Nigeria’s Foreign Policy and Insurgency: A Critical Assessment of Boko-Haram

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Abstract: This paper analyses the relationship or correlation between Nigeria’s foreign policy and the Boko-Haram insurgency in Nigeria. Using secondary data and system theory, this study reveals the devastating effects of the activities of Boko Haram insurgency on the Nigerian foreign policy. These effects range from killing of innocent lives, destruction of private and public properties, bombing of places of worship, etc. which have resulted in increase in the number of displaced persons, shutting down of economic activities, etc. this makes the foreign policy of open economy to turn down as the economic environment in the country suffers from insecurity. Findings also show that Nigeria is currently deficient to still maintain her stand as giant of Africa as she cannot provide security for her citizens. Consequently, it dents the image of the country in the comity of nations and no nation will command respect among the members of international community if it harbors terrorists. It is the opinion of the paper that the way in which a nation is internally organized that will accord it respect at the international level. The paper thus, concludes that the vital decisions are taken in the international system based on the perceived image of nation states. It is therefore recommended that, the struggle to contain the activities of Boko Haram insurgency will only record success if the various internal factors like poverty, corruption, etc. are addressed and if they are shared interest by other neighboring countries which will lead to cooperation.

Key Words: Foreign Policy, International Relations, Insurgency, National image, Nigeria,

Introduction

Since Nigeria won her independence on 1\textsuperscript{st} October 1960, Africa has no doubt occupied a central position in her foreign policy. In other words, Nigeria’s foreign policy is Africa-centred, built on the core principles of working for the peace, integration and cooperation of the Continent. And these guiding principles have largely remained constant, because they can be employed at any given point in time to explain Nigeria’s behaviour at the continental and global levels. For instance, the active involvement of Nigeria in the resolution of most conflicts on the African continent through the African Union (AU) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) can be explained using one of the core principles of peaceful neighbourhood. Nigeria believes that the neighbourhood she lives in really matter. That is, if the countries around you are all fighting, it will discourage the flow of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into the country. This is often called the ‘neighbourhood effect’. It is in recognition of this fact that virtually all Nigerian Presidents often channel their energy into resolving violent conflicts on the Continent, because we need a good and peaceful neighbourhood if we...
are to develop economically and otherwise. Consequently, the foreign policy of Nigeria can best be assessed within the context of its regional and global relations, as well as its aspirations. Furthermore, certain internal and external factors play important role in influencing or shaping Nigeria’s foreign policy. Among these factors are the nature and structure of the Nigerian economy, which is primarily mono-cultural (oil driven), geo-political location in West Africa, the nature of political leadership, military capability, population and domestic political situation in Nigeria (Kayode, 2016). Importantly, events such as domestic policies and actions of sovereign governments, routine exercise of power on matters of day-to-day governance, can snowball into foreign policy controversies that are likely to attract global attention. In other words, issues or matters upon which governments have acted within their domestic jurisdiction often become issues or matters of international concern. In the same vein, the activities of Boko-Haram insurgents which hitherto was regarded as a Nigerian problem has now snowballed into an international problem, affecting countries like Cameroun, Niger, Chad and the investments of countries beyond the shores of Africa.

Therefore, the activities of Boko-Haram in recent time, has contributed in no small measure to the dented image of Nigeria among the comity of Nations, as well as in the area of economic development by slowing down the developmental strides of the country through the arrest of efforts aimed at wealth creation. This has left the citizens poorer, especially in North-East Nigeria, by discouraging wealth creation or business activities and the inflow of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) (Olanrewaju, 2015). Against this background, the main thrust of this paper is to show the nexus between foreign policy and insurgency. In other words, it examines the impact of Boko-Haram insurgency on the Nigeria’s foreign policy.

**Statement of Problem**

The objective of Nigeria’s foreign policy like foreign policy of every other nation is to establish and maintain a cordial relationship with other nations as well as to build a good image for herself and meet her national interest. This invariably means that foreign policy is important in formulating, maintaining and sustaining a nation’s good image. Over the years, Nigerian image has been affected negatively as a result of the activities of Bokko-Haram insurgency. The problem of the activities of Bokko-Haram insurgency affecting the country's image is located in accurately managing the nation’s domestic interest. In response to this, the research work therefore aims at investigating the nexus between Nigeria’s foreign policy and insurgency, with a focus on the activities of Bokko- Haram.

**Objective of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to ascertain the nexus between Nigeria’s foreign policy and insurgency.

**Nigeria’s Foreign Policy**

The objectives of Nigeria’s foreign policy have, since the country’s attainment of independence or nationhood in 1960 been broadly spelt out by successive administrations. The broad and overriding objectives of Nigeria’s foreign policy and indeed the foreign policy of any country, is to promote and protect the country’s national interests (Akindele, 1996). The foreign policy of Nigeria has over the years continued to evolve, from past military regimes and civilian administration since independence to what we now have today. These policies have remained with some amendments in order to capture local, global, political and economic changes. According to Aluko (1981), in 1960, these principles were the usual respect of sovereign equality of other countries, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries as well
as commitment to cooperation as a means of promoting African unity. As such, Africa is the Centre-piece of Nigeria’s foreign policy. Section 19 of 1979 and 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria had gone further to set the foreign policy objectives of the Nigerian state. Thus, the foreign policy shall be:

• Promotion and protection of national interest;
• Promotion of African integration and support of African unity;
• Promotion of international cooperation for consolidation of universal peace and mutual respect among all nations and elimination in all its manifestation;
• Respect for international law and treaty. Obligations as well as the seeking of settlement of international disputes by negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration and adjudication; and
• Promotion of a just world economic order (Wogu, Sholarin & Chidozie, 2015).

Theoretical Framework

This work is framed within System theory to explain the nexus between Nigeria foreign policy and insurgency. The underlying assumption of system theory is that there is order in our system in international relations. It sees nations as being in constant contact in an intricate framework of relationships resulting from the process of interaction. According to this theory, every nation is involved in some degree of participation in the international environment. A nation's behaviour according to the theory is a two-way activity of taking from and giving to the international environment. It is this process of exchange that the theory referred to as the international system.

The systemic approach views the international system as a result of diverse actions. International relationships are conceived as the consequences of vast number of particular purposes, intentions, expectations and efforts. According to the theory, since the international system is the result of interactions, it is closely connected with the idea of transformation in some form or the other. This is because the interaction of state behaviour is always subject to change under the impact of new factors. According to Chandra in Obi there are three major usages followed in this approach (Obi, 2006). The first is concerned with description, the second with explanation and the third with analysis of international society.

According to Obi, James Rosenau represents the first usage and according to him, a system is considered to exist in an environment and to be composed of parts which through interaction are in relations to each other (Obi, 2006). While those who use the term in this sense are interested only in describing the pattern of action among international actors, those who use it as explanation differ from them.

Morton Kaplans is one of the most recognised of the systemic school. According to him, there is some coherence, regularity and order in international politics (Morton, 2007). He asserts that international politics implies two things: international system and nation state system. While nation states are the main actors in international politics, the role changes with the change of international system. In summation, the system theory sees nations as constantly interacting in other to give and get in return from other nations. The theory asserts that in other for this to happen nations must engage in some degree of participation in the international environment.

This theory is relevant to this paper because, the Nigeria state is an actor in the international system like-wise the Boko Haram insurgents/terrorists though not a core actor as states. States in the international system
interdepend on each other as challenges in one part will mar the stability of other sub-systems (parts). This interdependence is further entrenched and consolidated with the trend of globalization where free movement of goods, services, and people especially among member-states of ECOWAS which Nigeria is a signatory. Also, since this work is based on a non-state actor (insurgency/terrorism), which has a global network, the resultant effects of its activities will be the shared interest of states thereby, necessitating cooperation, interaction or relationship with other nations in other for it to meet or accomplish its domestic interest through its foreign policy.

The Nexus between Nigeria’s Foreign Policy and Boko Haram Insurgency

Nigeria’s image in the comity of nations is very relevant in the direction of its external relations, because it determines the quality of respect she earns from other states and other shareholders in the global community. The respect and acceptance that a nation holds globally, is dependent on the core value that it upholds, the effective management of her domestic affairs and the promotion of her citizen’s interests as well as the conduct of her external relations (kehinde, 2008 cited in Adefuye, 2013). However, the activities of Boko-Haram have serious implication on Nigeria’s external relations and have affected the perception of Nigeria’s image.

The impact of Boko-Haram terrorism has been the wanton loss of lives, private properties and public infrastructure which slipped the country into financial conundrum. It led to the closure or irregular operations on banks, markets, shops and other business ventures have translated to a quantum loss of revenue to the government (Attu, 2014; Awojobi, 2014). This made development in Nigeria to decline as part of the Nigeria economy could not compliment the other parts of the country as a result of system imbalance. It brought about unproductive and instability prone macro-economic environment and economy which complicate Nigeria business climate and make it investor unfriendly – both foreign and local, thereby widening the gap between the north and other regions as cost of living is very high. Kano for example, serves as a commercial nerve centre not only for the north, but also neighbouring Countries like Chad, Niger, Cameroon and Western Sudan for past 500 year before evolution of Nigeria. The Reduction in the flow of foreign direct investment, break-down of industrial production, hindering greater productivity and meeting the nations production target, wastages, exacerbate the already bleak years for investors in the Nigerian stock exchange, decline in economic growth and development are the negative impact of Boko Haram (Chukwurah, Eme & Ogbeje, 2015; Chinedu, 2012). In other words, the economic foreign policy which will enhance FDI is crippled due to the unfriendly business environment.

Over the years since 2009, the activities of the Boko Haram sect, has increased the displacement of people from Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states in the form of internally displaced persons (IDPs) fleeing to safer havens within the nation and refugees fleeing to neighbouring nations like Niger, Chad and Cameroun. It has been noted that majority of these persons constitute women and children (International Regional Information Networks, 14 March 2014; UN OCHA, 2014). Apart from the epidemiological disaster confronted by IDPs, they also, in the long run, face severe trauma due to extended stays in unsuitable environments. The result of this can be multi-dimensional. They could become destitute after returning from displaced persons’ camps and never go back to normal life (Oluwadare, 2012). This has affected the Nigeria’s foreign policy negatively as the Nigeria state fail to protect lives of its citizens which constitute her core national interest. The bombing of Nigeria Police Force Headquarters” in Abuja on June 16, 2011, the U.N house in Abuja on August 26, 2011 and other high profile
A. O. Ogoh, Gambo Sagir Rumah, Orbunde Emmanuel & A. N. Shalok

bombings attest to this assertion. Nigeria does not seem to have suffering only the economic setbacks caused by Boko Haram’s bombings but also suffers from the battered image and humanitarian disaster the group inflicted on her (Nwanegbo & Odigbo, 2013). For instance, between July 27, 2009 and February 17, 2012, Boko Haram has launched fifty three (53) attacks in which 1157 people were killed and hundreds of people injured in the Northern Nigeria (adapted from a graph in Adagba et al, 2012).

The kidnap of 300 Chibok school girls to Sambisa forest, opened a new vista in the activities of Boko Haram and its implication on Nigeria’s external image, as the kidnap draw the attention of the whole world and this led to the famous global campaign of “Bring Back our Girls”. The kidnap of the school girls and the crisis within the Armed forces that led to the dismissal of some officers from the frontline exposed the weaknesses of the counter terrorist measures of the Nigerian government before the world. This attracted negative attention globally, especially by international right groups and humanitarian bodies like Amnesty International (AI), Human Rights Watch (HURIWA), who have all written at various times damaging reports on the activities of the Nigerian state. This barrage of criticism to a very large extent has the potentials of reducing Nigeria to a pariah state among the comity of nations (Eseoghene & Efanodor, 2016).

The implications of Boko Haram on Nigeria’s external relations are enormous especially as it manifested in the diminishing image of Nigeria in the comity of nations. First and foremost, the listing of Boko Haram group as Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO) by the United States of America and Canada has led to a renewed campaign of calumny against Nigeria in which many western nations have advised their nationals to desist from travelling to Nigeria, especially the North East region where suicide bombing, kidnapping and killings has become rife (Aro, 2013). The United States and most European countries through their embassies in Nigeria have constantly issue travel warning to their citizens not to visit the north-eastern part of the country, particularly after the killing of a British hostage Chris McManus and his Italian counterpart, Franco Lamolinara by the Boko Haram sect. This implies that Nigeria has now be grouped along with such terrorist states as Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, Pakistan, Libya, Iran and Iraq, to mention but a few; where people lives in perpetual fear, and indeed, where people lives in Hobbesian state of nature where life is “short, brutish and nasty”. The implications remain that, the collective will, and support needed by Nigeria in her quest of becoming a respected player in global politics is being daunted by the negative image of being a terrorist state (Bamgbose, 2013; Eseoghene & Efanodor, 2016). Also, is the suspicion of most Nigerians at international airports in some countries, as they are subjected to intense scrutiny before being allowed to board the flight as Adefuye (2013) posits that with the designation of Boko Haram as Foreign Terrorist Organisations, Nigerians are likely to be subjected to further travel restrictions to the United States and Canada (Adefuye, 2013 cited in Eseoghene & Efanodor, 2016).

The Boko Haram insurgency has also exposed the security lapses of security outfits in Nigeria, especially those involved in information gathering. It has shown that the security agencies are not adequately equipped with enough apparatus to gather information on impending attacks to nip them in the bud. These lapses account for these agencies not being proactive enough to expose planned attacks by the insurgents before they take place. The attacks on institutions such as various police stations and the United Nations building in Abuja, or the kidnapping of the Chibuk girls, were a result of this weakness. The security situation became so precarious that the Nigerian leadership became suspicious of the incompetence of their
military commanders. This suspicion has led to their regular replacement. The inadequacies and incompetence allegations were validated by Air Chief Marshal Alex Badeh, former Nigerian Chief of Defense Staff (CDS), who was quoted as saying that “the military he headed lacked adequate equipment to fight Boko Haram.” Boko Haram has plunged its area of operation into long-time insecurity and danger. Troops of the Nigerian Army have reported cases of mines along the routes frequented by people, which only military engineers have the technical knowledge to breach. It is, however, doubtful if the Nigerian Army engineers have such sophisticated modern equipment (Oluwadar and Abdallah, 2015).

Furthermore, Nigeria’s status in Africa and international organizations has continued to be threatened. The activities of the insurgent groups have negative implications on the big brother’s role Nigeria play to other African nations, preaching and promoting peace, equity and justice, ethnic terrorism have sent a wrong signal. Therefore, her status as the ‘giant’ of Africa is at stake. This is made prevalent as some countries in Africa contest the leadership position with Nigeria. For every available position in which Nigeria has an interest, there are usually some other countries which compete with her and, in some instance defeating the nation due to the image problem. The quest for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council is threatened, as other contending states are assumed to be more stable in nature, politically, economically, socially, militarily than Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper has examined the strong correlation between domestic situation (insecurity, the impact of Boko Haram insurgents) and Nigeria’s foreign policy. It is imperative that Nigerian government must address the underlying causes and provides realistic ideas solutions that will tackle the inherent socio-political contradictions in Nigeria as way of enhancing the image of the country within the international system. It is important that Nigeria gets its military strategy right. This recommendation is apt because several reliable sources have confirmed that the Boko Haram has an advanced and sophisticated military arsenal that can sustainably engage the military in battle for long. It is therefore recommended that the Nigerian armed forces and the civilian authority overseeing its operations consider the urgency for advancing its amour and antiquated arsenal. When this happens, every resource must be deployed to the theatre of engagement for the assurances of a quick and decisive victory. This could be achieved only through a sound intelligence sharing mechanism between the military and other security agencies and these security agencies/military and the civil population in society.
References


