From Colonial Occupation to a National Force, the Army in Nigeria: Past Experiences, Present Realities, and Future Prospects

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Abstract

The Nigerian Army came into existence as an army of occupation introduced by the British colonialists to protect their economic, strategic, and political interests in Nigeria. However, a major challenge facing the transformation of the Army has been how to transit from its perceived colonial role to that of a national force. The paper discusses the growth of the Nigerian Army from its inception to its present state. It highlighted the following as some of the inadequacies of the Nigerian Army: the perception of regional domination of the force due to the lopsidedness in the demography of the officer's corps and rank and file; the issue of the Army's inability to successfully tackle internal insecurity due to some lapses in its composition and operational strategies; and the lack of acquaintance by troops with their operational environment and other related constraints. It recommends amendments to the structure and operations of the Army for better, efficient, and effective operations as well as some critical adjustments for efficient future operations. These include a review of its policy to ensure that its personnel do not serve in their homelands, or alternatively establish a language policy whereby all personnel are encouraged to be proficient in one major Nigerian language apart from their native tongues. It also proposes the establishment of a new corps that would be trained in guerrilla warfare to tackle internal security.

Keywords: Nigerian Army, Colonial role, National role, Guerrilla warfare, Internal security

Introduction

This paper discusses the evolution of the Nigerian Army from inception till these contemporary times. The Nigerian Army came into existence as an Army of occupation by the British colonial masters. Its major challenge, however, had been how to transit from this role perception to that of a national force.

On the one hand, an Army of occupation is an Army that goes to a conquered territory to enforce the terms of a peace treaty. A national force on the other hand is the lawful Army of a sovereign state. It is the symbol of sovereignty of the state and commands nationwide acceptance. In coming to Nigeria, strategic and operational expediencies made the British to rely on a native force to conquer and hold Nigeria like other colonial realms. However, operational wisdom demanded that the British should keep the Army as a force of occupation. All efforts and policies were put in place to make sure that the Army was not familiar with their operational environment so that in case of complications, the Army would not fraternise with the local people to the detriment of the colonial government. Rival ethnic groups were made to garrison the territories of one another. There was an imbalance in the demography of the officer's corps and the rank and file. While the officer's corps was predominantly from a part of the country, the rank and file was drawn from another part.

In addition to these, the myth of the martial group against the non-martial group was propagated to ensure imbalance in the army between the officer's corps and the rank and file. Language was also manipulated to foster differences among personnel within the force. While officers and troops from a part of the country were encouraged to use the official lingua franca, those from the other part of the country were indulged to operate in their native tongue.

As time went by and Nigeria approached independence, the division in the army was obvious given the lopsidedness in the demography of the officer's corps and the rank and file. An attempt to correct this imbalance was perceived as injustice with serious consequences on troops and officers' morale. In an attempt to redress the imbalance in the officers' corps, educational requirement for the officer's corps was lowered. The result was that officers from the "disadvantaged" section of the country became unduly "advantaged" and juniors suddenly overtook seniors and contemporaries became subordinates overnight. The above structure of the army, while it was useful for the colonial government, turned out to be grossly inadequate for a sovereign nation state.

The lack of acquaintance by troops with their operational environment has turned out to be a major operational constraint. During the colonial period, Nigeria's major defense challenge was internal security. Even though Nigeria had prepared for the eventuality of external aggression, the history of the country so far has shown that her challenges either during the civil war or in the current war on insurgency had been from within. The challenges the Army faced and is facing had been due largely to lapses in her evolution.

This study seeks to investigate the past of the Nigerian Army with the aim of highlighting its inadequacies, suggesting amendments for its present and adjustments for its future operations. To this end, a suggestion is being made for the Army to review its policy of making sure that its personnel do not serve in their homelands. If this has not been done, there should be a language policy whereby all personnel are encouraged to be proficient in one major Nigerian language apart from their native tongues. The Army

should also consider the establishment of a new corps for irregular warfare that will be trained in guerrilla warfare.

The Past Experience

As a result of its preponderance on the political stage of Nigeria since independence, the Army has attracted a litany of studies. Independent Nigeria had hardly taken off when the Army seized power on 15th January 1966. The Army thereafter held the reins of power until 1979 when there was a brief transition to civilian rule for a brief period of four years. The Army again struck to seize power until 1999 after an abortive attempt at another transition to civilian rule. In the course of these years in politics, the Army affected the Nigerian state and was itself affected by it in diverse ways. All sources about the beginning of the Nigerian Army agreed that the army had its genesis in Glover's Hausas. Captain John Glover of the Royal Navy was appointed the Governor of the Colony of Lagos in 1863.[1] Though recruited out of exigencies, Glover's Hausas came to lay the pattern for recruitment into the army for a considerable length of time. Soldiers were usually from foreign areas in Nigeria. The reasons for Glover's use of Hausa ex-slaves are not farfetched. Lagos was itself in a state of flux at the time of Glover's arrival. The British were just struggling to get Africans who had participated in the trans-Atlantic slave trade to divert to trade in sylvan commodities, particularly the oil palm. It was therefore not the best of ventures to get indigenes to do other things. Hence, only former slaves who were indebted to their British liberators could have been readily available for recruitment into the army.

This reasonably accounts for Hausas as the first crump of soldiers to be recruited by Glover. When the French faced a similar challenge of recruitment of troops in Senegal, they used liberated

slaves in the colonial Army and allowed such soldiers to own slaves as rewards for military service. This served as an inducement to other people for recruitment into the Army.[2] The British, who were campaigning for the abolition of the trade, could not have behaved like the French in Senegal. Also, the indigenes of Lagos were known to be averse to wage labour around the time of Glover because of the availability of better alternatives to wage labour in general and better wage-earning options in colonial Lagos[3]. To meet their wage labour needs the British had to resort to labour importation from Sierra Leone where there were no opportunities for independent livelihood comparable to that of Lagos and the Niger Delta. It is instructive that the first African Chief of Army Staff of Nigeria (General Aguiyi-Ironsi) was one of those Sierra Leoneans though he is today regarded as an Igbo man.

Glover established the nucleus of present-day Nigeria's Army and Police with 10 Hausa runaway slaves on 1 June 1863. The group was known as Glover's Hausas. Glover went to great lengths to develop bonds of personal loyalty with the Armed Hausas. He personally trained, commanded, and chose his successors, ensuring their loyalty. In return for their loyalty, Glover rewarded his troops with land and dwellings. He raised their pay and provided them with smart uniforms that broadcast their status as free men and agents of the British colonial government.[4]

After the period, Glover was employed to repel incursions of the Ashantis. When the Third British-Ashanti War broke out in 1873, Captain Glover undertook the task of organising the native people, whose hatred for the Ashantis might be expected to make them favourable to the British authorities to the extent at least to which their fears would allow them to act. His services were accepted, and in September 1873, he landed at Cape Coast in the Gold Coast

and, after forming a small trustworthy force of Hausa, marched to Accra. His influence sufficed to gather a numerous native force[5].

In 1886, following the 1885 proclamation of a British protectorate over the "Oil Rivers", the "Oil Rivers Irregulars" came into existence. During the same year, the "Royal Niger Company Constabulary" was created as the private militia of the Royal Niger Company. The Royal Niger Constabulary set up its Headquarters at Lokoja. When, in 1891, the "Oil Rivers Protectorate" changed its name to the "Niger Coast Protectorate", the "Oil Rivers Irregulars" became the "Niger Coast Constabulary" (NCC), later regularised in 1893 under the command of British officers, based at Calabar. It has been indicated that the indigenous component of the NCC force was made up of "one-third Yorubas and two-thirds Hausas".

Following the French occupation of Bussa in Borgu Emirate, the British government decided to make contingency plans for a military conflict with France, which it regarded as encroaching on British mercantile interests in what was known as the "Niger area". In these circumstances what became known as the West African Field Force was created by Colonel Lugard and expanded from a core of draftees drawn initially from the Royal Niger Company Constabulary. The 1st battalion of this force was created on 26th August 1897. Two additional battalions, the 2nd and 3rd, were created in 1898.

Eventually, this particular British-French face-off did not degenerate to military conflict, but there were already proposals on the table for the consolidation of all British constabulary forces in West Africa. Meanwhile, it had been suggested, on January 8, 1897, through a newspaper article by Miss Flora Shaw (who later

became Lady Lugard) that the term "Niger-Area" be changed to "Nigeria". That is how "Nigeria" got its name. The War Office in London, citing well-known principles of war, had been putting pressure on the Colonial Office using the argument that centralization of military command would lead to better coordination, economy of force, and military efficiency in the scramble for West Africa. This resulted in the establishment of a committee under Lord Selborne. The work of the committee led to the formal separation of Police (irregular) from Military (regular) functions and the consolidation of all colonial forces – Lagos Constabulary, Gold Coast Constabulary, Sierra Leone Frontier Police, Niger Coast Constabulary, Royal Niger Company Constabulary, and the West African Field Force - into what became known as the West African Frontier Force, under an Inspector General.

In late 1899, therefore, the Niger Coast Constabulary, 3rd Battalion West Africa Field Force, and the Royal Niger Company Constabulary were merged to form what became known in early 1900 as the Southern Nigeria Regiment, West African Frontier Force. In May 1900, the consolidation of the 1st and 2nd battalions of the West African Field Force and Royal Niger Constabulary companies based in Northern Nigeria, led to the formation of the Northern Nigeria Regiment, West African Frontier Force, under Lugard.

Meanwhile, at least in part a response to War Office pressures, since January 1896, a "Lagos Police Force" had been created, separated from the more military "Lagos (Hausa) Constabulary." Subsequently, as part of the new Frontier Force arrangements, in 1901, the **Lagos (Hausa) Constabulary** formally became known as the Lagos Battalion, West African Frontier Force. The remnants

of the Niger Coast Constabulary and the Royal Niger Company Constabulary companies were merged to form the Calabar Battalion, West African Frontier Force.

In February 1906, when the Colony of Lagos and Southern Nigeria were merged, the **Lagos Battalion** was designated as the **2nd Battalion, The Southern Nigeria Regiment**. The rest of the Southern Nigeria Regiment (including the Calabar Battalion) became known as the 1st Battalion, The Southern Nigeria Regiment. Despite the change of name from "Hausa Constabulary" to "Lagos Constabulary" and then "Lagos Battalion", the unit continued to be viewed and described by the British as a predominantly "Hausa" unit. Forty-Eight (48) years after its creation, according to the 1911 edition of *Encyclopedia Love To Know*,

> The defense of the province is entrusted to the Lagos Battalion of the West African Frontier Force, a body under the control of the Colonial Office in London and composed of Hausa (four-fifths) and Yoruba. It is officered from the British army.

Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that the term "Hausa", like "Sepuy" in India, was sometimes used, not in an absolutely accurate ethnic context, but as a generic term for "soldier." On January 1st, 1914, consequent upon the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria, The Southern Nigeria Regiment was merged with The Northern Nigeria Regiment to form The Nigeria Regiment, West African Frontier Force. From this point on, the various colonial battalions (initially comprised of eight companies each) took on new designations, with specific number. The 1st Battalion of 1914 was the former 1st Battalion Northern Nigeria

Regiment. The 2nd Battalion of 1914 was the former 2nd Battalion Northern Nigeria Regiment. The 3rd Battalion of 1914 was the former 3rd Bn Northern Nigeria Regiment. The 4th Battalion of 1914 was the former 2nd Bn, Southern Nigeria Regiment (and thus the former Lagos Battalion, former Lagos Constabulary, former Hausa Constabulary, former Hausa Militia (or Guard) and original "Glover's Hausas"). On the other hand, the 5th Battalion of 1914 was the former 1st Battalion, Southern Nigeria Regiment.

Various re-designations have occurred since then. The 4th battalion, however, retained its number, as part of The Nigeria Regiment, although, along with other Nigerian battalions, it was rotated from time to time from one part of the country to another. During World War 1, when the number of battalions was expanded to nine (9), it was known as the 4th regiment, West African Frontier Force, attached to the Kings Own Lancaster Regiment. In 1920, after the war, the number of battalions was reduced to four but then expanded back to five, several years later. The West African Frontier Force itself later became the Royal West African Frontier Force in 1928. Just prior to WW2, the unit was known as the 4 Bn, Nigeria Regiment, Royal West African Frontier Force. During World War 2, it was known as the 4th Battalion Nigerian Rifles. The Nigeria Regiment became The Queen's Own Nigeria Regiment, Royal West African Frontier Force in 1956, Royal Nigerian Army in 1960, and The Nigerian Army in 1963 (when Nigeria became a republic).

The last colours of the RWAFF used by the unit were reportedly presented to it in 1952 by Sir John Stuart Macpherson, GCMS, then the Governor General of Nigeria. The colours were retired in 1960 when Nigeria became independent and remain to this day preserved in the Battalion Officers Mess. The unit was based in

Kaduna in the early fifties, and was thus responsible for the honour guard parade when Queen Elizabeth visited the Kaduna Race Course in February 1956. However, as of October 1st, 1960, when Nigeria became independent, the old 4th battalion (then known as the 4 Queens Own Nigeria Regiment (4QONR) was back again at Ibadan, capital of the then Western Region, its original location just before the Second World War. On June 1st, 1963, it celebrated its centennial anniversary and was presented with the Freedom of the city of Ibadan[6]. This was symbolised by a key presented by the late Sir Isaac Akinyele, the then Olubadan of Ibadan, to Lt. Col. Kur Mohammed, the first indigenous Commanding Officer of the battalion, who was later murdered in cold blood during the January 1966 coup by Major Christian Anuforo.

After Nigeria became a republic, the unit became known as "4NA" or "4 Battalion." Subsequent minor alterations in nomenclature (while still retaining the number "4") have been driven by changes in its role and responsibilities, as will be apparent as we delve deeper into its history. Indeed, it is the only battalion in the Nigerian Army that has served as Infantry on foot, motorised Infantry, Airborne, and most recently as a Guards Battalion.

At the time of the first coup, the Nigerian Amy numbered 10,500 men and 511 officers. Of the officers, only 330 were of combat status[7]. The officer's corps was not balance. The non-commissioned officers' cadre was mainly dominated by the Yoruba followed by the Igbo.[8] As independence was approaching, the Army established contacts with Secondary Schools to encourage their students to join the officers' corps of the Army as cadets. Schools so contacted were Government College, Keffi for students from the Northern part of the country, Government College, Umuahia for those from the Eastern part of the country,

and Government College, Ughelli for those from the Mid-Western part of the country. The Eastern part of the country was thus inadvertently placed at an advantage since there were Igbo also in the Mid-West. Meanwhile, the Army for reasons not yet clear did not establish contact with Government College, Ibadan to encourage students from the institution to take interest in the Army unlike their counterparts in other regions of the country. This may not be unconnected with the political tide of the time where both the East and the North were in close political alliance.

The result of this move from 1953 was to be the domination of the officers' corps of the Army by Igbo-speaking officers. While there was Government College, Keffi providing cadets for the north, there were Government Colleges, Umuahia and Ughelli providing cadets for the Igbo while Government College, Ibadan was not able to play the same role for the Yoruba. At independence on 1st October 1960, there were 57 commissioned officers in the Nigerian Army. Of these, 37 were from the East, 10 from the West and 8 from the North. At independence, it was decided to Nigerianize the officers' corps of the Army[9] and also redress the ethnic imbalance in the army. This was what led to the introduction of the ethnic quota system shortly before independence. Under this system, whenever, recruits were needed in the Army, Northern Nigeria would provide 60%, Eastern and Western Nigeria would provide 15% each while the Mid – West would provide the remaining 10%[10]. Also, the academic qualifications for entry into the officers' corps and age limitation were lowered and increased respectively to accommodate Northern interests[11]. The results were a fall in the standards of the Army.

Apart from this, military installations in the country were concentrated in the northern part of the country. Military

installations in the north were: 3rd battalion, Kaduna, 5th battalion, Kano, Field Battery (artillery), Kaduna, Field Squadron (Engineers), Kaduna, 88 Transport Regiment, Kaduna, Nigerian Military Academy, Kaduna, Ordinance Depot, Kaduna, 44 Military Hospital, Kaduna, Nigeria Military Training College, Kaduna, Reconnaissance Squadron and Regimental Headquarters, Kaduna, Nigerian Air Force, Kaduna, 66th battalion, Kaduna, Ammunition Factory, Kaduna, Recruit Training Centre, Zaria, and Nigeria Military School (NMS), Zaria. Western Nigeria: 4th Battalion, Ibadan, Field Artillery, Abeokuta, Reconnaissance Squadron, Abeokuta. Eastern Nigeria: 1st Battalion, Enugu[12].

This was the situation in which the Nigerian state was plunged into political crisis following the two military coups of January and July 1966. The army deployment system was such that the boundary between the units and their operating environment was sharply defined. The battalions were periodically transferred around to prevent them from developing local ties[13]. Postings and promotions were made without reference to the area of origin, so that most officers and men were more likely to spend the greater part of their career outside their home area[14]. This was a legacy from colonial tradition whereby the British ensured that officers and men of the Army did not serve in their homelands to avoid any fraternization with the local populace in times of internal security challenges. This was succinctly put by Major Denton when he said,

> In our Hausa force, we have a body of men dissociated from the countries immediately around Lagos both by birth and religion, and who are as a matter of fact the hereditary enemies of the Yorubas[15]. This is such an enormous advantage in time of interior complication that

> I should be sorry to see it abandoned if it be possible to obtain a supply of recruits in any other way[16].

The folly and wisdom of this deployment system would be demonstrated in the civil war. On the outbreak of the war when men and soldiers had to be deployed to their regions of origin as a result of loss of confidence, the Mid-West was commanded by officers of Igbo origin. They simply abandoned their responsibility to the nation by allowing their compatriots from the East to overrun the Mid-West without any struggle[17]. This underscored the wisdom of the British colonial policy of not allowing officers and men to serve in their regions. On the other hand, at the outbreak of the war, because troops had been sent to their regions of origin, there were no Eastern Officers and men to tackle the Eastern region. Troops from the North under Colonel Shuwa had to be deployed[18]. Shuwa's advance was characterised by inexplicable caution and delay which had a telling effect on the course and outcome of the war. Obasanjo was at pains to lament the adverse effects of Shuwa's delay which allowed the rebels time to regroup and reverse some of the gains of the Federal troops. Unfortunately, General Shuwa, as he later came to be, has not left his own account of why he did or did not do what he did. It is instructive that he was a northerner. He was therefore most likely not as familiar with the terrain as he ought to have been, his previous tours of duty notwithstanding.

Over the years, (since Independence) the fourth Battallion has served under the 2nd Brigade, 1st Brigade, 1 Division, 3 Marine Commando Division, 3 Armoured Division, 82 Division (in the Bakassi Peninsula) and most recently under command of the Guards Brigade, Nigerian Army. Following a complete breakdown in discipline, the battalion was redeployed from Ibadan to Kaduna

in September 1966, and then repositioned at the border of then Benue-Plateau and East Central States in June 1967, just prior to the civil war. It operated along the Oturkpo-Umuahia axis under the 1st Division during the war. Its last major battle in that unfortunate conflict was the capture of Ovim. At the end of the civil war, it was located at Nkwere (in present day Imo State) until 1974 before it was redeployed to Owerri (present Imo State). It later moved to Ogoja (Cross River State) in 1981. It moved from Ogoja to Takum (in Taraba State) in 1992. The unit moved from Takum to Archibong Town in the Bakassi peninsula in April 1995 before being redeployed to its present location in Abuja in 2000. The unit mascot is the Lion, symbolic of strength[19]. As a result of the killings of officers of South Eastern origin in the north during the second coup, confidence was lost in the Army. By April 1967, the decision was taken to deploy officers and men to their regions of origin[20].

The Army practically ceased to be the national institution it has managed to pretend to be. The Western region suddenly realised that it was defenseless as there were few officers and men of the region's origin to be deployed to Ibadan the regional capital[21]. The northern troops had to be retained for some time in the West where they were seen as an Army of occupation. When there was no emergency of the type that occurred in 1967, the same officers and men had been seen as service men and officers of the national Army. This was the situation in which the Army went into the civil war. The civil war necessitated the hurried expansion of the Army from the pre-war strength earlier noted to a strength of about 120,000 officers and men at the end of the War[22]. The expansion process overseen by the Nigerian army command staff led to an extreme shortage of commissioned officers, with newly created Lieutenant-Colonels commanding brigades, and platoons and

companies often commanded by sergeants and warrant officers. This resulted in tentative command and control and in rudimentary staff work by Nigerian army personnel[23].

At the end of the Civil War, the three divisions of the Army were reorganised into four divisions, with each controlling territories running from North to South in order to de-emphasise the former regional structure. Each division thus had access to the sea thereby making the service cooperation and logistic support easier. This deployment formula was later abandoned in favour of the present assignment of sectors to the divisions. Thus 1 Division with HQ at Kaduna is allocated the North West sector; 2 Division with HQ at Ibadan, South West sector, 3 Division with HQ at Jos, North East sector, and 82 Division with HQ at Enugu, South East sector[24]. The army has over the years grown in leaps and bounds to a strength of about 9,134 officers and about 144,288 men. It has also multiplied its institutions several folds and attempted to spread them across the country. However, a critical look at the spread of military installations in Nigeria will show an uneven spread between the north and the South. Most of the installations are still concentrated in the north.

Present Realities

Apart from the exigencies of the two World Wars, the Nigerian army had essentially been used for the maintenance of internal security. This is because, even though like other sovereign nation-states, Nigeria has had to prepare for the possibilities of external defence, the country had been largely immune from external attacks both during and after colonial rule. Like a few very fortunate countries in the world such as Britain and the United States, Nigeria is geostrategically well favoured by nature. She is bounded to the north by the Sahara and the south by the Atlantic

Ocean. These are in themselves natural barriers to attack. The invasion of Nigeria from the north or south would require some time to cross these two barriers. The time required to cross them is enough to prepare counter measures. Nigeria is also flanked by relatively weaker neighbours to the west and the east. Even though these neighbours are in one military understanding or the other with an extra continental power, history has shown that such understanding has hardly been of benefit to such African countries in times of need[25]. Also, such an extra continental power has vested interests in Nigeria which she will have to balance against her treaty obligations to Nigeria's neighbours in times of need[26]. Thus the army in Nigeria has always been for the maintenance of internal security both during and after the colonial period. During the colonial period, it was a cardinal principle of colonial defense that the colonies were to be defended by the British Imperial might. Colonies were expected to have just enough strength to hold the ground until the arrival of imperial forces[27].

Also, threat calculations to the colonies were based not on the local situation of such colonies but on the disposition of the colonial master in international relations. In the light of this, any war between Britain and any power in the international system was bound to spread to her colonies of which Nigeria was one. This was why Nigerian troops participated in the two World Wars on the side of Britain. Until the end of the First World War, Germany and France, as colonial masters of Nigeria's immediate neighbours (Cameroun and Chad), were putative enemies of Britain in Nigeria. With the end of the First World War and German loss of her colonies, France became the only putative enemy of Britain in Nigeria. As a result of her perception of threats to her interests in international relations, France, though had a very heavy military and air defense build -up in West Africa close to Nigeria, did not

constitute a threat to Britain. Britain remained undisturbed about the security of Nigeria because formidable as the French strength in West Africa was, they had alternative uses[28].

France was frightened about the prospect of Germany asking for her colonies which were lost during the First World War and thereby envisaged a likely War. Her defense build-up in West Africa was to enable her meet German challenges. She went a great length to convince Britain about her (France's) friendly intentions towards Britain and was indeed working towards an alliance with Britain throughout the inter war years[29]. This trend of international relations put Britain at ease in all of her West African colonies. As a matter of fact, when eventually the alliance between Britain and France became a reality to fight the Second World War, West Africa was included in the Atlantic theatre of operations and given to France to defend in the war. This was the situation until the tide of War changed in June 1940 and both former allies found themselves as enemies.[30]

Even in the changed strategic situation after 1940, Nigeria was not regarded as externally threatened. This was because the nearest place from which Nigeria could be threatened by France was from her bases in the Maghreb. Even then, the time it would take to prepare to cross the Sahara to threaten Nigeria was deemed sufficient for effective counter measures to be prepared against such an attack. Nigeria was therefore regarded to be free from external attacks by colonial defense planners for most of the colonial period. The security challenges of Nigeria were rightly believed to be internal. Even here, they were believed to be minimal and expected mostly from the northern part of the country. Defense plans for Nigeria for most of the colonial period were contemptuous of civil uprising in Southern Nigeria

particularly Lagos. This was because it was claimed that all that was needed to suppress any civil unrest in the South was to dispatch a few mounted Policemen and fire some rounds in the air[31]. Any such development in the north was however, to be treated as an outbreak of war with all the severity of combat[32]. This probably partly accounts for the concentration of military installations in Nigeria in the northern part of the country.

As a result of this role perception of the Army by the colonial government, the army was largely equipped to meet the challenges of internal security as indicated above. The history of post-independence Nigeria has shown that though the country has become a sovereign independent state, it has not changed its defense calculation parameters. Her geography and its defense implications are still the same. Even though the country has participated in peace keeping operations all over the world, the country has not been involved in a foreign war. The threat to her from the World remains largely the same with France as a result of her military understandings with her former colonies, which are Nigeria's neighbors and her past record of non-cordiality with Nigeria being the major country of concern for defense planning. The security challenges that Nigeria has faced either in the form of civil uprising, civil war, and the current insurgency challenges are largely from within. It is in this regard that the army should refocus itself to be able to meet the challenges of internal security better.

Future Prospects

In the light of the above diagnosis of the likely future security challenges of Nigeria, the Army should profit from its experience to reposition itself to meet the likely internal security challenges in Nigeria. With hindsight, the internal security challenge that

Nigeria has definitively met is the civil war and that was because its adversary, the Biafran secessionists, could not adopt the appropriate strategy which has so far proved intractable for the Army. This is revolutionary or guerrilla warfare. With the gross imbalance in strength between the federal government and the Biafran challengers, it calls to question the wisdom by Biafra to meet the federal government in conventional warfare. The reasons for this are not difficult to explain. In the first instance, officers who commanded both the Federal and Biafran troops were trained in the same Academies in conventional warfare in which they had limited experience. The Biafran warlords could probably not think outside the box. Also, the adoption of the revolutionary warfare strategy by Biafrans could have been problematic because they lacked the elements that would have ensured their success. Two critical elements for the success of guerrilla warfare are popular and external support. From N.U. Akpan's account, the Biafrans warlords did not enjoy wide support among the non-Igbo in the East[33]. The territories of these non-Igbo were of critical strategic importance to the success of guerrilla warfare if the Biafrans had decided for guerrilla warfare. They are the ones located close to the coast from which external support could have been accessed. They are in what are today Akwa Ibom, Cross Rivers, Rivers, and Bayelsa states. Without the popular support of these coastal and riverine states, access to external support through the ports would have been difficult. Last but not least, the Biafrans did not have a contiguous external state they could have used as a safe haven. Cameroun under Ahidjo was firmly in support of Nigeria. Attempts by France to smuggle matériel to Biafra through Dahomey (now Benin Republic) was firmly blocked by Nigeria. With incomplete popularity and no external support, Biafra could not have waged a successful guerrilla war against Nigeria.

The civil war dragged on for thirty months due to many reasons among which is the inexperience of the army, as well as its structural problems which she has to address to become a national force. Recent history of internal security challenges in the country has shown that the army can be better prepared. The Niger Delta militancy and current insurgency in the northern part of the country have given indications about how the army can fare in the face of determined revolutionary or insurgency wars. The army could not defeat the Niger Delta militants and peace was bought through the amnesty programme.

The success of the Niger Delta militancy was vicariously responsible for the encouragement of the Boko Haram menace which the country is facing currently. It is in this regard that some recommendations about the direction of restructuring of the army will be made. This is because the inability of the government to suppress the Niger Delta militants showed other would-be rebels what can be achieved with perseverance and sustained victory on the battle-field. The Independent People of Biafra (IPOB)'s movement is suffering reverses mainly because the Igbo lack the critical elements of success of insurgency or revolution which would have made guerrilla warfare difficult during the civil war. They do not have access to the sea and a contiguous territory as a safe haven. Based on Nigeria's history, future challenges are going to take the form of insurgencies like the Niger Delta militancy and the current Boko Haram war which the government has technically defeated on the screens of the television several times. An objective appraisal of the government's response to these two challenges will show that the Army could have done much better. The major reasons for the dismal performance of the army are, in my own humble opinion, the lack of understanding of the strategy and tactics of revolutionary or insurgency warfare and the inability

of the Nigerian Army which is trained in the strategy and tactics of conventional warfare to respond appropriately to revolutionary warfare. It is therefore imperative to have some words about insurgency and revolutionary warfare in order to know how the army should reposition itself for likely future challenges.

Insurgency and Revolutionary Warfare

Insurgency and revolution have attracted a plethora of definitions in strategic studies. We will not go into these but simply adopt working definitions of the concepts for our purpose. We shall take the definition of insurgency by Anthony James Joes, a renowned writer[34] on revolutionary warfare. He defines insurgency as an attempt to overthrow or oppose a state or a regime by force of arms and this often takes the form of guerrilla war[35]. Ian Beckett equates insurgency with revolutionary war adopted by weaker groups to seek power through a combination of subversion, propaganda, and military action[36]. Since the second author has mentioned revolution in his definition, we should quickly look at revolution before proceeding further. The concept of revolution is variously defined but, for our purpose, we shall take it to mean a movement aimed at the sudden overthrow of established authority in order to have fundamental changes in the existing social order[37]. From the definitions above, it can be seen that both the Niger Delta militancy and the current Boko Haram menace have taken the form of dissatisfied groups trying to overthrow the government and reshape the Nigerian society the way they like. How then do insurgents or revolutionary groups operate? Insurgent first of all try to get the support of the people in their areas of operation. This is in keeping with the teachings of revolutionaries about the requirements for a successful revolution. Mao Zedong, the legendary Chinese revolutionary, indicated that the richest of power to wage war lies with the people[38].

Popular support cannot be overemphasized for revolutionary warfare. Revolutionaries and even governments fighting insurgency need intelligence about each other's moves, and the terrain of operations. Revolutionaries get the supply of their food mainly from the people, as well as the supply of foot soldiers[39]. Popular support is divided into two broad types, namely active and passive supports. Passive support has to do with sympathy for the revolutionaries and refusal to cooperate with the government. Active support on the other hand has to do with sacrificial participation in the revolution. This includes joining the revolutionaries, providing intelligence, concealment of the revolutionaries, shelter, hiding places for arms and equipment, medical assistance, guides, and liaison. It also includes joining in disobedience or protests and acts of sabotage[40].

Revolutionaries secure popular support through various means. Among these are charismatic attraction, demonstration of potency coercion and terrorism[41]. Revolutionaries also take time to secure external support. External support also comes in two ways. These are moral and political external support. Moral support has to do with the expression of solidarity for the revolutionaries by way of justifying their cause by external governments and extolling their morale and heroism[42]. Active political support comes in the form of belief in the cause of the revolutionaries and the provision of material support. Political support of this nature is exemplified in the Arab nations' support for the Palestinians and their nationhood in the Middle East[43]. External support also comes in the form of the provision of safe havens in contiguous countries for the revolutionaries. During the days of anti-apartheid struggles, contiguous Southern African countries provided safe havens to liberation fighters in South Africa. External supporting powers can provide troops directly or artillery to insurgents to enhance their

fire power as the United States was doing to anti-Assad forces in Syria in the recent past. Healthcare facilities may also be provided for revolutionaries or insurgents.

In the two recent cases of the Niger Delta militancy and the ongoing Boko Haram insurgencies where the army cannot be said to have recorded a clear victory, insurgents have followed that typical format of insurgency and revolutionary warfare. They have operated in difficult terrains of impenetrable forests and creeks. They are located close to international boundaries and have safe havens and sanctuaries in neighbouring states. The Niger Delta militants are bordered by the Atlantic Ocean through which they had access to international supplies and are close to Cameroun where they easily had a safe haven. The Boko Haram insurgents are close to at least three international borders (Cameroun, Chad, and Niger) and operate close to a vast expanse of forests in the northeastern part of the country. They have access to supplies and almost inexhaustible recruitment of cadres for their fighting force. How then have the militants and insurgents operated? This leads us to a discussion of the strategy of insurgency or revolutionary warfare.

Strategies of insurgency or revolutionary Warfare

After ensuring that they have the support of the people and external backing, insurgents select their bases in difficult terrains (either deep jungles, mountainous areas or creeks difficult to access by non-indigenes usually close to international frontiers for easy access to external support. They then commence their operations and usually go through three fluid stages known as the strategic defensive, strategic stalemate, and strategic offensive[44]. The strategic defensive stage is the formative stage of insurgency or revolutionary war. At this stage, they start identifying bases,

pointing out government's failure which necessitates the movement, recruiting cadres for their operations, organising strikes, attacking soft targets, kidnapping people for ransom or sheer terrorism to instill fear in the populace, and presenting alternatives to government policies which they are complaining against. They avoid open confrontation with the government. They abandon any base easily when threatened by superior forces. When the insurgents are convinced that they have built enough strength and resources, they proceed to the next stage which is the stage of strategic stalemate. At the level of strategic stalemate, the insurgents have acquired some degree of confidence in arms build-up and experience in confrontation with the government. In most cases, they also have some measure of parity with government in arms and ammunition. They are usually recognised as combatants with rights and privileges under the laws of armed conflict and humanitarian laws. They also adopt conventional strategies and tactics on the battlefield. They refuse negotiations and when they agree to do so, it is not with a view to reach agreements but to buy time to break the spate of government attack and restock for a more formidable re-attack. Demands at negotiations are couched in vague and ambiguous terms with a view to attaining evasiveness and abrogation later. If the fortunes of war are favourable, they proceed to the stage of strategic offensive. If the contrary is the case, they may be compelled to fall back on the first stage of the conflict.

The third and final stage of the struggle by insurgents or revolutionaries is the stage of strategic offensive. At this stage, the insurgents have become strong and with a reasonable edge over the government to be able to take initiatives on their own. If the revolutionaries are able to hold on to their cadres, continue to enjoy the support of the populace in their areas of operation, and

sustain their external support, they may prevail against the government. A cursory look at the operations of the Niger Delta militants and Boko Haram insurgents will show that they complied squarely with the procedures described above. The Niger Delta militants, for example, started their complaints in the early 1990s. The conflict in the Niger Delta first arose in the early 1990s over tensions between foreign oil corporations and a number of the Niger Delta's minority ethnic groups who felt they are being exploited, particularly the Ogoni and the Ijaw. Ethnic and political unrest continued throughout the 1990s despite the return to democracy and the election of the Obasanjo government in 1999. The struggle for oil wealth and environmental harm over its impacts fueled violence between ethnic groups, causing the militarization of nearly the entire region by ethnic militia groups, the Nigerian military, and the police force, notably the Nigerian Mobile Police[45].

Beginning in December 1992, the conflict between the Ogoni and the oil companies escalated to a level of greater seriousness and intensity on both sides. Both parties began carrying out acts of violence and MOSOP issued an ultimatum to the oil companies (Shell, Chevron, and the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation) demanding some $10 billion in accumulated royalties, damages and compensation, and "immediate stoppage of environmental degradation", as well as negotiations for mutual agreement on all future drilling. The Ogoni threatened mass action to disrupt the operations of oil companies if they fail to comply with MOSOP's demands, and thereby shifted the focus of their actions from the unresponsive federal government to the oil companies producing in the region. The rationale for this assignment of responsibility was the benefits accrued by the oil

companies from extracting the natural wealth of the Ogoni homeland, and the central government's neglectful failure to act[46].

The government responded by banning public gatherings and declaring disturbances to oil production acts of treason. Oil extraction from the territory slowed to a trickle of 10,000 barrels per day (1,600 m^3/d) (.5% of the national total). Military repression escalated in May 1994. On May 21, soldiers and mobile policemen appeared in most Ogoni villages. On that day, four Ogoni chiefs (all on the conservative side of a schism within MOSOP over strategy) were brutally murdered. Saro-Wiwa, head of the opposing faction, had been denied entry to Ogoniland on the day of the murders, but he was detained in connection with the killings. The occupying forces, led by Major Paul Okuntimo of Rivers State Internal Security, claimed to be 'searching for those directly responsible for the killings of the four Ogonis.' However, witnesses say that they engaged in terror operations against the general Ogoni population. Amnesty International characterised the policy as deliberate terrorism. By mid-June, the security forces had razed 30 villages, detained 600 people, and killed at least 40. This figure eventually rose to 2,000 civilian deaths and the displacement of around 100,000 internal refugees.

Though motivated by a different cause, a painstaking look at the Boko Haram insurgency will show that it has followed the same trajectory as the Niger Delta militancy. Boko Haram started as a movement for the repudiation of western education but later broadened its scope to include a repudiation of secularism itself just as the militants started by asking for environmental justice and then moved on to request for equity in the use of the resources from the Niger Delta and later moved up to demand for resource control. Even though the activities of the group became

pronounced from 2009, it is believed that the group started as far back as 1995[47]. From 2002, Boko Haram came under a new leadership when its founder, Abubakar Lawan travelled to Medina[48]. Yusuf established a religious complex which included a mosque and a school where many families across northern Nigeria and neighbouring countries enrolled their children[49]. Though based in Maiduguri, the Borno State capital, the group was affiliated to Al-Qaeda with an extremist Islamic ideology[50]. Like the Niger Delta militants, Boko Haram started by attacking soft targets and kidnapping foreign workers as hostages[51]. Boko Haram gained widespread exposure in July 2009 when, after an incident in which group members were allegedly subjected to excessive use of force by the police and were unable to get official investigation into the matter, the group launched attacks on police posts and other government installations killing scores of police officers. When the police could not bring the situation under control, the army was brought in. The ensuing Joint Military Task Force operation left more than 700 Boko Haram members dead and destroyed the mosque that the group used as its headquarters. Yusuf and other leaders were arrested by the military and handed over to the police. A few days later the bullet-riddled corpses of Yusuf and his colleagues - including that of his father-in-law, Baba Fugu Mohammed, who had willingly handed himself over to the police for questioning - were displayed in public; the extrajudicial killings by the police infuriated the group as well as others.

After that incident, Boko Haram appeared to be disbanded, or at least inactive, until the next year, when a video was made public in which Yusuf's deputy, Abubakar Shekau, declared that he was the group's new leader and vowed to avenge the deaths of Yusuf and others.

Revival and onslaught of attacks

In the summer of 2010, the group began to assassinate individuals, typically police officers, and also attacked larger targets. One early operation that garnered widespread attention occurred in September 2010 when the group attacked a prison in the city of Bauchi, in Bauchi State, and released more than 700 inmates, including some 100 Boko Haram members. Later that year, on Christmas Eve, the group attacked two Christian churches in Maiduguri and detonated explosives in Christian neighbourhoods in Jos, Plateau State, with the latter attack killing more than 30 people.

Picture of a destroyed school and displacements after 2012 Boko Haram attacks

Boko Haram's attacks increased in frequency and magnitude, killing and injuring many. The attacks occurred primarily in Nigeria's northeast and north central states, and typically focused on police, military, and government targets, as well as Christian churches and schools and Muslim individuals who were critical of the group. On August 26, 2011, the group struck its first high-profile international target within Nigeria when a suicide bomber crashed a car into the United Nations building in Abuja and detonated an explosive, which killed at least 23 people and injured more than 100 others. One of Boko Haram's deadliest attacks occurred on January 20, 2012, when more than 185 people lost their lives after group members launched coordinated attacks in the city of Kano, in Kano State, targeting police stations and government offices.

After its 2010 resurrection, Boko Haram's membership and organizational structure were not clear. The group reportedly had begun splintering into multiple factions sometime after Yusuf's death, with the main faction being led by Shekau. Security reports indicated that Boko Haram had links with other terrorist networks such as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghrib (AQIM) and al-Shabaab in Somalia. In February 2013 some Boko Haram members reportedly began operating in neighbouring Cameroon. The shadowy nature of Boko Haram as well as its resilience made it difficult to craft an effective strategy to end the group's campaign of terror. The Nigerian government initially responded by pursuing a strategy of military confrontation. This did little to end the attacks, though government forces were eventually somewhat successful in driving the group from larger cities. In 2013 it was apparent that Boko Haram had taken over many rural local government areas in northeastern states, where they were able to gain strength. Also troubling was the manner in which government

security forces pursued the group, a manner that was often rife with extrajudicial violence and killings, and troops did not always discriminate between group members and civilians. Such methods heightened tensions in a country already on edge from Boko Haram's attacks and elicited widespread condemnation from human rights groups.

In April 2013 Shekau dismissed a proposal from Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan to grant amnesty to Boko Haram militants if they disarm. Shekau declared that Boko Haram members had done nothing for which they needed amnesty. The following month, the group launched a series of coordinated military-style attacks in the town of Bama, in Borno State, which left more than 50 people dead and destroyed numerous police, military, and government buildings. The group also released more than 100 inmates from a prison in the town. In response, the government launched its largest-scale military offensive against Boko Haram to date, employing thousands of troops on the ground and a campaign of air strikes to combat the group. Despite the military's actions, Boko Haram continued with its horrific attacks - including many on schools - resulting in more than 1,200 deaths by the end of 2013.

On the heels of the military offensive in June, President Jonathan officially declared Boko Haram a terrorist group and banned it under Nigerian law, which meant that group members and anyone caught aiding them would be prosecuted under the country's Terrorism Prevention Act. The new legal designation was expected to make it easier for authorities to prosecute members of the group legally.

Boko Haram: kidnapped girls

Boko Haram's attacks persisted into 2014, particularly in the northeast, as the group raided villages terrorizing and murdering civilians with increasing frequency. The group also killed hundreds of people by detonating bombs in large towns and cities, including Abuja. Boko Haram continued to target schools, such as in the February attack on a college in Yobe State where some 50 male students were killed and the college was virtually destroyed. The group drew worldwide condemnation after it perpetrated a mass kidnapping of more than 275 girls from a boarding school in Chibok in Borno State in April, which generated an increase in offers of international assistance to Nigeria as the country attempted to quell Boko Haram's acts of terror. In May, the United Nations Security Council imposed sanctions on individuals in Boko Haram, freezing assets and issuing travel bans and an arms embargo on its members. However, given the group's informal structure, the sanctions had no discernible effect on Boko Haram's operations. The group continued its attacks and expanded the

territory it occupied. In August 2014 Boko Haram declared the area under its control to be an Islamic state.

Containment, allegiance to ISIL, and division

The tide appeared to turn in the fight against Boko Haram in February 2015 when a successful offensive was planned and launched by troops from Nigeria and neighbouring countries, which proved effective in uprooting Boko Haram from much of the area it had previously held. Meanwhile, in March 2015 the group pledged allegiance to ISIL, an insurgent group operating primarily in Iraq and Syria, and took the name ISWAP (later more commonly known as ISWA).

Also about that time, the group experienced a significant fissure, with Abu Musab al-Barnawi, the son of the group's original leader, Yusuf, leading a majority of the militants while Shekau remained the head of others. One of the reasons for the split was Shekau's indiscriminate use of violence that affected Muslims. In 2016 ISIL recognized al-Barnawi's faction as ISWA, and Shekau's faction was then referred to by its original name: in Hausa, Boko Haram, or, in Arabic, Jamāʿat Ahl al-Sunnah li-l-Daʿawah wa al-Jihād (JAS). In spite of the different factions and names, "Boko Haram" was used at times to collectively refer to the various factions, particularly when there was confusion as to which group was responsible for an attack.

Resurgence

Although the joint task force composed of troops from Nigeria and neighbouring countries had made significant progress against Boko Haram and its related groups beginning in 2015, attacks by the militants later resumed with ISWA in particular being very

active from 2018. ISWA also reportedly gained a new leader, Abu Abdullah ibn Umar al-Barnawi in 2019[52].

As can be seen from the above, both the Niger Delta militancy and Boko Haram share a lot in common. It only needs to be added that just as the Niger Delta militants chose the Delta creeks as their bases, Boko Haram is located in an area that is suitable for insurgency[53], close to international boundaries[54]. Boko Haram,[55] from this location, was able to recruit youth from ages 17 and 30, who are passionate, illiterate, jobless and frustrated[56]. The north eastern part of the country, which is the epicenter of Boko Haram, is a typical location for insurgency[57]. It is made up of a vast game and forest reserves of about 231,762 Sq, km made up of mountains and undulating territories. The people are predominantly Muslims who use both the Arabic and Hausa languages for communication[58]. Like the Niger Delta, the region is among the poorest in human development indices.

Federal Government's Responses to Boko Haram Insurgency

Like in the case of Niger Delta militancy, the federal government has responded to Boko Haram insurgency. However, unlike the former, the government's responses have not yielded a lasting peace. This is largely because government's response to the Boko Haram menace falls short of the book maker's mark for counter insurgency. A major key to a successful insurgency where it is of citizens against their government is an understanding of the nature of the insurgency. Insurgents may wish to change a government or simply want a reform of the government. Others may wish for change of policy to favour their section of the country. Other insurgents may wish to establish a commercial system that favours them. The first step to a successful counter-insurgency is to understand the nature of the demands of the insurgents[59].

It is the nature of the insurgency that determines the approach to counter-insurgency. It is what determines whether a government should negotiate or fight it out. Without understanding the nature of the insurgency, a government that should negotiate may be fighting and vice versa. This was why, for example, it was possible to negotiate the Amnesty programme with the Niger Delta militants. All they wanted was environmental justice and equity in the use of the resources that accrue from the Niger Delta in such a way that the indigenes would benefit. It is also the poor understanding of the demands of Boko Haram that made government to attempt to negotiate. As noted earlier, Boko Haram started by condemning western education and then increased its demand to create a theocratic state. These are two demands that are impossible for the Nigerian state to meet. An understanding of the nature of insurgency will also assist government to know whether the insurgents are united or divided along lines that can be exploited to destroy solidarity. As pointed out above, the Boko Haram movement later factionalized along the lines of operational techniques to adopt. Unfortunately, the government could not explore this division to its own advantage. Niger Delta insurgents had similarly broken into several splinter groups and it took government a long time to explore that division.

The next step in the struggle against insurgency is for governments to move to the bases of insurgents in the creeks, jungles, and rugged mountainous areas. This is to be done by having agents at such remote areas. Such agents are ordinary country folks such as craftsmen, artisans, farmers, masons, and so on. They are people who will go about their normal vocations in day time but will go into the bases of the insurgents at night, when need be, to gather intelligence, and for combat duties if and when the need arises. They will be connected to centres where their information will be

processed. As insurgents succeed most where they have the support of the people, government agents should live among the people. Since insurgents look for succor in contiguous territories, counter-insurgency efforts should also cultivate the goodwill of neighbours. Having known the likely nature of the challenges to be faced by the army in the future, we now look at what repositioning of the army requires to be able to meet up with them appropriately.

Suggestions for the future

Since the challenges of the Army in the future is likely to be that of insurgency, it is advisable that the Army should modify itself to respond to these challenges better than it has done in the past. It is in this regard that one would like to suggest the establishment of a corps of irregular warfare in the army. This corps should be of the strength of a division and its officers and men will be given training in guerrilla or irregular warfare[60]. They will then be posted to all fighting units, and should insurgency break out they can be easily mustered and deployed to tackle it. The officers and men will be encouraged to have proficiency in one Nigerian language apart from their mother tongue. This is to ensure that they will be in sufficient number at any time to serve in any part of the country. They will be made up of motley lot of people knowledgeable in civilian vocations such as masonry, arts and craft, farming, auto spare part selling, hairdressing, among others. They will live among the people in their duty posts and will be empowered to pursue their ostensible civilian vocations. Sufficient arrangements will be made for their drill and training as at when needed.

Also, the army should take a second look at the policy of making sure that officers and men do not serve in their home areas. As has been shown, the policy has both its pros and cons. However, as it

stands, it deprives counter-insurgents the required knowledge of the operating terrains of battle both for intelligence gathering and tactical and strategic maneuvers. It is suggested that at least a third of indigenes should serve in their home bases while a third should be non-indigenes with linguistic proficiency in their areas of duty tour. The rational being that if the third indigenes want to betray their duty, the third non-indigenes with final third will checkmate the indigenes. Also, counterinsurgent forces should desist from collective punishment of communities as have happened in Maiduguri, Ogoniland, Aguileri, and Umuleri. This has the undesirable effects of alienating them from popular support which is crucial for counterinsurgency operations.

Conclusion

We have, in the preceding paragraphs, discussed the journey of the Nigerian Army from one of colonial occupation to that of a national force. The army started its life as an army of occupation established by the British imperial masters. Unfortunately, the independence of the country made it inevitable for it to transit to a national force as the transition came with certain challenges which the army has tried and is still trying to resolve. We have also made suggestions about how the army can accomplish this mission.

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