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## Boko Haram Insurgency and Nigerian Counter-insurgency (COIN) Strategy

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### Abstract

This study examines the Counter Insurgency (COIN) measures adopted by the Federal Government of Nigeria in combating Boko Haram (BH) insurgency in the North-eastern Region of the nation. It seeks to answer the following questions in order to measure as well as put into context Nigerian government capabilities from military and non-military perspectives: How has the Nigerian government struck a balance between or prioritized one of the two primary counter insurgency approaches – Population-centric and Enemy-centric – in the formulation of an effective national security policy against a revolutionary warfare, such as Boko Haram? The study found an enemy-centric skew in the government's strategy and recommends improvement of the citizens' living standards, development of government infrastructures and provision of amenities, as vital concerns that should reflect in Nigerian counterinsurgency strategy against Boko Haram.

### Introduction/Context

Nigerian independence, like every other African State created by European powers, rather than ease political tensions, has served to exacerbate it – with the focus of hostilities shifting from colonial administrators to national governments and fellow ethnic nations. African States, upon independence, were saddled with the simultaneous responsibilities of “building the institutional apparatus of the State (state-building) and constructing an overarching national identity among disparate cultural groups (nation-building).”<sup>1</sup> These are demands that most developed states in the international system had had difficulty responding to separately and sequentially. The Nigerian State has a long history of armed insurrection, dating back to the early years of its independence. In 1966, barely six years into independence, Mujahid Asari Dokubo led a

group of youths from the Niger Delta region, going by the name Niger Delta People's Volunteer force (NDPVF) to take up arms against the Nigerian Federal Government demanding for, among other things, the control of oil resources exploited in the region to their own detriment for the benefit of other regions. In response to the NDPVF threat, security forces were immediately dispatched to the region, resulting in the prompt suppression of the revolt. In a quick succession, a bloody Civil (Biafran) War broke out from July 1966 to January 1970, this time by separatists from the South-eastern Igbo ethnic region, seeking to secede from Nigeria. Other prominent uprisings like the Maitesine occurred in 1980s in addition to pockets of ethno-religious conflicts with more or less intensity and duration.

More recently, a shift in political power to the South-South oil-bearing region of Niger Delta has – while assuaging the Niger Deltans – created a fault line in the North, where an Islamic sect, Boko Haram, has been terrorizing the North-eastern region and environs since 2009. In 2014 alone, “Boko Haram killed over 11,000 people, carried out a high profile kidnapping of 276 school girls,<sup>2</sup> assassinated dozens of government officials and attacked numerous military bases. Mimicking the Iraq's Islamic State (ISIS), Boko Haram established a caliphate in Borno State, where it controlled 40% of the territory.<sup>3</sup> All efforts by the Federal Government to roll back Boko Haram onslaught has so far proven ineffective, as the carnage rages on.

This study examines the Counter-Insurgency (COIN) measures adopted by the Nigerian Federal Government in fighting the scourge of Boko Haram (BH) by answering the following questions: How has the Nigerian government struck a balance between or prioritized one of the two primary Counter Insurgency theories – Population-centric and Enemy-centric – in the formulation of an effective national security policy against a revolutionary warfare, such as Boko Haram?

### Causes, Objectives, and Strategy of Insurgency

For objective, insurgencies are undertaken to wrest political power, either by taking it over or by self-determination through secession. Typically, they are revolutionary hence the employment of subversion and violence to advance their agenda. Because governments rule over a people

living within a particular geographical entity, insurgents strive in every stage of their struggle to influence the popular will by carrying along the population in their efforts. Since legitimacy of the ruling class issues from the people, the people reserve the right to withdraw such legitimacy in favour of an alternative, well-meaning government. The population is therefore the prize. Generally, insurgency is a revolution nurtured overtime by citizens who share common unfulfilled aspirations. Under a government that fails to adequately address the concerns of large segments of its people, the citizens begin to agitate for a reform. The causes of these unfulfilled aspirations may be: Colonialism or foreign occupation, Nationalism, ethnic irredentism or separatist movements, Religious fundamentalism (separate identity), pauperization of the people by the ruling class through economic failure, corruption, and other trappings of a failed state. A cause is the rationale by which the insurgents sway the population to join its ranks against a common enemy—the government.

### Successful Insurgencies in Historical Perspective

In his article titled, *External Support to Insurgencies*, Bruce Reider observed that insurgencies could win in a variety of ways, including overthrow of the government, successful annexation of independent territory, or a marked recognition of minority rights.<sup>4</sup> The following historical accounts of successful insurgencies illustrate how varying factors, including government actions and inactions can sway the outcome of a counterinsurgency (COIN) campaign in favour of insurgents.

The support or at least sympathy of the local population has been instrumental to the victory of many insurgencies. To cite a few, the insurgency on the island of Bougainville in Papua New Guinea from 1988-1998 is a case in point. Enemy-centric attempts by the Papua New Guinea army to obliterate the insurgency by utilizing local militia forces in addition to private military contractors and instituting a military and economic barricade of the island estranged the government from the people and the COIN campaign failed. Similarly, four decades of a corrupt and unpopular government rule led to insurgency in Nicaragua from 1978-1979. The COIN forces there lost the war because of their indiscriminate violence, which turned the hearts and minds of the population towards the insurgents, who swelled their ranks with willing recruits. From 1980-1991, Mohamed Siad Barre's dictatorial regime in Somalia was ousted by a decade-long

insurgency. The overthrow was easy because the population vigorously supported the insurgents due to the COIN forces brutal tactics, wanton violence against non-combatants and any persons thought to be associated with certain tribes. When Ethiopia gained control of Eritrea and unilaterally annexed the region in 1962, insurgency broke out. In countering the rebellion, the Ethiopian government launched a ruthless COIN campaign that resulted in a high number of civilian casualties and significant population displacement, turning the Eritrean population in support of the insurgents. Consequently, Ethiopian forces were defeated in Eritrea and the government in Addis Ababa was toppled in 1991.

Often too, external support can be critical to the outcome of insurgencies. The uprising in Greece (1946-1949) enjoyed unwavering support of Yugoslavia, the primary source of external support to the Communist Party of Greece (KKE). Bard O'Neill, who wrote comprehensively on the importance of external support to insurgents, observed that population support alone seldom provides all the resources insurgents require, hence the need to seek external assistance.<sup>5</sup> When insurgents lack popular support, outside support from other countries, such as insurgent movements, private institutions, as well as international organizations become vital. During the Rhodesian Bush War (1965-1980) external support also featured prominently as a factor in the eventual victory and Rhodesian (now Zimbabwe) insurgencies. In the case of Rhodesia, a major source of external support to the insurgents came from the sympathetic Front of the FRELIMO, which provided logistics (placing vehicles, railways and ships at their disposal); weapons and sanctuary to the insurgents as well as permitting the establishment of training camps.<sup>6</sup> Neighboring Zambia, Angola and Tanzania allowed the insurgents to establish active training bases while Botswana served as a transit area to facilitate the movement of recruits and abductees to camps in Angola where they were trained by Cuban instructors. Indian external support and eventual direct military intervention was decisive in the outcome of the 1971 insurgency in Bangladesh launched in response to the Pakistani government's efforts to subjugate the Bengali people. Within two weeks of Indian direct support, the insurgents eventually won and Pakistan army was defeated.

Geography plays a pivotal role in conventional war just as in insurgency warfare. Galula observed that the larger the country the more difficult for a government to control it, thus providing advantage for the insurgents. An example is the triumph of the insurgents in Tibet region of China. Lengthy borders, particularly if the neighboring countries are sympathetic to the insurgents, favor the insurgent, as was the case in Greece, Indochina, and Algeria. Terrain also helps the insurgent when it is rugged and difficult—mountainous, hilly or swampy.<sup>7</sup> The hills of Kiangsi, the mountains of Greece, the Sierra Maestra, the swamps of the Plain of Reeds in Cochin China, the paddy fields of Tonkin, and the jungle of Malaya were all pivotal factors in the victory of the insurgents in those areas. In Peru, Sendero Luminoso availed himself of the Peruvian mountains and jungles to create a liberated zone in parts of Peru.

Mao Tse-tung, T.E. Lawrence, J.K. Cilliers, Che Guevara and other theorists of Guerrilla warfare acknowledge the value of sanctuary for insurgents. Cilliers points out that bases (sanctuaries or temples) should provide the insurgents a degree of physical security and may be established within the sanctuary of adjacent states.<sup>8</sup> The extent to which these sanctuaries facilitate freedom of movement and security directly influences insurgent success. The success of the Vietcong in Vietnam, the Sunni Insurgency and Al-Qaeda in Iraq; and the Taliban in Afghanistan all demonstrate the importance of sanctuary to insurgents. Afghan insurgents find sanctuary both inside Afghanistan and in Pakistan's western frontier to fight a long-drawn-out war against the coalition COIN force. Led by Amílcar Lopes Cabral, the PAIGC waged an insurgency to overthrow Portuguese colonial rule in Guinea-Bissau. Although the insurgents enjoyed several important advantages, the most prominent and decisive were safe havens in neighboring French Guinea (Guinea-Conakry). Eventually, the insurgents succeeded in founding an independent Guinea-Bissau. In South Africa, ANC's resilience can as well be attributed to its access to safe havens in Mozambique, where militants could train, rest, and plan future operations. Nepalese Maoist insurgents prevailed in South Asia largely due to the availability of sanctuaries in India, which also served as a base for political, logistical, and financial support of the insurgents.

RAND report identifies four important factors (incorporating the above factors), which converged to allow the insurgents to dislodge a qualitatively and quantitatively superior government COIN force. In

Nicaragua (1978–1979).<sup>9</sup> First, the three main insurgent groups harmonized their differences and pooled a joint attack against the government in what can be called insurgent networking. Second, indiscriminate violence by the counterinsurgents turned the population toward the Sandinistas and swelled their ranks with recruits. Third, the United States resolved that it could no longer back Nicaraguan government following conspicuous human rights abuse by government forces. Finally, Venezuela, Cuba, and Panama afforded the insurgency the weapons and safe haven necessary to defeat a stronger opponent. These factors led to an insurgent victory in a short, but bloody fighting. Other equally important aspects of successful insurgencies are propaganda and intelligence, as well as the local autonomy of insurgent commanders in the field, which allows for both flexibility and cohesion. These were effectively employed by the Taliban insurgents in Afghanistan against the international coalition forces to the extent that COIN forces soon became war weary.<sup>10</sup>

### Theories of Counterinsurgency (COIN)

The U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide (2009) defines counterinsurgency (COIN) as comprehensive civilian and military efforts taken to simultaneously defeat and contain insurgency and address its root causes.<sup>11</sup> Scholars and soldiers alike have attempted to theorize on what constitutes the best approach to the simultaneous defeat and containment of an insurgency, albeit some deem it worthless to develop a generalized theory of COIN or to seek analogies from experiences, as each insurgency is entrenched in a peculiar set of conditions.

As early as 1726 and 1730, Santa Cruz de Marcenado wrote one of the earliest systematic guides to counterinsurgency in his *Reflexiones Militares*. Strikingly, Santa Cruz recognized that insurgencies are usually due to real grievances; hence, he recommended clemency towards the local population and good governance, to seek the people's "heart and love" as the best COIN approach.<sup>12</sup> This COIN theory, which came to be known as "winning the hearts and minds of the people," was later abridged to "hearts and minds" (HAM) theory, by Gerald Templer during the Malayan Emergency. In Templer's opinion, the solution lay in restoring the hope of the people and gaining their support for the government by providing the people security from predations by government forces and insurgents alike,

increasing political rights of the people, improving standards of living, and reducing corruption and abuse of government power. The HAM theory has remained a dominant paradigm for COIN.

COIN theories can be classified as implicit and explicit corollaries of two primary COIN schools, the enemy-centric and population-centric schools of counterinsurgency, both of which can claim historical successes, and both have a sensible logic with face validity. The enemy-centric approach of counterinsurgency centers primarily on combating the insurgents and eliminating their organizations through kinetic force exertion. Merom describes three strategies under the enemy-centric counterinsurgency approach: annihilation of the popular base of insurgency, isolation of the population from the insurgents, or selective eradication of the insurgents and their leaders.<sup>13</sup> Kilcullen however identified other variants of the enemy-centric approach to include "soft line" and "hard line" approaches, kinetic and non-kinetic methods of defeating the enemy, decapitation versus marginalization strategies, and so on.<sup>14</sup> Although many of these strategic concepts are shared with the population-centric school of counterinsurgency, yet the philosophy differs. Concisely, the enemy-centric school of counterinsurgency could be summarized as "first defeat the enemy, and all else will follow." The ultima ratio in this equation is force and brutality, and the Russian approach to counterinsurgency, which has recorded successes, is often cited to justify this approach. In this direction, training of military personnel, procurement of sophisticated military technology, and continuous military assault on the insurgents stronghold serve as the basic strategies. **The population-centric school, on the other hand**, emphasizes the primacy of the loyalty of the local population. Thus, success by the government or the insurgents requires persuading the local population to side with either side by providing basic necessities like security and infrastructure.

### The Boko Haram Threat

Boko Haram is a Salafist Jihadi movement sworn to impose its version of ideology (Islamic fundamentalism) in Nigeria by any means necessary, including violent terrorism. The popular charismatic leader, Mohammed Yusuf, raised the profile of the group when he embarked on massive membership recruitment by providing opportunities for a better livelihood for them through farmlands, trading, schools and mosques,

while on a proselytizing mission. Boko Haram (Western Education – book – is forbidden), as rendered in the local language, formally called *Jama'atu Ahlis-Sunnah Lidda'awati WalJihad*, rendered in English as "People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad," took on its radical character in 2009 following a hostile encounter with Nigerian security forces in which Mohammed Yusuf and 800 other members were allegedly killed extra-judicially.

With such a significant loss of its members, the Boko Haram sect underwent aestivation, only to announce its return with a remarkable jailbreak in Bauchi State, in which five people were killed and almost a thousand inmates freed.<sup>15</sup> Three months later, in another audacious attack, four people were killed in a bomb attack outside a military barracks in the Federal Capital, Abuja. Thus began the series of terrorist hostilities unleashed by Boko Haram on an almost weekly basis since its return after Yusuf's death.

Obvious in these well coordinated attacks now led by the person of the vociferous hardliner, Abubakar Shekau, was the adoption of high profile attacks, using more sophisticated weaponry as manifested in the development of the capability to produce Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and engage volunteers to deliver these devices to high profile targets, such as United Nations (UN) building in Abuja on August 25, 2011, in which 26 people were killed. By this act, it became clear that the sect was receiving external support.

By 2014, Boko Haram was ranked number one deadliest terrorist group in the world with 6,347 civilians killed in that year alone, nearly half of all civilian deaths in African war zones in the year under review, according to a report by Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), an academic group that monitors and compiles conflict fatalities from media reports.<sup>16</sup> Compared to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), to whom Boko Haram pledged allegiance in 2015, Boko Haram outnumbered ISIS with 6,644 against 6,073 non-combatant civilian deaths during the same year, reports Global Terrorism Index, a publication from the stables of Institute of Economic and Peace (IEP).<sup>17</sup> Iraq, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Syria, the publication highlighted, account for 78 percent of global fatalities in 2014 alone, with the attendant outcome of more than one million people believed to have become internally displaced in Nigeria – a recipe for humanitarian crisis.

In the light of the Boko Haram's campaign of terrorism supposedly attributed to the sect's passion for religious piety and its aspiration to reform society along strict Islamic precepts, why has this lofty vision waited till now to be pursued? What and who sustains the sect materially, financially and militarily? Why is the sect still finding support among civilians to carry out terrorist actions (human bombs)? Why is Boko Haram so resilient that the movement is seemingly invincible? These are pertinent questions that if correctly answered and tackled, can put the Nigerian Federal Government Counter Insurgency (COIN) campaign on the winning side.

### Causes of Boko Haram Insurgency

Insurgents justify their actions with a cause, which David Galula describes in his book, *Counterinsurgency Warfare* as the means by which insurgents swell their ranks with supporters and sympathizers.<sup>18</sup> Related to a cause are ideology and narrative, both of which are developed overtime from grievances against a government. An ideology, according to the US Counterinsurgency Field Manual 3-24, is a motivating factor used by insurgencies to gather recruits and amass support,<sup>19</sup> while a narrative serves to legitimize an ideology.<sup>20</sup> Extrapolating these to the Boko Haram insurgency, the cause that gave rise to the insurgency is the failure of the Nigerian state to deliver to its citizens the political goods arising from the existence of governments. These goods include security, law, medical and health care, schools and educational instructions, critical infrastructure, among others.

In the Fragile States Index of 2015, a publication of Fund for Peace (FfP), Nigeria was ranked 14th in the *Very High Alert* category among the most unstable countries in the world. Under the social, economic and political indicators, Nigeria is rated high (failing) in the following categories: Group governance, Poverty and economic decline, State Legitimacy, Public Services, Human Rights and Rule of Law, Security Apparatus and Factionalized States, giving it a total score of 102, where South Sudan and Somalia are ranked first and second with 114 and 114.5 points respectively.<sup>21</sup> The Human Development Index (HDI) Report of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) 2014 edition is equally unimpressive with Nigeria ensconced in the 152<sup>nd</sup> position with an HDI value of 0.514.<sup>22</sup> Life expectancy at birth, according to the report, is 52.8; mean years of schooling stood at 5.9 years; while Gross National Income

per capita reveals an abysmal minus 24. Such damning report demonstrates to a large measure the negative effects of corruption in Nigeria, which Transparency International in its 2014 result of Corruption Perception Index publication ranks Nigeria as the 27<sup>th</sup> most corrupt country in the world.<sup>23</sup> These reports become even worse in the region of Boko Haram's stronghold as presented in a public address titled: *Nigeria's National Assembly: A House of Thieves and Blackmailers* by former President by Olusegun Obasanjo, in which the president, while giving the following statistics, pointed out that prolonged lack of development is a fertile breeding ground for insecurity:

Literacy level of males is, he continued: South-West: 77%; South East: 66.1%; North East: 18.1%. Literacy level of females is: South-West: 79.9%; South-East: 69.9%; North-East: 15.4%. Infant Mortality Rate per 1000 live births is: South-West: 59; South-East: 95; North-East: 109 (Highest in the country). About 78% of children born in North-East are from mothers without formal education while the South-West, it is 20.9%. Percentage delivered by a skilled provider is: South-West: 82.5%; South-East: 82.3%; North-East: 19.9%. Percentage delivered in a health facility is: South-West: 75.6%; South-East: 78.1%; North-East: 19.5%; Maternal mortality as per 100,000 is: South-West: 165; South-East: 286; North-East: 1549 (The highest maternal mortality rate in the country). Distribution of health personnel among the zones is: South-West: 26.9%; South-East: 16.1%; North-East: 9.5% (Least number of health personnel across the country). Incidences of poverty are: South-West: 59.1%; South-East: 67.0%; North-East: 76.3% (Highest rate of poverty in the country and only region above the national average of 69.0%).<sup>24</sup>

It is clear from the above that the Nigerian state hardly meets the fundamental requirements of providing the political goods for its citizens; therefore Islamic ideology upheld by Boko Haram provides a ready solution to "purify" the state with Sharia law under Islamic rule. This ideology has been effectively employed by Boko Haram to recruit, organize and sustain its battle against the Nigerian state, with the concomitant benefit of drawing on shared ethnic and cultural roots of enamoured kiths and kin from Cameroon, Chad and Niger Republic achieved by evoking the narrative of a once monolithic, united people of Kanem-Bornu Empire. This affords the sect members not just the benefits of instant recruitment

and replacement of combatants, but also the opportunity of melting into neighbouring countries (sanctuaries) through porous borders to evade arrest by Nigerian authorities. External support also provides training camps, material and logistic support for Boko Haram, in addition to the financial leverage obtained by aligning with international terrorist organizations adhering to the Sunni-Salafi doctrine, such as ISIL to which Boko Haram pledged its allegiance in March, 2015.

### **An Assessment of the Nigerian COIN Operations against Boko Haram**

Nations employ specific instruments of national power (political/Diplomatic or Informational, Military, and Economic) in the pursuit of national interests. Put together, these instruments are collectively called grand strategy. Grand strategy, states Lidell Hart, “is to coordinate and direct all resources of a nation, or band of nations, towards the attainment of the political objects of war.”<sup>25</sup> Bearing in mind the aforementioned instruments of national power, the government of Nigeria has failed to address the grievances of the BH threat accordingly. In the first instance, politically, the Federal Government has a running battle with legitimacy. Nigerians believe that their political leaders have assumed power improperly – not through the votes cast, but by other manipulative methods. Nigerian democracy falls short in the provision of government institutions that will ensure popular sovereignty and basic civil rights and liberties, witness the brutal murder of Mohammed Yusuf, the founder of the BH sect. More delegitimizing is corruption, which is perpetuated with impunity. Corruption has been so institutionalized that military hardware and sundry equipment are undersupplied and inferior in the national battle against the insurgents, thereby causing avoidable deaths of COIN forces. In fact, corruption-related issues regarding military forces emoluments and equipment has caused several mutinies against higher military command, and consequent court martial of officers involved. The rebellious soldiers were sentenced to death until the current leadership of Rtd. General Buhari’s administration commuted their sentences to 10 years imprisonment.<sup>26</sup> Diplomacy and Information, which also fall under the broad category of political instrument has hardly been put to effect. With respect to the earlier, all efforts by the Nigerian government to negotiate with the sect to stop the carnage have been rebuffed by BH whose pre-

conditions include: the prosecution of the government forces responsible for the extra-judicial killing of Mohammed Yusuf and other sect members; the release of sect members in police custody among other conditions about which the Federal Government is yet to give a definitive response. Government silence on negotiations can also be attributed to the mistrust of the sect's true representative as there are indications of factions with varying degrees of hostility towards established authority.

Informational COIN consists in countering the ideological narrative of the insurgents. Galula writes that insurgency feeds on propaganda.<sup>27</sup> He notes that, unlike the counterinsurgent force who is judged by what he does and not by what he says, the insurgents lack similar responsibilities, thus they freely lie, cheat and exaggerate. As a countermeasure, it behoves the Nigerian COIN to developed a counter-ideology of the sort that rebuts BH claims and portrays a true practitioner of Islam as a peaceful God-fearing individual incapable of killing fellow human beings, let alone fellow Muslim brethren. These positive counter-ideology narratives would have gone a long way in discouraging potential recruits to the sect, as well as contribute to enhancing intelligence gathering efforts of the COIN campaign.

On the economic front, the economic indicators above still remain the same, if not worse, in Nigeria just as in the North-Eastern region of Nigeria where the sect originated and is still entrenched. At the opening ceremony of the International Islamic Conference on Peace and Nation Building in Abuja, the Nigerian President, Mohammad Buhari acknowledged that, “Poverty breeds disaffection, which in turn leads to crime and lawlessness including confrontation against the State. “To checkmate this, we must work hard to lift our economy, engage our youth and rebuild infrastructure.”<sup>28</sup>

Military force has been the preferred instrument of choice employed by the Nigerian government in finding a solution to the Boko Haram threat. In the past, it had served effectively in crushing rebellions of similar character. Lacking in rule of law, the Nigerian Military establishment did not judge it necessary to develop a coherent counterinsurgency doctrine, specifying a systematic politico-military approach to countering domestic asymmetric wars of this character.

One of the prerequisites for a successful counterinsurgency

campaign is the force requirements relative to the population in the territory under COIN operation. There are three core States affected by the violent campaign by Boko Haram: Borno, Yobe and Adamawa, with a combined population of about nine million and seven hundred thousand inhabitants, according to the census of 2006.<sup>29</sup> Examining fifteen cases from a historical perspective, Quinlivan's studies shows that a force/resident ratio of 20:1000 is the optimum force density requirement for an effective COIN operation. Current doctrine of American Army and Marine Corps Field Manual adopts this recommendation.

By implication, the troops required by Nigeria to fight BH in the affected region should stand above two hundred and forty thousand troops at a 25:1000 rate, within the ballpark figure of 200,000 troops recommended by Andrew Noakes, coordinator of a research group in the Nigerian Security Network, which investigates insecurity in Nigeria.<sup>31</sup> While that figure is the ideal, the Nigerian Armed Forces, with a total active strength one hundred and thirty thousand (130,000)<sup>32</sup> is impractical to attempt a coverage of the entire Boko Haram-afflicted States with a national force already spread thin. This and such factors as the shoestring military budgets and low grade, obsolescent equipment transpired to cause the Federal Government resort to hiring the services of a Private Military Contractor (PMC) from South Africa.

To tackle the BH menace and restore law and order, the 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division was established in Maiduguri in August 2013. It succeeded the Joint Task Force-Restore Order (JTF-RO) composed of the Nigerian Armed Forces, Nigerian Police Force, Department of State Security, Nigerian Customs Service, Nigeria Immigration Service and Defence Intelligence Agency. JTF-RO was originally set up in 2011 to accomplish the same purpose. The new Division which covers the affected States is headquartered in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State with force strength of 8,000.<sup>33</sup> The forces whose primary role is the protection of the population have, however, committed heinous crimes against humanity similar to, if not worse than the insurgents. According to an investigative report titled, *War Crimes Committed by the Nigerian Military*, published by Amnesty International, Extrajudicial executions, Deaths in custody, Mass Arbitrary Arrests, Unlawful Detention, Enforced Disappearances and Torture, among other crimes of horrific proportions numbering thousands of cases have

been evidently collected since the JTF COIN campaigns began against Boko Haram.<sup>34</sup> As a result of the Federal Government COIN heavy-handedness, the population, rather than enhancing the COIN efforts in intelligence gathering and sundry assistance, has been further driven into the hands of BH foot soldiers and spying activities – a critical element in irregular warfare both for government forces and insurgents.

### Conclusion

Former Colonial Secretary of the United Kingdom, Oliver Littleton, referring to the Malayan insurgency in 1951 once said that, "You cannot win the war without the help of the population and you cannot get the help of the population without at least beginning to win the war."<sup>35</sup> This assertion is still very relevant in today's COIN operations, including the Northeast region of Nigeria, where the BH insurgency remains unabated. As Galula would put it in percentile, "A revolutionary war is 20 percent military action and 80 percent political."<sup>36</sup> For the insurgents, just as for established authority or government, the population is the prize. As such, COIN efforts should prioritize the improvement of the citizens' living standards and development of government infrastructures and provision of amenities, while trying to rebuild the trust of the people. In arraying the instruments of national power (Grand strategy), care should be taken when determining which instrument fits the COIN bill under specific circumstances, in order not to alienate the population. Once citizens share a sense of partnership in the affairs of state, the likelihood of defiance to authority becomes low, with the outcome of a stable, peaceful polity where national security is guaranteed.

From a military standpoint, a reevaluation of the military institution is long overdue. Organizational change beginning with a well developed leadership doctrine aimed at retraining and educating the officer corps to engender creative and critical thinking, as well as innovation is necessary. No irregular war is the same; they vary according to the advantages at their disposal – domestic or external support, geography, sanctuary, among other variables made more complicated and complex by globalization and technological proliferation. In the light of this, adaptability, flexibility and dynamism on the part of the Nigerian military institution are necessary prerequisites in order to seize the initiative, more so, when domestic human rights issues are beginning to erode the sanctity of sovereignty at the

international level. Preeminently, however, political instruments of national power, which potentially precludes military intervention, hold the key to a harmonious citizen-leadership relationship.

### Endnotes

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<sup>2</sup>Lanre Ola and Imma Ande, Thousands' Flee as Boko Haram Seizes Northeastern Nigerian Town, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/10/30/uk-nigeria-violence-idUKKBN0IJ24zI20141030> (accessed 05 December, 2014).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Bruce Reider, "External Support to Insurgencies," <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/external-support-to-insurgencies> (accessed 10 January 2016).

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<sup>9</sup>Christopher Paul, Colin Clarke and Beth Grill, *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Sources of Success in Counterinsurgency*, (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2010), P.11.

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