



**CRISIS OF INSECURITY IN NIGERIA: EMPLOYING HUMINT AND
SIGINT INTELLIGENCE TO FIGHTING BOKO HARAM
MILITANTS IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This paper employs the structural functionalism to explain how integrating HUMINT and SIGNIT intelligence resources in the overall security apparatus of Nigeria will help douse the increasing insecurity challenges perpetrated by the Boko Haram insurgents. While the paper has successfully establish the limitations by adopting a qualitative case study without any reference to qualitative interviews to gather supportive data to augment the study's findings. This research is concluded that future studies should focus not only on secondary data, they should also employ quantitative data and structured interviews to provide better and more reliable findings on this interesting subject. However, this paper recommended that the Nigerian security agencies should take a holistic approach to security, which means that intelligence gathering should be incorporated into the Nigerian security apparatus as much as deploying soldiers on the battlefield, it is that the Nigeria should invest heavily in signal intelligence, namely: aerial surveillance, GPS trackers, sophisticated telecommunication gadgets, and high-speed hardware and software computer devices to outcompete the enemy, in addition to training its intelligent agents; and that the Federal Government of Nigeria should end the endemic corruption that has crippled Nigerian institutions.

Keywords: *Insecurity, Employing, Fighting, Boko Haram Militants, Nigeria*

Introduction

“There are great occasions in which some men are called to great services, in the doing of which they are excused from the common rule of morality”—Oliver Cromwell.

Since the first combat between Boko Haram (BH) and the Nigerian military in Borno in 2009 (Onuoha, 2013), peace and security have not been restored in the country. Every so often, the Boko Haram insurgents strike and kill innocent Nigerians or kidnap young girls in their hundreds at night and in broad daylight (Mbah, 2019). Most scholarly studies have agreed that the scale and frequency of the terrorists' attacks are largely attributed to a cocktail of many factors, such as state's failure, the porosity of the Nigerian borders, defective security strategic model, interagency rivalry between Nigeria's security personnel, and the fact that the country's security architecture is overstretched (Fukuyama, 2004; Omede, 2011; Oarte, 2018; Aleyomi and Nwagwu, 2020; Oyewole, 2020). However, most of these studies were mainly conducted to discuss the general crisis of insecurity bedeviling Nigeria while other studies aimed at tackling the security challenges of the country through the use of the traditional measures—the use of the military as a mono-solution to ending the threat of Boko Haram. Although no one can dispute the power of the physical involvement of the military in the fight against Boko Haram, we can unanimously concede that “modern warfare is not traditional wrestling” (Ikechukwu, 2021); in other words, rejigging and retooling the Nigerian army with sophisticated weapons and ammunition is a necessity, not an option.

Beyond that, taking a holistic approach to fighting the Boko Haram terrorists, by incorporating other important elements of military security, in addition to the deployment of soldiers, such as military intelligence to fighting the Boko Haram insurgents, is of paramount importance (Ofongo, 2018). Although the role of intelligence in counterattacking the Boko Haram terrorists was recognized, it was; however, mainly examined broadly (Ashaolu, 2012), discussed through the political economy perspective (Lasisi & Robert, 2019), and on the surface (Oarte, 2013; Ofongo, 2018). As past research rarely offered a specific and sufficient theoretical account of how the use of human and signal intelligence can help defeat Boko Haram, there is a paucity of studies unveiling the critical role of the use of covert intelligence in countering the threats of Boko Haram militants in Nigeria.

To fill this research gap, this study attempts to build a theoretical framework on the conceptual underpinnings of intelligence and Nigeria's domestic security to epitomize how spies and surveillance could be used as valuable clandestine firepower to undo Boko Haram. In building such a theoretical framework, this study will make the following contributions. First, drawing on the perspective

of functionalist theory (Durkheim, 1938; Parsons, 1951), this study will explain the benefits of integrating the art of espionage in the security architecture of Nigeria. Second, this study seeks to provide further insights into the significant function of human and signals intelligence; we argue that in order to achieve a “state of equilibrium” in Nigeria’s national security, in addition to deploying “boots on the ground,” Nigerian military must utilize intelligent gathering procedure to contain the mounting security challenges of the country.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. First, we will draw on Durkheim’s (1938) Structural Functionalist Theory of society to analyze the role of intelligence gathering as an important element in the overall security system of Nigeria. Next, we will then provide conceptual clarifications of the two key terms that are relevant to this study: HUMINT and SIGINT intelligence. Following that, we will examine the Nigerian security apparatus and investigate whether the country’s security system is effective or defective. We will also analyze the two essential security components that are missing in Nigeria’s security system. Lastly, we will present a comparative case study to show how intelligence was used in practice in the United States as a tool for eliminating the Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden in Pakistan in 2011.

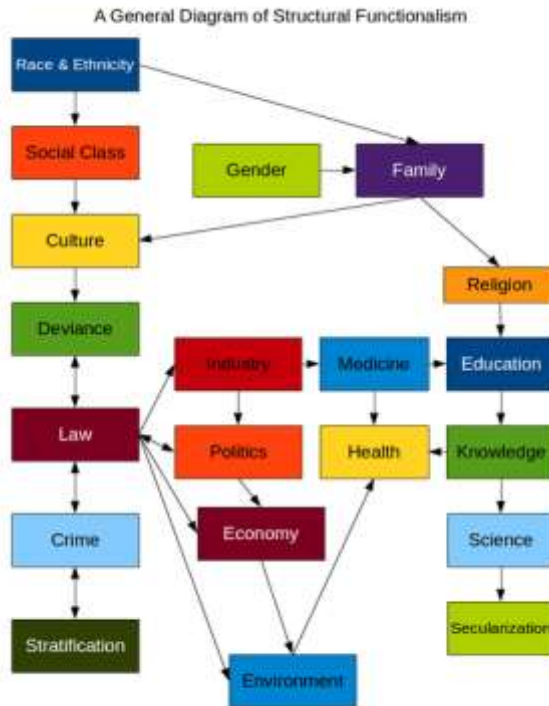
Theorizing Functionalist Theory

The theoretical framework to be used in this study is Structural Functionalism, which is also known as Functionalist Theory or Functionalism. This is a popular theory in sociology; the theoretical framework is prominent in the works of Auguste Comte (1798-1857) and Herbert Spencer (1820-1903); it was developed by Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) and refined by Talcott Parsons (1903-1979) in the 1940s and 1950s. The central question that the functionalist theory attempts to answer is “how do human societies work?” Functionalist theorists argue that society is like a human organism—a system with various parts;¹ the parts are interdependent and interrelated; each part works for the survival of the whole system (Durkheim, 1938). Therefore, if one institution or part of society fails to perform its function, it will affect the function of the whole social system, as is illustrated in Figure 1. The term “function” in the functionalist theory connotes the contribution made by different parts of the

¹ The “parts,” here are referred to as the various components of human organs, such as a hand, a head, or a heart. In the case of a society, on the other hand, its “parts” may be referred to its institutions: Religious, family, social, political, economic institutions, and so on.

system to ensure the survival of the whole social system or the contribution made by the parts for meeting the “functional prerequisites” of the society (Parsons, 1951). Moreover, the functionalist theory ignores the role of conflict in the social system; the theory places more emphasis on consensus as a means for achieving social order in society (Durkeim, 1938).

Fig. 1: A General Diagram of Structural Functionalism



Source: Wikibooks (October 2020).

Our decision for choosing the functionalist theory is because of its relevance in explaining the functions of intelligence as an integral part of the security network of any democracy. In Nigeria, Boko Haram fighters have succeeded in killing innocent Nigerians since in 2009, bombing Nigeria’s military installations and threatening the security of the entire northern region while maintaining their stronghold in daring covert operations. The increasing success of these so-call “rag-tag armies” has been their use of an effective instrument of war—the use of informants—which the Federal Government of Nigeria does not *effectively* use to counter their operations (Ofongo, 2018). In a serious and complex circumstance of war, there is an urgent need for knowledge production, especially one that relates a classical social theory with a current social problem.

Thus, the application of the functionalist theory is important in the current study as the theory will help in explaining how some parts (human and signal intelligence) can function for the survival of the whole system (the effective performance of Nigeria's security architecture).

Despite its popularity and inter-subjectivity, the functionalist theory has been criticized for putting much emphasis on consensus and of being silent on conflict (Mann, 1973). It has been argued that conflict is inevitable in society; "struggle, rather than peaceful growth, is the engine of progress; strife the father of all things, and social conflict the core of historical processes" (Marx, 1986, p. 34). The criticisms have been further buttressed by the fact that functionalist theory assumed a deterministic worldview, which upheld the notion that society determines human behavior, for society is above and beyond the individual (Durkheim, 1938). On the contrary; however, human beings have free will and personal choices; they act based on their volition (Weber, 1978). Notwithstanding these criticisms, the functionalist theory makes intuitive sense in explaining the role of intelligence in tackling the insecurity challenges posed by the Boko Haram insurgents in Nigeria. Lack of spies and surveillance technology means that communication between the Boko Haram militants can take place unnoticed, resulting in a free flow of information between the Boko Haram militants and incessant attacks in Nigerian cities and villages.

As the insurgents advanced their military capabilities through a strategic partnership with Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM), the so-call African Giant IS militarily crippled by social evils— corruption, nepotism, favoritism, poor governance, and ineffective public institutions. What this means is that deploying soldiers to fight these highly-trained insurgents is not enough: The underfunded, underpaid soldiers have every reason to compromise and, in some cases, even serve as informants to Boko Haram. In this case, building a robust spy network and digital surveillance infrastructure is the only way out to counteract the covert operation of any mole and restore the country's national security.

Conceptualizing Human Intelligence (HUMINT) and Signal Intelligence (SIGINT)

Generally speaking, the term "intelligence" denotes a set of information acquired to devise a plan to defeat an enemy or protect a nation. As stated in the 2007 Joint Intelligence (JP 2-0), in a more militaristic undertone, intelligence

results from scouting potential hostilities, operation sites, or foreign nations. According to Alex and Schmid (2000), the military, diplomats, and other operations use intelligence as a tool for decision-making, which comes from knowledge acquired through various methods ranging from detection to interpretation of information. Furthermore, with intelligence, Warner (2002) argued that an action plan can be initiated since prior knowledge of the information is known. Intelligence is acquired from two main sources, Open Source (Overt) and Secret Source (Covert). In overt operations, an action plan is formed from intelligence gathered and analyzed from public sources, including defectors, refugees, defense attaché, and so on (Oluwafemi et al., 2019).

Covert operations are unsanctioned and may result in the death penalty. The information acquired is through secret sources from clandestine collection through human intelligence [HUMINT] or spies and various enigma machines, espionage, aerial and space surveillance—these techniques are known as Signal Intelligence [SIGNIT]. When intelligence is gathered through these various sources, the acquired information is analyzed through scientific models and psychology, which is later scrutinized by being passed through intelligence circles and collection priority (Oluwafemi et al., 2019). In a situation of heightened security breaches, countries employ various intelligence methods to stay ahead of the enemy, which is why most countries invest in the latest technological equipment to stay competitive.

Nigeria's Intelligence System: Effective or Defective?

The Nigerian National Intelligence Services was restructured in 1986 to form the Federal Intelligent Investigation Bureau (FIIB) and State Security Service (SSS), which manage the country's domestic intelligence. The SSS works closely with FIIB and is responsible for the overt or covert operations of the nation (Ashaolu, 2012). They do so by collecting intelligence either from human or signal intelligence assets (HUMINT and SIGINT). Other roles of the SSS include neutralizing threats and protecting high-ranking government officials, including the President, the President of the Senate, visiting Heads of States, and Governors and their operations are overseen by the National Security Adviser while working under the Presidency as a separate arm. Moreover, the Nigerian Police Force is another security outfit that is charged with the

responsibility of securing Nigeria (Ashaolu, 2012). Despite all the restructuring and creation of many security agencies in Nigeria, the “rag-tag army” of Boko Haram’s extraction seems to be winning over a powerful military of a country as gigantic as Nigeria (Bodunde et al., 2014).

One simple explanation for this defective nature of Nigeria’s security apparatus, or what David et al (2004) call the “multiplicity of internal security outfits and the irony of insecurity in Nigeria” is the failure of Nigeria’s National Defense Headquarters to take a holistic approach in dealing with insecurity (Bodunde et al., 2014). While the Federal Government has tried deploying soldiers in the north-eastern region to counter the threats of Boko Haram, the government has failed to face the fact that most of the Nigerian armies are untrained, unprofessional, and ill-equipped (Ashaolu, 2012; Lasisi & Robert, 2019). The years of mismanagement and corruption by the Nigerian leaders have rendered the Nigerian security personnel incapable of facing AQIM-trained Boko Haram fighters. In addition, the Nigerian army does not have a credible criminal database and cannot use forensic science in solving criminal activities (Ashaolu, 2012).

Furthermore, Ashaolu (2012) contends that the Nigerian police forces are highly illiterate. School dropouts see it fit to join the force that cannot even use mobile phone records to track a criminal, indicating that sophisticated intelligence gathering is still lagging in Africa’s most populous nation. The ongoing corruption in the country has snowballed down to the Nigerian military establishment and has affected the funding of the Nigerian army (Comfort et al., 2003). There are genuine reports that senior military officials are siphoning the funds of their subordinates; publicly, soldiers have often complained about the internal “systemic corruption” in the Nigerian military; senior military officers “robbing them off of their allowances;” and about the “poor standard of equipment and medical care” (Anyadike, 2018). Thus, this cancer of corruption will impact the psychology of the soldiers; it will affect their morals and drain their energy; it will also push them to lose passion and confidence as they face the enemy on the battlefield.

As the Nigerian soldiers questioned their motives and momentum to fight, these psychological forces will create a sense of fear in the mind of the Nigerian soldier; the implication of this will result in a situation where soldiers will throw away their guns and flee during the gunfight with the Boko Haram fighters; and in some cases, kill themselves because of despair (Ogundipe, 2019). Under this

defective security system—facilitated by the political elites and supported by the entrenched culture of corruption and unpatriotic motives of the citizens—it is important to scrutinize what is missing in the toolbox of Nigeria’s security system and offer a solution on how to fix them.

The Missing Components in Nigeria’s Security System

Like any other security architecture, Nigeria’s security establishment is a system, made up of parts and components; the various parts that, when put together, make up the security architecture of Nigeria, including the military, the Department of Secret Service, the NIA, and the Nigerian Police Force among others. For the country’s security to be effective in tackling Boko Haram’s menace, each security component has to work independently and effectively to provide the collective functions needed to protect and secure the country (Ashaolu, 2012). However, as we have established, Nigeria’s security architecture is defective; the security network of the country is lacking two most important intelligent security components: The effective use of spies and surveillance, and these security elements are crucial in counteracting the threats of Boko Haram. We argue that the absence of these important components not only renders the security of Nigeria obsolete; it also means that the country will never win the war on Boko Haram, as many studies have proven.

According to Lasisi and Robert (2019, p.1), the long battle with BH is a result of Nigeria’s intelligent failure in the last decade; the intelligent failure was due, partly, to the ethnic and religious sentiments which “undermine” the process of intelligence gathering. Without well-trained spies and GPS and telecommunication gadgets that can monitor, track, and intercepts the enemies’ communications, identifying the location of a BH operative or understanding their plans and preparations is impossible. The highly-trained militants can easily blend in Nigerian communities, use fake identities and pseudonyms, and hide under a “cover” to evade decapitated Nigeria’s security radar. However, spying work is not an acting career; it is a matter of life and death, which requires a huge sacrifice from the individual who will sign up for the career. In Nigeria where long years of corruption has weakened the institutions of the state and patriotism is in short supply, due to the trust deficit between the citizens and the state (Aleyomi & Nwagwu, 2020), many Nigerian citizens will not agree to become an agent, and those who have agreed to join—because of the

paycheck, not because of the love for the country—can easily work against the state, become double agents for BH.

A Nigerian spy or an officer has every reason to “run away knowing that he does not know what would happen to his family when he died” (Ikechuckwu, 2019). Moreover, the existing agents have already proven to be ineffective in their actions and job performances. In short, our argument is not that the Federal Government is not using spies and surveillance to fight BH; we argue that the way these spies and surveillance work are not effective: The motivation is not there; the funding is absent. About twenty years under a democratic dispensation, the Nigerian state is a case study of a “country’s polity that has not yet matured to the right and wrong being a fundamental sense” (Ikechukwu, 2019). Therefore, for the security agencies to plant skillful spies and win the fight over Boko Haram, Nigeria’s polity must be fixed, corruption has to end, and general social welfare of the people must ensue. Only then can the spies bring in the intelligence that can eliminate the enemy, just as the way the American agents spied over Osama Bin Laden in 2010 and succeeded in killing him in 2011.

The Case of Killing Osama Bin Laden

We argue that countering terrorism of any kind and in any country—whether that country is a First World or Third World country—must take a system approach, incorporating all the components of the security apparatus from military to technology to human spies, as the U.S. had done in the cause of killing Osama Bin Laden. The event goes as follows: Four months after occupying the White House, Leon Panetta, the Director of the CIA, briefed President Obama about the latest initiatives and programs that the Agency had for tracking Bin Laden, but Obama was not impressed; he further instructed the CIA Director to create a detail-oriented plan and expend every effort to find Bin Laden, the Al-Qaeda leader (Schmidle 2011). An analytical study into how the CIA Director deployed the resources at his disposal would reveal three important themes—relating to both the HUMINT and SIGINT intelligence—and their impact in accomplishing the U.S.’ mission of killing Bin Laden.

1. Human Spies as an Integral Part of National Security Architecture

According to (Schmidle 2011), upon receiving the directives giving by the President, in 2010, Mr. Panetta returned to the White House with better news: He informed the President that CIA analysts had tracked Abu Ahmed al-

Kuwaiti, a man who was believed to be the Al-Qaeda leader's courier. The question that we need to ask at this point is how did the analysts track the Al-Qaeda leader? The answer is because the CIA, as an intelligent organization, is a system that coordinates and manages information collection, analyses, and execution. The organization also takes the business of intelligence seriously and regards it as an independent component that helps in achieving the overall objectives of U.S. national security. Moreover, from the happenstances of the above event, it is observed that human intelligence is used in the preparatory stage as a precursory event of war. In the case of Bin Laden's raid, the U.S.' intelligent analysts started by tracking Kuwaiti in great detail noting, with the help of satellite technology, the color of the SUV Kuwaiti is driving and the compound he frequented in the Abbottabad neighborhood.

2. Technology as an Integral Part of National Security Architecture

In other to fully examine who Kuwaiti is, the CIA agents need to spy on him more, using surveillance to track his movement. So far, what the CIA agents knew about Kuwaiti is that he is living in a three-story house in Abbottabad, located 20 miles across the Pakistan border on the foothills of Pir Panjal Range. They also knew that Kuwaiti and his brother went in and out, although another man was residing on the third floor; the man had never left the compound; the man was Osama Bin Laden. The occupants of that house periodically burned trash instead of removing it for collection, which led the CIA to suspect them even more. Thus, through the use of aerial surveillance, the CIA continues to track Kuwaiti and the compound in which he dwells, leading to the success of the raid (Schmidle, 2011).

3. Achieving a National Security Goal Requires Optimal "Functions" from Each Component Part of a System

On the night of May 1st, 2011, 23 Navy SEALs from Team Six, officially known as the Naval Special Warfare Development Group (DEVGRU), embarked on a mission to kill Osama bin Laden. They lifted off from Jalalabad Air Field on two MH-60 Black Hawk helicopters on a moonless evening. The radio communications were minimized, and the pilots wore night-vision goggles because they flew over the mountains that border Pakistan without lights. Their destination was Al-Kuwaiti's compound, where Osama bin Laden was believed to be residing and targeted for elimination. The team succeeded in accomplishing the mission; they eliminated Bin Laden and his family (Schmidle 2011) and buried his body at sea (BBC, 2011).

Presenting information of this depth implicitly reveals the caliber and character of the men who analyzed Kuwaiti. These men were not randomly picked up in the neighborhood and asked to work as informants for the Agency (as is often the case in Nigeria); it is clear that these are highly trained individuals who were prepared and equipped with the tools that will help facilitate their undercover operations. Another lesson that Nigerian security agencies should learn from the above case study is that covert operations must not necessarily be carried out by humans; inanimate objects may also play the role of a human with “eyes in the sky” enabling them to pry over the enemies thousands of miles away (Schwager et al., 2011).

Conclusion: Remove Corruption from the System; Arm the Military with Modern Equipment

The present paper uses Structural Functionalism to explain how integrating HUMINT and SIGNIT intelligence resources in the overall security apparatus of Nigeria will help douse the increasing insecurity challenges perpetrated by the Boko Haram insurgents. While the paper has succeeded in establishing that; the paper is not claiming to be perfect; it has some limitations. For instance, the study uses a qualitative case study without any reference to qualitative interviews to gather supportive data to augment the study’s findings. We proposed that future studies should focus not only on secondary data, they should also employ quantitative data and structured interviews to provide better, more reliable findings on this interesting subject. However, the paper is useful in several ways. Through the application of the qualitative case study methodology, this is the first paper (as far as we know) on the specific subject of human and signal intelligence written in the context of Nigeria’s security using the classical sociological theory of functionalism.

The policy recommendations of the paper are as follows. First, we recommend that Nigerian security agencies should take a holistic approach to security, which means that intelligence gathering should be incorporated into the Nigerian security apparatus as much as deploying soldiers on the battlefield. Second, as a country, Nigeria should invest heavily in signal intelligence, namely: aerial surveillance, GPS trackers, sophisticated telecommunication gadgets, and high-speed hardware and software computer devices to outcompete the enemy, in addition to training its intelligent agents. Third, the Federal Government of Nigeria should end the endemic corruption that has

crippled Nigerian institutions. As a nation, Nigeria is a system; the existing corruption culture in the country has a tremendous impact on the military and can affect the clandestine work of a field agent. For this war to be won, Nigerian leaders must eliminate corruption and use the resources at their disposal to arm their military with quality weapons. As one Nigerian officer says: The senior military personnel bought us soft-skinned Hilux trucks; “that is not a weapon—the enemy is not afraid of that. Give us MRAPs [and] mine-resistant armored vehicles that RPGs cannot penetrate” (Anyadike, 2018).

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