

The Human Security Implications of the Nigeria's Counter-Insurgency Strategy against Boko Haram

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Abstract

The spate of violent attacks perpetrated by Boko Haram insurgents has necessitated the response by the Nigerian State through counterinsurgency measures. However, this has negatively affected the human security of the affected communities in the northeast region. This paper examines the counter-insurgency strategy adopted by the Nigerian state in responding to Boko Haram insurgency and human security implications in the state. Library research is used as a methodology of the paper. The paper advances the argument that even though counter-insurgency measures adopted by the Nigerian in its fight against Boko Haram proves effective from the onset, yet it fail to completely defeat and eliminate the movement, and instead the measures breed a renewed upraise of the movement with more sophisticated waves of armed violence against the state and its security apparatus, and gross human rights violations and human security implications against the civilian population. Thus, the paper conclude that as long as these counter-insurgency strategy remain the only measure of fighting against Boko Haram insurgency it could hardly be possible to have lasting solution to this security challenges. In view, of this, the paper recommends adopting a more pragmatic peaceful approach revolving around dialogue and peace-building that is less militaristic in dealing with problem, human security considerations should be emphasised.

Keywords: Insurgency, Terrorism, Counter-insurgency, Human security, Boko Haram

Introduction

Nigerian state has for more than two decades been bedevilled by ranges of security challenges and tensions, in forms of civil unrest, ethno-religious violence and disturbances, youth restiveness, threat for secession, militancy, terrorism and insurgency among others. These negatively affect the socio-economic condition of the Nigerian populace and question the continuity of its existence as one sovereign entity. In recent time, the most salient of all the challenges has the insurgency perpetrated by the Boko Haram dreaded group, through their campaign of terror which was initially waged against the state, and directed against the security personnel and the their various formations. But, later assumes additional dimension in which civil population have equally being affected, through massive attacks and bombardment of public places such as schools, hospitals, markets, residential areas, farmlands, motor parks, and public joints among others. The gloomy picture of the trend of Boko Haram insurgency has been vividly captured by Former Chief Justice of the Federation Dahiru Mustapha (cited in Muzan, 2014, p 218) when he noted that more than ever before in the political history of Nigeria, the scourge of terrorism poses great challenges to the state, sliding into anarchy which has assumed dangerous dimensions, perhaps beyond the capacity of our security agencies to deal with effectively. This resulted in serious human security threats and crises with gross political, social and economic implications against the Nigerian people and state.

Given the magnitude of these challenges, Nigerian state responded by adopting a counter-insurgency strategy that aimed at eliminating the insurgency and terror campaign. The strategy involves the use of brutal force and other extra-judicial measures to suppress uprising, opposition or any other forms civil violence by the constitutional authorities through the instrumentalities of the state apparatus, in forms of road blockade, stop and search, cordon off operations, detention without trial, illegal arrests, torture, heavy security deployments, human right violations and abuses among others. Although, in some occasion these measures prove effective in containing the security challenges of the time, however, more often they have serious profound human security implications. As they generate spontaneous violent reactions with more tempo than the previous realities, and at this point it always becomes difficult for the state to suppress or even to contain despite its military prowess.

Human Security

Human security is a people-oriented phenomenon that revolves around protection of the lives, livelihood, and human values of a given people and their communities against danger and or threats. Thus, it is measured in term of degree or the extent at which people and their communities are safe and free from physical violence, harm and or attacks, and are enjoying relative stability and order. In view of this, Lisa (2016, p9) refers to human security as the security of individuals and communities from direct threats of violence. In addition, United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (2024) observes that It depends upon empowering people to participate in making choices about how they can be most secure, now and over the longer term, and also requires norms and institutions that guarantee basic protections of human progress and safety, such as through good governance, rule of law, early warning and social protection schemes.

Therefore, human security deals with the capacity to identify threats and want in order to avoid them when possible, and to mitigate their effects when they do occur. Hence, it means helping victims cope with the consequences of the widespread insecurity resulting from armed conflict, human rights violations and massive underdevelopment (Tadjbakhsh, 2005, p5). In view of this, it is seen as people-centred, because it concerns with how people live and breathe in a society, how safely and freely they can exercise their many choices, how much access they have to market and social opportunities, whether they live in conflict or peace, how confident they can feel that the opportunities they enjoy one day will not be totally lost the next (UNESCO, 2008, p3). Therefore, human security is deliberately protective, as it recognizes that people and communities threatened by events well beyond their control: it is responsive, not rigid; preventative, not reactive. In this way, thus, human security is people-centred, not threat-centred.

Insurgency

According to Obafemi and Galadima (2013) insurgency is a strategy adopted by groups, which can not attain their political objectives through conventional means, but by protracted, asymmetric violence, ambiguity, the use of complex terrain (jungles, mountains, and urban areas), psychological warfare, and political mobilization, it is fast becoming a means of expressing perceived discontents among groups in the country. Its ultimate desire is to subvert and alter the balance of power in their favour. In a similar vein, the US Department of Defence (2001:207) defines the term as “an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through use of subversion and armed conflict.

In addition, Kilcullen and Porter (2009, p6) refer to insurgency as an organized use of subversion and violence to seize, nullify, or challenge political control of a region. The major

goal of insurgency as a movement is to subvert or displace the government and completely or partially control the resources and population of a given territory. They do so through the use of force (including guerilla warfare, terrorism and coercion, intimidation and propaganda, subversion and political mobilization. Also, they intend to weaken government control and legitimacy, while increasing their own control and influence. Their main target is not to kill counterinsurgency forces, but rather to establish a competitive system of control over the population, making it impossible for the government to administer its territory and people.

In a more comprehensive manner, Moore (undated, p3) opines that an insurgency is a protracted violent conflict, in which one or more groups seek to overthrow or fundamentally change the political or social ordering in a state or region through the use of sustained violence, subversion, social disruption, and political action. He further maintain that insurgency seeks radical change to the existing political and social orders through the use of sustained violence and political disruption. It is a long term form of warfare in which military actions are carried out by guerilla attacks and terrorism often as one of its basic element, targeting civilian infrastructures (Moore, undated). In addition, O'Neill (1990:13) argues that as an organized movement, it usually involves a struggle between a non-ruling group and the ruling authorities in which the non-ruling group consciously uses political resources (e.g., organizational expertise, propaganda, and demonstrations) and violence to destroy, reformulate, or sustain the basis of legitimacy of one or more aspects of politics.

As an organised movement, in order to fund their activities and operations, insurgents may foster an illicit economy, sometimes with an international scope, eluding government monitoring, taxations and interdiction. Such illicit financial activities diminish government revenues, increase corruption among local officials and weaken the control and legitimacy of government. In addition, they also engaged in a range of criminal activities, which include theft, extortion, trafficking of narcotics; arms and people, money laundering, piracy, document fraud, bribery, kidnapping and black market activities, donations from sympathetic foreign governments, diaspora groups and individuals (Kilcullen and Porter, 2009, p8).

An obvious feature of insurgency is the widespread loss of life, in which casualties are frequently most vulnerable, such as women, children (who are often recruited as fighters) and the elderly. This is because cities and urban areas, which generally have large civilian populations, are strategically important locations for insurgent operations, and hence control over these is often strongly contested. This makes it difficult for civilians to find safe havens (Bellamy, 2020). Thus, insurgency poses major risks to people's survival, livelihoods and dignity and thus to human security, because it suffocates daily life, adding to pervasive feelings of insecurity and hopelessness. During these conflict, groups especially insurgents engage in gross violations of human rights and war crimes, including torture, genocide and the use of rape as a weapon of war (CHS, 2003, P21).

Counter-Insurgency

Counterinsurgency has been defined as a 'comprehensive civilian and military efforts taken to simultaneously defeat and contain insurgency and address its root causes'. (US COIN, 2009). In view of this, it is seen as "an integrated set of political, economic, social and security measures intended to end and prevent the recurrence of armed violence, create and maintain stable 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 (Moore, undated, p14).

In a similar vein, US Joint Chiefs of Staff (2018) refers to counterinsurgency as a combination of measures (involving use of political, economic, security, legal and even

psychological) undertaken by a government, sometimes with United States government and multinational partners' support, to defeat insurgency. Thus, it is a blend of comprehensive civilian and military efforts designed to simultaneously defeat and contain insurgency and address its root causes (US Joint Chiefs of Staff (2018, p,xiii). It is also a complex, protracted effort that often requires the integration of capabilities, foreign humanitarian assistance, stability actions, with those of numerous Inter-Agency partners to help the national government marginalize insurgents and win the support of the population (US Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2018, chapter III-2). As a complex process every situation involved in it is unique and has its own context, its own specific set of factors and all these must be fully understood, in order to be able to craft a sound and comprehensive approach (US Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2018, chapter IV-p1).

COIN strategy has two core objectives, firstly, involves seeking the mutual assistance of the state towards the end goal of crippling terrorism, and second, using actors within the population who would become useful and critical partners in undermining terrorists ideology (Gingell, 2021, p129). In view of this, Curtis (2020) maintains that COIN strategy focuses on political or ideological mobilization, as the protracted violence requires a wide range of social, economic, informational, political and military initiatives. No single government initiative is sufficient, particularly, when the insurgents are able to bind political and ideological goals with genuine public grievances in mobilizing popular support. In addition, Kilcullen and Porter (2009, p12) observe that COIN as a complex process integrates full range of civilian and military agencies. It is often a people-centric, focuses on security and controlling of a given population, and or enemy-centric, focuses on defeating the insurgents. Thus, it is an extremely difficult undertaking, often highly politically controversial, involving series of ambiguous events that are extremely difficult to interpret, and often requires vastly more resources and time, than usually anticipated. The fundamental objective of COIN campaign is to build popular support for a government, while marginalizing the insurgents. Thus, is seen as armed political competition between the government and insurgents (Kilcullen and Porter (2009, p12).

Basically, there are two major approaches to COIN namely: (i) Enemy Centric: this is an army contest between the COIN security forces and insurgents, and emphasizes defeating the enemy as its primary goal, and all else follows; and (ii) Population Centric: this focuses on maintaining or recovering the support of the population, while direct military action against the insurgents organization is sustained. Thus, preaches ' first protect and the support the population, and all else will follow (Kilcullen and Porter, 2009, P14). In a similar vein, Galula (cited in Oberoi, 2011, p6) argues that population centric COIN is essentially a military operation, but its success is not determine by the number of enemy killed, but by the shielding of the civilian population. It considers population as the most important centre of gravity and focuses on protecting them, even at the cost of military, thus requires patience on the part of the administration running the war. However, in reality, COIN campaign will rarely be purely enemy-centric or population-centric, but generally include elements of both, with relative balance changing over time (Kilcullen and Porter, 2009, P15).

The Rise of Boko Haram Insurgency and the Response of the Nigerian State

Obafemi and Galadima (2013, p,xv) revealed that insurgent groups in Nigeria have emerged at different points in the political history of the state, and each assumes different patterns and adopts different strategies in accomplishing it's objectives with little or real militancy approach. Among them are: Odua People's Congress (OPC); Bakassi Boys; Movement for

the Actualization of Biafra; (MASSOB); Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND); and Boko Haram Insurgents.

According to Osumah, (2013) Boko Haram evolved from a small religious sect formed in 2002, by Muhammad Yusuf, however, its transformation into a terrorist group started with the investigation carried out by the Nigerian Police Force into the sect's activities, under the code name 'operation flush' on 26th July, 2009. Consequently, some members of the group were arrested and weapons and bomb-making equipment were confiscated. Thereafter, a joint military task force operation was also launched against the group on 30th July, 2009, and this led to the death of more than 700 people mostly Boko haram members, while several police stations, prisons, government offices, schools and churches were destroyed (Adesoji 2010 cited in Idahosa, 2015). Subsequently, the leader of the sect Muhammad Yusuf was arrested and later died in police custody.

Later, Boko haram has become notorious for its extreme violence and bloody war. Hence, In 2014, the Global Terrorism Index designated it as the most deadly terrorist group in the world. It was reported to have killed an estimated over 15,000 people, kidnapped tens of thousands, displaced over 2.3 million, and destroyed several schools, mosques, churches, roads, bridges and infrastructural facilities of unimaginable estimated values (www.krigsvidenkab. 4/10/2018). As part of their strategy, the group employ psychological warfare (filming, caning and beheading of captives), the use of social media for political propaganda, exploiting issues of poor leadership/governance, in order to sway the vulnerable population in violent extremism and insurgency. In addition, the group engages in irregular warfare including mobilization of militants, suicide bombing, and ambush to carry attacks. The most popular of these were the infamous Baga massacres of January 3 & 7, 2015, UNO building on August 26, 2011, Nyanya Motor Park on April 14, 2014, and the Nigerian Police headquarters on June 16, 2011 all in Abuja, (Shodunke, 2021, p63-64). The most notorious act of terror by boko haram was in April, 2014 when they abducted 276 school-girls from the students' dormitory, at Government Girls Senior Secondary School Chibok, Chibok Town, Borno State. And, also in a similar incident 110 female students were also abducted in Dapchi, Yobe state, in 2018. This indeed generated serious global tension and reactions from various international agencies, non-governmental organizations and foreign governments (Shodunke, 2021, p64).

In many of the studies carried out on the activities of boko haram in Nigeria, there is an implicit assumption that the rise of the group like others before was as a result of state's neglect, a relative deprivation of a large percentage of the citizens by the government. Central to this argument is that of increasing poverty in Nigeria which is accentuated by increasing unemployment. The resulting consequence and cost is that it creates the necessary condition for radical Islam to thrive (Idahosa, 2015).

In 2013, Boko haram insurgency assumed international dimension as their operation spilled over to Cameroun, Niger and Chad. This came after the declaration for its support and allegiance to Ansaruddeen and later to Islamic State IS. These trends have combined to point at the enormity of the cross-border attacks and other related security threats by the group against these countries. They perpetrate heinous crimes which include kidnapping and abduction, raping, hostage taking, arson, looting of banks, smuggling and human trafficking, which have all been hallmarks of Book haram insurgency (Eva, 2015, p37).

By 2015 the enormity of Boko Haram insurgency was in its audacious act of capturing and controlling several local government areas including strategic and historical towns like

Gwoza and Bama, where they imposed their rules over these areas with serious attendant consequences and gross human rights violations and abuses. Thus, it was reported by Eva (2015, p37) that by mid November 2014, Boko Haram had, in what seemed like lightening operations, conquered and brought under its control about 21,545 square kilometres of territory in Northeastern Nigeria, and by early 2015, Boko Haram had controlled of 30,000km² of land areas consisting of Gwoza, Bama, Marte, Ngala, Mubi, Michika, Madagali, Mubi North and villages across Yobe and Adamawa states, (Shodunke, 2021, p67). In addition, Wilkins (2017) observed that by January 2015, Boko Haram held territory that included 10 out of 27 local government areas in the northeast.

Consequentially, over 2 million people have been displaced and tens of thousands killed, resulting in the estimate by UN Refugees Agency in (Shodunke, 2021, p64) of 3,019,318 of IDP's which has spread across countries of lake Chad areas, while 12.5 million victims need humanitarian assistance, and 5.3 million suffering from food insecurity. While, the cost of the conflict estimated at over \$9billion.(African News, cited in Shodunke, 2021, p64). This culminated in the death of over 13,000 people and the displacement of over 1.5 million people.

In responding to that security challenge, on 14th May 2013 Nigerian government declared state of emergency in three north-eastern states of the federation: Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states (Hiqazi, 2013). However, Instead of resolving the challenge posed by Boko Haram through diplomatic or legal means, the state attempted to eliminate the movement through overwhelming force in July, 2009, with some serious breaches of laws. Over one thousand (1000) people were killed including the leader of the movement Muhammad Yusuf in Maiduguri, Damaturu, Potiskum and with massive arrest in place like Kano (Hiqazi, 2013). This generated high degree of sympathy for the movement in the north and compounded the complexity and severity of the insurgency when the re-emerged in the late 2010 under Abubakar Shekau.

On 3rd June, 2011, Terrorist Prevention Act 2011 was signed into law by the Federal Government. This was an important milestone in the fight against insurgency in Nigeria. It covers and addresses issues of prevention, prohibition, combating as well as suppressing of the financing for Terrorism. In addition, it prescribes penalties for the act ranging from 20 years to life jail term and death sentences depending on the severity of the case. The act also facilitates help from foreign governments by way of mutual assistance, information sharing and extradition with regards to terrorism-related offences. However, the major problem with the act is that it has given enormous powers to the law enforcement agencies to haul suspected terrorists with hardly any judicial oversight. Further, the law broaden the definition of terrorist, introduces military trials for Boko Haram militants, transfer complete authority to the office of the national Security Adviser as the lead agency for dealing with terrorist groups; along with allowing death penalty for terror suspects if found guilty as charged. Thus, severely criticizes by various international human rights groups for a number of lapses such as denial of terrorist rights for fair trial, self-defence and right to counsel (Bhura, 2012).

In a similar vein, Amnesty International Report (2012) blames Nigerian security forces for exacerbating the Boko Haram crisis in the northeast of the country, because of their tendency towards brutal force in the crackdown of suspected terrorists. They committed various human right violation and abuses including burning of homes, detention without trial, torture, enforced disappearance and extra-judicial executions. This consequently, exacerbated the situation leading to the creation of an atmosphere of more brutal violence, and further militarization and hostility.

Consequence of the creation of the theatre command, mobile strike teams, the establishment of naval operational base in Fish Dam Baga, the upgrading of the Nigerian Airforce formation in Maiduguri to the status of division command, as well as formation of forward operational bases in Monguno among others, there have been remarkable successes in the counter-insurgency operation by the Nigerian military. As the position was in 2015 troops were forced to defensive warfare and barely able to hold positions in Damaturu, Maiduguri and Yola, but currently they hold and conduct offensive operations in even border towns like Mallam Fatori, Damasak, Baga, Bama, Gwoza, Chikun Gudu among others (Antigha, 2017).

On 23rd December, 2016 President Muhammadu Buhari officially declared the technical defeat of Boko haram, when their last camp in Sambisa forest was cleared. However, in a short while this turnout to become a premature proclamation. Several incidences combine to prove this. For instance just three days after the proclamation on 26/12/2016 two female suicide bombers targeted cattle market in borno state's capital Maiduguri. Similarly, in January, 2017 the Nigerian Airforce mistakenly bombarded an IDP's camp killing over 256 people, whom they mistook for book haram fighters gatherings. In addition, in the same month over 100 heavily armed boko haram fighters attacked the same camp. However, they were repelled and neutralized by the joint coordinated operations of army and airforce. In essence, the premature announcement of boko haram defeat and the reappearance of the sect's leader on various occasions point to another dimemision of the war which is far from being over. However, overtime, disagreement over doctrine, ideology and targets have caused a major split in its leadership. This was obvious in August 2016, when ISIS faction of the movement installed Abu Mus'ab Al Barnawi as the new leader, a move which was outrightly rejected by Shekau who insisted on heading the Boko Haram faction.(Iwuoha and Onuoha, 2021, p93).

Counterinsurgency Strategy of the Nigerian State Against Boko Haram Insurgency

The Nigerian COIN strategy is basically in form of kinetic warfare that is enemy centric relying on the use of substantial combine coercive forces of (land and air operations) to annihilate Boko Haram insurgents. Its aims are itemized as follow: Maintain civil orders; Protect the civilian population; Conquer and exterminate the insurgents; Capture Sambisa forest and the lost territories; Arrest or annihilate the leaders of Boko Haram; and Wipe out Boko Haram and its residues (infrastructures and logistics). (Drukhan cited in Shodunke, 2021, p68). In general, the strategy adopted involves heavy-handed tactics and human right violations, and these make things worse because they alienate civilians and increase sympathy for the enemy (Noakes, 2014).

The Nigerian security forces were accused of arbitrarily rounding up young men on the streets and shooting them, burning homes and carrying out summary executions in response to attacks as well as unnecessary prolong detentions where most young detainees lost their lives (Noakes, 2014). Obviously, The Nigerian Government's response and handling of the Boko Haram insurgency has significantly contributed to ther radicalization of Boko Haram, pushing the movement to the extreme end of the spectrum. The July 2009 shooting of Boko Haram members at a funeral procession, just prior to the July uprising, was seen as a declaration of war, as was the extra-judicial killing of their leader Muhammad Yusuf. The movement has since then identified the civilian population as a key for their protection and operational success against the JTF, and as a result the JTF has resorted to taking vengeance on the whole civilian population. This indiscriminate response has garnered Boko Haram support in the community, even with the knowledge of the group's own role in committing atrocities. The state's inability to protect its population, marred by the JTF's lack of

distinction between civilian and combatants, has had the effect of increasing Boko Haram's confidence in their endeavours as well as its membership numbers (ICRP Report, 2020, p6).

As Antigha (2017) argues public opinions, legitimacy and support are largely major determinants both domestic and international of the success in counter-insurgency operations. However, the brutal use of force and other extra-judicial measures adopted by the military affect the operations in general. In another development, to reinforce the COIN operations the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTf) was formed in June 2013, as a response to the security challenges posed by the activities of insurgents in Borno state since 2009, which resulted in the loss of control over the Insurgency by the government security forces, and the brazen style adopted by the insurgents in the destruction to lives and property (Osakwe and Audu, 2017, p4). The response of the military joint task force to insurgents' violence has been marked by indiscriminate and excessive use of force, they sometimes, set homes and shops on fire in areas where terror activities occurred, while at the same time shooting and arresting individually and indiscriminately (Osakwe and Audu, 2017, P4).

Since 2009, the Nigerian state especially under the Special Joint Task force (SJTF) (comprising of coordinated operations of Army, Navy, Airforce, Police, DSS, Immigration, DIA) has adopted its counterinsurgency Strategy through various security arrangements, repressive and non-repressive approaches, marked by politicizing, stop and search, periodic patrol, arrest, detention and others, in order to quell Boko Haram insurgency. These include various operations coded in different titles: Operation Flush, Operation Restore Order (1,2,3), Operation Deep Punch, Operation Boyona, Operation Ruwan Wuta I&II, Operation Gama Aiki, Operation Zaman Lafiya, Operation Last Hold, Operation Lafiya Dole which was renamed Operation Hadin Kai, and Operation Tura ta kai Bango. In addition, regional initiative in collaboration with members of states of Lake Chad commission was embarked upon leading to the formation of Multinational Joint Taskforce (MNJTF), in order to decimate the transnational threats of Boko Haram insurgency (Shodunke, 2021, p65).

In line with federal government commitment in the fight against insurgency the President Muhammad Buhari gave the war another progressive dimension by taking a bold step to fuel the COIN. He directed the release of \$21 million out of the \$100 million promised for the smooth operation and effectiveness of the Multinational Joint Taskforce conducted initially by a contingent of 25,000 troops in 2011, which later grew to about 100,000 troops (Shodunke, 2021,p70). Precisely, since 2013 Nigerian COIN has launched thousands of aerial bombardments, and sorties against the insurgents and has flown a total of 5,390 operational missions: comprising: 2,648 for ground attacks, 1,479 for airlifts, and 1,443 for ISR, conducted 1,448 airstrikes against the insurgents. Consequently, from December 2014 COIN succeeded in recapturing many territories from the insurgents, destroying their hideouts in October 2017 (Shodunke, 2021, p70).

The Human Security Implications and Challenges of the Nigerian Counter-Insurgency Strategy and Operations

The main goal of the COIN operations of eliminating the perceived enemies and their threats, but this always has its own far reaching Implication, as experience shows such measures, sometimes proves effective, yet culminates in breeding new forms of violence, which resurface with more tempo more than at the initial point, when it was presumed to have been eliminated or rather crushed, thereby, spelling more colossal national security disaster against the state and its teeming population. Supporting the argument above Gana et al (2018, p10) maintained that the types of military action adopted by COIN such as arbitrary arrests,

widespread intimidations, detention without trials and disappearance, caused resentments in the local population, and this provides fertile ground for insurgents support and recruitments.

As it has been revealed, the deployment of 8000 troops for Operation Restore Order to combat the insurgents resulted in extra judicial killings, dragnet arrests, and intimidation of innocent civilians in Borno state, this resulted in drawing public sympathy towards the insurgents, who overtime hoodwinked the local population to create a sense of resistance against the government (Onuoha in Shodunke, 2021, p73-74). Unfortunately, the high-handedness and abusive measures by the security forces worsen the dire security situation, particularly in those areas. This is because, the security strategy under that political atmosphere has empowered security personnel to take all necessary actions in their engagement with Boko Haram insurgents, often at the detriment of the citizens they have sworn to protect (Dietrich, 2015, p29).

In view of this, Felbab-Brown (2018, p 13) laments that the COIN policy of the Nigerian military and police have become sources of insecurity, dislocation, suffering, and severe and widespread human rights abuses. This was particularly before 2015, where the COIN strategy involved collective punishment of entire village suspected of harbouring Boko Haram militants or having fallen under Boko Haram's rule, through clearing operations, which often amounted to violent reprisals by the Nigerian military, villagers who did not manage to flee to the bush were randomly killed on suspicion of being Boko Haram members. Others include incidences where women and children were dragged off to detention en masse.

There were reported widespread cases of extra-judicial killings and torture by COIN forces. In this respect, between 2013 & 2014, they executed more than 1000 people, sometimes up to a 100 per day. It has also been reported that, in cities, most of the COIN operations have involved the aggressive cordoning off and searching of houses, with young men frequently shot by the military. In that respect, in retaliation for Boko Haram attacks on Giwa Barack, where they liberated some detainees, Nigerian Military in March 2014, executed 640 boys and men, most of them recaptured detainees (Felbab-Brown, 2018, p 14).

Above all, the Nigerian military reportedly employs civilian joint task force units (CJTF) as spies to identify Boko Haram associates within the IDP camps, and they also independently set up checkpoints, patrol streets, check suspicious cars and interrogate people with duress, torture and human rights abuses and sometimes death, especially during clearing operations alongside military (Felbab-Brown, 2018, p 14). To debunk the extent of excessive abuses committed by the CJTF, in 2013, about 99 of their members were arrested in connection with the unauthorized attacks on the suspected Boko Haram insurgents in Baga areas of Borno state. Similarly, between January and April 2014, 21 CJTF members were arrested for unlawful execution of Boko Haram suspects under their custody (Raji and Ahmed, 2015,

In a similar vein, Country Rights Practice Report (2016) lamented that arbitrary mass arrests and detention under poor and life-threatening conditions have continued unabated in the Nigeria's northeast. Thus, the report further reveals that more than 120 boys between 5-16 years of age were held incommunicado in a single cell. And, since 2009 security forces have arbitrarily arrested approximately 20,000 persons in the region, out of which over 7000 died of thirst, starvation, suffocation, diseases due to overcrowding, lack of medical attention, the use of fumigation chemicals in unventilated cells (Country Rights Practice Report, 2016, p17).

According to Amnesty International Report (2014) more than 4000 people have been killed in 2014 alone in the conflict by the Nigerian military and Boko Haram, including more than

600 extrajudicially executed following the Giwa Barrack Attack on 14th March, in Maiduguri. The report further disclosed that in a disturbing video image, Nigerian military and CJTF were shown using blade to slit the throats of a series of detainees, before dumping them into an open mass grave. More disturbing incident was reported on April 16 & 17, 2013, when Nigerian military raided Baga town, and engaged in deliberate shooting and killing of local people, destruction of homes and properties, resulting from the killing of a soldier and wounding 5 others, by the local residents. The attacks according to satellite images of the town over 2,227 buildings were destroyed, vast majority of which were residents, and over 200 people killed. Thus, the report lamented that the Nigerian Military has a duty to protect itself and the population from Boko Haram attacks, but the evidences from Baga indicate that they engaged more in destruction than in protection (Human Rights Watch, 2013).

It is evident that the hard power approach to counter-insurgency will not yield the desired results. As it appears the government security forces are more concerned with arresting, detaining, imprisoning and killing terrorists, and pay little attention to curbing the diffusion of radical ideas among the youth, (Akubo, 2019). This includes indiscriminate gross human rights violations and abuses; extrajudicial killings perpetrated by the Nigerian security forces and the Civilian Joint Task Force JTF in the name of COIN operations. This indeed makes the entire COIN project to lose its credibility and legitimacy both domestically and internationally. Consequently, it hampers the fight against insurgency and even lends it an element of sympathy from the larger segment of the population, who are central frame of reference in the entire COIN operations. Eventually, this tendency alienates people, demoralizes and scares them from giving significant cooperation and support, which are in winning the war and success of the COIN operations.

In addition, this generated negative reactions from the wider society and around the world, especially among civil society organizations promoting human causes and rights, such as Amnesty International, which in its 2014 Annual Report indicted the Nigerian Army in the COIN operations in Northeastern part of the country. This is through its revelation that in responding to Boko Haram, Nigerian security forces committed grave human rights violations and acts that constitute crime under international law. They reportedly carried out extra-judicial executions, often following the 'screening of subjects'. In this regard, on 23rd July, 2013, the Nigerian soldiers in collaboration with CJTF entered Bama central market and told all adult men in the vicinity to gather in one area and take off their clothes. Later, they were separated into two groups. The first group comprises of 300 men deemed innocent, while the second group designed as Boko Haram with 35 men designed as Boko Haram members were asked to lay down on the ground thoroughly beaten and macheted and loaded onto truck and taken away to military barracks, later on 29th July, 2013 were brought back to their communities and shot dead and dumped their corpses (Amnesty International Report, 2014).

Consequently, the COIN suffered a serious setback, and as in 2014 US government was called upon to impose a ban on sales of arms to Nigeria, over gross human rights violations and abuses (Omotuyi cited in Shodunke, 2021). In view of this scenario, a study conducted on the perception of civilian population on the COIN security forces revealed that the perception of people changed from seeing the government role as security provider, to that of aggressor. In fact, armed forces have too often defined their roles in terms of trying to take militants lives, rather than trying to save civilians lives. This has drawn some sympathy to Boko Haram insurgents, thereby paving them way for easy recruitment of civilian population (Dietrich, 2015, p5). Thus, the research maintained that the COIN forces have failed in three

major ways: (i) to protect the vulnerable communities from violence; (ii) to prevent collateral damage during counterinsurgency operations with Boko Haram; and (iii) and above all, they directly target civilian population with unlawful detention, harassments, destruction of properties, sexual violence, indiscriminate targeting of youth, torture and excessive use of force causing injuries and death (Dietrich, 2015, p5).

One of major challenge of Nigeria's COIN strategy and operations is corruption in the execution of the COIN. It has been reported that Nigeria expended an amount over \$3.9 billion in the procurement of weapons, part of which \$2 billion was suspected to have been embezzled by corrupt politicians and not used for its purpose leading to a probe tagged Dasuki-Gate (Shodunke, 2021, p73). In a similar vein, Dietrich (2015) summarizes the major challenges of the Nigerian COIN strategy as follows: lack of clear distinction between civilians and insurgents; inadequate troops deployment and unwillingness to fight; lack of clear policies to protect civilians; lack of professionalism and accountability; lack of training and adequate equipments; lack of complaints mechanism; lack of due process; unlawful detention; poor community relations and communications; perceived corruption and mistrust of security forces by the civilian population; poor intelligence and information collection.

Conclusion

Verily, the spate of violence against the Nigerian state and the population in the northeast has taken a monumental proportion, and even though the counter-insurgency strategy which is essentially an enemy-centric in nature adopted by the Nigerian in its fight against Boko Haram proves effective from the onset, yet it fail to completely defeat and eliminate the movement, instead breed a renewed uprisal of the movement with more sophisticated waves of armed violence against the state and its security apparatus. As long as these counter-insurgency measures remain the only strategy for fight against Boko Haram insurgency it could hardly be possible to have lasting solution and sustainable peace and security in the northeastern region of Nigera.

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