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A Review of the Implications of Terrorism on National Cohesion in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Since 2009, terrorism occasioned by the activities of the violent extremist group popularly known as Boko haram has posed a serious security problem in Nigeria. This has resulted into huge loss of lives and property as well as huge loss of financial resources which would have been invested in other meaningful ventures. The activities of the group has since then shook the foundation of the nation, putting a question to the existence of the nation. This study aims at investigating the implications of terrorism on national cohesion in Nigeria. The study used the historical research method for its investigation; hence, past studies which have been done on the subject matter were reviewed. Recommendations on how to eradicate the spate of terrorism in Nigeria were proffered such as that the Nigerian Immigration Service as well as other security

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agencies should intensify surveillance of our borders with the neighboring countries to control influx of illegal migrants, curtail all unauthorized routs and weapons links.

KEY WORDS: Terrorism, Boko Haram, Insurgency, National Cohesion, development

INTRODUCTION

One of the problems which have shook the foundation and existence of Nigeria since its amalgamation is terrorism which reared its ugly head about a decade ago. According to Grotheus (2011), terrorism can be defined as the use of violence to physically and psychologically terrorize a population by an individual or a group in order to draw attention to a cause, political change, or gain political power. In other words, terrorism can be seen as the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government or its citizens to further certain political or social objectives. Law enforcement generally recognizes two types of terrorism: domestic and international. Domestic terrorism is based and executed in a country by its own citizens without foreign direction. International terrorism, which is connected to foreign governments or groups, transcends a nation's boundaries (FBI, 2018).

Nwolise (2018) posits that to many Nigerian citizens terrorism may appear to be a new phenomenon given the experiences with hired assassinations, bomb blasts and plane hijacking since the June 12 crisis of 1993, but those with a sense of history know that the phenomenon is not new in principle; it has only recently graduated to a "professional" level. There is no doubt that the phenomenon of terrorism will increase with increasing contemporary struggles over issues of justice, democracy, public accountability, national resources distribution, and power sharing, ethnic tolerance, religious tolerance and so on, extremists or dissidents, especially those with suicide tendencies, as well as patriots who can no longer bear the retrogression of their

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country in the midst of plenty, can always emerge to form terrorist groups that will terrorize citizens or government officials.

From the foregoing, the case of Nigeria is unfortunate as it is clearly a breeding ground for terrorists. There is wide range poverty and unemployment ravaging the country. Iproject (2018) reports that Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and the eight in the world with a population of 140 million by 2006 census and a nominal GDP of $207 Billion per capita income of $1401. As a result, it is the second largest economy in Africa. As impressive as the above figures may appear youth unemployment has been one of the major problems facing Nigeria. A high level of unemployment is one of the critical socio-economic problems facing Nigeria. The inadequate employment situation of youth has a number of socio-economic, political and moral consequences. This has resulted in poverty in Nigeria which is chronic and rising. The share of the total population living below the $1 (one dollar) a day threshold of 46 percent is higher today than in 1980 significance improvements in the growth of GDP in recent years. These give ground to frustration and the temptation to revolt through the acts of terrorism (iproject, 2018).

Adebayo (2014) is of the view that the emergence of Boko Haram insurgency has introduced a terrorist dimension, hitherto unknown, into the criminal space in Nigeria. The group whose original name is *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad*, is a jihadist terrorist organization based in the northeast of Nigeria. It is an Islamist movement which strongly opposes man-made laws. Abebayo (2014) recounted that the group was founded by Mohammed Yusuf in 2002. The organisation is a Muslim sect that seeks to abolish the secular system of government and establish Sharia Law in the country. The movement, whose name in the Hausa language, Boko Haram, translates as "Western education is sacrilege" or "a sin" is divided into three factions, and

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in 2011, was responsible for more than 1000 killings in Nigeria (Eme, et. al, 2012 cited in Adebayo, 2014). Though the group first became known internationally following sectarian violence in Nigeria in 2009, it does not have a clear structure or evident chain of command. It has, however, been severally alleged that the group has links with several terrorist networks such as Al-Qaeda, Hezbolla, Taliban etc. The group adopted *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad* as its official name which translates into 'People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad'. Boko Haram is an indigenous Salafist group which only turned itself into a Salafist Jihadist group in 2009. It propagates that not only interaction with the Western World is forbidden, but it is also against the Muslim establishment and the government of Nigeria. The group publicly extols its ideology despite the fact that its founder and former leader Muhammad Yusuf was himself a highly educated man who lived a lavish life and drove a Mercedes Benz (Bartollota, 2013 cited in Adebayo, 2014).

Adebayo (2014) noted that the group was founded by Mohammed Yusuf in 2002 in the city of Maiduguri with the aim of establishing a Shari'a government in Borno State under former Governor Ali Modu Sheriff. He established a religious complex that included a mosque and a school where many poor families from across Nigeria and from neighbouring countries enrolled their children. The centre had ulterior political goals and soon it was also working as a recruiting ground for future jihadists to fight the state. The group includes members who come from neighbouring Chad and Niger and speak only Arabic. In 2004 the complex was relocated to Yusuf's home state of Yobe in the village Kanamma near the Niger Republic border. Yusuf was able to recruit membership from numerous unemployed youths, whose situation has made them become dissatisfied with the state. Late Yusuf also took advantage of the irresponsible leadership

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of all levels of government, unemployment, poverty, corruption and insecurity. And as he points out such failures, citing verses of Quran and the saying of the prophet, the youth see him as the leader that will indeed deliver them from malevolence to the promises land. Many Nigerians are hungry for progress and an improvement in their lives, but northern Nigerians feel this need most acutely. Life in Nigeria for many is tough, but across the North, life is grim.

As reported by Adebayo (2014), a studies show that poverty in the 12 most northern states is nearly twice that of the rest of the country. The health indicators reflect this. Children in the far north are almost four times as likely to be malnourished. Child mortality is over 200 deaths per 1000 live births, leading to lower life expectancy. Educational standards are just as bad. Literacy in the far north is 35 percent as opposed to 77 percent in the rest of the country. Seventy-seven percent of women in the far north have no formal education, compared to only 17 percent in the rest of the country. In northern Nigeria, primary school attendance is only 41 percent, while youth unemployment is extremely high. All of this contributes to joblessness and a deepening cycle of poverty (Carson, 2012). In the same vein, Abdulkarim Mohammed, a researcher on Boko Haram, added that violent uprisings in Nigeria are ultimately due to "the fallout of frustration with corruption and the attendant social malaise of poverty and unemployment'' (Cook, 2011 cited in Adebayo, 2014).

The effects and implications of terrorism are numerous. Nwolise (2018) reports that world politics is fast coming under the yoke of terrorism today: terrorists tend or attempt to force governments to reverse their decisions, avoid taking any decisions over some crucial issues, or to make decisions they would not normally make, also, nobody is safe, and terrorists can strike at any time, targeting children, women, heads of state, travellers and installations, in 1993, for

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example, a Nigerian plane was hijacked to Niger Republic following the June 12 crisis, the Niger-Delta is fast becoming a zone of terror, and the symbols of the Talliban are showing themselves in Borno State. Yet, there exists a pool of millions of hungry and angry unemployed youths in this country, from which terrorists can be recruited easily, these make it necessary and urgent for Nigerians to begin to think and plan seriously' about terrorism, the people have been enlightened and mobilize; and the military, security and intelligence force trained and equipped adequately to meet the new challenges of terrorism (Nwolise, 2018).

Nwolise (2018) also opined that terrorism has great implications for national security, apart from the killing of citizens and the destruction of lives and property, terrorism can subvert the operation of defence and security agencies, and this puts a nation in great danger, again, it can demoralize security forces, and for a nation to have demoralized security forces is bad omen for national security. Terrorism can also lead to a breakdown of law and order and discourage investors both foreign and domestic, in this way, development and national productivity become threatened, since national leaders will always do their best to ensure the security of the nation, terrorism can stimulate the diversion of funds from socio-economic development to defence and security tending. The country's international image can also be adversely affected by terrorist activities and this, in turn, affects tourism and the revenue expected from it, terrorism also weakens government resolve and ability to govern effectively, and retards administrative efficiency and momentum of development (Nwolise, 2018).

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This study is premised on the Social Movement Theory (SMT) which came to fore in the early and middle 1900s when social researchers thought that movements were random occurrences of

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individuals who were trying to emotionally react to situations outside their control (Wikipedia, 2018).

Beck (2008) noted that recent syntheses of social movement theory stress an integrative approach to all forms of political contention. In this view, challenges of social movements are one form of contention, while the actions of states, elites, and counter-movements constitute other dimensions. The contentious politics approach sees tactics, movements, and actors arrayed along a spectrum of related phenomenon rather than boxed in by formal, discrete categories (Beck, 2008). Terrorism, given that it makes political claims and seeks to influence political processes and outcomes, should be seen as one such mode of collective action (Oberschall, 2004). Terrorism is a tactic (Tilly, 2004) and a type of contention that may or may not appear in a political struggle. Furthermore, political violence is often conducted by organized groups that undertake, to borrow Tarrow's (1998) definition of a social movement, 'collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities'. No matter the precise definition, it is reasonable to suggest that terrorism includes: (1) violence or the threat of violence; (2) unconventional targets (e.g. civilians); and (3) political goals or political claim making. Specifically, in this review, it is opined that the boko haram terrorist group in Nigeria who employ this tactic fits here. Terrorist groups are first and foremost movements with political or religious claims and can be analyzed as such. Hence the social movement theory aptly captures the evolution, modus operandi and objectives of the boko haram terrorist group.

TERRORISM AND NATIONAL COHESION

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According to Abubakar (2017), national cohesion refers to a sense of unity and oneness by citizens of a country to the extent that, despite their diversity, they see themselves as forming a nation. That sense of solidarity encourages them to invest economically, socially, politically and emotionally in the wellbeing of the nation-country. National cohesion does not mean the absence of disagreements but those disagreements play out and are resolved within the parameters laid out by the country's laws and regulations and in a manner that preserves that sense of oneness.

In other words, national cohesion is a process and an outcome of instilling and enabling all citizens in the country to have a sense as well as a feeling that they are members of the same country, engaged in a common enterprise and facing shared challenges. Indeed, National Cohesion goes beyond peace-keeping and conflict management. It is based on the fact that societies and individuals can only achieve their potential when living and working together. This is realized through the regulation and reconciliation of differences, competing interests and demands. It is strongest when everyone in the country has the opportunity, the resources and the motivation to participate in society as fully as they wish and on an equal basis with others.

According to Sodiq and Babalola (2016), national cohesion means combing all the people of the nation into a single whole. It is a particular sentiment that binds together all people in one common bond no matter what their religion, language or history is. It is strong cementing force whereby all kinds of people live together peacefully and can identify themselves as a part of a single whole. It reduces socio-cultural and economic differences or inequalities and strengthens national unity and solidarity, which is not imposed by any authority. People share ideas, values and emotional bonds. It is feeling of unity within diversity. National identity is supreme.

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Ntalaja (2002) in Sodiq and Babalola (2016) noted that solidarity with one's identity is best mobilized when the group faces a threat, real or imaged, to its interests, security or its very existence as a group. This is why there is an increase in identity based conflicts during periods of economic and political crisis, the high incidence of inter-communal violence is due to growing competition over scarce resources and the persistence of poverty. Thus are insecurity and poverty intertwined, and their persistence can only frustrate the Nigerian 'national' cohesion and development process (Ntalaja, 2002 in Sodiq & Babalola, 2016).

According to Sodiq and Babalola (2016), it is disheartening that Nigeria is being lumped together with Somalia, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and other ill reputed nations. Terrorism is a disincentive to potential indigenous and foreign investors and the Boko Haram problem continues to hurt Nigeria. The evidence and fast changing indices (in form of changing migration patterns, cost of insurance in the North, mass repatriation of funds, dearth in skilled labour etc) speaks volumes.

Historically, each region in Nigeria compliments the other. What the North lacks in access to the sea, the South provides. The north wields 78 percent of Nigeria's land which supports most of Nigeria's agriculture (food, cash crops and livestock). The South-West's terrain supports both domestic and international commerce and provides an import/export rout. While the South-South and some parts of the South-East wield Nigeria's oil wealth (Business Day, 2012 in Sodiq & Babalola, 2016).

Sodiq and Babalola (2016) is of the view that with increased intensity of bombings in the North, the gripping tension, insecurity, and suffering occasioned by the sect members and the military

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actions, subjecting innocent civilians to humiliation, brutalization, extortion and undue hardship led to the mass exodus of people from the violent zones. The movements were of unprecedented kind since both Southerners and Northerners simultaneously moved from Boko Haram strong holds. The implication is that "there will be significant dearth in professionals, artisans and commercial professionals in the region" (Olasile, 2014).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Nigeria as a nation since its independence has witnessed several unrest and violent situations. Most of these emanate from the seeming incompatibility of the various ethnic groups which often see each other as "the devil's cousins" coexisting in the same nation. These violent situations often caused by minor misunderstanding between two people of different origin grow to become a full blown massacre around the various states of the country. The highest bad blood is felt more between the Southern area (which until date identifies itself with the State of Biafra) and especially the Northern part. Each of these violent clashes greets the nation with so much unnecessary bloodletting and often waste of resources to fix. In the face of this a lot people become disillusioned and lose faith in the nation since there is little progress and more hatred which advances deepens by the day. In the face of these one wonders if the unity of the country can ever help it achieve any development (Okoye, 2016).

Okoye (2016) is of the opinion that the Boko Haram insurgency builds on this hatred which bedevils the country from the time of its self-consciousness as a multi-ethnic nation. The insurgence gains grounds and keeps inflicting its gory attacks on the dominated areas without any effort to collective fighting. The only reason why such insurgency continues in Nigeria is

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that there is no collective will to fight Boko Haram, the people in power struggle to sack the insurgent, the political opponents see it as an avenue to discredit the incumbent, whip up sympathy and get into power; there is rather a concrete politicization of the lives instead of a positive will to resolve an impending problem (Okoye, 2016).

From the foregoing, this study puts forth the following recommendations:

1. The government at all levels should provide social amenities to Nigerians. This can be in the form of monthly stipends, provision of employment for the teeming youths, or providing infrastructure that will improve the standard of living of Nigerians. By so doing, Nigerian citizens will not be prone to radicalization by violent extremists.
2. Government should be sincere in the fight against terrorism in Nigeria. The security agencies must be patriotic and face their jobs. It has been reported that some saboteurs and sell-outs exist among the security agents.
3. Traditional and community leaders must be proactive to identify bad eggs in their communities.
4. The Nigerian Immigration Service as well as other security agencies should intensify surveillance of our borders with the neighboring countries to control influx of illegal migrants, curtail all unauthorized routs and weapons links.
5. Education of youths is paramount in decimating terrorism in Nigeria. The government in all levels should provide free and compulsory education for her citizens. Government should ensure that all children of school age attend school. By so doing, these youngsters will not be tools in the hands of terrorists.

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