

BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY: EMERGING CHALLENGE IN PEACE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND NIGERIA'S SUSTAINABILITY

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Abstract

This paper examines the Boko Haram insurgency and its emerging challenge in peace and conflict resolution and Nigeria's sustainability. The paper x-rays the Boko Haram insurgency, its historical origin, and attacks since inception and the effects of such attacks in Nigeria. From the study it was discovered that the Boko Haram insurgency has compounded the developmental challenges of Nigeria through destruction of lives and properties, destruction of schools which have led to the closure of so many schools in the North-east geopolitical zone, disruption of businesses, reduction in government revenue, fear of foreign investors to live and do business in Nigeria, political instability, among others. Consequently, the study recommends that government should intensify its counter terrorism fight against the insurgents, upgrade the equipment of the military and other security agencies to effectively and decisively defeat the insurgency, embark on an aggressive enlightenment and re-orientation campaign to mobilize the citizenry in support of the armed forces campaign against the terrorists, collaborate with the international community in the fight against Boko Haram, pragmatically create new employment opportunities for jobless youths, impose stiffer penalties on terrorists, and concerted work towards the eradication of poverty and corruption in Nigeria.

Keywords: Boko Haram, Development, Insurgency, Terrorism, peace and sustainability.

Introduction

Insurgency is a threat to the economic, political and social security of a nation and a major factor associated with underdevelopment; because it discourages both local and foreign investments. Also, it reduces the quality of life, destroys human and social capital, damages relationship between citizens and the states, undermining democracy, rule of law and the ability of the country to promote development (Akhain, 2012). On the state of the country, when people feel insecure, their appetite to invest, buy or rent from the product of investment reduces; and that is why all over the world today, any country that radiates an environment of insecurity naturally repels investment initiatives from both the international community and its own local investors. Every society across the globe has its peculiar problems and challenges in which Nigeria is not an exception. Today, insecurity is one of the greatest problems be-devilling various countries in varying degrees. It affects policies of government and also retards development (Ifijeh, 2011).

A number of analysts have variously attributed the disturbing trend to political

dissatisfaction. ethnic and religious differences, perceived societal neglect and pervasive poverty among the people. Some scholar attributed insecurity to the desire of man to satisfy his inordinate ambition of lust for power and this has often led to the irrational use of violence against the state, private organizations and the general public with the ultimate objective of achieving selfish goals(Isakpa 2011, Babajide 2012 & Aro 2013). Nigeria is a multi-ethnic and a multi-religious state with a population of about 160 million people cutting across the divides of ethnicity and religious beliefs. Comprising 36 states, a federal capital territory (FCT) and 774 local government councils, it is a complex, multi-religious and multi-ethnic nation state according to (Oyeniyi 2012). The complexity of Nigeria as a nation state is centred on its political formation, economic, social and religious inclinations. As a nation state, the country since independence has experienced several ethnic and religious crisis of various degrees and magnitude (Gilbert, 2013).

Grappling with such political and economically motivated crises, successive administrations in Nigeria have been criticized by either the Muslim or Christian faithfuls when they are not favoured. The current Boko Haram insurgency in the North-east geopolitical zone of Nigeria that originally took the form of sectarian religious violence has escalated into terrorist activities with international linkages and affiliations making it a relatively difficult nut for the Nigerian government to crack. Consequently, Nigeria has not known peace for about four years now. The emergence of the fundamentalist Islamic sect, has led to the flight for safety and security of most Nigerians residing in the North East, especially Christians. Since the commencement of the terrorist operations of the sect, they have adopted several methods to unleash terror on the people. And most states of Northern Nigeria have experienced their dastardly activities, but the worst hit has been Adamawa, Bauchi, Bornu, FCT (Abuja), Kaduna, Kano, Plateau and Yobe.

In recent times, there has been an upsurge in the frequency of crime in Nigeria. The problem of insecurity which used to be one of the lowest in the hierarchy of social problems facing the country seems to have assumed an alarming proportion since the end of Nigerian civil war in 1970. During the pre-colonial and colonial era, insecurity was merely handled by the Federal Government using the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Nigeria Police Force.

The magnitude of insecurity in Nigeria has become so grave that the Army, Police Force, Air Force, Directorate of State Security, etc. have all been drafted into maintaining internal security. Even at that, the military which is saddled with the responsibility of defending the territorial boundaries of the country sometimes flee out of the country to neighbouring Cameroon in fear of the insurgents and they call it tactical manoeuvre. This has led to palpable fear among the populace as security of lives and property can no longer be guaranteed. The phenomenon of crime has impacted negatively on the economic, social and political life of the nation over time. It is worthy of note that over the years, different sets of groups had risen in Nigeria with real militancy approach in prosecuting their objectives. Notable among these group are the Oodua People's Congress (OPC) within Yorubas, Bakassi Boys and Movement for Actualisation of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) among Igbos, Niger-Delta Militant in the South-South as well as Boko Haram in the North.

Ekanem, (2012) revealed that Boko Haram have been in existence right from the 1960s but only started to draw attention in 2002. It is on record that this particular group has been operating under the name Shabaab Muslim Youth Organisation with Mallam Lawal as

the leader since 1995 but leadership of the group shifted to Mallam Mohammed Yusuf when Mallam Lawal left Nigeria. The emergence of Boko Haram insurgency has introduced a terrorist dimension hitherto unknown in the criminal space of Nigeria. Series of bombings have been carried out by the sect as well as taking hostage of innocent citizens including over 200 students in Chibok in 2014. This has raised both international and national concern which had also led to a campaign by civil societies called the Bring back our girls' campaign. The Islamic terrorist group is growing in number and brutality. The continued rise in insecurity in Nigeria if not checked, may result into greater investor apathy for the country and low inflow of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). It would make institutional investors look for other stable economies to invest their capital.

Boko Haram activities and Nigeria's Sustainability

Terrorism has various dimensions and manifestation across nations. In Nigeria, the Boko-Haram sect has carried out their attacks in the form of abductions, bombings, suicide bombings, assassinations, armed assaults amongst others over the years of its uprising. The popular areas usually attacked by the sect include recreational centers, office complex, social gathering, religious centers, beer parlors, residential buildings, industrial plants, etc. This section examines the socio-economic effects of Boko-Haram activities (Isakpa, 2011).

The Effect on Economic Development

Nigeria is a country endowed with natural and material resources, all competed favorably with one another in securing a big chunk of foreign exchange earnings for the country in the early 60s, the discovery of oil and the unprecedented wealth accrued from it in the 70s soon emerged Nigeria as a major foreign exchange earner. In spite of the natural and mineral resources with which the country is endowed coupled with numerous governmental policies and programs to foster peaceful co-existence among the multi ethno-religious entities which make up Nigeria, the country has virtually become a battle field where incessant ethno religious and political crises are staged. The implication of the crisis on economic development is that the instrument which is supposed to be used for sustainable development is conversely being used for destruction and vandalization purposes (Mohammed, 2014). In essence, it gulped the Nigerian government millions of naira to put in place numerous amenities which were destroyed during crises. Resources which could have been used to improve these amenities and embark on other developmental project would have to be used on restructuring and replacing what had been damaged during the crisis.

In most cases, government compensated victims of these crises and this gulped millions of naira which could have been used to develop the economy. Apart from the fact that many virile men of the nation are seriously affected in the crises which consequently led to their death. The country's source of revenue is equally affected by crises. The Niger Delta for example, had shaken the country's economy to her root. Since no economic development could take place in an atmosphere of fear, anarchy and insecurity. It therefore implies that Boko Haram menaces are bane to economic development. Looking at it internationally, Boko Haram crisis has added to the fear of foreign investors that are in Nigeria. The cases of kidnapping of expatriates in Nigeria are no more news.

One wonders how foreign investors could decide to establish in the War Zone. Apart from the fact that the image of Nigeria has been dented globally as a country which breeds social miscreant and criminals, these crises have also made investors to flee the nation's troubled spots particularly Plateau State. Also neighboring states have had their economies disrupted by the influx of the crisis. As a result of these blasts, the citizens mostly those who come from other parts of the country have relocated from their states especially those from different ethnic regions (Nwanegbo & Odigbo, 2013).

This does not mean well for the economic development of the country. The greatest of these scenarios is the amount of funds being diverted to security issues and related matters. The aim is to enable the country meet the challenges of the present threat in the country. These funds can be best utilized in providing infrastructure in the country. There are no good roads, electricity and other vital amenities yet the Federal Government has to raise funds to take care of the little established institutions. The irony is that while the country is striving towards capacity building, the Boko Haram menace is crumbling all its effort.

The Effect on Social Development

During the colonial era, Nigerians lived in peace with one another; this is because the colonial masters merged under the hegemonies suzerainty of colonial masters. The social background of Nigerians then can be surely said to be peaceful until the exit of the colonial masters when things started falling apart. The people of Nigeria faced one another with serious enormity, hatred and they did not want to see one another again (Aborisade, 2014). The social background of Nigeria turned from peaceful to chaos which finally gave birth to a cankerworm that ate deep into the very fabric of Nigerians social system. The implication here is that to attain social development in Nigeria became impossible because the people living in the northern parts are no longer in unity. The nation has been striving to put in place amenities for the purpose of elevating the education standard of the country. This is, however, hampered by incessant closure of schools and institutions in the northern parts of the country. Many schools had been burnt down while many were forced to close down for months in particular University of Maiduguri which in effect made the interaction of innocent youths impossible and created a very bad opportunity for parents of different ethnic groups to withdrawn their children from school. The education of innocent youths was equally disrupted under tumultuous situation created by the Boko Haram sect, as many were forced to emigrate from the crisis area and this emigration took two patterns temporary and permanent emigration. Those who emigrated on temporary basis came back after several weeks or months; however, those who opted for permanent emigration were mostly indigenous suffered losses and felt their continued stay in the crises areas is like casting one's life into prediction. Every social gathering that attracts individuals especially the elites in the society is prone to attack.

The issue of bomb scare is worthy to note in this aspect. From past occurrences, it is no longer a new thing to witness in on-going activity been disrupted due to security reasons. In the last campaign towards the last general election, bomb threat was constantly a factor to reckon with, though, this are not directly traced to Boko Haram sect, the argument here is that most people may pretend under the guise of the sect of perpetuate evil in the country. The fear

of Boko Haram now becomes the beginning of safety. The resultant factor is that the Boko Haram group directly or indirectly has contributed towards the disruption of social activity in the country (Aro, 2013)

The Effect on Political Development

It is an undeniable fact that a nation that witnesses crisis almost on an annual basis could not be said to be politically stable. The Boko Haram crisis which dichotomized the country's Police Forces was said to have been responsible for the outbreak of the Abuja Police Headquarter bombing leaving six (6) people dead including Police Officers and civilians. In essence, Boko Haram crisis breeds unstable government which is very crucial to sustainable political development. Consequently, the Federal Government now spends more time seeking how to deal with the menace of Boko Haram. Because of the sensitive, dangerous, and very deadly nature of Boko Haram activities, attention is now focused on them. Boko Haram has seriously threatened the adequate, efficient and effective implementation of the transformational agenda. Indeed, the transformational agenda has been Boko Haram by the violent group. This is seriously a wrenching development.

Impacts of Boko Haram insurgency on human Security in Nigeria

The consequences of any act of violence are often despicable and far-reaching. The analysis of the impacts of the insurgency on human security will be based on the broader perspective of human security with particular focus on food and nutrition, health, shelter, education and protection which are the primary needs of every individual.

Food and Nutrition: Boko Haram insurgency has affected agriculture especially in some of the country's main food-growing areas. Yobe, Adamawa and Borno states worst hit by the insurgency are known to produce cowpeas, rice, millet, tomatoes, onions, yams, corns and sorghums, livestock and fish. Farmers are afraid to go to their farms as a result of fear of being attacked. A lecturer in the University of Maiduguri Abba Gambo said, "No one can move a kilometre due to fear, most of them have fled their homes." According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee, more than 1.5 million people, mostly farmers have been forced to flee their homes as Boko Haram intensified its insurgency in the past year. Also, the trade routes between the north east and the south are disrupted, hence making transportation and distribution of food very difficult. The Central Bank of Nigeria stated that the disruptions on food distribution because of the insurgency are among the largest inflationary risks faced by the economy.

Health: The health of the people is paramount. The World Health Organisation (WHO) Report on Violence and Health launched on October 3rd 2002 stated that each year, more than a million lives are lost and many more experience non-fatal injuries as a result of various forms of violence. Boko Haram insurgency has claimed a lot of lives and inflicted injuries on thousands of people. About 75 people died and not less than 215 people were injured on Monday April 14, 2014 when there was a bomb blast in Nyanya District of Abuja. On October 2nd, 2015 there was a twin blast at the Kuje and Nyanya areas of Abuja where scores

were left **dead and** injured as well. The increasing numbers of the injured has led to the **overcrowding** of health care centres and hospitals with so much pressure on machines leading to **their** breakdown as well as the health staff working overtime.

Shelter: The number of houses that have been destroyed by the Boko Haram insurgency cannot be quantified. This destruction has left millions of people displaced. Over 2.1 million were displaced in Nigeria by the Boko Haram insurgency. These internally displaced persons have migrated and now live in host communities and are in dire need of appropriate shelter and in the long-run resettlement. If the Boko Haram insurgency is not tackled, the number of IDPs will continue to increase drastically with problems of shelter and accommodation becoming a critical security issue. The HNO (2014) noted that most internally displaced people are camped in schools, churches and makeshift accommodations which are mostly uncompleted buildings or derelict houses. "Many of the communal and make shifts shelters are overcrowded and unsuitable in terms of water and sanitation facilities, cooking and privacy, especially for women".

Education: Boko Haram insurgency has affected greatly the educational sector as the sect has targeted schools and colleges with students and teachers injured, killed or abducted and facilities destroyed. According to Babajide (2012), "conflict and insecurity have had a direct and compounding negative impact on children's access to education, the availability of educational spaces and materials and the ability of teachers." The National President of the Nigerian Union of Teachers, Micheal Olukoya speaking on teachers day celebrated on the 5th of October 2015 said that 600 teachers have been killed as a result of the Boko Haram insurgency (Pulse.ng, 2015). As at August 2013, over 882 classrooms in Borno State had been damaged and from June to September 2013, all schools were closed in Yobe state. On April 14, 2014, the abduction of over 200 female students at the Government Girls Secondary School in Chibok has discouraged parents from enrolling their children.

Protection HNO (2014: 13) states that "an estimated 2.15 million men, women girls and boys are facing physical and psychological trauma related to insurgency". Recent attacks have seen increasing manipulation of children especially females. The Islamists have carried out fatal ambushes across the borders of Nigeria and in many of them women have been used to stage several attacks. There is high prevalence of early child marriages with health and maternal implications. The humanitarian needs for protection of those affected by the insurgency especially IDPs are not often met. In the case of IDPs, HNO (2014) states that staff lack camp management and protection. Counter insurgency has also been characterized with human rights abuses. In a keynote presentation at Nigeria Development and Finance Forum (NDFF) 2014 Conference, Femi Aribisala, former special Adviser to Prof Bolaji Akinyemi as Foreign Minister of the Federal Republic of Nigeria stated that: "The Nigerian has fought against Boko Haram the Nigerian way, attacks on the innocent; illegal searches and torture; extrajudicial killings; wrongful and indefinite detention of suspects without trial; random burning of homes and farms; revenge attacks on the innocent. This is a blueprint for losing the war. As a result, the military has alienated the local population it is sworn to protect, making it difficult to fight the insurgency."

Recommendations

Having examined the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria and its role in the conflict resolution and sustainability of Nigeria, we put forward the following recommendations:

- (i) The Nigerian government should as a matter of urgency declare a full state of emergency in all affected states in the north and declare full scale war against terrorism devoid of political and ethnic sentiments. This will to a large extent reposition the military and free them from political influences by political office holders in the affected areas.
- (ii) Sponsors and sources of funding for the Boko Haram insurgency should be traced. The best way to defeat a man in a battle is to cripple his economy. The Biafran experience is a clear example.
- (iii) All Boko Haram sponsors and sources of funding should be brought to book and crippled. The government should match words with action in dealing with the security challenges in Nigeria. This should include equipping the military, re-organizing the police force, settlement of political, economic and religious disputes without favoritism.
- (iv) The government should put machinery in place through a collaborative effort between national and state orientation agencies, local government areas, traditional rulers, youths, women and religious groups in carrying out re-orientation campaign in northern Nigeria. This will help to address the misconceptions about western education, government activities and other issues used by Boko Haram in convincing the youths to support them.
- (v) Furthermore, it will also help to address the issue of school drop outs so that Boko Haram will not seize the opportunity to recruit them.
- (vi) In addition, poverty should be addressed across the country through employment generation by governments at all levels, collaboration between government and the private sector, revamping ailing firms and empowering youths and women through skills acquisition programmes and agricultural practices. These measures cannot be achieved without government addressing the issue of corruption which is the major cause of poverty in Nigeria.
- (vii) Finally, the government of Nigeria should partner with the international community in addressing the Boko Haram insurgency. Terrorism is a global phenomenon; therefore, it is advisable that it should also be addressed through global collaboration.

Conclusion

The main thrust of this paper is to reveal that the Boko Haram insurgency has negative impact on the peace and security of the Nigerian citizens. It is therefore evident that as Boko Haram insurgency has claimed lots of lives, aggravated the food and nutrition in security, further damaged to health and education sector, and has caused general fear and anxiety; an urgent solution is needed. Boko Haram insurgency is therefore a threat to human peace and conflict resolution, thereby threatening the continued existence of the very entity called Nigeria.

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