



STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION & NATIONAL SECURITY: NIGERIAN MILITARY IN FOCUS

By
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“The mobilization of public opinion at home, the persuasion of opinion in neutral states, and the undermining of the legitimacy of the enemy government through propaganda, all became as much tools of grand strategy as the maintenance and deployment of armed forces, the preservation of a healthy economy, and the preservation of alliances”- Micheal Howard



Source: Michael Howard (historian) - Wikipedia

INTRODUCTION

- ❖ The global security environment is shaped by the dynamics of the Information and Communication Technology characterized by a profound effect more on Revolution in Military Affairs
- ❖ Wars in Russia/Ukraine and Israel/Hamas epitomized the information combat age with live transmission of operations to global audience



Russian/Ukraine War

[Russia-Ukraine war: List of key events, day 697 | Russia-Ukraine war News | Al Jazeera](#)



Israel/Hamas War

[What We Can Learn From the History of Hamas | TIME](#)

INTRODUCTION contd

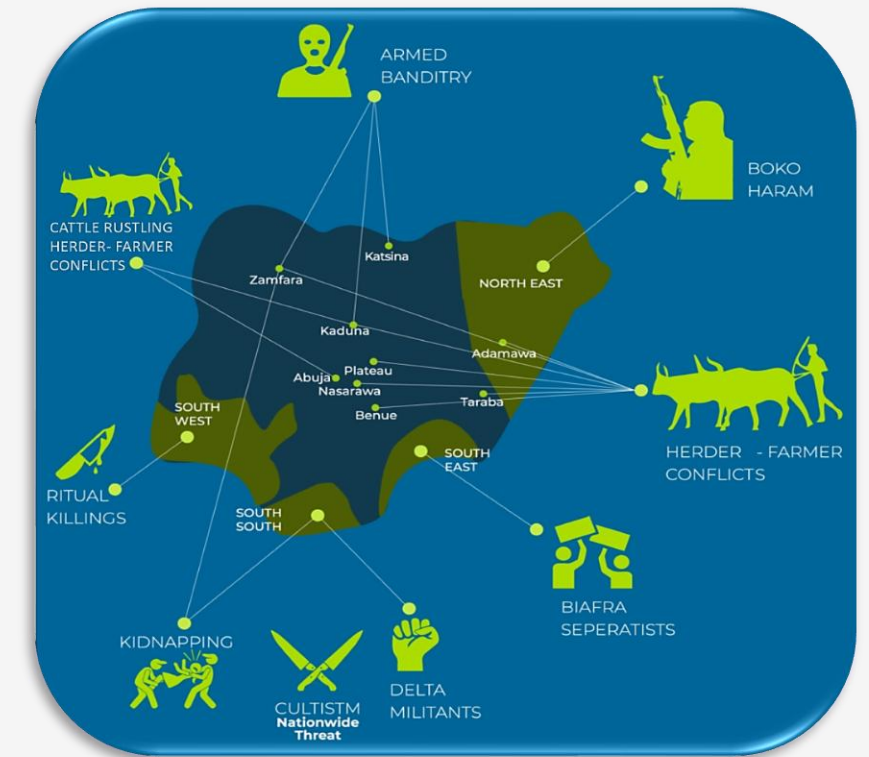
- ❖ Perception of the conflicts by combatants and civilians on each side and indeed their allies becomes a battle of the narratives to swing global opinion
- ❖ Information age has provided a new way of visualizing the space previously defined “*battlefield*” as a “*battlespace*” as the theatre of modern battle has become broader in coverage
- ❖ Global access to information is evolving and four dynamics underscore this era:
- ❖ These are the quest for *freedom, knowledge, truth* and *trust* in which *militaries* are caught in the field

INTRODUCTION contd

- ❖ In reaction to this, the concept of strategic communication in national security emerged as a military strategy in the United States in the 20th Century
- ❖ The US policymakers argued that by equipping the military to gain “information superiority” from the growing synergy of orbital satellites and digital technology. American and its allies would quickly resolve the future wars in its favor
- ❖ Military alliances such as NATO and countries like Kenya as well as Israel have articulated a strategic communication policy to shape their military doctrine
- ❖ To “*act as a force multiplier*” and in service of “*force protection*”, within this context, strategic communications becomes indispensable in non-kinetic operations

INTRODUCTION contd

- ❖ Nigeria currently faces challenges from groups of well-armed terrorist, insurgents and separatist groups
- ❖ These non-state actors rely on the media to communicate their purpose and effects in terms of *recruitment, funding* and *propaganda*
- ❖ The significance of media in “*the battle for hearts and minds*” which provides the oxygen to most terrorists like Boko Haram to maintain their links with the media.



INTRODUCTION contd

- ❖ To counter the terrorist narratives and to influence public opinion positively towards national security, Nigerian government has initiated the concept of strategic communication as an integral part of national security strategy
- ❖ Achieving political objectives in war is no longer solely bound by conventional military strategy as the management media in the recent military operations has become strategically vital because it is where perception of *victory* and *defeat* are consolidated
- ❖ The purpose of this lecture is to discuss strategic communication in national security with a particular emphasis on the Nigerian military in the execution of its current operations



The aim of this lecture is to discuss strategic communications and national security with a focus on the Nigerian Military, highlighting challenges and steps to effective strategic communication

SCOPE

- ❖ Conceptual Discourse
 - ❖ Principles of Strategic Communications
 - ❖ The Changing Nature of Military Operations, its Effectiveness and Public Expectation
 - ❖ The Hostile Use and Effects of Strategic Communication by Adversaries
 - ❖ The Role of Media/New media in Strategic Communication
 - ❖ Challenges of Strategic Communication
 - ❖ Strategies for Mitigating the Challenges of Strategic Communication for the Nigerian Military

CONCEPTUAL DISCOURSE

- ❖ Strategic Communication
- ❖ National Security
- ❖ Nigerian Military

CONCEPTUAL DISCOURSE contd

Strategic Communication

- ❖ Mauri Huhtinen is of the view that in the “age of digital neoliberalism, where societies are connected through social media, strategic communication needs to be adopted as an analytical tool to counter warfare in public information spaces”
- ❖ Rupinder Mangat explained further that “warfare in the social media needs to be securitized and comprehensive strategies need to be employed in order for states to win hearts and minds of the public and to avoid any uprising against national security and foreign policy matters”



Mauri Huhtinen
Source: X.com



Rupinder Mangat
Source: balsillieschool.ca

CONCEPTUAL DISCOURSE contd

Strategic Communication contd



Paul Cornish

Source: [researchgate.net](https://www.researchgate.net)



Julian Lindley-French

Source: [audible.co.uk](https://www.audible.co.uk)



Claire Yorke

Source: [claireyorke.me](https://www.claireyorke.me)

- ❖ Trio of Paul Cornish, Julian Lindley-French and Claire York, on their part, they defined strategic communication as “**operations conducted by armed forces to communicate strategy and progress to the populations affected by land, sea and air operations; ‘psychological operations’ intended to demoralize the adversary and ‘civil-military cooperation’ between security forces and local populations**”

CONCEPTUAL DISCOURSE contd

National Security

- ❖ Lippman defines it as when a nation is secured to the extent that it does not have to sacrifice its legitimate interests to avoid war.
- ❖ Omotola defines national security as “the freedom from danger or absence of threats to the multidimensional elements that may affect the nation’s ability to protect and develop itself, promote its cherished values and national interests, as much as to promote and boost the well-being of its people.



Walter Lippman

'Walter Lippmann' Review: A Life of Public Opinions - WSJ



J. Shola Omotola

Source: fuoye.edu.ng

CONCEPTUAL DISCOURSE contd

- ❖ The International Working Group on National Security of the Centre for Security Sector Management defines national security as:

The first and most important obligation of government involves not just the safety and security of the country and its citizens. It is a matter of guarding national values and interests against both internal and external dangers – threats that have the potential to undermine the security of the state, society and citizens. It must include not just freedom from undue fear of attack against their person, communities or sources of their prosperity and sovereignty, but also the preservation of the political, economic and social values – respect for the rule of law, democracy, human rights, a market economy and the environment – which are central to the quality-of-life in a modern state.

CONCEPTUAL DISCOURSE contd

Nigerian Military

- ❖ Military, the world over, comprises the army, navy and air force.
- ❖ Section 217 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) provides for the establishment of the Armed Forces of Nigeria with the role of defending the country's territorial integrity, amongst others

THE NEXUS: STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION, NATIONAL SECURITY AND THE NIGERIAN MILITARY

- ❖ The relationship between the concept of strategic communication, national security and Nigerian military convey the reality of the modern statecraft
- ❖ In Nigeria, the codification of the National security strategy in 2019 into a policy document can be viewed as a strategic communication tool on ways to tackle the country's challenges through harmonization of instruments of national power
- ❖ Chapter 3 of the 2019 NSS listed 13 main threats to Nigeria's security, amongst which are **terrorism, fake news and hate speech** that are deliberate misinformation spread via print and electronic media

THE NEXUS contd

- ❖ Chapter 4 page 33 of NSS stated that “strategic communication as a cross-cutting function will be mainstreamed to assist in utilizing the social media for positive ends while countering negative voices online amongst other roles”
- ❖ The relationship between the three concepts stems from the fact that terrorist uses social media to promote fake news and hate speech in furthering their ideology
- ❖ Strategic communication connects military strategy and other instruments of national power

PRINCIPLES OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

- ❖ Strategic communications is an umbrella term that comprises four major communications disciplines.
- ❖ In a civil context this includes public affairs or information and public diplomacy.
- ❖ In the military context, it embraces *'information operations'* conducted by armed forces to communicate strategy and progress to the populations affected by ground, air and sea operations and *'psychological operations'*

PRINCIPLES OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION contd

In 2008, the US Department of Defence created the following 5 principles of strategic communication

- ❖ Intentional Message Design
- ❖ The Correct Platform(s)
- ❖ Calculated Timing
- ❖ Audience Selection and Analysis
- ❖ Desired Impact

THE CHANGING NATURE OF MILITARY OPERATIONS, ITS EFFECTIVENESS AND PUBLIC EXPECTATION

- ❖ Military operations represent the application of military power in pursuit of specific goals, guided by strategic planning and tactical execution
- ❖ The changing nature of military operations in Nigeria its effectiveness and public perception will be view from three basic layers these are;
 - Evolution of Hybrid Warfare
 - Expanding roles of the Military in Internal Security Operations
 - Crisis Management in the Era of Digital Battlefield

Evolution of Hybrid Warfare

- ❖ The Prussian military theorist Carl Von Clausewitz described war as a “*true chameleon*”, forever changing and adapting its appearance.
- ❖ The contemporary global security environment is defined by hybrid threats which operates in the “*grey zone*” between war and peace using a combination of military
- ❖ Given the complexity of hybrid threats, strategic communication becomes a critical tool for shaping public perception, building resilience and mitigating disinformation campaign
- ❖ The adaptive nature of the hybrid threats necessitate the engagement of the Nigerian military and security agencies in counter terrorism and counter insurgency (CTCOIN) operations since 2009



Source: i0.wp.com/wordsworth-editions.com/cms/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Carl-Von-Clausewitz-Author.jpg?w=1024&ssl=1

Evolution of Hybrid Warfare contd

- ❖ As the country continues to grapple with increased hybrid warfare caused mostly by terrorist, militants and separatist the use of military or kinetic approaches to combat requires the use of technological surrogates like drones.
- ❖ The mistaken airstrike in Tudun Biri in Kaduna State on 3rd December 2023, in which 85 people were confirmed killed and many were injured, raised a lot of ethical issues on the regulation of the use of force by the Nigerian military
- ❖ This changing role of Nigeria in hybrid warfare has raised the public perception of the effectiveness of military operations in recent times

Expanding Role of the Military In Nigeria's Internal Security

- ❖ The internal security operations against non-state actors in Nigeria's security landscape are exceptionally complex
- ❖ Two major issues of concerns to military operations are
 - how to treat a terror or an insurgent suspect
 - regulation of the activities of the human surrogate forces
- ❖ Most of the non-state actors in Nigeria are terrorist, insurgents and separatist amongst others who are not signatories to the international law and not bound by its provisions

Expanding Role of the Military In Nigeria's Internal Security contd

- ❖ The military OPERATION SAFE CORRIDOR of repentant Boko Haram has raised some doubt about the full integration of the repentant terrorist into the society.
- ❖ The asymmetric nature of the internal security challenges in Nigeria has seen the use of surrogate security assistance in terms of the provision of hard of security by non-state actors
- ❖ Surrogate forces such as the Civilian Joint Task Force in the NE operation and various vigilante groups raised a legal and moral obligations on their professional conducts.
- ❖ The effectiveness of the military operation is guided by command and control of this surrogate forces and the alignment of its operations with international law and human rights.

Crisis Management in the Era of Digital Battlefields

- ❖ The management of crisis in the era of digital battlefield has become an essential element of statecraft with a significant impact on military effectiveness.
- ❖ Strategic communication in recent time has been used in various capacities such as crisis communication to counter narratives in order to promote social cohesion.
- ❖ The analysis of the US military executed precision strike in Sokoto on 23rd December 2025 epitomized the changing narrative of crisis management in the era of digital battlefields.
- ❖ In a post on social media President Trump characterized the action as a “powerful and deadly strike against ISIS Terrorist Scum” and a “Christmas present” delivered after his repeated warnings to “stop the slaughtering of Christians



First Nigeria-US Led Airstrike Hits ISWAP Hideouts in Sokoto - INDEPENDENT POST NIGERIA

Crisis Management in the Era of Digital Battlefields contd

- ❖ This narrative was met with immediate counter-narrative by the Nigerian government, which described the precision strike not as unilateral American intervention, but a *joint* and *coordinated* counter terrorism effort
- ❖ The US strike conveys a message that strategic objectives can be achieved through weaponized strategic communications narratives.
- ❖ The Nigerian response carries the weight of pragmatic acts of diplomacy and statecraft to promote social cohesion and raise the morale of the military in support of national interest

THE HOSTILE USE AND EFFECTS OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION BY ADVERSARIES

- ❖ The use of strategic communication has become dual use goods both by the state and non-state actors in the era of information warfare.
- ❖ The hostile use of strategic communication will be view from three perspectives these are,
 - Subversive Operations
 - Source of Recruitment and Communication Platform
 - International Support and Building Alliance

THE HOSTILE USE AND EFFECTS OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION BY ADVERSARIES contd

Subversive Operations

- ❖ Napoleon Bonaparte, in one of his maxims, stated that “*Four hostile newspapers are to be feared more than a thousand bayonets*”
- ❖ The use of strategic communication for subversive activities to undermine state authority by terrorist groups has become a global a challenge
- ❖ War is constantly waged via online communication through the media and internet to promote adversaries' goal



Napoleon Bonaparte
Source: kylarsroleplay.fandom.com

THE HOSTILE USE AND EFFECTS OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION BY ADVERSARIES contd

Subversive Operations

- ❖ Ayman al-Zawahiri asserted that “*I say to you that we are in a battle and more than half of this battle is in the media. In this media battle we are in the race for the hearts and minds of our Umma*”



Ayman al-Zawahiri

[Ayman al-Zawahiri obituary](#) | [Ayman al-Zawahiri](#) | [The Guardian](#)

THE HOSTILE USE AND EFFECTS OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION BY ADVERSARIES contd

- ❖ In Nigeria, the propagation of ideas to undermine the legitimacy of the state authority are mostly carried out by terrorist and separatist through the propagation of hate speech and fake news.
- ❖ Boko Haram terrorist through its strategic communication network has undermine state control in some of the part of the NE region
- ❖ The separatist group known as the Indigenous People of Biafra through its subversive activities such as the Sit- at- Home undermine the government authorities in the South-East Nigeria.
- ❖ It has been estimated that these Sit-at-Home orders cost the South Eastern states more than ₦7.6 trillion in lost productivity in the first two years they were enforced

THE HOSTILE USE AND EFFECTS OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION BY ADVERSARIES contd

Source Of Recruitment And Communication Platform

- ❖ Digital revolution platforms provide terrorists such as Boko Haram with communication, coordination and recruitment tools at relatively low costs.
- ❖ Their use of media began long before the commencement of their insurgency when it established a 'Public Awareness Department' which was mainly responsible for the production and distribution of their propaganda materials, liaising with the media and recruiting members



Source: www.pulse.ng/news/local/ignore-turjis-gangs-plea-for-reconciliation-northern-elders-to-tinubu/ktzq1yk
accessed on 22 October 2024

THE HOSTILE USE AND EFFECTS OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION BY ADVERSARIES contd

Source Of Recruitment And Communication Platform contd

- ❖ Boko Haram has effectively utilized encrypted messaging applications to secure their communications
- ❖ This secure communication infrastructure is crucial for planning and executing complex operations, such as ambushes and kidnappings.
- ❖ The use of encrypted messaging was instrumental in the planning and execution of the 2014 kidnapping of the Chibok schoolgirls

THE HOSTILE USE AND EFFECTS OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION BY ADVERSARIES contd

International Support And Building Of Alliance

- ❖ The hostile use of strategic communication mostly by terrorist is to legitimize their course and building of alliance.
- ❖ Boko Haram, the jihadists have succeeded in attracting global media attention by the effective use of their communications strategies
- ❖ In 2015 after Boko Haram pledged allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and became the Islamic State West Africa Province
- ❖ The first thing ISIS ensured in the wake of ISWAP's allegiance was setting up direct lines of communication via multiple Telegram groups
- ❖ The hostile effective use of strategic communication to rally allies and network becomes one of the main pillars to sustain the Boko Haram ideology and its operations.

THE ROLE OF MEDIA/NEW MEDIA IN STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

- ❖ The transformation of war in the 21st Century has led to the decline in classical military strategy in which warfare involves regular forces pitted against each other
- ❖ The importance of strategic communication to the Nigeria military strategy will be view from three layers. These are:
 - **Shaping Public Perception On Current Military Operation**
 - **Strengthening The Instruments Of National Security**
 - **Promoting Civil-Military-Media Relations In National Security**

THE ROLE OF MEDIA/NEW MEDIA IN STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION contd

Shaping The Public Perception On Current Military Operations

- ❖ The ability to rapidly disseminate graphic images and ideas to shape the public narrative transforms social media into a strategic weapon for the military
- ❖ Objectives include building support for missions, countering adversarial propaganda and maintaining legitimacy
- ❖ Boko Haram and other non-state actors use social media to depict themselves as the winning entity
- ❖ These situations has shaped the threats confronted by the military in its operations to include countering the terrorist narratives

THE ROLE OF MEDIA/NEW MEDIA IN STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION contd

Strengthening Instruments Of National Security

- ❖ Strategic communication is the integrating of information with other instruments of national power to support national security.
- ❖ Strategic communication as a cross-cutting concepts involves inter-ministerial, intergovernmental and inter-agency collaboration.
- ❖ Some policy documents as it relates to the security of Nigeria made reference to strategic communication as a cross cutting issues

THE ROLE OF MEDIA/NEW MEDIA IN STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION contd

Promoting Civil-Military-Media Relations In National Security

- ❖ Integration of strategic communication into military strategy to cope with the hybrid security challenges has remain crucial to Nigeria's survival in the recent time.
- ❖ The media in the 21st Century has acquired an omnipresent capacity and thus a real time coverage of military operations exposes every disproportional use of force to criticism or for civil support.
- ❖ Media coverage of military operations has often posed serious paradoxes between the public's right to know and the need to protect national security interest
- ❖ The establishment of Armed Forces Radio in the year 2016 through this strategic communication channels the activities of the Armed Forces have been reported positively enabled the winning of hearts and minds of the civilian population in support of the national security.
- ❖ Through Operation Hadai Kai Radio stationed in Maiduguri focused on image making by uncovering destructive ideology of Boko Haram Terrorist and educate the locals on the need to support the military

CHALLENGES OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION FOR ENHANCED MILITARY OPERATIONS IN NIGERIA

Challenges of strategic communication for an enhanced Nigeria's military strategy in its current operations will be outlined within three interlocking layers;

- **Structural and Operational Challenges**
- **Technological and Information Challenges**
- **Perception and Trust Deficit Challenges**

CHALLENGES OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION FOR ENHANCED MILITARY OPERATIONS IN NIGERIA contd

Structural and Operational Challenges

- ❖ The structural challenge is the lack of unified purpose on major security policies documents on strategic communication.
- ❖ Major gap exists as there is no evidence that there was a review of the National Defence Policy 2017 to incorporate strategic communication plans into military strategy after the National Security Strategy was review in 2019 which incorporate strategic communication as part of the policy.
- ❖ Operation Hadin Kai provides a classical example of operational challenge to the use the strategic communication in military strategy
- ❖ The dearth of trained of personnel with requisite skills and their inability to adapt to hi-tech ICT based equipment is an impediment for the use of strategic communication on COIN operations in the NE

CHALLENGES OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION FOR ENHANCED MILITARY OPERATIONS IN NIGERIA contd

Technological and Information Challenges

- ❖ The rapid spread of information and communication via social media platforms are carried out through the nexus of cyber and outer space technologies.
- ❖ Nigeria military currently relied on space-based assets for national security like satellites that provide vital services such as Position, Navigation and Timing services as well as communications platforms to enhanced its capabilities
- ❖ The political power of cyber and space domains relies in their technology and application

CHALLENGES OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION FOR ENHANCED MILITARY OPERATIONS IN NIGERIA contd

Perception and Trust Deficit Challenges

- ❖ The perception and trust deficits challenges in the military operations across Nigeria shows that there is inadequate strategic communication alternative and counter narratives of military actions
- ❖ A few cases of human rights violations with locals and media erode confidence and credibility

STRATEGIES FOR MITIGATING THE CHALLENGES OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION FOR THE NIGERIAN MILITARY

- ❖ **Promulgation of the National Policy for Strategic Communication as an instrument of national power**
 - Harmonization of National Security Strategy with National Defence Policy toward a Nigerian Strategic Communication Doctrine with a clear vision, objectives
 - Operational guidelines to address the policy gap and facilitate the articulation of a holistic strategy to support and coordinate the employment of military for national security objectives.

STRATEGIES FOR MITIGATING THE CHALLENGES OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION FOR THE NIGERIAN MILITARY contd

❖ International Technical Support

- Strategic communication is a high skilled area that require a combination of technology and creativity for effective dissemination of information.
- The need for technical expertise support in emerging technology is crucial for the Nigerian military strategy in its current operation

STRATEGIES FOR MITIGATING THE CHALLENGES OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION FOR THE NIGERIAN MILITARY contd

❖ Develop National Strategic Communication Doctrine

- Strengthen Civil-Military- Communication towards building trust, enhance legitimacy of the government and military with local communities while countering negative narratives.
- Invest in Technology and Training, through training and equipping personnel with modern tools and skills to dominate the strategic communication environment.
- Apply Cyber-enabled military capability of monitoring the Information Space through real

CONCLUSION

- ❖ The transformation of the media landscape and the growing interest of state and non-state actors in the battles for the hearts and minds of the public have raised the art of strategic communications to new heights
- ❖ Strategic communication serves as a core pillar of modern military strategy, serving as a non-kinetic instrument to shape the cognitive dimension of warfare
- ❖ In hybrid warfare, militaries fight not only in the air, ground, and sea, but also in cyberspace and the information environment to determine who delivers the authoritative spectacle for the largest and most dispersed audiences
- ❖ Strategic communication is a sine qua non for effective military operations. Indeed, it must be considered a mission-critical component of all future military operations in support of national security.

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Brigadier General (Retired) Mustapha Dennis Onoyiveta has over 31 years of military service in the Nigerian Army. He held several appointments during his military career including: Commanding Officer 4 Guards Battalion, Head Operations Monitoring at the Army Headquarters, Chief of Staff to the Chief of Army Staff and served as the Aide De Camp (ADC) to Late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua from 2007 to 2010.



A graduate of the prestigious Nigerian Defence Academy, he is an alumnus of Cranfield University UK, Royal Military College of Science UK, General George C. Marshall European Centre for Security Studies in Germany and the National Defence University, Islamabad, Pakistan where he obtained his Master's Degree in National Security and War Studies. He was at Harvard Kennedy School in USA and Oxford University UK for higher defence and management programmes respectively.

He is a human resource manager and the recipient of the Chief of Army Staff Commendation Award in 2006 for designing the Computerized 'Scale A' Parade, a human resource management solution which was adopted by the Nigerian Army. He currently serves as the Chief Security Consultant to Mangal Cement Industries and he is the Chairman/CEO of Concepts Security Solutions a leading Defence and security solution provider.

He is married to Mrs Hassana Mustapha Onoyiveta and they are blessed with children and grandchildren. He loves playing golf and travelling.