

The Threat of Boko Haram on Security and National Development in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria as a heterogeneous society has been bedeviled by ethno-religious conflicts with devastating human and material losses since the country return to democratic rule in 1999. The first of its kinds is the emergence of ethnic militia forces namely Odua Peoples Congress (OPC), Egbesu Boys, Bakassi Boys and Arewa People's Congress (OPC) and of lately is Boko Haram. Security is evidently the pillar upon which meaningful development could be achieved and sustained. The development strides in most Western Capitalist States that place premium on security lend credence to this assertion. Whilst Nigeria is endowed with abundant resources, negligence and challenges of insecurity appear to have threatened civil regime and retards development. This study concludes among others that Nigeria can achieve sustainable development when all individuals partner security agencies in providing security for a sustainable national development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Security, National Development, Nigeria and ethnic militia forces.

INTRODUCTION

After decades of military dictatorship, in May 1999, Nigeria returned to civil rule with fresh hopes and latent optimism. The fresh optimism is predicated on the fact that democracy would guarantee and promote freedom, liberty, and development and enhances security of lives and property which would indeed reposition development and sustainability. But alas, this optimism appears to be a mirage or dream. Today, the country's nascent democracy is being threatened by rampant crimes and unprecedented campaign of terror such that in south, civil unrest threatens safety and stability, to the east, gangs who kidnap expatriates for ransom lie waiting on the roads, in bars and cities and to the north, the Islamic terrorist group called Boko Haram is growing both in number and brutality. Arguably, considerable progress has been achieved in the areas of freedom of speech and liberty but series of resource based conflict in the Niger Delta, ethno-religious crisis in Jos and communal conflicts persisted. The climax of these security threats is the insurgence of a group called Boko Haram in the Northern Nigeria. The concept of security is an important ingredient to the survival of human society either in the modern or primitive societies. The need for security necessitated the social contract in which people willingly or voluntarily surrendered their rights to an organ (government) who oversees the survival of all. From time immemorial, issues relating to security tend to occupy the centre stage in the development discourse. With the end of cold war in 1991, there have being attempts to

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shift conceptualization of security from a state-centric perspective to a broader view that places premium on individuals, in which human security embodies elements of national security. Human rights and national development therefore remains major barometer for explaining the concept. In this work, it is espoused that attempts have been made to deepen and widen the concept of security from the level of the states to societies and individuals and from military to non-military issues (Krahmann, 2003). Majorly, two contending perspectives tend to provide the basis for the conceptualization of human security. One is a neo-realist theoretical framework, which is predicated on the primacy and centrality of state in conceptualizing security. It tends to explain security from the standpoint of state primary responsibility.

Within this context, Buzan (1991) argues that the straitjacket militaristic approach to security that dominated the discourse during the cold war as ‘simple minded’ subsequently led to the underdevelopment of the concept. For him, human security includes political, economic, social and environmental threats including those that are militaristic. Thus, Buzan (1991) illustrates a tripartite concept analysis of security based on international system, state level and individual level but submitted that sovereign states should remain the most effective security provider. The second approach is a postmodernist or pluralist view that seeks to displace the state as a major provider of security but rather places greater emphasis on non-state actors. Advocates of this approach tend to argue that the concept of security goes beyond a military determination of threats. According to Booth (1994), governments must no longer be the primary referents of security because governments which are supposed to be the guardians of peoples’ security have instead become the primary source of insecurity for the many people who live under their sovereignty. As a result, Booth (1994) further argues that human security is ultimately more important than state security. Concurring Booth’s (1994) position, Nwabueze (1989) posits that economic security of the individual should be of far greater concern to the government and society than the security of the state.

Thus, some scholars seem to place emphasis on absence of threat to acquire values or tendencies that would undermine national cohesion and peace as criteria for determining what security connotes (Wolfis 1962 as cited in Oche 2001). In his view, David (2006) cited in Igbuzor (2011) posits that security is the condition or feeling of safety from harm or danger, the defense, protection and the absence of threats to acquire values. Security is absence of danger, the defense, protection and the absence of threats to acquire values, in subjective sense, the absence of fear that such values will be attacked (Wolfers, 1962). In spite of its conceptual complexities, the understanding of the term shows that security is vital for national cohesion, peace and sustainable development. Thus:

“Security has to do with freedom from danger or with threats to a nation’s ability to protect and develop itself, promote its cherished values and legitimate interests and enhance the well being of its people. Thus, internal security could be seen as the freedom from or the absence of those tendencies which could undermine internal cohesion and the cooperate existence of the nation and its ability to maintain its

vital institution for the promotion of its core values and socio-political and economic objectives, as well as meet the legitimate aspirations of the people. Internal security also implies freedom from danger to life and prosperity” (Oche 2001).

It is apparent from the foregoing that national security is a sine qua non for economic growth and development of any country (Oladeji and Folorunso 2007). Security seems to be critical in the life of any nation as it attracts and propels development. This study therefore looks at insecurity as the greatest challenge for Nigeria’s national development and proffer the way forward.

Development

The concept of development seems to be in a state of flux since the end of the Second World War. In the early 1940s, the ideological difference between the Socialist East and the Capitalist West appears to have influenced the meaning and the conceptualization of the term. Ake (2001) argues that ideology of development itself became a problem for development because of the conflict between its manifest and latent functions. At the time when development seems to be conceived as the outcome of economic growth, many theorists as Rostow (1952) and Harrod and Damar (1957), among others proposed models of development, generally identifying structural changes, savings and investments as the source of economic development and growth (Otto and Ukpere 2012). The assumption was that economic growth would generate fund for investment and infrastructural development that would guarantee better living condition of people.

Thus, towards the end of the 1970s it appears that economic growth in most developing and underdeveloped societies especially in the Latin America and Africa do not provide corresponding social goods. Evidently, economic growth could not sufficiently address the spate of unemployment, poverty, diseases, hunger, and illiteracy and over increasing crimes and wars. Rodney (1972), Nnoli (1981) and Ake (2001) have argued that development is multifaceted and indeed centred on man. For Nnoli (1981), development could be seen as a dialectical phenomenon in which the individual and the society interact with their physical, biological and inter-human environment transforming them for own betterment and that of humanity at large. The conception of development according to Okolie (2009) pointedly improves man’s potentials and capacities and subsequently eliminates and/or reduces poverty, penury, inequality, unemployment and generally enhances the condition of human existence and self-reproduction. Development therefore, could be seen as the process of empowering people to maximize their potentials and the ability to exploit nature to meet daily human needs. It can also be seen as a process by which quality of human lives and capacity to surmount or overcome daily needs are considerably improved. Since the end of the cold war, security and development concerns have been increasingly interlinked (Chandler 2007). In fact no sustainable development can be achieved in the atmosphere of conflicts, crisis and war and Nigeria is not an exception. Unarguably, security and development are two different concepts but tend to affect each other making both concepts inseparable and intertwined.

Historical Evolution of Boko Haram in Nigeria

Boko Haram is a religious Islamic sect that came into limelight in 2002. The presence of the radical Islamic sect was first reported in Kanama (Yobe State) and also in Gwoza (Borno state). “Boko Haram” which in the local Hausa language means “Western education is forbidden” officially call itself Jama’atul Ahlul Sunnah Lidda wati wal Jihad which means “people committed to the propagation of the prophet’s teachings and Jihad” (Mechan and Specier 2011). Beyond religious explanation, Boko Haram could be arguably described as a ‘home grown’ terrorist group that romances with some desperate politicians in the North (Adagba; Ugwu and Eme, 2012). It appears that the sect enjoys effective support from well-to-do individuals, religious leaders, admirers of their ideology and highly placed politicians in the North who claim to be Nigerians but are clandestinely working against the state. For instance, it was observed that it is no longer a sect of Islamic fanatics but has the support of disgruntled politicians and their paid thugs (Adagbam, Ugwu and Eme, 2012). Recently, revelations and security investigations into the activities of the sect affirm that the group is also sponsored from within the country. This is simultaneously transpired within the period when a serving senator from the North is on trial for aiding the activities of Boko Haram. Thus, a senior official of Boko Haram allegedly granted an interview detailing how the sect had been on the payroll of a few governors of the North (Adagba, Ugwu and Eme, 2012).

The Causes of Boko Haram in Nigeria

The causes of Boko Haram in Nigeria are explained differently by different people but convergent views or factors are:

Bad Governance/Leadership: One of the major determinants of development (social, economic, political, cultural and religious) in any society is good governance. The common denominator of most theoretical explanations of state collapse is bad governance. Thus, the promotion of good governance has become a critical pillar of development policy (Akude, 2007). According to World Bank (1992) and most other United Nations’ institutions viewed the concept governance as connoting the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country’s socio-economic and political development. It therefore follows that there cannot be good governance without good leadership. One begets the other. Leadership implies influencing change in the society and that leaders are often looked upon to direct, control and protect the interests of the group under them. Sadly, since independence, Nigerian state has been bedeviled with bad leadership. The effect has been an uncaring society characterized by pyramidal patron-client relations that have left the society deeply fragmented and factionalized (Aiyede, 2005). The point here is that the northern political leaders have not been responsive, purposeful and focused with respect to the holistic development of the Northern region.

Absence of mass literate youth: Most political elites in the north feel very reluctant to provide quality Western education to their citizen so that they will continue to manipulate them. At best, the youths are subjected to study Quran and Arabic language. This is not

totally bad but that the system makes them to be narrow minded and unable to enjoy a broader perspective of issues in this contemporary times. The state exists for the exercise of the qualities which make men good citizens, good men of science and philosophers (Appadorai, 1968). In other words, the State, through its leaders, is meant to serve the interest of its people and where this fails, the citizens can revolt as it is happening in north-east geo-political zone of Nigeria. As Atiku (2011) opines “poor governance, among other issues, is the cause of the rising wave of insecurity in Nigeria. What kind of society are we building when about 80percent of school age children in the north-east and some part of north-west are not in school? Our energies should be channeled on what needs to be done urgently “enforce rules, value the people, show fairness and equity and assist and protect the most needy and vulnerable”.

Role of the Elite: The elite in Nigeria have promoted religious violence. These elite, according to Joseph (1999) represents essentially capitalist who depend on the state machinery for survival. They are also a major player in the ethno-religious game for exploitation and manipulation of the non-elite, usually directed towards personal elite group interests, which mostly promote division and hatred among people in pluralistic societies (Oтите, 1999). These elite use ethnic and religious sentiments to achieve their political and socio-economic goals. In many other instances, the elite often sponsor ethno-religious violence in order to alter or destabilize the political system or cause religious disharmony in the polity. Most often, particularly since the inception of the fourth republic in the country, the northern youths are mainly used (or employed) as political tools to wage war against other political opponents but only to be dumped when the coast is clear. Thus, a senior official of Boko Haram allegedly granted an interview detailing how the sect had been on the payroll of a few governors of the north (Adagba, Ugwu and Eme, 2012).

Poverty: The economic crisis in Nigeria since the 80s has created the problem of acute poverty. According to Obateru (1994), poverty apparently accounts for the bulk of violence due to problems such as employment; inadequate housing, physical and social infrastructure. Corroborating this fact, Cherian (2002) observes that the serious economic difficulties that the country has been facing many years have led to the mushrooming of Christian and Muslim fanatics, as thousands of young uneducated and unemployed men have fallen easy prey to religious bigotry. Similarly, Diamond (1992) argues that mass poverty is a breeding ground for extension of religious, ethnic and class consciousness. It is a truism that the current depression in the Nigeria economy has rendered many citizens, especially youths, idle and almost hopeless; hence they have become instruments of manipulation by the elite for ethnic, political and religious uprising in the country.

Religious Fanaticism: This is a violent and unreasoning religious enthusiasm or inability of religious adherents to harmonize between the theories and the practical aspects of religions (Balogun, 1988). Religious fanatics often show excessive and irrational zeal to defend their religions and consequently become destructive agents of religious harmony in the country. Some Christians, Muslims and traditional worshippers in Nigeria are at one stage or another motivated by fanaticism to perpetuate religious violence.

Aggressive Preaching: By this we mean an offensive or coercive approach to conversion and propagation of one's religions. Militant preaching occurs when any religious group or individual preacher within that group set out to convert those they consider infidels or pagans to their own religious beliefs. This practice is common among some adherents of scriptural religions, because they are built on evangelism. In Nigeria, some Christians and Muslims have embarked on coercive preaching which have resulted in violent religious conflicts.

Corruption: This is also one of the causes of the menace called Boko Haram. When money that is supposed to be used to better society as well as improve facilities that add to the quality of lives of the citizens finds its way into the pockets and purses of the governing few; there is bound to be problem. All forms of social vices such as kidnapping, robbery, militancy have bearing with a feeling of cheat. Corrupt practices therefore make those who feel cheated to resort to unholy acts as protest. A wicked house boy who is unable to match his wicked master strength with strength maims the master's favourite goat.

Why is Boko Haram a Threat to National Security in Nigeria?

To any responsible and peace loving person whether as a Nigerian citizen or non-citizen, the sect called Boko Haram is a serious threat to national security in Nigeria in particular and to the African continent and to the global community as a whole. Boko Haram appears to be a destructive tool with a cosmetic pretension of being religious. The bombing of Nigeria Police Force Headquarters in Abuja on June 16, 2011, the UN house in Abuja on August 26, 2011 and other high profile bombing attest to this assertion. Nigeria does not seem to have suffered only economic setbacks caused by Boko Haram's bombings but also suffers from the battered image and humanitarian disaster the group inflicted on her.

For instance, between July 27, 2009 and February 17, 2014, Boko Haram has launched fifty three (53) attacks in which 11057 people were killed and hundreds of people injured in the Northern Nigeria. It becomes increasingly unsafe and has compelled most non-indigenes of the region to relocate especially the Igbos. The phobia of being attacked especially in cities like Kano, Kaduna, Maiduguri, Adamawa, Jalingo and Yola was responsible for the exodus of people from the north to other parts of the country as witnessed in the last few months. Other ethnic groups seem to have followed suit in the exodus, while economic activities in the north have drastically been reduced as a result of this crisis. The resultant effect is that the crisis is rather under-developing already under-developed northern region and threatening Nigeria's prospect of joining the league of highly developed countries in 2020. Generally, Boko Haram's activities have perforated the peace and tend to have impacted negatively on socio-economic development of Nigeria. Lastly, the issue of Boko Haram reinforces the Nigerian civil war of 1970 of which a section/region opted to break away from the corporate existence of Nigeria.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is no doubt that security is a big challenge in Nigeria's efforts towards national development and Boko Haram insurgency has compounded the insecurity situation in

Nigeria. Since after the civil war in 1970 and the annulment of June 12, 1993 presidential election, Nigeria's security situation has been growing from bad to worse and worst since the emergence of Boko Haram in 2002. This is coupled with ethnic sentiments, political desperation, favouritism and nepotism, ravage poverty among populace and inability of the leadership to deliver the needed dividend of democracy. To this end, there is the need for government and stakeholders to explore alternative avenue to basically dialogue rather than use force to find lasting solution to the security lapses and the menace of Boko Haram if actually Nigeria wants to develop. This is because the use of force approach appears to have been inflaming the crisis and diverting attention from the fundamental issues that nurture and propels the insurgency. Again, Nigerian leaders must address the problem of educational imbalance between the north and the south. This, according to Adebisi (2002), will help reduce the different rates of development between the two regions. Apart from this, the government must ensure that the economy of the country is more balanced while emphasis from now on must be on actual production, not on the distribution of national wealth. Another measure that deserves to be mentioned here is the state sponsored programme of mass education and enlightenment and the efforts to enthrone what Hackett and Oluponna (1991) describe as "civil religious". In this respect, an agency of mass mobilization should be set up and maintained to educate the populace on dangers of religious bigotry, in order to address what the Political Bureau had identified as "low level of consciousness" of the vast majority of the people which rendered them vulnerable to the fraudulent manipulations of politicians and other elite groups in the society (MAMSER, 1991). There is the need for inter-agency collaboration among security agencies as well as the involvement of more groups beyond uniformed forces, with the adoption of the community policing philosophy and respect for human rights. The Nigerian government should establish special force to counter terrorism of Boko Haram caliber as well as open a viable channel for information sharing between the government agencies and the individuals or private security outfits because security is everybody's responsibility. The Federal government should decisively take the bull by the horn to stop the wanton destruction of innocent lives and property of Nigerians particularly in Northern Nigeria. This will help to guarantee the survival of Nigeria's nascent democracy. Finally, the ongoing fight against corruption should be sustained and measures that will make successive government to continue with the operation eradicate corruption in Nigeria instituted.

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