

BOKO HARAM TERRORISM AND NIGERIA NATIONAL INTEGRATION: A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The prediction of the break-up of Nigeria by 2015 is premised on existential situations accruing from the nation's political and multi-ethnic settings. If such prediction took cognizance of the possibility of insurgency based on the reality of ethnic struggles from different quarters of the country, it precluded the likelihood of terrorism. Initiated as a Muslim youth organization with the intent of revolt against Western tradition, Boko Haram, since inception, has graduated to international terror sect with established links with Al-Qa`ida core and Al-Shabab. The quest of Nigeria national integration presupposes the reality of conflict within a commonwealth of multi-ethnic diversity. To what extent do the ethnic facets of the nation desire to belong to Nigerian sovereignty in the face of multifarious ethnic conflicts? Is Nigeria a nation-state or a multi-nation? The sectional various agitations for justice and true federalism tend to signal the indication that the current entity Nigeria remains an experiment. With the tool of philosophical analysis, this paper examines the implications of the inclusion of Boko Haram terrorism to these lingering agitations vis-à-vis national integration. The paper submits that Boko Haram activities incite the dichotomy between reality and perception. Whereas Boko Haram deeds could be pure acts of terrorism, the sects' various perceptions by the citizenry remain susceptible to igniting reactions inimical to national integration.

Introduction

Within the last decade, Nigeria is confronted with the realities of insurgency. At the point of embrace of amnesty and laying down of arms by the Niger Delta militia in the administration of late President Umar Musa Ya'adua , the citizenry heaved sighs of relief, as that event tended to douse the boiling tension within the Nigerian polity. Most unfortunately, the abating brazing wind was, almost immediately replaced by a more virulent hydra headed monster, this time, *Boko Haram*. The Congregation of the People of Tradition for Proselytism and Jihad Jamā'at *ahl as-sunnah li-d-da'wa wa-l-jihād* was originally hatched as a fundamentalist Muslim youth organization with the name *shabaab* led by Mallam lawal in 1995. It originated with the objective of

ideological revolt against Western traditions. It has been noted that, “The Boko Haram sect claims its mission on fight against western education and orientations, giving the impression that it is not another ethnic struggle. But the terrorist activities of the group actually negate this claim.”(Nweke, 2012) Officially founded by Mohammed Yusuf in 2002 in Maiduguri, *Boko Haram* literarily designated in Hausa parlance as “Western Education is a sin” worked for the establishment of *Sharia* rule in Borno State as well as recruiting and training future jihadists from among Northern Muslim youths and those “from neighbouring Chad and Niger and speak only Arabic.” Yusuf’s headship entrenched the policization, elements of criminality and quasi popularity of the sect. The gradual militarization of the sect, initially ignored by Nigeria security outfits, later popped them to action that culminated in Yusuf’s death in 2009.

As if on a mission of vengeance, the reign of Abubakar Shekau graduated the sect to a terror group with a spree of armed violence with both simple and sophisticated weapons. Ranging from brutal killings, ambush, setting of houses and vehicles on fire, spates of bombing, kidnap etc, the Boko Haram's dastardly activities resound beyond frontiers. Attempts at a proper classification of the sect prove elusive given the spread of their victims across board to include Muslims and Islamic hierarchy. Grossman accounted that in January 2013, Emir Al Haji Ado Bayero of Kano, regarded as the second-most important Muslim leader in Nigeria behind the Sultan of Sokoto, was targeted in a Boko Haram assassination attempt. He was protected by his bodyguards and driver, who were killed, as gunmen surrounded his convoy. Alhaji Idrissa Timta, the emir of Gwoza, was shot in his car while traveling in a convoy to the funeral of the emir of Gombe, who passed away recently in London. Two policemen were also killed in the attack. The emirs of Uba and Askira were also in the convoy and reportedly escaped the ambush. Their flight from the scene initially created some confusion, leading some to speculate that they had been kidnapped. However, they have since been located. This is not the first time that traditional Muslim leaders have been targeted by Boko Haram.

But then, a critical view suggests that they maim the Islamic hierarchy that attempt to criticize them. Grossman (2014) posits that “Boko Haram perceives the traditional leaders as tied to the secular government they oppose, accusing them of selling out.”

From Insurgency to Terrorism

Over time, *Boko Haram* has developed into a terror giant segmented into splinter groups, one of which is known as Ansaru. Their monstrous activities centre around the North East states of Borno, Yobe Adamawa, Kaduna, Kano and Bauchi compelling the Nigerian government to declare partial state of emergency in three states(Adamawa, Borno and Yobe). The extension of their gruesome acts to other states including Plateau

and the FCT relays the inability of Nigerian security forces to contend them. The sect's viral spread beyond the shores of Nigeria represents its graduation to an international terrorist group. Wikipedia accounts that:

The Boko Haram leadership has international connections to Al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Al-Qa`ida core, Al-Shabab, the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), Mokhtar Belmokhtar's factions, and other militant groups outside Nigeria. Attacks by the group on international targets have so far been limited. On November 13, 2013 the United States government designated the group a terrorist organization. On 22 May 2014, the United Nations Security Council added Boko Haram to its list of designated al-Qaeda entities, bringing "funding, travel and weapons sanctions" against the terrorist group.

Boko Haram terror activities have received and continue to receive local, international and global condemnation from many quarters including Muslim authorities. In the burial of the Late Emir of Gwoza, killed by the sect, the Sultan of Sokoto on behalf of the umbrella body of Muslims in the North, Jama'atu Nasril Islam(JNI), which he is the chair, condemned the sect's attack on Muslims and urged Muslims to pray for restoration of peace in the country. At the international scene, "The Islamic Circle of North America, the Islamic Supreme Council of Canada, the Muslim Council of Britain, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and the Council on American Islamic Relations have all condemned the group's actions."(Wikipedia)

Furthermore, the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia Sheikh Abdul-Aziz ibn Abdullah Al ash-Sheikh, a Sunni Islam cleric, has described Boko Haram as misguided and intent on smearing the name of Islam. Iranian Shia Islam jurisprudent Grand Ayatollah Naser Makarem Shirazi has denied any relationship between the Nigerian group and Islam. He has described the group as "savages who do not deserve to be called human beings." The Indonesian Ulema Council in The Jakarta Post condemned the group stating that "[Boko Haram] is not on the right path and contradicts Islamic values" Grand Imam of Al-Azhar University in Cairo Sheik Ahmed el-Tayeb maintains that "the actions by Boko Haram are pure terrorism, with no relation to Islam" and criticizes them for using religion to justify their nefarious activities which "completely contradict Islam and its principles of tolerance."(Wikipedia).

The recent kidnap of over 270 Chibok school girls, which grossly exposes the weakness of Nigerian security apparatus in overcoming the *Boko Haram* menace, attracted the assistance of foreign allies as an indication that the phenomenon of terrorism has actually become a global concern. As the '#Bring Back our Girls' campaign sought attention and support of United States, Barack Obama's response was that regional aggression that goes unchecked – whether in southern Ukraine or in the

south China Sea or anywhere else in the world - will ultimately impact our allies and could draw in our military. We can't ignore what happens beyond our boundaries” (news.naij.com).

To this effect, Nigeria has received international security support from USA, Britain, France, China, Israel and neighboring West African nations to rescue the Chibok girls as well as fight *Boko Haram* terrorism.

Implications on National Integration

How do the current *Boko Haram* acts of terrorism impact on national integration? Prior to the advent of insurgency and terrorism, Nigeria has been beguiled by the challenges of integration. National integration entails expressions in acts and willingness to belong, in every sense of that word, to a nation. Okunna(2012) stated that Shona Khurana writing about national integration in India defines national integration as the awareness of a common identity among the citizens of a country. It means that though we belong to different castes, religions and regions and speak different languages, we recognize the fact that we are all one. This type of integration is very important in the building of a strong and prosperous nation.

Integration basically presupposes diversity. The reality of diversity equally entails the reality of conflict and harmony founded on the very nature of being. Nature negates monotony but thrives in diversity. The diversity of being is ontologically rooted in a fundamental unity. Thus, the beauty of nature lies in the culture of unity in diversity. While considering diversity as nature's culture, Amaku(2012) avers that the beauty of the universe, according to Thomas Aquinas, consists in its manifesting ontological diversity and hierarchical structure. This unity in diversity that marks the ontology and excellence of being we can rightly describe as “nature's culture”- “a mode of being”. Even nature has its “culture”; it has the custom of substantializing itself in diversity, in multiplicity, and in unity. If diversity is inbuilt in nature, nature's habit of self-revelation, it cannot be bad; it must be depicting the mode in which nature ontologically flourishes.

In human society, diversity is categorized into gender, races, tribes, lineages, kits and kin. The peopling of any given society is anchored on either homogeneity or heterogeneity of these categories and grounds the formation of nation-states. Integration would normally pose no problem for homogeneous nations, since their statehood remain a political institution of people with common origin (Most homogeneous are Japan and Korea; Many European countries). Hence, their nationalism is guided by a sense of common purpose, a 'we feeling', although not negating the possibilities of intra-ethnic conflicts. The greater challenges of national

integration are to be found in heterogeneous nations. In other words, nations of ethnic diversity or multi-ethnicity are often plunged into conflict of interests. Successes in addressing the challenges depend hugely and essentially on the level of political maturity evident in any such nation. United States of America is an ethnic diverse nation, with lesser problems of integration consequent upon its political stature which ensures both socio-political and economic security of her citizenry. Thus, every ethnic group in US desires to belong.

The guiding principle of any social contract is agreement often codified in constitutions. Political agreement must reflect a lucid volition of parties to contract without any form of subtlety or coercion. The cradle of Nigeria's problem of national unity and integration remains the amalgamation of Northern and Southern protectorate in 1914 signaling the birth of Nigeria as a sovereign nation. The first evidence of clash of interest and lack of confidence in the reality of unity in diversity for Nigeria is the Nigeria/Biafra civil war of 1966-1970. After that war, the country continues to exist in the cold war of ethnic conflict, social mistrust, religious bigotry, the major problem hinging on the majority/minority divide part of which throws up a born to rule mindset as a political creed of a particular ethnic group. Thus, the dethroned Nigeria military regime remains the regime that introduced the Nigerian known endemic corruption, ethnic sentimentality, developmental retardation and forms of marginalization. The era witnessed series of violent and bloody ethnic clashes often ignited by religious extremism. The born to rule mentality ensured the retention of political power by a particular ethnic group at the expense of the entire nation. Even within the democratic dispensation, the born to rule mindset continues to dictate the actions, in-actions and reactions of the ethnic group.

Several unheeded calls for national conference/dialogue(sovereign or constitutional), myriads of agitations from various ethnic groups crying for marginalization, the Niger Delta question coupled with their struggles are indices that point to crack in the wall of Nigerian unity and remain expressions of unwillingness for national integration. Although it is arguable that the *Boko Haram* phenomenon is a pure act of terrorism spread across religious and ethnic board of the nation, it is obvious that Christianity remains its greatest enemy.

The truth remains that *Boko Haram* poses greater challenge to the problem of integration in consideration of the dichotomy between reality and perception. Whereas the reality could mean that *Boko Haram* is an international terrorist group, its perception by the citizenry could assume various dimensions. For a perceiver, the fact that *Boko Haram* is an Islamist sect already couches it in an ethnic garb. The spate of attacks of Christian dominated areas in the Northern Nigeria and burning of churches presents an ethnic undertone to the situation. The fact that *Boko Haram* activities took a cancerous turn within the administration of a Southern president, Goodluck Jonathan,

after the statement that this country will be ungovernable for him presents to a perceiver that the insurgents are in pursuit of Northern agenda. What sort of integration would be desired in the present state of the nation? Which kind of integration would a perceiver desire amidst loss of dear ones, property and life investments?

Nigeria has actually become a domain of terror as the inhabitants are living in fear and uncertainty. The discovery of ranks of Nigerian security apparatus as members of the dreadful sect makes the situation more worrisome. Who would want to integrate into a system where there is obvious effort to Islamize the nation? If not, what is the ultimate aim of *Boko Haram*? In various forms, the South/East, South/ South regions of Nigeria, have expressed dissatisfaction with the presumed unity of Nigeria. As the activities of *Boko Haram* are at the moment prevalent in the North, the Southerners seem to already anticipate its spread to the South. In his article entitled “Boko Haram Insurgent and Islamic Jihadists: Why Christians Will Defend Themselves. Akpogena (2012) notes what should be response of Christians and non-Muslims to Boko Haram insurgent and Islamic jihadists attack? (a) Watch: be aware about on-goings around you. Who are your stewards, drivers, domestic staff, electricians, janitors and plumbers who work in your house repairs? Who is your security guard? Who is your personal Assistant, front desk officer? Who are you doing business with or partners in business? Where do you go to and frequent to spend your leisure time on recreation. Get necessary information on security and activities of terrorists especially Boko Haram and Islamic Jihadists.

If American intelligence predicted the break-up of Nigeria by 2015, the terrorist activities of Boko Haram stand the possibility of bringing it to fruition especially if those activities extend to the South. The show of solidarity by all segments of Nigeria in bring back our girls campaign could be a basis for argument for/evidence of integration, but the truth remains that *Boko Haram* is already dealing a fatal blow on the Nigeria wall of unity. It is simply submitted that their activities, if not adequately checked and contained, retains the potentiality of drifting Nigeria to total disintegration.

Conclusion

Concerted effort has been made in this paper to x-ray the connections between the dastardly acts of terrorism unleashed on Nigerian citizens, institutions and government by the dreaded sect, *Boko Haram* and national integration. The perplexities surrounding the inclusion of Muslims as victims of *Boko Haram* attacks were addressed. As a multi-ethnic entity with religious divergences, Nigeria has witnessed myriads of ethno-religious violence. Coupled with cries of perceived economic and political marginalization engendering forms of agitations and struggles, Nigerian national unity remains vigorously threatened. *Boko Haram* decimations, it is noted, stand the chance of dealing a coup-de-grace to Nigerian present sovereignty.

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