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INSECURITY IN NORTHERN NIGERIA: A CASE OF BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY, THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT RESPONSE AND ITS IMPACT ON NIGERIA'S EXTERNAL IMAGE

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Abstract

The problem of insecurity is a major problem to the Nigerian state at large and the most challenging/concerned national issue in the public domain, insecurity became a more challenging problem with the return of democracy in 1999. Insecurity in Nigeria spans from kidnapping, farmers-herders clash, ethnoreligious conflict, cultism, communal clashes, militancy, etc.; all of which have become a daily occurrence compounded by the rising waves of terrorist's activities. This work is corned with insecurity in the Northern part of Nigeria caused by the activities of Boko Haram, the response by the Nigerian government in fighting the menace and its impact on Nigeria external image. The Boko Haram activities resultant effects include loss of lives and properties, displacement of citizens, under-development of the area, etc. The central thesis of this work is that Boko Haram activities have negative effects on Nigeria's external image and fundamentally exposes the nature and dynamics of Nigeria's security problems. The research work adopted secondary sources to documents its findings, sources such as textbooks, academic journals, police records, the internets, and newspapers were examined and documented. The work contributes in part to the literature on the Boko Haram menace and insecurity in Northern Nigeria but significantly.

Keywords: **Insecurity, Insurgency, Nigeria, Northern Nigeria, Boko Haram.**

Introduction

Insecurity and many other challenging issues in the public domain in Nigeria have taken the centre stage of the nation's discourse and almost inevitably replete with issues surrounding insecurity, militancy, insurgency, and terrorism, due to its link with economic, social, political

and governance, with effects on the image of the nation. Following the return of democracy to the country, there has been an uprising in violent activities leading to insecurity in Nigeria with Boko Haram insurgence making headlines daily. Boko Haram has become a major threat to both internal and international security with its activities stretched beyond Nigeria to neighbouring countries. According to Gilbert, since the insurgency began, there has been over 12,000 deaths and 8000 persons maimed. Food insecurity has further worsened as farmers have fled their farms in fear of being attacked especially in the northern region which is the country's main food-growing region (Gilber, 2014:150-156). According to USAID (2014); the insecurity challenges in Nigeria may trigger long-term consequences in the region sub-region, this is because; Nigeria serves as Africa's largest supplier of staples cereals. Insecurity in Nigeria is on the verge of being the identity of the country; this is because no single day passes without any news of the act of insecurity which can either be kidnapping, arm robbery, Boko Haram, terrorism, marauders, communal clash, etc. The fact that the Nigerian government seems to be incapacitated and incapable of curbing this menace or probably playing politics perhaps doesn't want to put a stop to it for an undisclosed reason is of more concern and worrisome to the state. This research work, however, is not primarily concerned with the factors that propelled the emergence of Boko Haram, but it is concerned with the challenge it posed to Northern Nigeria and on Nigeria at large and the effect of the activities of this group/sect on Nigeria's external image.

This work is divided into five parts. The first part is the introduction while the second part defines the keywords used in the research, the third gives an insight into an insurgency in the world and the fourth part discuss the history of insurgency in Northern Nigeria. The fifth aspect deals with the rise of Boko Haram, the sixth looked at the Boko Haram insurgency and the response of the Nigerian government while the seventh deals with the image of Nigeria externally following the activities of Boko Haram and the eight aspects of this work is the conclusion.

Conceptualization of Terms

For a better understanding of this research work, the major keywords used in this work which are insecurity and insurgency are elucidated.

a. Insecurity

Insecurity is simply the opposite of the word security which in a layman understanding simply means the absence of peace. Though; the concept of insecurity means different things to different scholars/people as the case in security. To a lot of people,it is the absence of safety or presence of danger; hazard; uncertainty; want of confidence; doubtful; inadequately guarded or protected; lacking stability; troubled; lack of protection and unsafe (Achumba, et al, 2013). Insecurity can lead to loss of confidence, be afraid, unsettled, oppressed, lose focus, and be devastated and lose one's humanness (Ozoigbo, 2019). Beland defines insecurity as a state of fear or anxiety due to absence or lack of protection (Beland, 2021). Insecurity is viewed from two perspectives as espoused by 'Achumba et al' (2013:271). First, insecurity is the state of being open or subject to danger or threat of danger, where danger is the condition of being susceptible to harm or injury. Secondly, insecurity is the state of being exposed to risk or anxiety, where anxiety is a vague unpleasant emotion that is experienced in anticipation of some misfortune.

b. Insurgency

The nature of insurgencies is an ambiguous concept in the sense that not all rebellions are insurgencies. There have been many cases of non-violent rebellions, using civil resistance. It develops into insurgency when the group establishes control of territories against a sovereign state. The Collins dictionary defines insurgency as a violent attempt to oppose a country's government carried out by citizens of that country. Insurgency is a rebellion against authority when those taking part in the rebellion are not recognized as belligerents.

A Brief History of Insurgencies

The word insurgency is not new and according to Fafowora and Oladapo (2013:1-18), insurgencies are not new in the history of states. In the world today, insurgency has become a defining feature of our society (Ngige, et'al2016:58-65). The history of insurgency dates back to the times of antiquity, this is as far back as the old civilizations of the Greek city-states and the Roman Empire when the rulers of these ancient civilizations often had to face the challenge of insurgencies, insurrections and revolts. In modern history, insurgencies and terrorism date back to four centuries ago, stretching many continents and states. These include states like France that had a revolution in 1789 that led to the replacement of the bourbon monarchy with the new French Republic and the 1776 American war of independence from British colonial rule. The 19th century witnessed an unstable and turbulent era during which the German unification was brought about using force under Chancellor Bismarck. Italy was also a unified vie force under the leadership of Garibaldi. In the Balkans, the old Habsburg Empire was overthrown by a series of insurgencies including the murder at Sarajevo of Archduke Francis Ferdinand by a Serb nationalist (Adaku& Benjamin, 2018). All of these, led incidents led to World War 1 and the breakup of the Habsburg Empire and Monarchy. The Ottoman Empire that had for centuries held sway in central Europe and the Balkans also fell after World War I and was replaced by modern Turkey. In Russia, the Romanov Empire was brought down in the 1917 revolution against Imperial Russia. This bloody conflict, in which the entire family of the Tsar was wiped out, gave rise to the new Communist Empire of the Soviet Union. Of recent, internal dissent and grievances led to the collapse of the Soviet Union and its replacement by several separate republics, once part of the Soviet Union. Ethnic war and cleansing in Yugoslavia also led to its collapse and the rise of several successive states in its place. Other governments and states, in central Europe and the Balkans, also faced a lot of security challenges and violence as many of the central European states fought for the independence of their countries against foreign domination (Fanfowa&Oladapo, 2013).

Contemporary examples of insurgencies include the Tiananmen revolt in China, brutally put down by the Chinese government, and the continuing sectarian conflict in Afghanistan between the insurgents, the Taliban and the Afghan government (Fanfowa&Oladapo, 2013). In Pakistan and India, terrorist groups, mainly extremist Islamic sects have continued to pose serious security problems. In the Middle East, the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians remains unresolved, with bands of insurgents and terrorists moving freely from one country to the other. The African continent is not left out of these upheavals with Nigeria joining the ranks of states affected by terrorism with activities such as the Boko Haram sect and MASSOB (Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra). The virtual dismemberment of Mali by Islamic warriors which have seized the northern part of the country constitutes a warning that insurgencies are spreading rapidly in the Savannah region of West Africa and the Sahel.

A Brief History of Insurgency in Northern Nigeria

The insecurity menace has continued to threaten the cooperative existence of Nigeria. Various rebellious groups have assumed different colourations not so much for what it is worth, but for their convictions of opposing beliefs worsened often by the nature of responses as a result of anti-citizens government policies, marginalization, religious fanatism, etc. from an anti-people government. Nigeria has witnessed the activities of several social, religious and political sects threatening the peace and security of the nation just as it is also witnessing the Boko Haram onslaught particularly in the Northern part of the country. History has shown that in Nigeria, there is/are no issues that threatened more heated debate, frustrating argument and insecurity than politics and religion. This, possibly are the reason why different groups/sects used the religious platform to unleash terror to create tension and a sense of insecurity in Nigeria. Before the military take-over power in 1966, cases of violence in whatever form and political protests groups were mostly haphazardly uncoordinated within a territory or geographical location in most cases with local leadership, with no direction which is usually- short-lived (Coleman, 1996). According to Adebowale (2021), from 1966 to 1979, this period reveals a more complicated situation in Nigeria, it was characterized by the externalization of provocative teachings, organized killings, government violent responses, rivalry among sects and greater intolerance of other religious groups. 1986 - 1996 witnessed worrisome situations which marked the nationalization of religious crisis. The Northern region of Nigeria made name for r3ligion-related violence that have a surface/manifested to date. The rate at which it occurs and how bloody it has/have been in nature of the recurring nightmare of religious disturbances coupled with massive destruction of lives and property assumed unimaginable proportion. For instance, the 1980 Maitatsine uprising in Kano and its uprising in Maiduguri, Kaduna down to 1992, and in Yola in 1994. There is also the 1986 Palm Sunday riot, 1987 Kanfanchan riot to the 1995 Jama'atul Tajdid quit notice to non-indigenes in Kano. 1996 Muslim/Christian clash in Kaduna and several other instances and examples explain more clearly the nature and dimensions of religious crisis in Nigeria. There were also on records, political crises that took place in the northern region of Nigeria that constituted and posed security challenges to the region. Thus; the information and the advocacy of the sects is a fundamental problem of nationhood, unity and peace of the country. In our contemporary time, sects such as Boko Haram have been linked to terrorist sects like Al-Qaeda. This suspicion cannot be separated from the global reach of Al-Qaeda and the resources at her disposal, the nature of the sophistication of the Boko Haram and its Modus of Operandi appears to have also confirmed the suspicion.

It is pertinent to note therefore that, all of these insurgencies indisputably had their reasons or perceived reasons for their emergence. According to Nwala (2013:27-62), he provides us with a list of typical reasons and conditions that led to the creation of insurgency. These include:

i. Injustice, such as inequity, persecution, discrimination, marginalization and denial of rights.
ii. Illegitimacy of the regime, as when it comes to power through the seizure of power, electoral fraud, tyranny or corruption.
iii. Longing for freedom and self-determination.
iv. Poverty, especially when the regime is deemed to be weak and incompetent and incapable to protect the poor masses amid plenty.
v. Weakness of government.

vi. Ideological influences.
vii. Militarisation of the society due to a long reign of the military.
viii. Lack of employment opportunities for the ever-teeming school leavers.
ix. Increasing circulation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs).

The Rise of Boko Haram

Boko Haram official name is known as Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad which means "People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad". The sect's headquarters is located in the North-Eastern city of Maiduguri in Northern Nigeria. Boko Haram was formed by a charismatic Muslim cleric who was known as Mohammed Yusuf in the year 2002 in Maiduguri. He set up a religious centre that included a mosque and an Islamic school where several poor Muslim families from across Nigeria and as well as neighbouring countries enrolled their children at the school. The school becomes a primary recruiting place that produces armed gangs united in thoughts, in opinion and vision about their desire. It is however pertinent to note that the school produces two groups using the Boko Haram front to unleash mayhem on the people. The group is made up of the 'poor group and those with religious colouration. The poor group seems to have deep social and economic grievances against Nigeria state (Tikhon, 2011), while on the other hand, the second group have clear religious vision'. All of which was geared against the foundation of the political/religious and economic practices of the Nigerian state. In 2009, Boko Haram became a common platform and officially announced its presence through a spate of attacks on police stations and other government buildings in Maiduguri following the killing of her leader and other comrades. Several other places were/have been attacked which includes religious centres, government buildings, communities, etc. Foreign missions were also not left out; the United Nations (UN) headquarters in Abuja was attacked.

Boko Haram is a militant Islamist group who are influenced by the Quranic phrase which says that "anyone who is not governed by what Allah has revealed is among the transgressors and are mostly referred to as infidels". The word Boko is the Hausa language which refers to 'education' while Haram is an Arabic word that means 'forbidden'. Hence, to this sect, the promotion of any version rather than Islam is considered haram or forbidden. They are of believing that contemporary Nigeria's political practice and all associated western civilization including education, social beliefs and practices deserve a jihad (Holy War). This ideology/philosophy obviously could be the reason or explains attacks on all symbols of western civilization in Nigeria by the sect. It also explains the political vision and desire of this group for the Islamic State of Nigeria and the total enthronement of sharia rules and practices. The new wave of Boko Haram activities is climaxed by a more sophisticated and deadly group by the day, the group now operates more violently with vigorous political language.

Below is the breakdown summary of their activities:

i. Founded in 2002
ii. Initially focused on opposing Western education
iii. Launched military operations in 2009
iv. Gained attention in 2014 with Chibok kidnappings
v. Pledged allegiance to Islamic State in 2015
vi. Split into two factions in 2016

Boko Haram Insurgency and Responses by the Nigeria Government

The current insurgency in Nigeria and Northern Nigeria particularly is driven by two forces which are the local and external forces. Domestically, the economy of Northern Nigeria is in shambles and has since the return of democracy especially from 2009 sustained a large pool of economic backwardness and the people within the area unable to tap the potentials of the area as they use to since the ugly menace (Boko Haram) showed its face. The activities of the Boko Haram sect have created an atmosphere of siege and desolation in most parts of the north (Kwanashie, 2013:141-180). On the other hand, poverty and economic marginalization do not automatically result inthe insurgency, facts from history suggest that the existence of economic marginalization and the economic sector provides ample manpower for insurgency. Based on the fundamentalist ideology, a striking factor in today's insurgencies throughout Africa is the growth in the number of terrorist groups. One continues to question the ruthlessness in their attacks, their audacity and how sophisticated they are as well the dexterity with which they operate are in no doubt taken security operatives in Africa by surprise, even though; history have shown that the most difficult war to engage in is the gorilla war type. Occasionally, once they lodge attacks, people are killed, maimed, kidnapped, displaced and government/individuals or cooperate facilities wrecked. By this, has exacerbated poverty, brought massive human suffering, wrecked economic activities, discourage agricultural activities and destroyed property worth millions. Kwanashie (2013:141-180) states that, it is pathetic to state that the society has lost confidence in the system, following the emergence of different insurgent groups in Nigeria that have emerged at different points especially in the fourth republic and assumed in different forms with different Modes of Operandi. Examples of the insurgent groups of the present time are the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and the Movement for Sunna Lidda'awa Wal Jihad, which means 'Brethren of Sunni United in the Pursuit of Holy War', popularly referred to as Boko Haram, meaning 'Western education is forbidden, and others.

At the early stage of the Boko Haram insurgency, it is said that, the government of Nigerian handled the issue with laxity and treated it lightly and envisage it as a minor uprising that would disappear within the shortest time. As at when the Nigerian police force was deployed to curb the Boko Haram menace, they had already gained root and perpetuating mayhem on the defenseless citizens. To Eze (2014), the turn of events necessitated the deployment of combatant soldiers to show how worse the situation had gone out of hand. Fawole (2013:8-13), asserts that the response of the government to the Boko Haram insurgency has not been coordinated and focused; the government has moved between the use of force, appeasement, amnesty, and negotiation in a bid to curb the insurgency. Since the return of democracy in 1999, the activities of the sect, especially from 2009, have constituted a major security challenge and threat to the north and the nation at large and have made northern Nigeria, especially the northeast, the most dangerous region of the country to live in. The activities of the sect particularly on attacks carried out have mainly targeted the government, her institutions and officials, mosque, churches, motor parks, market, etc.; and countless numbers of innocent citizens have been rendered homeless, refugees in their land by the Boko Haram sect which has been devastated so far. The activities of the sect especially at the early years of the fourth republic which basically was the incessant bombings of churches in the north, particularly in states like; Bornu, Yobe and Adamawa and partially in Abuja, Jos, Kaduna and Kano, the killings and kidnappings of mostly the Christian faithful's and recently the Muslim faithful in states such as Niger, Zamfara, Kaduna, Sokoto, etc., has pitched Christians and Muslims against each other. The attacks carried out by the sects is not restricted to the north or the

nation alone, but their violent activities have also assumed an international dimension with the kidnappings and brutal killings of some Europeans as well as bombing the UN building in Nigeria (Nwala, 2013:27-62).

After the 2015 elections, the government became apprehensive about the activities of the Boko Haram sect. The government became more serious and sort for cooperating with neighbouring states such as; Cameroon, Chad, and Niger to form a multinational force backed by the African Union, the European Union, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States incurbing the sects' activities (Smith, 2015). As a result of this giant step by the Nigerian government, an integrated military approach, comprising Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger, Chad and of recent Benin, is mounting counter-attacks on the sect (Yakohene, 2015:52-56). It is worth mentioning that, the activities of the sect do not only affect the Nigerian state but also constitute a big problem to the neighbouring states with which the country shares boundary with especially from the northern axis. The attempt put in place by the governments to grant amnesty to Boko Haram members was rejected by its then-current leader Abubakar Shekau and an attempt to negotiate in a non-violent manner also backfired as well as Sheik Abubakar Gumi's effort to push for a truce between Nigeria government especially the government of Zamfara did not yield a positive result.

Yakohene (2015:52-56), further stated that, in a bid to confront and end the activities of the sect, a special Joint Task Force Code-namedOperation Restore Order (JTF ORO) was established to eliminate the threat posed by Boko Haram, this effort recorded some successes as put by; Yakohene. The measures applied by the Nigerian Government through the military JTF, has not been effective andare far from restoring peace in the areas. The killing of Boko Haram terrorists through JTF attacks as a measure used as a major counter-terrorism strategy had grievous and worrisome side effects. Such side effects include counter-attacks by the group upon innocent villages/villagers. Despite the attacks on the sects, it is worrisome that the membership strength of the Boko Haram group appears to be on the increase daily (Egbue, et'al 2015:13-29).President Muhammadu Buhari on the 13thof August, announced that he was setting a three-month deadline for the defeat of defeat Boko Haram. President Buhari embarked on a solution-seeking process, he aligned with his neighbours and brought Benin into the fold by meeting its leadership. President Buhari ensured the release of money to the Nigerian Army to make adequate preparation and he well directed that the military command and control centre be relocated from the capital Abuja to Maiduguri the main city and the heart of the insurgency for more effectiveness and to be more proactive until the conflict is resolved (Achodo, 2019).

Fawole (2013:8-13) submitted that; defeating the Boko Haram sect or any insurgency group has been proven historically to be very difficult. The experience in many countries that had/have faced the insurgency monster, such as Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Peru, Colombia, Spain, Afghanistan, Iraq and Israel, etc., clearly shows that an army or no army has ever defeated a guerrilla insurgency.

Nigeria's External Image

The insecurity problem caused by the deadly sect Boko Haram, though envisaged as an internal crisis, it has a serious impact on Nigeria's image externally. Boko Haram insurgency and the propagation of its ideas have been linked with the Al-Qaeda terrorist group and a

militant armed network for a decade now. It is believed that the Al-Qaeda sect is the greatest financier of the activities of the Boko Haram sect in Nigeria (The Guardian, 2012:2).Though, no evidence to have proven to advance and substantiate the assertion but the mode of Operandi, foundation, philosophy, etc., of the Boko Haram sect have been pointed to as shreds of evidence of its link to the Al-Qaeda sect. In 2014, Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan even went so far as calling Boko HarāmAl-Qaeda in West Africa. If this assertion is true, then; the possible relationship between the two sects makes Nigeria a dangerous state where terrorism strives. A close evaluation of the attacks on foreign missions in Nigeria, kidnapping, hijacking and bombing, makes Nigeria look laughable and irresponsible among the comity of nation. The way and manner the insurgency is handled by the Nigerian government appeared to the foreign countries that the sect is being accommodated by the state and the political class. The seeming lackadaisical attitude of which the sect is managed by the ruling class and its inability to reach for the ultimate solution and credible but enduring options to resolve the insecurity crisis creates an unsafe picture of a country dreaded by the foreign investors and peace-loving citizens of other countries. The implication of this is that Nigeria is partly a picture of a failed nation and has been described as an unsafe state by the United States of America. The attitudes of Nigeria's political class and the state must have been responsible for the conclusion made on Nigeria by the USA and thus; the U.S warned of its reduction of the U.S missions' staff strength in Nigeria. Another image crisis is the congressional report released in November 2011 which warned that Boko Haram was an "emerging threat" to the U.S and its interest in Nigeria, while the British have been skeptical on her response to the insurgency (Times International, 2012:6). Though the British have not officially made any form of condemnation on that, it has as well not failed to warn its citizens on Nigeria's insecurity. On the other hand, Nigerians have demonstrated a lack of trust and confidence on the part of the ruling class. The Boko Haram insurgency underscores the relevance of the Nigerian state and the weakness of her security apparatus as well the weakness in leadership, this insensitivity by the Nigerian government have also increased the fears of Nigerians and the global community in general. The invitation by the Boko Haram sect to the Nigerian government and few statesmen to dialogue and stating the basis and the place of the dialogue was accompanied by threats. The invitation read thus; "We are by this letter of invitation to our respected elders proving to the government that we are not joking with the government, we are awaiting the response of those concerned" (The Punch, 2012:1). The situation depicts a picture of a caged, battered and nurtured state at the mercy of a syndicate group, which to a large extent explains the current downwards in economic/agricultural activities in the state and fear of investors to invest in the country especially the areas caught by the web of the insurgency. The height of it all was the speech of the Canadian Prime Minister which appears to be worrisome. In his word (Canadian Prime Minister) he asserts that; "We cannot allow our citizens to be killed unwarrantedly, the global community must rise to this challenge" (Times International, 2012:6).

On 17 May 2014, the presidents of Benin, Chad, Cameroon, Nigeria and Niger met for a summit in Paris and agreed to combat Boko Harām on a coordinated basis, sharing in particular surveillance and intelligence gathering. Goodluck Jonathan and Chadian counterpart, Idriss Deby both declared total war on Boko Harām. Western nations, including Britain, France, Israel, and the United States had also pledged support including technical expertise and training.

The invitation to the global community to help Nigeria curtail the Boko Haram menace clearly explains the global vote of no confidence on the Nigerian state ability to curb or stop the activities of this sect.

Conclusion

The insecurity situation in Northern Nigeria is a major problem to the entire nation that calls for collective responsibility to fight it. To confront the insecurity problem requires sincerity of purpose and undivided commitment on the part of the leadership of the country. Furthermore, the issue of security should be the concern of everybody both the leaders and the led and all are beckoned to contribute to its sustenance. Reliable and genuine information from citizens to the government is required and the safety of the informants should be guaranteed by the government. Again, the government should as a matter of urgency listen to the people and address them without delay all the contentious issues are being raised which contributed to insecurity because responsible leadership brings about responsible followership.

For over a decade of a fierce battle between the Nigerian army and the Boko Haram sect, it has been difficult for the Nigerian militarily to defeat the Boko Haram insurgency even with the logistical support coming from the neighbouring countries (Mbombo, 2015) and the physical support of the Chadian Soldiers. The effectiveness of the military campaign against the Boko Haram sect between 2015-2017 has improved drastically and the Nigerian Government managed to retake territories from Boko Haram that were captured by the sect, forcing the group to retreat to more marginal areas, though; the Nigerian Military has been able to struggle to effectively maintain and hold unto the retaken (recaptured) territories. The continued attacks by the sect have proven against the words of the former chief of Army staff "LT. Gen. Yusuf Buratai" that the sect had been tactically defeated. The Boko Haram sect has been the deadliest in the history of Nigeria and particularly the north. The way of its operations and attack, the highly sophisticated nature of the group and the doggedness of the group members to champion the activities of the group explains the group's resilience and ruthlessness.

It is therefore the submission of this research work that, the government should do more to redeem the image of Nigeria before the comity of nations as against what it is assumed or perceive is the state of Nigeria today.

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