

Political Leadership and Security Management in Nigeria: A study of Boko Haram insurgency in Northern Nigeria

Nwogwugwu, Ngozi, PhD; Ayomola, Oluranti O.

Department of Political science and Public Administration

Babcock Business School, Babcock University, Ilishan – Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria.

Abstract: *Political leadership is regarded globally as the main driver of the development of any nation – state. Across the world, scholars acknowledge that most of the time, the quality of national leadership of countries have determined their political stability, level of general security, economic and national development. Nigeria is recognized globally as being among the poorest countries of the world, with high levels of unemployment and poverty in spite of enormous resources as the world’s seventh largest exporter of crude oil. Scholars agreed that the level of security in any given country to a great extent determines the inflow of foreign direct investment, as well as the ability to muster domestic private investment that are necessary to drive the economy. Over the last decade, Nigeria has been experiencing rising insecurity across different sections of the country, with the most destructive being the rising level of Boko Haram terrorism in the Northern part of the country. The rising insecurity has been a major disincentive to investment, thereby worsening the economic conditions of the country as well as making some sections ungovernable. The paper examined the role of political leadership in security management, with specific focus on the control of the Boko Haram insurgency across several states in North – East. The paper argues that the inability of the security agencies to effectively combat the Boko Haram menace is a failure of political leadership to provide the necessary empowerment for the agencies, lack of political will to tackle the root causes of the insurgency and political leadership’s inability to adopt effective counterterrorism measures that will bring the menace to an end.*

Key words: *Political Leadership, Security management, Boko Haram, insurgency, Northern Nigeria*

I. Introduction

Nigeria is a nation that is blessed with enormous resources, currently ranked as the seventh largest exporter of petroleum in the world. However, over the years, the political leadership of the country has not been able to translate the enormous wealth at its disposal to national development, or the good life for the citizenry. As a result of the fact that it is the political leadership of the nation that is directly responsible for ensuring good governance and national development, especially effective management of the national security, it is imperative to interrogate the role of political leadership in the effective management of national security.

The political leadership of this paper refers to not only the elected and appointed political office holders at various levels, national, state and local, but includes the members of the political class who parade the corridors of power and wield enormous influence. Equally included in are the military elite, serving and retired, most of who have unlimited access to political policy makers and public officials.

In trying to show the importance of political leadership in the development of a given society, Ogbeidi (2012) writes that history has shown that no nation of the world grew and enjoyed steady development in virtually all spheres of its national life without experiencing good and selfless political leadership. This is largely because qualitative growth and development has always been an outcome of good governance.

It is rather pathetic that the Nigerian political leadership class instead of engendering development has become entrenched in an unending cycle of crass materialism, powered by unbridled greed and self centeredness. This has led to the national interest, including national security, being put in the back burner as political leadership help themselves to state resources, climaxed by the continued acknowledgment of Nigeria by Transparency International as one of the most corrupt nations of the world since year 2000. Several of those elected and appointed to public office have either ended up in jail, or escaped through plea-bargaining or are facing charges in various law courts for corruptly enriching themselves with resources that were meant for the commonwealth.

During the fourth republic Nigeria has continued to experience security challenges in different geo-political zones, with political leadership regarded as either being too slow in reacting to the challenges, or lacking the ability to tackle them. The Militancy in the Niger Delta region, was allowed to generate to the extent of it affecting the nation’s economy, before the adoption of amnesty policy. Kidnapping in the South – East was allowed to degenerate to the level of secondary school children as well as members of NUJ being kidnapped in

Abia state, before the military moved in to combat the menace. Boko haram has been carrying out their insurgency activities since 2009 unabated till the kidnapping of over 200 school girls from a Government school in Chibok, Borno State, led to intervention of the international community.

We argue in this paper, that the rising problem of insecurity, especially the inability of the government to curtail boko haram insurgency in the northern part of Nigeria, is as result of the failure of political leadership, to provide policy direction, deliver democratic dividends, and provide adequate security of lives and property, exemplified by political leadership's inability to equip, train and motivate the military and other security agencies. The paper is sub-divided into six sections, introduction, conceptual clarifications, boko haram insurgency, boko haram activities and security management, conclusion and recommendations

II. Conceptual Clarification

Political leadership

Political leadership is one of the most widely experienced and *intuitively* or tacitly understood phenomena – like great power competition, Olympic rivalries, climate change, the right to develop, or central human rights controversies about trade-offs between security and civil and political rights (Masciulli, Molchanov, & Knight, nd).

Most researchers on political leadership agree on certain elements that are necessary ingredients in the definition of political leadership. These element include: the personality and traits of a leader or leaders, including her or his ethical and cultural character; the traits and ethical-cultural character of the followers with whom the leader interacts; the societal or organizational context in which the leader–follower interaction occurs – general culture, political culture, political climate, norms, and institutions; the agenda of collective problems or tasks which confront the leaders and followers in particular historical situations (certain problems/challenges may elicit bonding between leaders and followers); the nature of the leader's interpretive judgment, (ability of the leader to interpret a given situation and act in such a way that meets the expectation of the followers); the material as well as intangible means that the leaders use to attain their ends and/or their followers' goals; encompassing the technique that leaders adopt to gain the willing support of their followers (Peele, 2005)

Political leadership overlaps significantly with the higher levels of military, legal, organizational, and religious and ideological leadership, and is a special part of 'social leadership' in general, as we contended above. The latter includes parental, business, educational, scientific and technological, athletic, medical, cultural, artistic, religious, and other forms of leadership (Masciulli, Molchanov, & Knight, nd). This is an all encompassing conception of political leadership, which captures the political leadership class of our discourse, going far beyond the elected and appointed public office holders traditionally recognized as political leaders in our society. This becomes very relevant in our present context as members of the political class who do not belong to the ruling party at the national level, instead coming together to work with the federal government prefer to politicize issues of national security, thereby negating the national interest on the altar of political expedience and forthcoming elections.

Aransi (2009) brings forward the idea of differences between political leaders, in terms of their ability to perform according to expectations of the citizenry, and the determining factors of such performance. Aransi (2009: 119) writes that "the difference between two political leaders in the same position today rests relatively little on differences in policy direction and very largely on other behavior, which can be labeled 'leadership styles'". In Nigeria, there are no clear cut differences in policy direction, as there are no specific programmes that can be linked exclusively to any particular political party. Elected officials at national and state levels and other political leaders adopt whatever leadership styles they believe would endear them to the citizenry. This is very apposite in the Nigerian context, as there are no differences in ideology amongst the registered political parties. This has encouraged the frequent carpet crossing from one party to the other, by politicians with intentions of contesting for public office.

National security

Kronenberg (1973, p. 36 cited in Asamu 2006, p.126) defines national security as "that part of government policy having as its objective the creation of national and international political conditions favourable to the protection or extension of vital national values against existing and potential adversaries." Imobighe (1990) describes national security as freedom from danger, or from threats to a nation's ability to protect and defend itself, promote its cherished values and legitimate interests, and enhance the well being of its people.

Anyadike (2013) writes that national security is the requirement for government to maintain the survival of the state through the use of economic policies, diplomacy (in various dimensions), power projection and political power. The concept is believed to have developed in the United States of America after World War II. Traditionally, it focused on military power; however, over the years it has acquired broader scope, covering

non military, economic security, human security of the nation and the entirety of the values expressed by the national society.

National security entails a condition, in which citizens of a country enjoy a free, peaceful, and safe environment, and have access to resources which will enable them to enjoy the basic necessities of life. (Enahoro, 2004). The scholars above have provided two significant perspectives to the concept of national interest, protection of national interests against internal and external aggression, as well as the good life for the citizens. In the light of this, Aliyu (2009) provides a description of national interest that embraces both perspectives when he writes that national security goes beyond military preparedness to defend the nation to the issue of provision of good life for the citizenry. It is the ability of a country to maintain its sovereignty, protect its political, economic, social and other interests in a sovereign manner and both internally and in relations with other states. It is not only about the security of national territory and infrastructure but also, about the good life, the basic values which keep the community together and advancement in the quality of life available to the individual regardless of their social status.

Boko Haram Insurgency

Boko Haram is a terrorist group operating mainly in the North Eastern States, of Nigeria. There exists conflicting data about the group; such as its origin, the real founder, etc. Some reports suggest that the group was first formed in the 1990s under various names (Aghedo & Osumah, 2012; Onapajo & Uzodike, 2012). Boko Haram's origin seems to lie in a group of radical Islamist youths who worshipped at the Alhaji Muhammadu Ndimi Mosque in Maiduguri a decade ago hence in 2002, an offshoot of this youth group (not yet known as Boko Haram) declared the city and the Islamic establishment to be intolerably corrupt and irredeemable (Anyadike, 2013). Madike (cited in Anaydike, 2013), traces the group to 1995, and argues that, one Lawan Abubakar, who later left for further studies at the University of Medina, Saudi Arabia, actually founded the Boko Haram sect.

The Hausa name Boko Haram has become popularised, but the group calls itself by the Arabic name *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunnah Ladda'awati wal-Jihad* ("people committed to the propagation of the Sunnah and Jihad" (Onuoha, 2012). The *Boko Haram* epithet, broadly conveying "Western civilisation is forbidden", was evidently conferred by outside observers in an attempt to capture the group's anti-Western ideology (Onuoha, 2012). The group seeks to overthrow the secular Nigerian government and establish an Islamic state under Sharia law (Adesoji, 2010).

The extra judicial killing of erstwhile Boko haram leader, Mohammed Yusuf by the police in 2009, marked a turning point in the activities of the group. Yusuf's successor Abubakar Shekau has administered a massive onslaught on the Nigerian state, with the group turning the offer of Amnesty by the federal government. In 2011 alone, the group was reported to have killed over 550 people in 115 separate attacks. Continuing violent attacks by Boko Haram in the North East, is believed to have claimed up to 4,000 lives as 2013 (Copeland, 2013).

Boko Haram activities and Security management in Nigeria

Abundant literature exists, detailing the major attacks of Boko Haram, since 2009. Abimbola and Adesote (2012) cited several Nigerian newspapers in their compilation of Boko Haram attacks between July 26, 2009 and April 30, 2012. Bayode (2013) provides data of 60 major Boko Haram attacks between July 27, 2009 and January 19, 2013. Boko Haram insurgency has become so rampant that it has practically become a daily affair, with the group choosing where and when to operate unhindered, killing thousands of innocent civilians in their daily walks of life.

The big Boko Haram attacks have included bombings on Christmas Day 2011, when bombs were detonated in three states, Niger, Plateau, and Yobe, killing forty-five people. In January 2012 three groups of gunmen and suicide bombers coordinated attacks on three government buildings in Kano the police headquarters, the office of the immigration service, and the State Security Service. In March 2012, some twelve public schools in Maiduguri were burned down during the night, with as many as 10,000 pupils forced out of education. In June 2011 Boko Haram bombed the national police headquarters in Abuja. A car laden with explosives drove into the compound of Louis Edet House, a block of offices previously thought secure in Abuja's government zone, by following a convoy of senior officers through the gates. In August 2011, a man drove a car into the UN compound in Abuja and detonated a massive bomb, killing twenty-three people and wounding scores (Bekoe, 2011).

In spite of the fact that most of the demands of the Boko Haram group are certainly not achievable, they deserve some level of attention. The Boko Harm may have a point here because as they claimed purest Islamic Group, they are disenchanted with the way their respected political leaders have administered their territories, and practice Islam. Contrary to Islamic injunctions, their political leaders, have resorted to barbaric accumulation of wealth, indecent personal life styles which are offensive to Islamic culture, without regard to

the needs and sensibilities of the masses. They have come to see terrorist activities as their way of getting back to the system, which has refused to care for the needs of the less privileged, rather choosing to administer over unlimited corruption, without fear of God. Unfortunately, domestic terrorism has become their only means of venting their anger to the Governments (Dearn, 2011 cited in Abimbola & Adesote, 2012).

On the night of April 14 – 15, 2014, Boko Haram shocked the world with the abduction of over 200 school girls from Government secondary school, Chibok, Bornu State. In spite of the massive outcry that trailed the action from across the globe, and the offer of assistance by USA, Britain and France, the release of the girls has not been secured over 140 days after.

The terrorist tactics undertaken by Boko Haram has succeeded in undermining the authority of political leadership and the Nigerian security apparatus; goals that the group has continually cited since 2009. The violent campaign has increased fears and insecurity across the entire country as such that one could actually say that the fear of Boko Haram is the beginning of wisdom for most of Nigerians, especially those residing not only in the North Eastern part of the country, but also North Central and North West.

The response of the government has been predominantly military, with the Joint Task Force being station in the North East, for years now. The pronouncement of state of emergency in the affected states in the North East has equally failed to yield meaningful dividend. In December 2012, President Jonathan met with US Africa Command (AFRICOM) General Carter Ham and re-requested security sector assistance to bolster Nigeria's counterterrorism efforts targeting Boko Haram. General Ham was reported to have agreed to collaborate with Jonathan in the form of police reinforcements along the border with Cameroon to re-strict the illegal importation of explosives and munitions (Copeland, 2013). Unfortunately, such cooperation was not recognized until after the abduction of the Chibok girls by Boko Haram.

The use of the JTF in North East has come under intense criticism by independent International groups. Analysts at Amnesty International have pointed out two critical policy errors made by the Nigerian government. First, its brutal suppression of the group, which includes a number of extrajudicial executions, clearly abandons the rule of law and has led to a backlash in the North.

Efforts by the committee set up by the federal government to begin negotiation with Boko Haram, in 2013, was aborted, following the position of the group that it was not prepared to negotiate, and that the federal government was in no position to offer it amnesty. The group claimed they were carrying the directives of Allah, and as such only they could grant the federal government amnesty.

The Northern political leadership equally politicized the issue of boko haram insurgency. At the time of Ihejirika's leadership of the Nigerian army, when the army launched massive onslaught against the boko haram terrorist group, the northern elite including El Rufai and some northern emirs, claimed he was "eliminating their innocent young people". They charged Ihejirika of engaging in ethnic cleansing in order to avenge the loss of Ibos during the Nigerian civil war. Lacking political will to stand to the challenge of the time, the presidency danced to the tune of the northern elite by retiring Ihejirika, thereby giving the boko haram terrorist group the opportunity to re-group, and equip themselves sufficiently to be able to challenge the military.

Interestingly, now that boko haram has started annexing their towns and villages, the same northern elites are the ones claiming that the presidency is not doing enough to contain the terrorists. The politicization of the issue of boko haram insurgency in Nigeria, has been a major impediment to efforts at curtailing terrorism in the North-East.

There are some mixed reactions from the North, regarding perceived marginalization of the North in terms of the presidency of the country. Many Muslims complain of marginalisation by the federal government, which is dominated by Christians. Additionally, at both local and federal levels, the Nigerian government has failed to respond satisfactorily to underlying social and economic conditions in the northern states. Poverty and malnutrition rates are staggering as over 75 per cent of residents in the north are impoverished, living off of less than USD one per day (Copeland, 2013). The reality on ground is that the federal statutory allocations that have been made to some of these northern states and their local governments, during the fourth republic cannot be justified given the high level of poverty, unemployment and lack of basic infrastructure in the areas. Most of the allocations seem to have ended up in private pockets, instead of being utilized for the good of the masses. As a result, it becomes easy for boko haram to convince, some of these poor impoverished people that western education is evil as the political leadership of the north, live in affluence and greedily corner state resources to themselves, at the detriment of the majority.

Nigeria's borders are not effectively controlled. The immigration and other agencies are under staffed, underfunded and ill-equipped to effectively man the borders. It is instructive to note that of the four thousand and eighty (4, 080) entry routes into the country, only ninety one (91) are officially recognized and manned the immigration and other agencies. The implication is that several routes exist for terrorist and other criminal elements to use to have access to the country unhindered by security agencies. This explains the reason why the Boko Haram terrorist group was able to operate from Cameroun to attack villages and towns before it started annexing some communities, and proclaiming its "caliphate state".

Another major shortcoming of the security management in the country has been the total neglect of border communities in terms of provision of infrastructure. Most border communities lack basic infrastructure, such as, good roads, functional hospitals, their public schools are ill-equipped, they lack portable water, job opportunities and there is high level of poverty. This has created disconnect between the people residing in such communities and the state. As such, the residents of the communities do not see any reason for them to be patriotic in terms of reporting to the security agencies infiltration by the criminal elements, who in most instances, “settle” some the residents, who then become hostile to security agents, while favoring the “benevolent” terrorists and criminals, who gain access to the country through their communities.

Unconfirmed reports in the media has been to the effect that the Boko Haram group possess military hardware that are more sophisticated than those of the Nigerian army. The claims seem to have some semblance of credibility with the inability of the army to overpower the terrorists for years now. The Nigerian military and security agencies are underfunded, ill-equipped and unmotivated to secure the nation. The military and security agencies do not have any consolidated life insurance packages in spite of the risky nature of their jobs. Families of soldiers killed in battle are reported to have been settled with paltry five hundred thousand (500, 000) naira, while promises of settling them are not met afterwards. This serves as a disincentive, as they cannot afford to lay down their lives for a nation that would not even take care of their families in their absence.

In the 2012 annual budget of the federal government, security had the largest sectoral allocation with about N800 billion, allocated to all the ministries and agencies charged with maintaining internal and external security. Unfortunately, the massive allocation did not translate to capability to curb security challenges especially terrorist insurgency in the North East, of Nigeria. It is not enough to budget large sum of money for security, which end up private pockets or being used to award spurious contracts for low quality CCTV in Abuja alone. The government must ensure that such funds are properly utilized, security agencies are well equipped, trained on counter terrorism, and well motivated, through enhanced remuneration in line with the kind of risks they are exposed to in their lines of duty.

III. Conclusion and Recommendations

The political leadership in the country, exemplified by the federal and state governments have failed in their duty to provide security of lives and property, especially in the North Eastern states. The various governments have encouraged breach of security through bad governance and massive public sector corruption and impunity which has equally resulted in large scale poverty across the land in the midst enormous resources the country is blessed with. Those disgruntled by the situation have adopted terrorism as their means of venting their frustration on the corrupt government officials past and present who they do not have direct access to.

Political leadership have failed to work together to curb the menace. Some of them have resorted to politicizing the Boko Haram insurgency to the detriment of national security. The federal government on its part, has shown lack of political will to combat Boko Haram through its inability to take drastic actions including the arrest and prosecution of those believed to be funding Boko Haram including members of the president’s cabinet. The underfunding, ill equipping and non motivation of the military and security agencies may have led to some of them being compromised and unable to effectively combat the menace.

In line with the above, we therefore recommend as a way forward the following:

The political leadership regardless of their party affiliations have to unite to ensure the curbing of terrorism. Security is a collective responsibility, and all political leaders; civilian and military must work together. Instead of politicizing the Boko Haram problem, all segments of the political leadership must cooperate to curb the menace.

The report by American security agents that the Nigerian military is compromised, after the president had announced that some members of his government have affiliations with Boko Haram, is a grave problem that requires urgent attention. The presidency needs to muster the political will to order the arrest and prosecution of those who are proved to have links with Boko Haram, including those in his cabinet, especially those funding their operations. Cutting the funding lines of the group will go a long way in curbing their activities, especially as they have become more menacing using high powered sophisticated machinery including anti aircraft weapons; showing that they have access to financial resources.

The political leadership from the North, need to intervene. Boko Haram insurgency is not an ethnic war, nor is it religious war. It has succeeded in destroying the economy of the North-Eastern part of the country, and the Northern elites will need to intervene and broker peace in the region.

The government should determine the number of men that are required to effectively control all Nigerian borders. Such number should be recruited and trained for that purpose from the large number of unemployed university and polytechnic graduates in the country. Their presence would deter infiltration of the borders by terrorists both now and in future. Recruiting from the large array of unemployed youths to effectively man the borders will be a double prone solution to the nation’s problems.

The federal government should establish a special force, like the Department of Homeland Security that was established by the American government in the wake of 9/11. This outfit would be trained in information gathering and counter terrorism activities, to not only curb Boko Haram, but also forestall future breaches of security, such as militancy and terrorism, both domestic and international.

It is believed that high level of mismanagement of public funds and corruption which has resulted in high level of poverty especially in the North East, is among the reasons for the success of Boko Haram insurgency in the region. The federal government must work closely with the various state governments to redress the anomalies, through good governance, people oriented programmes and poverty eradication. This will reduce the number of young men who are available to be recruited by Boko Haram.

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