



'STATE OF EMERGENCY' AS THE BEST POLICY OPTION FOR BOKO HARAM TERRORISM

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Nigeria a great African nation is facing serious security challenges during the last few years. These challenges not only threaten the lives and property of its citizenry but also have implications for its territorial integrity as well as well for the entire global system. Unarguably one of the major security challenges confronting Nigeria today is the Boko Haram insurgency. Perhaps what Gregory Ochiagha calls 'the emerging culture of death' has assumed eccentric and ludicrous proportion in Nigeria given the activities of the Boko Haram insurgents. Since the group started their activities, more than 3500 Nigerians have lost their lives to terrorism. Their refusal of any conciliatory measures made the matter even worse. Left with no other option, the Nigerian government on 14 May 2013 declared 'a state of emergency' in three Northern States of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa(1), where they have their biggest strongholds. Invoking the provisions of section 305, sub-section 1 of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria,1999, as amended, the Nigerian President, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, imposed a state

of emergency in the mentioned states thereby mandating the country's security operatives to destroy all terrorists strongholds in the states involved and arresting of perpetrators for proper judicial process.

This paper critically examines the implication of this action of the Nigeria. Is it the 'best' policy option to deal with the Boko Haram threat? Can a state of emergency be a definitive solution to Boko Haram insurgency? While the paper appreciates the imposition as a significant step in the right direction, it argues that unless the structures and conditions that dispose people to terrorism and criminality in Nigeria are addressed, the government 'state of emergency' may not achieve the objective for which it was enforced.

The Boko Haram: Who are they?

Boko Haram is a radical Islamist group who claims to abhor whatever is Western. Their official Boko Haram is Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad which in Arabic means "People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad. The group which is better known by its Hausa name 'Boko Haram' was a local radical Salafist group which transformed into a Salafi-jihadist terrorist organization after 2001(2). This official name captures the ideology and the sect. Its school of thought considers anything western as completely unislamic, and as such the basis for religious weakness. For them Western civilization is responsible for the evils of the modern society. It has imposed itself on every aspect of modern life. It has corrupted on the age-old, tested and trusted core Islamic values. As a result of its influence, many Muslims are departing from pure Islamic way of life. Syncretism and compromise has been the situation.

To safeguard themselves from the corrosive influence of this 'godless' civilizations, the Boko Haram group try to live a life that is not only distinct but also devoid of any western influence. Hence they eat traditional food, dress according to Islamic dressing code and also worship in their own Mosque.

For the Boko Haram extremists however, it is not enough to simply live a non-western lifestyle. If left to continue, this 'pesudo'- civilization is capable of undermining the teaching of Mohammed. As a result Boko Hara declared a 'fatua'(a religious decree) war on Western civilization and all that it represents or represents it. According to AbdulMumui Ibrahim Muhammad, a Boko Haram leader, "we

are fighting westernization to protect adulteration of Islam (. This is not a sit- and - condemn battle; it involves the destruction of Western civilization and all that represents it and the establishment of Islamic State where Allah would be the supreme leader and members of Islam will govern on his behalf. For them, fighting for the establishment of the Islamic ideals under the Sharia law is an agenda that must be fulfilled. In their view, only the enthronement of Islam and promulgation of the Sharia will stop the corruption and maladministration in the political system especially in Nigeria where corruption walks on two legs.

Therefore this sect fights to establish an Islamic state where they can impose their strict interpretation of the Sharia law. It's their intention to overthrow the Nigerian Government and create their Islamic state where Sharia law will be enforced in full force and there is no doubt that the group is gaining tempo across the country.

Their Activities

When Mohammed Yusuf started his activities in the Northeastern city of Maiduguri in Borno state, it started as a religious organization offering Koranic education and other informal means of livelihood to the impoverished youths of the area.(6) In his sermons and teachings, Mohammad condemned the Nigerian ruling class who live in scandalous affluence while majority of its population wallow in horrible poverty. He condemned the Western civilization which not only produces but also stratifies the society into the haves and have-nots. In his view, the rapacious and criminal politicians are products of Western education and therefore every 'true' Muslim has it as a religious obligation to fight such a corrupt civilization with whatever is at their disposal. Therefore, there is need to fight not only Western civilization itself but also what sustains such a civilization. Little wonder the sect directed their attacks on the Government, Christian Churches, Security officials and institutions, public officials and even their fellow Muslims who were compromising their faith.

As one would expect, the message of Boko Haram appealed to the sentiments of the numerous jobless youths, University students and other artisans who considered him as an unquestionable Allah's

instrument of salvation to them. Sequel to this, many of them joined in the crusade and Mohamed and other leaders of the group continued to secretly attract and prepare the members for future onslaught.

It was not surprising therefore to the residents when Mohammed and his group on 15th May 2003 waged an armed attack on Police Stations in the area. They also attacked many churches and government institutions and killed many people.

The response of the Nigerian security operatives led to the death of Mohamed Yusuf, the founder of the sect under extra-judicial circumstances. After the death of their founder, the group went underground and for a long time. However when they group re-emerged in 2010, it became more programmed and more sophisticated in their activities. Little did the government know that their initial withdrawal to re-strategize for further onslaught. Thus employing guerilla strategy they have attacked many Nigerian and International Institutions primarily targeting security installation and Christians living scores dead. Their tactics range from suicide bombings, shoot-and-run attacks, kidnapping and execution of public officials. On 7th September 2010, the sect broke into a in Maiduguri prison and released their members detained there. Also on 16th June 2011, the group bombed the Nigerian Police Headquarters. Again on 26th August, 2011, the group claimed responsibility over the bombing of the United Nations Headquarters in Abuja. Recently on 6th July 2013, Boko Haram attacked a Yobe State Secondary School setting the school hostel ablaze and killing about 42 persons most of were student.

Muslim Institutions are not spared by the Boko Haram. Just as I am putting final touches on this paper, BBC announced that the group has attacked a mosque in Maiduguri, killing about 45 Muslim worshippers (5). This attack came as a surprise to many Muslims because since their renewed operation in 2010, this is the first time they are attacking a Mosque in such a brazen manner living about 45 fellow Muslims dead (6). However, this shouldn't be a surprise if one remembers that the sect usually attacks fellow Muslims and Mosques whose clerics have spoken against their religious extremism. For example, on August 12 2011, the group shot dead a Muslim cleric Liman Bana. Liman is a frontline critic of the group.

There is no gainsaying that the members of this sect have created an atmosphere of fear and security through their indiscriminate and deadly activities. Below is the chronicle of their terrorist activities (7).

<i>Chronology of Boko Haram Activities</i>	
7 September 2010	Bauchi prison break
31 December 2010	December 2010 Abuja attack
22 April 2011	Boko Haram frees 14 prisoners during a jailbreak in Yola, Adamawa State
29 May 2011	May 2011 northern Nigerian bombings
16 June 2011	The group claims responsibility for the 2011 Abuja Police bombing
26 June 2011	Bombing attack on a beer garden in Maiduguri , leaving 25 dead and 12 injured
10 July 2011	Bombing at the All Christian Fellowship Church in Suleja , Niger State
11 July 2011	The University of Maiduguri temporary closes down its campus citing security concerns
12 August 2011	Prominent Muslim Cleric Liman Bana is shot dead by Boko Haram
26 August 2011	2011 Abuja bombing
4 November 2011	2011 Damaturu attacks
25 December 2011	December 2011 Nigeria bombings
5–6 January 2012	January 2012 Nigeria attacks
20 January 2012	January 2012 Kano bombings
28 January 2012	Nigerian army says it killed 11 Boko Haram insurgents

8 February 2012	Boko Haram claims responsibility for a suicide bombing at the army headquarters in Kaduna.
16 February 2012	Another prison break staged in central Nigeria; 119 prisoners are released, one warden killed.
8 March 2012	During a British hostage rescue attempt to free Italian engineer Franco Lamolinara and Briton Christopher McManus, abducted in 2011 by a splinter group Boko Haram, both hostages were killed.
31 May 2012	During a Joint Task Force raid on a Boko Haram den, it was reported that 5 sect members and a German hostage were killed.
3 June 2012	15 church-goers were killed and several injured in a church bombing in Bauchi state. Boku Haram claimed responsibility through spokesperson Abu Qaqa.
17 June 2012	Suicide bombers strike three churches in Kaduna. At least 50 people were killed.
17 June 2012	130 bodies were found in Plateau State. It is presumed they were killed by Boko Haram members.
3 October 2012	Around 25–46 people were massacred in the town of Mubi in Nigeria during a night-time raid.
18 March 2013	2013 Kano Bus bombing: At least 22 killed and 65 injured, when a suicide car bomb exploded in Kano bus station.
7 May 2013	At least 55 killed and 105 inmates freed in coordinated attacks on army barracks, a prison and police post in Bama town.
6 July 2013	Yobe State school shooting: 42 people, mostly students, were killed in a school attack in northeast Nigeria.
11 August 2011	The Maiduguri Mosque Shooting left 44 persons dead. These were Muslims who were saying their morning prayers.

The Reaction of Nigerian Government to Boko Haram Insurgency

The Nigerian Federal Government did not fold its hands and watch the Boko Haram unleashing their terrorist activities to its citizenry. In fact, the government mapped out strategies to combat the Boko Haram challenge which not only threatens Nigerian territorial integrity but also Nigerian relations with other countries. As a result, the government introduced some negotiation process including extending olive branch to Boko Haram by granting it amnesty. However the group's refusal of negotiation coupled with their continued attacks on government installation and more brutal killings forced the

Nigerian Government to declare a state of emergency in the area most affected by the Boko Haram insurgency.

Thus, on the 14th May 2013, the Nigerian President invoking the provisions of section 305, subsection 1 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 as amended declared a state of emergency in Bornu, Yobe and Adamawa states. In his nationwide broadcast, the President emphasized that “the activities of the Boko Haram which amounts to a declaration of war and a deliberate attempt to undermine the authority of the Nigerian state and threaten her territorial integrity has compelled his administration to declare a state of emergency in those states(8). He therefore mandated the military in conjunction with the Nigerian Police, the Department of State Security (DSS), and other security agencies to move into the area and to destroy all terrorist strongholds and to apprehend the perpetrators of terrorist crime.

The state of emergency was therefore imposed to curb increasingly violent attacks by the Boko Haram whose activities imposed on the government no other option than such extraordinary measures which also involves sealing Nigerian border with Cameroon, Niger and Chad. Until then, the border towns of these countries have served as operation bases for terrorist training and other criminal activities. It was imposed so as to ‘restore public order and security in Nigeria.

State of Emergency as the Best Policy Option

This is thrust of this paper. Many researchers, scholars and policy makers have viewed the state of emergency declaration from various perspectives. While some scholars see it as a step towards the right direction, other sees it as ordinary waste of the nation’s resources.

According to the first camp, a state of emergency can combat fire for fire. Only a joint military assault a terrorist organization like Boko Haram can checkmate or destroy it. According to Ibrahim Taiwo, “the measure even came late. The government should have declared it few years ago when the group was in its nascent stage. I wondered why it took the government too long to decide on such a crucial issue”(9).

For the other camp, it is the worst policy option against not only against Boko Haram but also against the citizens of the affected states. According to Ango Abdullah, “The proclamation of the state of

emergency was ill-advised and ill-timed because if really the government was serious about reconciliation and dialogue, it won't have declared war on its own people"(10).

Other critics of the state of emergency condemn it from the point of view of the previous activities of the security operatives during such situation. There has been various accounts gross violation of the rights of citizenry during such operations. There has been in the past wide cries of extra-judicial interrogation, detentions, tortures and killing of innocent person by the operators of the emergency rule. According to Umar Ardo, "The primary duty of government to rid the society of terrorists and terrorism is not more sacrosanct than its duty of protecting the lives and property of innocent citizens, and maintaining peace and harmony in the society" (11)

From my own perspective, in as much as I see the state of emergency as a move towards the right direction, I argue that it may not yield the desired divided of enduring peace in Nigeria. The state of emergency must be accompanied by other conflict resolution measures. The resolution 60/80 of the United Nations Global Counter-terrorism Strategy serves as a paradigm. This document requires member-states as a matter of necessity to address conditions that precipitates and enhances the spread of terrorism.

There is no doubt that although Boko Haram uses religion as an alibi for their terrorist activities, they are fighting age-long socio- political problems that has plagued Nigerian society. Nigerian society is a society where the leaders see politics as a means of enriching themselves than serving its population. According to Abdulkarim Mohammed, a researcher on Boko Haram, "Violent uprising in Nigeria, whether by Boko Haram or other groups, are invariably the result of "social injustice" and "bad governance"(12). Arguing further, he asserts "Boko Haram is essentially the fallout of frustration with corruption and the attendant social malaise of poverty and unemployment... The young generation see how [the nation's resources] are squandered by a small bunch of self-serving elite which breeds animosity and frustration, and such anger is ultimately translated into violent outbursts"(13). With the number of its unemployed youth multiplying every day, it wouldn't be a surprise that this disaffected group will necessarily swallow any doctrine and ideology that promises them a better future even after

this life. “The bulk of these youths, (especially those who execute their operations) are illiterate, poor, frustrated and jobless” Mohammed laments (14). Ogundiya laments that “that the state of economy is daunting standard of living extremely poor, ineffective and poor security systems, perpetual state of instability and poor and poor morale of the population and high crisis of legitimacy (15).

It is an incontrovertible fact that the corruption of Nigerian leaders together with the poverty of the masses contributed in the rise and growth of Boko Haram terrorism. According to Gutschuss, former leader Yusuf gained support “by speaking out against police and political corruption on the country’s vast numbers of unemployed youth who he was able to tap into for recruits” (16). Left with no future, they accepted the new message of liberation as sacrosanct. Therefore, I insist that if some of the root causes driving Boko Haram membership are addressed, said Guttschuss. These include “poverty and unemployment, driven by poor governance and corruption”

From the foregoing therefore, it is clear that state of emergency although appreciated is not however enough. The healing must start from the root- ‘sanatio in radice’. To achieve the strategic objective of the imposed rule, these polices must be pursued vigorously. Unless this is done, Boko Haram will continue to remain a thorn in Nigeria’s flesh.

Evaluation and Conclusion

Boko Haram has remained Nigeria’s biggest security challenge. It threatens not only her territorial integrity but also the entire international system. To confront this challenge, the Nigerian government declared a state of emergency in three Northern Nigerian States of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe. The purpose of this extraordinary measure is to curb the activities of Boko Haram and restore peace and order. While we appreciate this move by the Government, we also maintain that for the government to achieve its marked out strategic objective of enduring peace in Nigeria, it must take serious the root causes the predispose people to terrorism. A state of emergency must be accompanied by sincere and dogged determination to improve the welfare of the people. Unless this is done, Nigeria may continue to remain a theatre of violence which it regrettable has been during the last few years.

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