

Globalization, Identity Crisis and Insurgency in Northern Nigeria: Trends, Complexities and Implications for Security Governance in Sahel, West Africa

Abubakar Abdullahi

Leadership, Empowerment Advocacy and Development (LEAD) Project, Nigeria

Abstract

This paper examines the link between globalization, identity crisis and insurgency in northern Nigeria vis-à-vis the Sahel. The central thesis of the paper is that globalization has ostensibly increased the layers of identity contestations in Nigeria and proliferated platforms upon which identity conflicts are waged. The paper argued that the trajectory of insurgency in Nigeria and Sahel is complicated by the character of state-society relations and the dilemma of demarcating borders of citizenship from boarder of identity. It contends that West Africa has robust security governance mechanism that is weakened by lack of synergy of capacity and strategy. The paper concludes that Nigeria and Sahel states should strengthen partnerships for regional security governance while striking a proper balance between domestic and transnational forces of globalization.

Keywords: Boko Haram, Globalization, Insurgency, Identity, Security, Governance

1. Introduction

Across the Sahel, fundamental challenge of managing conflicts provoked by globalization persists alongside the problems of sustainable development. As the effects of globalization are felt, extremist groups in the Sahel are feeding on unresolved local grievances tainted with banditry, human and drugs trafficking. Nigeria regarded as outlier in the Sahel, is caught in the dilemma of finding a proper balance between domestic and transnational forces of globalization. For couple of years now, salafists insurgency dubbed “Boko Haram” has gripped the northern Nigeria with a terrifying rage of deadly bombings, assassinations and mass abductions. What broke out as a vengeful reaction to perceived persecution and extra-judicial killings of sect’s leader and members has swiftly metamorphosed into well-coordinated guerilla warfare against Nigeria and adjoining Sahel States (Abdullahi, 2013). Boko Haram has evolved from an obscured local rebellion to highly sophisticated insurgency. Trajectory of insurgency is reversing hard-won development gains, heralding wider regional security implications and threatening vital global economic investments in the Sahel. Insurgency is further complicated by massive corruption in security sector, human right abuses and alleged complicity of security elites in maintaining security diktat for self-serving ends.

The objective of this paper is twofold: First is to contribute to academic discourse on globalization and insurgency with the view to examine new layers of identity markers and new forms of identity crisis provoked by the wave of globalization in Nigeria. Second, is to deepen perspective on trajectory of Boko Haram with the view to shed light on the extent of its fraternity with extremist groups in Sahel and implications for security governance in the region. Thus, the basic questions this paper seeks to advance are: What are the impacts of globalization on identity crisis in Nigeria? To what extent is contemporary identity crisis rooted in local grievances and to what extent is it driven by forces of globalization? What is the dynamics of insurgency in northern Nigeria and how it been interpreted? To what extent is Boko Haram a self-regulating insurgency and to what extent is it a domestic face of global Jihad? How threatening is operational fraternity of Boko Haram with extremist groups in Sahel and what are the implications for regional security governance? This paper is further subdivided into four sections and proceeds as follows: section two provides theoretical underpinning for the paper; section three examines the link between globalization, identity crisis and insurgency; section four analyzes identity crisis in northern Nigeria vis-à-vis the dynamic of insurgency. The fifth section took an overview of global security governance in the Sahel West while the sixth section concludes the paper.

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Frame of Analysis

The analytical approach of this paper incorporates two theoretical perspectives: critical securitization theory and constructivist theory. Critical securitization theory embedded in the Copenhagen School takes a multi-dimensional approach, whereby security threats are observed in five distinct yet interconnected sectors, from military to environment, economic, social and political. By challenging the prior, state focus in the traditional security theories, critical securitization theory advances alternative approaches to securitization and desecuritization focusing on interlinking security dynamics of regions (Buzan et al 1998:32). Constructivist theory “focuses on the role of shared ideational structure in constraining or shaping behavior” (James & David, 2000). The basic idea here is that all identities whether civil and primordial are fluid and subject to continuous construction and reconstruction. Also disparate construction of worldviews, ideas, identities and historical experiences are influential in shaping the

structure of politics, society and conflict. Constructivist like Wendt (1999) stressed the dialectical relation between domestic and global forces of identity construction, arguing that identity crisis that occurred at the global level has important implications for domestic stability. Constructivism stands to enrich perspectives on dynamics of identity crisis in northern Nigeria, and how identity manipulation by extreme forces in the global arena worked their way down to the local. Boko Haram's ideals of global jihad, its demand for political Islam (Sharia) in Nigeria; exposition of norms repugnant secularism and equation of anti-state rebellion with Islamic faith can be viewed through the constructivist lens.

3. Conceptualizing the links between Globalization, Identity crisis and Insurgency

Globalization is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon representing two faces of the same coin (Heine & Thakur, 2011). On the one side, there is the tendency towards homogeneity, synchronization, integration, unity and universalism. On the other side, there is the propensity for localization, heterogeneity, differentiation, diversity and particularism (Bornman, 2003). The forces associated with globalization among others includes: global production and marketization of goods; the world-scale convergence of legal and ethical principles and the advancement of democracy as a dominant form of political organization (Bornman, 2003). Globalization also entails the trans-border diffusion of knowledge and information through new technologies such as the worldwide web, mobile telephony and liberalized media. Discussions among scholars of globalization and insurgency have converged on a number of key issues: First, is that the forces of globalization have let loose the "infrastructure of uncivil society" (Heine & Thakur, 201:31) and accelerated the transnational flows of clandestine groups (terrorists, insurgents, militias, and criminal syndicates); heightening their organizational effectiveness and lethality. Second, globalization has substantially impacted on identity crisis around the globe by enhancing cultural differentiation and hybridization in "host" as well as diasporic communities (Corcoran, 2003:23). Third, Sovereignty of nation-states have come under siege by transnational as well as sub-national forces of globalization undermining weak states, creating crisis of governability and legitimacy (Hanlon, 2008). A disturbing conclusion from this convergence is that insurgents are uniquely positioned to exploit the benefits of globalization in ways weak states in the Sahel cannot. Instantaneous and virtual communications technologies, creates "marriages of convenience" insurgents to operate anonymously over vast distances, disseminating jihadist ideals and tactics; recruiting fighters, and soliciting arms, financial support while masking their authorship amidst the noise of legitimate global interaction (Hanlon, 2008).

The premise of insurgency, very broadly speaking, is that armed groups seeking to overthrow an existing government using a variety of violent and non-violent tactics that include drawing support and sympathy from acquiescent population. In weak states fractured along ethnic and sectarian cleavages, insurgents may strive to step into the vacuum created by the legitimacy deficits to offer radical alternatives. On the basis of motivation, capability and *modus operandi*, Mackinlay (2002) distinguished between *Lumpen*, *Clan*, *Popular* and *Global insurgency* arguing that insurgency could be driven by greed, grievances or both. Corroborating this view, Kilcullen (2005) contends that there is one set of insurgents who take the entire world, rather than one country, as the field for insurgency, and who seeks in the name of global jihad to overthrow the existing international order. There are also separate insurgencies rooted in local grievances and middle layer insurgents who glom into local insurgencies and globalize them. Carrol (2012) further argued that all insurgencies regardless of the regional, religious, or cultural commonalities have their roots in local political failings. According to Carrol (2012) Al Qaeda, as the benefactor of the 'global insurgency', has become a decentralized network that only expands when a local grievance allows dissents and political subversives to take up the Al-Qaeda's banner in support of their local, non-global jihadist cause.

The term "identity" first gained salience through the work of the psychologist Erikson (1968). There are two common, but opposite, perspective on the questions of what identity means and how it is constituted: the traditional and discursive. While the traditional approach views of identity are "fixed and trans-historical", discursive approach views identity as being "fluid and contingent" (Woodward, 1997: 67). In the discursive approach, Hall (1996) elaborates identity as constantly changing and transforming within the historical, social and cultural developments such as modernity, post-colonization and globalization. With globalization, the forces associated with identity formation have become a complex mixture of both local and global elements. Turkle (1995) suggests that engagement with the new technology "challenge what many people have traditionally called identity" (Turkle, 1997:73). In the Nigerian social formation as Jega (2000) rightly argued, the transformation of identity connotes a "continuous process, which suggests the changing role of identities and the heightening magnitude and consequences of identity conflict" (Jega, 2000:13) as opposed to creating an entirely new identity. A central point from the conflict-based perspective is that "different structures or configurations of identities generate different levels or patterns of conflict" (Diamond 1987; Horowitz 1985: 3-54). With regards to forms of identity conflict, Osaghae & Suberu (2005) distinguished between territory-based identities, supposedly more volatile and prone to violent mobilization, and non-territory based identities, which are benign and amenable to regulation. They argued that ethnic, religious and race based identities, which evoke nationalist territorial claims, tend to be more violent

and dangerous than generation-based identities which usually do not involve territorial claims. While these arguments are valid, recent literature has emphasized the positive role of religion in peace-building and in the mobilization of non-violent alternatives.

4. Northern Nigeria: Context, complexities and dynamics of Insurgency

Northern Nigeria constitutes a complex intersection of multifaceted identity construct and convergence of ethnic, religious and communal identity conflict. The geographical fringe of northern Nigerian bisecting southern Niger and western Chad is inhabited by religious and culturally homogeneous identities who by virtues of colonial balkanization found themselves in different political sovereignties. Northern Nigeria's clusters of identity remain critical in the geo-political calculation of both ruling class of northern and southern extract; while the former exploits the region's demographics on the basis of geographical congruity, the later capitalizes on minority Christian identities in north central states. Suffice to say that identity crisis in northern Nigeria has over the years been driven by perceived hegemonic domination of ethno-religious minorities, and entrenchment of discriminatory practices against identity groups considered as "non-indigenes" "migrants" and "settlers. Globalization has ostensibly increased the layers of identity contestations in northern Nigeria, proliferating platforms upon which identity struggles are waged. As the effects of globalization are felt, repressed identities and resentments, hitherto dormant during decades of military dictatorship surfaces with the wave of democratization and has been brought to the forefront of contestations in the struggle for rights, power, privileges and resources. Identity contestations in Nigeria are manifested in incessant politicization of differences, lack of compromise, totality of identity claims and the inevitable struggle over oil wealth.

Contemporary, identity conflicts are furthermore complicated by structural changes associated with the dramatic rise in telecommunication, satellite television, and emerging culture of virtuality. With the growth of mobile telephony (from paltry 500,000 landlines in 1999 to over 120 million mobile subscription), information travels at the speed of light; communities that have hitherto lived in cultural cocoons have suddenly found themselves connecting to the world with greater ease. Central to the understanding of globalization's effects on identity conflict in Nigeria is the surge of religious extremism. Extremists of all religions react to social, economic and political crisis of the Nigerian polity in religious term and demonstrate extensive intolerance both towards other religions and co-religionists (Sampson, 2012). The growth of ICT has also gone by side with the proliferation and growth of religious electronic media outfits; intensifying identity conflicts and contestations between religious and ethnic formations. What is of significance is the way identity groups make use of electronic media for outreaches that foster stereotypes inter-faiths ridiculing and disparaging prolysterization that radicalize and escalates conflicts.

Like most regions in the Sahel, Islamic identity predominates in northern Nigeria and as Paden (2005) noted "the all-consuming nature of Islamic identity in northern Nigeria does eclipse other identities" reflecting the historical salience of Islam in the formation of the northern emirates in the early 19th century, and the continuing significance of religious authorities in framing identities"(Lewis, 2007:16). Sufism, a mystical and esoteric form of Islam predominates yet a *Salafist* orientation, most closely connected with radical Islam is burgeoning. Salafist insurgency in northern Nigeria has roots that dates back revolutionary *Mahdism* of the 19th century; which mobilized "radical clerics" "disgruntled peasants" and "fugitive slaves" (Abimbola & Adesote, 2012:14) in an unsuccessfully bid to overthrow the British colonial regime in 1906 and to reinstate pre-colonial Islamic Caliphate that ruled parts of what is now northern Nigeria, Niger and Southern Cameroon. Although colonial forces crushed *Mahdism*, it resurfaces in the 1980s through series of anti-state rebellion referred to as *Maitatsine*. Sampson(2012) argued that the failure of state, after quelling *Maitatsine* in the 1980's to put up de-radicalization programmes for the remnants of its cadres, led to the gradual but sustained incubation of its trace elements into more a radicalized and lethal Boko Haram. Like most extremists groups in the Sahel, Boko haram operates first from a base of strength (northeastern Nigeria) and uses the region as launch pad for spreading campaign of violence across Nigeria, neighbouring Chad, Niger and Cameroun. Between 2013 to present and amidst intermittent dislodgement by Nigerian and multinational military force, Boko Haram seized and hoisted flags in dozen of communities in the bid to establish a *de facto* Islamic territory in the tri-country boarder areas of (Chad, Nigeria and Cameroon).

Since surfacing in 2009, Boko Haram has attracted streams of competing narratives (factual, fictional and anecdotal) woven around the following thesis: global surge in religious extremism, state-failure, political feud and conspiracy. Religious extremism perspective holds that Boko Haram is targeted at cleansing ethno-religious minorities in northern Nigeria. This perspective anecdotal given that Boko Haram campaign of violence targets state infrastructures, opposition religions and well as co-religionists (Muslims) who are thought to have fallen for the trappings of western civilization. The state-failure thesis argued that Nigeria is simply convulsing from its internal contradictions. This perspective sees brazen stealing of citizens' commonwealth by a predatory ruling class, in the north as the biggest culprits in the fertilization of the seed of insurgency. Suffice to say that predatory politics in northern Nigeria makes governance irrelevant to ordinary citizen's (*Talakawas*) need for social justice, voice. Conversely, northern political elites decry that the geometry of oil resource distribution which places

awesome wealth in south to the detriment of a more populous northern Nigeria as responsible for diminishing economic opportunities and insurgency. Northern elites arguing for the recalibration of resource distribution in favor of north have also asked for the replication of Amnesty for Boko Haram similar to those granted to oil insurgent in the Niger Delta. At the onset of insurgency, Haruna (2010) has argued that Boko Haram is an “an expression of rebellious alternative” similar to those of oil insurgents in Niger Delta and southwest militias which is consistent with democratic dissent. Event of the last couple of years have proved his perspective wrong; Boko Haram have graduated from supposedly “expression of rebellious alternative” into a lethal and single most visible threat to peace and stability in Nigeria.

The political feud perspective views insurgency as reflection of northern elite angst over loss of central power in 2011 through breach of rotational presidency. Insurgency is arguably orchestrated by disgruntle northern power elite bent on bringing down the government of former president Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, a Christian southerner. The fact that insurgency first surfaces under presidency of Jonathan’s immediate predecessor, a northerner and Muslim (late Musa Yar’Adua) and has persisted under current Buhari presidency actually erodes the relevance this perspective. Conspiracy perspective sees resentments by adjacent francophone states towards perceived Nigerian hegemonic influence in the West African sub-region as a factor in insurgency. This perspective is grounded on history of subversive activities of some neighboring francophone states in Nigerian civil war of 1967-1969, cold war and mutual suspicion resulting from boundary conflicts around Lake Chad region. Analysts holding this perspective have argued that initial lack of cooperation by Nigerian neighboring particularly Chad enabled insurgency either by tolerating their presence or allowing uncensored weapons and mercenaries to filter their way into Nigeria. Some analyst further pushed the argument that Chad might be eyeing control of Chad Basin which is believed to hydrocarbon reserves. The October 2013 phantom ceasefire deal allegedly brokered by President Idris derby and his serial false declarations that Boko Haram leader, Shekau has been killed is often cited as part of the conspiracy perspective. Again, this conspiratorial thesis is not substantiated as Chadian forces in recent time have staged some of fiercest counter-insurgency operation against Boko Haram.

5. Overview of Global and Regional Security Governance in the Sahel

The Sahel divide stretches from geographical fringe of northern Nigeria through Chad, Niger Mali to Mauritania. Fragility in the core Sahel region continues to affect adjacent states revealing the interconnectedness of domestic and transnational security threats. Suffice to say that transnational security threats in the Sahel is complicated by dilemma of demarcating borders of citizenship from boarder of identity. Current trajectory extremism in the Sahel lends credence to Zenn (2012) postulation of possible growth of insurgency arch connecting *Timbuktu*, with *Abuja* through *Niamey* and *N’Djamena*. In 2010, Republic Mali hitherto regarded as “a democratic island of stability” (Thiele, 2013:5) in a generally insecure region became the epicenter of Tuareg rebellion and a launch pad for Islamist insurgency incorporating salafist groups in the region. In Niger Republic, the insurgent Tuareg group, *Movement Nigerien pour la Justice (MNJ)* is locked in a deadly conflict with government over autonomy, uranium revenue and broken promises of resettlement. In Nigeria, Boko Haram perpetrates its campaign of violence targeting security formation and civilian population in Nigeria, Niger Chad and Cameroun. A question to be asked at this juncture is: what has been security governance strategy to counter nacor-terrorism in Sahel?. In the last one decade, series of global and regional security governance initiatives have sprung up in response to multifaceted threat of “ungoverned spaces” narco-trafficking and Salafism. These frameworks among others includes: United Nation Integrated Strategy in the Sahel, US Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI) which metamorphosed into Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) or USAFRICOM, EU-Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel, African Union and ECOWAS collective security framework for peace and stability.

In response to transnational security threats in the Lake Chad basin area, the governments of Niger, Nigeria, Chad and Cameroon established a Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to patrol their common borders. MNJTF has gained momentum with the initiation of Global Security Contingency Fund (GSCF), Presidential Security Governance Initiative (SGI), AU and UN Security Council authorizations. Both GSCF and SGI initiatives seeks to offers a more robust security governance assistance that focuses on systems, process and institution in Lake Chad Basin Countries (Cameroun, Chad Niger and Nigeria). While security governance in the Sahel is robust moderate successes have been recorded in relation to the region’s multifaceted security challenges. Some commentators have argued that effective global and regional security governance in Sahel is constrained by problematic institutional confusion, poor geographical framing and enduring cold war between Francophone and Anglophone states. Much problematic institutional confusion arises from the pursuit of contradictory policies and conflict of interest *between* ECOWAS, Francophone Union économique et monétaire ouest africaine (*UEMOA*) and *Communauté des États Sahélo-sahariens (CEN-SAD)*. While Nigeria and its francophone neighbors have forged bilateral and multilateral ties, mutual distrust continues to manifest amidst brewing transnational threats. Four critical issues on the workings of MNJTF in countering Boko Haram is the leadership of the MJTF, the extent to which member states are allowed to operate within Nigerian soil, funding matrix and how human right is to be protected. While members states proposed leadership alternate after every six months, Nigeria insist that it must

be sole leader of the joint military operation since the main theatre of insurgency is in Nigeria.

Regional security governance in the Sahel is further weakened by the character of state-society relation and competing demands between regimes and human security. While sifting through the layers of insecurity in the Sahel, Jourde (2007) argued that the flag of insecurity is often waved by incumbent regimes to deal with legitimacy deficits, check domestic discontent while concealing ugly realities of structural violence. The climate of insecurity in the Sahel serves as a political resource for incumbent regimes and enables them to flex their muscles with impunity using national security as justification. In Nigeria, security governance over the past decades exhibits a contradictory dynamics of suppression of dissent and protection of a regime against forces, individuals and groups that are considered hostile be they ethnic or religious. While return to democracy in 1999 brought about a notable shift in this authoritarian security governance paradigm ingrained in military dictatorships, security sector reforms (SSRs) purportedly aimed at “de-politicizing” “re-professionalizing” and “re-equipping” security formations, have remained largely cosmetic and inconclusive. Even in the face of a lethal insurgency, security governance in Nigeria is still tainted with role confusion, conflicting jurisdictions, gargantuan corruption and unprofessional complicities. Role confusion between security formations and tiers of governments has resulted in the loss of synergy, failure of shared intelligence, and disconnect between security governance and citizenry. Impunity and indiscriminate killing of innocent civilians in several security sweeps by joint task force in the north east has alienated the local population from counter insurgency strides. A recent Amnesty International (2015) report entitled “Stars on their shoulders, Blood on their hands” indicted Nigerian Military of war crimes from starving, suffocating and torturing of over 8,000 people.

6 Towards synergy of capacity, Security and Development: A Conclusion

This paper has conceptualized the link between globalization and transnational threats in northern Nigeria vis-à-vis the Sahel. It examined the trajectory of insurgency in northern Nigeria and Sahel which is complicated by the character of state-society relations and the dilemma of demarcating borders of citizenship from boarder of identity. Given the multifaceted nature of security challenges in the Sahel, there is a clear need for strengthening synergies of capacities in regional security governance, justice and development sectors. This is requires a fundamental change in State-society relation and the advancement of security governance and counter-insurgency strategies that are grounded on the trust and cooperation of citizenry. Nigeria and states in the Sahel must advance a decentralized intelligence collection system that incorporates regional civil society organizations such as the West African Network on Security and Democratic Governance (WASNED), the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) in the matrix of security governance.

Nigeria government must take development and human security deficits in northern Nigeria seriously as a means of growing the seed of peace and of defusing insurgency in the Lake Chad basin. One critical step towards advancing human security in Nigeria is the entrenchment of social justice and dethronement of political economy of thievery one which allows few thieving ruling class easy access to state-based accumulation. The anti-corruption stance of the current Buhari regime in Nigeria which seek greater transparency and accountability in security and resource governance some hope. Yet there is a critical need to restructure the political economy of northern Nigeria away from system conducive to dependency on oil rent to one of economic diversification and viability of state and local governments. It is imperative to revive agricultural fortunes of the region which hitherto employed a large chunk of the populace before the ruling class soaked its brains into petrol rents that perpetuates the opulence of few and misery of many. Finally, Nigeria and Sahel states should strike a proper balance between domestic and transnational forces of globalization.

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