

THE MILITARY AND NATIONAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA: LESSON FROM THE BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY

BY

PATRICK OLUSEUN BAMGBOYE

*Department of Sociology and Anthropology
University of Uyo, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State
Nigeria*

Email: seunpat@yahoo.com

Phone: +2348138434142

SUMMARY

The study examines the role of the Nigerian military towards national security of the Nigerian State. It observes that the national security of the country has been severely threatened by the Boko Haram insurgency in recent years despite the efforts of the military towards tackling the insurgency in the Nigerian State. The study further identifies internal and external factors as the bane of the military in prosecuting the war against Boko Haram. These factors include among others, poor and unsophisticated weapons and equipment, low morale on the part of the military, corruption among the rank and file of the military, lack of intelligence gathering and sharing, Nigeria's porous borders, proliferation of arms in the country, political influence, poverty and unemployment as well as external supports and funding. As a methodology, the paper relied on secondary data retrieval from books, journals, news papers, magazines and the internet. The study however recommend inter alia that, internal and external factors be seriously addressed by the Nigerian government and by extension the Nigerian military if the war against the Boko Haram insurgency is to be won.

INTRODUCTION

The act establishing the Nigerian military can be found in section 217 of the 1999 Constitution, while subsequent sections deal with its composition and roles toward national security in the country. Apart from the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970), the greatest national security challenge the Nigerian military has faced since 1960 is the Boko Haram insurgency. This security challenge is apparently so because Boko Haram has grown into full scale terrorism with attendant internal and external contradictions. It should be noted that the military by its characteristics, training and functions is to protect and defend the nation from external aggression and internal insurrection when a nation's security is threatened. Nonetheless, the challenge posed by the Boko Haram insurgency has seriously exposed the limitations and shortcomings of the Nigerian military capabilities as far as the sensitive issue of national security is concerned (Awofeso, 2002; Dudley, 1964).

Among other issues, Boko Haram insurgency has exposed the limitations in the Nigerian military ranging from inadequate personnel, low morale of soldiers, poor

equipment and corruption among the rank and file in the military, indiscipline among officers as well as the infiltration of the military by terrorists coupled with the politicization of the military. These among others are the contradictions confronting the Nigerian military in its war against Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria (Chris, 2015).

Conceptual Clarifications

The following concepts used in this study are operationally defined as they relate to this study.

The Nigerian Military

Oyediran (1996) sees the Nigerian military as the totality of the country's armed forces, which include the navy, army, air force and the police force. Maxwell (2012) however argued against the classification of the police as part of the military. He conceptualizes the Nigerian military as the entire armed forces of the country. This is said to comprise the army, navy and air force, a perspective adopted by this study.

National Security in Nigeria

Otasowe (2014) views national security as all issues of safety, security of lives and property as well as strategic issues of national interests of a country. Maxwell (2012) sees national security as all issues bordering on a country's defence, as well as all activities involved in the protection of a nation against attacks, protection of lives and property. This paper agrees with the views above.

Terrorism

Tanson (2011) posits that the conceptualization of the term "terrorism" is controversial and contentious due to its subjective definitions among conflicting nations for what is termed "terrorism" by some nations or groups, may be termed "freedom fighting" by others, vice versa. Tanson however defined terrorism as an act of unleashing terror on people for political purposes. Maxwell (2012) perceives terrorism as the use of or threat of violent actions with a view to pursuing political goals or to forcing a government to act in a particular way.

Boko Haram

Boko Haram is said to mean that "western education is sacrilegious or sinful or forbidden. It is also said to mean western civilization is forbidden. This is said to be closely associated with the sect's official name – "Jama" atu Awis Sunna Lidda' Awati Wal-Jihad in Arabic, meaning people committed to the propagation of the prophet's teachings and Jihad (Otasowe, 2014). For all intent and purpose, this meaning holds sway considering their mode of operation.

Theoretical Framework

The paper adopts structural functionalism as the theoretical framework. From the perspectives of some of its exponents such as August Comte, Emile Durkheim,

Herbert Spencer, Robert Merton and Talcott Parsons, it is a framework that sees the society as a complex system, whose parts function together to promote solidarity and stability. This framework views the society through a macro-level orientation, which is a broad focus on the social structures that shape society as a whole, and argues that society has evolved like an organism (Craib, 1992).

Functionalism addresses society as a whole in terms of the function of its constituent elements; namely norms, customs, traditions, and institutions. A common analogy, popularized by Herbert Spencer, presents these parts of society as “organ” that works towards the proper functioning of the “body” as a whole (Bernard, 2000)

Emilie Durkheim was interested in how social order is possible or how society remains relatively stable. Functionalism views each part of society in terms of how it contributes to the stability of the whole society. The society is more than the sum of its parts; rather, each part of society is functional for the stability of the whole society (Crossman, 2014).

Robert Merton expanded Parsons’ understanding of structural functionalism by explaining not only the function of social structures, but also their dysfunctions and non – functions. Merton’s theory of structural functionalism has been called “middle range” because he moved away from trying to analyse society as a whole to studying different levels of social world such as organizations and groups.

Talcott Parsons version of structural functionalism is perhaps the best known. According to Parsons, four functional imperatives are embedded in all systems of action: adaptation, goal attainment, integration and latency (also known as pattern maintenance).

The different parts are primarily the institutions of society, each of which is organized to fill different needs and each of which has particular consequences for the form and shape of society. The parts depend on each other (Crossman, 2014).

The import or relevance of this theory to this paper is that structural functionalism enables the society to critically identify, observe, analyse and predict the role of the military in ensuring national security. Its emphasis on the organic role of the parts in the system mirrors the military as part of a society, as well as its role in ensuring the stability of the Nigerian society as a whole.

Functionalism emphasizes consensus and order in society, focusing on social stability and shared public values, which the Nigerian military strives for as an institution that ensures political stability and national security. The military as an institution exist to ensure order in the Nigerian social and political systems. From this perspective, disorganization in the system, such as deviant and criminal activities of the Boko Haram insurgents leads to disorder and the onus to ensure stability and order rests with the Nigerian military.

Boko Haram insurgency has become dysfunctional to the Nigerian state. It has plagued the national security of the nation so much so that the responsibility to ensure social order has become the functionality of the Nigerian military. Experience has shown that when the military institution is not performing its functional role properly, the state of national security worsens. When it is up and doing, performing its role properly, the nation’s national security (social stability) is better for it.

Origin and Development of Boko Harm Insurgency in Nigeria

The origin of Boko Haram can be traced back to 2002, when the Founder of the sect, Muhammed Yusuf started his radical religious movement in Ndimi Mosque in Maiduguri, Bornu State. Muhammed Yusuf had called for Jihad to oust the secular status quo, pushing for Sharia to be practised in Nigeria. The sect as at this time was viewed as parochial Islamic sect and equally seen as less dangerous by security forces (Madin, 2013).

It should be noted that even until the year 2011; the sect was still viewed as less dangerous by the security forces. The violent attack by the nation's security forces against the sect in 2009 that led to the death of its leader Muhammed Yusuf changed the dimension of the activities and development of Boko Haram in Nigeria, as the sect that vowed to carry out reprisal attacks. This they did, by carrying out coordinated attacks in Bauchi, Bornu, Kano, Yobe, Abuja, Adamawa and other places in the Northern States of Nigeria (Otasowe, 2014).

In recent years, the violent activities of the sect grew, kidnapping of school girls and women, suicide bombings, attacks on public institutions, which have proved very challenging for security agents to handle. The internal and external support and funding of the sect has enabled the sect to continue with its heinous activities despite increased Nigeria's military offensive and regional military intervention against it (Madin, 2013).

On May 2013, the Nigerian government declared a state of emergency in the Northern States of Yobe, Borno and Adamawa, and assembled a Joint Task Force comprising the Military and the Police to tackle the menace of the terrorist group. Also by this time, the nation's security policy was reviewed, and the nation's borders reinforced in view of the threats and attacks from the Boko Haram group (Chothia, 2011).

Nigerian Military And Boko Haram Insurgency: An Appraisal

The mandate of the Nigerian military as far as the issue of national security is concerned is clearly enshrined in the Army Act of 1960, the Navy Act of 1964, Air force Act of 1964 as well as section 217 to 219 of the 1999 constitution of Nigeria (Awofeso, 2002).

The military by tradition is to defend the country from external aggression and internal insurrection. The military is also expected to assist the police in maintaining law and order whenever the President deems fit.

Moreover, the specific functions of the military according to the various sections of the law are listed below:

- a. Defending the country against external aggression.
- b. Maintenance of the country's territorial integrity and the security of its borders from violation on the land, sea and air.
- c. Suppression of insurrection in order to restore law and order in the country.
- d. Performance of other functions as may be prescribed by an act of the National Assembly.

Boko Haram Ascendancy: A Result of Poor Military Formation

The Nigerian military has not made any remarkable progress after the Nigerian civil war, the end of the war in January, 1970 witnessed reconstruction of the war torn areas. This was followed by series of military coups and counter coups. Each military Head of State was conscious of the fact that a well-equipped military could lead to his overthrow. For years the military was underdeveloped and underfunded and could be said to be ill prepared for the sophisticated Boko Haram onslaught.

As earlier stated from the poor military structure of Nigeria, one major step taken by the military to tackle the Boko Haram insurgency was the setting up of the Military Joint Task Force. Through this outfit, military personnel were mobilized to the affected areas in the northern part of Nigeria (Madin, 2013).

The major challenge the Nigerian Military has been faced with is on how to contain the terrorist activities of the Boko Haram group, such as suicide bombings, sacking of villages and other terrorists acts. With nothing less than 170 explosions since 2009, and many lives and property lost to the terrorist group, kidnappings on a high scale and the attendant aftermath of the heinous activities of the sect, which has resulted into displacement of numerous people from their homes as they are now popularly referred to as internally displaced persons (IDPs). This according to Chris (2015), has been worrisome and burdensome on the country.

There is no disputing the fact that the terrorist activities of Boko Haram have been quite challenging to the Nigerian military. There have been several reports of military operations against Boko Haram being poorly executed, with soldiers often lamenting about their poor equipment and poor arms against the more sophisticated weapons and equipment of Boko Haram fighters (Chris, 2015).

Furthermore, other internal contradictions affecting the military's war against Boko Haram insurgency are the report of widespread corruption among military top brass, which has negatively affected the prosecution of the war negatively. There is also the low morale among the military officers posted to the war-torn northern region. The low morale is caused by poor funding of the military establishment in-terms of inadequate welfare packages and also inadequate equipment to really prosecute the war against Boko Haram.

It should be noted that in response to the global outcry that trailed the kidnap of the Chibok girls in 2013, United States in April 2014, agreed to assist Nigeria in handling the menace of Boko Haram insurgency beginning with the rescue of the Chibok girls. Thus, the U.S. agreed to send spy planes to Nigeria to assist the Nigerian military embark on rescue operations (Nigerian Watch, 2015).

Unfortunately, according to U.S. Consul General and the U.S. Defence Headquarters, the covert operation to rescue the girls was sabotaged by some military officers within the Nigerian army. This enabled the terrorist group to take preemptive actions. The United States subsequently pulled out and even refused the sale of weapons and equipment to the Nigerian government (Nigerian Watch, 2015; Abdulhakeem, 2015). Many soldiers could be said to be sympathetic to the Boko Haram cause from religious and ethnic lines.

The Nigerian military has had several of its personnel ambushed, killed and the operations scuttled due to leakage of information within its fold. Though, it has made several arrests and prosecution of those found guilty of this offence, the ugly

development has significantly affected the war against Boko Haram negatively and subsequently affected the image of the military badly and also cast aspersions on the military's national security capabilities.

The above stated factors represent the internal contradictions militating against the successful prosecution of the war on Boko Haram insurgency. The external contradictions can be situated within the purview of external funding and support from other terrorist groups such as ISIS, Al Shaba, etc.

The factors have also undermined the efforts' and tactics of the military in its onslaught against Boko Haram. There is also the issue of abject poverty and high rate unemployment, which has helped the group to easily recruit vulnerable youths into its fold, thereby affecting national security. The proliferation of arms and ammunition in the north of Nigeria and the porous borders of Nigeria are factors that have hampered the military on prosecuting the war against Boko Haram, with the attendant negative consequences on national security.

There is also the lack of intelligence gathering and sharing, and also lack of synergy between the military and other security outfits in the country. Suffice it to say, that all of these factors and contradictions have been the bane of the Nigerian military in its attempt at winning the war against Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

The National Security of Nigeria has been seriously threatened by the Boko Haram Insurgency since 2009. This however, is not without political, economic religious, social and humanitarian implications. Thousands of lives have been lost; property worth billions of Naira had been lost too, thousands of people are currently suffering as a result of displacement from their original homes to refugee and internally displaced camps. Economically, investors are scared away from investing in the region and the country at large. The country for these numbers of years has been in the news for wrong reasons and the Boko Haram has been termed one of the deadliest in the World by United Nations Security Council among others (Abdulhakeem, 2015).

In view of the poor state of Nigeria's National Security, the Nigerian Military faces a very daunting task in tackling the Boko Haram Insurgency. This is particularly so because of the internal and external factors that have impacted negatively on the Nigerian military in its efforts at prosecuting the Boko Haram insurgency. It is thus, the view of this study that these contradictions must be tackled or addressed if the military is to successfully execute its war against Boko Haram and strengthen national security in preparation for other future challenges.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following suggestions are hereby proffered as way of ending the Boko Haram insurgency and positioning the military for formidable future defence of Nigeria,

- The Nigeria's defense policy must be constantly reviewed in view of the dynamics of terrorism. The policy must extensively take care of the training and retraining of military personnel on issues of counter-terrorism.
- There must be increased budgetary allocation for the military to modernize in line with global military best practice.
- The military must investigate and flush out those sabotaging its effort within its fold so that the war can be fought with common purpose.
- The military must ensure that the officers on the front lines are adequately equipped with sophisticated hardware good enough to defeat Boko Haram.
- The morale of the military, especially those on the battle fields must be bolstered by good and adequate welfare packages, remuneration and promotion.
- There should be a thorough investigation of funds allocated to prosecute the war since 2009, as well as all contracts to supply military hardware since 2009. Culprits must be sanctioned so as to serve as a deterrent to others in future.
- The Nigerian government should prosecute the sponsors of the sect.
- Also, all the insurgents in military and police custody must be properly prosecuted according to the law of the land.
- The Nigerian government should seek international cooperation and support from the more developed countries to tackle the problem.
- Last but not the least, the Lake Chad Basin Commission comprising of troops from the front line countries of Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger must be strengthened so as to effectively contain the terrorist activities of the Boko Haram within these regions.

REFERENCES

Abdulahakeem, M. (2005). "*National Insecurity*", Osundefender.org.

Awofeso, O. (2002). *The Military and Politics in Nigeria*. Unpublished Monograph.

Bernard, A. (2000). *History and theory in Anthropology*. Cambridge: CUP

Chothia, F. (2001). "*Who are Nigeria's Boko Haram Islamists?*" In www.bbc.co.uk.

Chris, S. (2015). "*Why Nigeria's Military is Losing the Battle against Boko Haram*", www.america.aljazeera.com

Craib, I. (1992). *Modern social theory: from Parsons to Habermas*. London: Haverster Wheatsheaf.

Crossman, A. (2014). "*The Functionalist Perspective*" in www.tradwords.com

Dudley, B. (1964). "The Military in the New States of Africa" in the *Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2. P.352.

Eshimolah, J. (2015). *Nigerian Political Development and Politics*. Benin City: Fourman Press.

Madin, S. O. (2013). *Nigeria, Governance and Political Instability*. Lagos: Trueman Printers and Publishers Ltd.

Maxwell, L. (2012). *Dimension of International Terrorism and Conflicts*. London: Oxford University Press.

Nigerian Watch (2015). "Tip Off over Chibok Girls Rescue" in nigeranwatch.com.

Otasowe, G. E. (2014) "The Issues of National Security and Security Agencies" in www.nigerdeltacongress.com

Oyediran, O. (1996). *Nigerian Government and Politics Under Military Rule (1966-1979)*. London: Macmillan Press.

Parsons. T. (1961). *Theories of Society: Foundations for modern Sociological Theory*. New York: Free Press

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria: As Amended.

Wikipedia (2016). "Structural Functionalism" in www.wikipedia.com