



INSECURITY CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA: A CRITICAL REFLECTION ON THE NORTH EAST OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

Nigeria has been bedeviled with insecurity challenges of great magnitude with great losses in form of human and material resource. The expression of frustration is the cause of concern as it threatens the Nigerian state hood. The paper tries to examine the activities of terrorist in Nigeria since 2012 when Boko Haram started unleashing harm on the Nigerian people especially northeastern part of Nigeria. The emergence of Boko Haram has brought untold hardship to the people of Nigeria in all its ramifications. A part from the billions of naira expended on the war against terrorism, it also brought intimidating challenge on the development of the country. The paper further examined some of the effects of terrorism as it breeds moral suspect among people, fear from being killed and business being damaged. The paper recommend that government should be up and doing in providing employment to the teeming youths so as to be gainfully employed. Poverty and corruption should be tackled in the fight against this menace. Government should also involve in vigorous activities in tightening security of the land by investing heavily in securing sophisticated equipment.

Keywords: Terrorism, security, insecurity; boko haram,

Introduction

National security is a premise for national economic growth and development of nations. This is because peaceful nations attract foreign investors while the domestic investors freely operate the economy with little or no tensions and

apprehensions. According to Nwanegbo and Odigbo (2013), security is the pillar upon which every meaningful development could be achieved and sustained. Nigeria as a nation state has witnessed unprecedented series of agitations in the forms of kidnapping and abduction, armed robberies, bombing, and carnages of all forms and magnitude in the past decade and a half. The most dastard so far is the activities of a group of some Islamic militants that called themselves the 'Boko Haram', interpreted to mean 'western education is evil'. With the coming to the scene by Boko Haram in 2002, the insecurity situation in Nigeria seemed to have assumed higher and more complex dimensions. A part from the frequency and intensity of deadly attacks and carnages, insecurity situation in Nigeria cuts across cities, towns and villages that there is hardly anywhere to run to for cover. Lives and properties are not safe for urban dwellers as well as for the rural dwellers. The United States, United Kingdom and many countries face the challenges of insecurity within their borders on a daily basis (Adejumo, 2011). The difference between these nations and Nigeria according to Adejumo is how they manage the threats. The speed with which evil is growing in Nigeria and the merciless ways that lives of innocent ones are being wasted are worrisome.

Lately, Nigeria has been enmeshed in a firebox of insecurity leading to scores of deaths of innocent civilians, foreigners, some members of the nation's security personnel, elected officials and many government workers. The insecurity challenge has assumed formidable dimensions forcing the country's political and economic managers and, indeed the entire nation, to rue the loss of their loved ones, investments and absence of safety in most parts of the country. The number of violent crimes such as kidnappings, ritual killings, carjacking's, suicide bombings, religious killings, politically-motivated killing and violence, ethnic clashes, armed banditry and others has increasingly become the regular signature that characterises life in Nigeria since 2009 (Imhonopi & Urim, 2012). Egwu (2001) had made this observation when he argued that the primordial tendencies of various ethnic groups towards violence, the perennial eruption of various ethnic militias and the preponderant religious fundamentalism in place, given expression to by some sections of the dominant religious establishments in Nigeria, have inevitably aggravated the scale and propensity of insecurity and widened its scope in various ramifications.

Conceptual explanations

Terrorism has become a global concern because many organizations have tried to define it in their own way, (Trosper, 2009) define it as “The unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives”. The United States Department of Defense defines it as “the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological.” Quoted in Omotola (2010), Bockstette (2008) sees terrorism as political violence in an asymmetrical conflict designed to induce terror and psychic fear (sometimes indiscriminate) through the violent victimization and destruction of noncombatant targets (sometimes iconic symbols), involving acts meant to send a message from an illicit clandestine organization. He argues further that the purpose of terrorism is to exploit the media in order to achieve maximum attainable publicity as an amplifying force multiplier in order to influence the targeted audience(s) and reach short- and mid-term political goals and/or desired long-term purposes.

For Hornby (2000), terrorism is the use of violent action in order to achieve political aims or force a government to act. The United States Department of Defense cited by Terrorism Research (Undated), defines terrorism as “the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious or ideological.” The people or individuals that carry out acts of terrorisms are known as terrorists.

They are militant, they use coercion, intimidation and instill fears in people Their characteristic involve:

Suicide bombing, car bombing, rocket propelled grenades, assassinations, abductions and kidnapping, disguising and hijacking. Their targets are extermination of human lives and destruction of properties. These are achieved by attacking:

Public squares, government buildings and installations, churches and mosques, schools, bridges, police stations, military barracks and installations as well as market squares and prisons to free inmates particularly their members incarcerated. Terrorism is of both national and international concern. This is because their activities most times are not concentrated in a particular place. Its

waves span across geographical boundaries both local and international. Terrorist activities had led to displacement of people, loss of lives and properties, feelings of suspicion, anger and hatred as well as psychological and emotional trauma and general state of insecurity.

SECURITY:

The first duty of a government is to keep its citizens safe because like Hobbes observed, only the state has the wherewithal to guarantee security and save society from anarchy (and since government represents the state), the state through its government should provide adequate security to justify its *raison d'être* (Gaskin, (1996). In this wise, Omede (2012) sees security as a dynamic condition which involves the relative ability of a state to counter threats to its core values and interests. McGrew (1988) holds that the security of a nation hangs on two important pillars which are (1) the maintenance and protection of the socioeconomic order in the face of internal and external threat and (2) the promotion of a preferred international order, which minimises the threat to core values and interests, as well as to the domestic order. For Nwolise (2006), security is an all-encompassing condition which suggests that a territory must be secured by a network of armed forces; that the sovereignty of the state must be guaranteed by a democratic and patriotic government, which in turn must be protected by the military, police and the people themselves; that the people must not only be secured from external attacks but also from devastating consequences of internal upheavals such as unemployment, hunger, starvation, diseases, ignorance, homelessness, environmental degradation and pollution cum socio-economic injustices. Citing Rothschild, Nwagboso (2012) argues that in the long sweep of history, security has been about people and without reference to the security of the individual, security makes no sense at all (McSweeney, 1999). Dike (2010) and Omede (2012) have taken this argument a step further by emphasising that Nigeria's security should be based on a holistic view which sees the citizens as the primary beneficiaries of every security and developmental deliverable that the state can offer.

INSECURITY

Insecurity is the opposite of security and has attracted such common descriptors as want of safety, danger, hazard, uncertainty, want of confidence, state of doubt, inadequately guarded or protected, instability, trouble, lack of protection

and being unsafe, and others (Achumba, Ighomereho & Akpor-Robaro, 2013). According to Beland (2005), insecurity is “the state of fear or anxiety stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection.” It refers to lack or inadequate freedom from danger. This definition reflects physical insecurity which is the most visible form of insecurity, and it feeds into many other forms of insecurity such as economic security and social security. Insecurity is therefore conceived as a situation where human and national security of a state is compromised by internal or external forces or interests exacerbated by the former’s weak or poor economic, military and/or human resource development conditions.

BOKO HARAM:

The history of terrorism in Nigeria is traceable to the emergence of a group of Islamic militants called “Boko Haram” in 2002. “Boko Haram” is translated to mean “western education is evil”. The progressive destructive activities of “Boko Haram” made the US department of states to designate them as terrorist organization in November, 2013 (Wikipedia). Since the emergence of this sect in 2002, human lives had been lost to their attacks in thousands. The Vanguard newspaper put the death toll at more than 12,000 with more than 8000 injured or maimed and thousands of other innocent Nigerians displaced (Vanguard, 18th May, 2014). The killings have continued unabated until recently that they are being gradually overcome. Their escalated activities created widespread insecurity among Nigerians, increase tensions between various ethnic communities, interrupt development activities, frighten off investors and generate concern among Nigeria’s northern neighbors (Eme and Ibietam, 2012). According to Okpaga, Chijioke and Innocent (2012), between July 27th 2009 and February 17th 2012, “Boko Haram” had carried out 53 deadly attacks. Wikipedia reported 57 attacks between September 2010 and 11th August, 2014. These crises have heightened tensions and insecurity in Nigeria and they have assumed a frightening dimension until recently that they are being overpowered by combined military efforts of Nigeria and surrounding nations. “Boko Haram” aside, insecurity in Nigeria is heightened by the activities of other ethnic militias such as the Niger Delta militants’ etcetera, whose activities manifest in kidnapping, abduction, pipeline vandalism, armed robberies, and hostage taking. Other activities that have heightened insecurity in Nigeria also include human and drug trafficking, porous borders that allow infiltration of

illegal aliens, arms and ammunitions, ethno-religious conflicts, political based violence, economic based violence.

METHODOLOGY:

Drawing copiously from existing literature on insecurity in Nigeria.

Causes of Terrorism

The causes of terrorism are abundant in the terrorism literature. However, Khan (2003) has identified the following etiologies as central to the manifestation of terrorism within society. These factors could be applied to the Nigerian situation. They include:

First, ethnicity, nationalism/separatism. In this sense, an aggrieved group could resort to terrorist toga and strategies to achieve nationalist or separatist goals. However, ethnic conflict could arise from a complex combination of class, inequality, political opportunity, mobilization resources and "ethnic strength". Second, poverty and economic disadvantage, globalization. The asymmetry in the distribution of scarce resources and benefits within the state can push vulnerable groups to take up arms and unleash terror on an apathetic and complacent population and the establishment. Many terrorist groups also have arisen out of the links they share with international terrorist organizations.

Third, absence of democracy. Democracy, in its truest sense, is supposed to be representative of the people, their wishes and interests. However, because this is not always the case in reality, terrorism can arise in a democracy in two occasions:

Fourth, disaffected intelligentsia. Rubenstein (1987) believes that terrorism could be triggered by disgruntled and disaffected, intelligentsia who are in a social and moral crisis unable to mobilize the masses. When rigid social stratification shatters hopes for social transformation, then the ingredients are present for a start or rise in terrorist activities in an attempt to reconnect with the masses who they claim to represent and aspire to lead.

Fifth, dehumanization. This is the opposite of the concept of disaffected intelligentsia as it represents simple-minded people who are easy to be indoctrinated and swayed into believing that they need to fight to be heard, recognized and treated as equal human beings in the society.

Six, Religion has become a vital opium that some groups feed on to misinterpret the requirements of their religion and to carry out their fundamentalist beliefs

which are generally aimed at conquering, expanding and consolidating on their religious gains and territories.

This view was shared by Look (2011) who posited that the roots of the problem are not only religion-oriented, but also are connected to the country's economic hardships and unemployment, as well as to alienation from the central government. This includes the incapability and lack of political will of the government to handle these groups, which has allowed the spread and resurgence of Boko Haram, as they question the state's capabilities. Due to the combination of religious revivalism and weak governance structures and process, there has been an uprising and growth of religious sects.

According to Ibegbu (2009), poor governance, corruption, lack of social and basic amenities, and lack of security could lead to the rise of terrorist organizations as it is being witnessed in Nigeria. This view was shared by Troster (2009) who averred that poor governance is the primary cause for terrorism in West Africa. Some reports also underpin this argument as they assert that weaknesses in democratic governance and factors contributing to fragility inhibit social development and economic growth, and this situation could cause civil unrest and provide fertile ground for the rise of extremist ideologies (Brown, 2006; UN, 2009; USAID, 2008). Therefore, as weak governments increase in West Africa, the potential for terrorist safe havens to flourish within various regions might also increase. When this poor governance is allowed to exist, it becomes a sign for terrorist groups to organize and capitalize on the weaknesses of a country's political and economic turmoil. Cilliers (2006) added climate change, competition over resources, and marginalization of the world's poor majority as other factors that trigger terrorism within societies.

Causes of Insecurity in Nigeria

- i. **Ethno-Religious Conflicts** Ethno-religious conflicts have been identified as a major source of insecurity in Nigeria (Ibrahim & Igbuzor, 2002; Hazen & Horner, 2007; Salawu, 2010; Igbuzor, 2011). Ethno-religious conflicts exist when the social relations between members of one ethnic or religious group and another of such group in a multiethnic and multi-religious society is characterised by lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion and fear, and a tendency towards violent confrontations to settle grievances. These conflicts have also revolved around who gets what and

how in the state especially as it concerns the distribution of scarce resources, power, land, chieftaincy titles, local government councils, control of markets and expansion of religious territories. These conflicts have resulted in large-scale killings and violence among ethno-religious groups in the country (Adagba, et al, 2012).

- ii. **Disconnect between the People and Government** Over the years, there has been a growing disconnect between the people and government. Governments, whether military or civilian, have not tried to bridge this chasm, thus creating misunderstanding, mistrust and resentment. Consequently, because the people do not understand government or have a perception that government does not care about their welfare, they become easy prey to centrifugal forces who co-opt/incite them to vent their anger on perceived enemies of the people and sometimes go to the extent of destroying national totems.
- iii. **Weak and Poorly Funded Military Establishments** In spite of the high security vote state governments receive on a monthly basis, there is greater insecurity in many states. Some of these monies find their way into the pockets of some highly-placed private citizens and the Chief Executives of the states, leaving the hapless citizens to the mercy of criminals and sociopaths.
- iv. **Interagency Rivalry** The failure of security agencies such as the police, the military, state security services and paramilitary units to share intelligence information has been identified as one of the factors negating the quick apprehension of culprits (Omede, 2011).
- v. Also, the failure of intelligence gathering by the security agencies as well as the near passivity of security operatives in proactively policing the country, coupled with the non-apprehension of culprits, is also a contributory factor to the rising tide of insecurity in Nigeria. Of course, when the armed forces and paramilitary agencies are not well-tooled with modern fighting and security gadgets and their welfare is not given priority attention, they may not want to make any sacrifices for the nation. All of these factors point to a passive national security team that is not really committed to fighting crime or stopping the merchants of violence or terror envoys from having the field day in the country.
- vi. **Non-Prosecution of Perpetrators of Violence In Nigeria** The lack of arrest and prosecution of perpetrators and sponsors of violence has

- encouraged many more social deviants and their godfathers to throw caution to the wind to perpetrate evil in the land. The Nigerian society has become a rigout of powerful
- vii. Loss of Socio-Cultural and Communal Value System The collapse of moral values within Nigeria is one critical factor to the continued security challenges that the country is faced with. The disintegration of communal value system which placed high premium on human life and despised greed, oppression and exploitation of the weak, among others, has also contributed to the unpleasant security environment in the country. New values that are zero-sum, paternalistic, narcissistic, chauvinistic and corrupt in nature and that preach that might-is-right have all taken over. Endearing social values and morals have been traded off for western values.
 - viii. According to Igbuzor (2011) who sees the state of insecurity in Nigeria as a function of government failure. This manifests in the incapacity of government to deliver public goods to its citizens. This lack of basic necessities by the Nigerian people has created a growing army of frustrated people who resort to violence at the slightest provocation or opportunity. Although Nigeria has the resources to provide for the needs of its people, the entrenched culture of corruption in public service has resulted in the dearth of basic necessities, leading to what Hazen & Horner (2007) call a “Paradox of Plenty”. Because of this situation, the crime rate shoots up and the security of lives and property are no longer guaranteed.

Putting all these factors together will provide some of the following as responsible factors for the general state of insecurity in Nigeria. Namely: Unemployment, bad governance, lack of quality education or training, lack or inadequate basic infrastructures, corruption and corrupt practices of government officials, perceived victimization, arrant poverty in the midst of affluence, ethnic superiority, religious superiority, domination and exploitation, materialism and the display of it with impunity, etcetera These factors according to Omede (2012) may not actually be the causes of unrest in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Conclusion Terrorism and insecurity in Nigeria are retarding the economic and technological advancement of the nation. Many Nigerians live everyday in

tensions and suspicion. Many productive lives have been lost, available ones are displaced and live in constant fears and pain of the lost of loved ones. Foreign investors are scared away from Nigeria. The nation's educational institutions are not spared either as institutions of learning are equally points of targets and attacks of terrorists and other hoodlums.

Terrorism raises the vote allocated to security. In an industrially and infrastructurally deficient economy, such monies could have been well utilized for development purposes. Ironically, since development cannot take place within a context of insecurity, these votes become a desideratum to raise the level of security formation so that economic and other activities can be sustained.

Consequently, armed conflicts, terrorism, ethnoreligious holocausts, kidnapping, political assassination and other violent crimes have become the leitmotif of Nigerian social relations. The government has made efforts to contain the insecurity inferno raging in many spots in the country, but until the moral foundation on which the Nigerian state is fulcrumed is regenerated, Nigeria may be walking the precipice. This paper argues for the need to revive and reinforce moral values and virtue ethics in the country and that the country should go a step further by codifying these values/principles so that Nigerians, small and old, can begin to imbibe these virtues to guide their conduct, behaviour and social relations with others.

Recommendation

The insecurity challenge in Nigeria has become a formidable challenge for the Nigerian government and peoples. The governance challenges facing the polity have trickled into the society, resulting in moral decadence. The growing dissatisfaction, discomfort and distress within the larger society coupled with the unabating official corruption, high unemployment rate, economic crisis, pauperisation of the masses, decaying infrastructure and a futile national integration project have heated up the socio-political environment.

The scotch of conflict kidnapers and other violent acts have continued to threaten the Nigerian people despite the efforts of the government in curtailing the monster. However, the successes recorded is not much but I think some recommendations need to be taken. Government should stand up and contain the insecurity challenges bedeviling our nations for the sustenance and wellbeing of the country. The government should tackle the issue of

unemployment among the youths. This is because the youth are use as agents of destruction as they are being recruited to serve as terrorist. Government should provide skills and farming acquisition centers across the country to engage the youth in meaningful trade so that they can be gainfully engaged. Government also should make sure that money meant for procurement of arms, ammunition and other military hardware that are in tandem with modern technologies are provided. The money set aside should not be diverted for something else. There is also the need for national dialogue, where national issues will be discussed. Gray areas that endanger security challenges should be identified and sorted out. Finally, government and the people must fear God as all of us will account for our deeds. God is watching us in whatever we are doing. Leaders should provide leadership style that will not shortchange people irrespective of status, positions, while the followers must follow laid down rules.

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