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CHALLENGES OF TERRORISM TO DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

When in 1999, democratic governance kicked off in Nigeria, the people of Nigeria gave a hive of relief and respite. This is because to many democrats and well meaning Nigerians, democratic governance would bring about not only national development but some semblance of cohesion vis-à-vis national integration that would put a permanent end to military incursion and other existing social vices. But in recent time, these laudable objectives borne out of democratic leadership have suffered some serious setbacks because of terrorism. No country can make any meaningful development in a country enmeshed in persistent war or terrorist acts. It is against this background that this paper sets out to examine the security challenges posed to nation states by these violent actors, possible causes of terrorism, its effects on the economy of Nigeria and more importantly valuable suggestions borne of altruistic motives on how this "in human act to man" can be laid to rest. It concludes that the state remains the most reliable agent in confronting all security challenges in the post sovereign globalized world.

Key words: Terrorism, democratic leadership, national integration and development.

Challenges of Terrorism to Democratic Leadership

Introduction

If we look back and analyze our history, culture and heritage the first thing that strikes us very forcibly is the underlying spirit of our fundamental unity in diversity in all times and ages. The concept of Nigeria as a composite entity, transcending all her external diversities is an eloquent theme that runs throughout our literature, epics and folklore. That is why, when the democratic leadership of Nigeria commenced in 1999, Nigerians gave a sigh of relief borne out of some beacons of hopes and aspirations. Religion occupied an enviable position as an agent of unity. The common devotion of the people to religion evoked affinity and sympathy for each other. Other sound factors in accomplishing the task of uniting all people were politics, patriotism and languages just to mention a few, played roles in strengthening national integration in this country. The barriers of caste, race, language or religion did not exist for any material purpose. Nigeria is a land of every important people who believe in secular ideas; tolerance, secularism and accommodation have been the most admirable characteristics of Nigerian culture. This explains the flowering and flourishing of all religions in our country side by side without any interference or encroachment by one upon the other. But, since the beginning of this administration in 2011, a group of persons masquerading as members of an Islamist sect popularity referred to as "Boko Haram" terrorists have held the country hostage killing, maiming, raping and wantonly destroying valuable property in a mindless orgy of violence with the sole aim of unseating or removing a democratically elected government. The democracy we all struggled for to enhance development and national integration has been brought under severe attack by these enemies of progress who tagged themselves "terrorists". Deafening sound of gunfire and bomb explosions have become a regular feature of life for Nigerian particularly in the northern part of the country where an estimated over three thousand innocent souls had perished in very wicked and dastardly attacks launched by rampaging group for no just and sustainable reason. While the bloodletting continues, the perpetrators and their sponsors wallow under an illusion that their real motive and identities would remain veiled. We are all not unaware of the political aim of Boko Haram but we fail to see beyond the kite which the group and their sponsors are flying in the air and professionally piloting us to destruction or disintegration. The serial bomb explosions and death of innocent Nigerians are receiving applause

from certain quarters today because those behind the barbaric acts believe they are winning the battle against the president, unmindful of the fact that they are laying landmines for the nation's disintegration.

These unrelenting efforts of the terrorists towards massive destruction of economic activities and destruction of lives have very adversely affected the democratic leadership vis-à-vis national integration in the country. Today, the unity of the country is in jeopardy. This is as a result of some criminal minded persons in the name of terrorists who continuously unleash terror and trouble to truncate the political development of Nigeria and more importantly, the democratic leadership.

Conceptual Classification

In order to understand the problem on hand, the definition of the following concepts is necessary; terrorism, democratic leadership, national integration and terrorism.

Terrorism: Various legal systems and government agencies use different definitions of terrorism in their national legislation. Terrorism has been considered as the systematic use of terror often violent, especially as a means of coercion. In the international community, however, terrorism has no legally binding criminal law definition. Common definitions of terrorism refer to those violent acts which are intended to create fear (terror), are perpetrated for a religious, political or ideological goal, and deliberately target or disregard the safety of noncombatants (civilians). Currently, it refers to the killing of innocent people by a non government group in such a way as to create a media spectacle (Jeremy Lott, 2001). For Mockey (2009), terrorism is the deliberate killing of innocent people at random in order to spread fear through a whole population and force the hand of its political leaders.

Democratic Leadership: Democratic leadership, according to Nwaham (2010) is a leadership style which is characterized by the sharing of ideas and respect for every person in the organization. In leadership style, decision-making, communication, consultation, consolidation, deliberation and participation are vital among the members of the organization. In the view of Oyibo (2000), democratic leaders share their leadership responsibilities with their followers by involving them in

Challenges of Terrorism to Democratic Leadership

planning and execution of the task. The leaders define limits and ask the group to make decisions and usually majority decisions are taken. They stress human relations and employ positive moral principles. It is logical to recognize that people who adopt this type of leadership style are mature, objective, humble and have respect for everybody in the group, hence productivity in such organization or existing country is very high.

National Integration: National integration is the awareness of a common identity amongst the citizens of a country. It means that though we belong to different castes, religions and regions and speak different languages; its recognize the fact that we are all one. National integration is the building of a nation state out of the disparate ethnic, geographic, social, economic and religious elements in the country. It is a process leading to political cohesion and sentiments of loyalty towards a central political authority and institutions by individuals belonging to different social groups or political units. Eregha (2005) conceptualize national integration as the bringing together of the various ethnic and social groups in a society into a harmonious and working relationship with loyalty to the centre. It is imperative to note that national integration leads to nation-building since an integrated society exhibits the features of a nation. National integration is a strong force that creates unbreakable ties among the people.

Development: Development implies the socio-economic transformation of the people geared towards improving the quality of life of the citizens within a specified period of time. Development according to Okowa (1996), comes from hardwork, discipline, commitment, skills and the intelligent utilization of the above faculties of man in a sustained manner over a fairly long period of time. There is no other way. Development can equally be seen as a type of social change in which new ideas are introduced into a social system in order to produce higher per capital incomes and levels of living through more modern production methods and improved social organization, Obi (2006). Based on the above interpretation of development, some development scholars have come to equate development with westernization, which implies that any country that is desirous of development must struggle to be like the western capitalist societies.

Democratic Leadership and National Integration

Democratic leadership implies leadership style that is characterized by the sharing of ideas and respect for every person in an organization or society. For instance, Nigeria is currently practising a democratic style of leadership; however contradictory it may seem. In his evaluation on the concept of democratic leadership, Okpetu (2003), considered democratic leadership as leadership that demonstrates and exhibits respect for every person in the group; responsibilities are shared and authority is delegated to subordinates to enable the leader participate in the shared responsibilities. To share responsibilities, the leader must have effective channels of communication. He consults and deliberates with the group members before major decisions concerning them are taken. Okpetu further asserted that in a democratic leadership:

- a. Authority to lead coming from the majority members of the organization
- b. The basic needs, rights and freedom of the people must be guaranteed and respected by the organizational leaders.
- c. Decisions are taken by consensus of the governed. It is usually based on popular election of the most agreeable and highly qualified or meritorious leader in accordance with laid down procedures.

Democratic leadership can equally be described as process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task. Interestingly, this is the type of leadership that is currently going on in Nigeria which has been constrained by a lot of internal squabbles.

On the other hand, national integration is a psychological process involving the development of a feeling of unity, solidarity and cohesion in the hearts of the people, a sense of common citizenship and a feeling of loyalty to the nation. One can also refer to national integration as the animated sympathy or feeling of one for the other and the warm hearted love and sympathy of Nigeria for one another.

So, democratic leadership and national integration promote national development in every existing society, including ours. Unfortunately, these sustainable principles that are germane towards national development and serve as a nucleus to economic sustenance has been adversely affected by terrorism. It is against this background that a

Challenges of Terrorism to Democratic Leadership

critical evaluation of our democratic leadership and national integration will be made.

The Challenges of Terrorism to Democratic Leadership and National Integration

It is a pity that the spirit of unity and accommodation which had made our people think and believe that they were one family and nation appears to have evaporated. Fissiparous forces though held in check repeatedly raise their ugly heads one form or the other. New forces of fanaticism threaten to destroy the cherished ideals of one country and one people, passions are inflamed in the name of language, regionalism and separation are threatening to balkanize the country. Communal passions are whipped up. Loyalty to caste and community is given priority over devotion to motherland.

There are a number of factors that militate against democratic leadership and national integration. The most formidable is terrorism; the most noticeable of this terrorist acts are the Boko Haram members; Boko Haram by whatever means it emerged in our country had become a big threat to our corporate existence as one nation. The politicians that may have started or engineered it from the North of Nigeria lost control of it. Those who called for blood to flow in the wake of 2011 election results became embarrassed and confused about the purpose because what they had intended was not what was playing out. What started as a small group with few guns, knives, and clubs killing mostly non-Muslims, have become a big terrorist organization with international connections and inputs.

The first major outing of Boko Haram group was to attack police headquarters. It was their strong message to the police, that they were a key target. Next they hit the UN office in Abuja to tell Nigerians they had gone international; then the news media houses to tell Nigerians how dangerous publicity is to their course. Terrorists burnt police stations, attacked prison yards at every opportunity for the argument that they don't want Christians and Western education in the North. Should that constitute reasons to kill our policemen like it happened in Nassarawa recently? According to Kanu (2013), there is a lot that is wrong in the land. From Baga to Bama and other places in between, Nigerians are caught up in an orgy of death and destruction which questions the efficacy of the state, as is presently constituted. In his visibly aggrieved

manner, Prof. Ango Abdullahi, former Vice-Chancellor of Ahmadu Bello University, opined that Nigeria's poor security situation is a function of bad governance and corrupt governments.

Boko Haram is not the only terrorist group that is making democratic leadership and national integration unworkable in Nigeria. Other social vices include kidnapping and over-bearing attitude of some of the militants in some parts of the country. Kidnapping is the taking away of a person against the person's will, usually for ransom or in furtherance of another crime.

Democracy and national integration have been reduced to a mere slogan as its tenets and principles have been scuttled of terrorism which is antithetical to utilitarian morality the basis upon which any political mode or culture finds its adequate and meaningful expression. This unhealthy situation according to Maureen Chigbo in his piece entitled "the Boko Haram kingpin they can't arrest" admonished that has made the security agencies not to be on top of the security challenges in the country. Instead of collaborating to solve the problem, they are busy trading blames and blackmailing one another. Thank God for the discretion of the federal government for declaring state of emergency in some part of the northern parts of the country

The question one is always tempted to ask regarding the political imbroglio, according to Omoh (2013) is how has

Nigeria degenerated to this low level of animal behavior of killing one another across the country? Nigeria leaders appear helpless. When as a people we collectively surrendered our sovereignty to the state to take care of all, it is the expectation that the state will protect us all. Nigerians are afraid of their safety in almost every part of the country and the north-east in particular. At a time, many well-meaning Nigerians thought that the problem was about corruption and power failure but now insecurity has taken over.

Causes of Terrorism

Many school and individuals have tried to identify the possible causes of terrorism in Nigeria. This paper will be incomplete without x-raying what would have necessitated these social vices in our society. The surest way to proffer solutions to this problem is to first and foremost examine the causes of this social stigma. Below are some of the possible causes of terrorism.

Challenges of Terrorism to Democratic Leadership

In the north, child abuse is a fact of life. Many parents do not bring up their children in a God-fearing way. There is also the fact that poverty appear to be endemic in the North. Parents therefore find it difficult to actualize the hopes and aspirations of their own biological children. Children between the ages of seven and fifteen years who

attend informal religious schools roam about for assistance, beg for alms for and sometime engage in various forms of labour in order to survive. Sometimes they fall into the hands of irresponsible adults who exploit them sexually.

Invariably, this category of children grow up aggressive and violent, as they have been exposed to the vagaries of weather, different forms of pressure, hunger and exploitations. Unfortunately, these are children that are supposed to be leaders of tomorrow. The "Almajiri" as they are popular called in the North have become source of worry to the Northern elite. The Almajiri according to Omorotionmwan (2013), did not ask to be born poor. It is not as if they had a choice between being poor and being rich and they deliberately chose the former.

Absence of good governance is another causal factor of terrorism in Nigeria. It is being argued far-and-wide that the overwhelming social vices ranging from child abuse, drug trafficking, kidnapping etc are as a result of the inability of those entrusted with leadership to perform creditably well. Once the socioeconomic needs of the people are met, political stability and tranquility are ensured.

Another compelling factor is the absence of job opportunities. An idle-mind is the devil's workshop, goes a popular saying. A man who has nothing doing is doomed for life. A situation where many of these able-bodied youths have no meaningful engagement could spell doom for the country. The inability of the federal government to come up with adequate jobs is enough reason for any jobless person to begin to go into terrorism.

Effects of Terrorism to Democratic Leadership and National Integration

First, the emergence of terrorism has adversely affected the pace of socioeconomic development in Nigeria.

Second, terrorism has resulted to political instability and ethnic conflict in Nigeria.

Third, it has led to clash of religion (the Christians and Muslims) which consequently resulted to incessant killing of members.

Fourth, it has led to lack of confidence and trust in the polity. People now view one another with suspicion and acrimony.

Fifty, it discourages investment as many people both local and international businessmen are not interested in investing in crisis laden areas.

Conclusion

Over the past twelve years, Nigeria preoccupation with democratic leadership and national integration has had only marginal success. The country is worse-off than it was before the emergence of democracy in 1999. Various social vices ranging from; armed robbery, pipeline vandals, raping and killing, kidnapping, among others, have made democratic leadership a crisis laden one. Furthermore, these researchers believe that terrorism is the greatest impediment to democratic leadership and national integration. According to Ahmed (2013), the most rapidly expanding population in Africa breeds young people without hope of productive lives, and its traditional and religious leadership framework is seriously challenged by an insurgency which claims higher legitimacy. Nigerian political leadership is in disarray, aging and decaying. Chief Obafemi Awolowo famously said Nigeria is a mere geographical expression. From militants in the Niger Delta to terrorist threats in the North, we probably have not been more divided since the civil war (Ademolekun, 2013).

The Way Forward

We cannot afford to continue like this. There must be an escape route out of this political quagmire and economic doldrums we have found ourselves. It is against this background that the following recommendations are made to ameliorate the very deplorable and despicable situation of this country.

If terrorism must be tackled to achieve democratic leadership and national integration, then a reorientation of the citizens away from special interests and towards common interests must be launched and sustained. This will mean in effect taking the interest of the subordinate classes as the measure of all things.

Challenges of Terrorism to Democratic Leadership

Changing the policy environment to reflect the yearnings and aspirations of the aggrieved youths is imperative. Secondly, according to the World Bank as reflected in Osalor's Piece (2013) policymakers should frame correct social as well as economic policies based on these "youth lenses." To bring this about requires the following initiatives:

Changing the policy environment; the policymakers need to expand access to and enhance the quality of education and health services. The policymakers need to give young people a voice to articulate the kind of required assistance and the opportunity to participate in the delivery of assistance policies.

Develop youth capabilities. To help the young people to choose the best from these opportunities, policymakers need to develop the youth's capabilities. To do this, the policymakers first have to recognize the youth of their country as a strategic resource and vital decision-making agents. They also need to make sure that the youths are well-informed, sufficiently resourced and judicious while making their decisions.

Thirdly, those involved in national and international security policymaking should understand the operational methodologies and instruments of these terrorists and the threats from them.

Fourthly, leaders in the corridors of power must work towards reducing poverty and also bridge socioeconomic inequalities which in most cases result in aggressive behaviours among the less privileged.

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Challenges of Terrorism to Democratic Leadership

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