
Military Intelligence and the Challenge of National Security in Contemporary Nigeria

Felix Ejukonemu Oghi

Department of History and Diplomatic Studies,
Samuel Adegboyega University, Ogwa,
Edo State, Nigeria.
felixo1966@gmail.com

Julius O. Unumen, Ph.D.

Department of History and International Studies,
Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma,
Edo State, Nigeria.
pastorunumen@yahoo.com

Abstract: *The challenges of peaceful co-existence in the twenty-first century world have become enormous. The problem of insecurity stands out as one of them. As improvements occur in science and technology, this problem is bound to be compounded. Also, as societies remain dynamic, negative acts are bound to assume the same dynamism. By implication, it also means that conflicts and crisis, including insurgency must be curtailed as much as possible. A lot lies on the shoulders of national governments to arrest the situation. One sure way to do this is to improve on military intelligence. This paper examined the challenge of security in Nigeria in the twenty-first century and the role that military intelligence can play in combating it. The secondary materials on which this work relied were subjected to textual and contextual analysis. It adopted the historical method of analysis and interpretation of data. The paper is of the opinion that the failure of military intelligence is largely responsible for the current state of quagmire of national security in the country. At the end, the paper recommends a restructuring of our military intelligence to make them more proactive and effective as well as collaboration with the locals in each community as ways out of the current national security quagmire.*

Keywords: *Challenge, Contemporary Nigeria, Military Intelligence and Security.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is an African country with a land mass of about 923,768 sq. kms, an area that is the size of France, Britain and the Netherlands combined.¹ This vastness of landmass ordinarily, ought to be an advantage as it could fast-track rapid socio-economic development, especially in terms of space for agricultural practices, but the reverse appeared to have been the case, with the upsurge in violent crimes and insurgency in recent times. Regrettably, since the dawn of the new millennium, there have been cases of conflicts of grave dimensions. These developments have impacted negatively on the security of lives and property in the country. Since the dawn of the Twenty-first Century, the challenges of security have become compounded, especially with the increasing spate of insurgency and terrorist activities.²

It is against this background that this paper examines the challenge of security in contemporary Nigeria and the role that military intelligence can play in its improvement. It suggests that a way out of this challenge is to reinforce and energise our military intelligence agencies. That way, the 'monster' is better checked rather than the current style of resort to placating victims of terrorist acts. The paper is divided into five main sections. Following this introduction is a clarification of the concepts of national security, terrorism and military intelligence. The third section highlights the reality of security challenge in the country. The fourth section deals with the role that military intelligence can play in an attempt to tackle this challenge as well as need for Nigeria to learn lesson from the moribund Yugoslavia. The final section is the conclusion and recommendations.

2. THE CONCEPTS OF NATIONAL SECURITY, TERRORISM AND MILITARY INTELLIGENCE

National security has been defined as the ability of a nation-state to, among other things, preserve the nation's physical integrity and territory; to maintain its economic relations with the rest of the world on reasonable terms; preserve its nature, institutions, and governance from outside; and to control its borders.³ The ability of states and societies to maintain their independent identities and functional integrity is also an integral aspect of national security. The main objective of national security is to

uphold a country's national values, which include national survival, self preservation, territorial integrity and economic progress.⁴

What constitute terrorism and terrorist acts have engaged the attention of scholars and analysts over the years. However, there is no generally acceptable definition of the terms. The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defined terrorism as "the use of violence such as bombing, shooting or kidnapping to obtain political demands..."⁵ Terrorism has also been defined as "a technique of political influence that has not been limited to specific weapons,... a tactic that all political contenders may be tempted to use if it seems likely to be effective".⁶

Just as the problem of having a universal definition of the term 'terrorism' exists, its origin has also elicited debate. The debate on the origin of the phenomenon could be bifurcated into two main strands. First, is the school of thought that sees it as a recent phenomenon, and second, is that which sees it as being part of human society from the time of creation. Even the advocates of the recency of the phenomenon appear also divided in their opinion. Scholars in this group have variously traced the origin of terrorism to the outbreak of the French Revolution and the rise of anarchists in the nineteenth century, the taking of Israeli athletes as hostage in the Munich Olympics of 1972 and the September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Centre in Washington D.C., USA and the defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan.⁷

As the absence of consensus on what constitute terrorism exists, so also is the typology of the phenomenon. Some scholars have classified terrorist activities into three categories; namely, communal terrorism, ideological and pragmatic or instrumental.⁸ Communal terrorism, from the perspective of these scholars, is the type organized by dissidents within a state, and thrives on the basis of ethnicity, religion or both. The Swedes, who considered themselves different from the Danes for example, are always cited to capture this category.

Ideological terrorism, on the other hand, refers to political violence orchestrated to realize political goals, usually common with left-wing groups.⁹ The pragmatic or instrumental terrorism refers to use of state terror by governing elites to keep themselves in power by continually introducing ideological justification for their actions.¹⁰ Some have also classified it into political and criminal terrorism¹¹ while others speak of repressive, revolutionary, sub-revolutionary and secessionary terrorism.¹² It is to be noted that these perceptions are based on variables such as the author's understanding of what constitutes terrorism, their background, religion, culture and class affiliation.

From the outflow of literature on this subject, it could be said that terrorism in whatever form it is manifested, basically has the element of violence and because it is an act that is not legally endorsed, its operation must be clandestine. Thus, the lack of a generally acceptable definition of terrorism notwithstanding, terrorist acts is generally clandestine, violent, and systematic in nature. Targets of terrorist acts could be individuals and/or groups. As an act, it could be directed at influencing goals which may be political, economic or even religious.

It is important to stress, too, that terrorist acts do not just occur overnight. The difference between conflicts and terrorism appear slim because uncontrolled conflict situations could eventually result in the emergence of terrorist groups and consequently, terrorist activities. Causes of terrorism are varied and complex in nature such that a scholar even christened some "Holy Terror".¹³ Factors that could lead to any form of violence could as well lead to terrorist activities.¹⁴ However, what appeared to have been the causes in the modern world, as argued by Crenshaw, are "social and economic inequalities, lack of opportunities for participation, economic problems, relative deprivations and governments repression among others".¹⁵

Intelligence involve the "collection, evaluation, analysis, integration and interpretation of all available information which concerns areas of operations and potentially significant to planning".¹⁶ Intelligence, with regards to the military, could be strategic, tactical and counter intelligence. In all human endeavours, including academic, social, military, economic and political spheres, intelligence is vital to the realization of goals and targets.¹⁷ This paper is concerned with the latter. The importance of military intelligence in combating insecurity cannot be ignored. In fact, lack of it or where it is not effectively utilized could endanger lives and properties.

Thus, military intelligence involves the "capacity to detect or acquire information about impending security threats and preventing their occurrence through the application of counter measures".¹⁸ To

check the threat to security, therefore, there is the compelling need for intelligence network that would ensure co-operation and linkage among intelligence agencies. The advantage of this is unquantifiable. As Odezulu has argued, this could enhance “the individual operations of the intelligence agencies for the collective achievement of the national security objectives for the government”.¹⁹

3. THE REALITY OF NATIONAL SECURITY CHALLENGE IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA

Since 1999, following the end of many years of military rule in the country, Nigeria has been confronted with the problem of national security arising from violent crimes, including armed robbery, assassinations, ethno-religious violence, kidnapping for ransom and terrorist bomb blasts. This unfortunate development has made the country to become one of the most dangerous countries to visit and invest on.²⁰ Regrettably, the country has joined the league of war-torn and terrorist enclaves in the world such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Pakistan, Yemen, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) Guinea, Sudan, Southern Sudan and Chad. Unarguably, the latest addition to the list of security challenges in the country namely, Boko Haram terrorism has surpassed the rest in every ramifications.²¹

Conservative figures of lives lost in Nigeria as a result of Boko-Haram terrorist activities have been frightening. Facts that emerged from the US Department’s Global Report on Terrorism indicate that as early as 2011 Nigeria ranked second with 593 deaths from terrorist killings, only coming behind Somalia in Africa, and at the world level, Nigeria was fifth. In fact, by 2012, the sect was said to have conducted about 136 attacks, largely on police stations, churches, mosques.²² With the recent upsurge in the activities of the sect, especially since 2013, these figures have become like a child’s play. What many thought would be surmounted within a short period have now graduated to the adoption of over 200 teenage school girls in one single operation. While the country was bemoaning the adoption of the innocent school girls, an attempt was made on the life of the Nigerian elder statesman, Rtd. General Muhammadu Buhari, sometime in July 2014.²³ These demonstrate the critical state of security in the country.

The *Boko Haram* terrorism and other violent crimes in the country have negative implications on national security, democracy, good governance and economic development. This is because, among other things, their activities dismantle democratic structures; prevent provision of state services, such as health, education, commerce and security. Moreover, “their activities have forced thousands to flee their homes, jobs and communities, pushing them into poverty.”²⁴

A key point to note is that the challenges of security arises from human interaction with other human beings and the society they live, but the increasing spate has never assumed the dimension it has, in recent times. Arms acquisition, possession and use have compounded the security situation in the world in general and Nigeria in particular. The effects of the use of these arms have been colossal on people and society because, it has prevented the creation of a congenial atmosphere for individuals to develop their potentials and go about their endeavours unmolested.

There is no gainsaying that security challenges are not peculiar to Nigeria neither is it a new phenomenon in the world. Available evidence shows that acts of violence and terrorism that threaten security have existed in the world, perhaps for over 2,000 years.²⁵ Instances existed in most communities of the ancient world whereby terrorist activities thrived. Apart from ancient China where secret societies worked against early dynasties in which revolts made use of dangerous weapons, internal politics of Rome during the periods of Republic, Jewish revolts in the Eastern Mediterranean against the Greeks are examples of organized violence that could be regarded as terrorist acts. Additionally, the acts of Assassins in the Levant and Persia from the eleventh to the thirteenth century, the turmoil among the city- states in Italy during the Middle Ages and the German Peasant war of the sixteenth century (1525) are also typical cases. The list is far from being exhaustive.²⁶ This demonstrates that terrorist acts existed even in ancient societies.

4. MILITARY INTELLIGENCE AND THE NIGERIA’S SECURITY CHALLENGE

Available evidence suggests that intelligence activities in post-colonial Nigeria took shape with the establishment of the Nigeria Security Organisation (NSO) via Decree No. 16 of 1976.²⁷ As it were, the Nigeria Security Organisation was to combine the duties of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) of the USA which involved counter intelligence activities and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).²⁸ It was headed by a Director-General who was also a member of the Supreme Military

Council and the National Security and Defence Council. However, as argued by Jimi Peters, “the body not only lacked intelligence specialist, hut also lacked clearly defined goals”.²⁹

By 1984, a Directorate of Intelligence was set up in the office of the Chief of Staff. It had four directors within three years of existence.³⁰ Incidentally, within the same period, the Defence intelligence Agency (DIA) was also set up within the office of the Minister of Defence. Clearly, from the outset, it showed that a clash of interest was inescapable and could therefore rob off on efficiency. By 1986, Decree No. 19 (under Rtd. General Ibrahim Babagida Administration) formally abolished the NSO and created the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) and the State Security Service (SSS).³¹ By virtue of the provisions of this decree, it meant that the Intelligence Agency had become decentralized. The State Security Service became saddled with the duty of prevention and detection within Nigeria of any crime against internal security, protection and preservation of all non-military classified matters concerning the internal security of Nigeria and such other responsibilities affecting internal security within the country, including the Armed Forces Ruling Council or the President, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces as the case may be, may deem necessary.³²

Unfortunately, the security challenges that the country has faced since the dawn of the Twenty-first Century, especially since the upsurge in the terrorist activities of the *Boko Haram* sect since 2011, seem to give the impression that the intelligence branch of the Armed Forces has gone to ‘sleep’. This is regrettable because the continuity of killings as has been experienced in the recent past portends nothing positive hut grave danger to the Nigeria nation-state. Terrorism, no doubt, is a global threat to peace but government must fight it head-long and this requires political will. Conflicts, where unchecked could lead to threat of unimaginable dimension as happenings in other climes have shown.

In recent times, commentators on the increased menace of insurgency in the country have warned against the likelihood of the division of the country, but the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, has consistently assured the citizens that insurgency would be brought under control. However, it is important to draw attention to the time-honoured saying that “Prevention is better than cure”. This underscores the reason why effort should be more on how to check the act than reliefs when destructions have been made.³³ In fact, from the analysis of scholars, three levels of activities that could elicit war are: individual level in which ‘bad’ decisions by leaders, communication failure and misperceptions; the societal level in which there is ethno-national challenges and the persistence of anarchy - all of which are signs of danger ahead of a nation.³⁴

The case of the moribund Yugoslavia seem to fit into the aforesaid three levels of analysis and thus offers a good lesson for Nigeria to learn from. After the collapse of communism, Serbian leadership tried to maintain the country’s unity in the face of strong separatist movements in Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Slobodan Milosevic was propelled by Serb nationalism under President Tito. Individual leaders particularly Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic, were able to stoke in the Serb masses, an ultra-nationalism that threatened other groups in the Yugoslav federation.³⁵ It is only hoped that the failure of intelligence agencies to quickly check the activities of insurgents does not plunge the country into similar experience because of the history of past injustices that may be latent in peoples’ mind.

Mere compensation to victims of terrorist attacks cannot be the antidote to curtailing insurgency. If it were so, then it means we have to compensate all such persons affected from the period of independence. This, therefore, means our leaders must get to the root of the problem and it is the position of this paper that the only way forward is to energize and restructure our intelligence network. The importance of an efficient and effective intelligence network cannot be over-emphasized. First, it helps to keep record of events and thereby detect the likelihood of dangers or indicators of crisis situation and forestall surprises. Second, it provides vital information on movement, environment and capacities of target groups, and above all, helps to identify insurgent groups and the need to apply requisite surveillance and techniques to neutralize insurgent acts. Even in the Christian holy book, *The Bible*, records exist on intelligence application.³⁶ The famous Chinese legend, Mao Tse-tung once stated that “intelligence was one of the secrets for the defeat of the Japanese in the Guerilla warfare”.³⁷ Nigerian leaders must therefore act fast and timely too.

5. SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

The president as the commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces of the country must rise up to the present challenge of insecurity. In order to check the activities of terrorist, reliance must not be on the

'big' powers because foreign assistance has its limitations. Unfamiliar terrain and environment are obvious challenges to foreign forces. In addition to the strengthening of military intelligence activities, it is recommended that the teeming youths of the country be engaged productively to check lures from groups that have negative intentions. A situation whereby even teenage girls of about sixteen years old have become agents of carrying out bombing is not only dangerous but disconcerting and disheartening.

Again, traditional rulers should encourage peaceful co-existence at the community level and ensure persons of questionable character are promptly handed to law enforcement agencies. In addition, respect for human rights even among the military should be encouraged. A situation in which our military is portrayed as 'barbaric' as shown in video clips recently flaunted by Amnesty International does not portray our military in good light. Our leaders should be more proactive in ameliorating the deplorable living conditions of the people. The saying that "an idle mind is the devil's workshop" should impress the minds of our leaders that crime could be reasonably reduced if people are comfortable. Above all, the Intelligence arm of the Armed Forces should be overhauled and energized to curtail insurgent acts albeit emphasizing attitudinal change on the part of the officers concerned.

Finally, it must be noted that just as conflicts are bound to occur owing largely to the likely clash of interests, the only antidote is their avoidance, ditto for terrorist acts. To encore the point earlier made in this paper, "To prevent is better than cure" and even, the donation of relief measures, whether monetary or otherwise.

REFERENCES

- [1]. G. Arnold, *The Resources of the Third World*, (Dearborn: Fitzroy Publishers, 2004), p. 123.
- [2]. Cases in point include: the Tivs Riot of 1964, Maitatsine Crisis in Gombe, Talibans onslaught in 2005, the Onitsha Crisis led by MASSOB, the Fulani farmers conflict in Gwadbawa, Sokoto in 1995 and recently the activities of Boko-Haram which has caused apprehension among Nigerians. See T.A. Imobighe, "Curbing Terrorism: An Integrated Conflict Management Approach" in Imobighe, T.A. and A.N.T. Eguavoen (eds.) *Terrorism and Counter Terrorism: An African Perspective*, (Ibadan: Heinemann Books, 2006).
- [3]. J. O. Unumen, "Boko Haram Movement in Nigeria and Its Implication for National Security", in Uche M. Nwankwo, Charles I. Anaere, Jonathan M. Ayuba, Olayemi Akinwumi and Lai Olurode (eds.), *Towards Peace, Security and Sustainable Development in Africa*, (Berlin-Germany: Mediateam IT Educational Publishers, 2014), Pp. 235-236.
- [4]. S. Abidde, "Nigeria's National Security in an Age of Anxiety", thewillnigeria.com/opinion/7638. NIG, 23 February, accessed on 8 August, 2014.
- [5]. *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, New Edition, p. 1712.
- [6]. P. C. Sederberg, "Global Terrorism: Problems of Challenge and Response" in W. Kegley (ed.), *The New Global Terrorism: Characteristics, Causes and Controls*, (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2003), p. 77.
- [7]. See J. Deutch, "Terrorism", *Foreign Policy*, No. 109, 1977, p. ii, A. Parry, *Terrorism: From Robespierre to Arafat*, (New York: Vanguard Press, 1976), W. Laqueur, *A History of Terrorism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2011), p. 11 and J.M. Lutz and B.J. Lutz, *Terrorism: Origin & Evolution*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 1.
- [8]. F. Chalk and K. Journassohn, *The History and Sociology of Genocide: Analyses and Case Studies*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 23. Also see J.M. Lutz and B.J. Lutz, *Terrorism: Origin & Evolution...* Pp. 11-13.
- [9]. W. Laqueur, *A History of Terrorism...* p. 143.
- [10]. J. M. Lutz and B.J. Lutz, *Terrorism: Origin & Evolution...* p. 12.
- [11]. O. Nwolise, "Terrorism What is to be Done about an Emerging Threat to Democracy, Good Governance, Development and Security of Nations in the 21st Century". *Special Research Issue* (Ibadan: Institut Francais de Recherche en Afrique, Vol. 1, 2005, Pp. 1-15).
- [12]. A. Kuper and J. Kuper, *The Social Sciences Encyclopedia*, 2nd Edition, Routledge, 1996, p. 872.
- [13]. B. Hoffman, "Holy Terror: The Implication of Terrorism Motivated by Religious Imperatives", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 1995.

- [14]. These factors may be outlined to include: absence of strong state structure that could lead to break-up of empires or multi-ethnic states, globalization and modernization. The latter factor could undermine existing political institutions in states and lead to political decay and weakness. See S. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of the World* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996) for details.
- [15]. C. F. Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism" in C.W. Kegley (ed.) *International Terrorism...* Pp. 99-101. Also, see Edward N. Muller and Mitchel A. Seligson, "Inequality and Insurgency" *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 81, No. 2, 1987, Pp. 425-451.
- [16]. B. Hoffman, "The Emergence of the New Terrorism" in Andrew Tan and K. Ramakrishna (eds.) *The New Terrorism: Anatomy, Trends and Counter-Strategies* (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 2002), p. 45.
- [17]. B. J. Takaya, "The Structure of Conflict in Nigerian Federalism", in J.I. Elaigwu and P.S. Akindele (eds.) *Foundations of Nigerian Federalism 1960-1995*, (Jos: Institute of Governance and Social Research, 2001), Pp. 73-77.
- [18]. See *Dictionary of US Military Terms for Joint Usage*, (Washington D.C.: Department of Army, Navy and Air Force, May, 1956), p.53.
- [19]. See I. N. Odezulu, "Crises Management", Being a Paper Presented at PTS, Enugu, April, 14, 2008, p. 12.
- [20]. Folashade Adebayo, "The World's Most Dangerous Places", *Tell*, Nigeria's Independent Weekly, Lagos, 21 February, 2011, p. 46.
- [21]. J. O. Unumen, "Boko Haram Movement in Nigeria and Its Implication for National Security", in Uche M. Nwankwo, Charles I. Anaere, Jonathan M. Ayuba, Olayemi Akinwumi and Lai Oluode (eds.), *Towards Peace, Security and Sustainable Development in Africa*, (Berlin-Germany Mediateam IT Educational Publishers, 2014), Pp. 233-249.
- [22]. A. O. Idowu, "Meeting the Challenges of Low Intensity Conflicts in Nigeria: The Role of the National Intelligence Agency", AFCSC, 2008, p. 9.
- [23]. Mohammed Sambo Dasuki, "Challenges of Governance in the Era of Insurgency (1)", A Speech Read at the Nigeria Security Summit, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, published in *The Guardian*, 11 August, 2014, p. 87.
- [24]. Mohammed Sambo Dasuki, "Challenges of Governance in the Era of Insurgency (1)", A Speech Read at the Nigeria Security Summit, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, published in *The Guardian*, 11 August, 2014, p. 87.
- [25]. B. Hoffman, "The Emergence of the New Terrorism" in Andrew Tan and K. Ramakrishna (eds.) *The New Terrorism: Anatomy, Trends And Counter-Strategies* (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 2002), p. 45.
- [26]. See generally, J.M. Lutz And B. J. Lutz, *Terrorism: Origin & Evolution*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).
- [27]. J. Peters, "Intelligence: Its Role and Future in Nigeria's External Relations" *Nigerian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 12, Nos. 1 & 2, 1986, p. 152.
- [28]. J. Peters, "Intelligence: Its Role and Future in Nigeria's External Relations" *Nigerian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 12, Nos. 1 & 2, 1986, p. 152.
- [29]. This was excised from the "E" Division or Special Branch of the Police. For details, See Report of the Committee on Police Affairs to the House of Representatives on the Nigeria Police Force in 1982.
- [30]. O. O. Oladoyin, "Management of Nigeria's Intelligence Community: An Alternative Option", *Defence Strategy Review*, Vol. 2, Nos. 2, 1985, p. viii.
- [31]. O. O. Oladoyin, "Management of Nigeria's Intelligence Community: An Alternative Option", *Defence Strategy Review*, Vol. 2, Nos. 2, 1985, p. ix.
- [32]. J. Peters, "Intelligence: Its Role and future in Nigeria's External Relations"... p. 154.
- [33]. For instance, on the 30th of July, 2014, a Special Fund Raising Programme was organized by the President at Abuja to assist victims of terrorist attacks in which over fifty billion Naira was raised.

- [34]. Y. Olukorede, "Terrorism: Boko Haram killed 590 in 2011, says US", *The Nation*, Lagos, August 6, 2013, Pp. 2-3. Also see, F. Umeagbalasi, "Boko Haram Terror: The chilling killing of 510 Igbo Christians out of the 714 Boko-Haram Related Deaths in 12 months", *Sahara Reporters*, January 19, 2012, <http://www.intersociety.ng.org>. Accessed on 4th August, 2012.
- [35]. See Kenneth Waltz, *Man, The State and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954), Karl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. O.J. Mathias Jolles (New York: Random House, 1943) and Karen Mingst, *Essentials of International Relations*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1999), Pp. 180-189.
- [36]. See for instance, Numbers 13:12-20 where Moses sent twelve spies to the land of Canaan.
- [37]. Mao Tse-tung, *The Strategy of Guerilla Resistance against Japan*, www.maoworks/1937/Guerillawarfare,ch07, p. 6.