

THE LEARNING CURVE IN INSURGENCY AND COUNTERINSURGENCY: A CASE STUDY OF NIGERIA AND BOKO HARAM

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Abstract

Nigeria has had some history of insurgency, and should possess a decent degree of experience in counterinsurgency, that should reflect in all levels of the state response system – policy, strategy and tactics. However, the body language and pronouncements of the Government’s response, on Boko Haram challenge, all put together, reflect a muddle that questions both history and experience – and by extension, the capability of the Nigerian state to deal with serious Fourth-Generation Warfare (4GW). And, the insurgents are not doing any better, either. This paper tries to explain the development of the phenomenon of insurgency and its alter ego in concept and as real challenge to the Nigerian state. The major queries here are: what lessons are there to learn; what lessons are not being learnt; and what lessons are being learnt, by the adversaries? Our approach is purely analytical, and the actions and behaviours of the Nigerian state and the insurgents are examined for the lessons of the 4GW theory/ concept. Our conclusion shows the gap between the perceptions of the adversaries and the demands of the 4GW in which they are engaged; and our suggestion is a combination of civilian JTF within a sequestered population area.

Keywords: Boko Haram, Biafra, Niger Delta militancy, Insurgency, Fourth-Generation warfare.

Introduction

Boko Haram has reverted to using improvised explosive devices (IEDS) indoctrinating young guys.... They have now been reduced to that. But articulated conventional attacks on centres of communication and populations, they are no longer capable of doing that effectively.

So I think technically we have won the war because people are going back into their neighbourhoods. Boko Haram as an organized fighting force, I assure you, that we have dealt with them.

(President Muhammadu Buhari on BBC, 24th Dec. 2015/ Africa: Nigeria Boko Haram” Militants ‘technically defeated Buhari BBC.com>>news>>world-africa-35173618.)

BREAKING: Heavy Gun Battle with Boko Haram in Maiduguri. Explosions and gunfire have rocked Maiduguri, the Borno State capital, this evening as Nigerian Armed Forces engaged Boko Haram terrorists in a fierce battle. [[Quoting] “a civilian Joint Task Force”] ”....we are under attack by Boko Haram. There is heavy fighting with military in Dalori and Wanori” (Sahara Reporters, 9:08pm. Sat, 30 January, 2016).

The above news items are indicative of the perception and realities of the Boko Haram challenge to the Nigerian state. And, much, more than Boko Haram, they give insight into the gap in contemporary understanding of the larger phenomenon of insurgency, as a dynamic in the history of Nigeria, and a serious challenge to the security of the contemporary Nigerian state.

The Problem and its Setting

The Nigerian state, having faced off the Biafra challenge in the 1960's, and the Niger Delta militancy, at the turn of the millennium and a whole lot of sparks of lesser profile before, since and in between, can be said of as having some history of insurgency, and it can claim to have some experience in dealing with it. And, from Biafra, through the Niger Delta militancy and to the present, insurgency in Nigeria as a phenomenon has not remained the same in identifiable ways. In the Boko Haram challenge, the whole complex issues of history, experience, capability and learning intermingle in curious ways.

On its own, the Nigerian state seems to have tackled previous challenges with greater confidence than it is doing in the present (Boko Haram) challenge. The random questions flying about include those that seek to understand the apparent uniqueness of this challenge, and what happened to any experience or knowledge learnt from the previous ones.

This paper is a general examination of insurgency as an intelligent construct, expressed in dialectics induced by learning for the parties – the state and the insurgents. It examines the current Boko Haram insurgency in both the wider context of contemporary knowledge or theory on insurgency; and, in the particularity of the Nigerian experience of it with Boko Haram challenge as typical of the phenomenon. To this end we raise the following questions:

1. What has insurgency learnt for its sustenance as a phenomenon, or, put differently, what is common or particular in the Boko Haram challenge in relation to Nigeria's experience with insurgency?
2. What has the Nigerian state learnt, or not learnt, about insurgency in the current Boko Haram challenge; or, how is the uniqueness of the present challenge being addressed?
3. Following these questions, our objective is:
 1. To frame the understanding of insurgency in the context of its general character;
 2. To understand the variation or development of insurgency in the Nigerian experience by indicating the difference between the previous experiences of Biafra and Niger Delta militancy and Boko Haram.
 3. To analyze the Nigerian state's understanding of insurgency and its dynamics as seen in its response to the Boko Haram challenge.
 4. To identify any unique experience or learned behaviour in the Nigerian states response to Boko Haram.

For data, we are relying on the pronouncements of the government and inferences drawn from its counterinsurgency actions. Our methodology is purely analytical. For explanation we are relying on the various suggestions in the writings of scholars on the new generation of irregular security threat and warfare called Fourth-Generation Warfare (4GW) theory, as explained by Yael Shahar, Andrew Mack, Ivan Arreguin-Toft, and others.

For a disclaimer: This paper is not a critique of the current administration's policy on Boko Haram, as might be erroneously suggested from the two news items cited above. These are taken as merely indicative of the Nigerian state's attitude and policy on insurgency/counterinsurgency. It is also representative of the perception and views of the top brass of the Nigerian defence and security establishment (who make input into the nation's

security policy – whatever the administration - and, then, oversee the creation and implementation of the nation’s defense and security strategy).

Having set the tone of our concern, the outlay of our discussion of it shall be on these points:

1. Insurgency and the Fourth-Generation Warfare (4GW) theory
2. The history lessons of insurgency in Nigeria
3. The state’s response to the Boko Haram challenge
4. Boko Haram: Lessons not learnt
5. Boko Haram: Lessons learnt
6. Recommendations and conclusion

4GW: Meaning, Nature and Elements.

The Fourth-Generation Warfare (4GW) is a multidimensional paradigm for conflict, in which the state is pitched in long-drawn and boundless hostilities with a non-state actor (for control of whole or parts of its resources) in a contest of perception and psychology that mirrors a continuation of public relations by violent methods (Yael Shahar).

It is total war (by insurgents) versus limited war (by the state) in which victory of the insurgents is a function of a combination of stronger political will, superior strategy and state’s regime type, and victory for the state is not guaranteed by the Clausewitzean principles of size and strength and speed, but by a lot of dynamics that have been observed to seem to have been loaded/operated against the bigger/stronger side. These variables exist and operate at the policy, strategic and tactical levels, and often even seem to be so fungible that they sometimes defy hierarchical ordering /stratification.

Some of the variables and characteristics of the 4GW include the following:

1. War of Different Wills: The side with the stronger political will wins. The opinion of the 4GW scholars/observes is that the insurgents tend to enjoy a greater edge here (Andrew Mark, 1975, Jeffrey Record, 2007). The stronger political will comes out of a chain-reaction of greater stake in the fight, which “leads to greater willingness to sacrifice”, and “which in turn leads to waging a total war against a foe for whom the war is limited” (Record, 2007). The (greater) stake for the insurgents comes from the fact that they risk a complete closure in the event of a defeat - they risk everything: freedom, life and limb, for the individual insurgent. It is a zero-sum game situation in which they risk everything, the end of the road. Therefore, they have greater desperation and tend to include everything in their definition of collateral, it is a total war. For the insurgents, they have a personal stake while the state and its forces are outsiders battling to project (their) power into the territory/space where the insurgents feel indigenous (Record, 2007:9). Out of this stems also the tendency of the insurgents to be more tolerant of casualties ratio (as indicator of such).

2. Different Strategies and Objectives: A 4GW involves a clash of strategic theories, with each side favouring one in which it enjoys advantage. The state with its advantages in firepower, manpower and technology, searches for quick victory in a direct approach, by focusing on destroying the enemy’s military capability. This almost mechanistic devotion to campaign and combat efficiency disregards or even negates the idea of struggle and the campaign for the psychology or the mind of the masses. Except in avoiding unnecessary civilian causality and collateral damage, when possible, the people are considered not involved and to be left out. Conversely, the insurgents being the all round physically inferior, opt for asymmetric warfare in which the approach is indirect and combat is guerrilla war strategy (GWS). The nature of warfare is protracted and tactics is attritional, with the

objective of wearing out the bigger opponent in an unending war/cycle of low-intensity bloodletting. This is otherwise classified as irregular warfare.

3. Different Social Power Orientations: Democracy as weakness to be exploited:

Democratic values that are sought to be made universal norms have become serious Achilles heels that undermine the survival of democracies in the age of 4GW. Rule of law, due process of law, human rights, freedom of the press and information, etc. are values effectively sought to be turned into weapons and used against the democratic societies and against which there are no good defences. The non-state challenges to the state take a clear advantage and even manipulate the operation of democratic process to beat the state. Democratic states having lower tolerance for protracted conflicts and casualties perform poorly than dictatorships in 4GW.

4. War of New Dynamics:

With diminished role for the physical element of materiel, the background dynamics of the 4GW consists in the interplay of the variables of increasing democratization, globalization and the information age, to the advantage of one and the disadvantage of the other adversary. Increasing democratization has changed the way people and societies make changes; globalization has changed/alterd the whole notion of power, its contenders and method of its projection – both states and non-state entities jockey for space; and, the information age has changed the way information is created, processed and delivered to the people. On the overall, the state has lost its monopoly in all these and has to contend with non-state actors (Yael Shahar, n.d.). Added to above operation is the non-state actors' interaction or penetration with the criminal element that now enables the non-state actors to be able to generate funds and move them through an effective underground economy. These groups enjoy the benefits of financing through crimes in narcotics, racketeering, money laundering and robbery and kidnapping.

5. War of Unrecognized Borders:

While the state may be squeamish in violating the territory of a (friendly) neighbour, the insurgents, either do not recognize the concept of territoriality or seek to exploit its negative interpretation. Territories and nationals of other states are easily worked into the equation of the insurgents: as refuge and recruiting ground, and even part of theatre of operation, and targets of attacks, hostage-taking and kidnapping, etc. (Yael Shahar, n.d.). This way, extra resources that might be beyond the reach of the state party for control, and necessarily inconsequential to its strategy and war efforts, could prove decisive in victory. This factor gathers momentum if there is official support for the insurgents in the foreign territory (Jeffrey Record, 2007). External support could prove strategic and transformatory to the conflict if it includes finance, logistics, training/capacity building, material, men and command, political/military alliances/support. Record (2007) adduces the cases of American Revolution/War of Independence, Viet Nam, etc to support this notion.

6. Contest of Differing Strategic & Tactical Definitions of Outcome:

Between the two adversaries, the interpretations/meanings of outcome differ in such fundamental way that they might as well be playing in different games. Losses at the strategic and tactical levels to insurgents do not necessarily add up to a victory to the state, as long as the former is still able to continue to mount any sort of provocations. Its overall objective tends to be just the opposite of whatever the state desires: Protraction versus quick victory, attrition versus clinical smash-up; etc. Paradoxically, operational casualties for its ranks and in the larger population of the state help to feed the overall strategic and policy objectives of the insurgents.

Analysis of Insurgency in Nigerian History: Lessons.

a. Biafra

Between 1967 and 1970, the Nigerian state faced down the Biafra insurgency in a sovereign challenge in which the insurgents sought to break up the state. Though the correlation of forces was to the inferiority of the insurgents, they did not opt for an irregular or revolutionary war. The overall strategy of the adversaries prosecuted a third-generation warfare in which the armies sought to “maneuver to bypass and collapse the enemy” (Shahar, n.d.). Being on the offensive, the federal army sought to open several fronts of hostilities concurrently in order to overstretch and therefore overwhelm the insurgents’ meager resources in men and materiel. Conversely, the insurgents went into a defensive posture to try to stave off the opposition, by sheer dogged and impregnable resistance (Atofarati, 1992).

Some of the lessons of the Biafra insurgency are:

1. There is no short insurgent war. Both sides missed the point by not planning on a long drawn campaign. For the state its estimate was a one month campaign of police action. Having worked out all the plans and machinery for a total blockade of Biafra, on paper, its quick collapse was taken as a given but it took thirty months to get the job done.

On their part, the rebels’ calculus was inextricably hinged to the federal government’s duration of conflict/hostilities (DoC). Given their defensive approach/objective, it made sense, but their lack of enough store for a probable long siege/blockade proved their unraveling.

2. Risk of underestimating the capability of insurgency:

The NAHQ (Nigerian Army Headquarters) assessment of the rebels in terms of men under arms and equipment did not give NAHQ much concern. The total mobilization and the will of the people of the Eastern Nigeria to fight against severe odds was underestimated (Atofarati, 1992).

The Biafrans went for a total mobilization of the population – men and women. Insurgents are definitely into a total war (Jeffery Record, 2007).

3. Importance of Intelligence (Strategic and tactical/ field): At the initial stages the Nigerian state, trusting in the ability to translate overwhelming superiority in men and materiel into an overwhelming military superiority, both at the strategic and tactical levels, disregarded or equated out the role of intelligence. “The NAHQ did not pay any particular attention to the strategy intelligence of the Eastern Region” (Atofarati, 1992). And, the correction of this error, later in the conflict, led to decisive improved capability and performance on the ground.

4. Role of External support through effective global Propaganda: The state made a first move and got strategic advantage to put its own narrative before the international community and secured the support of both sides of the potential sources of support and supplies in the Cold War era. Coming late to this, the rebels mounted a more emotionally/psychologically effective propaganda that began to win over some states, albeit belatedly, to supply relief to its starving population. The important lesson for both parties: even though a local conflict, there was always an attentive global audience.

5. Effective propaganda for local mobilization. Both government and rebels were able to mobilize their populations for a brutal conflict through a propaganda that demonized the other side and justified their own cause. The former had ‘reunification’ while the rebels had ‘independence/survival’ as powerful themes.

6. Total sequester: An effective strategy by the state was to blockade conflict area and squeeze the area and population of insurgent support base (Boot, 2013:472-73). And, for a long time into the future the people will remember and try to avoid conflict with the state in order to avoid such harsh living conditions.

7. Food as a most effective weapon, either as bait, persuasion, pressure, punishment, to a devastating effect/efficiency.

8. The dilemma of civil conflicts: The greatest lesson of all in the Biafran war is: the complicated task of contradictory objectives involved in all civil wars, namely, how to win the war without losing the peace? According to (Major) A.A. Atofarati (1996):

[It] was a war of unification, a war of reintegration. It was therefore a much more difficult war for the federal field commander to prosecute with objectives of unification in mind than wars fought against aggressors on foreign land. The human aspect was paramount. It was a contradiction and complication not easy to resolve - how to fight causing only limited destruction, how to inflict wounds and heal at the same time, how to subdue without fatal and permanent injuries, how to feed and house civilian population without exposing our troops to danger and risk of saboteurs and infiltrators, how to achieve surrender without inflicting permanent or long lasting psychological humiliation.

b. Niger Delta Militancy

Though the objectives of the insurgencies differ, the Niger Delta militancy showed signs of having learnt from the Biafran rebellion as shown in the nature of the challenge presented to the state and the strategy adopted to that effect. Unlike the sovereign challenge of the Biafran insurgency, this was essentially a systemic challenge, in which the militants sought better or enhanced share of the natural resources of their land, and their choice of strategy was revolutionary war or guerrilla war strategy (GWS). This enabled them offset the imbalance in men and materiel against them, the odds of which were much higher than those of the Biafrans. In stead of defending territory, they sought to turn the whole area of the Niger Delta into a maze of traps to the security forces (JTF). The inhospitable creeks became a cul-de-sac of a defense system.

At the tactical level, they resorted to a low intensity conflict the specific methods of which were kidnapping, essentially of expatriate workers of the oil companies; sabotage of oil industry infrastructure and illegal bunkering on the high seas; and moonshine refinery of petroleum products.

While engaging the militants in the creeks, the federal government's offer of Amnesty and rehabilitation transformed the nature, process and methodology of the conflict into one of opportunities, business, career, skills, etc. And, in strategic considerations, the impact of the amnesty programme, as a weapon or instrument of war propaganda of the state was profound. It unfrocked the militants (leadership) of the romanticism of the guerrilla and revealed them as just shrewd businessmen in the chase for 'filthy lucre', as they became contractors.

The success of amnesty as strategy has been such that it is widely recommended for the Boko Haram insurgency (Egbeme, 2015) even though there is wide difference between the two insurgencies (Alex Thurston, 2013).

c. Boko Haram: Nature of Challenge

Boko Haram insurgency, has the hallmark of its own in the intensity, graphicness and sway of the violent challenge to the state. It is unlike the Niger Delta Militancy but like the Biafran

as it poses a sovereign threat; but like the former, its strategy is irregular warfare. Even in areas of similarities with the earlier insurgencies, Boko Haram has managed to show a world of difference with them, in depth and sway. Its type of irregular warfare is largely of the terror variety; and its sovereign challenge goes beyond the territory of Nigeria into those of Cameroon, Chad and Niger. At the strategic level it has merged itself into the terror caliphate of the Islamic State (ISIS/IL) and became its West African province (BBC.Com, 2015).

At the tactical level, Boko Haram's insurgency consists in: kidnappings; bombings, suicide bombings and mass murder of civilians and other non-combatants; assassinations; rape and slavery of girls; sectarian and religious violations; willful destruction of private property (Amnesty International, 2015); forced evacuations, and ethnic cleansing (Dorsey, 2015, Allen, Lewis and Matfes, 2014).

Boko Haram shows indications of contemporariness with the development of the spirit of Fourth-Generation Warfare (4GW), than even the Niger Delta crisis and their proximity in time. Apart from better organization and evaluation at the policy, strategic and tactical levels, it has shown itself to be better even in men and materiel, and others.

1. Tie-up with ISIS as a strategic gambit, and which enables it to attain at a policy level an important – some say, potentially decisive – element of a Fourth-Generation non-state actor. This feat was lacking in the militants and poorly achieved by the Biafrans and so sorely missed. At the strategic level, it opens a potential avenue for funding, capacity building and materiel; and, a breathing space for safety and refuge for its leadership, whenever the heat of the Nigerian army gets too hot. The broader import of this alliance is that the Nigerian conflict could go beyond the capacity of the national resources to deal with. According to the BBC's analysis "the fact that the group is now part of a wider international network means the campaign of violence could escalate in neighbouring countries, particularly in Chad and Niger, which have border and are closer to Libya, where IS began its expansion in Africa". This opens a corridor of direct contact that practically splits Africa right in the heart of it, with ominous portends. At the tactical level, it has great shock and global propaganda effect.

2. Chibok Girls' abduction scored Boko Haram two very high points. It gave them greater global attention than any number of large explosions and deaths. And, it continues to be a strong bargaining chip, almost a joker, in any future negotiation (BBC.com, October 2, 2015). Though Niger Delta militants did take a few hostages, but none on such scale and of so much propaganda and bargaining value.

However, Boko Haram has its own challenges in the understanding of its own strength and limitations in a 4GW scenario and the Nigerian realities:

- Boko Haram's assumption that the apparent absence of the security forces in some outlying parts and forests was a real existence of (uncontested) space where it could metamorphose itself into a conventional force and mount a conventional challenge; and,

- Boko Haram's assumption that a 4-D and mathematical dimensional advantage, conferred on insurgents by the nature and theory of 4GW, could translate into geophysical 3-D space of equal acreage/mileage and so sought to transform itself into a force capable of conventional materiel acquisitions – APCs, tanks, headquarters, locations and outposts, own civilian populations (even when they are hostages).

These two assumptions have become dead-weights that reduced the capabilities for speed and curvature, without any comparative advantage conferred; and, it added mass without density, in an inertial geophysical space.

Government's Response: A Cross Section

The earliest response of the government was of a law-and-order disposition, singularly inadequate and generally uncoordinated. By the time the state saw the military

threat, Boko Haram had attacked and looted the armory of many police stations and quite a few army locations, resulting in a lot of weapons for the insurgents and equally less so for the security forces. And when the government finally came to, its choice of response was military.

Responding to the cross border activities/operation of the insurgents and the common threat to their territorial integrity, Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon and Niger formed a Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), to open up hostilities fronts against Boko Haram.

April 24, 2013, Government introduced another element or dimension of a peaceful resolution to the conflict, probably hoping for a repeat of the conclusion of the Niger Delta militancy, by setting up the Committee on Dialogue and Peaceful Resolution of Security Challenges in the North, “with the task of identifying and constructively engaging key leaders of Boko Haram and developing a workable framework for amnesty and disarmament of the group” (Alex Thurston, 2013).

2013, the US government placed a \$7m bounty on Abubaka Shekau’s head.

October 29, 2015, Nigeria army issued a Most-Wanted photo list of Boko Haram leaders, and special hotlines for the public to call to give information.

The Government introduced the concept of Civilian Joint Task Force into its counterinsurgency action.

In its response, the government revealed a complexity of wrong assumptions, lessons not learned, and lessons learned.

a. Wrong Assumptions on Boko Haram

- Assumption of ‘just (another) version of low intensity communal/ religious clashes’: This is drawn from the army’s initial approach of seeking to overwhelm with superior force. The very idea of seeking to put up men to fight in formation is testament to that. It assumed a single capability strategic vision (David E. Long) by thinking it is a purely police/law-and-order challenge; and when that did not work, it moved over to the assumption of a purely military solution. At first, the army arrested the leader of Boko Haram, the late Yusuf Mohammad, and handed him over to the police for possible prosecution. When that failed, the army was brought out expecting a conventional combat operations/challenge.

- Assumption of a purely military solution to a military problem is shown in the earlier lack of professional trust and consequent coordination among the security forces, especially between the army and the police. This was probably a product of the fact of arrest of the controversial cleric and original founder of Boko Haram the and circumstances surrounding his death, of whom the army arrested and handed over to the police, at the very initial stages or the beginning of the outfit. The various security forces did not see the necessity/imperative of intelligence sharing and the effect was that the insurgents could slip through their nets.

- Assumption of ideological parallelism with ND militancy (and possibly, Biafra) and non consideration of asymmetric relations/nature of situation by agreeing to negotiate and believing in an early (negotiated) settlement without overwhelming superiority in combat (the battlefield). Boko Haram has an ideological depth and take that is a profound source of power and commitment exceeding the ND and Biafra. The latter were clearly ideologies of the Here-and-now/existential ideologies while the former is an unusual blend of existentialist and Hereafter psychology in which the Hereafter feeds the existent.

- Assumption that skills acquisition via education and job would solve the problem, like in the ND case was misplaced. The level of Boko Haram commitment/indoctrination calls for reformation via psychiatric and psychological reorientation to let an indoctrinate understand that there may not be a paradise in the hereafter if one willingly throws away this life or pollutes ones conscience by spilling another’s blood.

- Yet another myth is that it is just a new version/wave of the classic Muslim-Christian clashes/violence for space. Boko Haram attacked both communities and bombed mosques, too.

- The assumption that Boko Haram like ND and Biafra is home grown and would stay that way, apparently because no neighbouring state had shown any positive links to it, or interest in supporting or that they have actually opposed it. The perseverance and sophistication of its tactics and weaponry was unprecedented; and when it finally declared allegiance to ISIL, the scales fell off the eyes of the state strategists.

Lessons not Learnt

There were some important lessons about insurgency/4GW and which the Nigerian state failed to learn or did not learn in the Biafra and ND cases to be able to translate to experience in dealing with Boko Haram. And, the reasons for such non-learning include: the state being a victim of its own past success in the previous challenges. These classic lessons not learnt include:

1. The importance of political will; magnitude of the political will in the insurgents; and, the disparity between their political wills compared (see Andrew Mack, 1975): The Nigerian state failed in the comparative study of wills involved in the two previous challenges. The Biafrans had the will in large quantity, the ND to some significant extent, but the Boko Haram for now dwarfs them all – with ‘will unto death’. The political will or zeal of the Biafrans was completely negated by their (now discovered/adjudged) wrong strategy; and inability to attract external assistance. The nature of the challenge of the ND (systemic challenge – based on loose structure and the regional political environment where no neighbouring state was sufficiently antagonistic to the Nigerian regime nor convinced of any interest in their cause).

Relatively, the Boko Haram has greater political will with far less mitigating factors. The border location of the foci of Boko Haram helps offset some of the terrain/geographical handicaps of the Biafrans and Niger Deltans. It can draw resources of money and materiel and men from Chad, Niger and Cameroon. For political will, the very combat methodology of the Boko Haram manifests its political will – its desire to create a sharia society and a consequent or an accompanied desire not to live in a non-sharia one, as indicative in their Wahabi principle (of withdrawing from a non-sharia society, preparing and then fighting to overthrow it) makes it a zero-sum situation for members. Adding, the acceptance of martyrdom, demonstrated in death in battle and suicide attacks, produces a mindset quite different from that upon which the state is sustained and upon which its army is modeled – every soldier costs money to train and is worth more alive and fighting, than dead. The insurgents are fighting for the creation of a desired turn of events in the life of their community, to create it, while the state is fighting to sustain “territorial integrity”. And, for a state that has a recent history of surrendering parts of its territory (Bakassi peninsula to Cameroun), there is not expected a large dose of emotional attachment and or interpretation of territorial integrity. Still stemming from political will is the fact of relative proximity to the location of contest. The policy makers for Boko Haram live and operate in the same area of contest which gives them much logistical and political advantage over those of the state trying to project power into the area of contest, with the inherent disadvantages of distractions and logistical challenges (Jeffrey Record, 2007).

2. Difference between military action and war objective (Objective – Outcome Logic Differential): To lose means slightly different things to the state and the Boko Haram. The state aims to eradicate Boko Haram, while the latter just wants to avoid that and stay active. To the state an ‘almost total’ elimination of the insurgents is not the eradication of insurgency and, thus, a failure to realize the objective and, by implication, a defeat.

Conversely, the same almost eradication is a victory to the insurgents – they are still there. This directly questions President Muhammadu Buhari’s pronouncement of Boko Haram having been “technically defeated”. You may win at the tactical and strategic levels, but still lose the war. In fact, for states often the push for victory in combat costs them the war. That was the experience of the US in Viet Nam.

3. Difference in the intrinsic nature of the adversaries and the corresponding strength and weaknesses there from: Nigeria is a large and democratic society admitting various and often different views on issues. In a Clausewitzian fashion, a government’s fighting capability or morale is, significantly, a function of public opinion, in a trinitarian way – nation, state and the army. In counterinsurgencies, democracies have low tolerance for long drawn campaigns – seemingly unending war, high cost, casualty, brutal campaigns, etc. This low tolerance reflects in the morale and performance of army, the cooperation of the other sections of the state institution and apparatus and the support of the people.

This unique character of democracies is what 4GW is contingent upon, and the Achilles heels of the government which insurgents like Boko Haram seek to exploit to victory. They work these into their policy, strategy and tactics, and enjoy a monopoly on them. The government avoids them.

Civilian JTF: A Good Lesson in the Learning:

The introduction of the civilian JTF by the state is an innovation beyond the coverage (knowledge) of existing literature on 4GW. This is a community based vigilante coverage set up to work in close cooperation with the security forces, to be engaged essentially in purposeful information gathering, the dissemination of specific information, and chance apprehension of terror suspects and their facilitators.

- The advantage (tactical, strategic and policy) of employing this or similar community/home defense methodology/system includes the following:

- It takes advantage of the history of the Gwoza, Kawri, Kanuri, Hitle, Kaw, of fighting, resisting and fighting off extremist Muslim invaders dating back in time. Since these tribes have again borne the brunt of Boko Haram occupation and pillage and rape and other atrocities, some infused capacity-building to protect themselves would pin down Boko Haram or force a relocation away from the Sambisa forest refuge out into less protected areas where their vulnerability would be enhanced.

- It would absolve the army of any charges of human right abuses and the inherent operational hindrances while protecting its traditional morale and discipline. Support and training of the civilians would remain a purely covert operation of the secrete services.

- Militias competition with Boko Haram in ‘propaganda by deed’ could be explained away to the wider society in terms of law-and-order and be so addressed by the normal police procedure.

- Civilian JTF would enable intelligence gathering and population control through: passes, curfews, and other restrictions that impede the movement of would-be terrorists and enable any necessary direct military action, and interrogation of suspects. This is the experience of the Israelis in West Bank and Gaza, in the Operation Defensive Shield, and Operation Determined Way, to stem the tide of suicide bombings by the Palestinians (Howard & Sawyer, 2004:266-7).

However, there are attendant apprehensions and risks by the state in putting weapons and expertise in the hands of the civilians, and a potential militia and mafia-like phenomenon. The lessons of ethnic militia in other African states and the vigilantes of Central America, etc. are counter to the idea of a civilian JTF. However, since ours is a position paper, the choice between the two evils of a renegade JTF and a rampant Boko Haram, the former is a lesser evil. Further, the state cannot show preference to a clear and

present danger of fatal propensity, in fear of a potential which may or may not materialize into greater or lesser problem. The Nigerian state would rather get for itself another chance to live today and - may be - die tomorrow or another day (of militia), than to give up and die today (of Boko Haram) in certainty.

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