

Terrorism and Democratic Governance in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: The practice of caricature democracy comes with itself consequences of subversion of the will of the people. One of the consequences is the enthronement of the regime of social vices, which is created by tenacious period of military authoritarianism but sustained by bad democratic governance. Good governance creates platform for inclusive governance process but what is abnormal is the increase in the spate of insurgency even in democracy in Nigeria. This paper examined the interface between democratic governance and terrorism in Nigeria. Insurgency and violence in Nigeria manifest in form of boko haram religious set which has vowed to Islamize Nigeria as a condition for peace. The activities of boko haram have assumed terrorist dimension, threatening the corporate existence of the Nigerian State. The paper generated the following research questions in order to raise critical issues of concern and deepen understanding on the relationship between democratic governance and terrorism in Nigeria: is there any relationship between democratic governance and terrorism? Is terrorism in Nigeria a consequence of bad governance and leadership failure? In order to illuminate the factors accounting for terrorist activities in Nigeria, the paper adopted both descriptive and analytical methods and also employed social contract theory to explain the factors precipitating the spread of terrorism in the country. The paper insisted that the genesis of terrorism could be traced to bad governance in Nigeria and put forth necessary recommendations to roll back the boko haram insurgency in Nigeria.

KEYWORDS: Authoritarianism, Corruption, Democracy, Terrorism, Governance.

1 INTRODUCTION

One of the biggest problem of man since existence has been how to ensure his security. Security ranks prominently among problem facing humanity both at individual and national level. In just a decade and half of democratic rule, Nigeria's internal security landscape has deteriorated in fundamental ways. Old security threats have remained or even assumed worrisome dimensions while new threats have emerged. Some of the old threats that assured new dimensions include small arms, and light weapons proliferation, sea piracy, armed robbery, assassination, human trafficking, kidnapping, hostage-taken, and ethno-religious conflict. Threats considered to be relatively new in Nigeria, though not without precedent, is the outbreak of violent extremism evidence in the growing audacity of the Boko Haram religious sect and the spate of bomb blasts across the country, which have now assumed a terrorist dimension. The act of terrorism in Nigeria has threatened the corporate existence of Nigeria and has become a prominent source of concern for the hapless citizens, the government, and indeed the international community.

Notably, willful attacks on innocent citizens and public infrastructure in Nigeria whether undertaken by Fulani herdsmen or radical Islamist groups are fast becoming headline news in local and international media, with damaging consequences on Nigeria's image. One of the major root causes of terrorism in Nigeria, it cannot be dichotomized from poverty, which is an end-product of the evil of the practice of caricature democracy facilitated by the bad leadership which widen the gap between the rich and the poor, sustained poverty by the enthronement of the regime of social vices, which is created by tenacious period of military authoritarianism but sustained by bad democratic governance.

The obnoxious policies of government that only protected the interest of the few elites and excluded the masses set the stage for terrorist violence in Nigeria. The Boko Haram followers, who were frustrated by bad governance, destroyed the institutions of government they believed were the cause of their plight. Where democracy is manipulated, governance is denied. It is the misery of democracy in Nigeria that promotes bad governance that has attracted the attention of this research work. However, all these ask questions: what is the relationship between governance and terrorism in Nigeria? Is terrorism in Nigeria a consequence of bad governance? It is expedient for the concepts to be thoroughly discussed.

2 CONCEPTUALIZING 'TERRORISM'

From the literature, the word "terrorism" was first used in France during the rule of terror days is known as state terrorism. This connotes bloody, repression by government agents directed primarily at the non-arm bearing masses. Essentially, the most pervasive feature of state terrorism is that, people are detained arbitrarily and usually have no right to judicial process and protection. Other attributes of state terrorism include summary trials and extra-judicial killings, beatings, torture, and death squads by shooting at sight. Circumstantially, it had many causes which range from intimidation, injustice of lack of fair hearing, emasculation of the opposition, forced democratization, ethnic distrust, economic exploitation and poverty, clash of civilization, cultural and religions variations, bad governance or dictatorship, political oppression, ethnic discrimination and marginalization of minority tribes by the major ethnic led governments, religious persecution: cultural dominations, anarchism, war and sadism among others. Essentially, most governments are often to be held accountable for terrorist attacks against their nationals.

Terrorism includes different kinds of activities ranging from assassination, murder, kidnapping, hostage taking, hijacking, shoot-outs with police, sabotage or vandalism, arson, bio—chemical attacks, pollution, threat or hoax, extortion, armed attack, theft, bombing, ambushing or barricade and arms struggles.

Terrorism has been described variously as both a tactic and strategy; a crime and a holy duty; a justified reaction to oppression and an inexcusable abomination. Obviously, a lot depends on whose point of view is being represented. This is the reason why it has been said that one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter."

Terrorism has often been an effective tactic for the weaker side in a conflict. As an asymmetric form of conflict, it confers coercive power with many of the advantages of military force a fraction of the cost. It is violence that is consciously carried out by the perpetrators(s) primarily in order to influence the attitudes and behavior of a wider target audience (or multiple target audience).

Wilkinson (2006:328) suggests that terrorism can be distinguished from other forms of violence in the following ways:

- It is premeditated and designs to create a climate of extreme fear.
- It is directed at a wider target than the immediate victims
- It is considered by the society in which it occurs as 'extra-normal', that is, it violates the norms regulating disputes, protest dissent.
- It is used primarily, through not-exclusively to influence the political behavior of governments, communities or specific social groups.

Wilkinson further provides typologies of terrorist movements or groups: ethno-nationalist groups, that is, those identified by ethnicity and political motivation; ideological terrorist groups this includes terrorist groups that want to create a state based on (e.g. A communist state); the other categories are the religions-political groups – such as the Boko Haram sect in the Northern part of Nigeria which aims to create an Islamic republic.

The United States Department of Defense defines terrorism as "the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religions, or ideological. The FBI uses this: "Terrorism is the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population or any segment therefore, in furtherance of political or social objectives." The U.S Department of State defines "Terrorism" as "premeditated politically-motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience.

3 CONCEPTUALIZING "DEMOCRACY"

Democracy varies in different place and historical periods. The current position is that democracy like human right should go beyond voting, it should encompass the right to make economic decisions in government chosen by the citizens. However,

many associate democracy at first thought with one true United States president, Abraham Lincoln (1861-1865) when during the Gettysburg address, which was made to mourn those who have fallen during the great battle of Gettysburg, gave a speech which was been considered as one of the most eloquent statement of the democratic fight ever made. He coined, "Democracy as the government of the people by the people and for the people".

Schumpeter (1967) defines democracy as "institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of competitive struggle for people's votes" (Schumpeter 1967) cited in Abdulhamed (2004). The concept here means it is an egalitarian form of government in which all the citizens of a nation together determine public policies, the law and the actions of their state, requiring that all citizens have an equal opportunity to express their opinions.

Also, Edwards, Watterberg and Lineberry (1996) define democracy as "means of selecting policy makers and organizing government so that policy represent and respond to citizen's preferences". Thus democracy can be seen as the system of governance under which people exercise their governing power directly or indirectly through their representative periodically elected by themselves. Indeed, a democratic government is invariably a government that is founded on the principle of the rule of law, accountability and transparency devoid of arbitrariness, highhandedness and dictatorship. From the above, it is obvious that for any government to be called democratic, its origin must be based on the consent of the and the people in this case refers to the people over which a government exercises authority.

4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this research work, social contract (Lockean perspective) as an approach would be employed for the analysis of terrorism and democratic governance in Nigeria. Social contract theorists advance the view that the state or, more precisely, civil society is the product of contract, a covenant, an agreement, or a compact. Some philosophers have argued that the sovereign's power should be unlimited, because the state originates in a so-called social contract, whereby individuals accept a common superior power to protect themselves from their own brutish and nasty instincts and to make possible the satisfaction of certain human desires. In contrary, it is also argued that sovereignty resides with the people for whom governments are trustee and that such government can legitimately be overthrown if they fail to discharge their function to the people. Therefore, the philosophical underpinnings behind social control theory are the origin and legitimacy of the government, the law and how, the reason as why to obey the law and how people punish the government in case they fail to keep to the part of their agreement.

The philosophical ideas of the social contact are dated back to Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), John Locke (1632-1704), Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1788) and more recently, John Rawls who wrote in the second half of the 20th century.

John Locke accepted much of Hobbes social contract theory but argued that sovereignty resided with the people for whom governments were trustees and that such government could be legitimately overthrown if they failed to discharge their functions to the people. He attempted to erect effective safeguards against violations of natural law by the government. Locke said that the sovereigns did not take all rights; the principal right remained with the people's will. This will remains with the people. The state was supreme, not only if it was bound by civil and natural law.

Locke believed in the governed as the basis of sovereign and that the state as the guarantor of individual liberty. To Locke, under social contract theory, power was surrendered not to the sovereign but to the community. Locke said "there and there only was a political society when everyone in the society has quitted his natural power resigned it up into the hands of the community". John Locke used the phrase "there and there only" to emphasis the importance of the will of the people informing a political society. Thus, every member of the community surrendered his natural power with free will explicitly or implicitly and resigned it into the hands of the community in exchange for the discharge of functions to the people, hence a political society becomes with power to preserve property and punish offenders. However, the power cannot be more than that the people had in a state of nature before they entered into a society and gave it to the community for nobody can give more than he has. The term community as used by John Locke signifies the government of the people by the people, for the people, thus community rights should prevail over individual rights and the rights are surrendered into community because the sovereign is the people and only comes from the people

The essence of the social contract is that without organized government, we would live in a state of nature, where we would each have unlimited natural freedoms. The inherent problem with this totally autonomous state is that it include the right to do whatever one wants to do, and thus, grant the freedom to harm all, or any who thereafter one's self preservation. To avoid such an unacceptable state of affairs; we unanimously agree to enter a social contract to acquire civil rights for accepting the obligation to honour the rights of others; giving up some freedoms in the process. The authority or body we

create to represent our joint interest, and to whom we delegate our powers, is the government or the state. Thus, the state is an agent while the people are the principal. The rules and provisions of this sacred, profound and noble contract are enshrined in a document known as the constitution.

From the above, the emergence and chief end of the state is to ensure “good life” for a generality of members of the society. Unfortunately, the Nigerian state, in concrete terms, is in most cases an instrument in the hands of a privilege few that perpetually dominates, exploits and subjugates the dominated majority of the citizenry. The state, thus serves the interest of a particular vested class structure rather than the generality of the masses. This few dominant class are the bourgeoisie and political class etc. government inability to provide basic amenities, employment etc has characterizes the Nigerian state as a mark of failure on the part of government to honour her par of agreement in the social contract has brought about terrorism and insecurity in diverse forms, as different groups in bid to overthrow the state engaged in armed conflict at various levels and regions. The state therefore can be said to be in capable and hence incapacitated in ensuring “good life” for its citizens as the chief end of the state.

The Nigerian state experiment is not an exception to the social contract theory. The Nigerian government is an agent of the Nigerian people. The people constitute the principal. The Nigerian government is answerable to the Nigerian masses. Under the social contract theory, the government must be able to protect the citizens, as this is a basis for the formation of a contract. Nigeria is now in a state of war of all. Against all. There is hardly a day that armed robbery, kidnapping and bombing activities does not take place in Nigeria. Evidently, the Nigerian state has breached its obligation under its social contract with the people/ the Nigerian government is obligated under the Nigerian constitution to protect the lives and properties of Nigerians. The inability of the Nigerian government to honour that obligation is a fundamental and material breach of its responsibility to the people. Extreme political corruption has since become the order of the day in Nigeria. Elections are known to be selections, which are brazenly conducted, in a provocative and rude violation of the governments’ social contract with the Nigerian people.

5 TERRORISM IN NIGERIA: A CONSEQUENCE OF ABSENCE OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

The contemporary terrorism in Nigeria is a product of prolonged failure of the Nigerian state to show characteristics or fulfill the purposes accepted a normal or beneficial to the totality of her citizens. There is wide gap between promises and performance by the ruling class. Economic deprivation, marginalization, frustration, and desperation experienced by the greater population of Nigerians (the byproducts of bad governance) are the underlying cause of terrorism in contemporary Nigeria. To describe governance as a good one and to determine whether it is a bad one requires the understanding of the essence of the state which are not embedded in the constitution but also a function of the religious ideas and the nature of current problems confronting the state. Section 14(1) of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria states that “the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be a state based on the principles of democracy and social justice”. This is further strengthened in section 16(1) a, b, c and d, that the State shall, within the context of the ideals and objectives for which provisions are made in this constitution harness the resources of the nation and promote national prosperity and an efficient, dynamic and self-reliant economy; control the national economy in such manner as to secure the maximum welfare, freedom and happiness of every citizen on the basis of social justice and equality of status and opportunity without prejudices to its right to operate or participate in areas of the economy, other than the major sectors of the economy.

Section 16(2) states that “The State shall direct its policy towards the promotion of a planned and balanced economic development; that the material resources of the nation are harnessed and distributed as best as possible to serve the common good; that the economic system is not operated in such a manner as to permit the concentration of wealth or the means of production and exchange in the hands of few individuals or of a group; and that suitable and adequate shelter, suitable and adequate food, reasonable national minimum living wage. Old age care and pensions, and unemployment, sick benefits and welfare of the disable are provided for all citizens.

If any section of the population is in fact excluded from participating in the life of the community, even at a minimal level, then that is a contradiction to the concept of the common good (Eboh, 2003). Governance can be defined as the process that is employed to achieve the noble end of the state. Thus, governance simply implies the art of governing a people within a given territory or a state. Governance is the process and mechanisms of allocating the values without jeopardizing the principle of equity, justice and fairness.

However, the above ingredients of good governance as embedded in the 1999 constitution are missing. Therefore, contemporary terrorism in Nigeria is a latent function of prolonged failure of the Nigerian state to deliver purposeful good governance. When leaders steal all the money allocated for building schools, hospitals, industries etc, the greater percentage of the citizenry especially the youths are deprived good education, employment and good health. These youths are therefore

affected socially, psychologically, and economically. Frustrations, dejection and hopelessness remain a day to day occurrence in their lives. They can easily be brainwashed and indoctrinated with false doctrines and co-opted into illegal societies.

6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This article has attempted to establish the link between terrorism and bad governance in Nigeria; specifically, how bad governance results in terrorism and how it continues to aid terrorism in Nigeria. In a democracy, political leaders are required to possess the capability to govern well. More importantly, however, they are required to have their conducts, especially in office, guided by moral values. Governance is good provided it is able to achieve the desired end of the state defined in terms of justice, equity, protection of life and property, enhance participation, preservation of the rule of law and improved living standard of the populace. Governance is termed bad when it fails to achieve the purpose(s) of the state. It is also established in this paper that failure of Nigerian government to honour the contract and agreement she entered into with the people is the major cause of terrorism in Nigeria. There is a wide gap between promises and performance.

In view of these, the paper recommends that the enthronement of good governance as a panacea for insecurity in Nigeria. The idea of granting amnesty to Niger Delta Militants and the calls from some quarters for amnesty to be extended to Kidnappers and Boko Haram Religious sect is like postponing the evil days because the issue that led to acts of terrorism/agitation in the first place remained unaddressed. Therefore, Government should address issues that led to terrorism like unemployment, corruption, poor infrastructure facilities, poverty etc.

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