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Published in the Ghana

<http://kadint.net/our-journal.html>

RESEARCH ARTICLE



ISSN 2410-4981

Religious Fanaticism and “Boko Haram” Insurgency in Nigeria: Implications for National Security

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Abstract

Nigeria is commonly adjudged as the “Giant of Africa”. No doubt, the African continent has witnessed drastic socio-political transformation between the periods 1960 to date. Ironically, since Nigeria became an independent nation on October, 1st 1960, she has been confronted with myriad of socio-political challenges. Notable among these, is religious fanaticism. This, in recent times, is encapsulated in grave religious insurgency, manifested in the “Boko Haram” challenge. This paper therefore addresses the relationship between religious fanaticism and security, how they affect each other (positively or negatively). It also examined the present security challenge in Nigeria, and attempts to advance some panaceas in achieving true security. Thus, articulating the benefits of security as genuine precursors for sustainable development of Nigeria. The paper applied historical and sociological methodology in its investigation. It is recommended among others, that the adherents of the different religions should embrace dialogue and tolerance. The government should also pursue the challenge posed by youth unemployment with the right vigour.

Keywords: “Boko Haram”; Insurgency; National Security; Religious fanaticism; Nigeria.

Introduction

Religion and security can be seen as complementing each other. The implication is that, they should work/walk together in order to enhance perfect tranquillity and progress which are the precursors and catalysts for sustainable national development. However, the contemporary situation in Nigeria with regards to achieving the aforementioned goals appears to be an illusion. This gives an impression that rather than harvest the right produces of peace and security, we have anarchy, acrimony, distrust, destruction of lives and property, and indeed mutual suspicion, becoming the order of the day. The present security challenge in Nigeria can be described as terrorism. This is vividly captured by Gwamna (2011), who defined terrorism as a “*weapon that is intended to create fear (terror) and could be perpetrated for a religious, political or ideological goal*”. He further argued that terrorism tactics include “*car bombing, hostage taking, improvised explosive device, letter bomb, kidnapping and others*”. Examining the above definition it agreed with the etymology of the word “terror: as deriving its root from the Latin verb, *terrere*, which means “*to frighten*”, or “*to cause to tremble*” (Juergensmeyer, 2000). Terrorism definitely breeds insecurity, encapsulated by fear and trembling.

Theoretical Framework

No doubt, the perpetration of terrorist acts and violence are reflective of deviant behaviour. Deviance refers to any behaviour that violates the norms of a society and attracts a negative formal or informal sanction (Rothwell, 2012). Each society subscribes to different norms. This has to do with what is proper and right within the society. It is expected that each member of the society complies with the norms, and a violation should incur a sanction or reprimand. The conduct of each member of the society is said to have an overwhelming effect on the society. This is due to the fact that man and the society are involved in each other. Thus, Awolalu and Dopamu (2005) are of the opinion that there can be no society without man.

The work of Akers and Jensen (2011) reviewed the empirical research evidence on the validity of the social learning theory as an explanation of deviant and criminal behaviour. According to them, the social learning theory offers “*an explanation of the acquisition, maintenance, and change in criminal and deviant behaviour that embraces social, non-social, and undermine conformity*”. The application of this to the Boko Haram sect and other acts of violence and deviance can be examined under the four basic concepts of the social learning theory.

The four basic concepts of the social learning theory include (Akers and Jensen, 2011):

i. **“Definition”**: This refers to behaviour learned from socialization into general religious, moral and other conventional values and norms which are favourable to conforming behaviour and unfavourable to committing any deviant or criminal acts (Akers & Jensen, 2011). They further argued that some of the “definition” that are favourable to the deviant are so intensely held as part of a learned belief system. An example of this, they posited, is the radical ideologies of militant groups that are involved in terrorists acts that provide strong positive motivation for criminal acts.

ii. **“Reinforcement”**: Reinforcement in operant conditioning is attributed to Skinner (1953). It is referred to as a response-stimulus-response process in which behaviour produces consequences that in turn produce the probability of the behaviour being repeated (Skinner, 1953). In this instance, the insurgents are reinforced due to the remarkable success they perceive have been achieved through the perpetration of their nefarious activities.

iii. **“Differential Association”**: This refers to “direct association and interaction with others who are engaged in certain kinds of behaviour or express norms, values and attitude supportive of such behaviour as well as indirect association and identification with more distant reference groups”. The implication is that the group, with which one is in “differential association”, provides the major immediate and intermediate social context in which all the mechanism of social learning operates. For example, family, friends and peer groups.

iv. **“Imitation”**: This is the last concept on which the social learning theory is based. This refers to the engagement in behaviour after the direct or indirect observation of similar behaviour by others. The insurgents are motivated to be involved in the act of terrorism as they observe others who have been involved in such behaviour.

The social learning theory could be seen as a basic theoretical framework on which to base the attitude of those who have exploited religion in perpetrating criminal acts and violence. Their activities have continued to “flourish” based on the grounds that they are brainwashed into believing that some form of “eternal reward” and “bliss” await them if they continue their activities (Gwamna, 2011). This is a form of “reinforcement”, as they continue their nefarious activities. The Boko Haram sect is motivated through learned radical ideologies (“Definition”), and response-stimulus-response-process (“Reinforcement”). They are also motivated by direct association and interaction with others engaged in certain behaviour (“Differential Association”). Lastly, they are motivated by engagement in behaviour that has direct or indirect similarity with the observed behaviour of others (“Imitation”). The paper thus has a leaning on the social learning theory as its theoretical framework. It is therefore important before attempting a positive discourse, to first of all examine the term, religion and religious fanaticism.

What is Religion?

It is generally accepted that Religion has no universal definition. However, the writer would consider some definitions of religion. It is important to note that the word religion is derived, etymologically, from the Latin noun, “*religio*”. The common verbs are: “*religere*” (“to turn to constantly”) or “to observe conscientiously”, “*religaria*” (“to bind oneself back) and “*religere*” (“to

choose again”) (Obilor, 1988). It could be safely claimed that most common definitions of religion appear to be etymological derivatives of the above verbs. On the strength of this, Obilor (2002:63) defined religion as “the whole complexes of attitudes, conviction and institutions through which we express our deep fundamental relationship with Reality and not excluding the created order”. On his part, Gilbert (1980:5) stated that religion “describes any system of values, norms and related symbols and rituals, arising from attempt by individuals and social groups to affect certain ends, whether in this world or any future world by means wholly or partly supernatural. The transcendental perspective of religion is aptly captured in the definition of Odumuyiwa (2006:2). He defined religion as “*man’s effective desire to be in right relationship with a sacred transcendental order, controlling human destiny and events, either a prescribed system of rituals and of belief*”. Omoregbe (1993:3) defined religion “as essentially a relationship, a link established by the human person and the divine person believed to exist”. According to Kant (in Odumuyiwa, 2006:2), he stated that “religion is the recognition of all our duties as divine commands”.

It can be deduced from the definitions above that religion conveys the following information, first, features of a Supernatural Being, secondly the belief in that Being and lastly a feeling of awe and mystery in response to the command of that supernatural being. The writer, therefore, defined religion as our “*absolute acknowledgement of dependence on the supernatural Being who sets and controls the entire affairs of life and the universe, hence attracting our reverence and obedience*”. This dimension may have been responsible for the emotional power that religion sometimes have on the adherents. This is exemplified in the actions of some religious adherents who often feel that they are carrying out all activities “for” God, whereas these activities are “against” God. They maim, kill, destroy and loot “for God”. Suffice it to say that these activities are against the society and the people, proximately, but against God, ultimately. No doubt, religion, which is operationally defined as “*belief in the supernatural*” is said to have a profound impact on almost all societies. This could be in the aspect of politics, law, education, culture, behaviour, festivals and so on.

What is Religious Fanaticism?

Simply put, a fanatic can be described as an over-enthusiastic person. It is important to underscore the phrase “over-enthusiastic” since religious fanaticism agrees with this description. Those who are “over-enthusiastic” about their religious belief/position are mostly blinded to the views of others. They attempt in most cases to go to any diabolical extent to perpetrate their beliefs. The zeal, passion and enthusiasm with which they pursue their goals, makes them nothing short of fanatics. This has often been demonstrated among some religious adherents. The writer argued that this cuts across the different religious groups.

It is generally believed in Nigeria that Christianity and Islam are the largest organized religions, with few, declaring open allegiance to “Afrelism” (African Religion). According to www.essential-humanities.net (2012), Christianity, a splinter from Judaism in the early centuries [AD], centers on the figure of Jesus. The central Christian scripture is the Bible. While, Islam, emerged in early seventh-century in Arabia, they believed that different messengers have been sent by God through the ages, but the last and most important of these messengers is Prophet Mohammed. The central scripture of Islam is the Quran. It further posited that Christianity is more prominent in Southern Nigeria, which consists of the Yoruba, Ibos and “Minorities” from the Niger Delta region. Islam is however predominant in the Northern Nigeria. Nevertheless, open practitioners of African Religion are not as numerous as the first two in Nigeria.

The outcome of a recent survey conducted by British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in ten countries, appeared to convey a cheering news! They conducted the survey, tagged, “*What the World Thinks of God*” on countries like, the United States of America, United Kingdom, Israel, India, South Korea, Indonesia, Nigeria, Russia, Mexico and Lebanon. Nigeria came top with “*90% of the population believing in God, praying regularly and affirming their readiness to die on behalf of their belief*”. Thus, Nigeria was declared as the most “*Religious country in the world*” (blue printing.com, 2012). What is the dividend of this position? How positively has it affected the Nation, thus catalysing her towards sustainable development, which would ultimately position her among the committee of Nations? Can it be argued that this is enveloped by consistent demonstration of marked religious fanaticism?

Religion and contemporary security in Nigeria

It is pertinent to consider the word 'security' and its common synonyms in order to have a clear understanding of the word insecurity. This literary approach has become relevant in order to simplify our attempt, thus articulating the point the writer intends to elucidate in the paper. Security shares the same meaning with safety, protection, defence, safe keeping, preservation, care, custody. The corollary of these synonyms is captured in the word insecurity, (Chambers Compact Thesaurus, 1994).

The contemporary security situation in Nigeria and its nexus with religion can globally be mirrored first of all with the September 11th, 2011 (9/11) attack on the United States of America. The dreaded Islamic extremist group, Al-Qaeda claimed that the attack and suicide bombings were sponsored by them (Gwamna, 2011). This, once more, incriminated religion, globally, with respect to world security and peace. A close follow-up to this is the *"linkage of bombings in Nigeria to the radical insurgent Islamic group, Jama'atul Ahlu-Sunnah Hidda'amaati Walkital Jihad, also popularly known as Boko Haram"* (Gwamna, 2011). They claim that Western education is evil and seek to enthrone the full practice of "Sharia" in the entire nation.

In addition, it also seeks to do away with all practices that have Western tainting. It is argued that, *"a critical analysis of all the happenings in Nigeria shows that religion has been a readily destructive tool employed by people who found how extremist some Nigerians are to matters of religion"* (Daily post.com.ng). This is collaborated by Gwamna (2011) who argued that the demonization of religion through its manipulation has assumed unrestrained levels with all the security implications for the Nigerian State and of its corporate existence.

It must be cautioned that the CIA report of 2005, predicting the collapse of Nigeria should not be dismissed or treated with kid's gloves. This is due to the fact that the general state of insecurity in Nigeria presently tends to lend credence to the report (Okolo, 2009). It is no gain saying the fact that religion is diabolically manipulated by these criminals to further their nefarious goals/objectives. Haar (2005) puts this succinctly: "the political manipulation of and mobilization through religion is used or misused in present times". The summary of this position is elucidated by the position of the Nobel Laureate, Wole Soyinka in his annual lecture on religion delivered at the University of Ibadan on 25th January, 1991. His position, as pointed out by Oladipo (1991: 128), surmised that *"I believe, therefore I am, you disbelieve, therefore you are not, and therefore you count for nothing. You are sub-human; you are outside the pale of humanity, outside the concept of community"*.

It is further seen as "us against them philosophy". The writer believes that this appeared to be the morbid attitude demonstrated by most religious fanatics in Nigeria. Although some of the perpetrators of insecurity acts in Nigeria exploit religion as an alibi, others out rightly employ ethnicity and politics. The "first baptism" of terrorism in Nigeria is said to have been experienced on the 50th Nigerian Independence Anniversary. The Eagle Square venue of the celebration experienced an explosion, killing dozens of innocent citizens. The Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) claimed responsibility (Blueprinting.com, 2012). This however did not carry any religious coloration, as the perpetrators saw themselves as fighting a war of economic emancipation, primarily.

Summaries of Common Religious Crises in Nigeria

The following analysis has well been articulated by Okafor (2007) and Uka (2012):

i. **Post-independence religious crises (1960 – 1966):** Uka (2012) posited that religious crises before and during this time was characterized by mutual respect between Muslims and Christians. Although in 1961, the Sardauna of Sokoto formed the Jamaatu Nasril Islam (JNI). This was an Islamic movement saddled with the sole responsibility of propagating Islam. Some people saw it as the religious wing of the Northern People's Congress (NPC), the Sardauna's political party. Some of their activities were not acceptable to some Muslims who were not members of the NPC.

ii. **Religious crises after the civil war (1970-1975):** The first five years after the civil war were declared as the period of reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction. However, the religious face of the war persisted in form of religious cold war.

iii. **The Sharia crisis (1976-1979):** The major aim of the Sharia was to reform what was seen as the lax practice of Islam among the adherents. The issue of Sharia was been debated by the

Constituent Assembly at that time. The Muslims outside were determined to enforce their argument as they engaged in threats and riots, claiming that if Sharia was not generally accepted by the country, they will make the nation ungovernable. The Muslim Students' Society (MSS) of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria staged a protest, warning the Constituent Assembly. Apart from this, protesters also took to the streets in Zaria and Kaduna for the entrenchment of Sharia (Okafor, in Uka, 2012).

iv. **Religious crises during the Shagari regime (1979-1983):** From religio-political perspective, the Muslims saw Shagari's regime as Allah's will for Nigeria, and the stage set for the "Islamization" of Nigeria (Uka, 2012).

v. **Kano religious crises/Riot (Oct. 1982):** This was adjudged as the first open and violent religious conflict between Christians and Muslims. According to Kukah (1994), the violence was directed towards Christ Church in Fagge, Kano metropolis. The grievance was fuelled by the fact that the church's foundation was laid near a mosque in Kano.

vi. **Religious crises during Buhari's regime (1983-1985):** This was quite visible in the lopsided manner the Supreme Military Council (SMC) was constituted. Most of the members were either northern Muslims or Muslims from the South.

vii. **The Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) crisis (Jan. 1986).** This was during the Babangida's regime. It was said that Nigeria sought admission into the organization. This was not acceptable to the Christians. They asked that the provision of the constitution, which puts Nigeria as a secular state, be upheld.

viii. **The Ahmadu Bello University Religious Crisis (June 1988):** During the Students' Union Elections, when it was suspected that a Christian candidate would win the election, violence erupted.

ix. **Kano Riot (11th Oct. 1991):** The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) chapter of the State planned a crusade with a German Evangelist, Reinhard Bonke. Violence then erupted as a group of Muslim youths attacked people in Sabongari and Fagge areas of the State.

x. **Religious crises during the Obasanjo's regime (1999-2004).** It was in January, 2000, that the then Governor of Zamfara State, Ahmed Yerima, introduced the Sharia legal system in his state. Since then most of the other Northern States have also embraced this. The aftermath was several riots and mass destruction of lives and property in the North and other sections of the Country. The vivid picture of the harm done by religious riots during this period is well captured by Crane (2007). She posited that, "Since Obasanjo came to power in 1999, more than 10,000 Nigerians have been killed in sectarian and communal violence. Recent events have only exacerbated the country's deep divisions: The imposition of Sharia or Islamic Law in twelve northern states forced thousands of Christians to flee, while more recently, Danish Cartoons ridiculing the Muslim prophet Mohammed, resulted in attacks and reprisals that killed dozens and injured or displaced thousands in the North and South".

xi. **Yar'Adua and the war against Boko Haram:** The late president, Musa Yar'Adua, staged a formidable war against the relatively unknown Boko Haram sect, killed the leader, Mohammed Yusuf (Blueprintng.com, 2012). This initial victory was said to have been lost under his successor, Goodluck Jonathan. The group then remobilized and re-strategized to unleash terror on Nigerians and the Nation.

xii. **President Jonathan's regime and religious crises:** President Goodluck Jonathan officially assumed the position of the executive president of Nigeria on May 29th 2011. His period has been marred by the incessant onslaughts of the Boko Haram insurgency. They have carried their "war" to different parts and sections of the country. They attacked Police Force Headquarters, Mogadishu Barracks, the United Nations building in Abuja, Independent Electoral Commission's Office in Suleja, a Catholic Church in Madalla, and others. The list of the havoc wrecked on Nigerians and the Nigerian nation by the "Boko Haram" "Jihadists" is inexhaustible. Could this be "killing in God's name"?

It was reported that there was twin bombings in Anguwan and Gadabiyu areas of Jos in December, 2010. These bombings were aimed at churches, market places and Christian settlements (Gwamna, 2011). The Boko Haram sect claimed responsibility. The arrogance and unremorseful attitude displayed by the perpetrators as they claimed responsibility for the bombings was quite disturbing. Ajaero (2011) captured their position succinctly: "*In the name of*

Allah the mighty who has power over everything, who made fighting the disbelievers an obligation until justice is established on earth. May peace and blessing continue to be upon the last messenger who wages (sic) Jihad the best of it. O Nations of the world, be informed that verily the attacks on suldaniyya (Jos) and Borno on the eve of Christmas were carried out by us, Jama'atu ahlus-sunnah Lidda' await Wal Jihad, under the leadership of Abu Mohammad, Abubakar bin Muhammad Shekar (may Allah preserve him), to start avenging the atrocities committed against Muslims in those areas, and the country in general" (Ajaero, 2011).

It is appropriate to state that the group was immediately disclaimed by the council of Ulama (Islamic Clerics) in Plateau State. On this premise, Gwamna (2011) concluded that, "the outbreak of the Boko Haram sect has given ethno-religious conflicts the radical disposition, unprecedented in Nigeria". His claim is justified by the incessant bombings in different parts of the North: Kaduna, Abuja, Maiduguri, Bauchi, Yobe, Gombe, Okene, and Jos, to mention but few. In their attacks, they make use of locally produced Improvised Explosive Devices (IED).

The Nation and its leadership/security outfits appear to "lie prostrate" to the antics of the Boko Haram sect. This claim is premised on two major arguments. First, according to Attah (2011), "the sad pity of the situation is that nobody can tell for sure what the Boko Haram adherents want. This is because their demands or the issues they want the Federal government to address have not been well articulated for public consumption, thus, leaving people to speculate and indulge in conjectures on their real intention".

Secondly, the then president, Goodluck Jonathan, was reported to have said that "the issue of bombing is one of the burdens we must live with. It will not last forever; I believe that it will surely be over" (Sahara reporter, 2011). Is this a fatalistic claim? Is it a philosophical panacea to the issue at stake or a mere wish? No doubt, the issue of ethno-religious insurgence cannot be wished away through mere semantics or rhetoric.

The sect has made Nigeria a "laughing stock" in the eyes of the world. They have also humbled the nation's security apparatus. "With the successful bombing of police headquarters, police stations, Joint Task Force fortress and State Security Service's offices (SSS), the Boko Haram sect has exposed the Nigerian State to ridicule" (Sahara reporters, 2011). The climax is the recent bombing of the church at the Command and Staff College (Military formation) Jaji, Kaduna State. This experience may be why Okolo (2009) concluded that "what the current trend of violence is imprinting on the psyche of Nigerians is that the government's security apparatus is incapable of guaranteeing the safety and security of its peoples".

It is worth mentioning that the Nigerian nation should not be necessarily intimidated by the state of stupor that the Boko Haram insurgency has placed her. There is the need to identify lasting panaceas to the challenge. Before this, however, it is important to explore some causes of the marked level of insecurity experienced by the nation today. This, more than anything else, will give birth to enduring solutions towards ameliorating the Boko Haram challenge and sundry insecurity problems in the Nation.

Some perceived causes of the Boko Haram insurgency and insecurity in Nigeria

Security, inexplicably, can be said to be the "backbone of any society, and it is inexorably linked with sound political, economic, educational and cultural growth" (Adeogun, 2012). However, the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria poses a lot of insecurity to the lives and property of the citizens, consequently, affecting the socio-economic development of the nation. It is often argued that the causes of the Boko Haram "grievances" cannot easily be identified. Some argued that they are a set of disgruntled charlatans who do not really have a clear-cut aim with regards to their actions and inactions. In the writer's view, this may not be the exact situation, as it can be inferred from their activities that there may be some causes/reasons for their actions. Whether such reasons are cogent or logical is another issue. It is therefore pertinent to consider some of the perceived causes of the Boko Haram insurgency. If anything else, this would assist the nation in identifying some panaceas towards ameliorating the challenge, consequently, checking other forms of insecurity bedevilling the nation.

According to Ensign (2012) and others, the following can be identified as some of the root causes of violence and insecurity in Nigeria. They could overtly or covertly account for the continuous Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. They include the following:

- a. **Unemployment** – Especially among the youths.

- b. **Poverty**-This is quite palpable in every segment and stratum of the nation's life
- c. **Inadequate security**- In most situations of violence, it would have been perpetrated most devastatingly before help come from the security apparatus.
- d. **Depletion of cultural values**- This is seen in the fact that man no longer attaches the expected value to the sanctity of life. The African virtue of being "your brother's keeper" has been eroded.
- e. **Unchecked movement of persons via the border posts** - No doubt, people from other neighbouring parts of Nigeria have infiltrated the country. Such persons, whose identities cannot be vouched for, and do not also feel they have anything at stake, are ready tools for unleashing mayhem once the opportunity arises.
- f. **Political divisions**- A clear experience that occurred in 2011, with the declaration of Goodluck Jonathan as the winner of the Presidential election, stands out as a vivid point in this regards. Churches, shops and houses were burnt in most of the northern states by supporters of General Muhammadu Buhari of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC). Police Stations, Electoral Commission Offices and some Federal establishments were also destroyed (Blue Printing.com, 2012). There were also reprisal attacks by youths from predominantly Christian communities in Kaduna State, who reportedly killed Muslims, burnt their Mosques and destroyed property.
- g. **Lack of adequate information**- In our contemporary information age, adequate security must explore relevant information. The contemporary time and age eschews brute force and barbaric approach to information gathering. The right information gathering strategies should be employed as this would consequently nip any anticipated violence in the bud. To say the least, our information gathering mechanism is both out dated and crude. This may be the reason our security outfits hardly have any clue before most of the violence are hatched.
- h. **Politicization of the security system**: Apart from the factors considered above, Adoke (2012) argued that another important factor that is militating against the success story of Nigeria's security system is the "*politicization of the security system as well as corruption*". Those involved in the security arm of the nation are sometimes dichotomized along tribal and religious stand.
- i. **Poor access to quality education**: Ensign (2012) argued that poor access to high quality education and health care, especially in the north, is responsible for the unabated security challenge. Someone had once asked a rhetorical question: "*Show me one of the Children of the elites who are participating in the Boko Haram sect? After all they are all studying abroad*".
- j. **Ethnic politics and mutual distrust**: Okafor (1997) had observed that, "the unhealthy ethnic politics and mutual distrust among various cultural linguistic and ethnic groups in Nigeria are the main causes of Nigeria's social and political upheavals". Uka (2012) concurred by arguing that: "the political behaviour of Nigerians is still greatly influenced by the hyperbolic assumption that one's political destiny is intrinsically and exclusively linked with one's ethnic, linguistic, and to some extent, religious identity".
- k. **The negative roles played by some religious leaders**: Obioha (2008) submitted that, "the occurrence of these conflicts cannot be divorced from the activities of religious leaders, both of Christian religion and Islam" According to him, some of them present "their religion as the best, while others are no religion, or worse still, false religions".

Following the position above, Gwamna (2011) and others also identified the following as some causes of the spate of violence and insecurity in the nation and especially, the north:

- i. **Religion is sometimes used to make people unleash terror against others**. According to George (in Gwamna, 2011), "every religion has its own zealots" and people have used religious books to entice followers to kill others in the name of God".
- ii. **Promise of a blissful hereafter**: Gwamna (2011) had posited that "martyrdom complex" and suicide mission hold much attraction to their terrorist activities with all the promise of a blissful hereafter which will reverse and compensate them for their lost "good things" of this life. This could be said to be one of the main re-enforcers, as they engage in suicide bombings.

Hassan (2010) identified three main causes of the continuous insurgency of the Boko Haram sect. They include:

- i. The grand conspiracy theory of conversion
- ii. The corrupting effect on (Islam) belief, (Imam and Aquidah) of the context of Western education.
- iii. Moral and ethical (Earbiyyah) corruption of the environment of the delivery of Western education.

Gwamna (2011) also identified global politics and events as another major cause of the Boko Haram insurgency. According to him, this includes the new wave of protests and violence in the Arab countries-Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen and the Syria. Other factors can be attributed to the Al-Qaeda link with the group (Isaacson, 2011). Poor leadership in Nigeria is also incriminated as one of the causes of the Boko Haram activities. This is basically due to the fact that the Nigerian leadership has not been able to translate the wealth and resources of the nation to glaring dividends to be enjoyed by the citizens. This of course has engendered deep poverty and lack. The consequence is that the citizenry are then easily manipulated and gullibly recruited to perpetrate all forms of havoc and violence.

Is there any solution in sight with regards to the spate of violence and insecurity in Nigeria? If religion is also seen as the “culprit”, can she be said to be capable of playing any role in ameliorating the situation? Can the Boko Haram insurgency be abated? All these will agitate the mind of anyone that seeks a positive nexus between religion and security in Nigeria!

History of Boko Haram and Timeline of Havocs

The writer undertook a survey of the havocs perpetrated by the Boko Haram insurgents in Nigeria. The history of Boko Haram and their havoc against the Nigerian nation is captured in a chronological order as gleaned from, thenet.ng, thenationonlineng.net, punchng.com, naijagists.com (In, *Daily Encounter with God*, 2015). The events are graphically illustrated, as this would further elucidate the challenge posed by religious fanaticism demonstrated by the Boko Haram insurgents.

The Boko Haram sect holds the philosophy that, “western form of education is forbidden”. The sect is officially referred to as Jama’atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda’ Awati Wal-Jihad. This simply means “People Committed to the Prophet’s Teachings for Propagation and Jihad”. The group which is morbidly militant in her operations is said to have its base in Kanamma, North Eastern, Nigeria (Daily Encounter with God, 2015). The group opposes to anything that has Western origin, including education, ideologies and systems.

The sect who has been in existence since 2001 became popular in Nigeria due to their active participation in the sectarian violence that occurred in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria, in 2009. It is also claimed that the group was founded by Mohammed Yusuf, who was killed in 2009 by soldiers. He was however succeeded by Abubakar Shekau. Other notable members of the group are Abu Qaqaz and Abu Zaid. They act as spokespersons for the sect. The claim by the military that Abubakar Shekau has been killed is still shrouded in mystery as there have been counter accusations and outright rebuttals by the sect.

The Boko Haram sect has remained an albatross both to the leadership and the entire citizens of the Nation. Their crisis which began mainly as sectarian religious crisis between rival Islamic groups in Plateau State in 2009 has metamorphosed to a menacing crescendo of violence. The activities of the sect have led to the death of over 10,000 people in Nigeria, with several also internally displaced (Daily Encounter with God, 2015).

Their heinous activities are captured on the list below:

➤ **June 12, 2009:** Mohammed Yusuf, the Boko Haram leader threatened reprisals in a video recording after the killing of seventeen sect members in a joint military and police operation in Borno State. This occurred after a disagreement by the members of the sect concerning using crash helmets during the burial procession for one of them who died in a car accident.

➤ **July 26, 2009:** Police allegedly killed the leader of the sect, Mohammed Yusuf, under the police watch after soldiers, who arrested him, handed him over to the police alive. The ensuing uprising led to a military crackdown that left more than 800 people dead. A mosque in Maiduguri, Borno State which served as the headquarters of the sect was burnt down.

➤ **September 7, 2010:** Bauchi prison break and 720 prisoners including 105 suspected sect members set free. Four people including a soldier, one policeman and two residents were killed in the raid.

➤ **December 24 and 27, 2010:** A series of attacks claimed by Boko Haram in Central Jos and Maiduguri killed at least 86.

➤ **December 29, 2010:** Suspected Boko Haram gunmen shot dead eight people in Maiduguri, including the ruling All Peoples Party (ANPP) governorship candidate in Borno State.

➤ **December 31, 2010:** Simultaneous attacks on military barracks in Abuja and Kuru, near Jos, Plateau State.

➤ **April 22, 2011:** Yola jailbreak, in which 14 prisoners, suspected to be sect members were freed.

➤ **May 29, 2011:** Multiple bombings in several communities in the North.

➤ **June 16, 2011:** Bombing of the Nigeria Police Headquarters, Abuja.

➤ **June 26, 2011:** Bombings of a beer parlour in Maiduguri, in which 25 people died and 12 others severely injured.

➤ **July 11, 2011:** University of Maiduguri closed down over Boko Haram threats.

➤ **August 12, 2011:** Killing of prominent Muslim cleric, Liman Bana.

➤ **August 26, 2011:** Bombing of the United Nations (UN) House in Abuja. Twenty three persons were killed and 129 others injured.

➤ **November 5, 2011:** Attack on the convoy of Borno State Governor, Kashim Shettima, on his return from a trip abroad.

Coordinated bombing and shooting attacks on police facilities in Potiskum and Damaturu, Yobe State claimed 150 lives.

➤ **December 25, 2011:** Multiple bomb attacks killed dozens including 35 worshippers at Saint Theresa Catholic Church, Madalla, Suleja.

Second explosion hit a church in Jos, killing a policeman

Two attacks on centres in Damaturu and another in Gadaka, Yobe State, claimed four lives.

➤ **January 5 and 6, 2012:** Multiple bombings recorded as the deadliest in Kano killed 180 people.

➤ **February 8, 2012:** Suicide bombing at the Army Headquarters in Kaduna.

➤ **February 16, 2012:** Prison break in Central Nigeria, 130 prisoners released.

➤ **March 8, 2012:** Boko Haram claims responsibility for Kaduna Army Headquarters bombing.

➤ **April 26, 2012:** Simultaneous bomb attacks on This Day newspaper and Sun offices in Abuja and Kaduna.

➤ **June 3, 2012:** 15 Church goers killed in Bauchi.

➤ **July 7, 2012:** Multiple northern villages attacked, claimed more than 100 lives.

➤ **June 17, 2012:** Suicide bombing attacks on three Churches in Kaduna claimed the lives of 100 worshippers.

➤ **August 7, 2012:** Deeper Life Church shooting in Okene, more than 19 people died including the pastor.

➤ **September 19, 2012:** Nigerian Army arrests Boko Haram militants, says it killed Abu Qaqaz.

➤ **December 25, 2012:** A Church was attacked and set ablaze on Christmas Day in Maiduguri, Potiskum, over 27 people died.

➤ **March 5, 2013:** Sultan called for amnesty for Boko Haram members.

➤ **March 18, 2013:** Suicide bombers attacked Kano bus stop, killed 22, and injured 65.

➤ **April 5, 2013:** President Goodluck Jonathan set up Boko Haram Amnesty Committee.

Boko Haram captured some towns – Damboa, Gwoza, Bama and some Nigeria's border towns with Cameroon in Borno State and Mubi, Madagaki and Michika in Adamawa State. Nigeria's Military fought back Boko Haram's attack to retake Konduga, killing about 115 of the militants, several insurgents surrendered their weapons. The sect claimed that it shot down a Nigerian military jet and captured one of the pilots alive. It released the video of how it beheaded one of the pilots.

- **April 14-15, 2014:** 276 girls abducted by the Boko Haram sect from Government Secondary School, Chibok, Borno State. They were believed to have been taken to the Sambisa forest towards whatever destination they were finally taken.
- **May 2, 2014:** 53 of the abducted girls escaped from their captors, claiming to have been raped severally.
- **October 17, 2014:** The army announced a truce with Boko Haram, and an arrangement to release the remaining girls. This was however, refuted by the sect.
- **October 17, 2014:** Voice of America (VOA) reports a meeting of the delegation of the Federal Government and Boko Haram members in Saudi Arabia.
- **October 28-29, 2014:** The sect took over Mubi, the second largest town in Adamawa State, killing scores and displacing thousands of people.
- **November 3, 2014:** Suicide bomber killed 15 people in Yobe.
- **November 4, 2014:** Took over about five more local government areas in Adamawa, renamed Mubi-Medinatul Islam.
- **November 6-7, 2014:** Overran Gashala village, Hong Local Government, Adamawa State, killing more than four persons in the process. The group bombed a new generation bank near Azare, Bauchi State, killing not less than 14 people.
- **November 10, 2014:** Suicide bomber attacked Government Comprehensive Science Secondary School, Potiskum, Yobe, leaving four people dead.
- **November 12, 2014:** Female suicide bomber attacked Federal College of Education, Kotangora, Niger State, leaving a student dead and many others injured.
- **November 14, 2014:** Suicide bomber attacked a filling station along Maiduguri Road in Kano, with at least six people killed.
- **November 16, 2014:** Female suicide bomber attacked Azare market, Bauchi, leaving not less than 13 people dead, with over 60 persons injured.

Sources: thenet.ng, the nationonlineng.net, punchng.com, naijagists.com (in, *Daily Encounter with God*, 2015)

The writer concedes to the fact that the list of atrocities committed by the Boko Haram insurgents in Nigeria may not be exhaustive in this study. Their nefarious activities have led to the death of scores of people while some have been displaced internally. This is quite worrisome as the Government appears not to have been able to bring the sect into total submission. It is disheartening to note that till this moment over two hundred girls who were abducted from Chibok, a predominantly Christian community in Borno State, have not been found. This is one, in many of such similar cases.

However, there is the recent common cherry news that some countries within the West African sub-region, for example, Chad, Niger and Cameroon have joined forces with Nigeria to fight the Boko Haram insurgency. It is also commonly on record that the United Nations and the Africa Union have agreed to give positive assistance to Nigeria in her concerted effort to overthrow Boko Haram. These efforts, it is assumed, would bring about the ultimate tranquillity that the Nation yearns for, thus engendering sustainable development and security.

Below are pictures of some of the abducted girls. The number, no doubt exceeds the pictures displayed by the writer. The photos indicate that these girls in their prime were actually of school age. It is quite disheartening that these young girls, who would have contributed to the development of the Nation, were subjected, against their will, to this heinous experience. The writer wonders why the Nation and all her security apparatus have been unable to wrestle these girls from the hands of their captors. It is hoped that they would soon regain their much cherished freedom. The writer would wish to acknowledge the efforts of well-meaning Nigerians and International friends who have mounted a consistent drive towards freeing the girls. The role played by #BringBackOurGirls, a group that has remained undaunted in the clamour for the release of the Chibok girls, is worthy of mentioning. **Photos:** *Courtesy of This day/Arise TV and Gordon Brown, former UK Prime Minister and now United Nations special envoy for Global Education.* Credit also to myschoolgist.com



Some solutions to the challenge posed by the “Boko Haram” insurgency

The alarming dimension that the spate of insecurity has taken in Nigeria calls for urgent attention. The “pulse” of majority of Nigerians is that the issue of insecurity be addressed aggressively without further delay. However, various solutions could be advanced in this regards. The writer would consider some of them:



Photos: Courtesy of This day/Arise TV and Gordon Brown, former UK Prime Minister and now United Nations special envoy for Global Education. Credit also to myschoolgist.com

1. **Clear separation of the state and religion.** This was also the position canvassed by the participants at the 8th All Nigeria Editors Conference that took place at Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. According to Adeseko and Effiong (2012), the participants opined that the “separation of the state and religion implies equal recognition and respect for all religions and favour to or patronage of none”. According to them, “failure to separate religion and the state, and the continuing politicization and manipulation of religion to gain and retain economic and political hegemony, will lead to the corruption of religion by the state”.

2. **The need to create employment for the teaming youths.** Mammaga (2012), urged, especially the governors of the states in the North to make judicious use of the available resources to create employment opportunities for the youths. This should extend to other states of Nigeria so as to check the vulnerability of the youths in the perpetrating of crime.

3. **Addressing the challenges facing the North:** Tangible efforts should be made to implement the recommendations of the various discussions held on the ways to address the challenges facing the region. This would draw the attention of all and sundry towards the development of the region.

4. **The need for dialogue.** This was underscored by Olokor (2012) when he reported on a symposium staged at the instance of the Vice President Namadi Sambo. Others invited were Pastor Ayo Oritsejafor, the President of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), the Sultan of Sokoto, and President General of the Nigeria Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, Alhaji Muhammadu Sa'ad Abubakar 111 and others. According to them, the symposium was organized "in view of the threat to national security and peaceful co-existence by the current Boko Haram phenomenon in our dear country" Advancing dialogue as one of the main solutions to the challenge of insecurity occasioned by the Boko Haram insurgency, Babatunde Fashola, the governor of Lagos State, said "...I do not know of any conflict that does not end on the table. I don't know one. Ultimately, it will come back to the table either with an international umpire, a diplomat or whatever, and I have always asked, why end up there when we can start there...."

5. **Setting up of a commission for Religious Affairs:** According to Attah (2012) this commission, is to report to the presidency directly. It should also have offices in all the state capitals and they are expected to co-ordinate activities at the ward level.

6. **Use of intelligence network:** There is the need to develop and make judicious use of the intelligence network to decode the security challenges that the Boko Haram sect is posing (Okolo, 2012). The contemporary level of technological development all over the world calls for the application of such in addressing security challenges.

7. **Full weight of the Law should be applied to** anyone who errs, by taking adequate steps and sanctions against violent religious fanaticism. There should be no "sacred cows," as this would serve as a deterrent to others.

8. **Educating and enlightening members of the various religious groups** on the value of love and tolerance as panaceas for peaceful co-existence.

9. **Prohibiting the use of inflammatory statements** against other religions.

10. **Impartiality by the leaders in handling religious conflict,** no matter their religious leanings.

11. **Keeping to the ethics of their religions.** Adherents should keep to the ethics of their religions. It can be safely argued that most religions preach peace; a deviation from this is indicative that we are not complying with the ethics of that religion.

12. **The need to eschew corruption** is also important in steaming the ill-tide of insecurity in the country. There is no way a corrupt nation can guarantee the dividends of the abundant natural resources for all. It then follows that this inequality engenders revolts and conflicts. Those who feel cheated can readily take up arms once any opportunity beckons, even if not justifiable.

13. **Determination and deep political-will by the leadership** of the nation to confront the security challenge headlong. The government should rise from her present state of stupor and cowardice to confront the issue.

If the above solutions and others are considered, then the challenge of insecurity and especially the Boko Haram insurgency would be brought to the barest minimum.

Conclusion

The state of insecurity in Nigeria, occasioned by religious fanaticism, especially the contemporary ethno-religious and religio-political crises in Nigeria, gives an impression that religion is the culprit in the entire scenario. Although religion is often indicted in most situations with regards to the present insecurity in Nigeria. Suffice it to say that religion is of immense value to human existence. Its cardinal ethics (no matter the religion) is "love". According to Makinde (2007:347), the problem is not necessarily with religion, but with its practice. He further submitted

that “Religion intrinsically is no evil. The extent to which religion becomes evil is the way and the extent to which it is practiced. The evil of religion lies in the nature of its practice. When the practitioners of religion practice it badly either out of ignorance of what religion is or out of selfish reasons (as the case has always been), religion becomes evil”. This is also supported by Obioha (2005:46), where he argued that conflicts, wars, bloodshed, wanton destruction and looting of properties, exploitation, and so on, are results of “bad religion”. According to him, “Religion qua religion is intrinsically no evil. Religion is absolutely virtuous rather than vicious.” It is the position of the writer that “bad religion” captures clearly the reasons for the present state of insecurity in Nigeria, especially ethnic and politically motivated conflicts that have found religion as a ready “bride” to exploit, due to the bad practice of religion. The writer is of the opinion that religion can readily be employed in achieving genuine and lasting security in Nigeria. This becomes possible as every figment of fanaticism is eschewed.

Recommendations

1. Adherents of all religions should see beyond their narrow/parochial spheres as they embrace the spirit of dialogue.
2. There is the need for all and sundry to appreciate the sanctity of the human life. You cannot take life at will; after all, you did not create it.
3. The government should mobilize all apparatus to address the issue of insecurity
4. There is the need for regular religious dialogue at the instance of all stake holders.
5. The government should tackle the challenge of youth unemployment with all vigour.
6. Moral instructions to inculcate values in the youths should be introduced at all levels of education- primary, secondary and tertiary.
7. Education should be free and compulsory at least to the senior secondary school level, with emphasis on vocational education for self-employment. This would engage the “almajiris”, who are believed to be easily exploited as ready tools for religious violence in the north.

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