



Research Article

The Dilemma of Airpower in Counter-insurgency: Politics, Tactics, and the Nigerian Air Force (2009-2022)

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Abstract

From 2009 to 2022 was an eventful period of major Airpower campaigns against insurgency groups across some regions of Nigeria. This threats has sprout from religious extremist group like Boko Haram, Islamic State of West African Province in the Northeast to armed banditary groups in the Northwest and ethnic nationalist agitators in the southeast of Nigeria. The application of airpower in counter-insurgency operations to restore order, protection of civilian lives and property has remained a subject of research for academics and debate amongst military strategists and policymakers because it was an internal security threat with allegations of human rights abuses. This study examines the Nigerian Air Force's experience in leveraging airpower capabilities to counter insurgency threats, the nature of the typology of conflict, tactical and political dilemma encountered and conjunctural moments that has questioned airpower successes in insurgency battles. Through historical assessment of primary and secondary sources, the research reveals how Nigerian airpower capabilities were often undermined by legal and political constraints. The study concludes that effective counter-insurgency requires nuanced understanding of the interplay between politics, tactics airpower and recommends reforms to enhance the Nigerian Air Force capabilities in this regards.

Keywords

Politics, Tactics, Air Power, Counter-insurgency, Dilemma

1. Introduction

Just a decade into Nigeria return to democracy witnessed the sudden rise of insurgency threat to her national security. Considering the origin and nature of Nigeria's long military rule before the miracle of a transition to democracy. Beyond the foresight of many was the rise of insurgent groups that would bring feverish tension gripping civilians and threat to national security across many region of Nigeria. This insurgency threats was not just an event but a process that had built-

up over long decades, stemming from factors such as the politics of the making of the Nigerian 1999 constitution that recognizes in its section two sub-section one an indissoluble sovereign State called Nigeria and its sub-section two, recognizing Nigeria as a federation consisting of States and a Federal capital territory; a complex constitutional model that recognizes a federation of territories and not the people. [1] It gives less regards to the interest, and rights of people which makes

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up these entities of State. Moreso, the colonial creation of Nigeria had created a privileged political class across regions and state with heterogeneous ethnic group. The cobbling together of different ethnic group hardly extend to the highest political office (Presidency). This had often made the Presidential general electioneering seasons susceptible to violence with polling units and all places around the country heavily guarded by armed military men during elections. For example, not surprisingly there were riots in the north and anti-southern, anti-christian flavor when Goodluck Jonathan was declared winner of the presidential election in 2011. [2] Also, decades of military rule under the Nigerian Army with little or no investment on Airpower components of the Nigerian Air Force. The central argument is that this factors were boiling point to rise of insurgency, and insecurity. The interplay of politics, tactics and conjunctural moments, amongst others limited the success of Nigerian Air Force application of airpower in counterinsurgency and other threats to national security. However, the Airpower component of the Nigerian Air Force an arm of the tri-service military joint operations have been so impactful in swiftly responding through counter-insurgency combat operations to the cellular of sudden insurgent groups. For more than a decade within the scope of this study the Airpower component of the Nigerian Air Force has maintained operational platforms, sensors and air support to preserve Nigeria national security from threat and protect her democracy from crumbling. Flexibility and adaptability had often been the key to the approach to holding battle space against all forms of insurgency threats and restoring the strategic value of the Nigerian Air Force. For example a strategic shift from traditional conventional Air warfare to specialized, intelligence-driven airpower operations with the establishment of the Unmanned Aerial Vehicles Unit of the 75 Strike Group under the Tactical Air Command, was a significant leap in the Nigerian Air Force efforts to enhance Intelligence Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Operations. [3] This development reinforces the Nigerian Air Force commitment to strengthening Nigeria's battle space dominance through improved precision, real-time intelligence gathering, and aerial support to ongoing counterinsurgency and internal security operations across the country. It is in fulfillment of the Nigerian Air Force Doctrine and Mission Statement, "Willing, Able, Ready," a mantra that matches every strategic challenge. [4] The golden key of victory through airpower emphasizes precision on how to think about and prepare through air platforms in degrading the mysteries of insurgent groups and hide outs. In 2009, Boko Haram uprising led to government action, with security forces arresting members and confiscating weapons. [5] Nigeria rekindled the flame against insecurity in 2011 to counter Boko-Haram, with Joint Task Force Operation restore Order. [6] Yet the end to insecurity threat was not accomplished. By 2013, government forces launched an offensive in the Northeast region of Borno to free the region from terrorist, which was initially a remarkable success, but the insurgents only dispersed for a while and regained strength later. [6] Nearly eight-hundred (800) of all

terrorist attacks in 2015 occurred in just two countries, Nigeria and Somalia, which led to a joint Airpower campaigns between Chad and Nigeria forcing Boko Haram to abandon several towns in the Borno and communities bordering Chad from Northeast Nigeria. [7] Nigeria featured amongst the ten most terrorism attacked countries in the world with several counter-terrorist operations for example in 2017, the Airpower component of the Nigerian Air Force conducted airstrikes, which violated the United Nations Counter Terrorism strategy by mistakenly bombing an Internal Displacement Camp in Rann, Borno State. [7] In order to carry out guided precision airstrikes and reconnaissance with no collateral damage, the Nigerian Air Force in 2021 inducted the A-29 Super Tucano to enhance both her Airpower capabilities and avoid any mistakes that might degenerate into human rights abuse. [4] Similarly, the Nigerian Air Force sustained extensive airstrikes, killing several non-state militias, including Boko Haram commanders, amongst which was the Islamic State of West African Province leader Sani Shuwaram. [4] The Nigerian Air Force, Airpower component had swiftly transformed its operational theories to practice with hurt inflicted on insurgent groups in their cellular of developments around regions were they posed threats to the national security and democracy of Nigeria. In practice, intensified Airpower campaigns such as Operation Gama-Aiki, which involved the deployment of six fighter jets to degrade the job and hideout of the Boko-Haram insurgent groups in Northeast Nigeria. [8] Amongst the numerous Airpower efforts and campaign against insurgency threat was a nine-thousand (9,000) flight hours bombing campaign, invasion against insurgent groups and reactivation of the Alpha Jets to boost Airpower combat capability between 2016-2017. [8] Successes from this Airpower campaigns had not only secured military victory but significantly coerced would be insurgent on the pain being suffered by insurgent groups through the growing prospect of Airpower and military defeat in the field. This, for illustration was the situation following the killing of Boko-Haram commanders in Sambisa forest in April 2015 by Nigerian Joint Military troops with large number of Boko-Haram terrorist voluntarily surrendering to the military in Maiduguri, Borno State in September 2015. [7] Afterwards, eighty Boko-Haram commanders equally surrendered to the Nigerian Army in October 2015. [7].

Although the Airpower component of the Nigerian Armed Forces in collaboration with the Joint Military Operations had established control over insurgent groups, it has not been able to put permanent end to the reign of insurgents and non-state actors armed groups in regions across Nigeria. In comparison with the ruthless and often uncommon shrewdness of past military rule in Nigeria which rose to a dizzy heights from decades of dominance of ethnicity in the Nigerian military by far northern elements that held most of the senior positions. Although many southerners were very vocal to point out that the army in power, dominated by core northerners could not be regarded as a neutral institution [2] but had no such prolonged

reign in terror and insurgent threat to national security, human lives and public infrastructure. Considering this hard fact, it becomes necessary to question the geniuses of the military as an institution by examining the place of politics and tactics towards effective Airpower counter-insurgency operations and its dilemma.

2. Conceptualization of the Complexity of the Idea of Counter-insurgency and Definition of Terms

Nigeria nascent democracy has seen resurgence in insurgencies and counter-insurgency Airpower operations. It is a human trait for individual or group belief to follow and support their interest within the ambit of law and order. However, extremist group and non-state actors had picked up arms in offensive against innocent civilians taking advantage of the democratic ubiquitous rights to association and religion for selfish and personal gains leading to human vulnerability of life and property by creating persisting insurgent group. This has raised questions on why has the tri-service military battle against insurgency for more than a decade since the return to democratic rule persist considering the remarkable feat of the Nigerian Armed Forces successes in helping other West African countries with severe armed-conflicts like Sierra Leone and others in restoring order and peace within its polity? Key to this question is strategically logical from the perspective of Airpower. First, offensive operations of Airpower component of the Nigerian Air Force is positioned to be more far-reaching and decisive in its strategic effects and well suited for conventional warfare, but there is a sketchy understanding of its capabilities and limitations when applied to internal or local counter-insurgency warfare. For example with the sophistry in resources and technology of the United States Air Force during the Operation Iraqi Freedom, Airpower was able to deliver swiftly devastating battle field effects leading to the swift defeat and control of Iraq's conventional forces. [9] However, the Iraqi enemies recovered again when they transitioned to insurgent warfare; there was a limited understanding of how the United States Airpower could best contribute. [9] Because conventional warfare is strategically tactical, rules of engagement are understood and adequate preparation in the exchange of opinion amongst troops are carefully planned to lead to results. Shortly after United States victory during Operation Iraqi Freedom, the United States 3RD Infantry Division faced dilemma as the defeated conventional forces transitioned into insurgent warfare adopting guerrilla and blending into civilian population. [10] It was a shift in tactics that caught United States forces off guard. The United States military were mentally, strategically trained and drafted for conventional warfare, the sudden shift to counter-insurgency became an unexpected challenge. Air power strategic strike is vantage strength in conventional war, but has limited use in a counter-insurgency warfare environment. At the time US Military air assets drafted for Operation Iraqi freedom were not optimized

for counter-insurgency, leading to concerns about collateral damage, if contingency decision was taken against dispersed, adaptive enemies that has transformed into insurgents. This led to withdrawal of some air assets; some airmen were sent home and focus became shifted to ground operations thereby stabilizing the situation. [11] This decision was driven in total respect for United Nations General Assembly resolution 60/288, annex that states that, "The promotion and protection of human rights for all and the rule of law is essential to all components of the strategy, recognizing that effective counter-terrorism measures and the promotion of human rights are not conflicting goals, but complementary and mutually reinforcing." [12] However, insurgency are not conventional battles and insurgents are not well defined forces because they are not bound by borders or international treaties neither are their battles done within standard rules of engagement and international human rights. This had made it difficult to give a definite timeline to end insurgency war whenever they simulate and activate their offensive cells.

Operation Iraqi freedom took off as a conflagration battle which the United States military had the conventional victory but shortly afterwards was a dilemma that stemmed from the dispersed transitioning into an unconventional, adaptive enemy. It offers a relevant lessons for Nigerian Air Force airpower campaigns against insurgency in the Northeast, banditry in the Northwest and ethnic militias and agitators in the southeast on the adaptability of insurgents and non-state militia groups. In similar fashion, Boko Haram, the Eastern Security Network a militia wings of the Indigenous Peoples of Bifara, adapts tactics, exploiting gaps in airpower and ground operations. Nigeria seem to be winning the battle against non-state actors but losing its international standing on the war against insecurity. Just as Airpower in Operation Iraqi Freedom successfully achieved tactical wins but struggled with the shift to counter-insurgency. In Operation Iraqi freedom political considerations was a factor in airpower deployment. In Nigeria likewise, balancing military effectiveness, avoiding civilian harm and political fallout were similar challenge.

Second, politics and war are basically an expression of politics, as a human project with all that it entails and implies. [13] The classical concept of the nature of war and strategy believes that war is simply a contest of wills, just as an abundance of historical experience supports the proposition that morale essentially, confidence is key to strategic performance. [14] Democratic education is still at a low ebb amongst Nigerians. They hardly understand its critical significance. Politicians are basically interested in sustaining their political relevance and winning back their electoral political offices. This ideology has become a major contest of wills between politics and tactics. Where strategic tri-service decisions that are practically result oriented is been taken to degrade insurgency group and its effects are likely going to make politicians from such regions unpopular and may likely affects their re-election such defense strategy will not get the timely or required support of politicians in power from such region.

These destroy the morale of the defense instrument and weaken their strategic performance against counter-insurgency battles. The tension of insurgency in the Northeast and other armed-conflicts in the Southeast of Nigeria waiting nervously for the synergy between politics and tactics is becoming almost unbearable.

As a toolkit to help shape the disparate ideas and conundrums of the complexities of counter-insurgency, it is useful to provide clarity in the definition of common terms such as Politics, Tactics, Airpower, Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency.

Politics: It is simply defined as the contest for power, who gets what, when, how, and what they do with it. [15].

Tactics: The art of disposing armed forces in order of battle and of organizing operations, especially during contact with an enemy. [16].

Airpower: The ability to do something strategically useful in the air. [17].

Insurgency: It is an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through use of subversion and armed conflict. [18].

Counter-Insurgency: It may be defined as those military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic action taken by government to defeat insurgency. [18].

Dilemma: It is simply defined as a crossroad with multiple undesirable options and each path comes with significant drawbacks. However, challenges are new or difficult task that test the skill of an individual or institution. [19] Analytically insurgency in Nigeria is an internal security threat and the challenge is how could it be stopped. While the dilemma is what strategy to be deployed. Is military tactics the most appropriate and how does it affect the civilians and properties it seek to protect? What military hardware are to be strategically rolled out for the operation, how accessible are they and what time is it more appropriate to be used. Dilemma are often tricky to navigate because it comes with conflicting value, uncertain outcomes that are very difficult to predict. The analysis now zero on Airpower dilemma in counter-insurgency campaign of the Nigerian Air Force.

These definitions gives clarity for apt understanding the nature of Airpower in counter-insurgency, its motive and what doctrine can be applied to Airpower counter-insurgency operations. Insurgency is an internal or local phenomenon, a cellular intentionally developed to instill fear in the minds of unarmed civil populace through resistance against incumbent regime with legitimate responsibility to secure life and property. The only key to reverting the objectives of insurgents is counter-insurgency which includes the contribution of Airpower to all these weighty concerns in order to restore peace.

3. Types of Insurgencies Peculiar to Nigeria

The tension in Nigeria created by insurgency under her democracy had lingered too long. Jettery feelings from effects of

insurgency either from the armed-wing of the Indigenous People of Biafra known as the Eastern Security Network (ESN) in Southeast region enforcing the Monday sit-at-home order, to the Islamic State of West African Province/Boko-Haram Group of the Northeast region and the dreaded Bandit and Ransom taking groups of the Northwest leaves weighty tales in the minds of many across these regions of Nigeria. This has badly affected all aspects of civil life with no complete agreement between the government and these groups to reach a middle ground, agree on a kind of balance compromise in order to restore peace and fix the image of Nigeria. The battle against all these armed-conflicts by non-state actors and insurgent groups has remained a long battle in Nigeria because counter-insurgency is not just one simple generic form of warfare. The nature of insurgency in Nigeria is different across its various region of cellular development. In view of this the best way to defeat a specific one will be to study and understand its characteristics.] In order to evade the pushes and pulls that are inalienable from the role of participant and emotive sympathizers of insurgency group. It is important to understand the nature of insurgency in terms of its ends and means. Precisely, what are the political basis that the insurgents are fighting for, and by what means do they want to achieve these goals? There are two broad areas that define what insurgents fight for in Nigeria. These are Extremist Religious Ideological Based Insurgency and Ethnic Nationalism Insurgency.

4. Extremist Religious/Ideological Based Insurgencies

There is a long tradition of feudal socio-cultural relations between the Northeast States of Nigeria and the Sahel Region. This relationship was not broken with the forged arbitrary creation of colonial borders, mostly amongst the Sahel regions. The fact is that these historical socio-cultural relations had contagious shared ideologies amongst the Sahel States population and the Northeast region of Nigeria for over a period of time. This can be illustrated by considering the Sahel region instability which triggered illicit movement of weapons and fighters across the extensive porous land borders of the northeast region of Nigeria and other Sahel state after the assassination of President Mammour Gaddafi in the Libyan civil war in October 2011. The spillover effects was the civil war in Mali the following year which were combined combustible material that was significant to the spread of Boko Haram an Islamic fundamentalist sect to have established a stronghold in the northeast that became a subject of international concern. [3] Both the Northeast States of Nigeria and the Sahel Region benefits from social-cultural, religious, and personal engagement that often shapes their ideologies. Ironically the Sahel region has the most rapid growth of militant extremist Islamic group activity than any region in Africa. [20] There are three deadly active cellular development of insurgent group in the Sahel. They are, the Macina Liberation Front (FLM), [20] the

Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), [20] and Ansarul Islam, [20] responsible for roughly two-thirds of the extremist violence in the Central Sahel. [20] Contagious effects through shared social-cultural relations and ideologies with the Northeast region of Nigeria has been largely responsible for the prolonged battle of insurgency in Northeast Nigeria. These extremist insurgent groups have a unified body with key ideological influences across the Sahel to the Northeast region of Nigeria. Their decades of insurgency across the Sahel has a strong flavor to their dominant strategic ideology known as Salafi-Jihadist Doctrine which is a core ideology on which Boko-Haram in the Northeast of Nigeria had established its foundation. [21] Their aim is to impose Jihadist ideologies onto the brother populace by the establishment of an Islamist Caliphate and impose strict Islamic Law (Sharia). [21] Banditry escalated in the Northwest of Nigeria amid economic hardship around 2011-2014, under the Goodluck Jonathan administration. It has a complex history woven around poverty, weak governance and the psychology that political power belongs to the north. It was a common catch phrase amongst average northerners that the “north was sick” after President Jonathan returned winner of the 2011 Presidential election. The far north was not economically prepared for tenure without been in charge of the Presidential powers and villa. Social cleavages were most dangerous in the north, were unemployment was high, politicians felt they risked exclusion from Abuja gravy train that nourished the far north in her long hold on presidential seat of power for decades as the Jonathan presidency dug in, a period that coincided by influence from radical jihadism in the Middle East, East Africa and the Sahel. [2] This became trigger factors to insecurity in the Northeast and Northwest regions of Nigeria. The relationship between the northeast insurgency and the northwest banditry is shared tactics, networks, common borders that makes it possible to share arms or intelligence. Although Boko Haram in the northeast focuses on extremist driven ideology and territorial control, bandits in the northwest are driven by economic motives. Regardless, the professionalism of Airmen where fitness for war becomes a full business of the Airpower and the pursuit for peace profession of the Airpower component, extremist ideologically based insurgency would yet remain uneasy to be resolved due to the external influences involved. The ultimate key to the latter rely on the support of the general indigenous population within the area of such insurgency and the ability of government to control the entire country by extending the reach of government to rural indigenous population and the political will in delivering justice.

5. Ethnic Nationalist Insurgency

The sharp rise of insurgent groups across some regions of Nigeria had turned one time places of peace and stability into battle spaces of violent conflict. A typical example is the Southeast region of Nigeria. In 2012, Nnamdi Kanu created a separatist movement, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)

that gave birth to an ethnic militia insurgent group in 2021, the Eastern Security Network (ESN). [22] Consequently, clashes with government forces have been rampant in the South East. As a result implementation of the natural human rights to life, and liberty, as clearly stated in chapter four section 33 to 46 of the 1999 constitution of Nigeria, [23] and the international standard behavior and justice of declaration of 1948 by the United Nations which every country must recognize, like the right to move from place to place [24] has become so difficult and almost unrealistic across the Southeast State with the forceful sit-at-home order by the parallel militia insurgent group in Nigeria. Insurgent groups fight for many reasons, amongst which are political, economic, or social change. The rise of insurgent group in Southeast Nigeria has been a conflict fueled by long-standing ethnic under-representation and marginalization in the polity of Nigeria. This ideological of political under-representation led to the Biafra war (Nigeria civil war) and has remained unresolved with the rise of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and its militia wing the Eastern Security Network (ESN) violently pursuing the same course. In ten years between 2012 and 2022, 696 people were killed by IPOB/ESN mostly in the border areas of Southeast Nigeria which are melting point for trade activities and movement of goods and services to big commercial market centers in Anambra, Abia and Imo States of Nigeria. [22] Time and again strong proponents keeps rising and fueling the desire to restore self-determination and self-rule amongst the Southeast populace of Nigeria. This was typical of the rise of ethnic nationalist insurgent groups in Southeast Nigeria, example include the Eastern Security Network (ESN) a Pro-Biafra militia group linked to the insecurity and several killings in Southeast Nigeria. These associations, the Indigenous People of Biafra are generally well supported by a large population of sympathizers home and abroad from the Southeast ancestry triggering violent abuse of fundamental human right, basically the right to life and movement from place to place. Their activities have become so difficult for the legitimate government of Southeast Nigeria to bring to an end. This insurgent group known as the Eastern Security Network (ESN) issue parallel directives to helpless inhabitants of Southeast Nigeria. A sizeable population of the indigenous people of Southeast Nigeria had a profound respect for their ideological agitation of a Biafran State, independence and secession from Nigeria. While other masses are intimidated by their powers, they instructed them, persuaded them, organized them, and pulled few among their youth population from their knees to their feet and recruit them into their armed militia wings of the Eastern Security Network. According to reports from Anambra State commissioner of information, Lawrence Mefor, Anambra State loses Eight billion Naira as part of the Nineteen point six billion in the Southeast every week to Monday sit-at-home instructed order by the militia armed wing of the Eastern Security Network. [25] To zero in on the statement of the Deputy Secretary General of United Nations, “the world is facing the highest number of violent conflicts since the second world war and

two billion people a quarter of humanity live in places affected by such conflict.” [26] Above all, Nigeria ranks amongst this places with insecurity and the reign of insurgency battle across three major geopolitical zones of the Northeast, Northwest, and Southeast of Nigeria.

6. Conjunctural Moment of Nigerian Airpower as Dilemma to Counter-insurgency Campaigns

The superiority of the enemy in counter-insurgency operations only last for a short period of time, whenever such superiority is retained by insurgents, terrorist and other non state armed militia groups, then there is a gap in correct estimation and proper alignments of all military and political factors. This is possible when terrorist, insurgent groups and the like gain the initiative, keep it in mind the weak points of the national counter-insurgency group and act timely on it to their advantage. Such situations are the conjunctural moment and a dilemma to the success of counter-insurgency operations. Amongst this conjunctural moments and dilemmas identified in Nigeria Airpower counter-insurgency campaigns within 2009-2022 are: (i) Political Controversy of Collateral Damage and Human Rights Abuses (ii) Tactical Efficiency and Political Legitimacy (III) Delay in Airpower campaign Against Insurgency Battle from Condition Attached to Super Tucano Aircraft.

Political Controversy of Collateral Damage and Human Right Abuses: In the history of Nigerian National Security and joint ground troops operations in counter-insurgency operations, the role of the Nigerian Air Force, Airpower campaign has been the greatest success story. However, the readily verified quantity and quality of airpower precision success against insurgency sits somewhat uneasily, in the company of controversy of collateral damage and human rights abuses during operational airpower campaigns. In one instance, up to one hundred and seventy civilians died on the 17th of January 2018 after the Nigerian Air Force bombed a refugee camp in the Northeastern town of Rann in Nigeria in error from an operational air campaign. [27] These are conjunctural moment that are inevitable in airpower campaigns against internal insurrections and insurgency battles.

Tactical Efficiency and Political Legitimacy: Although the Nigerian Air Force Airpower operations had matured significantly but still has its limitation in tactical efficiency and political legitimacy. Tactics as an apt utilization of time and space is key to the success of airpower campaigns. Because every military strategy has its breaking point. This breaking points are the conjunctural moment. It can only be evaded by apt utilization of operational time and space in airpower campaigns. That is balance of tactical airpower operational campaign against insurgent groups and other armed militia non state actors in Nigeria. Proper arrangement of military and all political factors through correct estimation of the situation

gives counter-insurgency troop a position of advantage to force insurgents, terrorist and armed non-state militias into passive positions with consequent loss of initiative. The fight against terrorism and insurgency battles is a global mission. Because terrorism and insurgency are common threats to constitutional rights, global peace and governance. Terrorism and insurgency are ill-winds that has evolved from the 21st century reduction of the world into a global village because of technological advances. It has become near impossible for developing countries to track and disable extremist radicalization, recruitment, and mobilization and live streaming of violent views and executions aimed to create fears in the minds of civilians and demoralized national counter-insurgency forces by armed non-state actors across national cyber space. This acts has destroyed the bridge of peace across several region of Nigeria with high terror related crimes and human rights violations. This is some of the challenges of the century that requires urgent and committed global support. Because socio-political and economic events in one part of the world has significant impact on the other, either negatively or positively. For instance, under the Political administration of President Barack Husein Obama of United States of America, intervention from his administration in the purchase of operational aircraft in the fight against terrorism and insurgency in Nigeria was flawed by controversies. The administration of Barack Obama of the United States of America refused the sale of A-29 Super Tucano to Nigeria due to concerns about human rights abuses, airpower safety maturity and the likely misuse of the aircraft in the fight against Boko Haram. The United States government emphasized her worries that the aircraft could exacerbate violence or target civilians, citing Nigeria's human rights record and conduct of its military operations. This decision was guided by the Leahy Law, that restraint United States support to foreign military units with alleged human right abuses. The Obama administration exercised caution to avert situations that might put lifes of innocent civilians in potential harm's way, leading to the initial refusal to sell the A-29 Super Tucano aircraft to Nigeria. [28] These restrictions on the sale of A-29 Super Tucano limited the aircraft's deployment. This political decision under the Barack Obama administration left innocent Nigerians and government contending between upholding national security and constitutional rights. It was a moment of mixed achievement and disappointment, as tactics which comes with the apt utilization of time and space could not match the urgency it requires under growing terror and insurgent group due to inadequate airpower campaigns stemming from the menace of limited air operational aircraft. This were weak points the enemies of Nigerian national security kept in mind, acted upon and gave them superiority over some territories across the northeast region of Nigeria. This majorly led to the inability of the Nigerian military to secure territories recaptured from Boko Haram insurgent. Because the A-29 Super Tucano has the needed capabilities explicitly crucial for air campaigns, which includes pre-

cision strikes and surveillance, that are vital in counter-insurgency operations. Delayed deployment actually meant missed opportunities to disrupt enemy stronghold and protect civilians. [29] Absence in the quality and quantity of airpower campaigns led to the resurgence in attacks by Boko Haram terrorist. This has hindered the military's ability to effectively combat insurgency, allowing groups like Boko Haram and Islamic State of West Africa Province to maintain strongholds. On July 25, 2017 the insurgents had ambushed oil workers in Borno killing over forty persons including troops and abducting some lecturers from the University of Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria. [29] Regardless, these dilemma Nigerian airpower campaigns remains an unmatched advantage in degrading insurgent groups and bandits within the territories of Nigeria. Because of the superiority of airpower from long-range precision air strikes that ensures swift closing in on insurgent hideouts. It further enables the joint Nigerian military ground troops in counter-insurgency operations to steadily grow its strategic plan and stay tactically effective in outnumbering insurgency groups and reclaiming their camps. Airpower has superior advantage to completely resist insurgent groups than the Nigeria military operational ground troops who are often exposed to attacks from landmines mostly in the Sahel North-east region of Nigeria with active terrorist cells of Boko Haram and the Islamic State of West Africa (ISWAP).

Delay in Airpower Campaigns Against Insurgency From Conditions Attached to Utilization of A-29 Super Tucano Aircraft: Nigerian Air Force aircrafts are always a class ahead of insurgency battles in Nigeria. Amongst its collection of military Aircraft are the F7, Augusta Combat Helicopter, A-29 Super Tucano Operational Aircraft and several others. Although this technical superiority in airpower operations were exploited too little and too late in the war against insurgency and banditry in Nigeria. Air Power is more efficient for reconnaissance and apt for the conduct of ground troops with alertness which is essential for counter-insurgency battles. To operate alertly is the most important factor in gaining the initiative and vital in its effect on the relative situation that exists between national forces and those of the enemy. [30] Historically, from the onset it was difficult to classify the sudden rise of armed militia groups in the northeast of Nigeria. They were numerically weak and it was presumed the quality of the Nigerian national ground troops and their equipment would readily fizzle them out. No swift political actions was taken by the parliament to proscribe them and their actions as terrorist group. Therefore, there was no strategic conception taken into account to give fierce consideration for the development of policy of tactical offence, tactical speed, and tactical operation of the Nigerian Air Force against the growing acts of terror of Boko Haram in the northeast region of Nigeria. It was a tactical failing not to have understood that all guerilla units start from nothing and grow. [30] Boko Haram as an insurgent group at the fringes of the Sahelian border of northeast Nigeria carried out violent attacks and executions in a guerilla like fashion for years until it was proscribed a terrorist group.

The violent activities of the group led to the classification of Nigeria amongst the ten most terrorism afflicted countries in the world with nearly 80 percent of all terrorist attacks in 2015. [17] The scare tactic and threats of violence by the sharp rise of Boko Haram and Islamic State of West Africa Province insurgent groups in northeast region of Nigeria was a major factor that ignited the ministry of defense in taking a definite decision to purchase the A-29 Super Tucano Fighter Planes for the Nigerian Air Force, Airpower campaign against insurgency in Nigeria. [31] Ironically, agreement signed with the United States was that the Super Tucano procured for half a billion dollars after years of delay from the United States to sign the deal would only be deployed against terrorist, insurgents and not bandits in accordance to United States terms of agreement in line with United Nations Armament and human rights laws. [32] The political implication of this agreement on tactics, the citizens of terrorist occupied communities of Nigeria and her national security in the war against insurgency was "like one who takes away a garment on a cold day." The nature of insurgency in Nigeria is clothed in three fabrics, terrorism, banditry and kidnappings. These are basic methods adopted to attack in a violent and deceptive form. Wherever their activities are disrupted and they are about to be annihilated by airpower precision strikes, they disperse as a group across the vast Sahel borders of the northeast to the northwest of Nigeria taking another identity as bandits and kidnapping civilians for ransom in order to purchase weapons, economic survival and ultimately as human shields against airpower superior strikes in the process of their dispersal. These are principles relatively applicable to guerrilla warfare that has been basically adopted by insurgent group in Nigeria. In other words, constraint on the use of full airpower with much emphasis on the Super Tucano Fighter Aircraft is a major cause of the prolonged battles against insurgency in Nigeria.

Regardless this dilemma, tactical decisions through Nigerian Air Force was employed for proper concentration for close air support (CAS) through airpower campaigns were good opportunities that helped practically degraded insurgent groups. It is well worth noting that strategic flexibility and agility of the Nigerian Air Force air instrument kept her above counter-insurgency dilemmas. The Nigerian Air Force adopted a strategic policy that ensured the conservation and development of her own strength and the destruction of that of insurgents, terrorist and bandit groups. Amongst the essential tactical steps adopted are the three strategic keys below:

- 1) Retention and reevaluation of the Nigerian Air Force Act: Nigerian Air Force Act designated various roles for the Nigerian Air Force across all its commands. In the wake of renewed internal security threats, Nigerian Air Force had to review her traditional national security role to reflect modern airpower by leveraging on Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and Precision Guided Munitions (PGMs), the services has significantly improved the precision and effectiveness of its operation. The Nigerian

Air Force further expanded her fleet with some new aircraft platforms, including surveillance aircraft and helicopters. By modernizing its operational Order of Battle (ORBAT), enhancing better preparedness for the diverse threats Nigeria faces. [3] In order to give the country the deserved prestige invaluable on international matters in both preservation of its territorial integrity and upholding her renewed democracy. [33] In the wake of insurgent uprising and terrorist threat this ethos directed strategically massive Airpower campaigns against insurgency.

- 2) Regular conduct of Airpower Campaigns: Reconnaissance and Airpower campaigns were frequently conducted to complement those of the joint task force counter-insurgency ground troops. According to a statement from the Nigerian Air Force Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshall Isiaka Oladayo Amao, the Nigerian Air Force conducted about 3, 700 missions in counter-insurgency operation in the northeast as well as operations against bandits in the northwest in 2021 alone. [34] Airpower has become indispensable in the Nigerian joint operational battle against terrorism, banditry and economic sabotage. In order, to sustain airpower campaigns against national security threats, further acquisitions and projections were made for delivery expected platforms such as the M-346 fighter aircraft from Italy and AH-17 Viper helicopters from the United States. [3] These investment signals the Nigerian Air Force dedication to maintaining operational posture capable of keeping it ahead of all sort of dilemma that could hinder operational successes.
- 3) Expansion and establishment of Air Force Operational Bases: In order to ensure efficient response time, more operational air force bases was established for rapid precision air strikes against insurgents, terrorist groups and provide swift logistic supplies, evacuations and tactical supports for the ground troops when necessary. The Nigerian Air Force as both offensive and defensive instrument expanded in its defense assets into seven commands and eighty-nine units. [33] This includes modernizing airfield infrastructure. For example collaboration of the Nigerian Air Force with the Nigerian Civil Authority, installed state of the art Instrument Landing System (ILS) and Avilite runway lights essential for night operations and pilot training at the Nigerian Air Force Base Kaduna. Moreso operational bases was established across regions of national security threats, for example the 213 Nigerian Air Force Operating Base Katsina in the Northwest notorious for banditry and kidnappings, apron and taxiway reconstruction of 405 Helicopter Combat Training Group, Enugu in the Southeast for easy deployment of airpower campaigns against Indigenous People of Biafra, Eastern Security Network militant wings of the ethnic nationalist agitators of Southeast Nigeria, construction of a Special Operations Command, Bauchi in the Northeast region of Nigeria and also facility expansions for 307 Executive Airlift Group of

Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja and much more that are remarkable milestone in policy reform against airpower operational dilemma. [3] This gave airpower superiority in manpower to carry out offensive air operational campaign over vast territories occupied by insurgent group. The total effect of this strategy was to destroy insurgent and terrorist groups completely or downgrade their strength.

7. Conclusion

It is persuasive to note that Nigerian Airpower role against insurgency was not devoid of dilemma. Regardless, it never lacked wise strategic policy and command to direct Airpower campaign and keep insurgents, terrorist, and bandits passive. The Nigerian national security and the military leadership are not defiant of the controversy of human rights alleged abuses by the military. But study in the nature of terrorist activities of Boko Haram and the Islamic State of West African Province of the northeast and northwest Nigeria were this allegation of abuses are frequently raised are largely linked to effect of terrorist activities from the Sahel states into the porous border of Nigeria. Nigerian border through the Sahel to the northeast and northwest has high terrorist activities due to alliance of the Boko Haram with the Islamic State of West African Province with overextended defense over the Sahel states. Nigerian ground troops cannot be sufficiently concentrated against the terror group within this region without reconnaissance support from Nigerian Air Force and Airpower campaigns. Ironically when fighting in close proximity of a hostile communal population with overextended defense and border communities like that of the northeast and northwest Nigeria, it is not an easy matter to know who is an innocent civilian, bystander or who is a full-or part-time combatant. [35].

8. Recommendation

Though there has been great progress in Airpower campaign against insurgency amidst the dilemma between politics and tactics in counter-insurgency battles in Nigeria. But the battle remain prolonged with insurgent terrorist group intermittently kept passive and increased reports of alleged human rights abuse. Superior airpower campaign and ground troop has only proven to be a tactical political strategy that treats the symptoms in order to keep Nigeria's democracy and national security alive. It has not been able to sufficiently address the causes of insurgency and terror group in Nigeria. A constitutional solution must be adopted to fix the inequalities in Nigeria. The structure of Nigerian federalism that recognizes the federation of territories and not the people, there by creating privileged ethnic political class amongst heterogeneous ethnic group must be fixed for a balanced economic and national unity in order to pull down the walls of religion and ethnicity

in the mind of the people used for indoctrination and recruitment into terrorism, banditry, kidnapping and insurgent groups. The 1999 constitution of Nigeria does not protect some basic rights, the constitution needs be changed to protect these rights.

Abbreviations

ESN	Eastern Security Network
ISGS	Islamic State in the Greater Sahara
FLM	Machina Liberation Front
ISWAP	Islamic State of West African Province
CAS	Close Air Support
ISM	Instrument Landing System
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
PGM	Precision Guided Munition
ORBAT	Operational Order of Battle
IPOB	Indigenous People of Biafra

Author Contributions

Aiyemowa Bamidele: Conceptualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, project administration

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare there are no conflicts of interest.

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