

The Nature of Nigeria's Boko Haram War, 2010-2015: A Strategic Analysis

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Abstract

The activities of Boko Haram in the North-Eastern part of Nigeria have highlighted the need for more effective counter-strategies. Nigeria's difficulties in defeating Boko Haram has security ramifications that go beyond its borders, especially for West Africa. Much has been written about the origins of Boko Haram. However, thus far there has been little analysis of the nature of the conflict between Nigeria and Boko Haram. It is this lacuna that this article seeks to address by applying the concepts of hybrid war, compound war, fourth generation warfare and unrestricted warfare to the confrontation between the state and its Islamist challenger.

Keywords: Nigeria; Boko Haram; Insurgency; Hybrid Warfare; Compound War; Fourth Generation Warfare; Unrestricted Warfare.

Introduction

With the end of the Cold War in the 1990s, it was assumed by some theorists of international relations, such as Francis Fukuyama, that the world has finally entered a period of peace.[1] Interstate conflict seemed on the wane in the post-Cold War world. Most of the few wars that were fought, like the Israeli-Hezbollah war of 2006 and the Russo-Georgian War of 2008 over Ossetia and Abkhazia, were of short duration and asymmetric in nature.[2] This asymmetry was supposed to take the form of intrastate conflicts resolved without external interventions. This perception of the post-Cold War world was shattered by the September 11 2001 attacks launched on the United States of America by Al-Qaeda.[3] With this attack and the subsequent declaration of the 'war on terror' by the US, the issue of 'terrorism' was pushed to the forefront of international political discourse. The 9/11 attacks has brought the spectre of how well-organized non-state groups can challenge even a superpower to the forefront.

Nigeria is not an exception when it comes to unconventional conflict. Since her independence in 1960, the country has witnessed attacks by non-state political entities. There was the Maitatsine crisis between 1980 and 1982;[4] the insurgency of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) between 2000 and 2010;[5] the Ombatse cult group in 2013[6] and the activities of the extremist religious group Boko Haram.[7] None of these other groups have threatened the territorial integrity of Nigeria like Boko Haram since Biafra tried to create a separate state in the late 1960s. Boko Haram has waged a protracted insurgency against the Nigerian state since 2009.[8]

A great deal has been written on the origins and objectives of Boko Haram. Works such as Anyanwu and Nwanaju's, *Boko Haram: Religious Conflicts and Dialogue Initiatives in Nigeria*,[9] Agbibo's "*The Nigerian Burden: Religious Identity, Conflict and the Current Terrorism of Boko Haram*,"[10] and Forest's *Confronting the Terrorism of Boko Haram in Nigeria*[11] contain excellent accounts of the origins and motivations of Boko Haram. While works such as Adeolu Adewunmi's "*The Battle for the Minds: The Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Northern Nigeria*,"[12] Samson Eyituyo Liolio's "*Rethinking Counterinsurgency: A Case Study of Boko Haram in Nigeria*,"[13] and Solomon's *Counter-terrorism in Nigeria: Responding to Boko Haram*,[14] have analyzed the various steps that the Nigerian state could take to contain Boko Haram, they suffer from one important shortcoming. Most counterinsurgency (COIN) works on Boko Haram fail to

define the nature of the conflict and assumed that Nigeria was waging a “war on terror”. This operational and conceptual misnomer has hampered analysis. Even in the medical sciences, the correct diagnosis of any ailment or disease is the first step towards effecting a cure. A wrong diagnosis or prescription would exacerbate the condition or might even kill the patient. The assertion here is that for Nigeria to be able to develop a more effective anti-Boko Haram strategy, it is important to recognize the nature of the conflict in the North-Eastern part of the country. This article seeks to demonstrate that the war between the Nigerian state and Boko Haram is not strictly a terrorist campaign and a war on terror, but rather an example of ‘Hybrid Warfare.’ [15]

Hybrid Wars

What is hybrid warfare (HW)? Hybrid wars involve a range of different models of warfare that include conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorism in its various manifestations (such as kidnappings, beheadings and suicide-bombings) and criminal activities.[16] It incorporates multi-modal activities that can be conducted by separate units, or even the same unit, but are strategically directed, connected and coordinated within the contested zones to achieve synergistic effects.[17] The space where Hybrid Wars take place is called the contested zone (CZ).[18] It is that space where the opposing forces meet, trying to realize their economic, political, social and religious objectives by means of force and psychological operations. These CZs generally include, but are not limited to, the dense urban centres (the scene of urban warfare), jungles, borderlines and mountains (the scenes of guerrilla warfare), and attacks on religious, cultural and educational centres (through acts of terrorism).[19] In the conflict zone, hybrid warfare combines two modes of warfare—conventional and asymmetric warfare—simultaneously and synchronously. These forms of conflict waging are used interchangeably as the situation demands. Hybrid wars bring together some of the lethality of state conflict waging with the unrestrained violence of asymmetric warfare. In such conflicts, adversaries (state, state-sponsored groups, mercenaries, terrorist groups, freedom fighters) exploit access to modern and sophisticated weapons and communication technologies to wage protracted conflicts.

Hybrid wars are different from conventional warfare, combining tactics, methods, weapons and strategies of conventional and unconventional warfare.[20] Engaging in such wars involve the use of ambushes, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), suicide-bombings, sexual assaults as well as targeted assassinations. While the two modes are operationally integrated and tactically fused, the irregular component tends to become operationally decisive rather than just protract the conflict (as in guerrilla war), provoke overreactions (as with terrorism) or extend the cost of security for the defender (as in a counter-insurgency). A recent example of hybrid warfare is the blistering run of the Islamic State (IS) over Tikrit and Mosul in Iraq in 2014.[21] Islamic State fighters made use of an array of sophisticated weapons (M1A1 Abrams battle tanks and M198 towed howitzers) coupled with a well-trained militia force that used both conventional and unconventional modes of warfare, to engage and dislodge the U.S.-trained Iraqi army.[22] Apart from the use of quasi-military formations and modern military tactics (learned from officers from Saddam Hussein’s armed forces), the fighters of what was soon to become the Islamic State also made use of suicide-bombings, IEDS and ambushes.

Hybrid wars come in three sub-types:

- i. *Fourth Generation Warfare* has at its core the idea that the weakening of the state as an organizing and governing mechanism results in the rise of non-state actors willing and able to challenge the legitimacy of the state.[23] The role of political will and internal social cohesion is

central to the construct. The 4GW actor uses a range of conventional and unconventional means, including terrorism and disinformation disseminated in cyberspace, to undermine the will of those defending the existing state, to de-legitimize its government and to stimulate an internal breakdown of the social fabric.[24]

- ii. *Compound Wars (CW)* are those major wars that have significant regular and irregular components which exist next to each other but under unified direction.[25] It occurs when a considerable degree of strategic coordination exists between state and non-state forces in a CZ. The complementary effects of CW are generated by the ability to exploit the advantages of each component.[26] The non-state part attacks weak areas and forces a conventional opponent to disperse its forces.
- iii. *Unrestricted Warfare* involves the synchronous mobilization of all the resources and assets at the disposal of one or both opposing forces in the CZ.[27] It is warfare beyond the traditional military domain. The concept refers to the extensive and deliberate use of the totality of the national resources and assets of a state in such warfare, including financial, trade, religious, social, cultural and virtual (cyberspace) resources and human resources (conscripted children and under age fighters).

In the light of these new manifestations of hybrid warfare, let us revisit some phases of the armed conflict between Boko Haram and the armed forces of Nigeria.

Boko Haram: Origin, Tactics and Strategy

The Arabic name of Boko Haram is *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad* ("People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad.") [28] The group became best known by its Hausa name 'Boko Haram'. It was a local radical Salafist movement which morphed into a Salafi-jihadist terrorist organisation after 2009.[29] It is based in the northeast of Nigeria, in the areas predominantly populated by the Kanuri people. [30] Boko Haram is believed to have its origin as far back as 1995 in a movement named 'Sahaba' which was led by one Abubakar Lawan.[31] When he travelled to study at the University of Medina in Saudi Arabia, he conceded leadership of Mohammed Yusuf.[32]

Yusuf soon abandoned some of the old cleric's doctrines, reorganized Sahaba and changed its name in 2002. Between 2002 and 2009, Yusuf successfully managed to gain a huge followership, comprised of youths, mostly from poor families, aged between 17 and 30 years.[33] He had established a religious complex that included a mosque and a school in the northern city of Maiduguri for the propagation and indoctrination of the group's belief system. The bulk of the students were from Borno in northern Nigeria and the country's neighbours Niger, Cameroon and Chad.[34] Yusuf succeeded in extending his following in some other states in northern Nigeria such as Bauchi, Gombe, Kano, Katsina and Yobe. In 2004, the complex was relocated to Yusuf's home town Kanamma in Yobe state near the Nigerian-Niger border.[35] In Kanamma, his militant base was called "Afghanistan".[36] Boko Haram initially fought for the establishment of a Sharia government in Borno State but after Yusuf's death in 2009 its goal extended towards the Islamization of all of Nigeria despite the fact that about half of Nigeria's population are non-Muslims.[37]

Before 2010, Boko Haram had no apparent strategy on how to achieve its objectives in Northern Nigeria.[38] It used occasionally guerrilla tactics of hit-and-run to harass and oppress Nigerians in its area of operations. Its weapons were rudimentary: clubs, machetes, Molotov cocktails, knives, swords and locally made guns. Boko Haram militants sometimes shot sporadically from 'okada' (local slang for motorcycle) at their targets—both civilians and police officers—before speeding away.[39] This, however, began to change after 2010 as the group started using bombs and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) on strategic locations.[40] Boko

Haram's tactics also include suicide bombings; on August 26, 2011 a suicide car-bombing in Nigeria's capital directed against the UN building killed 21 persons and injured 73 others.[41]. Boko Haram's arsenal now includes AK-47 rifles, grenades, rocket propelled grenades, automatic rifles, surface-to air- missiles, vehicle mounted machine guns with anti-aircraft visors, T-55 tanks, Panhard ERC-90 'Sagaie' and explosives such as Semtex.[42] Tactics have become more sophisticated, both in response to increased security operations by the military and in an effort to stir sectarian conflict. The first attacks in 2010 were predominantly shootings, but IEDs began to be used by December, especially in the run-up to the 2011 elections.[43] After those elections, the movement turned to vehicle-borne IEDs (VBIEDs). These cars were typically packed with several propane cylinders or explosives-filled oil drums. Furthermore, in order to disseminate its ideology and to reach a wider audience, Boko Haram began to make effective use of the Internet. Youtube has been particularly effective in showcasing Boko Haram's exploits and confrontations with the Nigerian army.

Government Responses to Boko Haram

At the initial stage of the conflict between the security forces of Nigeria and Boko Haram, the state made use of its police force in an effort to check the activities of the group. Before 2010 Boko Haram's activities consisted mainly of civil, social and religious acts of disobedience to established local norms. The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) made extensive use of roadblocks and mass arrests to curb and contain Boko Haram's activities.[44] NPF's inability to check the militant sect forced the government to form a Joint Task Force (JTF) in 2003. By this period, the group had begun to actively target and burn down police stations in Yobe. [45] In 2007, the JTF launched 'Operation Flush' to arrest and contain the activities of the Boko Haram in the northeast.[46] By 2009, the JTF succeeded in killing the founder of the Group, Yusuf. His death generated serious controversy both in local and international media; Yusuf was captured alive and briefly held in police custody before he 'mysteriously' died.[47] It has been argued that it was this unlawful killing of Yusuf that pushed Boko Haram to embrace a more combative approach. With the death of Yusuf, Abubakar Shekau took over the leadership of the Boko Haram.

With the ascension of this new leader the conflict then entered a more virulent phase. After a year of preparations, Boko Haram began to employ new tactics and methods, including suicide-bombings.[48] This forced the Nigerian government to establish the Special Military Joint Task Force (SMJTF) in 2011.[49] It consists of personnel from the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), the Department of State Security (DSS), the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) and the Defence Intelligence Agencies (DIA). Moreover, the new level that Shekau took the conflict to, brought about two important changes. The first was that it pushed Nigeria to fully mobilize its armed forces (totaling 100,000 soldiers) to confront the security challenge. Secondly, it forced the government to adapt its counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency strategies. In May 2013, Nigeria declared a state of emergency in the three north-eastern states of Yobe, Adamawa and Borno. The three states have not only become the main CZ of the war but also Boko Haram's stronghold in Nigeria. During this period, Nigeria also established a Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) to complement the efforts of the military in degrading Boko Haram.[50] The CJTF is composed mainly of vigilante groups, hunters, farmers and youths in the areas most affected by the activities of the Boko Haram. In addition, Nigeria created a new military formation, the 7th Division, in Maiduguri with a mission to contain and rout Boko Haram.[51] To give legal backing and effective coordination to these measures, Nigeria fast-tracked the passage of the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2013.[52] The Acts stipulates, among other provisions, death penalty sentences for terrorists and insurgents and the destruction of suspected terrorist enclaves. At the same time, the Nigerian state also made an offer to engage in a strategic dialogue with Boko Haram.[53] However, Boko Haram steadfastly rebuffed this offer.

In December 2015, the new president of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari, declared that Boko Haram has been 'technically defeated'.^[54] In January 2016, the president announced that Boko Haram was now on 'fall-back'.^[55] By late 2015, the State had indeed retaken much of the territories in the CZs previously controlled by Boko Haram. As a result of this, it has now become impossible for Boko Haram to launch conventional attacks against federal troops in the CZs. It has fallen back onto its stronghold, the Sambisa forest in Maiduguri, a mountainous border region difficult to penetrate. Nigeria was able to turn the tide mainly because of the engagement of troops from neighbouring countries and, what is less well known, with the help of white South African mercenaries known as STTEP (Specialized Tasks, Training, Equipment and Protection).^[56] These soldiers of fortune, veterans of bush warfare in South Africa, trained elite counterterrorism troops in Nigeria and conducted sorties against the Boko Haram.^[57] Using a tactic of 'relentless pursuit' to match Boko Haram's hit-and-run tactics, an effective counter-offensive against Boko Haram began to take shape.^[58] By the time the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) came to the aid of Nigeria in late 2015, the STTEP had succeeded in putting the Boko Haram on the defensive. Yet it was only when troops from Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Benin, under the command of the MNJTF, were introduced to the war in late 2015 that the counteroffensive yielded more permanent results.^[59] Battle-hardened troops from Chad and Niger played crucial roles, advancing, in some instances, into Nigerian territory to dislodge the Boko Haram insurgents.^[60] However, the war is not over. Boko Haram has gone back to guerrilla tactics, eschewing open and conventional confrontations with the military. Since January 2016, it has been hitting counter-value targets in the CZs, making heavy use of underage suicide bombers in its bid to further destabilize Nigeria's northern states.

The External Dimensions to the War

The Nigeria-Boko Haram conflict has its origins in Nigeria. The main theatre of operations of the war is northern Nigeria. However, the activities of the opposing forces have extended the War beyond the borders of Nigeria. The reasons for these extensions are obvious. All belligerents assumed that external involvement was to be crucial to achieve their overall strategic objectives. To Nigeria, externalizing the conflict ensured international support to check the insurgency. Crucially, externalizing the conflict, especially couching it in terms of a war on terror, has allowed Nigeria greater access to foreign military hardware, know-how and funds.

To Boko Haram, externalizing the conflict ensured foreign assistance in the form of funding, fighters, weapons and technical know-how in bomb-making, obtained from like-minded jihadi groups such as al-Shabab and Al-Qaeda. It also gave Boko Haram global attention and recognition. Externalizing the conflict makes it more difficult for the Nigerian government to contain Boko Haram's activities. Even if the government should succeed in checking the Boko Haram's operations within the country, choking off the local pool of materiel and manpower, the external links are likely to allow Boko Haram to sustain the insurgency at a low-level. In 2011, Boko Haram had attacked the UN building in Nigeria.^[61] However, this attack failed to give Boko Haram the international recognition it craved for. It was the kidnapping of more than 200 girls from their school dormitory in Chibok, Bornu state, that finally pushed the group and its practices into the international limelight.^[62] This single act guaranteed Boko Haram a global audience. It was part of an atrocity campaign that in terms of casualties, matches or even surpasses those produced by the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq.

In 2010, Boko Haram had tried to forge links with established jihadi organizations such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Al-Qaeda Central in Pakistan.^[63] Such alliances supplied Boko Haram with the needed technical expertise in asymmetric warfare. For example, after pledging allegiance to the IS

(Islamic State), there was a noticeable improvement in the quality of the video and audio productions of Boko Haram.[64] This suggests that the IS must have provided some technical expertise to Boko Haram in media productions. External links also made it possible for Boko Haram to access international sources of jihadi financing, fighters and weaponry.

Apart from forging links with other jihadi groups, Boko Haram, through its activities in the territories of Nigeria's neighbours, also externalized the war territorially. The group is also active in Niger, Chad and Cameroon. For example, Boko Haram attacked a police station in Kousseri and a Chinese-run engineering company in Cameroon in 2014.[65] It also launched a devastating attack on Ngouboua in Chad in February 2015.[66] The reasons for the extension of the war into these countries are also strategic. On the one hand, the group wanted to show to Al-Qaeda Central and later IS that its reach covers the whole of West Africa [67] Finally, extending its operations into neighbouring Cameroon, Chad and Niger ensured the continuous supply of men and materiel from the Maghreb, particularly Libya. The extension of the war across borders also offered Boko Haram a safe haven beyond the reach of Nigerian troops [68]

The Nigerian government, on its part, externalized the war for two strategic reasons. The first was to compel its neighbours at the frontline of the war, especially Cameroon, to help in policing its porous borders and to prevent Boko Haram from attacking Nigeria from across the borders. The second, more important, reason was for Nigeria to garner international military and political support against Boko Haram. To this purpose, the Nigerian government signed bi- and multi-lateral security agreements with its neighbours and with select strategic partners beyond them. For instance, in February 2012, Nigeria had signed a security treaty with Cameroon.[69] The treaty secured, among other things, Cameroonian assistance for Nigeria's fight against Boko Haram in the border areas. In October 2012, Nigeria had signed a similar treaty with Niger, establishing joint security patrols along the borders.[70]. In addition, Nigeria signed a strategic 20-year security-training pact with Britain in 2015, providing it with counterterrorism and COIN training.[71]

Using multilateral mechanisms, Nigeria was able to expand the scope of operations of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to include tackling the Boko Haram in the West African sub-region. However, the establishment of the MNJTF predated the Nigeria-Boko Haram war. It originally came into being in 1994 to combat trans-border banditry in the northern part of Nigeria and comprises troops from Cameroon, Niger, Chad and Benin.[72] The emergence of the Boko Haram expanded the scope of operation of the MNJTF's to include counter-terrorism.[73] The headquarters of the MNJTF, which was initially at Baga, Bornu state in Nigeria, had to be relocated to N'Djamena in Chad, following the coordinated attack launched against it by Boko Haram in January 2015.[74] In September 2015, from its new base in Chad, the MNJTF launched a well-coordinated attack against the Boko Haram in Bornu state.[75] Through this offensive, the Boko Haram lost swath of territories that it has hitherto held on to and from where it had resorted to guerrilla tactics to undermine northern Nigeria. Additionally, in June 2014, Nigeria signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) establishing an External Intelligence Response Unit (EIRU) with the United States, Britain, France, Benin, Chad, Cameroon and Niger.[76]

The Nature of the War, 2010-2015

The conflict with Boko Haram has gone through three different iterations. In the beginning, the Nigerian government perceived it to be a form of civil unrest when it reared its head between 1995 and 2002.[77] Subsequently, it came to be seen as a religious uprising between 2002 and 2009.[78] Between 2010 and 2015, the war took its final form. It became a war on terror on the one side and an insurgency on the other.[79] It is from this final form that the true nature of the war can be gleaned. It is the contention of this article that

the war is not a mere terror campaign but amounts to hybrid war. This assumption is based on, among other things, the tactics and strategies, aims and objectives and the choice of weapons used in prosecuting the war by the adversaries.

A war has some basic definable features. Although its contemporary definition now encompasses asymmetric warfare, it still has some generally accepted characteristics.[80] One of these is the observance of established rules of engagement. Normally, the combatants take special care during engagements to shield non-combatants from the violence of war. Proportionality is also an established norm. Terrorism does not have such rules of engagement. Boko Haram only graduated from occasional attacks to irregular warfare in 2010. Why 2010? It is an established fact that the conflicts between Nigeria and the group went as far back as early 2000. It is worth recalling that the founder-leader of the group, Mohammed Yusuf, was killed in 2009 along with over 900 of his followers by Nigerian security forces.[81] The group subsequently dispersed to re-organize. By 2010, the new leader Abubakar Shekau escalated the conflict and took it to a more dangerous and unrestricted phase. In addition to seeking revenge, a major factor responsible for this escalation was the desire of Boko Haram to Islamise Nigeria as a long-term objective. Since 2010, there has been a noticeable difference in Boko Haram's tactics in its confrontations with the Nigerian state. For the first time, the Group carried out a series of carefully coordinated and deadly bombing campaigns in Nigeria, directed against both religious and secular targets. The bombing campaigns took four major formats: suicide bombings, VBIEDs, roadside IEDs, and vehicle-borne suicide bombings (VBSBs). By this period, the CZs of the war were clearly defined. The major CZs are Adamawa, Yobe, Borno, Gombe and Bauchi states. Other targeted zones in the HN include Abuja, Plateau and Kano states.

From 2010 onward, Boko Haram started launching a series of attacks on security structures and military installations in the North-Eastern part of the country. For example, on September 7 2010, Boko Haram attacked and overrun a prison in Bauchi, freeing over 700 inmates in the process.[82] Between 2010 and 2015, Boko Haram attacks became more daring and brazen. Never in the history of political violence in Nigeria had any group deliberately targeted not just military structures but military formations and barracks in the CZs. The attacks launched on Giwa barrack and Baga military base in Bornu in 2014 and 2015 are cases in point.[83] In the two encounters, over 500 lives were lost. What became noticeable in the course of the confrontation was that the adversaries simultaneously employed asymmetric and conventional tactics and strategies in waging the war. This is why the Nigeria-Boko Haram conflict can be described as a form of hybrid warfare.

The Nigeria-Boko Haram war has gone through the different phases earlier enumerated above. Elements of *unrestricted warfare* could be seen in the use of girls (as young as 10 years old) as suicide bombers.[84] This is apart from the fact that the group uses men and women in carrying out conventional suicide bombings and VBSBs. A good example was the deadly suicide attack in Borno that killed 58 and injured over 139 people in March 2015.[85] During this phase too, Boko Haram actively targeted Nigerians of different religious persuasions. Vulnerable groups such as the old, the infirm, women and children were not accorded any protected status. Churches, mosques, pastors and imams, traditional chiefs, universities, secondary schools, markets, car depots and restaurants became legitimate targets. Boko Haram also became very adept at using cyberspace. It has effectively communicated via *YouTube*, *Twitter* and *Facebook* during its war against the Nigerian state. The group made use of every tangible and intangible resource at its disposal to wage war. During this phase, the Nigerian state also used considerable resources to wage war. The military used tactics and strategies such as the declaration of a state of emergency in the CZs, arrest and intimidation of spouses and relatives of known Boko Haram members while deliberately flouting humanitarian rules of engagement. This was the reason why Human Rights Watch (HRW) wrote a critical report about the activities of the

Nigerian forces in the CZs and its treatment of prisoners in the course of the war.[86] The point being made here is that during the *unrestricted phase*, the adversaries used conventional and unconventional techniques in prosecuting the war. The responses of the opposing forces were disproportional and civilian countervalue targets were actively sought and destroyed.

In the *Fourth Generation warfare* phase, which occurred within the same period, the group effectively tried to undermine the sovereign integrity of the Nigerian state. It tried to achieve this through incessant and ubiquitous attacks on civilian and military structures in Nigeria. The aim was to demonstrate to Nigerian citizens that the government did not have the capacity to protect them. This was probably also the main reason why the group carried-out the brazen kidnapping of more than 200 Chibok girls from their school in Borno in 2014.[87] The repeated attacks against military infrastructure targets (such as barracks and munition depots) were designed to show the citizens that the Nigerian military even lacked the capacity to protect itself. The Internet played a crucial role in the propaganda efforts of the group. Since the government could not effectively censor what was posted on-line, Boko Haram used YouTube to disseminate its threats against the Nigerian state. The exploits of the group against Nigeria in the CZs as well as its administration of the localities under its control were posted online. All these efforts were geared towards the delegitimization of the authority of the State in what amounts to acts of psychological warfare.

During the *compound warfare phase*, the opposing forces deployed asymmetric and conventional tactics and strategies simultaneously in the CZs. In some cases, there were even instances of role reversal with the military taking up the guise of the insurgents and the insurgents doing vice-versa. Nigeria established a special Counter Terrorism Squad (CTS) the aim of which was to go into Boko Haram territory in the CZs and complement the efforts of the military forces.[88] Militants from Boko Haram in turn sometimes posed as regular Nigerian forces in order to make it easier for them to launch surprise attacks on the villages in the CZs. This was what happened when Boko Haram attacked Gwoza Local Government Area in Borno state in 2014.[89] Moreover, Boko Haram adopted a conventional military mode to confront the Nigerian forces during this phase. A prime example was the attack on Baga military barrack in January 2015. A video released by Boko Haram of the confrontation shows how it attacked the military barrack frontally, using vehicle-mounted machine guns and lots of AK-47-wielding infantry foot soldiers. This is not unlike how a regular army would attack its opponent's base in a conventional war. On the Nigerian government's side, the CJTF played crucial roles during this phase of the war. It acted as the unofficial intelligence-gathering unit of the SMJTF and, in many instances, acted also as the first line of defense against the insurgents.[90] In March 2014, the SMJTF was able to foil a bomb attack on an Internally Displaced Persons' camp in Maiduguri due to the timely intelligence provided by the CJTF. On several occasions the involvement of the CJTF in actual combat operations was decisive to defeating Boko Haram attacks in the CZs.[91] Thus, the simultaneous and synchronous use of conventional (JTF) and unconventional (CJTF) forces and the use of conventional and unconventional tactics qualify the situation as being one of *compound warfare*.

Conclusion

To bring any major armed conflict to an end, it is important to understand the nature of the war. The South African mercenaries were effective against Boko Haram because they had a better understanding of the nature of the war in northern Nigeria. Hence, their adoption of the tactic known as 'relentless pursuit'. Nigeria has variously referred to the conflict with Boko Haram as a terrorist campaign, a religious war and an insurgency. In line with this reasoning, the government had tried various strategies which did not fit the kind of warfare being fought by Boko Haram. The army's own approach had failed to quell the activities of Boko Haram, partly for lack of fighting motivation of the soldiers, partly due to the corruption and incompetence

of their superiors and partly – as has been argued above – because the government misread the nature of the war.

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