BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY AND NIGERIA'S FOREIGNPOLICY: AFAILURE OF DIPLOMACY, MULTILATERALISM AND SECURITY APPARATUS?

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Abstract

International terrorism became a major concern to Nigeria with the emergence of the Boko Haram Islamist group from around 2009, and the escalation of attacks on the country by the sect. The group has bases in neighbouring countries of Chad, Niger, and Cameroon. This made the governments of Presidents Goodluck Jonathan and Mohammadu Buhari to be involved in negotiations, dialogues, shuttle diplomacy, and the usage of other tools of foreign relations with these contiguous countries. The Multinational Task Force (MNTF) was established in 1993 by Lake Chad Basin Commission and had to be resuscitated and invigorated by the governments of Jonathan and Buhari. However, the insurgency lingered despite these concerted efforts. This paper attempts to investigate why several foreign and security policy initiatives of the Nigerian government have failed to find lasting solutions to the insurgency. Secondary data, qualitative research methods, and content analysis were used as a methodology in this research. Findings showed that inefficiencies of government, poverty, and porous borders made it easier for Boko Haram terrorists to recruit members from these neighbouring countries. It was also revealed that this insurgency has made Nigeria lose foreign direct investment (FDI) because some Multinational Corporations (MNCs) relocated from the country. Therefore, the study advocates a wider approach that incorporates economic programs that would reduce poverty among the local populace and stronger border controls, among others.

Keywords: Boko Haram, Nigeria's foreign policy, international terrorism, diplomacy, security

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Introduction

The State Department of the United States of America (U.S.A), in November 2013, officially labelled Boko Haram and, a splinter group, Ansaru, as Foreign Terrorist Organisations (FTOs) as they announced to have sworn loyalty to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The group also demonstrated an international capability by carrying out attacks in Cameroun, Chad, and Niger republics (Ploch, 2013; Campbell, 2014, p.3). It is remarkable to note that the Jonathan presidency worked closely with the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTTITF), the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED), and other similar organizations, coupled with the fact that the government at that time equally signed the Terrorism (Prevention) Bill 2011 into law and the Anti-Money Laundering (Prohibition) Amendment Act in June 2012 (Ashiru, 2013). All these developments put together necessitated strategic foreign policy initiatives and responses from the Nigerian government.

The major objective of foreign policy goals is the promotion and protection of a country's national interest which determines its relations with other nations to a very large extent. The credible direction of foreign policy intentions is built on broadly established principles that help shape a country's profile in the international system. National interest covers three major components of national security, protection, and the maintenance of the prosperity of the state and national reputation (Udeala, 2016, pp. 126-127). The fundamental component of citizen diplomacy embraced from 2007 during the government of Umaru Yar'Adua was to safeguard the welfare of Nigerians at home and in diaspora and this should be a major concern regulating Nigeria's foreign policy. It is a failure of governance if a state cannot look after its citizens. It became obvious that Nigeria is not exempted from conflicts that seem to bedevil African societies as it is presently confronted by Boko Haram insurgency and others (Dickson, 2010, pp. 2-3).

Foreign policy is defined by the realities of increasing interdependence among countries in the international system. No nation can survive without having interactions with others and the era of isolationism has been greatly diminished. The aspect of public policy that is connected with the relationship with other countries, international organizations, and global actors is regarded as foreign policy. Nigeria made Africa the centre-piece of her foreign policy since independence in 1960. It would be recalled that the country has intervened politically, diplomatically and, sometimes, militarily in the conflicts of some African countries such as Sierra Leone, Liberia, Sao Tome and Principe, the Sudan, Mali, and Burkina Faso and the Gambia. Ade-Ibijola (2013, p.565) observed that the inconsistencies of Nigeria's foreign policy towards her neighbours in the past five decades have allowed religious extremism and law-breaking, particularly arms smuggling and borderless lopsided movement in the northern parts of the country, has made the stressed country susceptible to the activities of extremists and negatively affected the economy.

The Boko Haram group became radicalized in 2009 and assumed an international outlook from 2013 onwards. Nigerian authorities consequently had to devise counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency measures which required collaborations with her neighbouring countries and foreign powers such as the United States of America and France, among others. But there were accusations of human rights violations against the Nigerian military, particularly by Amnesty International (AI) and this prevented the U.S. from rendering some essential military support to Nigeria. The American Leaby Law proscribes support to the government of countries whose military is responsible for human rights abuses (Thompson et al, 2016). However, the Nigerian military authorities refuted these allegations and decried the overbearing propensities of the global human rights watchdog- AI. It expressed uneasiness that AI's uncontrolled and unfounded accusations could reduce the spirit and morale of troops (Daily Post, 2015). Yet, a U.S. intelligence report said an operation designed to release the Chibok girls, which was a

clandestine mission that would have consisted of the use of gas, was leaked and disclosed soon after Nigerian security chiefs were told about it in secrecy (News Wire NGR, 2015).

Numerous issues are capable of having adversarial effects on Nigeria's external relations. Nigeria was at a time respected for its role in restoring peace to some countries that were prone to conflicts in Africa such as the role it played as a mediator in Congo in 1960, Chad in 1979, and Liberia in 1989, among others. It is an irony that Nigeria now needs the international community's aid to restore peace, security, and sovereignty over its territory. The interests and objectives of Boko Haram later became political which was to form an Islamic state, with the establishment of the Sharia Law system in Nigeria. To accomplish its goals, the sect fought with the Nigerian Police on numerous occasions in 2009. Increasingly, the group has developed to become a national, regional, and global concern (Enuka & Ojukwu, 2016, pp. 56-58).

Against this background, the issues of Nigeria's foreign policy, with regards to the efforts to combat the threats of Boko Haram, assumes greater significance. The necessity to provide solutions to the security threats posed by the insurgency of Boko Haram, which has assumed international dimensions, motivates this study. Consequently, the study undertakes to examine some salient issues such as: how has Boko Haram insurgency affected Nigeria's foreign policy? What are the recurring factors hindering the capabilities of concerted foreign policy efforts in the fight against the prolonged insurgency? Has diplomacy, multilateralism, and security fail to curtail the menace of this insurgency? Which strategies can Nigeria's foreign policy actors muster in the campaign against Boko Haram? These are the pivotal questions that will be answered in this study.

Conceptualizing Foreign Policy, Diplomacy, and Multilateralism

Foreign policy has been termed as the sequences of action implemented by a nation in the interest of the wellbeing of its people. It is the policy of a state that is pursued in an attempt to promote the values, ideologies, and benefits of its citizens in the course of interactions at the international level. Legg and Morrison (1971) explain foreign policy to represent a set of unambiguous objectives that concerns the domain outside the borders of a particular social entity, and a set of approaches and strategies intended to attain these goals. Similarly, Frankel (1967) describes foreign policy as comprising of critical actions which consist of some noticeable relationships between one state and the others. The foreign policy of a country is made up of self-interest approaches preferred by the state to protect its national interests and to accomplish its objectives within the international relations environment. It is the cumulative of a country's national interest which are the outcomes from the dealings of internal and external powers as supposed by the architects of foreign policy. The methods that are applied are used deliberately to work together with other countries.

However, the dynamism of the contemporary era, which is characterized by globalization and an increase in transnational activities, has to do with the emergence of non-state actors in the international political system. These actors also interact with state actors willingly and unwillingly and have influenced more than a few foreign policies. The foreign policy of several nations is the external projections of some of the internal policies of that country that may have significance in such an arena. Because both the domestic and foreign policies of a country are interconnected (Wogu et al, 2015, pp.137, 141). Nigeria's foreign policy was "Afrocentric" in the past, making "Africa the centre-piece of the country's foreign policy". The country's dominance in the African region may not be as noticeable as before, but its sub-regional manifestations in West Africa under President Buhari are incontrovertible. The government of Buhari outlined the international facet of his three-point agenda of handling insecurity and the pursuit for international joint efforts to fight it, campaigns against corruption, and the search for the repatriation of Nigeria's plundered assets, and efforts to recuperate the economy with the backing of trading partners. Buhari's courageous steps disallowed Morocco from being accepted as the 17th member state of ECOWAS. After all, Morocco does not by geographical stretch

belong to the West African sub-region but has its place in the Maghreb and Arab North African sub-region (Lewu, 2021). Buhari was also involved in shuttle diplomacy to West African states in the search for regional assistance targeted at tackling Boko Haram terrorism. The president also used a façade of shuttle diplomacy while acting as chief mediator in resolving the constitutional stalemate in the Gambia (Bello et al, 2017, p. 49).

General (rtd) Muhammadu Buhari and his Presidential campaign team, in 2015, had planned a foreign policy vision of a 'concentric circle' that had Nigeria's immediate neighbors as the main emphasis and other West African neighbours next, followed by the African continent and lastly the rest of the world. He visited seven countries comprising of Niger, Chad, Cameroon, Benin, the United States, Germany (G-7 meeting), and South Africa (African Union summit) in the first two months of his government in 2015, where he rallied for global action against terrorism, through multilateral efforts. It was discovered after the extrajudicial murder of Mohammed Yusuf (founder of Boko Haram sect) in 2009 that the group has members numbering up to 40,000 and comprising of citizens of Nigeria, Chad, Mali Sudan, and Libya, around 2010 to 2015 (Forest, 2012, pp.62-63; Odo, 2015, p.50).

Diplomacy is the art and process of winning over the interests and conduct of foreign governments or organizations through negotiation, dialogue, cooperation, and other peaceful methods. It generally entails how international relations is carried out through the mediation of professional diplomats with respect to a multiplicity of matters and issue areas. Moreover, diplomacy is the foremost instrument of foreign policy, which characterizes the wideranging objectives and approaches that guide a state's interfaces with the rest of the world. International agreements, pacts, alliances, and other indices of foreign policy are commonly the outcome of diplomatic consultations and practices. Diplomats are also involved in formulating and implementing a state's foreign policy by advising government bureaucrats (Barston, 2006, p.1). Winter (2014) made it clear that contemporary diplomatic approaches, practices, and main beliefs were initiated mainly from 17th-century European tradition. Diplomacy became professionalized from the commencement of the early 20th century. The 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, was approved by most of the world's independent states and it provides a background for diplomatic processes, techniques, and conduct. Much of diplomacy is now conducted by qualified bureaucrats, such as diplomats and emissaries, through a steadfast foreign affairs bureau (p.68). Diplomats work through diplomatic offices such as consulates and embassies and depend on many support staff.

The term diplomat is thus at times used generally to refer to diplomatic and consular staff and foreign ministry officials. In the context of this study, counterinsurgency diplomacy, also known as 'Expeditionary Diplomacy,' was established by ambassadors positioned to civilmilitary steadying programs in Iraq and Afghanistan. It made use of diplomats at strategic and operational levels, besides traditional embassy environments, and regularly together with armed or peacekeeping forces. Counterinsurgency diplomacy may deliver political environment information to local commanders, cooperate with local leaders and expedite the governance exertions, roles, and influence of a host government (Green, 2007). Multilateralism, on the other hand, is an interaction of more than three states within the international system and necessitates them to follow international standards and give more deference to international institutions. This is compared with unilateralism, where one state can determine how international issues are addressed and relations are conducted.

To fully comprehend multilateralism in foreign policy, it is important to understand how international society has established institutions, standards, and regimes. Tago (2017), argued that disparity made studies of unilateralism and bilateralism place emphasis on how a dominant state practices its foreign policy by ignoring international institutions and legal restrictions (pp.1-2). Moreover, Ruggie (1993) and Ikenberry (2000) put multilateralism forward as the fundamental issue in the contemporary international order, planned by the United States after the Second World War. Nevertheless, by the actual character of international relations, bilateralism and unilateralism are what states regularly implement as a tool of foreign policy. Multilateralism, bilateralism, and unilateralism are three interconnected, but time and again multifaceted concepts in international relations. Some scholars isolate these in simple terms of measurement: unilateralism is grounded on one state, bilateralism is constructed on two, and multilateralism has three or more (Keohane, 1990, p.731). The United Nations Organization (UNO) is by this description, unmistakably a multilateral global institution. This unpretentious arithmetical explanation founded on a "threestate minimum" benchmark for multilateralism is seen by some as realistic and pragmatic. Even though this is a marginal position in the field, however, the mainstream IR scholars engage in a quality-based classification. This approach suggests that multilateralism requires the subsequent three features: indivisibility, widespread organizing ethics, and diffuse mutuality. Indivisibility requires multilateralism to be built around communally created public good, general organizing principles and diffuse reciprocity necessitate that multilateralism would be different from discrimination and privileged bilateralism (Ruggie, 1993, p. 11).

Boko Haram Insurgency and Nigeria's Security

Boko Haram is an Islamic sect that is against all forms of western education, which renders part of its name to mean that "Western" or "non-Islamic" education is a sin. The group is mainly located in the northern area of Nigeria and wants to make Islamic law the sole regulation in Nigeria, in adherence to Sunni Islam. Its ideology rejects not only western education but its ideas and institutions. It is imperative to remember that the group has a preference to be known as its original name, which is Jamaatu Alisunnah Liddaa awatil wal jihad, connoting people devoted to the spread of the prophet's instructions and jihad. Its fundamental objective is to eliminate the secular Nigerian state with a government that sticks firmly to Islamic Sharia law. Boko Haram has not only affected the lives and properties of Nigerians but has also had lots of negative effects on the foreign policy of the country (Gilbert, 2014, p.150). Aduloju et al (2014) give a very good breakdown of the progression of Boko Haram and explanations of various assaults they have carried out within Nigeria. It is reasoned that there is a possible connection between the group and other terrorist groups in the region and the international community at large. This was manifested in access the sect had to modern and sophisticated weapons which empowered it to proceed from its previous guerrilla tactics to a full confrontation against the Nigerian Armed Forces and its subsequent declaration of loyalty to Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb (pp. 102-107).

According to Rapoport (2001), there are four waves of contemporary terrorism, namely the anarchist wave, the anti-colonial wave, the leftist wave, and the religious wave. Each wave had a triggering event, last for a generation before withdrawing but regularly with an intersection into the next wave that becomes prevalent. He writes that most terrorist groups will wane, with few showing to be long-lasting. Revolution is the dominant objective in each wave. In his interpretation, Islam is at the centre of the fourth wave and revolution in the fourth wave is contrary to the secularisation of the state which Boko Haram teachings emphasize (pp. 419-421). Agbiboa (2019) avers that the predicament and insurgency in the Northeast of Nigeria are an outcome of the enclosure of religion into a long agitation that brews protests about corruption and discriminating distribution of power. He suggests that religious terrorist groups have anti-modern goals of returning the society to an unrealistic variety of the past and that they are against democracy and progressive society. He further states that they have the aptitude to summon total assurance and that they make use of diverse kinds of forcefulness in making their grievances known (p.135).

Boko Haram is well-known for being offensive against Christians, government targets, shelling churches, attacking schools, police stations, army barracks, abducting western education students, and also members of other Islamic sects or establishments that condemned them. They have also included the northern borders with Cameroon, Chad, and Niger among areas where they unleash terror and create fear in the minds of the residents of the areas where they operate. Their threat has also changed the urban setting by making the government intensify military checkpoints and ban motorbike taxis (Okada), which is so often used by Boko Haram militants to carry out their dastardly operations. These security arrangements lead to overcrowding and traffic constraints as experienced daily in most parts of northern Nigeria (Onuoha, 2012).

Factors in Boko Haram's Assumed International Dimensions

The fall of Muammar Gaddafi in Libya, in 2011, the growth of the Tuareg rebels in northern Mali, and the rise of the Islamic State (ISIS) among other factors further made the campaigns of Boko Haram assume international dimensions. The threat of Boko Haram's operational spread has also extended across the West Africa subregion. Boko Haram has taken advantage of the collective language in Niger (the Hausa linguistic relationship) and common Kanuri customs in Chad and Cameroon to increase its operations in the region. Moreover, common economic circumstances, such as joblessness and porous borders, have also negatively affected and compromised security in the region, empowering Boko Haram to search for new members from other states and spread across the region (Mazrui 1994; Suleiman, 2015, p.23).

The group deepened its activity in August 2011 when it blasted the United Nations building in Abuja, which killed at least 23 persons. It has sustained its insurgency in Nigeria and has even amplified its ferocious attacks and actions in the Northeastern States of Nigeria in 2014. In April 2014, for example, the group also kidnapped over 200 schoolgirls in the community of Chibok. The group has continued to kill, carrying out kidnappings and bombing of different places mainly in towns and villages in Northeastern Nigeria (Aduloju et al, 2014, pp. 102-104). Gilbert (2014) affirms that the outreach of Boko Haram insurgency outside the borderline of Nigeria consists that of Nigeria's neighbours, has degenerated and affected the current bitter relations among them. This is believed to be the case if one considers the circumstance that the activities of Boko Haram have gone past the northeastern part of Nigeria. Beyond its ferocious

attacks on the Nigerian soil, to the greater economic predicament in the Niger Republic, abduction of citizens of Cameroon and alien nationals for redemption purposes, and its use of Chad as a haven. Remarkably, but disadvantageously, the Boko Haram insurgency has upset Nigeria's influence in its neighbourhood, and has compelled the country to focus more on its internal issues (pp. 152-154).

Nigeria's Foreign Relations and Efforts to Curtail Insurgency

President Buhari has since assumption of office, in 2015, been faced with innumerable domestic challenges that embarrassed foreign policy outputs. Odubajo (2017) states that the foreign policy agenda of this administration is directed at wooing regional cooperation in the fight against the Boko Haram hazard. It involves appealing for Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) and associating with states, particularly with Western nations, in the fight against corruption. The Nigerian government had to make exertions through bilateral and multilateral approaches to seek the backing, trust, and support of its neighbours such as Chad, Niger Republic, Cameroon. Other countries include France, the United States of America, China, Israel, Great Britain, among others, in fighting the dangers of international terrorism reinforced by the activities of Boko Haram. Some countries within the international community will not be eager to have bilateral relations with a country that is extremely faced with terrorist operations. As an alternative to relishing multinational organizations venturing into Nigeria to boost the nation's economy, the country however is facing the departure of numerous foreign companies and industries from the country to other countries even in Africa, as a result of the unguaranteed security and uncontrollable actions of the Boko Haram sect.

Buhari's shuttle diplomacy led to the resuscitation of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) which consists largely of troops from Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroun. It all intended to defeat Boko Haram terrorists and restoring peace and advancement to the Lake Chad area. However, there seemed to be a lack of cooperation among the member countries of MNJTF when a Chadian attack, led by the Chadian President, on Boko Haram in 2020 was not sustained. Yet, the Chadians had massive success as regards chasing Boko Haram out of their territory into Nigeria. Perhaps, if the expected collaboration had existed within MNJTF, the troops from other states would have combined with the Chadian towards total freedom of the Lake Chad Basin where Boko Haram have their control centre in the theatre of war. Likewise, if President Buhari had similar ideas and motivations with the Chadian President, the Nigerian troops would have been mobilised on a state of alertness to boost the efforts of the Chadian. Without hesitation, when institutions are created for the joint benefits of countries concerned, such institutions should be sustained effectively by member states (Lewu, 2021). This lack of concerted effort has perpetuated the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria.

Resulting from this lack of coordination, bilateral and multilateral relations of the countries in the international arena with Nigeria have continued to decline amidst issues of Boko Haram over the years. Boko Haram in Nigeria has been attributed to violent agitations, lack of patriotism, and religious intolerance. Nigeria needs to do more to restore its marred image; combating Boko Haram needs to be done with utmost sincerity and commitment on the part of the government (Enuka & Ojukwu, 2016, pp.62-64).

Conclusion

This study revealed that the major objective of foreign policy goals is the accomplishment of a country's national interest which regulates its relationship with other countries. This informed the reason why successive governments in Nigeria had to pay greater attention to relations with their contiguous neighbours. The activities of the Boko Haram sect made Nigeria urgently pursue inclusive diplomacy, using bilateral and multilateral approaches. The insurgent group launched attacks from these neighbouring countries and recruits their nationals as fighters. Moreover, the Nigerian government had to employ counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency measures which required partnerships with her neighbouring countries and foreign powers such as the United States of America and France, among others.

Yet, the insurgency has not abated and this had led to concerns among the government, stakeholders, and the international community. The sect took advantage of the Hausa linguistic relationship and common Kanuri customs in Chad and Cameroon to increase its operations in the region. Added to these are prevalent poverty, joblessness, and porous borders, which have destructively affected and sabotaged security in the region. Nevertheless, the present government of Buhari continued to court regional cooperation in the fight against the Boko Haram terrorist operations and appealing for Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) and loans from advanced countries. The government must make efforts to reduce poverty in the northeast and strengthen border controls as well. We also noted that there was insufficient cooperation among countries that made up the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). Therefore, Nigeria needs to show more commitment and make efforts to regain the confidence of other countries whose support is crucial in the coalition, to defeat the insurgency in Nigeria and the region as a whole.

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