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COUNTER-INSURGENCY AND THE MILITARY STRATEGY IN NIGERIA'S NORTH-EAST

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ABSTRACT
This paper examined "Counterinsurgency and the Military Strategy in Nigeria's Northeast" It provided an overview of counterinsurgency operations and military strategy employed in the northeast region of Nigeria from 2009. The paper used secondary sources of data such as the use of textbooks, journals, government publications, conference and seminar lecture materials, and the internet. The paper pointed out the causes and impact of Boko Haram insurgency on national security, the achievements and challenges of military strategy in countering insurgency in northeast Nigeria. The research adopted the enemy-centric theory and the population-centric theory as the theoretical framework for analysis. The paper showed that the inability of most citizens to understand the real issues of insurgency and give the military all the needed support and morale is a major challenge to the success of military counterinsurgency operations; since the insurgents do not operate in a vacuum or in isolation. The study recommend that the government must address the socio-economic grievances that contribute to the recruitment and support of Boko Haram and any other aggrieved group. It further recommends community engagement and civil-military cooperation, intelligence and information sharing, and capacity building and adequate training of the military on counterinsurgency approach.
Keywords: Boko Haram, Counterinsurgency, Insurgency, Military Strategy

Introduction

Insurgency has become the most prevalent form of conflict since 1945 and has become more frequent over the years. During the mid-20th century, a large number of insurgencies left immense effects on national, regional, and international affairs. This period is also considered a "golden age of insurgency" (Metz and Millen, 2004). It was marked by instabilities and crises in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, mainly due to de-colonization, corrupt and weak governments, multi-ethnic societies, and newly-emergent unstable states. More so, the fragile nature of some of the countries in the underdeveloped continents led to incessant crises and insurgencies. The popular appeal of insurgency lies in the cause being fought for. It is then manipulated and exploited in a way that may generate hatred and discontent among the people. Developing countries are particularly vulnerable to this type of situation as several forms of contentions exist in their weak and inefficient state systems and societies. This explains why most of the insurgencies have occurred in Asia, Africa, and Latin America (Amaeze, 2019).

In Africa for instance, domestic terrorism and insurgency have a long history. "Early examples occurred during the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya from 1952 to 1959 and the Algerian independence struggles from 1954 to 1962" (Imobighe, 1984). It was not uncommon for African independence movements and their colonial opponents to resort to tactics that, today, would only be described as insurgency in nature. According to Akanji (2009), Nigeria's political history is replete with acts of terror perpetrated by individuals, groups, and organisations that are either indigenous or foreign. The upsurge of insurgence and other terrorist acts poses threats and insecurity to human existence in Nigeria such as the Maitatsine uprising that led to looting, maiming, burning, assaulting women, and killings in the 1980s.

Since 2009, Nigeria's security landscape was dampened by the violent uprising by an Islamic fundamentalist group colloquially described as Boko Haram, which literally mean' Western Education is Sacrilege.' The violent campaign of the group to overthrow the secular political system and replace it with

an Islamic state that should be governed through strict compliance with the divine injunction of the Qur'an and Hadith (the holy books of Islam) has caused unprecedented loss of lives and valuable resources.
Boko Haram sect was formed by Muhammad Yusuf, a Salafist scholar indoctrinated with the teaching of Ibn Taymiyyah (a radical Syrian theologian). Arising from its portentous attacks, Boko Haram has carved a niche for itself as the most vicious and violent religious group ever witnessed by the country (Ike, 2018). This evidence, is glaring with the rapid escalations of the insurgency. Although, the uprising started in Maiduguri, a city of about 2 million population, but witnessed a spread into many cities and towns of the Nigerian states including the capital city of Abuja. Currently, there is growing evidence of the spread of the insurgency in Cameroon, Chad, and Niger Republics, bordering the Nigerian State. In fact, the frequent attacks, and mass murder have led many to describe Boko Haram as one of the most serious threats to the peaceful co-existence of Nigeria, especially after the end of the country's civil war in 1970. The escalation of terrorist activities of the group increased in spite of the concerted efforts taken by the Nigerian government, regional military bloc, and supports from foreign powers such as the United States and Britain. The counterinsurgency (COIN) campaign ranges from the application of hard military power and the adoption of quasi-military actions of counterterrorism. However, the emphasis is accorded more to the use of military force to combat Boko Haram than the latter approach. Whereas an accurate statistic is skewed, there are over 100,000 members of the Nigerian armed forces fighting the insurgent group in the north (Folade, 2016). However conservative this figure may seem, it signifies the highest military engagement in civil conflict in the history of Nigeria's political existence.

One of the central pillars of the military strategy in the Northeast of Nigeria has been the adoption of counterinsurgency operations. These operations are characterized by a combination of military force, intelligence-gathering, and civil-military cooperation with the aim of isolating and defeating the insurgents while simultaneously winning the support of the local population (US Department of Defense, 2009). Operations such as Operation Lafiya Dole have been instrumental in this regard, emphasizing the importance of civilian protection and the minimization of collateral damage (International Crisis Group, 2015). Despite the challenges in curbing the insurgency, the Joint Task Force (JTF) and Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) were able to adapt counterinsurgency strategy in combating the insurgents. The paper therefore examines the counterinsurgency and military strategy in the northeast of Nigeria. It is divided into six subtitles which include introduction; conceptual clarification, theoretical framework, Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast, military strategy and counterinsurgency operations, and conclusion

Conceptual Clarification on Insurgency, Counterinsurgency, and Military Strategy

Insurgency, counterinsurgency, and military strategy are interconnected concepts that pertain to armed conflicts, often involving non-state actors. Hence, there is a need to conceptualise the concept.

Insurgency

The term *insurgency* conjures often widely disparate interpretations, suffering at the hands of both experts and pundits. The key to understanding an insurgency in a given operational environment rests on the ability to analyse the conditions, motivations, and characteristics of this type of political-military conflict. This analysis must include an examination of the following: dynamics of an insurgency; strategic aims and methods used by insurgents; political, ideological, social, and military instruments used to achieve their goals; and potential vulnerabilities/weaknesses to be exploited by those working to mitigate the insurgency. This analysis should also provide insights into the potential vulnerabilities of the insurgency that can be turned into COIN actions and activities by a host nation government and supporting external partners to defeat the insurgents.

The USA Department of Defense defines insurgency as "an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict (*DoD, 2005*)."

While succinct, this characterization has changed little over the past several decades, orients on military and security actions, and fails to reflect the wider scope and complexity of insurgencies today, especially their protracted and transnational nature and their political, economic, and social dimensions. With its emphasis on subversion and armed conflict, the definition identifies, by implication, insurgency as a predominantly military problem. For these reasons, the following expanded definition is offered, one that more accurately portrays the nature and scope of insurgency in the 21st Century:

> An insurgency is a protracted violent conflict in which one or more groups seek to overthrow or fundamentally change the political or social order in a state or region through the use of sustained violence, subversion, social disruption, and political action (Moore, nd).

Insurgency is a condition of violent revolt against constituted authority or established leadership through sabotage and harassment in order to undermine its authority. In other words, insurgency becomes latent when a group of persons uses violent methods to resist the enforcement of the law or the group opposed the running of organized governance through bloody violence and insurrection. In the Nigerian constitutional context, an insurgency is defined within the active framework and physical activities of the following; an attack on defenceless civilians resulting in the massive loss of lives and properties; prevention of the flourishing domestic and foreign investments and investors and its linkages to murder, genocide and indeed, treasonable felony (Okene and Olawale, 2013). The extreme extension and aggravation of insurgency and threat to security leads to terrorism which is a systematic use of violence, destructive acts, and coercive methods to intimidate individuals, populations, and constituted government (Okene and Olawale, 2013). According to the US Department of Army Field Manual (2014), an insurgency is defined as an organized, protracted politico-military struggle designed to weaken the control and legitimacy of an established government, occupying power, or other political authority while increasing insurgent control.

Counterinsurgency

The term "counterinsurgency", suffers from imprecision and confusion as with counter-terrorism. In the lexicon of military studies, it has frequently been given a euphemistic colouration and used interchangeably with stability operation, 'internal defence' 'internal security,' 'counter-guerrilla operations' and 'countering irregular threat'. Theoretically, counterinsurgency is a term used to explain the various techniques that relate to the prevention and suppression of armed insurgencies. As such, it is a response to the insurgency. Counter-insurgency is defined as "those military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological and civic actions taken by a government to defeat an insurgency. According to Moore (nd), counter-insurgency is "an integrated set of political, economic, and social structures and resolve the underlying causes of an insurgency in order to establish and sustain the condition necessary for lasting stability. According to Nwanna (2016), counter-insurgency strategies are designed to help save the affected population from insurgent violence and reinforce the legitimacy and capacity of government institutions, in addition to eliminating the insurgents' influence over a region.

Counterinsurgency, frequently referred to by the acronym (COIN) is just the opposite of insurgency. To put it differently, it involves a combination of measures undertaken by the legitimate government of a country to curb or suppress an insurgency taken up against it. So, while insurgents for instance try to erase or overthrow the existing political authority in order to establish theirs, the counter-insurgent forces try to reinstate the existing political structures as well as reduce or annihilate the usurping authority of the insurgents (Liolio, 2013).

COIN involves all political, economic, military, paramilitary, psychological, and civic actions that can be taken by a government to defeat an insurgency. COIN operations include supporting a Host Nation's military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken to defeat an insurgency. Avoiding the creation of new insurgents and forcing existing insurgents to end their participation

is vital to defeating an insurgency. COIN operations often include security assistance programs such as foreign military sales programs, foreign military financing programs, and international military training and education programs.

NATO (2019) doctrine defines counterinsurgency as comprehensive civilian and military efforts made to defeat an insurgency and address any core grievances. Insurgents seek to compel or coerce political change on those in power, often through the use or threat of force by irregular forces, groups, or individuals. Counterinsurgents must not only develop short-term solutions to provide security for the targeted population and change disruptive behaviours, they must also determine the sources of the unrest and dissatisfaction fuelling the insurgency. Counterinsurgents conduct long-term operations to eliminate those sources of unrest. This may require improving governance, developing the economy, or restoring essential services. These tasks require the participation of relevant civilian agencies, both indigenous and international.

Military Strategy

While people have been practicing strategy at various level to achieve their interest, it is only in relatively recent human history that various military commanders, theorists, and commentators have tried to formally describe and define the field of strategy. Strategy sprung from the need for people to defeat their enemies. According to Horwath (2016), the term "strategy" is derived indirectly from the Classic and Byzantine (330 A.D.) Greek "strategos," which means "general." While the term is credited to the Greeks, no Greek ever used the word. The Greek equivalent for the modern word "strategy" would have been "strategike episteme" or (general's knowledge) "strategon sophia" (general's wisdom). One of the most famous Latin works in the area of military strategy is written by Frontius and has the Greek title of *Strategemata*. *Strategemata* describes a compilation of strategema, or "strategems," which are literally "tricks of war."

Military strategy is a broad plan embodying a set of doctrines, principles, and tactics on how to ensure defence and security by fighting and winning a war or at any rate, deterring war or threat of aggression (Aja, 1999). Unlike grand strategy, military strategy is chiefly concerned about the manner of employing military resources to achieve the maximum result at a minimum cost in a potential state of war conflict (Momah, 1998). Military strategy can be implemented in the area of war, attrition, total destruction, and psychological disruption of enemies to either dislodge, capture or destroy them (Ukhami, nd).

Freedman (1998) defines strategy broadly as the art of creating power. However, he asserts that strategy is much more than a plan, emphasizing that a good strategy considers the potential effects of unexpected factors and the roles of others who might disrupt one's strategy because of opposing interests. Freedman also observes that the word strategy nowadays has become diluted and is often inappropriately used. Although the term strategy comes from the Greek word 'Strategies' (the art of the general), it was not until the Late 18th century that the term came into use in military circles.

To sum it up, according to Field-Marshal Montgomery, "Strategy is the art of distributing and applying military means, such as armed forces and supplies, to fulfil the ends of policy. Tactics means the dispositions for, and control of, military forces and techniques in actual fighting. Put more shortly: strategy is the art of the conduct of war, and tactics the art of fighting (Chaland, 1994:3). Consequently, it would be accurate to give a definition to military strategy, although a universal definition does not exist. In this perspective, one will consider the definition of Goodman (1993), who holds that military strategy and tactics are vital to the waging of armed conflict. The author provides his definition of strategy, which is the coordination, the planning, and the general management of military of operations to achieve total military and political objectives.

Theoretical Framing: Between Enemy-Centric and Population-Centric View

The Enemy-Centric Theory

This theory is premised on the presumption that counterinsurgency is a contest with an organized enemy and thus, emphasizes the defeat of the enemy as its primary objective while viewing other mechanisms as secondary (Liolio, 2013). What this means is that the theory stresses the need for the state to mobilize all instruments of coercion at its disposal to completely subdue, suppress and annihilate the insurgents and the threats they pose the monopoly claim to the legitimate use of force by the state. This counterinsurgency theory believes that the state is the only entity that has the monopoly of organized violence and/or coercion and as such, must not tolerate any individual or group that overtly or covertly competes with it. Thus, Liolio (2013) highlighted the point that the enemy-centric approach underscored the saying 'first defeat the enemy, and all else will follow'. This theory supports the full mobilization and deployment of all necessary military forces of the state to engage the insurgents in battle until they are defeated and the state reclaims and retains its monopoly of force over other groups in the society.

While the Nigerian States response to the BH insurgency has been a mixture of the two main approaches, the enemy-centric approach has been dominant. The first military intervention against BH was necessitated by the inability of the Nigeria police to quell the violent riots of the group from July 25 to 30, 2009 (Oyewole, 2013:257). The escalation of the BH conflict in 2011 prompted President, Goodluck Jonathan, to set up a "strong" military command known as the Joint Task Force Operation Restore Order (JTFORO) in the northeast (Strategic Comments, 2013). The establishment of the JTFORO was accompanied by the President's invocation of his Emergency Powers as enshrined in section 305 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution. The constitution allows a state of emergency to be declared when there is an actual or threatened breakdown of public order and public safety anywhere in the Federation to such extent as to require extraordinary measures to restore peace and security, or where there is any other public danger which clearly constitutes a threat to the Federation's existence (Sampson, 2015:37). Emergency rule was declared on December 31, 2011, in fifteen local government areas across the northern states of Plateau, Niger, Yobe and Borno (Animasawun, 2013:118). As the military lost ground in many parts of the northeast in 2013, the President expanded the scope of the emergency rule to include Adamawa and end the mandate in Niger and Plateau states (Strategic Comments, 2013). Rather than being restricted to selected conflict hotbeds, the new mandate applied to all the local governments in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states. Alongside changes in the scope of the emergency rule, JTFORO was replaced as the coordinating unit of Nigeria's counterinsurgency by the newly established Army 7^{th} Infantry Division (Comolli, 2015:127).

Furthermore, in order to stifle the ability of BH to regroup in the neighbouring countries of Benin, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, the Nigerian government started to coordinate its counterinsurgency efforts with these countries in February 2015. A coalition of 8,700 soldiers, known as the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), was set up in June 2015 to replace the previous ad hoc arrangement (Africa Research Bulletin, 2015). Since Nigeria started to coordinate its counterinsurgency operations with its immediate neighbours - initially under an informal arrangement, but currently within a more formalized coordinating framework - BH has suffered substantial military defeat in north-eastern Nigeria. For example, as at January 2015, BH was estimated to be in control of Nigerian territory equivalent in size to Belgium (Bappa, 2015:6). However, by February 2016, the government claimed to have recaptured these areas from BH (Ehikioya, February 11, 2016). Despite being effective in maintaining control of territory in the northeast, enemy-centric COIN is beset with the following challenges: inadequate knowledge of the conflict environment by the deployed military personnel; difficulty distinguishing combatants from non-combatants or terrorists from bystanders; and difficulty in gaining intelligence from the citizens, many of whom are suspicious of state representatives (Hills, 2009).

Population-Centric Theory

In most respects, the population-centric theory advocates for the nonviolent approach in the counterinsurgency campaign. The contributors like Mendoza and Mercenado de Santa Cruz, Marshal

Thomas Robert Bugeaud, Joseph Galléini, his disciple Hubert Lyautey, and Sir Robert Thompson in this perspective suggest that to ensure total control of the population, counterinsurgents can desist from the use of coercive action (Liolio, 2013). This approach has much reflected the British counterinsurgencies around the world. This strategy is in contrast to the enemy-centric school that advocates the importance of repressive action in ending an insurgency.

The population-centric (P-COIN) theory, unlike the enemy-centric approach, focuses on first and foremost, protecting the civilian population from terrorists, winning the confidence of the populace, and maintaining or winning its support in the effort to rid insurgency (Liolio, 2013). This way, vital intelligence information that could easily lead to infiltration of the insurgents and consequently, ways to effectively combat them can be easily attained. This theory de-emphasized over-reliance on the military approach to combating insurgency by the state. In other words, the argument of this theory is that while direct military confrontation might be needed in defeating the insurgents, it is not seen here as the primary objective which is to win the support of the population. This approach can be summarized as 'first protect and support the population, and all else will follow'. For, as Springer has argued, "the population wants to be associated with the side they believe will be prosperous, victorious and offer the best social and economic alternative for the future" (Springer, 2004).

The principle of population-centric theory emulated the fish and river analogy prophesied by the classical Chinese strategist of Sun Tzu. The expert in his analogy equated insurgents to a fish and the population to a river. He pointed out that once the river is drained, the fish is forced to die naturally. It is in this context, Tzu argues that to ensure the easiest defeat of an insurgency, the counterinsurgent must focus on a strategy that may expedite the withdrawal of the support of the population on the insurgent. Since insurgency and counterinsurgency is a battle of legitimacy and control of the population, the process of obtaining the support of the population according to French military General David Galula is by addressing the causes of the insurgency from the population. This involves enhancing governance factors such as the provision of basic amenities and tackling socioeconomic issues. Therefore, to most P-COIN scholars, to combat an insurgency, counterinsurgents can first understand the factors that cause and fuel the insurgency from the population. In this respect, this study contends that to combat the Boko Haram group, the government should address the factors that instigated and fuelled the Boko Haram insurgency (Galula, 2006). With the assumption that socio-economic factors are responsible for the emergence of BH, the prescribed approach to ending the conflict is often tailored towards long-term economic empowerment and human capacity development strategies. One of the pioneering studies on what the Nigerian government should do with regard to BH is Aghedo and Osumah's 2012 study. The authors suggest that the government should implement institutional reforms and other policies that address the sources of inequality and human insecurity in the region (Aghedo and Osumah 2012:866). According to Aghedo and Osumah, ending the BH insurgency requires that the government implements a policy of development in northern Nigeria as follows:

> In collaboration with the state and local governments, the federal government should undertake a grassroots socioeconomic empowerment programme aimed at employment generation and human security. The programme should be anchored on farming, entrepreneurial and vocational skills acquisition and development, as well as provision of soft loans to artisans and traders. In addition, there is a need for improvement in economic opportunity in the region, including greater foreign investment, improvement in infrastructure, federal government intervention, especially in education and healthcare, and greater pressure on the northern political elite to develop the region (Aghedo and Osumah 2012:867).

In essence, the P-COIN perspective implies that BH's aspiration for an Islamic state across the Sahel could have been watered down if the government had intervened economically at the early stages of the conflict. A related view implies that it is the government's excessive use of force against the group in 2009 that

made BH more radicalised and uncompromising, thus complicating the prospects for peace through conciliation (Bamidele, 2015:139; David et al, 2015:105).

Both Comolli (2015) and Maiangwa (2014) have a common understanding of what is fuelling the BH insurgency and how the problems can be remedied. For example, Comolli notes that because BH "capitalizes on poverty, underdevelopment, and social marginalisation", the provision of employment opportunities among the border communities of Nigeria, Niger, and Chad, and the improvement of the delivery of basic social services, such as health and education, will be instrumental to ending the insurgency. Due to the extensive nature of social and economic problems that plague the Sahelian region, Comolli argues that external support, especially from international development agencies, will be needed to simultaneously implement development policies and a military strategy. In the same vein, Maiangwa explores the possibility of reducing the appeal of terrorism through development initiatives. According to the author,

> Given that terrorists recruit foot soldiers from poor, marginalised, and underdeveloped regions, the right kind of aid may well help to resolve some of the socioeconomic issues that enable terrorists to gain a foothold in the region. Granted with the right intentions and administered in an effective manner - with a stated timeline, clear mandate, etc., development aid could help to alleviate the socio-economic problems that create the conditions for the radicalisation and indoctrination of jobless youth in places like northern Mali, Niger, and northern Nigeria (Maiangwa, 2014:26).

Agbiboa (2014), suggest that in order to end the conflict, the Nigerian government should cut back on its military operations and instead work toward winning the confidence of Boko Haram by implementing some of the group's demands, as these will demonstrate government's sincerity and willingness to dialogue. Since the eruption of Boko Haram insurgency, military force remained the main priority of the Nigerian government in combating the insurgency. Besides the massive deployment of armed security to the northeast which some estimates indicated to have reached 100,000 (Folade, 2016), since 2014, there are also 8700 Multinational Joint Task Force [MNJTF] troops formed by the member states of Lake Chad Basin Commission [Cameroun, Chad, Nigeria, and Niger Republics] to support the Nigeria army in combating the insurgency. In addition, to boost the military campaign, Nigeria raised her military expenditure to the tune of $2 billion (Perouse De Montclos, 2014) representing about 40% of the total country's annual budget.

Alongside the military operation, numerous repressive actions were taken to strengthen the military as well as ensure the control of the population. These quasi-military measures provide stringent punishment for fighters, sponsors, and collaborators of Boko Haram. It also allowed the security operative to arrest suspects and confiscate properties owned by the insurgent group or their collaborators. Consequently, the military approach came with several repercussions. Therefore, informed by the successive failure of the COIN approach, to combat the Boko Haram group, the Nigeria government is to adapt to the principle of P-COIN that emphasize the support and control of the local population as a conduit for defeating the insurgent Boko Haram. The success of a population-centric approach will depend on factors like the Nigerian government's ability to deliver services, address corruption, maintain security, and build trust with local communities. Additionally, the military's conduct and adherence to human rights will play a crucial role in determining whether this strategy is effective in countering the Boko Haram insurgency and stabilizing the region.

Boko Haram Insurgency in the Northeast

Initially, Boko Haram was radical in its ideology but did not resort to violence. However, a turning point occurred in 2009 when the group members refused to comply with some law mandating motorcycle riders to wear helmets (Uri, 2014). The arrest of several members triggered a riot, marking Boko Haram's first major confrontation with Nigeria Police Force, resulting in a devastating loss of approximately 800

lives. Mohammed Yusuf was handed over to the Nigeria Police Force by the Nigerian Army and died in the hands of the police. It became the stroke that broke the Carmel's back and the sects became more aggressive than they used to be. Some survivors, including a notable figure named Shekau, sought refuge in training camps located in the Sahara Desert. After a while, Shekau decided that there could be no negotiations with such a government and set about reorganising the group. He adapted the Al-Qaeda model and broke the group into cells that are largely independent of each other. This is currently Boko Haram's structure; a cellular structure, no centralised command, and seemingly no unity of purpose. This "lack of unity" makes them particularly difficult to negotiate with, as you cannot tell who exactly represents the group.

In mid-2014, Boko Haram seized control of significant portions of territory in and around Borno State, excluding Maiduguri, the original base of the group. However, in 2015, a coalition offensive forced Boko Haram to retreat to the outskirts of the Sambisa Forests and the Lake Chad Basin (Addaney, 2017). During the same year, Boko Haram's leader, Abubakar Shekau, pledged allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (Aljazeera, 2015). Internal conflicts within Boko Haram resulted in numerous desertions, leading to the formation of a separate organization known as the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP). Ongoing disputes further fragmented Boko Haram into various factions, including the Shekau and Barnawi factions, as well as smaller factions such as the Ansaru faction, which receives support from al-Qaeda, Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Al-Shabaab, the Taliban, and ISIL.

Under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau, Boko Haram transformed into a highly violent organization, advocating the use of terrorist tactics to promote its radical agenda. Shekau established links with international terrorist networks, including Al Qaeda, thereby expanding Boko Haram's connections on a global scale. Over time, Boko Haram received training from Al Qaeda operatives, specifically in the areas of explosives handling and carrying out large-scale terrorist attacks. The deepening alliance between Boko Haram and Al Qaeda has raised concerns among regional observers who fear the potential expansion of Boko Haram's attacks beyond Nigeria's borders.

The causes of the Boko Haram insurgency are multifaceted and interconnected. Some of these include poverty, unemployment, religious and ideological believe, failure to tackle violent ideological groups, injustice and extra-judicial killings, and lack of good governance. The Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria has had far-reaching and devastating impacts on various aspects of society. The consequences of the insurgency extend beyond the immediate areas affected by violence and have had profound social, economic, and humanitarian repercussions. Some key impacts of the Boko Haram insurgency include the destruction of lives and properties which according to Campbell (2020), alleges that due to the Boko Haram insurgency, about 37, 500 people have been killed, 2.5 million people displaced, and made about 244, 000 people made refugees. In spite of the disparity in these figures, it is evident that Boko Haram has claimed 'thousands' of innocent lives and displaced people in their 'millions'. Other significant impact of Boko Haram insurgency include rebellion against the state, disruption of the economy and psychological trauma of victims.

Military Strategy and Counterinsurgency Operations

The military strategy in countering the Boko Haram insurgency has undergone several phases and evolved over time. Nigerian security forces, along with regional partners, have employed a combination of conventional and counterinsurgency tactics to combat the insurgency. According to Udounwa (2013), Nigeria initially employed a "kinetic strategy" in its conflict with the Boko Haram Group (BHG). This strategy, as highlighted by Falode, focused on using hard military power through kinetic operations against the BHG. Kinetic operations involved conventional engagement tactics, such as manoeuvres, massed movement of infantry, and adherence to rules of engagement in war. However, this approach proved costly for Nigeria during the major phases of the conflict between 2010 and 2015 (Falode, 2016). The military counterinsurgency operation strategy in the Northeast of Nigeria according to the Chief of Army Staff Operations Directive (2015), was initially etched on the offensive approach. It gradually gone into the

defensive mode due to prevailing operational challenges, making it less effective and giving the insurgents the leeway to attack soft targets (the populace) and carry out incessant and sustained attacks against various military locations. A situation that has unnecessarily prolonged the ongoing COIN operation, whose end seem not to be in sight. The mode of operation of the counterinsurgents has remained the conventional warfare model while the insurgents' tactics continue to be dynamic and guerilla in nature.

It was only towards the end of 2015 and early 2016 that Nigeria began blending both conventional and unconventional countermeasures against the BHG, which led to some progress. Initially, the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) was responsible for addressing the activities of the BHG, viewing them as civil, social, and religious disobedience. The NPF utilized roadblocks and mass arrests at attack sites to curb and contain the BHG's activities (Walker, 2012). However, due to the NPF's inability to effectively tackle the BHG, Nigeria established the Joint Task Force (JTF) in 2003, and later the military became fully involved as the Boko Haram insurgents posed a serious threat to national security.

While the kinetic approach was initially used to counter the insurgency, there are claims that the military has frequently violated fundamental human rights in the process. Though, the Nigerian military authorities have made numerous official declarations emphasizing that human rights are not a mere distraction but an essential aspect of counterinsurgency operations (Olonisakin, 2015), the practical implementation of these principles reveals a disturbingly low, if not entirely absent, regard for human rights. An illustrative example can be found in the stance of General Buratai, the Chief of Army Staff, who has expressed the belief that allegations of human rights abuses against officers and enlisted personnel of the Nigerian Army have the potential to undermine the morale and effectiveness of army personnel in the execution of their duties (Premium Times on 8 March 2018). To underscore the prioritization of national security imperatives over human rights concerns, General Buratai went a step further by appealing to judges to take into account the element of national interest when adjudicating cases related to human rights violations committed by members of the armed forces engaged in counterinsurgency (COIN) operations (The Voice of Nigeria on 22 Nov 2018). He argued that these human rights cases brought against the Nigerian Army were intended to divert the Army from its constitutional duty of safeguarding Nigeria's territorial integrity (The Voice of Nigeria, 22 Nov 2018). Though, no doubt, military strategy in countering the Boko Haram insurgency has been influenced by the changing dynamics of the conflict, the capabilities, and tactics of Boko Haram, as well as the response of the Nigerian government and its international partners. The military strategy employed in countering Boko Haram since its inception include various Joint Task Force (like the Special Military Joint Task Force (SMJTF) in 2011, Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), and the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF)), and Military Operations (like Operation Zaman Lafiya, Operation Lafiya Dole, Operation Gama Aiki (2015), Operation Safe Corridor (2015), and Operation Tura Takaibango).

The military counterinsurgency efforts in the north-eastern region of Nigeria have achieved some level of significant accomplishments in the fight against the Boko Haram insurgency. While it is challenging to provide an exhaustive list of achievements, some notable ones include liberation of territory previously captured by the terrorists, degradation of boko haram insurgents and making them weak in their strongholds, protection of civilians, rehabilitation and reintegration of victims and repentant Boko Haram members, international and regional cooperation to mitigate terrorist activities, and collaboration with the civilians to gather intelligence. Notwithstanding the achievements, the military faces several challenges in their counterinsurgency efforts. These challenges can impede the effectiveness of military operations and require strategic approaches to overcome them. Some of the common challenges include persistent insurgent attacks, shortage of enough manpower within the military, sabotage within the military in the counterinsurgency effort, inadequate equipment, allegations of human rights abuses in military operations, elusiveness of insurgents, concealment of insurgents' identity, and the lack of cooperation and trust between the military and local communities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

There have been various security challenges in Nigeria since its inception, especially since the country returned to democratic rule in 1999. But none has been largely compared to the Boko Haram insurgency that has bedevilled the North East region of the country. In fact, no issue has challenged the country's national security like the insurgency of the North East that has equally spilled across national boundaries. The threats and damage Boko Haram insurgency has caused to the national security of Nigeria are frightening, alarming, and capable of destroying the territorial integrity of the country and neighbours like Chad, Cameroon, and Niger Republic. The activities of the Boko Haram terrorists have led to the destruction of lives and properties and the displacement of millions of people away from their homes and means of livelihood. The insurgency in northeast Nigeria, primarily led by the Boko Haram group, emerged as a complex and multifaceted challenge. It was influenced by historical grievances, socio-economic factors, and external actors. The lackadaisical attitude and approach of the government to mitigate the effective operations of the insurgency from the onset escalated the scourge and further compounded the task of the security agencies who could not deal with it adequately.

The Nigerian military adopted a counterinsurgency doctrine and employed various strategies throughout the period under review. The initial government responses were largely ineffective, as the Boko Haram insurgency was becoming more popular than anticipated, leading to the establishment of Joint Task Forces and multinational cooperation. The military that was known for professionalism outside the country failed to tackle the terrorists, which could be a result of poor weapons and ammunition as the insurgents use better and superior weapons. The counterinsurgency approach of the military was initially kinetic. The subsequent Operation Lafiya Dole represented a significant shift in strategy and tactics, emphasizing intelligence-led operations and cooperation with local communities. However, the militarized approaches had their limitations and unintended consequences, such as the abuse of fundamental human rights of citizens, displacement of civilians, and lack of trust in the military.

While the Nigerian armed forces achieved notable successes in terms of territorial gains and weakening the insurgency, there were also areas that require improvement. Government should address the socio-economic grievances that contribute to the recruitment and support of Boko Haram and any other aggrieved group. This can be possible through the implementation of comprehensive development projects aimed at creating employment opportunities, improving education and healthcare facilities, and addressing infrastructural deficits in affected areas. The military should work hard to foster trust and cooperation with local communities through sustained engagement. Develop programs that encourage community members to report suspicious activities, provide information, and participate in community policing initiatives. Ensure that military personnel are trained in cultural sensitivity and human rights to build positive relationships with local populations. There should be a continuous investment in the training and capacity building for the Nigerian military and security forces involved in counterinsurgency operations. This includes specialized training in asymmetric warfare, intelligence analysis, counter-terrorism tactics, and human rights. Regularly evaluate and update training programs to adapt to the evolving nature of the insurgency.

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