TERRORISM AND USE OF MILITARISM IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION: A CRITICAL STUDY OF NIGERIA'S EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

This paper critically considers the use of militarism as an option in conflict resolution in Nigeria. Over time now, Nigerian government and her security agencies have been using militarism in tackling the challenges of terrorism in Nigeria which was orchestrated by Boko Haram and herders. This approach has been causing Nigerian government a lot (both fund, destruction of lives and properties). Instead of curbing the terrorism, it has led to its escalation. Suffice to say that this method is counterproductive, and has deepened the problems of insecurity, national instability and underdevelopment. Hence, it has made the quest for a better option obvious. Analytically, therefore, the paper advocates for dialogue and at the same time rejects militarism as a model for a sustainable conflict resolution in Nigeria. This paper suggests that Nigerian government and her security agents should first and foremost identify the bases of conflict in Nigeria and address them. While addressing them, they should forthwith engage the disputed members of the society in dialogue. This paper therefore concludes that only dialogue anchors on the principles of humanness and common good, rather than extremely economic or political interests, can ensure stability and mutual co-existence in multi-cultural society like Nigeria.

Keywords: Militarism, terrorism, critical study, conflict resolution, Nigerian experience

Introduction

The problem with Nigeria government and her security agencies is that they often leave the substance and pursue the shadow. They leave the cause(s) of security challenges and always pursue the aftermath or the consequences of the long time security negligence in Nigeria. They seemed to have not taken time to ask some fundamental questions on how best to embark on apolitical security issues. The problem is that almost every situation in Nigeria is politicized, even the security issues. This oftentimes does create political

divides amongst the political parties. Sometimes, members of the opposition party accuse the ruling party of sponsoring terrorism and vice verse.

No matter the level of accusation, the fact remains that Nigeria is currently faced with security challenges ranging from Boko Haram militants, herders, Niger Delta militants, and other security issues like kidnapping, armed robbery, etc. Since the emergence of Boko Haram insurgence and herders attack in July 2009 in Nigeria, many Nigerians have been living in fears. Maianmwa and Uzodike (2012) in Obiefuna and Adams (2017, p.10) and Afeno (2012) agreed that Boko Haram insurgents waged destructive attack on the ethnically mixed state like Bauchi and others.

With the activities of Boko Haram, Nigeria has been designated as a terrorist nation, and as well included in the terrorist list (The Global Terrorism Index, 2017). With these attacks here and there, Nigeria has been finding it difficult to address the security issues. The fact remains that terrorism has really claimed many lives and destroyed millions worth of properties; it has affected the economic and social activities in many states, especially in the northeast of Nigeria.

To curb these challenges, Nigerian government and her security agents have employed a method - militarism or military force, which often is considered a better option or a model for counterinsurgency. This method has been observed to be counterproductive. Reports and other research conducted so far have proven that this approach can never resolve the security challenge. Rather, it will continue to escalate the problem. In this paper therefore, we argue that military force or militarism can never stop terrorism rather it will make it more violent and dreadful. This paper will identify the causes of terrorism in Nigeria, which include injustice, poverty, illiteracy, ethnicity or tribalism, religious fundamentalism. This paper contends that to end terrorism, these fundamental problems must be addressed. As these problems are being addressed, the perpetrators of these terrorist acts should, at the same time, be engaged in humanistic dialogue that is devoid of extremely political interest.

Conceptual analysis
Conflict: conflict is synonymous with crisis, strife, dispute, or clash, but in a more escalated for is terrorism. The term *conflict* means a serious disagreement or argument typically a protracted one. Merriam-Webster (https://cambridge.org) defines conflict as an active disagreement between people with opposing opinions or principles. Ajit (2010) in Rakhim (2010, p.16), opines that there is no single universal acceptable definition of conflict. He states that one issue of contention is whether the conflict is a situation or a type of behaviour. This is very important in conflict resolution. We shall elaborate on this later in the work. Corroborating with Rakhim, Robert A.

Baron (1990), in his work "Conflict in Organization", having understood conflict as that which flows from peoples' interaction, defines it as an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within or between social entities (Rakhim, 2010, p.16). Commenting further, Rakhim notes that a conflict may be limited to one individual, who is conflicted within himself. With this, one can easily say classify conflict into internal conflict (intra-conflict), when it occurs within an individual and external conflict (inter-conflict), when it occurs between individuals, groups, or nations. Further on the definition of conflict, Michael Nicholson(1992, p.11) defines conflict as an activity which takes place when conscious beings (individuals or groups) wish to carry out mutually inconsistent acts concerning their wants, needs, or obligation. The emphasis here is the idea of "mutually inconsistent acts" of needs, wants or obligations. Conflict comes in immediately there is divergence of interests among members of a group. It is important to note that the basis of conflict often varies. It could be political, race, caste, and international. Roy Eidelson and Judy Eidelson (2003, p. 182-192) list five beliefs that often give rise to conflict, and among them include superiority, injustice, vulnerability, distrust and helplessness.

Terrorism: The concept *terrorism*, though with different and controversial definitions, has one common feature which is "to instill fear in people or the entire society". The controversy which associated with the term lies on the fact that "one person's terrorist might be another person's freedom fighter" (Kaarbo & Ray, 2011, p. 238). The reason is that terrorism is considerably a political term often used by people to refer to political violence or any other related political occurrence which they disapprove. In defining terrorism, effort will be made to bring to bear its global understanding. In this view, The Institute for Economics & Peace(IEP, 2017), in the "Global Terrorism Index" (GTI)" asserts that defining terrorism is not a straightforward matter. There is no single internationally accepted definition of what constitutes terrorism and the terrorism literature abounds with competing definitions and typologies. IEP accepts the terminology and definitions agreed to by the *Global Terrorism Database*(GTD) and the *National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism* (START). The GTI therefore defines terrorism as 'the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation.'

Terrorism, according to *BBC Dictionary* (1992, p.1211) is the use of violence for political reason. For the *Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary* (2005, p. 1528), terrorism means the use of violent action in order to achieve political aims or to force the government to act. These definitions, so to speak, are restrictive. As a result, concentration will be on exploring other views or definitions of terrorism by different scholars. Ilechukwu (2017, p. 207)

defines terrorism as the deliberate commission of an act of violence to create an emotional response through the suffering of the victims in the furtherance of political and social agenda. According to Henslin (2006, p. 296) terrorism is the use of violence to create fear to try to bring about political objectives. We can say that terrorism is an unaddressed conflict in its escalation form when non-states actors have disagreements or are incompatible with the authority or government. Conflict, when it is not properly addressed or managed at the initial stage of its manifestation, may turn to terrorism. This is actually the case of Nigeria with regard to Boko Haram insurgence. We shall discuss this later when discussing terrorism and Nigeria's experience.

From the definitions, it is clear that terrorism is not conscripted to only political reason. Rather, it embraces other classifications; namely, state terrorism, religious terrorism, right wing terrorism, left wing terrorism, pathological terrorism, issue-oriented terrorism, separatist terrorism, and narco-terrorism. Each of these types of terrorism has its specific goal(s) (Obiefuna and Adams, 2017).

Terrorism sometimes is associated with a moral judgment. From this perspective, it is considered a deliberate, systematic murder, maiming, and menacing of the innocent to inspire fear in order to gain political ends (Kaarbo and Ray, 2011, p.238). These authors note that considering terrorism as a moral term becomes problematic, because the concept of morality in itself is a problematic concept among moralists, and even among the world leaders. In this way, justifying some acts considered terrorist acts become an issue (Kaarbo and Ray, 2011, p.238). For instance, the France Resistance and the Polish Underground, according to Kaarbo and Ray, were considered terrorists by Germany in World War I, but were considered by others who believed that resisting Nazi occupation was a moral cause (Kaarbo & Ray, 2011, p. 238). The United States (U.S) occupation of Vietnam (Vietnam War in 1955-1975), which led to the death of millions of peoples, was justified by her allies until Martin Luther King, Jr. criticized their actions and military activities in Vietnam (Presbey, 2014, p.218-222).

Terrorism in Nigeria
In Nigeria, the challenges of Boko Haram and its sinister, herdsmen attacks, remain a typical example of this fact. Series of attacks have been launched by Boko Haram, which has led to the death of many Nigerians. Boko Haram has claimed many lives in Nigeria. Before the hydra-headed monster known as Boko Haram in Nigeria, which emerged in 2009, there has been a radical Islamic fundamentalism like the Maitatsine movement, which began around 1980s. Even before this sect emerged, Nigeria has been involved in various religiously, socio-politically, economically, and culturally motivated violence. The pre-independence period around 1950s was known for different tribal

motivated conflicts or riots, coupled with the colonial domination, which was also a problem during the period. Again, the post-independence period, which started in 1960 till date, was not without its own problems starring before Nigerians. Accusations and counter accusations of corruption, misappropriation of public funds, unhealthy competitions etc., coupled with the dreaded tribal affiliations among the Nigerian nationalists, led to coups and countercoups by the military. All these also created a lot of prejudices among the Nigerian elites, who turned out to be using the poor, unemployed youths, or locally put, the street boys and girls to perpetuate evil and achieve their targeted goals (Obiefuna and Adams, 2017).

Rogers, cited in Obiefuna and Adams (2017), states that, "…following independence in 1960s, the rise of the radical Maitatsine movement in the 1970s, which engaged unemployed urban youths, led to clashes with the police in Kano in 1980, leaving many hundreds dead". The Maitatsine movement then later metamorphosed to what is known today as Boko Haram. Connell, in Obiefuna and Adams (2017), traces the origin of Boko Haram to 1995, when it was founded by Abubakah Lawan under the original name of *Ahlulsunna wal'jama'ah hijira*. Connell (2012); Faleti (2016); and Obiefuna and Adams (2017) maintain that the original mission of this group was to draw the attention of the government to the level of poverty and economic hardship in the society. It was also meant to look at the problems like political and economic exclusion, injustice, poverty, disease, exploitation, and inequality. So, Lawan mission was to address most of these problems. Under the leadership of Muhammed Yusuf, Lawan's *Ahlulsunna wal'jama'ah hijira* was changed to Boko Haram with a different ideology. We shall discuss the ideology in the later part of this work. It is proper to note that Boko Haram is today considered as the most dreaded terrorist group in the world due to its activities and affiliation with Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), even its sinister, herdsmen, which is yet to be proscribed as a terrorist group in Nigeria, poses security challenge to Nigeria security.

As Boko Haram and herders have posed and continued to pose serious security challenges in Nigeria, Nigerian government has considered militarism or military force as the best option to address the security issue. The question is whether military approach has solved the security issue? Has Boko Haram and herder challenge eradicated?

Militarism model: A misplaced conflict resolution model
Militarism or counterinsurgency is an action taken against a group of people trying to take control of a country by force. The term, *militarism* is defined as the spirit or tendencies of a professional soldier. *BBC Dictionary* (1992, p.731) defines it as the desire to strengthen and use the armed forces of a country in order to make it more powerful. It is all about using force as a

means of achieving peace in the world (Obijekwu & Okafor, 2017, p. 240). We can easily say that militarism goes with the concept *force*, which implies that both words can be interchangeably used or applied. The word *force* has other connotations. In Physics, a force means any interaction that if not intercepted will change the motion of an object. A force causes motion or acceleration in an object. *Force* as used here is not force as used in *Physics*, but force as a means of achieving peace or as a means of countering insurgence. It may also be understood as *militarism* or application of military force in conflict resolution.

This paper maintains that using militarism or military force in resolving conflict is counterproductive anywhere it is to be used in the world and Nigeria in particular. The word, conflict resolution is defined as ….the methods and processes in facilitating peaceful ending of conflict and retribution (Forsyth, 2009). The entire world and Nigeria in particular has been in chaos and anarchy despite trillions of money budgeted annually by different countries of the world to acquire ammunitions for fighting terrorism in order to achieve peace. They forget to understand that peace achieved through conflict, even through militarism is war suspended.

Globally, militarism has not solved any terrorist problem or challenge. The world till today is still under attack by different terrorist groups. Some countries despite the huge amount of money invested in security are still under attack. There is always a face-off between America and Iran. Few months ago were between the President of America, Donald Trump and his counterpart, the President of North Korea with regards to weapon inspection. It is all about exhibition of military might or power. The point is that American has made himself the soldier of the world. The face-off between the United States of America and North Korea is seriously threatening the world peace. Meanwhile, the effects of the First 1914- 1918 and Second World War 1939-1945 have not been completely forgotten. Willmott (2003, p.307) First World War (WW1) was one of the deadliest conflict in history within an estimated nine million combatant and seven million civilian deaths, while resulting genocide and the related 1918 influenza pandemic cause about 17-50 million death worldwide. These wars were fought due to egocentrism and selfishness of the powerful nations; where national interest were place above the global interest and common good. This WW1 might be fought with the intention that after the war, the world would be in peace. But that was not case. Some years after the war, Second World War occurred. In all these wars human lives were wasted. Even the present time where terrorists are fought with military force, the world has not known peace; peace has been eluding the entire world. The death of Osama bin Laden, Saddam Hussein and other people who were killed by US have never brought peace in the world. At this point, we may wonder why using militarism as an option for conflict resolution?

In Nigeria, therefore, given the origin of Boko Haram in the northeastern Nigeria, was originally not violent, but was meant to purify Islam in northern Nigeria. But due to the military approach used by the then state government by killing the founder Mohammed Yusuf in 2002, the group since then has turned violent. The *New York Times* reported that Boko Haram has killed tens of thousands and displaced 2.3 million from their homes (The *New York Times,* 2015*).* This was after the military actions taken by Nigerian military force to counter their deadly activities. Since then, their activities have taken different forms such as suicide bombings, bombing churches, police stations, kidnapping of prominent people from the north, rapping and committing other atrocities. In 2011, the United Nations office in Abuja was burnt; and in 2014, more than 6,600 people were killed (Buchanan, 2015). In 2014, the group kidnapped 276 schoolgirls from Chibok. Nigerian government, over the years, has been fighting Boko Haram as if the country is fighting another country in defence of her territory. This should have been well managed if the government was calculative enough. In 2019, President Muhammadu Buhari claimed that Boko Haram is "technically defeated" (Dionne, 2019). At present, even as Nigeria is battling with the global pandemic disease – Covid-19, Boko Haram has continued killing Nigerians. Suffice to say that militarism-model is never the best model in conflict resolution. Therefore, it is proper to toe a better model as we desire to achieve peace in Nigeria.

Dialogue model: Anoption for conflict resolution
The question is: Can dialogue resolve a conflict? Under what condition is dialogue an option or alternative to militarism? Answering these questions depends on what the government or the parties involved in dialogue want to achieve. Of course, every society wants peace and harmony. How do we achieve it? Is it by military force or dialogue? We argue here that dialogue remains the alternative to militarism in conflict resolution. Dialogue, as it is, is among the methods of conflict resolution, which among others include mediation and negotiation. Conflict resolution as the definition goes is a way for two or more parties to find a peaceful solution to a disagreement among them. This disagreement may be personal, financial, financial, political, or emotional. Meanwhile, the definition of dialogue has been difficult to offer. Pernille Rieker, in the introduction of the book titled, *Dialogue and Conflict resolution: The potentials and limits of dialogue as a tool for conflict resolution*" asserts that "dialogue has become one of the new buzzwords in international politics today" (Rieker, 2015). Even at this, we can still give a working definition of dialogue. Merriam-Webster defines dialogue as a discussion between representatives of parties to a conflict that is aimed at resolution.

Dialogue can be classified into political-oriented dialogue, economic-oriented dialogue, cultural-oriented dialogue, religious-oriented dialogue and humanistic-oriented dialogue, and most important. Cherished and valued among these classifications is humanistic-oriented dialogue. Political-oriented dialogue is a situation where a person or a group of persons who are to go into dialogue pay much interest in their political differences or disagreements; economic-oriented dialogue is where the interest for the dialogue lies on the economy; this is where the opposition or rebels (or non-state actors) are threatening the economic growth of the other that needed the dialogue. The typical example here is Nigeria-Niger Delta militants. Other types are cultural-oriented dialogue where cultures which are in dispute needs to be reconciled; religious-oriented dialogue that focuses of doctrinal differences such Christianity, Islam and Traditional religion. The most conflicting ones in Nigeria today are Christianity and Islam.

Above all is humanistic-oriented dialogue that considered human person, human life and dignity; where person is the basis of the dialogue not political interest, economic interest, religious interest, or any other related interest. It is necessary therefore that before one or a group embarks on the process of dialogue; the individuals should first and foremost understand the basis of the dialogue and the cause(s) of the conflict. Understanding the basis of conflict and the aim of dialogue is the first step to conflict resolution.

In one time or other, Nigeria has entered or being involved in one, two or more of these dialogues mentioned above. It was to resolve the political conflict and differences in Nigeria that led to the division of Nigeria into six geopolitical zones by General Sani Abacha. This was done in order to carry all zones or regions along in the political, economic and educational resources across the zones. The 2014 National Conference (2014 Confab) was another form of dialogue motivated or oriented conference. The Conference was inaugurated by the then Nigerian President Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan on 17 March, in Abuja, Nigeria and was headed by Chief Justice Idris Legbo kutigi (Oluata, 2014). About 492 delegates were selected across the six geopolitical zones. Other professional bodies and groups were also represented. The conference considered those challenges that have kept Nigeria apart for so long. Among the thing discussed include:

> Devolution of power, political restructuring and forms of government, national security; environment; politics and governance; law, judiciary, human rights and legal reform; social welfare; transportation; agriculture; society; labour; electoral matters; foreign

policy; and Diaspora matters; land
tenure matters, and national boundary,
trade and investment, energy; religion;
public finance and revenue generation,
science, technology and development
immigration (Oluata, 2014).

This national conference was convoked to address so many challenges facing
the country then. Unfortunately, the outcome of the conference was not
implemented. This is another challenge one can hold against dialogue model
in conflict resolution. The point we are looking at is the ability of coming
together of the disputed parties to settle and harmonize their difference to
further progress.

We can also make reference to the July 2009 Presidential Amnesty
programme in Nigeria Delta area. This amnesty programme came to be when
there was fracas in Niger Delta. Despite the contribution of the Niger delta
area to Nigeria economy, the area for several years was abandoned,
completely forgotten. Until the youths of the area (Niger Delta) woke up one
day, took to arms to challenge the government that they were remembered by
Nigerian government. At this period, Nigeria lost about one million barrels of
crude oil per day (bpd) which was estimated to be about N8.7 billion ($58m)
as at May 2009. This really affected other sectors of Nigeria's economy.
There was reduction of the daily production from 2.2 million bpd to a
700,000bpd when the problem escalated due to military approach employed
by then President (OSAPND, n.d). Between January, 2008 to January, 2009
many workers were killed and kidnapped especially foreign expatriates. If not
that the government engaged those Niger Delta militants in a serious dialogue
it would not have reduced that situation. Suffice to say that dialogue model
can still work in the areas of Boko Haram and herders in Nigeria.

However, the primary thing would be to address the possible causes of
conflict in Nigeria which include social injustice, illiterate, poverty, hunger,
exclusion, marginalization and discrimination. Every region or geographical
zones in Nigeria is faced with one problem or the other. Over the years, most
of them have calling government attention to these problems but government
has failed to pay attention to their plight. As the insecurity is still a challenge
in Nigeria, it is earlier now to start to pay attention in order to avoid future
escalation. Just like national dialogue conference was organized in 2014 to
avert the impeding dangers then, though the outcome of the conference was
not implemented, but the mere fact it was convoked reduced the tension in the
country then. So if the intention of a group that is to engage in dialogue is to
improve human life, protect human life and sustain human life, this paper

suggests that dialogue should be of humanistic-oriented dialogue, where everyone's interest gears to preserve human life and dignity.

Conclusion

Every action has a cause and effect. But often, the cause is forgotten, and only the effect is pursued. Hardly had the world powers sincerely pursued the cause of conflict or terrorism in the world. The cause can be addressed through dialogue not by militarism. Boko Haram's demand for abolition of western education can be re-addressed, but should not be through military might. If not for the military disillusionment, some violence or terrorist attack experienced in Nigeria would not have occurred. Many Nigerians have been killed because Mohammed Yusuf was killed, which would not have occurred if Nigerian security agents applied dialogue to find out the cause of the agitation. As the nation government is currently fighting terrorism, it is important to avoid the old mistakes. Some known social problem such as injustice, poverty and illiteracy should be addressed; tribalism, discrimination, marginalization and exclusion of some sections of Nigeria should be avoided.

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