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INCUBATION OF TERRORISM IN NIGERIA: THE BOKO HARAM EXPERIENCE.

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Abstract
The resilience and the violent rise of the jihadist group Boko Haram pose challenges that are enormous: humanitarian, governance, security and many more. The desire to embrace the sharia legal system and do away with a secular system of governance, gave rise to the Boko Haram phenomenon with its radicalization. Boko Haram is against democracy and wages war principally against everything western and un-Islamic; this is in order to enthrone Islam. The finding of this paper reveals, inter alia, that it is precisely due to the strategic blunders and the wrong steps taken by the Nigerian government that the current resurgence of the insurgency in the North-East lingers on, especially when this movement was at its incubating stage. The methodology adopted in this work is historic-descriptive which means that the Boko Haram terrorist movement has been carefully studied and critically analyzed based on its impact, brutality, ferocity, ruthlessness and disrespect for the human person
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***Keywords*: Incubation, Terrorism, Insurgency, Boko Haram, Nigeria.**

INTRODUCTION

The fight against Boko-Haram insurgency remains one of the deadliest security challenges in Nigeria. This Islamic militant group has defied and contended the major military offensive by the Nigerian government and her international allies. This conflict has been lethal with the civilian populace, and the motif behind this Boko-Haram onslaught is nothing but the establishment of an Islamic state.

Boko Haram is a concretization of absolute negativism, desolate positivism, a constant conquest of self and demonstration of concretized threats and serious challenge to Nigeria's security. Unless the government develops and enacts potent, strategic plans against the injustice that pilot much of the troubles and consciously tackle insecurity, Boko-Haram would continue to impact colossal damage on the people and on a large part of the country. It seems that the government's reaction is grossly military while the tactical political volition to do more than that military push seems illusive.

Origin of the Movement

Boko-Haram, a sect claiming to act in the name of Islam took shape in Maiduguri the north-eastern Nigeria in the early 2005. The group attracted support but also became notorious for its contention and advocacy that western education is sinful. On account of this, it became arguably prohibited legally by Islam because of their view as described by Thurston (2019:1), thus:

> Western-style of education belonged to a larger, evil system. That system included multiparty, democracy, secular government, constitutionalism, and "manmade laws". For Boko-Haram, all these institutions are not just un-Islamic but anti-Islamic.

The word "Boko Haram" is a coinage from the local people it is a combination of the Hausa word "Boko" which means literally "western education" and "Haram" an Arabic word figuratively meaning "sin" or "forbidden". This group prefers to be known and identified by their Arabic name *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda' await Wal-jihad* "people committed to propagation of prophet's teachings and Jihad: It was founded by Muhammed Yusuf in 2001. Some however argue that the sect was actually

formed in 1995 and was known and identified then as *Sahaba*. The group was opposed as it claims to western civilization which includes western education and the secularization of the Nigerian state".

As early as 2009, this group conducted its affairs peacefully until the government clampdown in 2009 in which about eight hundred of their members were killed including their leader Muhammed Yusuf, who was later killed while in police custody. The radicalization of this movement began with the government clampdown and onslaught.

Incubation of the Boko Haram Terrorist Group

Nigerians have many lessons to learn with the real history of the country. The levels of grievances, injuries and wounds that the communities carry are not unconnected to this. There is need to understand why things in Nigeria have not worked out; why the national integration and project development have not made progress and why the overall negative impacts of these failures have created such an angry factitious and seemingly frustrated society. In the light of this, we must seek to understand how Nigeria found herself where she is now with so many years of retrogressive development indices. Nigeria has become such a decimated and fractured country. According to Ene (2011:63):

> Nigerian political leaders,… often articulate visions in colourful and expensive development plans, policies, programmes, etc but mostly for chanting. They are chicken-hearted in the implementation of these plans; except to enrich cronies, political stooges and royal choristers or sycophants. At the end of the tenure, no actualization of the vision and no regrets for the failure; no review, no direction. Yet such a non performing leader often aspires to continue in office even after his tenure has expired. If and when, he leaves or steps aside or is forced out of office, the successor jettisons some of the visions of the previous leader(s), adds to the list and repeats the circle of chanting vision slogans for inaction.

He may even abandon all the programmes of the previous leaders for his new ones or panel-beat them to feign some air of originality, ingenuity and sagacity. The question now is what could be done to Nigeria's image once more; especially regarding our collective wills that has been tested severely and decimated by the Boko Haram Insurgency.

This crisis dragged on because of wrong approach and analysis arising from blind prejudice, ignorance and apathy. Nigerians did not allow themselves to be led by facts and evidence when this catastrophe broke out, rather this crisis was personalized by people from the South-South as a rankle on their son Goodluck Jonathan who was then the President of the country. The North on the other hand was obsessed and possessed with the conviction that Boko Haram was the product and outcome from defeated and frustrated politicians who have refused to accept and live with their defeat. The targeting of churches of course did not help the situation. The general conviction that General Buhari has been cheated at the polls and his adherents were seeking revenge was untruthful and insincere. In the words of Kukah (2014:27):

> Clearly, it may not really be true to say that the General necessarily had a hand in the crises, but matters were not helped by the fact that the General did not immediately condemn the activities of this evil group. As it is with our country, time passed and more and more people dug themselves into these fault lines. We lost time and allowed the group to take advantage of the climate of fractiousness and bickering among the elite.

On the other hand, the Northern region may have created the impression to a younger generation of Northern Muslims that somehow by holding unto power for over a thirty year period that power belonged to the North; not just the north but the Muslim North. Beyond the manipulations of the ignorance of their people, for whatever reasons, unfortunately this power has hardly done anything positive for the ordinary people of the area. In Nigeria, the north has the greatest number of poor people. Beyond the superficialities of sponsoring thousands of pilgrims to Mecca and the building of Mosques,

the region has remained in darkness, poverty and destitution. Losing this power perhaps for its symbolic benefit may have generated a psychological sense of estrangement, alienation and shame. The sense of losing this power could be a generating force as well for terrorism. According to Johnson (2011:3):

> Many northern Nigerians view the presidency of Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian, as illegitimate, arguing that it ignored the ruling parties (People Democratic Party PDP) informal power rotation which was attested to by the former National Security Adviser to Jonathan who said that the root cause of Boko Haram was the rocking of the zoning arrangement by the PDP itself.

Secondly, a leadership vacuum has been exploited by the Boko Haram that has existed in the north (among the *Ulama*). The north has survived by drawing her strength from the legacy claims of the leaders of the caliphate. They have not however paid much attention to the timely thought and brilliant words of advice that their ancestors offered them. For example, the founder of the caliphate, Othman Dan Fodio, cautioned the people that a nation cannot live with injustice but can live with unbelief. His son Mohammad Bello also warned that:

> "… most of the evil that befalls the state comes from the appointment of officers who are anxious to have the appointment because none would be keen on such but a thief in the garb of a hermit and a fax in the guise of a pious worshipper… whenever I was faced with a problem in my realm, I found out that the cause was the injustice of the governors (Hammid Bobboyi, 2011: 16).

It is an indubitable fact that Nigerians are reaping what they sowed over the years. Successive governments set the standard of leadership so low that the legacy of British colonialism was literally eroded by corruption. In a very strange way public life has lost its glory. With these turn of events the ordinary citizens have come to expect so little from the civil service. The brother of Dan Fodio, Abdullahi himself addressed the situation thus, "Whoever has wealth above what he earns from his work, the leader shall confiscate and restore it to the treasury" (Hamid Bobboyi: principles of leadership 2011: 91).

The inspirations of these people we often refer to as fanatics and extremists were often drawn from these statements of their founding fathers. These their elites and politicians have not read or are not prepared to tolerate when the deeds of their leaders were found to be in contrast with the injunctions of these founding fathers of the caliphate; the ordinary Muslims are accustomed to rebel against this injustice. This security casualty is then suffered by the rest of Nigeria. For the ordinary Muslim then, the real source of annoyance has always been to a great extent their own elites who are happy that Christians and the Nigerian state suffer a security casualty and colossal damage. It is this phobia that their own people might rage against them that made them to be quiet and reluctant in condemning the Boko Haram victimization in the face of this crisis and their excesses.

It is an indubitable fact that history counts a lot for any nation. The future is in jeopardy, without a proper understanding of the past. Kukah (2014:33) citing Richard Evan (1999:42) in his book, *In Defense of History* wrote that: Historians should not judge the past in moral terms, their purpose is rather to understand how the past contributed to human progress.

Another detrimental thought pattern is the fact that Nigerians like to think in negative terms of their country and its past as if somehow no leader has done anything positive worth celebrating and remembering. There is hardly across the board any former head of state that commands the required respect of Nigerians. Nigerians' views are tainted over their former public office holders by selfish, self-serving assessments, ethnic, clannish, regional or religious considerations. Nigerians must develop the capacity of managing the good, the bad and the ugly that come out of history since history is a highly contested terrain. Nigerians account of themselves has become incestuous and has made it impossible for her citizens to create an enviable country, a Nigeria they could be proud of. The endless talk about marginalization in Nigeria has grown up from this lack of collective narrative. Primordial sentiments which we invoke to justify why we must hate each other often cloud national discussion among Nigerians. This is why northerners blame southerners, Muslims blame Christians and vice versa.

Nigerians have no more energy left to defend her nation, this is the result and why undesirable elements like the Boko Haram among others have hijacked and kept the country at a standstill.

The problem with the leadership structure in Nigeria is that politics is seen as the factors for access to public life and god-fatherism. This is because public life in Nigeria is measured and valued within the context of what one could amass of the wealth of the country and the ability to help oneself, tribes, kinsmen and women. This entails creating a government that is solely for one's kinsmen and women. It is the transferring of this baton in a long relay race of incompetence in government, injustice, social malaise and gross irresponsibility that is called Boko Haram today. Succinctly Kukah (2014:36) expressed it thus:

> Yesterday, it was Odua People's Congress who burnt, killed and ended up getting a President Obasanjo. Today, the Niger Delta think President Jonathan is a reward for their struggles. Why will Boko Haram not think that it is only violence that will give them a president or an Islamic state?

This system of thought as tragic as it is, cannot go on this way endlessly. Nigerians have to wake up from their political slumber and malaise.

The Government's Response

It may be due to the strategic blunders of the Nigerian government that the current resurgence of the insurgency in the North-east lingers on. This is the observation and the evaluation of some security experts familiar with the dynamics of the Boko Haram conflict.

The insurgents are helped to wax stronger by the wrong steps taken. This wrong step helps in frustrating the effort of the military. The opinions of some individuals familiar with the ongoing counterinsurgency operation in the North-East of Nigeria, on why Boko-Haram still carry out surprising attacks despite official claims that the group has been subdued was due to this tactical and ruinous error of the government.

In their opinion the Nigerian government had not helped matters in the counterinsurgency efforts with the Boko-Haram. It was alleged that the government exchanged some captured commanders of the Boko-Haram and money to secure the freedom of the one hundred and seven school girls of Chibok, the three university of Maiduguri oil explorers and the ten brome women. It was alleged that ransom was paid by the Nigerian government to Boko-Haram for some of the kidnapped victims. The government has not yet responded to these allegations. But, it has in the past hinted at a prisoner swap. The government was commended by Nigerians for the release of these victims, but the ransom they paid for this may have strengthened this terrorist group. Ahmed, a former state Director of the Department of Security Services (DSS) in Borno saw this negotiation with this terrorist organization as:

> "a major misstep in the war against Boko-Haram" … other countries with similar but milder terror problems met out commensurate punishments including death to terror suspects in custody, here we trade them by releasing Boko-Haram suspects.(Haruna Abudkareem, 2018:2).

In the operation he led as the director of DSS during his tenure in Borno State. He was able to arrest with his men some leaders of the Boko-Haram sect. He was also behind the founding and the establishment of, what is known today as the Civilian JTF (Civilian Joint Task Force). Buttressing this fact further he says:

> I weep seeing how the gains of such efforts are being wasted by the current managers of the countries security. Over 400 BH (Boko-Haram) suspects in Kainji detention facility were released by a local court in the area recently… Is this how the war will be won? Almost all the commanders in the DSS custody-dreaded criminals that we risked our lives to apprehend over the years-have been evacuated and traded under the guise of securing the release of Chibok girls… the recent abductions by Boko Haram are another avenue cheaply

> given to Boko Haram commanders to generate more cash in hard currencies from the federal government which the insurgents could use to further arm themselves. Dapchi girls will further fetch more Euros to the current callous commanders (of Boko Haram) and security managers, who have no sincerity of purpose, (Abudkareem Haruna, 2018:2).

Through its several operations in the North-East, the military succeeded in blocking all the sources and channels of funding for Boko-Haram. But, the federal government that it is working for is spoon feeding the starving insurgents with another hand. This supply sources and funding may have been blocked, now they are creating ways to generate more funding, since they know the Nigerian Government is negotiating with them. One of the easiest ways to generate this funding is through kidnapping so that is why kidnapping would be the end point in their attacks. This is something in the past they ordinarily would not have done. Rather than this questionable and kangaroo negotiation on the part of the government with the Boko Haram insurgents, they could as well leverage on this open window of communication to advance a more solid dialogue and possibly negotiate a deal to end the insurgency.

In the global measures, in addressing terrorism, the address of grievances of affected communities is the number one measure, and sadly, the Nigerian government has done nothing in this regard. In any negotiation, the starting point has always been to show that one has addressed grievances, deprivation, poverty and other socio-economic issues that have been troubling the area affected. To this end, Kabiru (2008:1) opined that:

> In Borno, the poverty level is extremely high, illiteracy as well as lack of education is significantly high amongst the youth, so these are the kind of issues you use in negotiating apart from other pecuniary benefits that the leadership of the group may have.

People suspect the current state of insecurity in the country especially in the North-East as beneficial to some individuals in government. There are some elements within the government unfortunately, as it is being suspected, including the Nigerian military who for reasons best known to them, that do not want this insurgency to end. This may be as a result of lack of proper comprehension of the aggressive nature of this conflict or for personal benefits. But, it is an indubitable fact that no counterinsurgency operation is run exclusively by the military. Another angle to be explored is the fact that since there is already a channel of communication, between the government and the Boko Haram such communication should extend to include broad negotiation towards ending the insurgency.

Recommendations

1. Government should look into the root cause of the problem that gave rise to this insurgency and find the best way to address this injustice. In this way, the insurgency would be countered.
2. The federal government should try to reach out to the leaders of the Boko-Haram sect and negotiate with them the possibility of their laying down their arms; sadly the Nigerian government has not done this.
3. The current state of insurgency in the country continues to linger on because some people, including government officials and the military seem to be benefiting from the crises. These individuals should be fished out by the government and summarily dealt with.
4. A special investigative task force of detectives should be set up by the government. They should be tasked to carry on the investigative role as to the people connected with the Boko-Haram's continued existence, funding, support etc. With this there would be a head way to the end of this insurgency.
5. The military should be adequately trained on counter insurgency and as well on a deeper understanding of the dynamics behind the conflict.
6. Moslem leaders should speak against this terrorism so as to put in check the activities of their followers in this regard.

Conclusion

The fight against the insurgency in Nigeria lingers on arguably because of the government's indirect sustenance of the insurgency through her epileptic response and lack of tactical approach. The government should, therefore, rise up to this challenge by seeing that the funds they provided for the fighting of this battle is adequately and properly channeled to the right source. The government should as well re-trace her steps in exchanging captured Boko Haram fighters or paying ransoms for captured civilians rather they should see to the safety of the people the govern and with this achievement, Boko Haram would be a concluded issue in Nigeria.

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