

Strategic Culture and Insurgencies in Northern Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects

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Abstract

The strategic culture of any sovereign state is determined by the historical experiences and how those in position of authority and influence respond to all forms of internal and external threats in the state. It takes account of actors, leaders, political equation, economic, geographic, ecological and historic contexts. It is important in framing strategic decision-making that informs strategic behaviour. The patterns of response to any of these determine the nature of national security. However, since independence and democratic rules especially 1999 till date a lot of insecurity issues and challenges pervade the Nigeria State to the extent that those strategic cultures that were used to place the country in good lights is no more working, hence, constrain the National Security apparatuses. It is on this background that the study peeps into Nigeria's strategic culture in fight against insurgency in Nigeria using Boko Haram and Fulani Herdsmen / Farmers conflicts as point of departure. To go about this, qualitative and explorative methods were adopted which is geared towards secondary source of data collection using textbooks, journal articles and official document. At the end, the work revealed that the jettison of Nigeria cultural heritage and the invention or introduction of conventional and modern way of threat and crises resolution has comatose the Nigeria National security, hence a revamp or reintegration of Nigeria strategic culture and current trend of mitigating threat and crises in Nigeria. Consequent upon this, the study recommend that government should construct its strategic culture and revamp a new security architecture that can be used to cushion these threats effectively and create robust National security.

Keywords: Strategic culture, Security threats, Crises, Insurgency, Boko-Haram, Fulani Herdsmen.

1.0 Introduction

Every country in the world has their own unique way of responding to security threats and issues and this unique way of responding to issues is what is known as strategic culture. Strategic cultures are determined by history and experiences which in turn account for how leaders respond to threat and pattern of mitigating it as it forms the context of their decision making. In other words, strategic culture is the impact of the collective national culture on elite's decision making. Strategic culture encompasses those aspects that borders on the culture that influences how leaders interpret national security and make their decisions regarding the use of force (Gray,2006).It is the inherent element embedded in the cultural heritage on how

issues are resolved and tackled within the cultural norms of the people. There are three basic aspect of a nation's strategic culture; the people, the government and the security sector (military, police and others)(*Clausewitz, 1831*).

However, since her independence in 1960 till date, Nigeria has witnessed and is engrossed in several attacks from non-state actors. These attacks range from violence to crime of all sorts to ethno-religious cleansing, herdsmen altercations with land owners, proliferation of small arms, light and weapons of mass destruction, the Biafra civil war, Niger Delta agitations and militancy, insurgency and terrorism. Among these crises, the Biafra civil war, militancy in the Niger Delta, Boko Haram insurgency and herdsmen killing have occurred with high rate of fatalities and pervasive that it could be said that Nigeria has lost its cooperate existence. Meanwhile there were preconceived notion of how our strategic culture were robust in solving crises before 1999 but currently were not imbedded in ameliorating threats today.

Consequent upon these are crises formation, uprising or warfare, blood bath, ethnicity and religious bigotry. In trying to proffer solution to this involves certain attitudinal change toward its strategic culture. For instance, countries that formulate a realistic strategic culture in any prevailing circumstances have a prospect of overcoming their rivals (*Millett, Murray & Watman, 1986:37-71*). Therefore, one can claim that the effectiveness or weakness of a country's defence establishment depends on the use of its strategic culture. However, despite the application of different strategies in the fight against insurgency and terrorism for ten years and above now, crisis, threat and insecurity have held the nation and some African states in the jugular. This indicate a normlessness, anarchical, failed or failing situation of our state, and it has continued to sock blood, kill, kidnap, rape and rob without restraint. On their part, the security sectors and those in authority have embraced the challenge with vigour, vivacity and verve; they have exhibited unequalled and unrestrained gallantry.

Despite these efforts of the security agencies and leaders, the blood magic has continued ceaselessly drenching the nation with unimaginable tales of horror being unleashed by the insurgent paving way to a situation whereby our government and security operators have left the whole situation helpless, complaisant and only relied on divine means for solution. This has instigated the thinking, that our strategic culture is no more working and that the modern and conventional security apparatuses have failed or naive and that a revamp or collaboration should be the order of the day, hence this paper is geared towards peeping into bringing back or the re-strategizing the Nigeria strategic culture for a robust National security.

1.1 The Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to examine Strategic Culture and insurgency in Nigeria, while the specific objectives are:

- (i) To examine strategic culture and insurgency in Nigeria.
- (ii) To look at those elements that militate against the use of Nigeria's Strategic Culture in the fight against insurgency in Northern Nigeria.
- (iii) To proffer strategies on how strategic culture can key into Nigeria's counter-insurgency mechanism in other to restore peace, stability and National Security in Nigeria.

1.2 Research Questions

The following research questions were designed to guide this study:

- (i) What are those strategic cultures that pervade Nigeria states?

- (ii) What are those problems inherent in Nigeria's strategic culture that mitigates the fight against insurgencies in the North-eastern States of Nigeria?
- (iii) What are those strategic cultures that can be adduced to key into Nigeria's counter-insurgency mechanism in other to restore peace, stability and National security?

1.3 Method of Study

The study adopted explorative and qualitative analyses to Juxtapose the relationship between Nigeria's strategic culture and insurgency in north-eastern Nigeria; its challenges and prospects. In other words, data were derived from secondary sources such as textbooks, scholarly articles, journals, and internet sources.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Strategic Culture: Conceptual Explanation

Strategic culture is the way our leaders and those in authorities imbibe cultural principles in strategizing security issues and threat. It was Snyder (1977) who popularized it from the soviet security strategy; who believed that a unique strategic culture originated from a brief paper on Soviet nuclear strategy written by Jack. Snyder for the RAND Corporation in 1977. Snyder suggested that state elite possess a unique strategic culture that relates to their security- military affairs that has a wider manifestation of public opinion, socialized into a distinctive mode of strategic thinking. Thus, he contends that a set of general beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral patterns has achieved a state of semi-permanence that places them on the level of "cultural" rather than mere "policy"(Snyder, 1977).

However, in the last decades a significant body of literature has emerged relating to the concept. More recently, the concept of strategic culture has emerged as a key element within the debate over the future of European security policy. Firstly, much of the strategic culture literature suggests that, due to cultural differences across security communities, different communities will make different strategic choices when face with the same security situation. Secondly, existing strategic culture theory also suggests that some particular communities are likely to exhibit consistent and persistent strategic preferences over time (Meyer, 2006). Thus, strategic culture is used to highlight and distinguish the persistent trends in the strategic behavior of particular communities.

Similarly, strategic culture has also been described as an additional milieu that limits behavioral choices', from which one could derive specific predictions about strategic situation and choice (Johnston, 1995). According to Rosen (1995), strategic culture comprises beliefs and assumptions that frame choices about military behavior, particularly those concerning decisions to go to war, preferences for offensive, expansionist or defensive modes of warfare, and the levels of wartime casualties that would be acceptable. This definition however defines strategic culture in terms of the security needs of states without looking at the aspect of national security. Strategic culture is also used interchangeably with military culture and there is a notion that strategy link with culture stems from the hypothesis that human beings base their actions on the principles that are prevalent in their environment (Gray,1999:140).In other words, the policy pursued by a country's military establishment is inevitably influenced by their present societies. This means that cultural differences play an important role in determining how nations develop their particular attitudes on how to use their armed forces to defend their interest (Macmillan, Booth & Trood, 1999; 27).

Furthermore, "Strategic cultural studies have provided rich descriptions of particularistic cultures and identities, and researchers have acknowledged the important link between external

and internal determinants of national security policy (*Lantis, 2006*). It is in line with this that Gray, (1999) argues that all strategic behaviour is cultural behaviour and that all decision makers grow up to be educated by unique societal standards, that shapes their strategic views. Thus, history and cultural preferences provide the context for how these leaders make decisions. Gray (1999) also noted that, “Strategic culture can be conceived as a context that surrounds, and gives meaning to, strategic behavior.” From the conceptual explanation, we can deduce that strategic culture is a policy driven by a country’s military, that is defined by specific aspect of the nation’s broader culture that influences how top leaders make strategic decisions regarding the use of force in a given situation.

Thus, Nigeria’s strategic culture represents the aggregate patterns of behaviour of the people or of the most influential or the elite class including the military and it accounts for the way that Nigeria’s decision makers view and implement force. It is centred around cultural norms, values and traditions which provide an extensive knowledge on how to promote peace, security and stability among communities and in the society at large. Culture influences national security policies because there is a link between politics, military culture and strategic choices. They offer valuable perspectives on a country’s military doctrine and also shape critical decisions as regards the use of force. This implies that there is a connection between culture and states behaviour (*Olawunmi, 2018*).

A review of Nigeria’s political history shows that the country has had its fair share of military coups and other insurrections, but the political will to engage such situation is determined by the type of regime in power, and to whom it owes its loyalties. For example, a southern president is more likely to engage and distribute additional resources in the South and vice-versa. Some of the sources of Nigeria’s strategic culture include its Civil War history and experiences, the significance of oil resource and geography and the nature of the political/religious establishments. These are precursor of the contemporary security challenges facing the country, the threat posed by Boko Haram, Fulani Herdsmen and other security issues are subjective functions of the country’s strategic culture; this is because they influenced the state’s security strategy, that is why Nigeria is generally known for its non-offensive strategic culture when it comes to the issue of its internal security challenges and these accounts for its inability to effectively curb the security issues in the north eastern region as well as in other parts of Nigeria (*Olawunmi, 2018*).

2.2 Strategic Culture, Counter Insurgency and Nigeria National Security

Nigeria’s national security policy since 1960 has been tied to the challenges of the problem of internal upheavals or insurrections. The Nigerian Constitution rightly provides that the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government (*Constitution of the Federal republic of Nigeria, 1999, Section 14 (2)*). The role of the public policy process in matters of national security cannot be overemphasized because of the crucial role it plays in identifying problems, deciding on what measures to take in addressing those problems, assessing effectiveness, or otherwise, of the measures, as well as in monitoring and implementing these measures (*Bello, 2014*). However, the challenges of Boko Haram and Herdsmen/Farmers crisis, show that Nigeria is neck deep and sometimes overwhelmed in looking for solutions to its security challenges. The response to these security challenges reveals a state-centric view, overdependence on military force and lack of interest in tackling human security challenges seriously (*Aghalino, 2009*).

Acts of terrorism and subversion calls for a “decisive military action” that is in tandem with the strategic culture of the state which involve the application of those cultural variables as

predicated in the past, present and future survival of the people. As noted earlier, a nation's strategic culture represents "the aggregate patterns of behaviour employed by a nation's most influential political and military elites." These behaviours shape the way a nation's influential decision makers view and implement force. Thus, when Boko Haram and Herders / Farmers crisis began, they were not considered as national threat by the Nigerian government and so it was ignored. It was also seen as a normal occurrence that will be quenched soonest going by how leaders used to tackle such incidences in the past. Also some leaders, community members and those in authority were in support believing that such attitude were tinted towards agitation against perceives marginalization of their socio-cultural, political and religious direction, hence, they do support, protect, shield and applaud them of those doings and actions. Later to be discovered that it was not to the interest of the people and the state. This negligence resulted to terrorism activities by Boko Haram and herdsmen activities in its early stage. And these have eaten dip into the nooks and crannies of the state to the extent that our security operators are no more working or comatose.

2.3 Strategic Culture and Counter Insurgency Operations in the North Eastern States of Nigeria

Boko Haram and Fulani Herdsmen have taken advantage of Nigeria's strategic security weaknesses to promote and perpetrate their goal of establishing a new Islamic Caliphate and ethnic cleansing in Nigeria. The consequence of this is that both groups pose a great threat to Nigeria's national security (*Maier, 2000*). However, as earlier said the emergence of the militant sects cannot be understood without reference to the social, religious, economic, and political milieu of northern Nigeria and failure to adopt strong or virile strategic culture in mitigating or combating it. This failure has brought to the fore; the deep roots, unattractive political message, and weak military have made Boko Haram and Fulani Herdsmen a formidable foe with great security implications such as insecurity, conflict of perception between the public and the government, loss of socio-cultural and communal value system, terrorism, underdevelopment, ethno-religious crises, etc., which portend danger to Nigeria National Security.

Also, Nigerianism, culture identity, and national interest are major determinants of Nigeria's strategic culture and have contributed to the situation we found ourselves in Nigeria today. Nigerianism is a territorial nationalistic approach that emphasizes a cultural connection of the people to the land. Instead of the myopic and senseless attitude towards ethnic, religious, traditional, geographic and resources, Nigerianism is a concept to cure or amputate ethnic and religious bigotry and enhance oneness. It first emerged in the 1920's under the influence of Herbert Macaulay who is considered the founder of Nigerian nationalism. The concept of Nigerianism emerged to remedy the effects of ethnic imbalance that was created by colonialism. Unfortunately, Nigerianism has been negatively influenced by multiple historical episodes such as; ethnic violence and repression of certain ethnic groups by the Nigerian government between the various people which resulted to multiple secessionist movements demanding independence (*Toyin, 2001*). Thus, the link between strategic culture and Nigeria's national security policy is that, national security is one of the manifestations of strategic behavior and this is to say that there are certain elements of strategic culture that negate counter insurgency operations in Northern part of Nigeria, and this have affected Nigerian security space, such as:

- a) **The politicization of religion:** The political culture of Nigeria is such that leadership is zoned or rotational in terms of religion, e.g. the President is a Muslim and the Vice president must be a Christian; hence create a big issue of competence and religious bigotry that is an

indispensable and Achilles heel in modern day Nigeria (*Adigwe&Grau, 2007*). This is an indication that Nigeria cannot produce Muslim-Muslim or Christian-Christian president, Northern President and vice president etc. Religious creeds excite and extract the deepest possible emotional and physical loyalties from their cohorts when it comes to political competition with people of the other beliefs. Thus, politicization of religion and insecurity is ideologically founded and build into the fabric of the people, Ezato (1979). The politicization of religion is an impediment to the counter insurgency operations in the northern Nigeria. Religion is a tool for hegemony and the leadership feels that the status quo is under threat and there is an ascendant radical thinking within a politically significant group capable of upstaging hegemonous relationships. Emekwue (2000) stresses that the politicization of religion and insecurity has impacted negatively on the quest for a peaceful state in Nigeria and has the element of a theocratic direction.

- b) The Dependence on Military Force and Lopsided Appointment of Security Chiefs:** Nigeria's main security strength indicates over dependence on military capabilities but lack interest in tackling human and structural security challenges in the country. Government has a narrow view of security and defines the security of the country largely in military and physical terms with efforts targeted only at the state, while neglecting human security. This has resulted to the exploitative relationship between security institutions of the state and the general populations who are victims of excessive force during crisis. Also situations whereby 95% of Security Chiefs are from one side of the country, negate Nigeria Strategic culture. The areas not represented may think that they are short changed hence crisis and infringement of the National Security architecture. These causes tensions, and sense of exclusion and insecurity between the civilian population and the military (*Ebo, 2017; Williams, 2018*). The Nigerian citizens not just in the north east or north central alone have endured a culture of intimidation by the country's security forces that have a reckless disregard for the rights of citizens and this has had a negative impact on the counter insurgency operations. The implication of this is human right abuses and other horrendous crimes such as law enforcement extremism, unaccountable or rogue law enforcement and general violence against women and children and ill will against security architecture.
- c) Poverty** - Boko Haram and the Fulani Herdsmen are more concentrated in the north-eastern part of Nigeria because of the high level of poverty. The Statistician General of the Federation, stated that, "the northwest and northeast geopolitical zones have recorded the highest poverty rate in Nigeria with 77.7% and 76.3% respectively" (*Abimbola, 2012*). This shows that there is wide gap between the North East and other regions of Nigeria. In addition to this, Zumve, Ingyoroko and Akuva (2013) examined the interconnections between endemic poverty created by official corruption. They stated that the neglect of the needs of the masses led to terrorism in contemporary Nigeria and concluded that economic deprivation, frustration and desperation are the underlying causes of crises and threats. Poverty in these regions mitigate against counter insurgency because the government has not been able to provide the people with basic infrastructural development such as improved standard of living, provision of affordable medical facilities, schools, good roads, jobs, electricity, water, etc. Therefore, it is easy for insurgents to promote their ideology and recruit members into their sect using the neglect from the government as an excuse to propagate violence within the region.
- d) Corruption:** Corruption is a systemic factor in Nigeria and has become institutionalized in all the government institutions making development, peace and stability impossible. Corruption in the security sectors is a prime factor responsible for the unabated inability to

provide solution to the security challenges in Nigeria. Certain elements in the military and in the government now derive financial benefits from the prevailing state of insecurity in the country especially from the resources budgeted for the prosecution of the counter insurgency operations (*Jibrin, 2013*). Thus, the existence of corruption in the Nigerian Military is a steep slippery slope into the abyss of national insecurity and instability (*Otu, et' al, 2017*). This assertion is evident in the fact that since 2000 till date, violent crisis as a result of Boko Haram and Fulani Herdsmen attacks have resulted to the death and displacement of thousands of Nigerians. Similarly, the vice President of Nigeria, Yemi Osinbajo in the Vanguard newspaper dated March 30th, 2017 stated that corruption is responsible for the insurgency in the country, he went further to say that the vice has caused untold humanitarian disasters, promote insecurity, strife, mistrust and bad governance (*Vanguardngr, 2017*).

- e) **The Adoption of Archaic Approach to National Security Issues:** One of the main obstacles to peace and security in northern Nigeria is the continue adoption of archaic, obsolete and traditional methods to national security issues which is creating a false image while ignoring other threats that are non-military in nature (*Korany, et' al, 1993*). A situation where by favoritism, ethnic bigotry and other aspect of “let my people go” are the major impediment that create a negative strategic culture and insecurity in the land, these have crippled our sense of reasoning to the extent that appointment, recruitment, and punishment are daily tailored towards who is the determinant of such situation.

3.0 Findings and Recommendations:

The insecurity in the country has not just brought security challenges to Nigeria, it has also provided the government with an opportunity that has enabled the country to change and formulate laws, rebuild its institutions, and create a platform for greater coordination and cooperation within and across agencies in order to have robust National security.

In other words, the counter insurgency operations by the Nigerian Army will not yield any positive result if the country relies on her strategic culture and armed forces alone. Thus, there is need for the collective effort from both the government and the citizens to adopt the following steps or strategies to re-strategize its strategic culture in collaboration with modern security techniques in the fight against insurgency operation in Nigeria:

- a) Most importantly, there is a need for the Nigerian Government to deconstruct and construct its strategic culture and create a new security architecture that can effectively be used for counter insurgency, given the type of sophisticated patterns used by the insurgents as well as the geostrategic position of the northern part of the country in general and the North-east in particular.
- b) An overhaul of Nigeria’s counter insurgency strategic culture that will include eclectic approach whereby all avenues must be touched and revamp for social re-engineering.
- c) Socio-economic regeneration of the north-eastern part of Nigeria to reduce or eradicate poverty to the barest minimum as this will also discourage young youths from joining the sects.
- d) Nigeria has maintained a non-aggressive strategic culture on her internal security challenges but the strategy used by insurgents’ calls for an aggressive counter insurgency measure. Thus, aggressive counter measure becomes imperative.
- e) There should be attitudinal change and mass re-orientation about life to enable man live in harmony with his neighbour.

4.0 Conclusion:

Insurgencies in north-eastern part of Nigeria have become part of the global scourge which have comatose socio-economic development and this has lingered for so long, issues of strategizing Nigeria strategic culture should be more paramount, ethnicity, religion and corruption should be death with and the government should abandon its former “carrot and stick” approach to adopt a more collaborative, aggressive military campaign and re-strategized its strategic culture to queue with modern days reality. The outcome of this will yield more results and create a platform for human corporate existence.

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