

IGWEBUIKE PHILOSOPHY AND THE BOKO HARAM MENACE

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Abstract

Boko Haram (a terrorist group) is absolutely a menace that requires an urgent response because they are out to destroy the present structure of the Nigerian State. From all available evidence, their sole intention is to fanatically Islamize the entire country and project an Islamic ideology of a radical nature. Their ambition is closely tied to that of the ISIS in Syria and Iraq. Fundamentally, Nigeria is a Secular State without any official State Religion. So in order to contain this group, and allow the Nigerian government save her corporate existence and maintain her secular nature, this paper encourages and in fact, adopts an indigenous African Philosophy called Igwebuike. Igwebuike; a substratum of African traditional values, philosophy and religion is an underlying and integral principle of African Philosophical experience which enhances the unity of all Africans. Igwebuike is an accepted tactics of soft power (i.e. the ability to attract and co-opt, rather than military coercion) to crush this dangerous sect to submission and quickly address all the contentious issues that facilitate agitations from different sections of the country such as illiteracy, unemployment, armed banditry, Kidnappings, environmental pollution and general poverty. To achieve the goal of this study, historical and phenomenological methods of enquiry were employed in the collection and analysis of data, while the indigenous wholistic theory was adopted for the interpretation and understanding of the problem at hand. This work submits that Boko Haram sect is ethically blameworthy for declaring war against the Nigerian State as it has no right whatsoever to do so, especially, when in prosecuting the war, the sect has violated all the universally laid down regulations for a just war and those of Human Rights.

Keywords: Igwebuike, Philosophy, Boko Haram, Just War, Human Rights, Traditional Values

Introduction

Anthony Kanu Ikechukwu, a superlative academic and a Nigerian Augustinian Professor of African Philosophy developed the concept of 'Igwebuike' to describe the unity of the African philosophical experience, which profoundly relates to a perspective driven ideology which epitomizes the manner of being in African ontology. This according to him includes African cherished traditional values such as complementarity, harmony, communality, etc. Thus, Igwebuike being the inner or underlying principle of African philosophy has successfully been used as a wholistic response to the problem of evil and sometimes it has been applied to define the logic of African Philosophy, inclusive leadership and even the issue of national development. For the

purpose of this discourse, Igwebuike Philosophy is adopted as a response to the Boko Haram menace.

A cursory look at many scholarly works written to address the phenomenon of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigerian indicates that the country's security system is failing (Bazza: 2013, Ozoigbo: 2015, Okereke: 2016). This crisis manifests in different forms ranging from Boko Haram insurgency, kidnapping, herders-farmers conflict, armed banditry, violent cult activities, etc. (Ohaja: 2016) The extent and magnitude of these security challenges vary from region to region, and together constitute a disturbing trend in Nigeria's development process (Nwolise: 2017). This study focuses on the need to adopt the Igwebuike Philosophy as a response to the Boko Haram menace by first and foremost examining the history of Boko Haram insurgency, its emergence and metamorphosis to a terrorist group, its ideology, objectives and ethics. It will also interrogate their strategy, recruiting and funding. The study will also articulate the nexus between terror ties and policy prescriptions. Although this paper is conceived around the theme of security studies in which a number of literature exist, this research is unique for its focus on studying insecurity along the methodology proposed by Igwebuike Philosophy to articulate a unique response to the Boko Haram menace. Its significance lies in using this case to simulate other cases of insecurity in Nigeria and bring the sect to accept the universally laid down regulations for a just war and those of Human Rights and fill the gap that exist in related literature.

The Historical trajectory of Terrorism and Boko Haram

a) Terrorism

Historically speaking, when we considering the notion of 'state of nature' in the Hobbesian account of the origin of society, where 'man was wolf to man'; one can say that terrorism is as old as mankind itself. Many of the wars fought in the ancient period could pass as terrorist acts as there were no regulations then regarding wars. The first recorded act of terrorism was in the Middle East, in the first century Palestine by the Zealot sect. History has it that during that time, the Jews revolted against the census carried out throughout the empire by the Roman authorities. The Romans clamped down on them into submission. This led the Zealots to launch an organized resistance against the foreign authorities through violent means, (Chalianda & Blin: 2007). Some scholars like Hegel saw the Enlightenment that followed the French Revolution of 1789 as the spring board of terrorism (Hegel, trans, 1967). The French leader then, Maximilien Robespierre saw terror as a virtue that must be pursued with vigour. For him, it is nothing but justice that emanates from virtue which is a general principle of democracy that must be applied because of the urgent need of France (A Brief History of Terrorism: 2003). (Kamal: 2008), traced the origin of terrorism to the concept of 'recognition' in Hegel's

‘Phenomenology of the Spirit’. The seeming war between the self and the other is not really war unto destruction of the other but that of subjugation. The subjugation of the other is what makes the self to be well established as a being with right (Ozoigbo: 2015). So in this direction, the self may be called a terrorist to a lesser degree considering the features of terrorism as a concept. However, it should be noted that terrorism in the society did not logically follow the triadic movement of Hegel’s system where the result of the conflict will be a higher and consequently result in bringing about better society as synthesis of the initial conflicting duo, where annihilation is aimed at, and synthesis is not realizable (Ozoigbo: 2015).

b) Boko Haram

This is an Islamist religious sect has since 2009, stepped up its violent activities against the government and people of the North East of Nigeria and her neighbours. They believe that the government of Nigeria is entrenched in massive corruption, abusive security and widening regional economic disparity between the disgruntled south and the impoverished north of the country: (Bazza: 2013). They argue that, the government of Nigeria should do more to address the issues facing the disaffected and impoverished Muslim north. Commentators on Boko Haram generally agree that in 1995, the group was said to be operating under the name Shabaab, Muslim Youth Organization with Mallam Lawal as their leader. While Lawal left to continue his education, Mohammad Yusuf took over leadership of the group. Yusuf’s leadership allegedly opened the group to political influence and popularity (Bazza: 2013).

The group has adopted its official name to be “*People committed to the Prophet’s Teaching and Jihad*” which is the English translation from Arabic “*Jama’at ahl as-sunnah li-d-da’awatiwa-a-Jihad*”: (Bazza: 2013). Literally, the name of the sect ‘Boko Haram’ means: “western education is forbidden”. This is due to the strong opposition to anything Western, as it is believed by the sect to have corrupting influence on Muslims: (Oladimeji, Olusegun & Oluwafisayo: 2009).

Boko Haram’s Emergence and Metamorphosis to a Terrorist Group

As earlier stated, Boko Haram is among the most vicious terrorists groups operating in the sub-Saharan Africa, home to some of the worst Islamist extremists in the world such as the Al-Shabaab in Somalia and east African region as a whole (Ozoigbo: 2015). Boko Haram emergence in 2002 resulted from a clash between the moderate Islamic teachings of the prominent Sheikh Jafaar Adam at the Mahammadu Ndimi Mosque in Maiduguri, Bornu State in the Northeastern part of Nigeria, and the more militant interpretation of the Qu’ran by his disciple Mohammed Yusuf. According to Mamodu, Yusuf believed in the creation of a new order in which the wretched should inherit

the earth, and for his extreme views, was expelled in 2002 from Ndimi Mosque Committee (Ozoigbo: 2015).

This expulsion gave Yusuf the opportunity to build his own mosque there in Maiduguri and started recruiting young boys of both primary and secondary school age to form the bedrock of his militant vision of Islam (Bazza: 2013). These new recruits were taught to discard their earlier notion of western education because it is a sin and thus came about the name 'Boko Haram'. Ozoigbo opined that, this may be the immediate cause for the emergence of this group but remotely it went back to the new structuring of the society in that region where the rich are living in affluence and the poor in misery (Ozoigbo: 2015). The likes of Yusuf attributed this kind of dichotomy of life to influence from western education and culture. Therefore, poverty on the part of the majority of the populace and corruption among the few privileged rich also were at the root of the emergence of this terror group (Ozoigbo: 2015). Although poverty and corruption were also rampant in other parts of the country, however, but this point cannot be ruled out totally.

Boko Haram launched military operation against the Nigerian government in 2009 and its leader Yusuf whose aim was to establish an Islamic state of Nigeria was killed that year. The leadership of the group is now in the hands of Abubakar Shekau, who surfaces intermittently in videotaped messages. In a video released in 2012 after an attack in Kano that killed 200 people, Shekau said, "I enjoy killing anyone that Allah commands me to kill, the way I enjoy killing chickens and rams" (Ozoigbo: 2015).

Boko Haram's Ideology, Objectives and Ethics

Boko Haram was founded as an indigenous group, turning itself into Jihadist group in 2009. It proposes that interaction with the Western World is forbidden, and also supports opposition to the Muslim establishments and the government of Nigeria. The members of the group do not interact with the local Muslim population and have carried out assassinations in the past of anyone who criticizes it including renowned Muslim clerics (Bazza: 2013). In a 2009 BBC interview, Mohammed Yusuf, leader of the group stated his belief that the concept of a spherical earth is contrary to Islam teaching and should be rejected along with Darwinian Theory of evolution and the concept of rain originating from water evaporated by the sun. (Bazza: 2013).

Before his death, Yusuf reiterated the group's objectives of changing the current educational system and rejecting democracy. Yusuf criticized northern Muslims for participating in what he saw as an illegitimate, non-Islamic state and preached a doctrine of withdrawal. In lieu of this, the sect even forbids the wearing of shirts and trousers and so on. But from the way they have carried out their activities so far, it seems obvious that Christianity

is clearly one of the things or religions the Boko Haram insurgents are vehemently opposed to. Meanwhile, it was this sort of outburst from Yusuf that made mainstream Islamic preachers such as the late Shiekh Jaafar, Ustaz Abubakar Kyari and a host of others to start sounding alarm (Bazza: 2013).

According to Qaqar, another one of Boko Haram's objective is total Islamization of Nigeria and the application of sharia law throughout the country, and this has to be achieved through clandestine activities like kidnappings, bombings and suicide attacks at both government and religious institutions that parade a huge number of people at a time. Since its military operation in 2009, about 17,000 people have been killed especially in the north-eastern Nigeria. And once, seized a large area in the northeast where it declared a caliphate (Qaqar: 2012).

Apart from the above reason for emergence of this terror group, two schools of thought that adduced other factors that breed violence in the society have been referenced, namely, 'frustration- aggression and relative deprivation school led by psychologist Dollard and his group (1939), and 'state - failure' school championed by Rotberg (2003). The 'frustration-aggression' and relative deprivation theory believes that frustration both at the individual and group levels naturally transforms into aggression against the perceived source of the frustration which was facilitated by deprivation. (Akanni: 2014) in analyzing this theory said that social movements are in place when frustration leads to group aggressive behavior directed at the source of the frustration both directly and indirectly. The immediate cause of such aggression rooted in frustration is when people do not have enough to live on and yet see and live with some that have more than enough. Frustration as a result of factors like poverty, unemployment, insecurity, elite corruption naturally turns the masses against the source of their frustration (Adibe: 2012). The anti-clericalism that occurred in France during the revolution was a case in hand, where the masses turned against the rich that impoverished them and also the members of the clergy that associated with the rich. One who is really frustrated and is aggressive can go to any length in venting out his or her anger.

The second school is that of the 'failed state' approach. Fundamentally, the essence of the state is for the welfare of the citizens which include the provision of security, education, healthcare, basic infrastructures, employment opportunities and a legal framework for law and order (Rotberg: 2002). The state as the custodian of the citizens' 'General Will' sees to it that the goods of the state are fairly distributed. These could include opportunities, infrastructures and appointments. No section of the state may see itself as being marginalized whatsoever. When a given state is unable to fulfill these statutory responsibilities to a marginal level, it loses legitimacy to be seen as a state with the expected patriotism. The loss of legitimacy by state provides the citizens the leverage to antagonize it and makes them vulnerable to any

ideology that seems to proffer solution to their problems. One basic feature of a failed state is non-availability of central government where every group is a government of its own. A typical failed state in Africa today is Somalia and I am afraid that Nigeria is on that road too!

Ethically speaking, It is the legitimate right of any individual or group to express without hindrance their grievances and disapprovals in a lawful way. Lawful protests are very legitimate but what is not lawful is violent expression of grievances. Before the emergence of Boko Haram in 2002, there have been in existence some organized groups protesting one thing or the other against the Nigerian government. These included the Odua People's Congress (OPC) in the South West, Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) in the South-South and the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) in the South-East. The Odua People's Congress was agitating for a greater control of the economy of the Yorubaland; the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, for the environmental degradation of their ecosystem as a result of oil exploration and neglect of their region by the Federal government in terms of infrastructural development; and the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra, for self-determination as a result of utter marginalization by the successive governments in Nigeria from 1967 till date.

Some of the reasons offered for their emergence and operation such as the 'frustration-aggression' motif; 'failed state' theory; elite corruption and insensitivity to the plight of the masses approach, are all correct but these are not found only in the northeast of Nigeria. In terms of infrastructural development, the most underdeveloped section of the country is South South and not the North East- the birth place and major area of operation of Boko Haram. The Boko Haram sect turned this order upside down by making secondary rights absolute and this ethically speaking is unacceptable.

Boko Haram's Strategy, Recruiting and Funding

In my earlier work (Bazza: 2013), I reported that Boko Haram had taken a strategy to simulate convoys of high-profile Nigerians to access target buildings that are secured with fortifications. Boko Haram has also reportedly attacked Christian worship centres to "trigger reprisals in all parts of the country", distracting authorities so they can unleash attacks elsewhere.

It was gathered that the group uses the internet to propagate its activities and enhance its radicalization and circulation of extremist ideologies. Boko Haram is reportedly planning to greatly increase its membership and following in many states of the Federation. In fact, *Talk-Naija* reported that Boko Haram has been involved in a recruitment drive, and they are allegedly targeting

Muslims between 17 and 30, and have also been recruiting freed prisoners through prison breaks. The group is also known to assign non-Kanuri on suicide missions (Bazza: 2013).

Officials of the sect arrested in 2012 revealed that “while the organization initially relied on donations from members, its links with Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, AQIM, opened it to more funding from groups in Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom”. They went on to say that other sources of funding included the Al Muntada Trust Fund and the Islamic World Society. In the past, Nigerian officials have been criticized for being unable to trace much of the funding that Boko Haram has received. A spokesman of Boko Haram Abu Qaqa claimed that a former governor of one of the northwest states and another serving governor in one of the northeast states had paid them monthly (Bazza: 2013).

The Nexus between Terror Ties and Policy Prescriptions

Experts say the prison breaks, use of propaganda and the bombing of police headquarters in 2011 indicated an increasing level of sophistication and organization, which could point to outside help. In 2011 for example, U.S. officials claimed the group has ties to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), which operates in northwest Africa, and Somalia’s al-Shabaab, another militant Islamist group.

Security officials in Nigeria and indeed, internationally, are concerned that the group has splintered into one that is focused on local grievances and another that is seeking contact with outside terror groups (WSJ). In fact, according to General Carter Ham, Head of U.S. military operations in Africa, “what is most worrisome is the stated intent by Boko Haram and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb to coordinate and synchronize their efforts”, noting that such a relationship would be the most dangerous thing to happen to Africa and to the U.S. interests in the region (Bazza: 2013).

As a policy prescription, the Nigerian government started to look for solutions similar to its quelling of unrest in the Niger Delta, including negotiations and amnesty. MEND leaders were “bought off” by the government and accepted a cease fire in 2010. Some analysts argue that some kind of federal intervention may be needed, especially in education and healthcare, and greater pressure may need to be exerted on northern elites to develop the region.

Britain and Israel have already offered anti-terror assistance, and the U.S. military recently discussed sharing intelligence and potentially training Nigerian security forces (Leadership). Human rights and diplomatic officials note that Nigeria’s heavy-handed military approach (NYT) is compounding their security problem. Mr. Smith urged the Nigerian Senate and House of

Representatives to replicate what the United States Government did after the 9/11 attack which claimed thousands of lives (Bazza: 2013).

Nigeria's Response to the Boko Haram Menace

The Nigerian government treatment of this terror group at inception was complacent. The government never thought the group a threat to her corporate existence as a nation and therefore did not take them seriously. Secondly, since the group was operating in the northeast alone it was taken as minor religious disturbance that the Muslim north is known for. Between 2002 and 2009, the sect engaged the Nigerian police force and the villagers in the northeast especially Borno and Yobe states in a low profile attacks.

The Nigerian government only came out boldly to recognize the seriousness of this sect's activities after the violent attacks on the innocent citizens in 2009. The government response was setting up of a judicial enquiry to look into the crisis and advise the government. As with so many similar judicial enquiries in the past, the reports never came to limelight and not to talk of implementing them. This non serious and committed response from the Nigerian government became a booster for the sect to intensify their atrocities against the citizens especially those in the northeast of the country.

It was stated that so many security reports about the sect were submitted to the appropriate authorities and nothing was done in terms of truly eradicating the sect. Even the Borno state command of the Nigeria Immigration Service, after the death of Mohammed Yusuf in 2009, identified, arrested and deported the leader and co-coordinator of the group Abubakar Shekau to Niger Republic (where he grew up and got radicalized) but through one of the porous borders of the country came back to Nigeria and continued his terrorist activities (Tell: August, 10, 2009). Again, report had it that government was complacent for the reason that some of the sponsors of this terror group were highly connected in the government. These financial sponsors that were involved for their selfish motives included known northern religious leaders and politicians (Sani: 2011). It was even speculated that the killing of Yusuf was to prevent him from naming his sponsors who may be top government officials.

The Nigerian government only confronted this sect with military might after the group's abduction of the Chibok girls that attracted international outbursts. Between 2009 that the terror group officially launched its first violent attack and in 2014 that the government responded militarily, the sect had gained so much ground in terms of seized territories, highly sophisticated weapons far superior to those of the Nigerian military, more funding from some selfish and ambitious northern politicians and groups in Saudi Arabia and United Kingdom, tactical assistance from other terror groups like al-Qaeda and ISIS.

During the dying days of the presidency of Goodluck Jonathan, the Nigerian government in coalition with the governments of Chad, Niger and Cameroun made tremendous progress in defeating the insurgents by regaining lost territories, releasing so many captured victims including, women and girls by the sect, killing so many of them and many surrendering to the coalition force. To effect total crushing of the insurgency, President Muhammadu Buhari, on assumption of office, reorganized the military hierarchy with the mandate to defeat the terrorists in three months period (September to November 2015), however, it's now 2019 and Boko Haram seems to be waxing stronger by the day.

Presenting 'Igwebuike Philosophy' as a Response to the Boko Haram Menace

In the course of our investigation to address the subject matter of this research paper, namely, articulating a response to the Boko Haram menace in the light of Igwebuike philosophy, we have come to appreciate immensely the apt and scholarly interpretation of Igwebuike from the Kanu school of thought as a remedy to almost every human problem. According to this school, Igwebuike is from an Igbo composite word and metaphor: Igwebuike, a combination of three words. Therefore, it can be employed as a word or used as a sentence: as a word, it is written as Igwebuike, and as a sentence, it is written as, Igwe bu ike, with the component words enjoying some independence in terms of space. The three words involved: Igwe is a noun which means number or population, usually a huge number or population. Bu is a verb, which means is. Ike is another verb, which means strength or power. Thus, put together, it means 'number is strength' or 'number is power', that is, when human beings come together in solidarity and complementarity, they are powerful or can constitute an insurmountable force or strength, and at this level, no task is beyond their collective capability (Kanu 2016 a & b). Igwebuike is, therefore, a philosophy of harmonization, and complementation. It understands the world immanent realities to be related to one another in the most natural, mutual, harmonious and compatible ways possible (Kanu 2015 a & b).

Conclusion

In the context of this study, Igwebuike as a complementary thought posits that no individual approach to the problem of Boko Haram adequately satisfies the devastating impact and havoc it has caused the Nigerian nation and her people. It calls for a complementary approach or an eclectic method of responding to the problem at hand. And to respond to the problem and menace of Boko Haram, there is the need for a wholistic approach, no one single approach is comprehensive enough. That Boko Haram is threatening the corporate existence of Nigeria is a fact that cannot be overemphasized. In view of this existential threat Nigeria and the international communities should do everything within their power to save Nigeria from this existential

embarrassment! And this should be done very quickly too. Boko Haram is not only a Nigerian issue but due to its international connection and support it has now assumed a global issue that has to be tackled globally. Therefore, it is at this juncture that Igwebuiké as a philosophy of harmonization, and complementation comes in handy because when human beings come together in solidarity and complementarity, they are powerful and can constitute an insurmountable force or strength, and at this level, no task (even the menace of Boko Haram) is beyond their collective capability.

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