

BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR FOOD SECURITY IN BORNO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The devastating humanitarian crisis in Borno State of Nigeria, which was occasioned by the Boko-Haram insurgency, was presumed to have serious implications for food security in the state. This paper investigated the evolution of the insurgency and examined its nexus with humanitarian crises and food security in Borno state. The paper adopted secondary data for its analysis. The study found that Boko-Haram-induced humanitarian crises in Borno state include but not limited to destruction of more than 20,000 lives and #2billion property, mass dislocation of inhabitants from Borno state to other parts of Nigeria and mega dispersal of over a million residents into refugee camps within Nigeria and as refugees outside the country within adequate access to humanitarian aids. The insurgency also has negative implications on food security in Borno state having led to dwindling availability of agricultural produce, weak accessibility to the source of farm produce in the state due to security threat and lack of adequate incomes for the dispersed farmers and many consumers to buy food, which further aggravated human crises in the state. The paper concluded that the Boko-Haram insurgency has obvious adverse implications for human security and it is directly and indirectly responsible for the large scale humanitarian crises in Borno State. It is recommended that the Nigerian government and other stakeholders should intensify counter insurgency operations and also expediently address the grievances and conflict drivers that led to their emergence in order to arrest the humanitarian crises in Borno State and the North-Eastern Nigeria at large.

Keywords: National Security, Insurgency, Boko-Haram, Humanitarian disaster

Introduction

All over the world, security (Anyadike, 2013). The emergence of challenges occupy the center stage of insurgents, which is due in many instances to their disagreement with the state, has led to internecine violent confrontation with the state, leading to debilitating humanitarian crises. There are several

examples of insurgent groups whose terror campaigns had resulted in humanitarian crises in different parts of the globe. For instance, in 1983, the ethnic tensions between Sri Lanka's majority Sinhalese (mainly Buddhist) population and the Tamil (mainly Hindu) minority in the North led to a devastating civil war. For over a quarter of a century, the Sri Lankan government clashed with the insurgent Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, who fought in pursuit of an independent state. The wars ended on 19 May, 2009 and according to the United Nations, between 80,000 and 100,000 deaths were recorded. The conflict displaced about eight hundred thousand people, up till September 2012. Similarly, since 2011, the epicenter of the current humanitarian crisis is South-Central Somalia where Al-Shabaab, a violent Islamist insurgents have compounded the drought's impact, undermined subsistence farming and cereal production. This led to crippling inflation and skyrocketing food prices, and mass displacement. An estimated 6.2 million people (half the country's population) are in dire need of food while over three million are in a "crisis" or "emergency food need" situation, faced with death due to hunger and disease (Paul & Olu, 2011).

Nigeria is not left out of insurgent-induced humanitarian crises. The incessant terrorist activities of the Boko-Haram insurgent sect have created unprecedented dire humanitarian disaster of global magnitude and national security challenges for the Nigerian state (Nwakaudu, 2011). In 2009, the activities of Boko-Haram had transformed from a local harmless religious sect into an extremely violent group after the vicious clashes between the sect members and the

Nigerian security architecture resulted in the killing of Muhammad Yusuf, the sect's first leader in Maiduguri leading to more than 15,000 deaths and 9 million population displacements as of 2015 (Blanchard, 2014).

Owing to Boko-Haram insurgency in Borno State, many lives have been lost, many people maimed and several property destroyed. Also, there has been loss of traditional homes, dislocation of families into Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugee camps across the State and other contiguous countries, burning and destruction of health facilities, among others (Oyeniyi, 2012). These heinous acts are done without humanitarian consideration or recourse to the Geneva Convention on the Basic Rules of International Humanitarian Law in Armed Conflicts; article 7, which states that parties to a conflict shall at all times distinguish between the civilian population and combatants in order to spare civilian population and property. According to the convention, neither the civilian population as such nor civilian persons shall be the object of attack (Nwakaudu, 2011). All these asymmetric warfare have resulted in overwhelming humanitarian disaster in Borno State.

A critical consequence of this virulent and unrestrained violence, fuels the continuing dire humanitarian crisis that threatens human existence in Borno State which is increasing in leaps and bounds; a relatively difficult debacle for the Nigerian government to handle alone resulting in global interventions. It is the need to systematically examine and analyse this hapless development that has informed this paper. The main objective of this study is to explore and document the devastating humanitarian disaster in Borno

State, occasioned by the Boko-Haram insurgency and its implications for food security in the state. The paper specifically investigates the evolution of Boko-Haram insurgency in Borno State and examines its nexus with the humanitarian crises and food security in the state.

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopts the theory of Humanitarian Disaster. The concept of humanitarian disaster as espoused by Humanitarian Coalition (2013) posits that it is an event or series of events that represent a critical threat to the health, safety, security or wellbeing of a community or other large group of people, usually over a wide area. It encompasses threat to all the seven indices of human security. The theorists, which includes Wayne Nafziger and Raimo Vayrynen classify human crisis as natural disasters: earthquakes, floods, storms and volcanic eruptions; man-made disasters: conflicts, plane and train crashes, fires and industrial accidents; and complex emergencies: when the effects of a series of events or factors prevent a community from accessing their basic needs, such as water, food, shelter, security or healthcare; e.g. war, terrorism, insurgency (Humanitarian Coalition, 2013).

According to the Humanitarian Coalition (2013), complex emergencies are typically characterised by extensive violence and loss of life; displacement of populations; widespread damage on societies and economies; the need for large-scale, multi-faceted humanitarian assistance; the hindrance or prevention of humanitarian assistance by political and military constraints; and significant

security risks for humanitarian relief workers in some areas.

From the foregoing analysis, it is evident that Boko-Haram insurgency in Borno State fuelled by insidious terrorism typifies a complex emergency which has since resulted in colossal dire humanitarian disaster with far reaching implications for national sustainability of Nigeria.

The Evolution of Boko-Haram into an Insurgent Group in Borno State

The Boko-Haram sect is leading an insurgency to create an Islamic state in the predominantly Muslim regions of North-Eastern Nigeria. It originally acted as a reactionary Wahhabi-Islamic, anti-government preaching group in 2002 and the sect was able to attract gullible young, unemployed disenchanted recruits by linking government corruption to western influence. Proposing their interpretation of Islam was the solution to their squalid social condition and a more prosperous entity. The Boko-Haram sect progressively withdrew from society from 2002-2005, and began to impose their interpretation of Islamic law upon Borno State citizens. Later, Yusuf, the sect's first leader was able to enlist Buji Foi a former commissioner of religious affairs in Borno State and foreign nationals as well as militants from Somalia and Sudan to further his religious agenda. At this stage, Abubakar Shekau, Mamman Nur, Kabiru Banki and Ibrahim Agaji were his immediate allies (Al Jazeera, 2011; Gusau, 2009).

Later, as Muhammed Yusuf's sect grew, he developed close ties with politicians in the North and particularly had a pact with Governor Ali Modu

gradually regrouped under a more vicious new leader, Abubakar Shekau, a reported criminal mind with a resolve to avenge the deaths of their "Martyred" leader (Yusuf) and members as well as perpetuate the sect's missions (Suleiman 2012).

Thurston (2011) observes that two events re-energised and escalated Boko-Haram sect insurgency. First, many sect survivors from the riots fled to either the Tuareg rebel training camp in Mali, to Somalia fighting with Al-Shabaab Maghreb or trained with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). These militants would later return to Nigeria with increased knowledge on waging guerrilla warfare and with expertise in the manufacture and use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and vehicle-borne IEDs. Secondly, Abubakar Shekau, a known vicious criminal mind and former Yusuf deputy, assumed control of the group in the middle of 2010, giving Boko-Haram operational direction again. These two developments resulted in immediate dividends for the hitherto rag tag insurgent group which now effectively transformed into a vicious insurgent sect.

The burst of violence in 2011 initiated the deadliest phase of Boko-Haram's insurgency fuelled by vicious terrorism. Between 2011 and 2013, the group seized Gwoza local government area including the Sambisa forest and declared the area its Caliphate, killed over 15,000 people using suicide attacks against civilian and state targets in Borno State and other parts of Nigeria. While the impact of the sect's activities is mostly felt in the Northern and Central LGAs of Borno State, their sporadic attacks have extended across the whole Lake Chad region, including Cameroon, Chad, and Niger as well as other parts of Nigeria.

In March 2015, Boko-Haram pledged allegiance to the Islamic State (ISIL) Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), though the strategic consequences of this are unclear. Boko-Haram now is likely to be an umbrella group with a decentralised command (Smith, 2016). In August 2016, Abu Musab al Barnawi, the leader of Ansaru - the now ISIL supported faction within Boko-Haram - was announced as the new leader of ISWAP. Al Barnawi has on many occasions denounced Boko-Haram's excessive violence against Muslims and use of child suicide bombers. Abubakar Shekau, the Boko-Haram leader since 2009, promptly called upon all sect members to remain loyal to him. There has since been a rift between the two factions that has led to casualties (ibid).

The group was reportedly cleared from its former stronghold in the Sambisa forest in December 2016 and recently in 2017 by the military. However, the Sects are now more dangerously diffused, ubiquitous and viciously engaged in asymmetric guerrilla warfare via ambushes, hit and run and suicide bombings. The internecine fratricidal insurgency and wanton carnage by Boko-Haram sect is still causing so much psychological trauma as well as gross humanitarian disaster and is yet to abate.

Counter Insurgency Responses to the Boko-Haram Insurgency in Borno State

Many approaches have been adopted as a response to the Boko-Haram crisis in Nigeria by concerned stakeholders including the military and non-military approaches. In August 2013, the 7th division of Nigerian army was established and put in charge of fighting

Boko-Haram. However, the military campaign was poorly equipped and suffered from corruption and desertions. Consequently, Nigerian forces made little headway against the sect. Nigerian forces began turning the tide against Boko-Haram from mid to late 2015. The success was attributed in part to a crackdown on dissents within the army, re-training/re-equipping soldiers, and moving the army's operational headquarters from Abuja to Maiduguri. The military has been accused of corruption and committing human rights abuses against civilians. Nigerian soldiers continue to lament their poor equipment and desertions in 2017 (ICG, 2017).

The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) has 8,700 military and civilian personnel, including contingents from Chad, Cameroon, Niger, and Nigeria. MNJTF's mandate includes the protection of civilians under immediate threat of attack from Boko-Haram insurgents. MNJTF has received the support from USA, UK and France in form of training, technical advice, logistics and equipment (ICG, 2016). Vigilante group (Civilian JTF) operating against Boko-Haram sect began in 2013 and currently works closely with the military. While it was effective in flushing the sect out from Maiduguri, it led to drastic increases in violence throughout Borno state as communities were enabled to fight Boko-Haram themselves without proper coordination. It has recruited between 26,000 and 45,000 members and covers 22 of the State's 27 Local Government Areas. They are equipped with a variety of improvised weapons, including pipes and swords, along with conventional arms and are often supported locally (Smith, 2016). However, they have been accused of

human rights abuses, including sexual violence in IDP camps and killing people on mere suspicion of being Boko-Haram sympathisers or operatives.

Datti (2016) posits that NEMA coordinates the Humanitarian Coordination Forum (HCF) consisting of relevant Federal government agencies, UN Agencies and International Non-Government Organisations (INGOs) at the national and state level to proffer solutions to humanitarian situations. In summary, NEMA has reportedly provided support to the affected populations living in camps, liberated areas, host communities and the refugees across the borders. However, the humanitarian landscape is fast changing due to the successes recorded by the Nigerian Military with the support of Multi-National Joint Military Task Force (MJTF) in the fight against Boko Haram insurgents. ICG (2016) reiterates that the focus is gradually shifting towards Reconstruction, Rehabilitation, Resettlement, Recovery and dignified return of IDPs back home while process for the return of Nigerian refugees from neighbouring countries is equally ongoing. This is a cross-cutting, multi-stakeholding, multi-disciplinary and cost intensive endeavour requiring support from all stakeholders.

Despite efforts by governments at all levels, civil societies, development partners and the international/humanitarian community in general, the response of these actors has not achieved the desired result in view of the huge number of IDPs and the scale of the crises. The Boko-Haram insurgency has adversely affected relief efforts in terms of the scale of attacks against communities, as well as humanitarian workers. The fact that roads remain unsafe

...makes movements difficult and risky for relief workers and even security personnel in some cases. A recent report on the state of displacements in the North-East region revealed that there are currently 1,446,829 IDPs in Borno State (Kwaja, 2017). The current humanitarian and protection needs of IDPs are grossly inadequate, as evident in the continued reports of malnutrition and deaths. This displaced population is currently faced with huge existential threats that require urgent life-saving interventions. With only an estimated 10 percent of the IDPs located in formal camps, the majority of them are located in host communities where both the resources and services they receive are over-stretched and strained (ibid).

Boko-Haram Insurgency, Humanitarian Crisis and Food Security in Borno State

The protracted Boko-Haram violence in the North-East has caused wanton destruction of lives and property, massive displacement and refugee debacle as well as hindered access to basic services including food supplies, health, and education among others. As of July 2017, it is estimated that 8.5 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in the conflict zone with grave consequences for food production and food security. 2017 UNHCR report measures Nigeria's risk of humanitarian crisis and disaster as 'high', 6.3/10, and its coping capacity index is 6.5/10 (Page, 2017). The Boko-Haram insurgency and the military's counter-insurgency have resulted in a severe crisis in the North-East particularly in Borno State leading to wanton destruction of lives and property stalling food production in the area whose

over 80% population are engaged in agricultural practices. According to the Human Rights Watch (2016), Boko-Haram insurgency in Borno State has led to the high rate of human casualties, as over 15,000 deaths have been recorded from 2009 to 2014. This has turned many women into widows and children into orphans while the incessant attacks adversely impede agricultural activities which are the main occupation of the people. In recent times, 34 suicide attacks have been reported across Borno State since January 2017, resulting in over 170 deaths (ICG, 2017).

Similarly, the Nigerian Security Tracker (2017) records that in Borno State, from 2009 to Oct 2017, the number of people either missing or abducted stood at 916,751 men and 4,000 women and girls abducted. This figure includes in several instances humanitarian aid workers, others forcibly recruited by the sect, detained, or are otherwise unaccounted for while several women have been sold into slavery to raise funds for the sect. Most of the people killed, missing or abducted were within the ages of 12-40 years indicating that the victims are mostly youth in their productive years. The number of markets and shops burnt during the period under review was 100 and 596 respectively while the number of public utilities and private buildings, Mosque and Churches burnt by insurgents stood at 1,039; 50,135, 88 and 187 respectively. About 2,453 cars and 72,052 motor cycles were burnt down affecting the source of revenue of the populace particularly the farmers.

Furthermore, an assessment conducted from November to December 2015 by the International Organisation for Migration's (IOM) Displacement Tracking

Matrix (DTM) team in 207 Local Government Areas (LGA) covering 13 States of Northern Nigeria indicates that Borno State has a record of over 1,434,149 IDPs. However, according to Borno State official records, more than 2 million citizens were internally displaced in camps and host communities in Maiduguri alone. Others fled to different parts of Nigeria including Lagos and neighbouring countries of Niger Republic, Chad and Cameroon (Borno State Post Conflict Assessment Report, 2016). This figure is excluding IDPs from Borno State who relocated to other safer states of the federation, those living with relatives in some relatively safe local government areas due largely to the deplorable state of the IDP camps, those forcibly abducted by Boko-Haram insurgents to swell their rank and those who out of frustration willingly joined the sect to better their social condition with dire consequences for agricultural practices. The foregoing devious activities of Boko-Haram insurgent group have separately and collectively disrupted agricultural activity which is the main occupation in the affected communities, obviously giving rise to food insecurity.

According to Famine Early Warning System Network (2016), for fear of being attacked by the Boko-Haram sect, hapless farmers could hardly go out to cultivate their farms or harvest crops. Sometimes when farmers manage to plant the crops or harvest same, the constantly invading bands of insurgents move in and plunder the farms and cart away even reserved grain stocks meant for future planting as well as rustle available livestock. Most of the community members have therefore wisely relocated to the various relatively safe places in

Maiduguri, Borno State and other contiguous states as well as countries, a move that has impacted negatively on food production in the conflict areas. Confirming the unsavoury situation, the National Emergency Management Agency (2016), reports that more than 37,000 farmers have fled from Borno State to the South since 2016. Agricultural production has totally declined due to Boko-Haram attacks and suicide bombings as well as Army/Airforce raids which have destroyed vital infrastructure. Security measures impacting food security include a ban on the cultivation of tall crops, road closures, controls on fertiliser, petroleum products and curfews. The scale of population movement is worsening food security as returning refugees and IDPs are adding to the strain on camps and host communities as well as on the development aid partners. According to the Cadre Harmonisé, areas of Borno state with limited access, such as Konduga, Bama, Gwoza, Kala Balge, Mafa, Ngala, Dikwa, and Marte, have between 39,000 and 250,000 people respectively in crisis to famine food security conditions (Cadre Harmonisé, 2017).

Furthermore, Boko-Haram insurgency has undermined the economic security of the State leading to a drop in basic income of the residents who could hardly go out to transact legitimate businesses because of the fear of being attacked by the sect. The negative trend has equally denied the people access to food security owing to impeded agricultural practices and restricted movements of agricultural produce due to incessant attacks of the farmers and traders by the insurgents as well as restrictions by the security architecture. Shortage of agricultural produce has escalated the

prices of food items across the state with its multiplier negative effects on the prices of other essential commodities. The health security of citizenry has largely been undermined by the insurgents due to unrestrained bombing of community health facilities as well as absence of clean water, safe food and other health services leading to avoidable communicable diseases including polio, measles and acute watery diarrhea cum premature deaths which impact negatively on the capacity of farmers to ply their trade. The lack of qualified staff and essential medicines, and the destruction of medical facilities all continue to hamper the implementation of interventions. Due to the huge number of displaced persons and refugees, 90% of whom are farmers, agricultural practice in the state is seriously impeded (Hayden, 2017). Again, lots of lands in the affected communities are laden with landmines thus causing environmental problems and making the place largely unsafe for human habitation, economic transactions and farming activities. Similarly, reports indicate that Boko-Haram terrorists either destroy or callously poison potable water sources and fish ponds with its attendant devastating effects on food security of the populace (Allen-Storey 2017).

About ten years of insurgency and counter-insurgency operations have resulted in the displacement of several people in Borno State. The number of people with protection needs has now grown from 2.6 million in 2015 to 6.7 million in 2017, as areas that were previously held by Boko-Haram insurgents have been become accessible. Needs result from attacks on communities hosting refugees now with severely depleted food resources, chronic insecurity

in camps, and high level of human rights violations, a critical situation tending towards outright famine if there are no immediate interventions (UNHCR, 2017). Despite concerted military operations in areas previously held by Boko-Haram sect namely Bama, Damboa, Dikwa, Gwoza, Konduga, Kukawa, Magumeri, Monguno, Ngala and Shani Local Government Areas (LGAs), some parts within the ten LGAs are yet to be accessible due to high level of insecurity, revealing the dire humanitarian needs of people who had been cut off from all essential services especially food production for almost two years. Furthermore, in July 2017, Cameroon repatriated an estimated 3,500 undocumented Nigerian asylum seekers towards Borno State. Another 12,000 are stranded at the Nigeria/Cameroon border in Adamawa state that would worsen the current food insecurity being experienced in the Lake Chad region (Guilbert, 2017). They can be expected to be repatriated any time soon and they will be in urgent need of further food and other assistance that would compound the humanitarian disaster.

According to the Human Rights Watch (2016), Boko-Haram insurgency has resulted in gross violation of human rights and commission of war crimes by both the insurgents and the government forces. The human rights abuses include extra-judicial killings and torture of prisoners of war and conscripted non sect members, forced conversion of people of other faiths to Islam, wanton attacks and destruction of churches, mosques, educational institutions, health facilities, farms, markets/wares and national assets as well as premeditated gruesome killing/maiming of innocent children,

civilians (noncombatants) and unrestrained rape of women. On the whole, both the insurgents and the government forces (the JTF/Vigilante) have had records of human rights abuses and crimes against humanity. The foregoing indices have created morbid psychological trauma on the people and weaken their resolve to stay back in their communities to engage in their traditional occupation of farming with dire consequences for food security in Borno State.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper specifically documented the evolution of the Boko-Haram insurgency in Borno State; examined the major catastrophic humanitarian generated by the disaster, assessed its implications for food security in Borno State. Against this backdrop, the paper concludes that Boko-Haram insurgency fuelled by vicious terrorism has resulted in dire humanitarian crisis in the study area. These consequences include human casualties/fatalities, population displacement and refugee debacle, human rights abuses, food insecurity, poor health security as well as economic dislocation. In the light of the foregoing, the paper submits that Boko-Haram insurgency, which is fuelled by unfettered terrorism, constitutes a source of humanitarian tragedy and veritable threat to food security in Nigeria. The study recommends that drastic measures must be taken by the Federal Government of Nigeria to end the insurgency and thereby stemming the negative implications on food insecurity in the country.

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