

COMBATING INTERNAL TERRORISM: AN ANALYSIS OF THE BOKO-HARAM SECT IN NORTHERN NIGERIAJohn Tor Tsuwa PhD^{1*} & Ikyase Johnkennedy Tersoo²

^{1*}Department of Political Science
Benue State University
Makurdi, Benue State,
Nigeria.

²Department of Political Science
Federal University
Wukari, Taraba State,
Nigeria.

Accepted 12 June, 2014

ABSTRACT

Terrorism and counter-terrorism are not new concepts within the domestic system. They have been with the human race since the dawn of recorded history. This paper critically examines the emerging trend of domestic terrorism in Nigeria with specific emphasis on the Boko-Haram sect of Northern Nigeria. The paper reveals that terrorism and counter-terrorism are linked in a confrontational kind of way; they are what you might call two sides of the same coin. Their relationship can be conceptualized as an "action and reaction" one. The article argues that domestic terrorism in the Nigerian context at least, is multifaceted. In this way, it is argued that the Boko Haram menace cannot be explained away as religious. Rather, it springs from many years of poverty, alienation and ignorance that have become terminal ailments in Nigeria, especially in the core north. The paper also argues that the military response option may only have a limited impact in mitigating the insurgency. In line with this, the State fragility theory and the integrated conflict management approach are adopted as theoretical mantras for this research paper. The paper recommends the promotion of education and employment opportunities for the youths as well as the entrenchment of equality and reduction of poverty as the surest antidote for combating terrorism in Nigeria especially in the Northern region. The paper concludes that for the present counter-terrorism efforts to be effective, Nigeria must not rely solely on force, but must focus fundamentally on addressing the underlying socio-political and economic triggers of domestic terrorism.

Keywords: Terrorism, Boko-Haram, North, Nigeria, Sect, Combating.

Introduction

It is a truism that no single issue has dominated the global strategic landscape as much as terrorism. In recent years, the Nigerian state has also been faced with this intractable problem. The global anxiety and concern for terrorism today can be compared with the anxiety and concern that gripped the United States of America in the wake of the 9/11 attack. Despite the inherently controversial and fluid nature of the word "terrorism", one point which is not often obscured is the fact that terrorist activities, whether political, religious or ideological, has one objective, which is to oppose an established authority with the purpose of coercing that authority or group into meeting the demands of the terrorists.

Obviously, terrorism is the buzzword in use today and has become a more challenging conundrum in the 21st century given the emergence of disgruntled groups with access to resources and technical expertise, sufficient to lay an assault on a state. It is no wonder that both the national and international communities are finding it difficult to tame, talk less of eliminating it. Terrorism has not only taken the centre stage in the strategic calculation of internal security especially in Nigeria, it has also completely altered the shape of domestic security equation. Apart from the threat it poses to peace and

security, terrorism has devalued the age-long strategic notion of security through state centric grandiose military preparedness. The contemporary way of viewing security departs from the mythical solitary state of nature where "might was right". This is because the usual targets of terrorist attacks are not the victims that die in the bombings alone, but the public as a whole. In this way, the understanding of terrorism is very imperative to look at. More so, the fundamental dynamics of terrorism and how terror itself is applied when faced with series of oppression needs to be perspectivised. David (1975; 24) captures this when he averred that:

Have we become so indifferent to the value of an individual life that we can no longer hear the cries of the victims, the suffering of the dying and injured? The anguish of the bereaved is not an intolerable outrage that many of those who have massacred the innocent are still going scot free in foreign lands; worse still, the immediate victims have no organic connection to the political policy of the target state and may indeed not be a citizen of that state nor have any influence over its policy.

Corresponding Author: John Tor Tsuwa PhD^{1*}

Department of Political Science, Benue State University, Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria.

Email address: johntsuwa@gmail.com

The succinct poser which constitutes the pivot of this paper is to examine the impact of the Boko Haram menace on the Nigerian state and how it can be combated. In order to achieve this, the paper is divided into six basic sections: section one focuses on the conceptual elucidation of terrorism, section two examines the theoretical perspective of the paper, section three considers the various causes of terrorism in Nigeria, section four discusses the Boko-Haram as a terrorist sect in Nigeria, section five looks at the existing counter-terrorism measures being utilised by the Nigerian Government, section six neats the work together in the form of Conclusions and Recommendations.

Conceptual Elucidation

Due to the subjective manner terrorism has been defined, it is extremely challenging to get a universally acceptable meaning of the term. Schmid and Jongman (1998) in their book titled "political terrorism" discovered more than a hundred definitions of terrorism. More so, Walter (1999) found the question of an appropriate definition so annoying that he refused to provide one. The word has been treated to various interpretations so much so that there is apparent confusion as to what really constitutes terrorism, and who terrorists really are.

The Black Law Dictionary (1999) defines terrorism as the use of violence, or threat of it, to intimidate or cause panic especially as a means of affecting political conduct. The OAU now AU convention on the prevention and combating of terrorism has a long list of acts that constitutes terrorism. These include any act, which is in violation of the criminal law of the state party and which may endanger the lives, physical integrity or freedom of, or cause serious injury or death of any person, any number or group of persons or may cause damage to public or private property, natural resources, environmental or cultural heritage (Imobighe 2006).

The Nigerian terrorism Act (2011, as Amended) particularly in part 1, succinctly examines Acts of terrorism and related offences. In part 1 (2) of the Act, an "Act of Terrorism" means an act which is deliberately done with malice, aforethought and which may seriously harm or damage a country or an international organization. The Act further states that, intimidation of population, kidnapping of a person, the release of dangerous substance or causing of fire explosions or flows, with the intent to endanger human life constitutes a terrorist act.

It is therefore extremely obvious that the *raison d'être* of terrorism is to intimidate and sow fear throughout a target population in an effort to produce a pervasive atmosphere of insecurity, wide spread condition of anxiety usually characterized by a variety of tactics such as assassination, hijacking, bombing, sabotage and abuse of innocent victims. According to Karpets, (1979;14) terrorism is;

an intended activity aimed at creating special organization and groups to commit murder, use of violence and take people hostage for ransom or other demands; forcible deprivation of freedom, often involving torture, blackmail etc.

Technically, terrorism could be defined as a horribly calculated attempt or use of violence to help achieve religious, political or economic objectives. It has also been defined as a politically premeditated violence perpetuated against noncombatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents usually intended to influence an audience Jega (2007). Far from being a new phenomenon, terrorism has been an age long weapon of the weak to frighten the powerful into submission. According to the UN statutory word and phrases (1976; 19), the word "terrorism" can be defined as;

The systematic use of violence and intimidation, especially for political purposes. A statutory definition of the word is contained in the prevention of terrorism (temporary provisions) Act 1976 Thus; "The use of violence for political ends and includes any use of violence for the purpose of putting the public or any section of the public in fear".

From the plethora of definitions given above, we can recapitulate that terrorism is a form of political violence on a horrendous scale adopted or used by groups or individuals acting on behalf of groups, with the sole aim of achieving an order they consider just. This world view could be ideological in terms of politics or in terms of religious beliefs.

Theoretical Perspective

In this article, we utilize the State Fragility perspective and the integrated conflict management approaches as our framework of analysis. Our choice of these theories is predicated on the desire to understand how the inability of the state to cater for her citizens has triggered terrorist activities and other social vices, and how these can be mediated. The fragile state as articulated by Sara (2008) is the term used for countries facing severe developmental challenges such as weak institutional capacity, poor governance, political instability, unemployment, poverty and low level of economic development.

It is a theory that describes how extreme poverty is concentrated in a given state, how low level of human and social development are linked to weak institutional capacity, governance and to internal conflict, all of which undermine the capacity of the state to deliver basic social and infrastructural services and offer security to citizens. More fundamentally, a fragile state is the one that is trapped in a vicious circle of violent conflict and poverty or suffer from a natural resource curse; others face a legacy of not providing the most basic services to their citizens. Such basic services include among other things, good health facilities, good roads, quality education, electricity, good water supply etc.

Slater (2012), a leading proponent of this theory has observed that a fragile state is significantly susceptible to crisis in one or more of its subsystems. According to him, a fragile state is a state that is particularly vulnerable to internal and external shocks as well as domestic conflicts.

This implies that in a fragile state, institutional arrangement embodies and perhaps preserves the conditions of crisis both in economic and social terms. In economic terms, this could

be institutions, importantly property rights that reinforce stagnation or low growth rates, or embody extreme inequality in wealth, in access to land or access to the means to make a living. In social terms, institutions may embody extreme inequality or lack of access altogether to health or education.

In fragile states, statutory institutional arrangements are vulnerable to challenges by rival institutional systems be they derived from traditional authorities or devised by communities under conditions of stress that see little of the state (in terms of security, development, or welfare).

It could be argued from the above vantage point that, the emergence of the Islamic sect Boko-Haram in the North may have resulted in part from the inability of the Nigerian state to meet the yearnings and aspirations of its citizens, most especially in the northern region. The truth remains that there is poverty, unemployment and lack of basic infrastructure in the country. In view of this, the provision of basic services, poverty eradication, employment opportunities and so on, can help reduce the scale of violent insurgency that has gripped the country in recent years. This is because as Anifowose (1982:27) posits, "when groups feel alienated and there is further feeling that such alienation is entrenched, it could degenerate into violence as the groups increasingly resort to desperate measures to break the Yolk".

This state of deprivation and social injustice may have driven this group to take up arms against the state to break the 'yolk' as a counter measure to address their grievances.

The integrated conflict management approach, although a relatively old one still possesses explanatory utility. The theory is based on the utilization of the problem solving techniques to comprehensively address the phenomenon of terrorism, which is two-fold and is referred to as an integrated conflict management circle comprising conflict prevention and peace promotion as well as conflict resolution. The idea behind this two level conflict management circle is to ensure that efforts at conflict management consciously strive to eliminate the conditions that create an environment of conflict and discord within the global system (Imobighe 2006). This entails that if in spite of such efforts conflict should still occur, it is productively managed to prevent it from degenerating into open violence or to minimize the level of violence which could possibly translate into terrorism and war.

At the conflict prevention stage, sound behavioral code, confidence-building measures and encouragement of inter-group cooperation and integration are usually part of the measures needed to minimize the incidents of conflict. Therefore if the Nigerian state wants to make meaningful impact in this area, it should initiate the process of evolving a genuine order that is collectively designed and incorporated into the constitution to guide its citizens. This could be done by holding a national conference to comprehensively carry out a system re-examination of the present state of the nation with a view to ultimately effecting the necessary system correction. The process could start at the local level before organizing it at the national stage. The delegates to the proposed conference should be drawn from all ethnic groups in the country as well as religious and other civil society groups.

Finally, it is at the conflict resolution stage that the fundamental issues surrounding the conflict are resolved. The Nigerian state needs to improve its capacity to facilitate intensive negotiations between the parties in conflict. According to Best (2006), the conflict management approach is significant in reducing the negative and destructive capacity of conflicts through a number of measures and by working with the parties involved in that conflict. To effectively perform this function which is vital to eliminate terrorism, the government needs to have a corps of mediators to mediate or act as facilitators in conflict situations. Such mediators should be made up of people who can devote their energy and time. Besides, adequate resources should be made available for the team to take timely action to catch conflict young, that is, to bring the parties to the negotiating table before the conflict escalates into violence.

The two theories articulated above should be seen as interrelated and mutually complimentary with regards to their analytical utility in comprehending the nature and character of the Nigerian state, the challenges posed by simmering insurgency and the measures for mitigating it.

Understanding Terrorism in Nigeria

Just like any other country which is faced by the challenge of terrorism, the fundamental underpinning factors which are frequently cited as contributing to the Nigerian situation include inter alia repressive and exploitative religions, self-determination struggles, phenomenon of failed states, political and religious intolerance and extremism, corruption and poor governance, political alienation, human miseries and injustice across the Nation.

What is important to note for the purpose of our discussion in this article is the fact that poverty has been identified as the major factor that causes conflict and discord in human societies everywhere. Poverty is generally a condition whereby a person lacks the means to satisfy the necessities of life. In the words of Marshall (1994:516), poverty is categorized into two broad terms "absolute and relative". To him, poverty in absolute terms is a situation where an individual lacks the resources necessary for subsistence, while the relative category is when an individual or group lacks resources when compared with that of other members of the society.

Drawing from Marshall's point of view therefore, poverty encapsulates condition in which an individual or group of individuals or community are unable to meet their basic material needs such as food, clothing, shelter, basic health care, and lack of participation in the prevailing social standard of living.

Poverty has become a major problem widely acclaimed nationally and internationally as deserving urgent attention especially in Sub-Saharan African countries, Nigeria inclusive (Jega, 2007). In these countries, the poor living conditions of the people has reached phobic dimensions and has defied all solutions offered due to the institutional fragility of these states.

It is apposite that poverty can be easily cited in Nigeria just like an "Elephant in a river". It is another form of modern slavery. Majority of these poor people live in rural areas that are neglected and almost forgotten in Nigeria especially in the Northern states. The effects of poverty are pervasive. A poor man is a problem to the society and even unto himself. He is always angry, never productive and seeks succour in religion. According to Pwul (2004) poverty is a vicious circle and it is the root cause of terrorism, corruption, fraud and embezzlement in the society.

From the Marxian perspective, poverty in capitalist society can only be understood in terms of the system of inequality generated by a capitalist economy. Wealth is concentrated in the hands of the few; those who own the means of production (Haralambos and Herald, 2002). The peasants who are in the majority own only their labour which they sell at the price determined by the owners of the forces of production.

Accordingly, the actualization of a free, peaceful and developed society is not achievable when majority of the citizens are living below poverty line. The poverty condition reduces the capacity of the poor to enjoy their civil, political and socio-economic rights. To the majority of the Northern people who are living in subhuman conditions of abject poverty, the notion of terrorism is paramount to them. When there is no food, shelter, health, good education and there is unemployment, the next line of action is to destabilize the polity. This is the context within which the emergence of Boko Haram can be understood.

Boko-Haram: A Historical Account

The popular name Boko-Haram according to Da'awah Coordination Council of Nigeria (DCCN, 2001) has its origin in the media and the public/community coinage. The word "Boko" in Hausa is popularly used to refer to the formal public or private educational system. It is also seen or refers to as western education in all its ramifications. "Haram" on the other hand is a word adopted from Arabic meaning Islamically unacceptable, forbidden or prohibited.

Boko-Haram can therefore be interpreted as meaning "western secular education is Islamically prohibited". It could also be interpreted to mean that evangelism deceptively camouflaged as western education is Islamically unacceptable. However, Islamic Scholars have strongly debunked this perception. Abdurrahman (2007) argues that "Islam encourages the search for knowledge as the Qur'an and Sunnah encourages Muslims to seek useful knowledge in all fields of human endeavor".

The sect (Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda'awati Waljihad) was founded in 2001 by two muslim leaders namely, Ustaz Muhammad Yusuf and Ustaz Muhammad Ali, both late. Their first meeting was to share ideas on how justice could prevail in the country as well as to encourage a change in the bad attitude of the youths. After considering the insecurity, corruption and moral decadence among the youths which according to them emanated primarily from the educational system, they further observed that almost all the top government officials are corrupt. To them, the rich were becoming richer while the poor were getting poorer (Mathew effect theory). They also believed that there was always a plan by non-Muslims to get rid of the Muslims on earth.

They saw this as a challenge which they had to take up and hoped to revive the Jihad of Shehu Usman Dan Fodio as a way of bringing sanity in the country.

The two friends Ustaz Muhammad Yusuf (the late) and Ustaz Muhammad Ali (the late) according to Abu (2011) got disagreed on how to start, as the former suggested that they should remain in the mist of people to preach and make them understand their mission clearly, while the latter rejected the idea and suggested that they should stay away from people, purify their intentions and minds and become closer to God. The two groups therefore split, Yusuf's group stayed in the town while Ali's group went into seclusion. Both groups' activities were aggressive in nature to the extent that government could not bear it. Security agencies were then employed as a means to destabilize the sect.

After the death of the two leaders, Abubakar Shekau emerged as the new leader, a position he holds till date. Other prominent members of the group include Abul QaQa and Abu Zaid. Both Qaqa and Zaid have been acting as the sect's spokesmen. (Google.com 27, April 2013).

Since 2009, the mayhem unleashed by this sect has taken a new dimension. According to the Amnesty international Annual Report (2012), the sporadic bombings and attacks on places of worship by this Sect has raised the number of casualties. The June 16th 2011 police headquarters killings, the 28th August 2011 attack on UN building in Abuja that claimed 24 lives, the November 4th 2011 Damaturu killings that claimed over 100 lives, and the Madala bombings on the 25th of December 2011 which claimed at least 44 lives, the rocket-propelled grenades in Baga area of Borno state on 22 April 2013 which claimed 185 lives, the abduction of over 200 school girls in chibok Borno state and the recent bombings in Abuja and Jos respectively are some of the horrific activities of this sect. The sect's sporadic violent attacks on Jos, Bauchi, Kano, Kaduna and some parts of the North has posed a lot of threat to citizens of the area thereby given them nightmare.

Official Responses

The Boko-Haram challenge is more of an ideological challenge than a technical or military one, the present counter terrorism effort at both the individual and state levels have centered on the use of military force, in which the full coercive apparatus of state power (including intelligence, economic, judicial and political) are brought to bear on those involved in this act. The present strategy used by government is one of meeting violence with violence. It discourages any idea of dialoging with those adjudged to be terrorists. However, the over reliance on military response is a basic weakness in the existing efforts. In the words of **Annan** (2005; 18), "We delude ourselves if we think that military force alone can defeat terrorism".

To further lay credence on Annan's analysis, it is obvious that military action may sometimes be necessary to help counter Boko-Haram, but we need to do more if terrorism is to be stopped in Nigeria. Kofi Annan is not alone in the observation relating to the limitation of a purely military

approach to the problems of terrorism. Making a similar observation, Richard (1984; 13) specifically observes in his work "fighting catastrophic terrorism" that;

Military responses have a limited impact and can breed more terrorists. Economic and diplomatic initiatives are needed too, not just military.

Flowing from the above statement countering Boko Haram requires a more multi-faceted approach, including employing weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and enhanced diplomacy.

The fundamental problems with the existing counter terrorism measures employed by the Nigerian government are two-fold. First is the over reliance on military response. This has birthed a situation whereby there is a competition in the use of violence by the so called terrorists and those involved in counter-terrorism efforts. Secondly, it relates to the tendency to use the so-called war against terror as an excuse for resisting genuine need for the overhauling of this domestic menace.

To some notable scholars like Imobighe (2006), the integrated conflict management approach could be very effective in combating terrorism. The proposed integrated conflict management system according to him is based on the utilization of the problem-solving techniques to comprehensively address the phenomenon of Terrorism. According to him, this integrated conflict management circle comprises of conflict prevention, peace promotion, conflict control, and abatement; and conflict resolution.

The idea behind this three-level conflict management circle is to ensure that efforts at conflict management consciously strive to eliminate the conditions that create an environment of conflict and discord within the Nigerian terrain.

It is imperative therefore that since terrorism is a product of conflict escalation, it is when conflict escalates into violent confrontation that they have the tendency to translate into terrorism. The suggestion is to create an integrated conflict management paradigm which should form the bedrock for combating the Boko-Haram menace.

Conclusions

An attempt has been made in this paper to take a critical look at the seemingly intractable problem of combating terrorism in Nigeria. In doing so, it is found that because existing counter-terrorism measures have been based on the strategy of maximal use of military force, which have led to the proliferation of violence across the country. Since terrorism is a product of conflict escalation and it is when conflicts escalate into violent confrontation that they have the tendency to translate into terrorism, it therefore follows that for the present counter-terrorism efforts to be effective; they must not rely solely on force, but must also focus on addressing how to eliminate the underlying social and political causes of terrorism. More so we felt that a better strategic response was to deal with terrorism at the level of integrated conflict management which form the bedrock on which to base the present efforts at combating terrorism in the country, it is only

when this is done that we can effectively dismantle Boko-Haram terrorist.

Recommendations

Having analyzed the phenomenon of Boko-Haram and the various measures to counter it in the country, the following recommendations though by no means exhaustive, are suggested for consideration as a way of addressing or possibly bringing a lasting peace in Nigeria.

Initiative of counter-terrorism should include both the medium as well as long-term strategies. This means that a broad based approach against terrorism that focuses on not only security but also addresses the root causes of terrorism should be adopted such as provision of basic infrastructural needs to the citizens, poverty eradication as well as employment opportunities. Any action in this regard would protect the youths from being ready tools for instability and recruitment by terrorists, groups.

More so, there should be an urgent need to demilitarize the counter-terrorism approach currently employed by the government, because militarization of the process for the past has only helped in widening the scope of the crisis and creating a vicious circle of violence. For this, government should always adopt dialogue instead of violence in the management and resolution of conflicts Dialogue as a means of conflict resolution ensures peace and stability, conditions necessary for democratic development and consolidation in the society. The Amnesty program of late president Yar'Adua would have been incomplete without dialogue. More fundamentally tolerance of other people's religion should be basic in addressing the issue of terrorism. There is no religion that is superior to the other, culture or ideological perception on others should be resisted.

Furthermore, construction of industries should be pursued by Nigerian state in such a way that poverty, misery, unemployment and inequalities are addressed. Across Nigeria these conditions have made life to be an insult to human dignity to the extent that most people have lost hope. Given the extent of despair and disillusionment, little disagreements that would have been resolved often attract violence leading to protracted conflicts. In situations like this, it is the army of the unemployed that are recruited or conscripted as armed militia groups or bands of insurgent to challenge the state.

Finally, we must practice the politics of harmonization or integration based on power sharing to the extent that groups can be accommodated in the framework or machinery of governance. If these suggestions are applied, we will address to a great extent on a permanent basis the crises in the northern Nigeria.

References

1. Abdurrahman, I.(2007), "Sharia the Islamic law" Al Yasser publishers, kurmi market Kano Nigeria.
2. Abu, U.(2011), "History origin of Boko-Haram and how it shocks the Governments". Column muryar Avenue (The voice of the North) 2nd publication Yulli. Kano Nigeria.
3. Amnesty International Annual Report (2012), On Boko-Haram violence.
4. Anifowose, R.(1982),"Violence and Poverty in Nigeria: The Tiv and Yoruba Experience. Enugu: Nok Publishers International.
5. Annan, K,(2005), 'key note address to the 45thU.N General Assembly.
6. Best, S (2006), "The Methods of Conflict Resolution and Transformation" in S.G Best (ed) Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies in West Africa, Ibadan Spectrum Books.
7. Black's Law Dictionary, 7th edition U.S.A; West Point Publishers Ltd (1997).
8. David C, et Carlo S. (1975), "International terrorism and world security; London publishers.
9. Da'awah Coordination Council of Nigeria,(2001),"the Boko-Haram tragedy" National Headquarters Ilmi Avenue, Minna, Niger state, Nigeria.
10. Haralambos, M.& Heald, R. (2002). "Sociology: Themes and Perspectives. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
11. Imobighe, T.A. (2006), "Combating Terrorism: An integrated conflict management Approach". Heinemann Educational Books Nigeria.
12. Inside Boko-Haram, (2011),'method of killing"; The Channel Television News news No, 4 dated 01 August.
13. Jega, A.M (2007), "Public Service and the Challenges of Managing Poverty Eradication in Nigeria." Democracy. Good Governance and Development in Nigeria. Ibadan, Spectrum Books Limited.
14. Karpets, I. (1979)," crimes of international significance"Russia: Moscow Publishers.
15. Marshall, G.ed. (1994). The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Sociology, Oxford, New York; Oxford University Press.
16. Nigeria Terrorism Act (2011) and Money Laundering Act (2011) (As Amended).
17. Pwul, G.S (2004),"Fundamental Rights in Nigeria Democracy and impediments to their realization" In Jos Bar journal vol 1 No 2.
18. Richard, V.R (1984), 'Confronting Terrorism in International Relations" New York; Oxford University Press.
19. Sara, P. (2008),"Improving the Provision of Basic Services for the poor in Fragile environment.": International Literature Review Synthesis Paper Overseas Development Institute, Oxford University.
20. Slater, R.(2012), "Social Protection and Basic Services in Fragile and Conflict Affected Situations. Retrieved on June 13, 2013, from <http://www.securelivelihoods.org/publications>.
21. Schmid,A.J and Jangman, H.C (1998), " Conceptualizin Terrorism" (New Delhi; Oxford University Press.
22. Walter, L. (1999), "The concept of Terrorism" (London; weld field and Nicolson Publishers Limited.