
The Changing Nature of Civilian –Military Relations in Nigeria, 1967-2017

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Abstract: Relations are critical social human phenomena. This is because no human group is an island to itself. These interactions may at times lead to friction as groups attempt to establish their authority and worth as human species and at other times lead to cordial relationships. This study therefore focuses on civilian and military relations from the era of Nigeria civil war to 2017. The study investigates the relationship between military and civilians in Nigeria from 1967 to 2017 in order to determine the nature of their relationship, and the consequences that their relations had on Nigeria internal security architecture. The study adopts historical -cum-qualitative research methods to establish the nature and dimension of Military-Civilian relations within the period under review. It notes among other thing: lack of proper synergy in the area of intelligence information gathering between military and civilians as a major gap in Nigeria security apparatus. The paper concludes that, if the current wave of internal security challenges in the country must be addressed headlong, then high level of warmth, cordiality and mutuality of interest and purpose between these two groups must be given priority.

Keyword: Changing nature of civilian, military relations

Introduction

The nature of relations between the military and the civilian population in Nigeria over the years are like labor-management relations, legislative-executive relations, or Soviet-American relations, where two concrete, organized groups with real conflicting interests contend and bargain with each other.¹ It thus suggests a basic dichotomy and opposition between the civilian and the military viewpoints. This difference created wide gap between military and civilian population to a level that intelligent information gathering by the military from civilian population proved very difficult. This has greatly hampered effective crackdown of criminal elements and terrorist group in Nigeria.

The hub of this paper argument is hinges on the fact that, for any country to be sufficiently well developed to have distinct military institutions capable of defend both the territorial integrity of as well the guarantee of peace and order within the territory, there must be synergy between the military civil populations.

Civil military Relation in Perspective

Civil–military relations involve a multiplicity of relationships between military men, institutions, and interests, on the one hand, and diverse and often conflicting nonmilitary men,

institutions, and interests, on the other. It is not a one-to-one relationship but a one-among-many relationship.²

The military order, indeed, may be coextensive with society, with all members of society also performing military roles. At the opposite extreme the military order may be highly differentiated, its members playing no important roles except military ones.³ At the second level, connections between military officers and other leadership groups in society may be very close; the same people may be military, economic, and political leaders. At the other end of the continuum, military officer ship may be an exclusive professional career, incompatible with other roles. Finally, at the top level the same individuals may exercise both political and military leadership roles, or these roles may be quite distinct and their occupants recruited from different sources through different channels.⁴

In the European armies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, for instance, social, economic, political, and military leadership functions were all concentrated in the person of the monarch. Similarly, officership was, in general, a perquisite of the aristocracy; aristocrats acquired by ascription military as well as social, economic, and political leadership roles. The rank and file of the European armies, however, was recruited from the lower ranks of society for long periods of service, and their ties with any groups in civilian society were often tenuous at best.⁵

In the nineteenth century these relations tended to be reversed. Political and military leadership roles became differentiated. Prime ministers and cabinets emerged from parliaments and party politics; commanding generals and chiefs of staff were the products of the military bureaucracy. Similarly, the military officership became professionalized; entry was usually at the lowest ranks and required specialized training.⁶ A career as a military officer became incompatible with other leadership careers. The relation of the enlisted personnel to society, however, tended to become closer. The core of modern armies remained the long-service soldier, but the rank and file was increasingly supplemented by large numbers of short-term “citizen-soldiers” initially recruited through conscription or universal military service and then organized into reserves, militia, territorial army, National Guard, or Landwehr.⁷

At each level of civil-military relations military groups may differ from nonmilitary groups in terms of skills, values, and institutions. Military men may differ from nonmilitary men in their skill in the use of violence or in the management of violence. In a frontier society, such as eighteenth-century America, the differentiation was relatively small. The average farmer possessed most of the skills of the soldier; the social, economic, and political leaders of the society either possessed or could easily acquire most of the skills necessary to command armies. During the nineteenth century and the first part of the twentieth century military skills tended to become more sharply differentiated from civilian skills. In the mid-twentieth century in the advanced societies the difference between military and other skills may again be decreasing.⁸

Military men may also differ from civilian groups in terms of their attitudes and values. In most societies presumably the outlook of the military more closely resembles that of some civilian groups than it does that of other civilian groups. In the history of the West military values were

often closely associated with aristocratic and conservative beliefs. In many of the modernizing countries in the second half of the twentieth century, the values of the dominant groups in the armed forces closely paralleled those of upward mobile, nationalistic, reformist middle-class civilians. The development of a professionalized officer corps generally stimulates distinctive attitudes and values (often referred to as “the military mind”) that may differ significantly from the attitudes and values dominant within the society. The professional military ethic tends to be conservative in character. If the basic values of the society are liberal, fascist, or socialist, the tensions between the military and political leadership may be intense, particularly if the military leaders occupy a position of power or potential power in the political system or if the political leaders feel that they must insist upon a high degree of ideological uniformity on the part of all elements in the society, including the military. In these circumstances nationalism may furnish a common ground for the accommodation of the revolutionary ideology of the political leadership and the conservative outlook of the military.⁹

Civil—military relations in modern societies differ from those in these earlier societies because of the existence of an autonomous, professionalized officer corps. The emergence of such an officer corps is a key aspect of the process of modernization. In Western Europe and the United States the professional officer corps was a product of the nineteenth century. From the breakdown of feudalism in Europe to the latter part of the seventeenth century, armies were usually led by mercenary officers who raised companies of men for hire to kings and princes. In consolidating their power in the seventeenth century, the national monarchs felt the need for permanent military forces to protect their dominions and support their rule. Consequently, they created standing armies and recruited the aristocrats they were subordinating to officer them. Thus, from the end of the seventeenth century to the French Revolution, officers, except in the artillery and engineer units, were usually aristocrats who assumed their posts with little regard to professional qualifications, experience, or talent.¹⁰

The pattern of military and political modernization in Europe and the United States contrasts with that in many of the countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In Europe and the United States, political modernization usually preceded the development of a modern, professional officer corps. Only in those countries, such as France, where constitutional issues remained unresolved did military interventions play a critical role in politics. In other countries, such as Germany, the military played a significant but less overt role in politics as a result of the conflicting claims to legitimacy and authority on the part of monarchical and parliamentary institutions. In general, however, the professional officer corps developed within the framework of an established political order.¹¹

Need for proper synergy between military and civilian population in Nigeria

From the earliest time possible, human beings have been trying to find out what is responsible for crime in society and how best the wave of crimes could be curtail. At one time, some people believed that it was the devil that moved a man to commit crime.¹² But scientists as Ozo-Eson rejected this assertion, claiming that the existence of the devil has not been scientifically demonstrated.⁵ argued that criminals commit crime using their free-will believing that crime

would bring them more pleasure and less pain. While we cannot completely right off any of the above arguments, the convergence of the above thought is that, the preponderance of weak institutions reduces the chances of offenders ever being brought to justice, which by logical extension encourages the proliferation of all manner of social and economic crimes.

Against the strong wave of crimes, the necessity for synergy between and civil population becomes more evident in modern Nigerian societies characterized by diversities and contradictions arising from population heterogeneity, urbanization, industrialization, conflicting ideologies on appropriate socio-political and economic form of organization.¹³

Thus, civil-military relation is a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies that support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime. Civil-military relation is emphasizing the prevention of crime rather than the traditional policing method of responding to crime after it happens. Crime figures continued on a consistent and dramatic upward course. It started earlier informs of theft within a short distance which includes the acts of forcing the neighbour's barn open and looted farms produces, and livestock. These crimes were checked in the earlier period through temporary flocking of the criminals. However, with the coming of colonialism into this area, superior inducements for crimes were offered especially during the riot that permitted breaking into houses and engaging in other forms of antisocial activities. More so, colonization heightened the rate of crime in the area through immigration of criminals from one section of country to another.¹⁴

In attempt to address the ugly trends of crime in Nigeria, Civil-military relation that involves collaboration between the military and community members characterized by problem-solving partnerships to enhance public safety must be adopted, with a view toward improving trust between community members and police, and leveraging police resources through voluntary assistance by community members in public safety measures. Strategies of community policing basically are: community partnerships, organizational transformation, and problem-solving.¹⁵

A situation where by officers and men are posted from one geographical location to another hampers crime fighting efforts. The military guys are isolated from the Communities and so do not have access to pertinent information. Vigilant Group of Nigeria, of all military and paramilitary Organizations in Nigeria is the only one that has its men domiciled (living and working) in their areas of operation. All others have their men posted as 'strangers' in their areas of operation. VGN men are bonafide members of their communities. They therefore understand their bits as they are familiar with the terrain, topography and demography of their communities. In addition they know the culture and understand the languages of their areas. Therefore, if the military could work closely with the Vigilant Group of Nigeria and some sincere member of the host community, then, they would be better position to address the wave of insecurity in the country.¹⁶

Civil-military relation requires the active building of positive relationships with members of the community-on an agency as well as on a personal basis. This can be done through assigning

officers to geographic areas on a consistent basis, so that through the continuity of assignment they have the opportunity to know the members of the community. Similarly, Policing agencies are unlikely to be successful in creating partnerships to address violent crimes until they establish trusting relationships with the communities they serve. The community policing strategies employed under this category included community assessments and engagement, and efforts to educate members of the public, private and non-profit communities.¹⁷

Conclusion

Flow from the above discussion, it is logical to submit here that, effective performance of military in the management of crimes at both national and trans-border engagement depend largely on the level of synergy the maintain with the civil population. Hence, the recent decimal performance of Nigeria military in an attempt to checkmate the excess of Boko-Haram terrorist groups and other anti-social elements in the country is rooted on the poor communication gap between the military and civilian population in the affected areas. The paper therefore, calls for water tight synergy between the military and civilian for better operational performance in the future.

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