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DIPLOMACY AS A PANACEA FOR RESOLVING THE BOKO HARAM INSURGENCE IN NORTHERN NIGERIA: IMPLICATION FOR NATIONAL INTEGRATION

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ABSTRACT

For over a decade now, the country have been experiencing violence attack by a group of insurgence popularly called boko haram. This group have created a lot of threat in the country which the government have been trying to curb out the mence by using force. This paper however examine diplomacy as a panacea for resolving the Islamist extremist group, Boko Haram insurgence in the country. Some literatures on the subject matter were reviewed while secondary sources were employed to analyze the issues therein. State fragility and frustration aggression theories were adopted as our theoretical framework in explaining the issues that are involved in the paper. The paper reveals that since the inception of this sect in the northern part of the country the national integration principle which is based on building a strong and prosperous nation irrespective of our differences has been in shamble, and the government on the other hand has been using the military approach in combating this terrorist group which has been causing a lot of harm in the country. In the quest for resolving this insurgence, the paper recommends some diplomatic element which may be used for combating or addressing this sect. These include, negotiation, arbitration, being patient, and adopting secrecy. The paper however, recommend that alleviating poverty as well as Education and employment opportunities are vital channel for combating terrorism in the Northern part of the country. Any action in this regard would prevent the youths from being ready tools for instability and recruitment. The paper concludes that for this act of terrorism to stop, the government should not solely rely on force, but must also focus on diplomatic element as well as addressing how to eliminate the underlying social and political causes of terrorism. It is only when this is done that we can effectively resolve the Boko Haram terrorist organization.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most serious issues that confront the Nigerian state and undermines her national integration is the resurgence of unrest by group of individuals in nearly all the geo-political zones of the country and the northern part is not an exemption hence no single issue both national and international has dominated the headlines in Nigeria for the past years as boko haram. These terrorists have over the years used violence, or threat of it on innocent citizens by intimidating or causing panic especially as a means of affecting political and religious conduct in the northern part of the country. Obviously, there is one point which is not often obscured and the fact being that, terrorist's activities whether political or religious have one

objective which is directed in opposition of an established authority with the purpose of coercing the established authority or group into accepting the demands of these perpetrators. Usually, the targets of these terrorists (boko haram) are not the victims that die in the bombings but the public as a whole. This insurgence (boko haram) has posed a lot of challenge which is more of an ideological challenge than a technical or voluntary one. Since we are faced with this intractable problem, we have to explore all possible avenues of solution. Nigerian government in a quest to end this rebel group has been employing the military force approach. In the words of Anan (2005) "We delude ourselves if we think that military force alone can defeat terrorism." Buttressing on the analysis by Anan, it is apt to say that "it is diplomacy and not the whims and caprices of the military that can defeat the boko haram sect, hence it generate violence upon violence" Ikyase (2013). According to Cardinal Onaiyekan (2013) "The security response in terms of arms, gadgets and trained

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personnel is useful and necessary but obviously not enough on its own.” Drawing from the statement made by the clergy, it is incumbent that, the government has centered on the use of military force which create violence with violence and discourage any idea of dialoging with those adjudged to be members of the sect. the over reliance on the military response is a basic weakness in the existing effort in stopping this menace. It is against this backdrop that this paper seeks to identify diplomacy as a panacea for resolving the problem of this sect for a better and healthy Nigeria. The paper is divided into six section, section one explore diplomacy, section two focuses on theoretical framework section three, examines the boko haram sect, section five considers some factors that account for the perennial rise of terrorist activities (boko haram) in Nigeria, section four addresses some possible diplomatic means of resolving the sects, conflict, while section six makes conclusions and recommendations.

Conceptual Clarifications

Diplomacy

Diplomacy as a term is derived from the Greek word diploma. These were paired wooden slabs that served as letters of credence to representatives in the foreign land. The term is capable of numerous definitions some of which are examine here, In his view, Feltham (1977) citing Satow, succinctly defined diplomacy as:

The application of intelligence and tact to the conduct of official relations between the government of independent states, extending sometimes also to their relation with vassal states or the conduct of business between states by peaceful means.

Ernest Satow’s definition is not quite recommendable because he fails to observe that not all diplomats are intelligent, nor are they all tactful. More so, diplomacy is not only used in international system alone it is also used in domestic affairs. But it is a total truth with the definition that diplomacy is the conduct of relation between states by peaceful means which is in consonance with the UN Charter, situated in Art 2(3) on the principle of peaceful means of settling international disputes: It is the best means so far used by civilized nations for preventing insecurity in the country. Ian (1979) defined diplomacy as:

any means by which states establish or maintain mutual relations, communicate with each other, or carry out politics/or legal transactions in each case through their authorized agents.

Looking at the above definition given by Ian Brownlie diplomacy is seen as an instrument in the hands of nation or states for the peaceful conduct of their relations. From the above definitions, what can be deduced is the unanimous acceptance that diplomacy is an effective functional instrument which state employ to maintain peace. More so, diplomacy is both an art and skill used and apply by professional expert with regard to issues of peace making, war, economics and culture. It is through diplomacy that states engage in resolving conflict among them as to live in a

harmonious environment. At its core, diplomacy is a basic human activity. In the word of Starkey (2004).

‘The desire to resolve problems amicably pervades all arenas of social organization. It is the function of negotiation to provide a channel for peaceful dispute resolutions.

Drawing from the above statement, diplomacy is seen as a means of resolving problematic issues in a peaceful manner so as to come out with a smiling conclusion. One important aspect of diplomacy is that, it employs several means of exercising influence ranging from persuasion, and militant destructive confrontation. By persuasion it encapsulate verbal, explanatory, preventive and pacific in orientation, which provide avenue for promises as well as the promotion of dialogue. The militant phase of diplomacy has to do with the actual threat and engagement of force. Which the Nigerian government has been using since the inception of the group but is not yielding the required result. Today, diplomacy is the hallmark of every issue. Without the value of diplomacy in world politics; the present world system (without world government) would have been too chaotic, jungle like and anarchical for the survival of human civilization. Every issue begs diplomacy, every relation invites diplomacy. The making of either war or peace relies on diplomacy.

National Integration

Just like the concept of diplomacy, national integration can also not be boxed into a unilateral definition. According to Chizea (1985), national integration is a process leading to political cohesion and sentiments of loyalties towards central political institutions. In the word of Bello(2012), national integration refers to specific problems of creating a sense of territorial nationality which eliminates subordinate parochial loyalties. National integration can therefore be conceived as the feelings which individuals belonging to different social groups of historically distinct origin see themselves as one. For the sake of this paper we defined diplomacy as the application of tact and intelligence by government through the use of negotiations, arbitration, patient, and secrecy to resolve insecurity challenges to foster national integration for a strong and prosperous nation.

Theoretical Discourse

The theoretical explanations and analyses of issues in this paper are based on two broad, but mutually complementary theories, namely the state fragility perspective and frustration aggression approach. Our choice of these theories is predicated on the desire to understand how the inability of the state to cater for her citizens has triggered ethnic militias and insurgency in the country thereby inhibiting the level of development. The fragile state as articulated by Sara (2008) is the term used for countries facing severe developmental challenges such as weak institutional capacity, poor governance, political instability, unemployment, poverty and low level of economic development. It is a theory that describes how extreme poverty is concentrated in a given state, how low level of human and social development are linked to weak institutional capacity, governance and to internal conflict, all of which undermine the capacity of the state to deliver basic social and infrastructural services and

offer security to citizens Ikyase (2013). More fundamentally, a fragile state is the one that is trapped in a vicious circle of violent conflict and poverty or suffer from a natural resource curse; others face a legacy of not providing the most basic services to their citizens. Such basic services include among other things, good health facilities, good roads, quality education, electricity, good water supply etc. Slater (2012), a leading proponent of this theory has observed that a fragile state is significantly susceptible to crisis in one or more of its subsystems. According to him, a fragile state is a state that is particularly vulnerable to internal shocks as well as domestic conflicts. This implies that in a fragile state, institutional arrangement embodies and perhaps preserves the conditions of crisis both in economic and social terms. In economic terms, this could be institutions, importantly property rights that reinforce stagnation or low growth rates, or embody extreme inequality in wealth, in access to land or access to the means to make a living. In social terms, institutions may embody extreme inequality or lack of access altogether to health or education.

In fragile states, statutory institutional arrangements are vulnerable to challenges by rival institutional systems be they derived from traditional authorities or devised by communities under conditions of stress that see little of the state (in terms of security, development, or welfare). The frustration aggression hypothesis formulated by Dollard et al. (1939) has the central premise that aggression is always the result of frustration. According to them, frustration produces instigations to a number of different types of responses, one of which is an instigation to some of aggression. Expanding on the above postulation, Anifowose (2003: 48) submits that, 'given the requisite conditions, individuals or groups who feel frustrated in the attainment of their desires and demands often react by direction aggressive behavior at what is perceived as being responsible for depriving or thwarting those desires, as a substitute. He further submits that, it is not utter lack but unfulfilled hopes and expectations that engender violent conflict'.

It could be argued from the above vantage points that, the emergence of the ethnic militias and insurgency in the country could have resulted in part from the inability of the Nigerian state to meet the yearnings and aspirations of its citizens. The truth remains that there is poverty, unemployment and lack of basic infrastructure in the country. In view of this, the provision of basic services, poverty eradication, employment opportunities and so on, can help reduce the scale of violent insurgency that has gripped the country in recent years. This is because as Anifowose (1982) posits; When groups feel alienated and there is further feeling that such alienation is entrenched, it could degenerate into violence as the groups increasingly resort to desperate measures to break the yolk. This state of deprivation and social injustice may have driven this group to take up arms against the state to break the yolk as a counter measure to address their grievances.

Boko Haram in perspective; The Historical Overview

The popular name Boko-Haram according to Da'awah Coordination Council of Nigeria (DCCN, 2001) has its origin in the media and the public/community coinage. The word "BOKO" in Hausa is popularly used to refer to the formal

public or private educational system. It is also seen or referred to as western education in all its ramifications. "HARAM" on the other hand is a Hausa word adopted from Arabic, meaning Islamically unacceptable, forbidden or prohibited. Boko-Haram can therefore be interpreted as meaning "western secular education is Islamically prohibited". It could also be interpreted to mean that evangelism deceptively camouflaged as western education is Islamically unacceptable. Though Islamic Scholars have strongly disagreed with this perception as Abdurrahman (2007) aptly put "Islam encourages the search for knowledge as Qur'an and Sunnah encourage Muslims to seek useful knowledge in all fields of human endeavor.

The sect (Ahlu-Sunnah Lidda'awati Waljihad) was founded in 2001 by two major leaders namely, USTAZ MUHAMMAD YUSUF (the late) and USTAZ MUHAMMAD ALI (the late) known as Al'udden. Their first meeting was to share ideas on how justice will prevail in the country as well as a change in the bad attitude of the youths, after considering the insecurity, corruption and moral decadence among the youths which emanate primarily from educational system. They further observed that almost all the top government officials are corrupt. To them the rich are becoming richer while the poor are still poor (Mathew effect theory). They further stated that, there is always a plan by non-Muslims to get rid of the Muslims on the earth, so they saw these as a challenge which they had to take it up and equally revive the Jihad of Shehu Usman Dan Fodio so that it may bring sanity in the country. The two friends USTAZ MUHAMMAD YUSUF (the late) and USTAZ MUHAMMAD ALI (the late) according to Abu (2011) got misunderstood on how to start, as the former suggested that they should remain in the mist of people to preach and make them understand their mission clearly, while the latter rejected the idea and suggested that they should stay away from people, purify their intentions and minds and become closer to God. The two group's therefore split, Yusuf group staying in the town while Alis group went to the bush. Thus, their activities were aggressive in nature to the extent that government could not bear it. Security agencies were then employed as a means to destabilize the sect.

After the death of the two leaders, the sect has Abubakar Shekau as their new leader, a position he holds till date. Other prominent members of the group include Abul QaQa and Abu Zaid. Both Qaqa and Zaid have been acting as the sect's spokesmen.(Google.com 27, April 2013). Thus, since 2009 till today the mayhem unleashed by this sect has taken a new dimension. According to Amnesty International Annual Report (2012) the sporadic bombings and attacks on places of worship by this Sect has raised the number of casualties. The June 16th 2011 police headquarters killing, the 28th August 2011 UN building in Abuja that claimed 24 lives, the November 4th 2011 Damaturu killing that claimed over 100 lives, and the Madala bomb on the 25th of December 2011 which claimed at least 44 lives, the rocket propelled grenades in Baga area of Borno state on 22 April 2013 which claimed 185 lives are some of the terrific activities of this sect, their sporadic violent attack in Jos, Bauchi, Kano, Kaduna and some part of the North have posed a lot of threat to citizens of the area thereby given them nightmares.

Causes of Terrorism in Nigeria

Just like any other country which is faced with this challenge, the fundamental contributing factors which are used by perpetrators of this act (terrorism) may include inter alia repressive and exploitative religions, lack of self determination, phenomenon of failed states, political and religious intolerance and extremism, corruption and poor governance, political alienation, unattended to human miseries and injustices across the nation, poverty, and unemployment. For the purpose of our discussion we identify poverty as the main cause for the emergence of this sect. According to Jega, (2007) poverty has become a major problem widely acclaimed within and internationally as deserving urgent attention especially in the sub-Saharan African countries, Nigeria inclusive. Poverty generally is a condition whereby a person lacks the means to satisfy the necessities of life.

It is easily recognized, just like an Elephant in the River. It is another form of modern slavery. Majority of the poor live in rural areas that are neglected and almost forgotten in this country especially in the Northern states. The effects of poverty are pervasive. A poor man is a problem to the society and even unto himself. He is always angry, never productive and seeks succor in religion. According to Pwul, (2004) poverty is a vicious circle and it is the root cause of terrorism, corruption, fraud and embezzlement in the society. The actualization of a free, peaceful and developing society cannot be achieved when majority of the citizens are living below poverty line. The poverty condition reduces the capacity of the poor to enjoy their civil, political and socio-economic rights. To the majority of Northern people who are living in subhuman condition of abject poverty, the notion of terrorism is paramount to them. When there is no food, shelter, health, good education and unemployment, the next line of action is to destabilize the polity; hence the emergence of Boko-Haram in Northern Nigeria.

Possible Diplomatic Elements for Resolving the Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria

It is fundamental to state that the machinery of diplomacy especially through the use and application of negotiation is the great engine used by civilized societies for national integration. The essence of diplomacy is to conduct official business and achieve result without rancor. It is specifically employed for building and rebuilding relationships, healing and not hurting feelings in relations (as much as possible) and promoting and not undermining mutual interest. The followings are some of the basic diplomatic elements that if employed will help resolve the boko haram insurgency.

First and foremost is **NEGOTIATION**:-Negotiation is a process in which explicit proposals are put forward extensively for the purpose of reaching an agreement where complicated issues differ. It is also a method by which people settle their differences. It is also a process where compromise or agreement is reached while avoiding argument. In the words of Aja (1999) negotiation is an attempt to explore and reconcile conflicting positions in order to reach an acceptable outcome. As a communication process negotiation involves two or more representatives either directly or indirectly, or

through an intermediary, negotiation is about dialogue between government to understand, convey and harmonise hopes, wishes, values, aspirations and threats. Usually, the spirit is flexible and not rigid. It is flexible to heal and not to hurt feelings or vitiate the process of talking together. To Pliske (1999) the essence of negotiation is usually to arrive at a mutual agreement. In the word of Best (2006) the goal of negotiation is to reach agreement through joint decision making between the parties. In Nigeria, the Niger Delta issue was resolved through negotiations by government and other well meaning Nigerians from diverse ethnic nationalities. Unless the federal government of Nigeria negotiates with the boko haram sect, this insecurity challenge will continue to be a threat to our national integration.

The second diplomatic element which will be useful in resolving the activities of this sect (Boko Haram) is **ARBITRATION**. By definition, arbitration is the use of the assistance of a neutral third party in the resolution of a problem. He hears the evidence from both parties and thereafter renders a decision, usually called an award, which is expected to be binding on the parties. This diplomatic element was used to resolve the unrest between the Talibans and the Government in Afghanistan. The setting up of a committee by the federal government to look into a possible way of resolving this menace is the right way in a right direction.

The third element of diplomacy which is useful in resolving this menace is being **PATIENT**. Bidding time is vital in diplomacy. There is no gain overtly too hasty. It may lead to unwise concessions or threats or actions. In diplomacy, it is a hallmark for statesmanship to set dealings, unless you are in a very strong bargaining position or quit indifferent to an agreement. Just as we want the insurgency to be buried, it is appropriate for us Nigerians to be patient with the government and offer a constructive intelligent advice so as to end this threat.

Finally, adopting **SECRECY**. Secrecy is about the most salient hallmark of diplomacy. Not all is to be made public. The security gathering should be secret and restricted to the public. What is secret should be kept truly secret until due time when it needs to be opened. This is a channel that leaders employ in highly sensitive issues affecting the position, security and opinion of people.

Conclusions/Recommendations

This study is a response to the growing problem of terrorism in Nigeria that undermines national integration. Quite a lot has been happening with respect to terrorism in recent past in the country. The crisis of terrorism and the response to it has become a worldwide concern for all. The agonies and destruction associated with acts of terrorism and the subsequent response to such acts, their frequency with the high level of lethality is becoming quite alarming. Hardly can any news headline in Nigeria go in a day without a news item on Boko-Haram attack, and a response to such attack. More regrettably is the low level of investment, lost of lives, coming from the zone all because of Boko-Haram. It therefore follows that for this act of terrorism to go down the government should not solely rely on force, but must also focus on addressing

how to eliminate the underlying social and political causes of terrorism. It is only when this is done that we can effectively dismantle Boko-Haram terrorist and create a conducive atmosphere for national integration. In doing so, we hereby proffer the following Recommendations. Initiative of counter-terrorism should include both the medium as well as long-term strategies. This means that a broad based approach against terrorism that focuses on not only security but also addresses the root causes of it should be adopted. Secondly, national efforts should be channeled to peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms that foster, intercultural dialogue and understanding, which are essential ingredients of conflict prevention. To this end the diplomatic conflict management approach discussed is a very helpful contribution.

Thirdly, Education and employment opportunities for the youth are a vital channel for combating terrorism in the Northern Nigeria. Any action in this regard would protect the youths from being ready tools for instability and recruitment by terrorists, groups. Fundamentally, we urge the Boko-Haram sect to embrace the amnesty program offer by the federal government which is seen today as a means towards conflict resolution. Thus, the Amnesty program of late president Yar'Adua would have been incomplete without dialogue. More fundamentally, tolerance of other people's religion should be basic in addressing the issue of terrorism. Often people have strong feelings about their own religion and oppose those of others. There is no religion that is superior to the other such occurrences damage our unity and prove to be a hinderance to our progress. Finally, we urge the Government of President Jonathan to develop and strengthen methods of monitoring and detecting plans or activities aimed at illegal cross-border transportation, importation, export, stockpiling and use of arms, ammunition and explosives and other materials as means of committing terrorist acts.

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