

NATIONAL SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF GRANTING AMNESTY TO BOKO HARAM INSURGENTS IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The activities of Boko Haram have caused so much fear and tension in the air, particularly among those residing in the Northern parts of the country. Worrisome is the Islamic sect spread of its tentacles to other states in the North-East, North-West and North-Centre. To contain the sect, the Federal Government deployed more troops, declared a state of emergency in the hotbed of Boko-Haram to check the spate of the menace, yet the sect is holding upper hand in the war. A situation that has tempted the federal government to concede granting the sect Amnesty. This study examines the implications of granting Amnesty to Boko Haram Insurgents in Northern Nigeria, it traces the activities and operations which has led to the continued massive loss of human and material resources, despite the death of their founder and detention of their top hit men. Their dastard activities have dented the image of the country, impacted negatively on the overall economic development of the country. This paper's position is that granting amnesty to Boko Haram will portray Nigeria as a weak state and more dangerously as an encouraging signal to other disgruntled elements in the society to take up arms against the state. The paper recommend that, there should be effective information and analysis about the sect members and their operations, updating of security personnel and equipment, strengthen the anti-terrorist laws, etc. these will guarantee peace in Nigeria and defeat the sect.

Keywords: *National Security, Amnesty, Boko Haram, Insurgent.*

DOI: 10.58934/jgss.v4i14.152

1. Introduction

Today, Nigerian internal security is threatened by heinous crimes perpetrated with impunity across the country consisting among others unbridled kidnapping and hostage taking, violent crimes, robberies and insurgency in the Northern Nigeria. The Boko Haram insurgency has constituted potent threat to Nigeria national security. The dreaded sect have resorted to the use

of suicide in advancing their murderous game.

Boko Haram also called Ahlis Suna Lidda' Awati Wai Jihad is an offshoot of the Maita Sine Islamic Movement of the eighties, it is an obscure movement confined to the northeast. Boko Haram has emerged as the most palpable threat to Nigeria's peace and development not only do their persistent attacks create widespread insecurity and fear, the prevalent trend has stifled trade and investment as well as the performance of routine security functions Okpo (2013) on daily basis Boko Haram threw home made bomb in churches, school, security vans, relaxation spot, security formation, government offices and strategic places across the northern Nigeria.

In order to confront this new and dangerous security challenge, the federal government deployed more troops, declared state of emergency in the hotbed of Boko Haram, increase security budget. National security adviser and security services chiefs were removed and new ones appointed as to inject fresh idea in the war, security personnel were trained and retrained in various countries, training complemented with provision of modern security gadgets to aid intelligence gathering.

Despite government effort to contain Boko Haram, the sect is still having an upper hand; they struck at every target without or with little resistance from the security operatives. The government and indeed the entire Nigeria seems helpless as government is incapable of halting the bloody campaign of Boko Haram.

To arrest this violent campaign against the Nigerian state which has claimed over many lives, destroyed properties worth billions of naira, dent the country's image, the federal government set up a committee to consider the feasibility of granting amnesty to the set. This paper's position is that Granting amnesty to these criminals will portray Nigeria as a weak state, it will expedite the emergence of other terrorist group in the country.

This paper will examine the security implications of granting amnesty to Boko Haram insurgents and suggest strategies to curb their activities. The objective of this paper is to protect the sovereignty of Nigeria, enhance her national security and development.

2. Conceptual Issues

Boko Haram: Is an Hausa phrase which means, western education is forbidden or sinful. This phrase is used to refer to the Bornu based Islamic sect called Jama'atu Ahlis Suna Lidela await

Wai Jihad which in Arabic means “people committed to the propagation of the prophet’s teachings and Jihad (Social and Economic Rights Action Center Report, www.serac.org:4).

Security: Oxford advance learner’s dictionary defines security as the activities involved in protecting a country buildings, or person against attacks and dangers. Imobighe (1992) conceive security as freedom from danger or threats to a nation’s ability to protect and develop itself, promote its cherished values and legitimate interests and enhance the well-being of its people.

National Security: Atoyebi (2003) advanced that national security refers to the absence of threats, to core values and the prevention of public disorder’s, in a wider sense, security, is seen as two levels namely the state and the individual, at the individual level, security is used to reference to core values such as job security, social security, security against national disaster etc, at the state level security connotes the safeguard of the territorial integrity of the state against internal and external aggressors.

Like Atoyebi, Thom-Otuya and Kabee (2011) defined national security as concerned with ensuring the state legal codes are not transgressed, the prevention of attacks on public infrastructures and their personnel by implementing civil defence and emergency preparedness measures and ensuring the resilience and redundancy of critical infrastructures.

In this paper National Security is seen as a combination of military hardware, traditional forces, activities through which a country can develop its potential.

Amnesty: Is an English word borrowed from a Greek word “Amnestia”; it is a legislative and executive act by which a state restores those who may have been guilty of an offence against it to position of innocence, it is more than pardon as it obliterates all legal remembrance of the offence. It is used to express freedom and the time when prisoner’s can go free. Of importance, is that amnesty can be used by any given authority to bring citizens in compliance with the law than punishing them for their past offence; it is a kind of reconciliation between the offenders and the society.

Boko Haram: Operation and Activities

The emergence of Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria is a major threat to Nigeria National security as it operates outside the confines of established laws of the federation and often

creates an atmosphere of tension and insecurity in the Northern Nigeria. Boko Haram operatives use Ak-47 assault rifles as weapon of choice and other motor bike as favored means of mobility, they use improvised explosive devices at choices, they plant these (IEDs) at schools, motor parks, government offices, security formations/stations, these home made bomb can be thrown into security patrol cars, churches and relaxation centres and at strategic location across the region, it is usually used to detonate prison formation to free

Perspectives of Boko Haram

Boko Haram like all human and social phenomena has various perspectives of interpretations. The perspectives range from the causes to the motivations, and interpretations of the Boko Haram insurgency. Agbaju (2013) pointed out four dimensions in interpreting the politics of Boko Haram. They are:

Social: The social dimension predisposes adherent of Boko Haram extremist such as illiteracy, ignorance, and social exclusion and excision of youth from the family system through the Almajiri system of half baked religions.

Economic: The economic dimension is the most critical, possessive poverty, unemployment, a complete absence in million of young people especially males of any skills or competence.

Religion: There is the religious dimension which is the core extremist religious ideology of a species of political Islam which opposes secular or western education, advocates hatred for Christians and endorses suicide killings on a promise reward of paradise plus seven heavenly virgins for instance.

Politics: The early origin of Boko Haram is traceable to politics. In a clear political alliance with mainly the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) Governors in the North East region and Kano. Its ostracism and attempted destruction of its estranged sponsors and appropriation of new mentors and financiers; its transmutation from locally focused to a national political agenda as federal power slipped into Goodluck Jonathan's hand and its deployment as an instrument to undermine the credibility of the Jonathan presidency at home and abroad.

There is evidence that in the early days of Mohammed Yusuf, Boko Haram enjoyed close relationship with the Borno State government. Boko Haram was used then as ANPP defense against Peoples Democratic Party PDP, ANPP adopted Islamic intimidation, and all most all

the ANPP states launched political sharia.

A prominent Northern Emir Dasuki (2012) believes that, the Boko Haramist is not fighting for Islam rather they are killing Muslims and tarnishing the image of Islam. He noted that, they started in Borno, which is 95 percent Muslim, in Kano 99 percent Muslim. He further observed that, if governments address the issues of injustice, corruption with impunity and the problems of the people, there would be less social unrest in the society.

Obstacles in Curbing Boko Haram

In the face of the frightening Casualty, figures, associated with Boko Haram activities several factors have been identified for festering Boko Haram problem. These factors includes but not limited to the following:

1. Corruption: Like every facet of the nation's human endeavour, corruption has again surface as the Latent factor undermining the effective, countering of the insurgents, it is disheartening that inspite of hundreds of billions naira appropriated as budgetary equipment for defence annually military equipment in the country have been described as obsolete and inferior to those used by the Boko Haram insurgents.

2. Sabotage: There is evidence of sabotage in the efforts to contain the sect, as there is a genuine apprehension that Boko Haram insurgents have sympathizers in the military, such sympathy might be responsible to the fatal death of some of our military men. Top military officers give advance information to the members of the sect and some times frustrate internal operations aimed at containing the sect.

3. Lack of intelligence support: The mere fact that the military operates in reactionary rather pro-actionary is a clear evidence of death of intelligence in the military up till now, the military is unable to generate accurate and reliable information of the hideout/operations of members of the sects

4. Porous borders: The lack of control of movement of persons and equipment across the country's borders has been identified as a major challenge which the Boko Haram insurgents have effectively taken advantage of to unleash terror on the Nigerian populace.

5. The effect of Global Terrorism: The presence of Global Terrorism makes it difficult for Nigeria to contain Boko Haram, Global Terrorism are Terrorist group with various cells and

network together thereby providing financial and logistics supports to Boko Haram operatives. Thus, retarding efforts made to contain the sects.

3. The Security Implication for Granting Amnesty to Boko Haram

The Nigerian government has indicated interest of granting amnesty to the Boko Haram insurgents but the insurgents have not reciprocated interest in accepting such offer. There are great security implications of granting amnesty to the dreaded insurgent. The implications are:

Projection of Nigeria as a weak state: Granting amnesty to terrorist is admittance that, the terrorist has overwhelmed Nigerian security forces. Granting amnesty to faceless terrorist means that, the Nigeria security organization is weak and helpless both in intelligence gathering and military hardware. This act will project Nigeria in bad light, it will jeopardize our national interest and expose Nigeria to incessant attacks from internal and external sources.

Waste of Nigeria resources: Granting Amnesty to Boko Haram Insurgents is a waste of Nigeria resources because; the Boko Haram operatives are not only Nigerian but national from Mali, Niger, Chad, Somalia and Sudan. Offering them amnesty is to open the floodgate for all manner of miscreants to come in from no where to cue for compensation for killing Nigerians and destroying properties. Boko Haram operatives are not only Nigerian, there will be no genuine remorse to those who are not Nigerian to be granted amnesty. The infiltrations of international terrorist group and cannot be easily assuaged with material offers because, their task is to destroy and create a fake Islamic State.

Increase the spate of insurgency in Nigeria: Amnesty to Boko Haram insurgents will increase the spate of insurgency in Nigeria. It is believed that the Boko Haram Insurgents do not have genuine demand; they are projecting a fake propaganda that western education is a sin as a decoy to control political power. Through the uncertainties and Impunities associated with governance in Nigeria and Africa may have spurred the poor once to join the fake crusade. But there are legitimate aggrieved youths in all parts of Nigeria that are not satisfied with governance, injustice, corruption and impunities in the county. They will rise against the government with hope that, Nigeria Security is weak and that after destruction of lives and properties, they too will be granted amnesty.

Demystifying the Rule of Law, Nigeria Constitution and Legal Codes: Terrorism is a heinous crime; the proposed amnesty to the Boko Haram insurgents will be counter-productive

as it aims to reward crime with money, and special favours. Granting amnesty is an attempt to demystify the rule of law, Nigeria constitution and legal codes. It will create a peaceless environment because, people will prefer to embrace crime and be rewarded, and this will erode ethics and cultural values in Nigeria. We can not reward crime with money and special favour.

Weaken the National Morale of Nigerians: Granting Amnesty to the Boko Haram Insurgents will weaken the national morale of Nigerians. What happens to the families of the victims of Boko Haram? What happens to the families of the security agents that the insurgents have brutally killed? What happens to the churches and infrastructures that the insurgents have destroyed? will they be happy to see those that have killed and maimed being set free and paid huge amount of money? Or will it spur them to carry arms against the government for vengeance? Will they be faithful to government policies and programmes?

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The menace of Boko Haram has impacted dearly on the lives, Properties of Nigerians and has posed a serious threat to the national security of Nigeria. It has exposed the amorphous nature and porousness of the Nigerian borders. The Boko Haram operatives are not only Nigerians but infiltrated by international terrorist groups which makes it difficult to be granted amnesty. The Boko Haram operatives have infiltrated the Nigerian army and security system. A situation that has hampered military intelligence and operations. The desires of the Boko Haramist cannot be granted in a circular country like Nigeria. We cannot do without western education neither can we accept Islamization of Nigeria. The Boko Haram activities will lead to the challenge of strengthening our security system and enhancing our military equipment. It will make Nigeria come out stronger and more powerful in the comity of nations.

To resolve the issue of Boko Haram, one need to take into consideration various perspectives of Boko Haram. However, this paper will step down the perspectives of Boko Haram and deal with them as common criminals. Though terrorist gangs cannot just be flushed out within a short period. When insurgency and guerrilla war starts, they do not end soon e.g. the cases of Afghanistan, Columbia, Iraq etc.

The activities of Boko Haram can be contained and minimized if the Nigerian State can affect the followings:

- Identification and control of Nigeria boarder. Nigeria has amorphous boarder that are

neither manned nor policed. These borders should be identified and policed. Government should construct suitable border security complex with sophisticated communication gadget and military hardware. Border communities should be developed and equipped for security operatives to feel at home and relaxed to inhabit.

- Government should recruit and train more immigration personnel that will police our borders.
- Leaders should promote good governance and curb the height of corruption in governance. Good governance will expedite liberty, equality and justice. It will boost the morale of the people and rekindle their confidence on governance.
- Government should improve on her quality of intelligence gathering of her security agencies, and upgrade her military hardware.
- Government should produce more air drone and use them for border surveillance. Government should spend more money on the security of the country and maintain social order.
- Government should mobilize Northern Leaders, traditional rulers and Islamic clerics to sensitize their people from supporting or shielding Boko Haram operatives.
- Government should muster courage and will power to detect and punish local financiers of Boko Haram.
- The terrorist act should be strengthened, and a separate Court created to try terrorist related cases.
- Government should close-up her diplomatic relations with some of her neighbors like: Cameroon, Chad, and Mali, etc. there should be regional and sub-regional security summit that will enable the Head of States to deter the use of their territories as hiding and operational base for terrorist.
- Lastly, Nigeria government should seek the assistance of the international community in combating terrorist. Because, terrorist is an international issue, it requires a collective effort to curb its menace and activities.

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