressively pursued a media strategy that focuses on timely dissemination of information that reflects operational priorities and objectives. These strategies include periodic briefings and interviews, press releases, publication of Soja Magazine, formation journals and regular updates of NA social

media platforms (Facebook and Twitter accounts), as well as embedding journalists in some of its operations. The purpose is to identify the target audience, and develop key narratives/messages that support mission priorities and disseminate such through the most appropriate medium. Other information activities to dominate information space over the terrorist include:

**ii. The Establishment of Media Campaign Centre.**

At operation LAFIYA DOLE to provide real-time and accurate information on military operations in the North-East and serve as a venue for proper coordination of military-media activities. Similarly, the NA has established the LAFIYA DOLE FM to bolster its information and media operations drive. The radio station which broadcasts in English, Hausa and Kanuri, and other major local languages with a view to sensitize them on the danger of the BH ideology as well as reorient the locals on the tenets of the two religions which both uphold peaceful coexistence, love and denounce violence of any sort. Furthermore, active online media (social media) is continuously used by the Nigerian Army through various social media platforms. The essence is to reach the whole world and to bring down the Boko Haram propaganda machinery using social media. As the COAS has once said “we have defeated Boko Haram physically and we follow them to social media and defeat them as well”.

**iii. Robust Utilization of Psychological Operations**

Psychological operations (Psy Ops) are an essential component of military operations, having the specific goal of influencing perception. Psy Ops are organized operations to broadcast information targeted at influencing the “sentiment” (e.g. emotions, motives, objective reasoning) of large masses, such as a population or the policies of government. It is a planned

operation to convey selected truthful information and indicators to audiences to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately, their behavior. Nigerian Army has used different physiological operations in its narrative through leaflet, jingles, clips, posters etc, this instrument has helped to open doors of opportunities for some Boko Haram Terrorist (BHT) to surrender which many have done through the introduction of Operation Safe Corridor. The capture of Camp Zero as well as the decimation of the ranks of the group was exploited for Psy Ops purposes through the upload of pictures and videos to the media space to play down the assumed superiority of the terror group.

#### **iv. Utilization of Cyber Operations**

Boko Haram terrorists for instance use computer-generated intelligence to execute their atrocities. In response to this, the government, security agencies and the general public now use the same medium to provide access to critical, real-time information, as well as crucial and timely location of the insurgents proactively to stop them before they unleash terror on unsuspecting citizens. To achieve this, the government in 2011 mandated the NCC to register all mobile telephone lines in the country in order to enhance the security of the state and its citizens and to enable operators to have predictable profile about the users in their networks. With this information, the intelligence gathering capability of the Nigerian Security Services was remarkably enhanced, and a number of key Boko Haram commanders were captured, including Sani Mohammed, Kabiru Sokoto and Shuaib Mohammed Bama to mentioned but a few.

Another instance was on 23 May, 2013, when the Government shut down mobile communications in the three Northeastern states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe. The objective of the shutdown was to limit Boko Haram's communications capabilities, restrict their ability to regroup and reinforce and also limit their ability to detonate improvised

explosive devices. Although, this action had its adverse effect on social, economic and security situation in those areas, the success of the action led to the sect being driven from Maiduguri and its environs to the vast and treacherous Sambisa forest where the Army recently captured their main base and is also carrying out methodical clearance operations to put a final end to their activities.

**v. Exploitation of Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) and Human Intelligence (HUMINT).**

OSINT has been used by the NA to gather publicly available information on specific targets. The NA employs several modern techniques available in today's highly sophisticated operations environment to conduct OSINT operations on certain targets which has helped the operations in the North East and other parts of the country in the arrest of many terrorists and economic saboteurs in the theatre of operations.

In the same vein HUMINT has also been used to collect information provided by human sources. This intelligence includes interrogations and conversations with persons having access to information.

**vi. Cordon and Search**

Another approach which the JTF uses is cordon and search operations. These are conducted together with the Nigeria Police. Cordon and search operations are carried out based on intelligence reports about sect members in certain locations. The JTF normally plans in detail and rehearses before conducting an operation, and these efforts have led to successes. Such operations have in many cases led to the capture of some suspected members of the Boko Haram sect and the recovery of arms, ammunition, and explosives. The operations have also led to the capture of some equipment used in the production of improvised explosive devices. There were, however, a

few cases where surprise and security were lost due to the lack of proper coordination at the infestation stage, and casualties were suffered on both sides. Also, there have been cases when the searches irritated the civil populace who view it as an infringement on their fundamental human rights. As a result, the public has been uncooperative with the JTF in furnishing it with useful information (Umar, 2013).

## **2. Military Operations: Nigeria Air Force Component**

The Air Force is a critical component of the military. Its aerial operations have given tremendous success to the forays occasioned on Boko Haram insurgents by the deployment of Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) and foray of aerial bombardments.

### **i. Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR).**

Intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance is an activity that synchronizes and integrates the planning and operation of sensors, assets, and processing, exploitation, and dissemination of systems in direct support of current and future operations. This is an integrated intelligence and operations function. For Army forces, this combined arms operation focuses on priority intelligence requirements while answering the commander's critical information requirements (JP 2-01 contains ISR doctrine). Through ISR, commanders and staffs continuously plan, task, and employ collection assets and forces. These collect, process, and disseminate timely and accurate information, combat information, and intelligence to satisfy the commander's critical information requirements (CCIR) and other intelligence requirements. When necessary, ISR assets may focus on special requirements, such as information required for personnel recovery operations. It supports full spectrum operations through four tasks:



ISR synchronization, ISR integration, Surveillance, Reconnaissance (FM 3-0 Operations,2008).

**ii. Foray by Aerial Bombardments (AB).**

Raids carried out by the JTF troops based on intelligence are used to curb the menace of Boko Haram. The persistence of such operations has resulted in some success, including the arrest of Boko Haram members, and truncated the group's plans of attack. Some sect members have been killed in the raid operations and weapons and explosives recovered. However, such operations have also frustrated the civilian populace and created more hatred for the JTF as innocent individuals are believed to have been killed in some failed operations or as part of collateral damage.

**3. Military Operations: Military and Civilians Joint Operations**

The Civilian Joint Task Force was formed in Maiduguri in June, 2013. The joint operation became necessary to adopt because it involves the locals who are familiar with the terrain, neighbourhood and those with proclivity for violence. They also help in identifying strange individuals and vehicles. They jointly conduct stop and search at mounted check points. The CJTF became regimented into sectors and sub-sectors leaders. According to IRIN (2014) the *yangora* are the 'eyes and ears of the security forces.....they are the first responders to trouble.'

**CHALLENGES OF COUNTER INSURGENCY IN NORTH EASTERN NIGERIA**

**Allegations of Human Rights Abuses in Military Operations**

The military operations in countering insurgency in North East has been accused of human rights violations which includes extra-judicial killings of criminal suspects in custody and torture.

Human Rights Watch (2012) reports that: ‘during raids in communities, often in the aftermath of Boko Haram attack, members of the security forces have executed men in front of their families; arbitrarily arrested or beaten members of the community burned houses, shops, and cars; stolen money while searching homes; and raped women. Government security agencies routinely hold suspects incommunicado without charge or trial in secret detention facilities and have subjected detainees to torture or other physical abuse’ (p.58).

These allegations are weighty and have made the operations to exert less force than expected. It also limits its incursions into fishing out evident insurgent.

### **Elusiveness of insurgents**

The government force is usually better equipped and trained than the insurgents. The key advantage of the insurgents is their elusiveness and invisibility; the government troops have the military means and capabilities to effectively engage the insurgency targets, but they have difficulties finding them. Although intelligence is a key component in any conflict situation, it is critical in counterinsurgency operations. Absent intelligence, not only might the guerrillas be able to continue their insurgency actions, but collateral damage caused to the general population from poor targeting by the government forces may generate an adverse response against the government, thus creating popular support for the insurgents. This popular support translates into new cadres of recruits to the insurgency (Lynn, 2005, pp.22-27).

### **Concealment of insurgents’ identity**

The Boko Haram insurgents do not only live in the forest. Some live in the communities with other people. They would go cause damage and withdraw into the communities. The inhabitants

who do not engage in the dastard activity would shield them from arrest or would not divulge their identity. This creates a serious problem to the counterinsurgency fight.

It is postulated that the main driver for population behavior in insurgency situations is security ( Hammes 2006, pp. 18-26 & U.S. Army 2006); the population will align with the side that is perceived as better protecting it, or is at least less threatening. We assume no sectarian or coercive violence, and therefore the insurgents do not deliberately attack the population; their attack is focused on the government force. Because the insurgents have perfect situational awareness, they do not harm the general population. On the other hand, absent perfect intelligence, the government forces may cause casualties in the population when missing their insurgency targets. This collateral damage triggers support to the insurgency, which is manifested in new recruits to their ranks. It diminishes locals' confidence in the COIN Operations and influences their decision to conceal insurgents' identity.

### **The fluidity of the insurgents and rigidity of the counterinsurgents**

According to David (1964, p.3) the insurgent is fluid because he has neither responsibility nor concrete assets; the counterinsurgent is rigid because he has both, and no amount of wailing can alter this fact for either side. Each must accept the situation as it is and make the best of it.

If the counterinsurgent wanted to rid himself of his rigidity, he would have to renounce to some extent his claim to the effective rule of the country, or dispose of his concrete assets. One way of doing this, of course, would be to hand over everything to the insurgent, and then start an insurgency against him, but no counterinsurgent on record has dared apply this extreme solution.

On the other hand, the insurgent is obliged to remain fluid at least until he has reached a balance of forces with the counterinsurgent. However desirable for the insurgent to possess territory, large regular forces, and powerful weapons, to possess them and to rely on them prematurely could spell his doom. The failure of the Greek Communist insurgents may be attributed in part to the risk they took when they organized their forces into battalions, regiments, and divisions, and accepted battle. The Vietminh made the same mistake in 1951 in Tonkin, and suffered serious set-backs.

In the revolutionary war, therefore, and until the balance of forces has been reached, only the insurgent can consistently wage profitable hit-and-run operations because the counterinsurgent alone offers profitable and fixed targets; only the insurgent, as a rule, is free to accept or refuse battle, the counterinsurgent being bound by his responsibility. On the other hand, only the counterinsurgent can use substantial means because he alone possesses them. Fluidity for one side and rigidity for the other are further determined by the nature of the operations. They are relatively simple for the insurgent— promoting disorder in every way until he assumes power; they are complicated for the counterinsurgent, who has to take into account conflicting demands (protection of the population and the economy, and offensive operations against the insurgent) and who has to coordinate all the components of his forces—the administrator, the policeman, the soldier, the social worker, etc. The insurgent can afford a loose, primitive organization; he can delegate a wide margin of initiative, but his opponent cannot.

### **Intermittent challenge in tracking prognosis**

Obtaining timely, adequate and credible intelligence; ability to predict the intentions of, and act before, the adversary; booby traps, landmines and improvised explosive devices (IEDs); fighting

in built-up areas (FIBUA) or military operations in urban terrain (MOUT); the use of civilians as human shields by insurgent have given the military operations some challenges.

### **International Law on War**

In complex military operations such as counter-insurgency or counter-terrorism, two opposing entities are pitched against each other – the conventional armed forces combat units and the insurgent/terrorist armed groups. The former is expected to recognize and abide by the LOAC as reflected in the series of Geneva Conventions 1, 2, 3 and 4 of 1949 ( Solis, 2010,p.258 ), while the latter is guided by the “laws of the jungle” characterized by organized lawlessness, genocide, savage brutal killings and decapitations of innocent civilians and non-combatants. In combating the armed groups, the conventional combat personnel are faced with the challenge of facing a hostile enemy too disguised to be easily identified, too lawless to be treated with soft hands and too savage and brutal to be spared whenever confronted. The question in this regard is: In complex military operations, should humanitarian law apply to non-governmental armed group members? Do these non-conventional gunmen qualify as prisoners of war, or enemy combatants or unclassified gunmen? How should they be perceived in complex military operations? This appears to be a big challenge in counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations.

### **Complex Military Operations**

A complex element could be perceived as a phenomenon or representation which consists of various parts or elements making it conglomerate, entangled, mixed, multiple in composition, heterogeneous and by implication, complicated. While complex military operations could be perceived as those military operations including, but not limited to, operations by conventional defence and security forces against non-conventional armed groups, they have been variously perceived as stability operations, operations other than war (OOTW), irregular warfare, hybrid

warfare, or counter-insurgency/ counter-terrorism (Guttieri, Franke & Civic, 2014). The entire situation is seen as complex because of the constantly-changing combination of actors involved the frequency at which the strategic and operational scenarios continue to change as well as the constraints and challenges on response initiatives against insurgency and terrorism. From this perspective, it could be said that complex military operations pose the greatest challenges to conventional armed forces personnel who are basically trained and tutored in conventional warfare against unconventional foes. This fact becomes more glaring under the current prevailing circumstances in which conventional armed forces of states (in the absence of international wars) are almost permanently pitched against non-conventional armed non-governmental insurgent/terrorist organizations and groups. The military, paramilitary and civil conglomerates and components of complex military operations tend to confirm its heterogeneous and complex nature. Be it traditional peacekeeping or internal security operations (ISOs) or peace enforcement or peace restoration or counter-insurgency/ counter-terrorism or operations other than war, the “complexity” of complex military operations could be gleaned from the fact that the peculiarity bordering its conceptualization, implementation and evaluation, stands it out as a type of “fourth dimensional war” – a war that is fought, not necessary with the three conventional tri-service (army, navy and air force) establishments against other conventional forces but, by conventional national forces against non-conventional armed groups (insurgents/terrorists).

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The counterinsurgents must take absolute control of the population. The population is the epicenter of insurgency and to record successes, the support of the population must be won. Adequate efforts should be towards detaching the insurgents from the population. This is where wining ‘hearts and mind’ becomes imperative.

As far as reward is given to those who offer leading information on intelligence (for counter insurgency), punitive measures should be meted to insurgents and those abating their violent activities. A situation where insurgent are released in the name of de-radicalization makes counter insurgency in Nigeria counter- productive. Insurgents are being released while they are holding Nigerians captives and executing some. In this case deterrence is practically voided.

The ability of the state to understand the grievances of insurgents provides an action plan for prosecuting the insurgency. Therefore a robust strategy that involves multi-security agencies collaborating needs to be established rather than having an omnibus counter insurgency which is an all military affair. Here expertise will be pulled from all and sundry to study those grievances and underscore which grievances could be assuaged.

Military and the Civil Society Organizations working in the theatre of crisis should not work at cross purposes. Effective machinery for inculcating values that will dissuade the civilian population from holding any support for the insurgents should be established and intensified.

Non- Governmental Organizations that intend to carry out humanitarian intervention should be vetted. Boko Haram war has been commercialized by some non-state actors and conflict merchants.

Ideological warfare needs grounded ideology to counter. An ideological trend requires ideological solution premised on national values and undiluted Islamic injunctions. The counter insurgency should take a two pronged approach: kinetic (physical war) and the non-kinetic(de-radicalization, cutting of all forms of supplies to the insurgents) to bring the insurgency to its knees.

## CONCLUSION

The counterinsurgency in North East Nigeria has recorded some commendable mileage. However much more needs to be done as the insurgents still unleash carnage on civil population and military assets. The exertion of National Power backed by political will to prosecute the war is needed to subdue the insurgents. Nigeria cannot afford to be releasing insurgents indiscriminately after arrest; otherwise the end to the insurgency may not be in sight.

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