NEW REALITIES OF INSURGENCY IN AFRICA: THE CASE OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN AS VICTIMS

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Abstract

All over the world, the primary purpose of government remains the security of citizens' lives and propertieshowever, this goal has been interrupted owing to the new realities of insurgency in Africa which have put to test the role of governments thereby causing citizens to live in fear, apprehension and agony due to the level of destruction and carnage that has been inflicted by the insurgents in different parts of the country. This paper argues that the new realities of insurgency have further exposed women and children who are usually victims of insecurity. This paper usesthe two cases of Nigeria and Kenya which have both suffered substantially from the attacks of Boko Haram and Al-Shabab groups respectively. Considering the devastating effects of these new realities on all and sundry with women and children feeling the heat the more, this paper calls for an urgent action to tackle this emerging threat. It is for this reason that this paper recommends a more pragmatic approach to deal with the problem of insurgency as well as the need for Nigeria and Kenya to share military intelligence since both states have become targets of repeated attacks by these groups that are renowned for leaving in their trail devastation, destruction and instability.

Keywords: Insurgency, Military Intelligence, Security, Insecurity

Introduction

It is not an overstatement that Africa is experiencing heightening security challenges threatening its unity and stability. While the continent may not be new to security breaches, the current wave of violence, criminality and breakdown of law and order puts the continent on a dangerous cliff. In the last 20 years, issues of insecurity occasioned by insurgency have put Africa in a precarious situation thereby aggravating the fragile state of the continent and the states therein. Indeed, Africa is on the brink of destabilization owing to the activities of Jihadists and Islamists amongst whom are carrying out deadly attacks on targets including Mali, Libya, Algeria, Niger Republic, Somalia, Nigeria, Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Egypt just to mention a few (Khazan, 2013). According to Aina (2016), African states have become fragileowing to the activities of insurgent groups who use guerrilla warfare tactics as a source of interest articulation and aggregation. Through the use of this asymmetrical type of warfare, insurgent groups have used the gaps created by governments' lack of presence to launch attacks on targets causing victims to live in agony, fear and apprehension.

It may be instructive to note that the continent's porous borders, weak governments, flourishing drug trades, vast lawless spaces among others provide refuge for these elements to launch and sustain their nefarious activities (Khazan, 2013). Africa today is home to a number of insurgent groups spread across the different regions including Al-Qaeda, Islamic State, Islamic State in West African Province, Boko Haram and Al-Shabab to mention a few. Insurgency has become a feature of the African state in the twenty-first century with the activities of Boko Haram group in Nigeria launching attacks on strategic locations in the country including attacks on its neighbours including Chad, Niger and Cameroon on the one hand and Al-Shabab in the Sahel region operating between the border town between Kenya and Somalia. The insurgents' display of capacity as depicted by the takeover of communities, widespread destruction of facilities as well as use of sophisticated military hardware among others is aclear indication of the huge security problem confronting African states.

Apart from the fact that African states appear not ready for this security challenge, the collaboration between these insurgent groups'and global terror organisations, such as the Islamic

state who they apparently enjoy logistics support from has given the groups the backing to sustain their campaign of terror and destruction across targets in Africa.Africa's desire for development and advancement is incontrovertible, but with the level of devastation caused by the activities of these insurgents, it may be safe to posit that Africa may be on the brink of destabilization if the new realities of insurgency are anything to go by. The ease at which attacks are launched with far reaching implications on women and children form part of the new realities, more importantly as the insurgents appear to be gaining ground thereby raising concerns about citizens who are cut in the middle thiscrisis. More worrisome is the lack of clear cut plan to rehabilitate and re-settle these victims of war who have been exposed due to governments' lack of protection.

The damning consequences of this growing malady on Nigeria and Kenya amongst others are what this paper intends to unravel.For the purpose of delivering on the objectives of this paper, this paper is divided into five parts. The first section is the introductory part while the second takes a look at insurgency in Africa with Nigeria and Kenya as case studies. The third focuses on the effects of insurgency on Women and children whilethe fourth section focuses on the conclusion and recommendations.

Insurgency in Africa: Focus On Nigeria and Kenya

Insurgents are belligerents who take on governments with the aim of subverting the course of justice or rendering a state lawless (Gupta, 2014). Presently, Insurgency has done irreparable damage to the stability of states in Africa more than corruption and leadership failure. Insurgency which is a form of insurrection against the state by a group is often employed to discredit a government or to provide an alternative to constitutional rule. The alternative which these groups seek to provide are usually explored to further their agenda of reign of terror by recruiting more foot soldiers to sustain the level of attacks and engagement. Except it is checked, insurgency has the capacity to render a government clueless, unpopular, irrelevant and irresponsible. Where insurgents gain ground, they do not only render a government powerless, irresponsible and irresponsive, they cause state fragility.

A look at case studies on the continent where insurgent groups have employed the instrument of violence reveal that such states are not only crisis ridden, but suffer from instability andlack of development.Aina (2016) stressed that a fragile state, which may result from insurgents attacks is not only weak, but also crisis ridden. Examples of states include Somalia, Syria, Yemen, Libya, Mali and Nigeria to mention a few. The aforementioned countries have suffered regular attacks to the extent that there have been calls on the government to wake up to its responsibility of protecting lives or resign if it cannot guarantee lives of citizens.

Some of the internal contradictions within these countries which have encouraged brigandage and criminality include poor policies, weak and corrupt governments, undertrained and underequipped militaries, porous borders and weak governance structure which provide a refuge for these elements to perpetrate their nefarious activities (Khazan 2013; Ncube & Jones, 2015). Apart from insurgency, African states are confronted with issues of organised crime and radical extremism which have been major talking points in the last two decades. The frequency of insurgent attacks on the continent appears not isolated; rather, a fall out of the failure of governments over the years to meet the expectations of the general populace.

The growth of insurgency in Africa has been quite noticeable for some time with Boko Haram and Al-Shabab groups now ranked among the worlds' deadliest; the three others are Islamic state in Syria (ISIS), Taliban and Al-Qaeda (Martin, 2017). These top five terror groups among which Boko Haram and Al-Shabab belong have accounted for thousands of deaths of innocent, armless and defenceless civilians. Boko Haram largely domiciled in Nigeria but with influence spread across Cameroon, Chad and Niger Republic for example, accounted for the deaths of 2,164 persons in 2016 (Ndujihe, 2018). Al- Shabab with influence spread across Djibouti, Kenya, Somalia and Kenya reportedly killed 4,200 persons in 2016 (Counter Terrorism Project, 2019). Though, the activities of these groups have attracted global attention and condemnation, their campaign of terror attacks have continued to claim lives with monumental destructions taking place across cities that have been targets of the insurgents.

The wanton destruction of properties, use of improvised explosive devices, mass killing of citizens during raids, abduction and killing of aid workers, ambush against the military to mention a few, raises serious concerns about the level of devastation and damage inflicted by these groups. While these attacks have put African states and their governments on the spotlight, international support rendered by allies including the United States of America, France and other allies have shown tremendous support but these groups have managed to sustain their activities(Adedire, Ake & Olowojolu, 2016).The new realities of insurgency in Africa have been the sophistication of these groups, daring nature of attacks, use of girls and children as suicide bombers, not to mention the abduction of school girls and its accompanying implications on women and children particularly in the North-East region of Nigeria and the country as a whole (Comolli, 2018). The abduction of school girls in Chibok and Dapchi are instances of how the terrorists have exploited girls and women who have been married off and sometimes used as sex slaves.

Furthermore , the groups' allegiance to global terror organisations including Islamic State and Al-Qaeda have also made them more deadly considering the fact that Islamic State and Al-Qaeda are known terrorist organisations creating chaos in parts of the world including Pakistan, Yemen, Afghanistan and Syria to mention a few. Their alliance to these global terror groups has made the recruitment of new fighters a seamless one, due to logistics support derived from their alliance. The ease at which new foot soldiers are recruited has made the war an unending one despite efforts by the militaries of the affected states to keep in check the activities of the groups. For example, Cannon, Khalifa and Plaut (2019) posited that Al-Shabab is motivated to attack Kenya because of the benefits of recruitment, media attention and the presence of ample opportunities to further their agenda.

Despite having their base in Somalia, Al-Shabab has used Kenya to propagate its agenda while attracting international media coverage. Following increased terror attacks, President Muhammadu Buhari at a forum with the Nigerian community in Cote d'Ivoire had blamed the increasing attacks on trained armed men who were displaced from Libya after the fall of Muammar Gaddafi and who are now perpetrating evil acts in Nigeria (Toromade, 2017).

President Buhari was however criticised for linking the political crisis in Libya to the surge in insecurity in Nigeria, especially the activities of the Boko Harm insurgents. Despite questioning the counterinsurgency strategies of the government, the fact on ground supports the claim that the involvement and infiltration of foreign fighters in the war as well as the global scope of terrorism may have contributed to the increasing security breaches especially attacks by the Boko Haram fighters within North East Nigeria. Or how does one explain the resurgence of attacks despite suffering heavy casualties? How else do we also explain the use of sophisticated weapons, artillery brigades, anti-aircraft missiles, armoured personnel carrier deployed by the fighters in their campaign against villages, Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps, military bases, among other targets around the affected area.

The inference that can be drawn here is that the sophistication of the groups have not only proven difficult for the members of the armed forces to effectively tackle, but also serves as an eye opener regarding the possession of arms and ammunitions by terrorists and persons with sinister motives. An editorial in one of the daily newspapers in Nigeria corroborated the alliance between Islamic State militants and Boko Haram militants (The Punch, 2019). The editorial opined that despite suffering large casualties and the claim of being technically defeated by the Nigerian authorities, the activities of the sect has been sustained, largely due to the infiltration of the war by agents of Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP), that are helping to step up attacks around the affected region, especially attacks on military bases and formations. Whatever the reasons for the upsurge in violence and killings, the Nigerian and Kenyan cases are clear instances of new realities of insurgency in Africa and its associated consequences.

Despite increased government spending to shore up the fighting power of the armed forces as well the involvement of the Multinational Joint Task force, the terrorists have continued their campaign of terror terrorising armless civilians and turning the country into a killing field. The implication here is that African states experiencing these breaches most particularly Nigeria and Kenya are confronted with security breaches that is testing the capabilities of their militaries especially in dealing with the asymmetrical type of warfare that has since gained prominence due to growth of insurgency and terrorism around the world.

On the African continent, Nigeria and Kenya have remained hotbeds for insurgent attacks whose aim is to render the government ineffective and helpless. The launch of deadly and daring attacks by Boko Haram on targets including military formations as seen in Metele, Rann and Baga in 2018 represents another twist in the operations of insurgent groups. For instance, the deadly attack on a military base in Metele, Nigeria in November 2018 was reported to have claimed the lives of not less than 70 soldiers (Haruna, 2018). Following public outcry and condemnation of the Metele attack, the military authorities refuted previous reports affirming that only 23 soldiers died in the attack on 157 battalion in Borno state (Aluko, 2018). Whatever the arguments and counter arguments, the inference drawn here is that the attack by these groups on military bases is a new reality that requires urgent national attention.

In Nigeria, Boko Haram insurgents have gone beyond launching attacks on soft targets, but found it plausible to launch attacks on military bases, barracks and security formations in some parts of the country. This also represents a new twist that must be fully understood in dealing with these new realities in order to deal with insurgency in Africa. In recent times, such attacks on military bases have become a regular feature following attacks on Metele, Baga and Kukareta bases, not to mention the ambush and killing of soldiers around the theatre of war (Toromade, 2018).

Kenya has suffered attacks by Al-Shabab militant group, a group with links with Al-Qaeda domiciled in the Sahel region between Somalia and Kenya. In the case of Kenya, the attacks were instigated by the group that also goes by the name of Unity of Islamic Youth and *Mujahideen* Youth Movement (Counter Extremism Project, 2019). In one of the most daring attacks in Kenya, Al-Shabab fighters attacked the Westgate mall in Nairobi in 2013 claiming 68 lives while 174 people sustained various degrees of injuries (Blanchard, 2013). The 2013 attack saw gunmen taking shoppers hostage, shooting sporadically until the situation was brought under control by the Kenya armed forces when they intervened. An attack was also launched on a school bus in 2014 claiming 28 lives in the Mandera region of Kenya (BBC, 2014).

The insurgents attacked a school bus while shooting pupils sporadically without any provocation. While the Mandera attack showed the extent that the insurgents could go to victimize children who were going to school, it further revealedthat these insurgents exploited these category of citizens in order to render the government incapable of solving the emerging security threats.

In another daring attack, gunmen attacked a dormitory at Garissa University. The attack on the University dormitory claimed no less than 147 lives including female students who were sleeping in their dormitory (BBC, 2015). The attack on Garissa University caused panic, global condemnation especially as it appeared to further expose the Kenyan government's lack of readiness to tackle the security challenges confronting the country. In an attack that was aimed at Christian students on campus, Al-Shabab once again gained prominence as an Islamic sect threatening global peace. It should however be noted that attack by the Al-Shabab elements have not been limited to Kenya alone; Somalia, Djibouti and Ethiopia have also suffered similar attacks from the group. For instance, Al-Shabab was responsible for a bomb explosion in Djibouti in 2016 as well as a truck bomb that killed over 300 people in Mogadishu, Somalia in 2017 (Burke, 2019).

At this juncture, it may be instructive to note that Boko Haram and Al-Shabab which represent the network of terrorist organisations across the globe may continue to carry out their attacks and activities, thereby threatening the security and stability of African states. The onus therefore lies on affected states to rise up to the challenge of putting in place strategies to protect women and children and indeed all citizens from attacks which maim and destroy their livelihood. The primary responsibility of government to protect lives and properties around the country should not be abdicated in whatever form.

Effect of Insurgency on Women and Children in Africa
The activities of insurgent group in Africa no doubt, havedevastating effects especially on women and children, withthis category of peoplebeing the most affected by insurgentattacks. Over the past few years,under-agedchildren have been recruited as child soldiers in crisis-hit countries of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Mali and Somalia with women always at targets and

victims. Young boys are forcefully recruited as child soldiers through intimidation and abductionand sometimes lured with promises of education, employment and foreign travel opportunities made to the parents of therecruits, who end up working for Al-Shabab. For example, Al-Shabab, the insurgent group with influence across Somalia and Kenya have recruitedfoot soldiers not only from its traditional hotspots of the coast and north eastern regions of Kenya; but also with influence on western and central regions of the Kenya (Menya, 2018).

Similar situations play out in Somalia with reports of hundreds of children recruited by Al-Shabab with 437 recruited from Bakool Bay and Lower Shabelle in 2014 and 555 in 2015 (Danish Immigration Service, 2017). A similar scenario is obtainable in Nigeria as the insurgent group operating in the countryhave also recruited thousands who are used either as foot soldiers or suicide bombers. In 2016 alone, 2,122children were recruited Boko Haram while the figures dropped to 1, 092 in 2017 (United Nations, 2017).

More than often, young girls are used as suicide bombers or as sex slaves; while others are used togather information. The 2017 Danish Immigration Service report revealedmore girls have been used as suicide bombers when compared to men. The reasons for such developmentcan be detached from the fact that the level of suspicion is far less than boys in strongholds of Al-Shababin Somalia.Similarly in Nigeria, girls have been used as suicide bombers in crisis-ridden states of Gombe, Kano, Adamawa and Bornoand the Federal Capital territory, Abuja (Olugbenga & Ayooluwa, 2017).

A major effect of insurgent attacks has been the displacement of people from their homes and means of livelihood. To avoid recruitment by force, most children become displaced as they flee into neighbouring communities, sometimes finding respite inInternally Displaced Persons camp and settlements. This has been the situation inSomalia where hundreds of children have fled their homes inGalgudud, Hiran and Middle Shabelle districts (Human Rights Watch, 2018) in order to avoid the insurgents. Apart from this, insecurity and fear of safety has led to the displacement of many people, with over 56 percent displaced in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states of Nigeria (UNHCR, 2017). The poor state of the concentration camps have also complicated the situation

of the internally displaced persons who live in these camps spread across the country. The poor health services as well as sanitary conditions have further exposed women and children who are vulnerable and at a risk of health challenges, exploitation and abuse. Other contradictions including food shortage, lack of portable water, inadequate health facilities, poor sanitary facilities among others have led to the outbreak of cholera and other water borne diseases in IDP camps and concentration camps in Nigeria (UNHCR, 2017).

Another effect of insurgent attacks is the increase in internally displaced persons and refugees in the affected states. Omilusi (2016) asserts that the number of refugees migrating to neighbouring countries such as Chad, Cameroon and Niger from Nigeria has increased greatly due to Boko Haram insurgency. More worrisome is the dominant population in these refugee camps being women and girls, with the resultant effects of this category being prone to sexual abuse and exploitation which further increases the rate of sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy-related complications, unwanted pregnancies or even early marriages.

Another effect of insurgency is the disruption of education of children due to lack of security brought about by insurgent attacks on educational facilities including school buildings and dormitories with the resultant effects onstudents and teacherswho are killed or suffer some form of injury. Isokpan and Durojaiye (2016) corroborates the above position that in the North-East Nigeria, several hundreds of schoolchildren and their teachershave either been injured or killed as a result of insurgent attacks and suicide bombings which have become a regular occurrence. In 2014, 276 girls in a secondary school in Chibok, Borno were abducted by Boko Haram and with an additional 110 girls abducted in Dapchi, Yobe state in 2018 (Amaza, 2018; Marama, 2018). After some negotiations and horse trading, 82 of the girls were released leaving 112 of the school girls still in the captivity of the abductors (Mbah, 2019).

As for the abducted Dapchi girls, 104 of them were released leaving behind a sole captive, Leah Sharibu (Haruna, 2018), a development which hasaffected school enrolment in North East Nigeria (Baje, 2018) with far reaching implications on the educational system of the affected areas with millions of children becoming displaced internally and others fleeing into

neighbouring countries. During insurgency, the rate of infant mortality is often high due to inadequate access to food, good portable water, injuries sustained during violent attacks, maternal stress, poor shelter and living conditions as well as lack of access to health services (Howel, Waidmann, Holla, Birdsall & Jiang, 2018).Not only that, most women lose their husbands and many children become orphans after insurgent attacks.

In Kenya and Nigeria, Al-Shabab and Boko Haram have attacked and killed policemen, soldiers, dormitory workers, bus passengers, and people in shopping malls, markets, motor parks, hotels and places of worship. These killings, no doubt, have made many women to become widows and forced them to take up the responsibility of caring for the home and family.

Psychological trauma is another effect of insurgent attacks on women and children in Africa. Many children have lost their parents or watched their loved onesinjured or killed, leading to nightmares and emotional insecurity. Not only that, the intimidating acts perpetuated by the insurgents not only responsible for a general state of insecurity, but also a cause for concern. For instance, the Al-Shabab militant group invaded a mosque at Komor Haile, Kenya and forced the worshippers to listen tothem for hours in a rare show of courage and capacity (Otsialo, 2018). With the victimsof such experiencingpsychological trauma and distressthetraumatic experiences brought about by the insurgent activities leave the people in a terrible state of mind with no one to care or rehabilitate them back to the society.

Conclusion

The emergence and sophistication of insurgent groups across the continent has left Africa in a more precarious situation especially in the aspect of security. The Africa continent continues to witness security breaches in form of armed banditry, armed herdsmen and terrorists who are slowing down the rate of growth and development owing to incessant attacks or communities, public places, schools and military formations. This twist continues to ravage African states, leaving the government sometimes helpless. The attacks by the Boko Haram and Al–Shabab groups have left in its toll devastation, agony, destruction, instability and uncertainties.The activities of insurgent groups carrying out these dastardly acts calls for a discourse, especially on

the new realities which have become evident, with far reaching implications on women and children. Africa is at precipice, in need of intervention in order to counter these insurgent groups before more harm and damage is inflicted. It is important to mention that the focus of this paper is not to suggest that women and children in Africa suffer more than men during insurgent attacks, but to clearly reveal the implications of these attacks on them in order to guide in adopting better strategies fortheir protection and also for the prevention of different forms of abuse against them.

Recommendations

The following strategies are hereby recommended;

1. There is a need for a pragmatic counter-terrorism approach to deal with this problem. Such approaches will include employing modern methods of warfare in terms of use of the latest military hardware, intelligence gathering and information sharing as well as countering the radicalization process used by insurgent groups to enlist the support of the people which makes recruitment of new members seamless.

2. There is the need for Nigeria and Kenya to share military intelligence. Except in a few instances, Nigeria has suffered more attack than Kenya. It is true that Al- Shabab group are majorly domiciled in Somalia, but Kenya continues to suffer attacks from time to time. Through robust information sharing mechanism, so much can be learnt by both states in their approach towards counter-terrorism.

3. Insurgencies are a fall–out of long years of frustration, anger, neglect, injustice, among other issues. One crucial strategy to tackle insurgency is to cut off the medium of recruitment. This can be done when a government improves significantly the quality of lives through the provision of welfare programmes and gainful employment. Insurgency thrives on support of the populace, once they do not enjoy the required support, they will either be forced to relocate or drop their radicalization programme.

4. Agencies that help surviving victims of insurgent attacks to return to normal life should be set up. The agencies should be saddled with the responsibility of offering them therapy, educational and vocational skills, that will aid their settlement to normalcy.

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