Insurgency and Terrorism in Nigeria: A Threat to National Security

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Abstract

Global terrorism is extreme both in its lack of realistic goals and in its cynical exploitation of the vulnerability of complex systems. There is no disputing the fact that terrorism has increasingly become widespread criminal violence as actors in different countries across the globe have their own unique ways of perpetrating the act. While some actors take to bombing and hyacking of airlines, some in other countries device the use of air missles, some insurgents settle with hostage taking, abduction, kidnapping and bombing of multinational oil pipelines. Nigeria, is a multi-religious, multi ethics and multi cultural society with enormous potentials for economic and social background. However, the country has been entwined with intense conflicts and violence from its earliest time under the colonial rule and has made progress and developments to elude the country. Nigeria has faced unprecedented worrisome security challenge. In recent years, the democratization process and the stability of the country are visibly jeopardized by the high level of violence resulting from political, ethnic and religious conflicts as well as organized violent crimes, in almost all states of the federation. Perhaps, there was no other time since the civil war ended that the Nigeria state was seriously engulfed in perennial security challenges that threaten the very foundation of the country than in the last few years. Today, Nigerian is currently entangled in the web of combustible lingering ethnic and religious conflicts, and urgently in need of proactive public policies, agents of peace, and conflict managers. This paper tries to highlight some acts of insurgency and terrorism in Nigeria and the effects on Nigeria national security. For the safety of lives and properties of Nigerians, this paper calls for an overhaul of governance in Nigeria, and the intricate link between governance, democratization and violent conflicts in the country bearings in mind the diffusion of bottled-up anger since the emergence of the present civil rule in 1999.

Key words: Insurgency, terrorism, violence, warfare, sabotage, guerrilla and security.

Introduction:

Nigeria holds a strategic place in the African continent and the global community. This is not unconnected with the fact that Nigeria is a diplomatic force in West African and a major player in African politics. Nigeria is a multi religious, multi ethnic and multi-cultural society with enormous potentials for economic and social development. As at 2014, Nigeria surpassed South Africa as the continent largest economy. Bellying tremedous resources with a maximum crude oil production capacity of 2.5 million barrels per day, Nigeria ranks as Africa's largest producer of oil and the sixth largest oil producing nation in the world. The Nigerian society has been faced with myriads of problems. As Okene (2010) puts "it the prevalence of political gargsterism ethnic poaching of maritime resources, illegal drug dealing and alms trafficking, human kidnapping, rapacious corruption and financial mismanagement are manifestations of failure of national security". Perhaps, there was no other time since the civil war era that Nigeria state was seriously engulfed in perennial, security challenges that threaten the very foundation of the country than in the last few years. Omilusi (2016).

It should be noted that there are different facilitators of insecurity in Nigeria today, among which are porous borders, social inequality, poverty, joblessness, and widespread availability of illegal alms and light weapons. All these therefore, are indices for measuring that security of a state is threatened. All the indices basically meant insecurity, a threat to peaceful coexistence, mitigation of democratic governance and a high barrier to socio political and economic integration which are pre-requisites to growth and development of a state.

Nigerian today, is currently entangled in the web of combustible lingering ethic and religious conflicts, which has snowbulled into insurgency and terrorism. This has permeated the entire landscape and there seems to be no solution in sight. Even the expectation that these will be resolved within a framework of genuine democratic governance and an enlightened and unfettered civil society that is able to offer an analytic exploitation of the historical, political, economic, religious and ethnic dimension of insurgency with a view to resolving the protracted issues of insecurity is defeated.

It is pertinent to clarify some key words used in their paper to explain different forms of irregular warfare that are now associated with our contemporary world. Kinnal (2011) admits that the two concepts of insurgency and terrorism are similar, yet different. Tactic and strategies such as terrorism guerilla welfare, insurgency and revolutionary warfare all come under the category of irregular warfare. A variety of terms like rural insurgency, urban insurgency, militancy subversion, sabotage, terrorism and guerilla and proxy wars are essentially part of a cauldron called low intensity conflict (LIC) which is an armed conflict for political purpose Omilusi (2016).

Insurgency is a technology of rebellion through guerilla warfare that has been successfully used in challenging regime domination in many countries. Gompert and Gordon (2008) explain, that all types of insurgencies have certain common characteristics. It is an armed resistance against governmental authority, for purposes like resisting the imposition of legal constraints and over throwing or weakening the government. Insurgency is often referred to as domestic politics Javed (2013). Insurgents often launch their anger on the state, targeting civilians and infrastructures, Liolio (2013). While terrorism is generally understood as an organized violent act by non-state actors against unarmed civilians to create mass fears in a targeted state. Terrorism is also committed by a sovereign country or a governments both domestically and internationally. In other words, states can and have been terrorists. States can use force or the threat of force, without declaring war to terrorize citizens and achieve a political goal. Germany, under Nazi has been described in this way, States can also participate in international terrorism by proxy.

Security is the state of being secure or free from danger or risk. It is a situation where either an individual, social group, or geopolitical entity is protected or defended against any form of danger, espionage or attack of any sort, internally or externally Okene (2010). Basically, there are two types of security but the crux of this study is on National security. Imobigbe (1990) sees security as an absence to those tendencies which could undermine internal cohesion and cooperate existence of the state and its ability to maintain vital institutions for the promotion of its core values and social political and economic objectives as well as meet the legitimate aspirations of the people.

Conflict on the other hand is a situation or condition of disharmony in an interaction process. Conflict erupts when interest of various groups clashes. Violence is a fluid concept which could take several forms: Physical, psychological, social, political and even culture. Violence involves threat or actual execution of acts which have actual or potential capacity to inflict physical, emotions and psychological injury on a person or group of persons (Short & Wolfgang, (1992) Violence is inevitable when the accommodation structures breakdown. This paper therefore focuses on the persistent acts of terrorism and insurgency that have become a clog in the attempt of nationhood despite democratization with a view to demysitifying its causes, with solutions proffered.

Forms of Violence in Nigeria:

The forms of violence in the country according to Merz (2010) can be roughly divided into four categories, the boundaries of which naturally overlap.

(1) Insurgencies and conflicts over resources mostly concentrated in the Niger Delta;
(2) Communal violence between ethnic and other social groups;
(3) Political violence mostly in the context of election;
(4) Violent crimes and dysfunctional security sector

Indeed, Nigeria internal security has been significantly undermined by violent activities of armed non state actors, largely made up of radicalized youth groups as foot soldiers and prominent among these groups are:

(1) Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)
(2) The Odua People Congress (OPC)
(3) The Arewa Peoples Congress (APC)
(4) Bakassi Boys, Egbesu Boys, the Movement for the Actualization of the sovereign state of Biafra (MASSSOB) and more recently Boko Haram, Ansani Kala Kato and Ombatse among others (CLEEN Foundation, 2014).

These ethics militants have contributed to the cycle of violence over the years. They have a political element to them and are often seen as self defence by particular ethnic – religious communities. The fact is that many of our ethnics militias and separatist groups in Nigeria are proof that there are many grievances and injustices in the system, Firsing (2012).

The first known insurgency or terrorism attempt in Nigeria may be credited to the movement to liberate the Niger Delta people led by Major Isaac Jasper Adaka Boro. He belonged to the Ijaw ethnic extraction in the Niger Delta. At the time of his rebellion, he was a student at the University of Nigeria Nsukka. His complaint was against the extraction exploitation of oil and gas resources in the Niger Delta region by both the federal and regional governments in total disregard of the citizens of the area. Boro formed the Niger Delta Volunteer force (NDVF) an armed military group composed of one hundred and fifty of his kinsmen. He firmly believed that the people of the region deserved a more equitable share of the wealth which accured from the oil.

After the Nigerian Civil war ended, several implication for the struggle for the Niger Delta ethnic minorities have surfaced. These included the increased transfer and centralization of the control of oil revenues from the region to the federal military government, the OPEC - led oil loom of the 1970s, the transfer of the ownership of oil rich lands from local communities to the federal and state governments and the vast expansion in local oil production and its effect on the fragile Niger Delta environment. This provided a background for agitation by the ethnic minorities that felt that the federal military government had short charged them, after they supported it during the civil war only for them to loose access to a considerable proportion of the land and oil produced from their region.

Rather than having a right to 50% of oil revenues on the basis of derivation principle of revenue allocation, it was progressively reduced till it got to a mere 3% in the early 1980s. In its place, population size and need were used, giving the greater share of the oil to the non oil producing ethnic majority groups from other parts of the country, who also were seen as occupying the most lucrative political offices as well as high positions in the

country in the Nigerian oil industry. By the late 1970s, various ethnic minority identity and elite groups had begun to mobilize support for a peaceful protest against the activities of oil companies and neglect by the government. These took the forms of petitions, reports and articles in local newspapers Obi (2009).

Despite the seeming/prevailing calmness in the region at the moment, as regards the issues of terrorism, the outstanding issue of resource control and allocation, poverty alleviation and environmental security remain potential sources of explosive situations. Inevitably, while the amnesty for and rehabilitation of the Niger Delta militants were beginning to mitigate the situation in the country, Little did we know that a more violent, vampire like dreaded movement called Boko Haram began. Folarin and Oviasogie (2013). The Boko Haram uprising has proved more ferocious than the Niger Delta militancy by deploying the lethal strategy of suicide bombing – hitherto unknown in the country. Thousands of people have been killed and properties worth millions of naira have been destroyed since 2009 when Boko Haram first appeared. Okaro (2014). Before 2009 Boko Haram first appeared, there was the maitasine rebellion which the Obasanjo government succeeded in putting down largely through the application of force. But the underlying problem that produced Maitasine in the North was not really addressed. Boko Haram is the direct successor of Maitasine.

Despite Boko Haram clandestine nature the largely coordinated pattern of attacks documented in the Human Rights watch (2012) report suggest a degree of coordination and organizational structure within the group. Although there is no conclusive link with Jihadist movement inside Nigeria, the modus operandi of the sect fashioned after the Taliban in Afghanisitan has generated some curiousity. Boko Haram has attacked a variety of groups relating security agents, Christians, traditional rulers, politicians, travelers and lately anyone who is not a member (Onuoha 2014). The group came into the worlds reckoning in August 2011 when it bombed the UN compound in Abuja, killing twenty three people.

Today, Nigeria records the world's highest causalities from Terrorist attacks per day with an average of 24 deaths higher than Iraq and Somalia according to recent survey by Mapple soft a U.K. based risk analytical company. Bombings, abduction and a scorched earth policy of burning down entire villages and killing the inhabitants are some of the violent techniques used by the extremist group Olukoya (2014). These deadly bombings and brazen kidnapping are the hall mark of the insurgent group, which terrorize local populations and regularly engage the Nigerian military in bloody combat.

Why Insurgency and Terrorism in Nigeria:

The Nigerian state is a home of insurgency and terrorism with fanatics posing threats to the peaceful coexistence of the country. The reasons behind constant violent clashes and confrontations are quite numerous. Indeed Nigeria internal security has been significantly

undermined by violent activities of armed non sector largely made up of radicalized youth groups as foot soldiers. A report compiled by international crisis group has however claimed that the Insurgency and Terrorism experienced in Nigerian is symptomatic of deep seated social malady. According to the report the roots of the problems especially in the northern part of the country are more complex and lie in Nigeria's history and contemporary politics, Amaraegbu (2013). Politics is essentially based on the mobilization and promotion of ethno-religious sentiments and unhealthy contestation and rivalry amongst the quisling elites across the different geographical zones and sections of the country. Courson (2009) submits that Insurgency and terrorism in Nigeria is the result of a complex mixture of grievances, greed, marginalization, depreciation political repression and the quest for social equity and justice. For example in Nigeria, the indigenous and ethnic minorities of the Niger Delta oil producing communities have anchored their resistance on their exclusion from the benefits of the oil industry resulting in the lack of social development, good governance widespread Poverty and high levels of unemployment in the region inspite of so many year of oil production. The problems are further compounded by the pollution of their lands and waters, with its attendant adverse implications for the health and livelihood of local people.

Amaraegbu (2013) on the other hand argues that the terrorism and insurgency in the northern part of the country is viewed by many as part of the unintended consequences of an unjust society that has squandered to oil wealth through decades of corrupt regime and a product of a political leadership that has failed to tackle the fundamental problems of a nation. But at the bottom, it reveals an ultra secretive, yet hyperactive jihadi group determined to overthrow the government in Nigeria and institute Shari laid.

In many parts of the country, the government is unable to provide security, good roads, water, health, reliable power and education. The situation is particularly dire in the far, north with only 28% of children in the northern state of Borno attend school and according to Nigerian government statistics, and the literacy rate in the north is 32% compared with the 68% national average. Nigeria poverty rate grew from 55% in 2004 to 61% in 2010; largely because of the collapse of the northern economy Dixon, 2014.

It is observed that illiteracy extreme poverty, misinterpretations of religious books by leaders, poor parental guidance all act as contributing factors to the involvement of the youth in violent extremism. In Nigeria, it is evident that poverty and socio – political exclusion have given rise to self determinations movements and prolonged insurgencies as it is in Nigeria today. The Nigerian government has at various times promises the domestic and international public that the terrorism threat in the country will soon be a thing of the past. Terrorism and insurgency represents an immediate threat to Nigeria's territorial integrity and to the lives and security of those especially to the future of a whole generation of boys and girls. Indeed, the nature of attacks attributed to insurgents and terrorists suggest that the group has rapidly grown in confidence, capability and

coordination. Unless the Nigerian government can address the growing radicalization of the nations youths and the festering ethnic religious tensions across the country, many poor and marginalized northern Nigerians will continue to gravitate towards radical Islamist groups, turning the north into a hub of insecurity. This in turn has security and economic implications for the broader-region and international partners, Sodipo 2013.

The Multi Dimensional Impacts of Insurgency and Terrorism on Nigeria National Security

It is a fundamental fact that terrorism and insurgence has stepped up assaults on every part of the country. The Boko Haram rejected government claims of cease fire, showing it remains the biggest security threat to African's biggest economy and oil producer, Reuters 2014. The series of deadly attacks across many states in the country is not only worrisome, as the worry is not only about the delibitations that insurgency is steadily causing the country and its land abiding citizens, it is even more so about the demystification of the Nigerian Army that before now has been an enviable international reputation for valiance and war time discipline.

Apart from recording heavy loss of lives, destruction of properties and displacement of citizens, the problem become complicated because of its target and the types of weapons deployed during these crises. The escalating level of violence in Nigeria fits the description of a failed state and the central authority lack of control to quell the wave of bombings and indiscriminate killings of Nigerians. Violence, insurgency and terrorism has led to the destruction of health facilities in all parts of the country, especially in the northern part of Nigeria, forcing health workers to flee and shut down clinics. This in turn has compelled residents to seek medical attention outside thereby adding to the pressure on limited health facilities in the host communities Onuoha (2014), Again, according to a study, tourism is reduced by 15% where there are substantial increase in political violence.

The Islamic militants in the northern of the country has dealt several blows to the educational development in Nigeria. Students and facilities are attacked with lots of schools being shut down. A survey also shows that a lot of graduates have vowed never to participate in the compulsory NYSC programme, if posted there. Apart from this, with the frequent attacks in schools, and case of abduction of female pupils, there are rising fears of further deterioration of the already dire state of girls education especially in the North.

A recurrent issue of terrors on insurgency in Nigeria is the extent of relative poverty and inequality in some parts of the country which have led some analysts to argue that under development is the main reason for such violence and insurgence. The impart of terrorism in the internal security in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized as citizens now live in fear of impeding but unknown attacks security matters to the poor and vulnerable groups especially women, and children, bad policing, weak justice and penal systems and corrupt

militaries mean that they suffer dispropertionery from crime, insecurity and fear. They are consequently less likely to be able to access government services, invest in improving their own futures, and escape from poverty.

Also the food industry in the North is under great strain over a number of reasons, with the main issue being human inability and immobility with the increase of such terrorists acts. Those employed in the industry have decreased their movement outside protected areas over fears of attack carried out by the insurgents. Many farmers in the states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe now fear being attacked, with many local processing companies have lost workers after families offer to leave conflict areas. These highlighted attacks have also made transportation of food riskier and more expensive, which in turn has placed greater pressure on the economic output.

Apart from the economic and monetary costs associated with terrorism, there are also social and psychological costs. Terrorism evokes inter communal distrust and destroy the reservoir of social capital that is so vital to building harmonious societies and pooling together community energies for national development. The Kaduna of today is a tragically divided city in which muslims live predominantly in the North and Christians in the South. All the Textiles companies have shut down with investors re locating to other areas.

Civilians in Northern Nigeria are increasingly caught between two terrible alternatives: an abusive government incapable of protecting its citizens and an extortive insurgency with no governing institutions beyond those that sustain the group. Added to this, is the problem of worsening food insecurity caused by their destruction of livelihood and social support systems, bombing of infrastructures displacement of families and pillaging of livestock and food stuffs Onuoha (2014). The issue of terrorism and insurgency has greatly negatively affected the relationship between Nigeria and other nations of the world.

Recommendations:

Having x-rayed the implication of insurgency and terrorism in Nigeria national security, it has been brought to the fore that the insurgency and terrorism is the main cause of the political and socio economic problems that has bedevilled the Nigerian state. The paper aptly recommends as follows:

Democracy should be practiced the way it should be. Civil liberties and rule of law should be put in place. The security and quest to re-assert identities, institutions, values and norms that make meaningful sense to the average citizen in Nigeria should not be wished away.

Governments at all levels should attend to the issue of decaying infrastructures and deteriorating social services in the country (Isa, 2010).

Terrorism is also seen as a violent product of an unequal distribution of power and wealth on local, national and global level. This unequal distribution of power and wealth feeds a perception of "us verses them". A perception found in all the ideologies associated with politically violent groups and movements. There should be equal distribution of power and wealth.

Unemployment and illiteracy is still very high in Nigeria, especially in the Northern part of the country. Government should stop paying lip services to the issues of education. Funding of education should be adequate in the country. Jobs should be given to the youths to reduce the rate of unemployment. Industrial projects should be labour intensive to mop the raving unemployed youths. This will help to boost the rate of unemployment in Nigeria and indirectly reduce youth involvement in insurgency and terrorism.

Finally sponsors of terrorism and insurgency with proven evidence of such sponsorship and those arrested should be persecuted regardless of how highly placed they could be.

Conclusion:

This paper highlighted the impact of insurgency and terrorism on National security in Nigeria. As tension continues to mount in the country, the government should decide either to uphold her secularity stand and strengthen it or accept the state as a failed state. The government of Nigeria must take development and human security deficit in Northern Nigeria very seriously. Also the empowerment and meaningful participation of individuals and civil society in governance systems are necessary to tackle inequality and promote social inclusion.

The voices of people living in poverty and the most marginalized must be heard in decision making over the allocation of development resources. In addition, people led activism and the mobilization of collective action can be effective drivers of change. The government must realize that where development and poverty are understood, as multi dimensional phenomena that go beyond economic or material well being, effective governance is also not just a means for economic growth or effective service delivery but also on end in itself.

Lastly, if Nigeria as a country is to escape from a spiral of insecurity, crime and underdevelopment, the theoretical links between development and security must be translated into greater cooperation and coherence between security diplomacy and development policy communities. Going by the stand of Isa (2010) government can turn around this negative trend by strengthening its capacity to provide public good, proactively responding to the needs of the citizens and strengthening democracy as well as free and fair elections.

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