The Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria: What could have been the precursors?

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Abstract

The problem of insurgency has for several decades occupied a good part of the attention of IR scholars. This paper explores the various perspectives on the formation and radicalization of Boko Haram in Nigeria. The focus is on the extent to which illiteracy, unemployment, poverty, weak state capability, the almajiri crisis[2] and the mobilization of ethno-religious identity explain simmering insurgency in Nigeria. The group has experienced ferocious onslaught on their activities by the Nigerian Military. The article relies on secondary data. This has enabled the author to draw heavily from literature espousing the diverse perspectives put forth as explanations for the uprising. Fragile state theory serves as a framework for analysis. On this basis, the article demonstrates the low-cost availability of foot soldiers from the almajiri pool, resulting from the state's inability or unwillingness to provide better education, and employment opportunities, and widespread poverty has exposed youths to indoctrination, criminalization and terrorism. In order to ensure the effectiveness of counter terrorism efforts, the military option should not be solely relied on. Rather, efforts should be geared towards addressing the various underlying social, political and economic triggers of violent insurgency, especially in northern Nigeria where such triggers are pervasive.

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[2] The Almajiri crisis refers to children recruited into Boko Haram, mostly youth within the ages of (8-32) (Aghedo and Eke, 2013)

Introduction

Conflict is a multidimensional process which needs to be holistically interrogated in order to comprehensively understand it. The term 'conflict' often carries a negative connotation. It is thought of as the opposite of co-operation and peace, and is most commonly associated with violence, the threat of violence or disruptive disputes. This negative view of conflict is not always helpful as conflict can sometimes be a force for positive social change and development (Aghedo, 2011).

Also, though conflict inflicts *pain* on certain people, there are many others who *gain* enormously from a conflict situation and would therefore want the conflict to continue. However, conflict is a visible demonstration of social life. It is present in every society whether underdeveloped, developing or developed. Conflict refers to the pursuit of incompatible interests and goals by different individuals or groups. As human beings, sometimes we have and pursue different interests and goals compared to other people. That is, our interests and goals sometimes *conflict* with those of other people.

Human societies, whether advanced or backward, are characterized by some degree of conflict. As noted earlier, conflict is not inherently threatening because it occurs when *actors* interact, and disputes arise over incompatible interests. Conflict is therefore inevitable and arises when two or more parties perceive differences amongst themselves and "seek to resolve those differences to their own satisfaction" (Aghedo, 2011).

There is nothing wrong with this because conflict in and of itself is the natural expression of social difference and of humanity's perpetual struggle for justice and self-determination. It becomes problematic however when actual force or threat of force is deployed or used in the pursuit of incompatible interests and goals by individuals and groups. This is known as violent or armed conflict. Some examples of armed conflict include the Nigerian Civil War, Niger Delta youth militancy, and the Boko Haram uprising (Aghedo, 2011)

The Boko Haram movement which was established in 2001 by two Islamic leaders, Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf and Utsaz Muhammed Ali with the stated intention of curbing insecurity, corruption and moral decadence among the youths soon became the victim of elite hijacking. The sect that was initially an Islamic movement against the corrupting influence of western education has become immersed in politics given its links to politicians, who are

themselves, products of western education, this poses a contradiction. As such, the ideology and philosophy of the Boko Haram have become terribly problematic as they continue to sit between politics and religion.

The emergence of the Boko Haram Sect in Nigeria has not only affected the strategic calculation of internal security in the country, but has also completely altered the shape of the geostrategic security relations with neighboring countries. In advancing possible reasons why people rebel or engage in violent behaviour, it is claimed that in reality many people have "genuine, legitimate, deeply felt grievances" which justify or better still rationalize insurgency (Magstadt, 2006:465).

In Nigeria, "there is no short supply of these kinds of groups and associations agitating for one thing or the other" (Oyeniyi, 2010:4). From the crude use of stones, machetes, arrows and so on, they have become more sophisticated and efficient, wielding state of the art weapons with somewhat accustomed precision. In this vein, coordinated bomb attacks, kidnappings for ransom and violent ethno-religious violence have become everyday events. Thus it is easily assumed that if such grievances and frustrations are adequately addressed, insurgency and needless violence would disappear or at least be minimal (Lanqueur, 1990). This paper interrogates the varied perspectives and perceived proximate triggers of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria.

Theorizing State Fragility

There is no universally accepted definition of fragility given the complex and diverse nature of states referred to as fragile. It is thus reasonable to shift energy away from its definition to its characteristics/features (Vallings and Moreno-Torres, 2005). Fragility entails a state's failure to perform the core functions necessary to meet citizens' basic needs and expectations. Such states are described as incapable of assuring basic security, maintaining rule of law and justice or providing basic services and opportunities for their people.

According to Magstadt (2006), fragile states are also refer to dysfunctional states where government is extremely repressive or weak are unable to maintain law and order. Here, citizens freely engage in large scale disobedience. At a more theoretical level, state fragility can be understood as a composite measure of all aspects of state performance such as authority, service delivery and legitimacy that underline the state.

According to Osaghae (2007) fragile states are usually characterized by pervasive corruption, poverty, low levels of economic growth, underdeveloped institutions of conflict management and resolution as well as an unstable and divided population. The indices of fragile states apply to the Nigerian situation; it is safe to conclude that Nigeria is indeed a fragile state. This is more so because the country manifests almost all the indices of fragility.

The Fragility State as precursor

This feature of fragility is often traced to the era of colonial rule when disparate ethnic groups were forcefully lumped together under the structure now known as Nigeria. Colonialism made possible through the amalgamation of 1914, created a culturally artificial and divided Nigerian state, but did very little to nurture a unified Nigerian nation (Osaghae and Suberu, 2005). Ever since, Nigerians have continued to live in an environment of mutual distrust, ethnic hatred and suspicion.

The nature of Nigeria's federal system, itself a condition that triggers fragility has birthed a fundamentally defective nation-state and is perhaps one of the major drivers of violent insurgency in the country today (Otoghile and Akov, 2011). In Nigeria's Northern region, resource control and revenue sharing issues have sparked anger and violent behaviour which are mostly targeted at southerners.

The generally held view is that the chunk of Nigeria's resources most of which are tapped from the South are used to develop that region, to the detriment of the North. Accordingly, most northerners, especially the illiterate, attribute the pervasive poverty in the North to the greed and selfishness exhibited by their southern counterparts whom they wrongly believe resist attempts at equitable sharing of resources in the country. The above scenario has contributed to bias amongst the predominantly Muslim Northerners who are quick to use religion as basis to vent their frustrations.

When state institutions fail to perform core functions necessary to meet citizens' basic needs and expectations, they are described as fragile (Vallings and Moreno-Torres, 2005). This is perhaps why the Nigerian state has been incapable of assuring basic security, maintaining rule of law and justice, or providing basic services and economic opportunities for the people (Harden, 1990).

Olusegun Anthony Ofongo: The Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria: What could have been the precursors?

The State and Insurgency in Nigeria: A short treatise

Daily acts of violence take place across the world for a variety of motives which include political fanaticism, ethnic hatred, religious extremism and ideological causes (Alanamu, 2005:1). Such incidences have caused societal awareness because they have explicit socio-political and economic implications. Insurgency has a long history; what distinguish today's insurgency are the frightening frequency and the variety of the events, resources and expanded opportunities available to the perpetrators of violent acts in the modern state system. In recent times however, the availability of small and light weapons (SLW) and other weapons of mass destruction have worsened the dimension of violent conflicts thereby introducing new forms of insecurity.

Agbaje (2007) suggests that the phenomenon of violent insurgency has become such a defining feature of the Nigerian scene in recent times that it is often not realized that its roots stretch back at least to the colonial period. The simmering violence being witnessed in Nigeria today has been linked directly to the fragile and weak character of the State, the foundation of which was arguably laid by colonial rule. According to Osaghae and Suberu

> *The colonial state ... pursued divide and rule policies that entrenched systems of ethnic segmentation and polarization. These included the discriminatory recruitment into the army and the police, the exclusion of Christians and southerners from the core north and their restriction to strangers' quarters, and the privileges accorded rulers of major groups in the regions, all of which bequeathed a fatal legacy* (2005:17).

The most recent and best known of these conflicts is the Boko Haram uprising whose protagonists have been engaged in a sustained rebellion since 2009 with the aim of Islamizing the country. While the Islamic sect makes constant headlines across the globe owing to its bombing spree, kidnapping of authority figures and westerners, and growing links to transnational terrorist organizations especially Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

The above scenario is part of what Kirk-Greene (1980) has referred to as *damnosa hereditas* (burdensome inheritance) for post-colonial Nigeria. Agbaje (2007) links the emergence of violent insurgency in Nigeria to the invention of the Nigerian tradition of promoting a more or less permanent feature of state craft and politics. He argues that this has

reverberated through the poor quality of political leadership as well as the alienation in Nigeria's political economy and socio-economic and cultural landscape. In his words:

> *The rise and resilience of the tradition of political brinkmanship involving threats and counter-threats or breakdown of rule-induced and system supportive behaviour in contexts etched by the tendency of the political elite to prefer fission to fusion, coming apart rather than sticking together, at moments of great national crises, provided the background to the emergence of contemporary forms of violent insurgency in Nigeria from the 1990s* (Agbaje, 2007:18)

The above commentary underscores the extent to which the present is captive to the past, casting doubts on the future which are not likely to be better if far-reaching reforms are not made. This is against the backdrop of the harsh colonial and post-colonial governance policy and the apparent failure of leadership, both civilian and military.

Contemporary forms of insurgency in Nigeria constitute a just reward for a country profoundly immersed in brinkmanship. The insurgency in Nigeria is therefore explained by the triumph and resilience over the decades of various forms of authoritarianism, state inefficiency and deliberate pauperization of the masses by governing institutions. This has bred disenchantment, disillusionment, and frustrations which are being expressed through acts of violence against the state and associated institutions.

The Nigerian state has over the years demonstrated that it has weak institutions of conflict management and resolution, including weak judicial structures, which make her conducive to conditions that favour insurgency and poverty (Fearon and Laiton, 2003). It is no wonder she is common with intractable conflicts, including violent insurgency that is often embedded in political economy issues. This is the context within which the Boko Haram onslaught can be viewed.

Is Insurgency justifiable? The Boko Haram in perspective

Many factors have been advanced as explanations as to the pervasiveness of violent insurgency in Africa. This explains why there have been several perspectives regarding the emergence of the Boko Haram Sect. These perspectives include the following.

150

Olusegun Anthony Ofongo: The Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria: What could have been the precursors?

Poverty as trigger

Most writers on the Boko Haram conflict have argued that central to the emergence of the Sect is the pervasive poverty of the Nigerian masses especially in the core Northern Nigerian States. Onokerhoraye posits that "two issues have been consistent in attempts to define poverty: who are the poor and at what level is poverty defined?" (Shija 2006:126) This suggests that poverty is an economic phenomenon measured either in terms of the minimum flow of real income per capita, or as a bundle of basic needs which may be qualified.

Further, the Copenhagen Declaration of 1995, as quoted by Edoh (2003:106) stated that;

> *Poverty has various manifestations, including lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihoods: hunger and malnutrition, ill-health, limited or lack of access to education and other basic services, increased morbidity and mortality from illness, homelessness and inadequate housing, unsafe environments, social discrimination and exclusion. It is also characterized by a lack of participation in decision and in civil, social and cultural life* (2003:106).

The phenomenon of poverty has been identified as the major cause of conflict and discord in human societies everywhere. In the opinion of Pwul (2004), it is "a vicious circle and is at the root of terrorism, corruption, fraud, and embezzlement in the society".

Scholars who identify poverty as the root cause of insurgency in Nigeria often observe that the actualization of a free, peaceful and developed society is impossible where majority of the citizens live below the poverty line. This is because poverty reduces people's capacity to enjoy their civil, political and socio-economic rights. Edoh (2003:68) argued that "poverty is very real in Nigeria…over the years the quality of life of the Nigerian citizen has progressively nosedived".

Table 2: Poverty by Geopolitical Zone, Nigeria

Geopolitical Zone	1980	1985	1992	1996	2004	2010
South-South	13.2	45.7	40.8	58.2	35.1	63.8
South-East	12.9	30.4	41.0	53.5	26.7	67.0
South-West	13.4	38.6	43.1	60.9	43.0	59.1
North-Central	32.2	50.8	46.0	64.7	67.0	67.5
North-East	35.6	54.9	54.0	70.1	72.2	76.3
North-West	37.7	52.1	36.5	77.2	71.2	77.7

Source: British Council (2012:10)

The above data proves crucial in understanding the state of poverty in Nigeria's northern region. Clearly, it is shown that poverty in Nigeria is both a rural and urban phenomenon. This explains the notion of violence is paramount; when there is no food, shelter, good health, good education and employment, the next line of action is to destabilize the polity hence the emergence of the Boko Haram mayhem.

The *Almajiri* phenomenon

The almajiri practice is an old tradition that remains attractive to certain segments of the population of Nigeria. The term 'almajiri' is reportedly an adulterated spelling of the Arabic 'almuhajir', meaning a person who migrates for the purpose of learning or propagating Islamic knowledge. Almajiri schools are an important medium of education in most Muslim societies. At an early age (usually from six years onwards), it is a common practice in Muslim communities for parents/guardians to send their children/wards to Islamic scholars (*mallams*) to study the tenets of Islam and to imbibe the virtues of self-reliance and discipline (Oladosu, 2012).

The *mallams*[3] would usually send the children into the streets to beg for alms/food, a practice believed to make them strong as they prepare for life's hurdles (Aghedo and Eke, 2013). The *almajiri* system is said to have produced eminent jurists, Islamic scholars and religious reformers in Nigeria over the years when the number of those enrolled was minimal

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[3] Mallams are Islamic scholars who teach Arabic to the almajiri children (Aghedo and Eke, 2013)

Olusegun Anthony Ofongo: The Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria: What could have been the precursors?

(Aluaigba, 2009). And there are few almajirai in other West African states with sizable Muslims populations, such as Niger, Mali, Senegal, and Burkina Faso. Moreover, the youth crisis in other parts of Africa, especially the predicament and dangers of street urchins in such countries as Sierra Leone, Liberia and South Africa (Kaplan, 2006; Vigh, 2006; Abdullah,1997)

However, in recent times, as a result of an increase in population and thereby enrolments in the face of soaring unemployment, many of the graduates from the *almajiri* system end up jobless and idle. For most *almajirai*, prospects for formal education are either very low or non-existent due to parental neglect and lack of governmental initiatives to galvanize education. Accordingly, desolate, hungry and largely illiterate, the *almajirai* become ready instruments of manipulations in the hands of the elite and other mischievous individuals. At this moment, there are over 9.5 million *almajirai* in northern Nigeria alone (Oladosu, 2012) and more than half of that number are found in northeastern Nigeria, which is also the hotbed of the Boko Haram insurgency.

Aghedo and Eke (2013) argue that these itinerant Quranic pupils, not only constitute the largest number of out-of-school children in the country, they present a tremendous challenge to the realization of both national and international conventions and protocols related to children, including education for all objectives and the millennium development goals, they also pose a direct threat to national security.

Ethno-religious readings of the Boko Haram Conflict

In Nigeria, the relationship between religion and ethnicity is likened to that of Siamese twins' reciprocating gestures (Akov, 2012). The roots of violent conflicts have been linked to colonialism and the Cold War (Machava, 2008; Nnoli, 1978). Others perceive it as a function of bad governance, politicization of ethnic and religious identities, the competition and conflict for political power (Anarfi, 2004; Conversi, 1999, Ekanalo, 2006).

Deeply divided states polarized along ethnic and religious fault lines often tend to be fragile and unstable resulting in violent clashes example, Ife, and Modakeke in 2001, also the Jos crisis between the Christians indigene and the Muslim settlers. This is because almost by definition, there are fewer points of convergence and consensus among the constituent groups that are required to effectively mitigate or contain the centripetal forces that tear the society

apart (Nnoli, 1978). In this context, the emergence of the Boko Haram Sect in Nigeria's northeastern region has been linked with peoples' attempts at the mobilization of ethnic and religious identity to gain an advantage in the country. Indeed, as Osaghae and Suberu (2005) note, religion and ethnicity are the most politically salient identities and the main basis for conflict throughout the country. Best, also argues that religion and ethnicity, given the necessary conditions, can be and often are a source of conflict in terms of identities, religious issues and the role they play in conflicts (Best, 2001).

Yet, the very fact that a country has different ethnic, communal, religious and racial groups does not make division and conflicts inevitable, as some of the most diverse countries (for example, Switzerland, Belgium, Malaysia and Tanzania) enjoy relative peace and stability, while some of the least diverse are the most unstable or violent (for example, Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi, and perhaps Sri Lanka). Fearon and Laiton claim that "a greater degree of ethnic or religious diversity … by itself is not a major and direct cause of violent civil conflict". Rather, such conflicts are associated with conditions that favour insurgency, including poverty, which are trappings of fragile states (2003:72).

In the mid-1980s, religious movement in Northern Nigeria became more puritan, with stricter interpretations of religion and by upholding fundamental tenets that were previously played down. This period they argue, coincided with the Iranian Revolution and the radicalization of northern Nigerian Islam through its contact with zealous and fundamentalist Islamic sects in other parts of the world (Best, 2001: Igwara, 1995). The exponential surge in fundamentalist Islamic insurgency, particularly the Boko Haram mayhem, is explained from this phenomenon.

What is more, in Nigeria, religious and ethnic identities are more fully formed, more holistic and more strongly felt than class identities as evidenced in the fact that "those who identify with religious and ethnic communities are almost universally proud of their group identities… those who see themselves as members of a social class are somewhat equivocal about their pride" (Lewis and Bratton, 2000:26). These two dominant identities have often been implicated in violent conflict in Nigeria and perhaps precipitated the Boko Haram insurgency.

Olusegun Anthony Ofongo: The Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria: What could have been the precursors?

Illiteracy and Unemployment as causes

Much of the instability and violence in Nigeria's North east region and in several other parts of the country are a result of illiteracy and unemployment. Clearly, the inability of the state to effectively deliver the basic necessities of life for its people has been as the underlining cause of violent conflicts and insurgency in Nigeria (Kwaja, 2009). It is now obvious that unemployment, ignorance and marginalization "exacerbate corruption, resource agitation struggles, cut-throat political competition and restiveness (Otoghile and Akov, 2011:87).

These challenges are accelerating to exponential levels, even threatening the unity and the existence of the Nigeria State itself i.e. the Boko Haram insurgency. Despite efforts by government and well-meaning organizations to invest in education, the situation has remained bleak. This scenario is said to be especially worse in Northern Nigeria, where lack of early exposure as well as restrictive and discriminatory cultural/religious practices have reduced the educational opportunities available to the people.

Table 3: School Enrolment in Public Primary and Junior Secondary Schools in Nigeria

Year	Primary Schools		Junior Secondary Schools	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
2007	11,086,997	9,382,398	1,688,295	1,310,077
2008	10,252,000	8,728,395	1,899,060	1,552,018
2009	10,154,860	8,663,684	2,081,305	1,676,788
2010	10,215,179	8,826,988	2,260,585	1,864,626

Source: Action Aid, 2012:7

The above table reveals that school enrolment in Nigeria is very low, Adult literacy varies widely across geopolitical zones: in 2008 it was lowest in the North West (22% female; 58% male) and the North East (23%; 51%). These figures contrast significantly to the southern zones, where there was an average literacy rate of 80% for women and 90% for men (NPC, 2011; Action Aid 2012).

Olusegun Anthony Ofongo: The Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria: What could have been the precursors?

Boko Haram which literally means "western education is a sin" certainly creates the basis for grave concern. This is in view of its avowed hatred for western education which is crucial for industrial transformation and development. Nigeria cannot afford to be left behind because education is identified as a tool for meaningful progress. These critical elements often mislead the youths into believing that the western-styled state system is responsible for their plight. Armed with this misleading sentiment, their 'next course of action is usually to unleash mayhem on state institutions.

The Role of Impunity

'Impunity' derives from the Latin *impunitas* meaning 'without punishment'. It thus implies disobedience to the rule of law or due process without consequence. Impunity explains why people act contrary to the expectations of the law and society. Historically, impunity in Nigeria is traced to the years of military interregnum when the government was run in absolute disregard for the rule of law.

The trend has persisted till date despite more than a decade of democratic rule. Impunity manifests in different ways. It is what breeds high-handed corruption, desperation for power, intolerance for political opposition, flouting of traffic rules, power drunkenness, evasion of justice, stealing of public funds and lateness to work. Consequently, electoral irregularity, bribery, crude oil theft, nepotism, political godfatherism and compromised electoral bodies have become defining features of the Nigerian state.

Once impunity is entrenched in a state, that state loses its capacity to pursue and achieve meaningful development or take important steps to tackle corruption, unemployment, and poverty. Accordingly, some people who have lost confidence in the existing arrangements resulting from the widespread culture of impunity usually resort to violent measures to express their frustrations.

External Factors

The persistence of violent conflicts in Nigeria's neighbouring countries has had spill-over effects on the country's security. In particular, political instability in Libya occasioned by the ouster of Muammar Al Gaddafi led to an influx of refugees and light weapons into Nigeria's territory. This was enhanced by the porous nature of the country's borders and the

failure of the security institutions which often fail to effectively safeguard the country's territorial borders. Indeed, it has been noted that most suicide attacks by Boko Haram in Nigeria are orchestrated by foreign nationals notably from the Niger Republic and Chad.

The Politicization of Insurgency in Nigeria

Deep-seated poverty, unemployment, socio-political alienation, inequality, and illiteracy have been identified as creating the basis for insurgency and other forms of violent conflict in Nigeria. Himmelstrand (1969) asserted that the competitive strain of modern political and economic structures is the explanation for violent insurgency. He further opines that the situation is worsened by extreme scarcity of resources in Nigeria, coupled with the inability or refusal of the state to make a remarkable dent on poverty; factors that have conduced bitter and often violent contestations.

More importantly, when demands of disgruntled groups agitating for one thing or the other are hijacked by the political elite and other self-serving elements in the polity, such struggles become politicized. This is very much the case in Nigeria where politics tends to determine every other sphere of social life. In this way, the struggles waged by insurgent groups are usually perceived as a smokescreen for the advancement of the interests of a select few, who usually benefit from the resulting instability.

Indeed, diversity in religion or ethnicity is not necessarily the precursor of violent insurgency (Lewis and Bratton, 2000; Osaghae and Suberu, 2005; Fearon and Laiton, 2003). Instead, it is the politicization of these identities that triggers violence. Takaya (1992:112) identifies some factors that gave rise to the politicization of identities in Nigeria. This includes:

- The existence of two or more ethnic groups with numerical strengths that can significantly affect the outcome and direction of democratic political process;
- The instrumentalization of ethnicity and religion as legitimizing tools of hegemony in instances when the interests of the political class are under threat;
- The existence of ascendant radical thinking within a politically significant ethnic or religious group capable of achieving hegemony;
- The presence of political, social or economic hardships that can cause alliances along ethnic and religious fault lines.

Olusegun Anthony Ofongo: The Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria: What could have been the precursors?

Ukoha's (2005:4) assertion that ethnic and religious conflicts do not just happen naturally, nor neither are they accidental but are the products of a conscious effort by social actors. This perhaps explains why some eminent politicians in Nigeria have been linked with the activities of the dreaded Boko Haram sect. The wide variety of weapons, resources and information available to them clearly suggests that they have the backing of an influential segment of society.

The sheer destruction unleashed by Boko Haram on strategic institutions and other locations with admirable precision and expertise is a clear indication that certain highly placed government functionaries are complicit in the on-going assault against the Nigerian state. Even former President Goodluck Jonathan admitted that the sect had infiltrated his government.

Thus, we can assume that insurgent activities are hardly motivated by the desire to mitigate inequality and poverty. Instead, most violent attacks on the state are usually spearheaded and sponsored by a disgruntled segment of the political elite. These self-serving elements often take advantage of the bitterness of ignorant and frustrated youths already disillusioned by the government's inability to guarantee a better life.

Towards combating the Boko Haram insurgency

The emergence of the Boko Haram insurgency has introduced new forms of insecurity in Nigeria. Our examination of the diverse and contending perspectives on the emergence of the conflict although by no means exhaustive, clearly shows that the factors that led to its emergence are varied and multifaceted. At present, the existing counter-terrorism efforts at both the national and state levels have centered on the use of military force in which the full coercive apparatus of state power (including intelligence, economic, judicial and political might) is brought to bear on the insurgents.

The strategy adopted by the government is one of meeting 'violence with violence'. However, the option of dialogue should not be discarded altogether. This is because the over-reliance on military response has been shown to be a basic weakness in most counter-terrorism efforts. However, that the sect's apparent refusal to embrace the amnesty offer from the Federal Government has made the option of dialogue problematic. But then, it could be

Olusegun Anthony Ofongo: The Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria: What could have been the precursors?

that the sect's members are distrustful of the government's sincerity in pursuing the amnesty deal. They probably perceive it as a ploy to round them up for prosecution.

It is possible nonetheless that military action may prove effective in countering the Boko Haram menace, but the Nigerian state must do more if the vicious circle of the insurgency is to be stopped. Kofi Annan is not alone in observing the limit of a purely military approach to the problem of terrorism. Making a similar observation, Richard (1984) observed that "military responses have a limited impact and can breed more terrorists…economic and diplomatic initiatives are needed too, not just military". This implies that a more multi-faceted approach, including enhanced diplomacy is needed to combat terrorism.

Imobighe (2006) recommends an integrated conflict management approach in combating terrorism. According to him, this adoption is based on the utilization of problem-solving techniques to comprehensively address the phenomenon of terrorism. This problem solving technique comprises of conflict prevention, peace promotion, conflict control, conflict abatement and conflict resolution. The idea behind this conflict management circle is to ensure that efforts at conflict management consciously strive to eliminate the underlining conditions that lead to the mobilization of ethnic and religious identities. These primordial identities often create an environment of conflict and discord within the state.

In the final analysis, counter-terrorism initiatives should include both medium as well as long-term strategies. This means that a broad-based approach against terrorism that focuses not only on state-centric security but on human security, with a view to addressing the root causes of insecurity should be adopted. These could include the provision of basic infrastructures such as education, employment, good roads, electricity, and other poverty-reducing policies and programmes. In this way, the youths (especially from the *almajiri* pool) will be gainfully engaged and would not make themselves available for mobilization and recruitment as insurgents. Besides, adequate resources should be made available to the nation's security institutions to take timely action to catch conflict early and bring warring parties to the negotiating table before conflict escalates into violence.

Olusegun Anthony Ofongo: The Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria: What could have been the precursors?

Conclusions

This paper critically examined plausible explanations for the emergence of the Boko Haram conflict. Indeed, it reveals that there are several underlining factors that led to the emergence and radicalization of the sect. In particular, factors as poverty, unemployment and illiteracy are shown to have accentuated the radicalization of ethnic and religious identities in the country. To mitigate widespread insecurity in the sprawling north, effective and quality education is necessary. The inclusion of the *mallams*, whom the almajirai and their parent are used to, will make the families receptive (Aghedo and Eke, 2013).

Precisely because the Nigerian state has proved deficient in its primary duty of protecting her citizens and guaranteeing their welfare, people have found more and more reasons to take recourse in ethnic and religious cleavages, thereby creating the incentive for violent insurgency along these fault lines. As a result of the huge costs of armed conflicts, there are mechanisms and arrangements by governments (e.g., Nigerian government), civil society organizations (e.g., Red Cross), sub-regional organizations (e.g., ECOWAS), regional organizations (e.g., African Union), and international organizations (e.g., United Nations) aimed at *managing* conflicts. The procedures, approaches and strategies of conflict management are however sometimes different from one country to another depending on the character of the state, nature of conflict, personality of the conflict managers and the resources available for conflict management. As a result, conflict management takes a lot of country-specific characteristics into account (Aghedo, 2011).

To be sure, insurgency is a product of conflict escalation, which is in turn birthed by diverse and often contending factors. It follows that therefore for the present counter-terrorism efforts to be effective they must not be predicated solely on force, but must also aim at addressing the underlying social, economic and political factors which justify insurgency. In so doing, the imperative for violent behaviour can be attenuated and the Boko Haram insurgency and indeed other insurgency group activities in the country would be relegated to the backwaters of history.

160

Olusegun Anthony Ofongo: The Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria: What could have been the precursors?

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