



Insurgency and Counterinsurgency:
Understanding the Patronage Politics of the Nigerian State

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Abstract

This conceptual review establishes links between insurgency, counterinsurgency and patronage politics of the Nigerian state. Derived from the population-centric approach, it purports, the failure of the state to earn public trust and tend the undercurrents that birth insurgency accounts for failed counterinsurgency. Apparently, ascriptive and particularistic responses to insurgent groups based on established affinity demonstrates an economy of affection towards familiar networks, reverberating patronage politics. Ultimately, socio-political undercurrents tend to undermine the effective and cohesive execution of counterinsurgency operations in Nigeria wherein belly politics and the subsistence of the culture of 'strong men' add force to insurgency and undermine counterinsurgency. Conclusively, the Nigerian state has a major counterinsurgency challenge that may only be overcome by a systematic reconsideration of the meeting points of the socio-political undercurrents that condition insurgencies in Nigeria and public trust earned by the country's leadership which is consistent with the theoretical tenets of the population-centric approach to counterinsurgency. The study recommends among others that the central government of Nigeria needs to earn public trust by eschewing ascriptive and particularistic responses to insurgent groups based on established affinity, adopt a population-centric approach in its counterinsurgency operations, monitor the activities of key actors in the military institution to ensure that there is transparency in the counterinsurgency operations such that the counterinsurgency operations do not become lucrative as a conduit for looting state funds while the beneficiaries of this corrupt network concoct instrumentalised political disorder to keep their lucrative venture alive.

Keywords: Insurgency, Counterinsurgency, patronage politics, population-centric approach, Nigerian State

Introduction

Nigeria like the rest of the Sub-Saharan African countries are fondly referred to as least developed countries (LDCs) because they constitute 70% of the "bottom billion" and are enmeshed in "development traps" (Collier, 2007). To be sure, Collier advances four (4) development traps: the conflict trap, the natural resource trap, the trap of being landlocked with bad neighbours, and the bad

governance trap (Collier, 2007). Countries like Nigeria that depend on primary commodities are likely to experience wars and exacerbated political instabilities that interfere with their development strive and perpetuate them within the vicious circle of poverty and insecurity (Collier, 2007). Similarly, contestations associated with natural resource access and use induced by the deep-seated economy of affection and patronage by key state actors in

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the African sub-region hurts development (Collier, 2007). Intriguingly, the bad governance trap in the LDCs is a product of political disorder consistent with the wishes of the big men who weaken the state and its paraphernalia for neopatrimonial proclivity (Collier, 2007).

Pointedly, these development traps persist because key political actors in the Sub-Saharan African states are enmeshed in neopatrimonial proclivity (Chabal and Daloz, 1999). In this, the state is tuned to demonstrate the aspirations and wishes of big men in the country and undermines the commitment to development (Chabal and Daloz, 1999). Thus, the framing of the modern African societies carry vestiges of primordial chauvinism which key state actors anchor their style of administering the modern state (Chabal and Daloz, 1999). Consequently, the workings of the modern state subtly underpin an economy of affection (Hyden, 2006), in which the political leader of the state recompenses his political and ethnic faction with the resources in his jurisdiction to reinforce ethnic jingoism, loyalty and support (Therkildsen, 2005). Ultimately, informal networks and shadow states are birthed and purportedly show loyalty to the ruler who reciprocates with the benevolence of state resources (Chabal and Daloz, 1999).

Thus, the ubiquitous postulations by modernization advocates that decolonisation of states predominantly in Africa and Asia would birth secularisation and negate primordial proclivity is a sham (Eisenstadt, 1973; Clapham, 1985). To be sure, the seeming adaption of the 'Western template' by the modern state in Africa is only intended to make official, the patronage regime and its workings within the modern state apparatus (Chabal and Daloz, 1999). Interestingly, the state is seemingly excused from the appellation of being predominantly traditional (Nyaluke, 2013).

Intriguingly, Africa's political arrangement is perceived as hybrid for juxtaposing the norms of patrimonialism with modern state paraphernalia with the former inundating the latter and birthing neopatrimonial states and regimes (Bratton and Van de Walle, 1997), that survive on instrumentalised 'political disorder' (Chabal and Daloz, 1999). Thus, key state actors who administer the seeming modern state are inclined to patronage and tolerance for shadow states that enable resource grabbing (Therkildsen, 2005), making good governance a repugnant venture (Chabal and Daloz, 1999).

Derivingly, the state of importunate national insecurity in Nigeria originates from patronage politics and the economy of affection expressed towards insurgent groups with established affinity with the patronage regime thus, making counterinsurgency repulsive (Vanger and Nwosu, 2020). It is important to note that, the present 'multi-polar insurgency' experienced in Nigeria reverberate the country's insurgency experiences of the 1960s and 80s, except for its 'relative sophistication, complexity, and ramifications' (Ibiang, 2018). To be sure, the current Niger Delta insurgency has roots in the Isaac Adaka Boro agitation that led to the proclamation of the Niger Delta as a Republic on February 23, 1966. However, the Nigerian military surmounted the insurgency within 12 days, reverting the purported Niger Delta Republic to status quo (Ibiang, 2018).

Similarly, there was the Muhammadu Marwa led Maitatsine uprising in the 1980s aimed at compelling the Nigerian State to succumb to religious philosophy (Isichei, 1987). The Maitatsine belligerent uprising which began in Kano in December, 1980, was neutralised with the concerted efforts of the Nigerian military and other security forces within 11 days with the leader of Maitatsine losing his life in the process (Akubor, 2016). Unfortunately, the Maitatsine riots resurfaced in Bulumkutu and

Rigasa in 1982, Yola, in 1984, and Gombe in 1985 (Isichei, 1987). Interestingly, it was purported that the persisting Maitatsine uprisings underpins the conspiracy theory in which key state actors were patronising the Maitatsine Sect to divert attention from its poor governance and its consequential on the wellbeing of its citizenry (Isichei, 1987).

Conversely, a counter-narrative ensued on the part of the Nigerian State purporting that Maitatsine Sect and its abhorrent activities were sponsored by some powerful informal networks with international benefactors poised to sabotage the development efforts of the Nigerian State (Isichei, 1987). Seemingly, the Nigerian security apparatus failed to live up to its mandate of securing lives and property created by the Maitatsine Sect activities (Isichei, 1987). When democracy returned to Nigeria in 1999, there was a renewed agitation by the Niger Delta nationalities demanding emancipation, equity, environmental cleanup and good governance led by the Movement for the Emancipation of the People of Niger Delta (MEND) (Ani, 2014).

This new clamour featured the emergence of many armed groups who employed belligerent measures, kidnapping, bloodbath, and negotiation with unpleasant consequences for the Nigerian economy and national security (Ani, 2014). In response, the Nigerian states employed the use of belligerent measures, and subsequently, the introduction of amnesty by the Umaru Yar' Adua administration in 2009 with reasonable success recorded (Ani, 2014). Nevertheless, the Boko Haram uprising of July 2009 reinforced the attempts by the benefactors of the Maitatsine riots of the 1980s to compel the Nigerian secular state to succumb to religious ideology and tolerate Islamic revivalism (Adesoji, 2010).

Interestingly, the Boko Haram riots were repelled within 5days, the riots had exponentially taken roots in Borno, Bauchi,

Yobe and Kano with the former being the war theatre because it was the home base of the Boko Haram leader, Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf (Adesoji, 2010). Surprisingly, the resilience with which the Boko Haram Sect operated suggested that there was some kind of patronage from key state actors from the northern region (Olojo, 2013). Thus, in 2012, former President, Goodluck Jonathan alleged that all tiers of the Nigerian government including the armed forces were infiltrated by Boko Haram benefactors which made it difficult to effectively counter the Boko Haram insurgency (Olojo, 2013, Oyewole, 2015). Consequently, former President Goodluck Jonathan appealed for a ceasefire and called for dialogue between the Sect and the Nigerian state (Abubakar, 2013).

This disposition to dialogue and peace appealed to the Boko Haram Sect who on November 1, 2012 nominated General Muhammadu Buhari as their mediator and 11 others, with Saudi Arabia as proposed venue for the dialogue (Aziken, Agande and Marama, 2012). Coincidentally, General Muhammadu Buhari, the nominated lead mediator by the Sect also contested for the presidency of Nigeria in the 2011 general elections on the platform of Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) but lost to the incumbent, former President Goodluck Jonathan (Aziken et al., 2012).

Amusingly, General Muhammadu Buhari berated former President Goodluck Jonathan for exhibiting patronage and affection by pampering of the Niger Delta militants while clamping down on the Boko Haram Islamic insurgents especially with the declaration of the state of emergency in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States and the ensuing military offensive against the Boko Haram Islamic sect which he termed as anti-North ("Buhari faults clampdown", 2013). Derived from the wealth of experience of General Muhammadu Buhari as former Head of State, General and lead

mediator in dialogue between Boko Haram sect and the federal government, it was thought that his emergence as President, Federal Republic of Nigeria would mark an end to Boko Haram and all other forms of insurgency and banditry in the country. However, there are insinuations that patronage politics has overwhelmed his clear headedness to arrest insurgency in Nigeria (Vanger and Nwosu, 2020).

Interestingly, it is purported that modernization/globalisation plays a key role in the prosecution of insurgency in Nigeria (Ogu, Iyanda and Ogu, 2015). This argument is anchored on the fact that globalization has enhanced institutional/legal frameworks, migration, communication, production and mobility which are effective conduits for prosecuting insurgency. In the case of Boko Haram insurgency, there are claims that the Sect has ties with al-Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula in Yemen and al-Shabaab in the Islamic Maghreb and enjoys sponsorship from this affinity (Guitta and Simcox, 2014). Similarly, attempts have been made to excuse the northern Fulani herdsmen from agrarian violence/insurgency in Nigeria by the Kaduna State Governor, Mallam Nasir El-Rufai, purporting that the marauding herdsmen were from other parts of West Africa comprising of Chad, Cameroon, Mali, Niger and Senegal whose entry into Nigeria was permitted by the ECOWAS sub-regional protocol on transhumance of 1988 (El-Rufai, 2016).

What can be added to this argument is that, while the insurgency masterminded by other nationalities is aggressively and effectively repelled by the Nigerian state and her military, the state appears seemingly feeble in effectively repelling insurgency with ties with the Hausa/Fulani nationalities in the country which bears interest and analysis. Thus, this paper is poised to understand the patronage politics of the Nigerian state in her

counterinsurgency operations and quest to ensure national security.

The Nigerian State and Counterinsurgency

The Niger Delta Insurgency and Counterinsurgency

The Niger Delta insurgency derives from the vestiges of the Isaac Adaka Boro led Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF) armed insurrection against the Nigerian state which began on the 23rd of February, 1966 and climaxed with the proclamation of the Niger Delta as a Republic (Ibiang, 2018). This insurrection was largely occasioned by perceived '*social neglect, ethnic chauvinism, political marginalization and economic deprivation*' by the Nigerian state, and their seeming supervision of the environmental callousness by multinational oil companies and its attendant consequences in the Niger Delta region (Utin, 2018). However, the insurgency was neutralised within twelve (12) days reverting and truncating the purported Niger Delta Republic (Ibiang, 2018). Ultimately, Isaac Boro and his cohorts were arrested, tried, found culpable of a 9-count charge of treason and jailed for same (Imhonopi and Urim, 2016). At the wake of the Nigerian civil war of May, 1967, Isaac Boro was granted amnesty by the General Yakubu Gowon led military government of Nigeria, a gesture which he reciprocated by enrolling into and was commissioned a Major in the Nigerian army which he served until his death a year later in active service of federal forces (Imhonopi and Urim, 2016).

Interestingly, in the 1990s, there resonated a peaceful non-violent clamour for the liberation of the Ogoni people of the Niger Delta by the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) championed by Ken Saro-Wiwa demanding for equitable derivation formula from oil revenue and environmental responsiveness and clean-up of oil spillage by the oil multinationals in the region among others (Imhonopi and Urim, 2016). Sadly, Ken

Saro-Wiwa lost his life along with 8 others in November, 1995, via a death sentence passed by the General Sani Abacha led military stratocracy amidst thunderous condemnations. Conversely, the state murder of Ken Saro-Wiwa ushered-in a spate of unwavering armed insurrection in the Niger Delta region and its consequential, the resource control agitations and political unrest (Imhonopi and Urim, 2016). In 1999, the Niger Delta agitations resumed enmeshed in violence with the emergence of a legion of militant groups prominent among which was the Asari Dokubo led Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF) (Duru, 2012). These belligerent groups were well coordinated and by the mid 2009, had birthed over 20 camps in the oil rich states of Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers (Etekpe, 2012). The militant activities of these groups reached its peak with the October 1 bombing of the Eagle Square, Abuja (Ogbonnaya and Ehigiamusoe, 2013).

To effectively combat the insurgency in the Niger Delta especially that the insurgents were known and their grievances in the public glare, late former President Umaru Yar' Adua on October 4, 2009 dangled the amnesty carrot at the militants (Etekpe, 2012). The amnesty programme was reasonably successful with relative peaceful atmosphere in the oil rich region (Ani, 2014). Sadly, in March, 2016, there was a resurgence of militant activities prominently featuring a new militant group known as the Niger Delta Avengers (Ibiang, 2018). This new group of insurgents made a ten (10) item demand of the Nigerian government that included, the clean-up of the Ogoni land, an improved funding and sustenance of the amnesty programme and the immediate release from detention of Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, the arrow-head of the Indigenous People of Biafra (Tom, 2016).

Interestingly, despite the enormous insecurity and economic downturn created by this new group of militants, the counterinsurgency

tactics of the Nigerian state has remained the flooding of the Niger Delta region with heavy military presence (Tom, 2016), with the only difference being the recent pronouncement of the clean-up operation for oil pollution of the Ogoni land and having dialogue with the Niger Delta communities (Tom, 2016).

The Boko Haram Insurgency and Counterinsurgency

There seems to be no consensus among scholars as to the specific date or undercurrents that birthed the Jama'atu Ahlu-Sunnah Lidda'Awati Wal Jihad (congregation of followers of the Prophet for propagation and Holy struggle) alias Boko Haram sect in Nigeria (Ani, 2014). The Boko Haram sect resonates with the Maitatsine riots of the 1980s poised to pressure the Nigerian state to succumb to a religious ideology based on Sharia Law and tolerate Islamic revivalism (Adesoji, 2010). Similarly, the sect also derives from the Nigerian Taliban birthed by Abubakar Lawan in 1995 (Komolafe, 2013). Fundamentally, Boko Haram was birthed in 2002 by some extremist Islamic students of the University of Maiduguri led by one Aminu Tashen Ilimi that justified their opting out of school on the grounds that western education inundates Islamic religion (Gusau, 2011). Purportedly, this group of dropouts had contact with Mohammed Yusuf whom they collaborated with to preach against the secular state of Nigeria (Gusau, 2011).

Ironically, the Boko Haram sect was considered a populist movement because of its pro-poor welfare programmes in the north (Hansen and Musa, 2013). The sect's inspiration was drawn from the September 11 al Qaeda sponsored terrorist attack on the United States of America (USA) (Olojo, 2013). The Sect's militant insurrection in Nigeria surfaced on July 25, 2009, sporadically spreading across states of Bauchi, Kano, Yobe and Borno the home base of Mohammed

Yusuf, the arrow-head of the Sect. The insurrection was repelled within 5 days by the combined efforts of the Nigerian security agencies with the overrunning of the sect's base located at Dutsen Tanshi in Bauchi State on July 26, 2009 and the successful arrest of nine Sect members and the impounding of military hardware and bomb making materials (Adesoji, 2010).

Grippingly, two hours after the Dutsen Tanshi raid, the sect retaliated by pillaging the police formations in Bauchi, Kano, Yobe and Borno (Bakare, Adedeji and Shobiye 2009). Even though the sect was subdued by the doggedness of the Operation Flush team who successfully arrested Mohammed Yusuf and Baa Fugu his father-in-law and handed them over to the Police, it was purported that Mohammed Yusuf and his father-in-law, were extra judicially murdered in police custody (Adesoji, 2010). Ultimately, the highhandedness of the police in the extrajudicial killing of Mohammed Yusuf and Baa Fugu was disdained by the international community and the suspected police officers were arraigned for murder (Soniya, 2011). Apparently, between the time Yusuf was extra-judicially killed and the trial of the culprits commenced, there were alterations in the tactics of the sect (Forest, 2012).

Consequently, with the emergence of a new leadership of the sect in 2009 by a trio of Imam Abubakar Shekau, Kabiru Sokoto and Sheikh Abu Muhammed, the sect assumed the status of a complete terrorist organization (Adesoji, 2010). Towards the end of 2009, the sect attacks were targeted at police formations and Christians in the north using small arms and light weapons until the later part of 2010 when the sect opted for simple improvised explosive devices (IEDs) (Stewart, 2012).

To be sure, the sect's resilience derived from the use of ambush, evasion and resistance and later, suicide bombings with Vehicle Borne

Improvised Explosive Devices (VBIEDs), motor bikes and then pedestrian suicide bombing (Omenma, Onyishi and Okolie, 2020; TRADOC G-2, 2015). Others include suicide bombing with Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), kidnapping, assassination and deception (TRADOC G-2, 2015). The preference for raid like that on the Chibok Girls Secondary School, on April 14, 2014 at about 9:45pm taking hostage 82 teenage school girls of was to convey the Sect's hegemony and peddle its influence using information war tool (INFOWAR) aimed at intimidating the locals to succumb to their demands (TRADOC G-2, 2015).

In this, the attention of the international community was drawn and the Nigerian state and its military were tasked to rescue the girls with protests staged within and outside Nigeria with the hash tag: '#BringBackOurGirls' campaign (TRADOC G-2, 2015). Intriguingly, the insalubrious activities of the Boko Haram Sect has placed Nigeria as the world's third (3rd) most devastated country on the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) since 2014 and the world's second (2nd) worst hit country by terrorism (Institute for Economic and Peace, 2019). Seemingly, the Boko Haram Sect is purported to have ties with the al-Qaeda in Arabian Peninsula in Yemen and al-Shabaab in the Islamic Maghreb (Guitta and Simcox, 2014). Derived from these purported links, the United States (US) proscribed the sect on November 13, 2013 (Omenma et al., 2020), the Home Office of the United Kingdom did same on November 22, 2012 (Committee on Homeland Security, 2013), premised on the Sects' purported link with the abduction of a British citizen in May, 2011 and his eventual murder in March, 2012 (Ani, 2014).

This proscription of Boko Haram Sect was replicated under the Nigerian Terrorism Prevention Act by former President, Goodluck Jonathan in June, 2013 to provide a legal framework to prosecute terrorist members and

their indicted collaborators. Similarly, Canada in 2013, Australia, the United Kingdom, the United Nations and the European Union in 2014 respectively also declared the Sect a terrorist organisation and hence proscribed it (Omenma et al., 2020).

Available statistics of the consequences of the unwholesome activities of the Boko Haram Sect from 2013 to 2018 indicate a 10.13% incident rate, a 9.28% fatality rate and 5.69% abrasion incident (Omenma et al., 2020). Interestingly, an upsurge in the momentum of terrorist activities of the Boko Haram Sect in 2014 according to the GTI, catapulted Nigeria from its fourth position in 2013 to a second place in 2014 (Institute for Economic and Peace, 2015). Pointedly, the incidence rate in 2014 came to 22.13% which was twice the 10.13% incident rate in 2013. Also, the fatality rate rose from 9.28% in 2013 to 38.17% in 2014 an approximate 300% percentage rise while the abrasion incident of 5.69% in 2013 puffed up to 27.96% in 2014 (Omenma et al., 2020).

Essentially, in 2015, the incident and fatality rates of the Sect's violent activities subsided by 2.48% due to the dexterousness of the counterinsurgency operations by the Nigerian military in collaboration with the Civilian Joint Task Forces (JTF) (Omenma et al., 2020). Statistics availed by the GTI indicates a consistent decline in the incidents, fatalities and abrasion rates between 2015 to 2017 until in 2018 which featured a 5.04% renaissance in the Sect's extremist activities (Omenma et al., 2020). What can be added is that the astronomical rise in the extremist activities of the sect in the build-up to every election year in Nigeria since its emergence bears interest and analysis.

Nevertheless, the Nigerian state has employed belligerent and non-belligerent approaches to counterinsurgency in Nigeria. Derived from the Constitutional impetus of Sect. 11 of the

Nigerian 1999 Constitution (as amended), the Terrorism (Prevention) Act (TPA) was passed in 2011 by the National Assembly (Omenma et al., 2020), to legitimise the interrogation, trial and prosecution of actors in terrorism cases (Omenma et al., 2020). To ensure efficiency and effectiveness, the TPA of 2011 was amended in 2013 to explicitly vest the sole responsibility of coordinating the national security architecture in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations in the office and person of the National Security Advisor (NSA) (Omenma et al., 2020).

With the police overwhelmed by the firepower of the Boko Haram sect in 2009, the Nigerian state opted for a Joint Task Force (JTF) comprising of the army and other security agencies with little or no success (Ani, 2014). Thus, former President Goodluck Jonathan on May 14, 2013 declared a state of emergency in three north-eastern states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe that were worse hit by the Sect (Botelho, 2013) with great success (Iroegbu, 2013). Even so, attacks by the Boko Haram Sect persisted and to secure the region as well as the borders with Chad, Niger and the northern-Cameroon which is alleged to be the training ground and safe haven for the Boko Haram terrorist, President Goodluck Jonathan established the 7 Division of the Nigerian Army in the North-east (McGregor, 2013). Sadly, even with the presence of the 7 Division, successes recorded by the Nigerian military amounted to ridicule (Adamu and Faul, 2013). Thus, in 2014, former President, Goodluck Jonathan contracted the services of a South African military firm with expertise in Specialised Task, Training, Equipment and Protection (STTEP) to collaborate with the Nigerian military to conquer the insurgents which yielded success as most of the territories hitherto conquered by the Sect were reclaimed before the 2015 general elections (Omenma et al., 2020).

Incidentally, the contract with the STTEP was revoked by General Muhammadu Buhari on assumption of office as President, Federal Republic of Nigeria in 2015 (Omenma et al., 2020), opting for the reinvigoration of diplomatic ties with border countries aimed at birthing a formidable Multinational Joint Task Force with a US\$100 million support fund for effective collaboration to surmount the Boko Haram Sect (Assanvo, Abatan, and Sawadogo, 2016). Interestingly, the Multinational Joint Task Force reclaimed over 80% of Boko Haram's terrestrial hegemony in barely a year of the counterinsurgency operation (Nextier SPD, 2019). Seemingly, civilian fatality incidents summarily put at 2000 in 2015 had three years later declined to 573 (Nextier SPD, 2019).

Incidentally, the Nigerian government at various times since the inception of the Boko Haram Sect in 2009 has shown commitment to engage the Sect in dialogue without success (Omenma et al., 2020). For instance, the Sect rejected the 26 member Presidential Committee on Dialogue and Peaceful Resolution of Security Challenges in the North constituted by former President Goodluck Jonathan on April 17, 2013 claiming not to be liable hence querying the justification for the grant of amnesty (Agbiboa & Maiangwa, 2014). Equally, purported claims of a successfully negotiated ceasefire with the sect constituted by the federal government are enmeshed in inconsistencies (Pate, 2014). Interestingly, in 2016, a non-military approach led to the wilful renouncement of Boko Haram by more than 87 of its Sect members between August 24 and September 13, 2017 under the prompting and supervision of to the Nigerian security agencies (Omenma et al., 2020).

Similarly, the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) had facilitated the deradicalisation of about 468 purported Boko Haram members who were arraigned in court but acquitted for lack of evidence (Omenma et

al., 2020), while another 760 repentant Sect members were released to the government of Borno state for absorption into its society (Omenma et al., 2020). The climax of the diplomatic approach by the Nigerian government was horse-trading of Boko Haram Sect members in government custody for the release of 21 of the Chibok girls in October 2016 and 82 others in May, 2017 (Nextier SPD, 2019). Regrettably, the Nigerian state has seemingly not done enough to surmount the Boko Haram Sect's insurgency which bears interest and interrogation.

Herdsman Insurgency and Counterinsurgency

The Terrorism (Prevention) (Amendment) Act, 2013 proscribes all acts of terrorism and or its financing in Part 1 (1). Interestingly, the herdsman insurgency sponsored by the duo of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) and Miyetti Allah Kautal Hore fits in perfectly into terrorism. To be sure, the 2019 GTI report apportioned liability for the exacerbated fatalities in Nigeria in 2018 to the herdsman whose unwanton killing in the country exceeded the total deaths resulting from Boko Haram insurgency (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2019). Intriguingly, the 2017 GTI report reveals that the Fulani insurgents were responsible for violent incident attacks in Nigeria's Middle Belt that accounted for fatalities in 2016 that surpassed those occasioned by the Boko Haram Sect (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2017).

Similarly, the report also reveals that between 2010 and 2016, the Fulani herdsman extremism accounted for 92% of fatalities derived from 466 terrorist incident rates and 3,068 fatality rates in the African countries of Nigeria, Central African Republic, Mali and Democratic Republic of the Congo with 92% of fatalities occurring in Nigeria (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2017). What can be added is that, to describe herdsman extremism in Nigeria as

farmer-herder conflicts rather than terrorism is an *alibi*.

It is not a coincidence that 2015 marked the climax of the herdsmen terrorism in Nigeria attaining the niche of 3rd place on the GTI and has since maintained in this position (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2017). To be sure, this new feat coincided with the assumption of office of President Muhammadu Buhari, a Sunni Fulani himself and grand patron of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), one of the familiar Fulani networks that sponsor herdsmen insurgency (Olugbenga, 2017; Vanger and Nwosu, 2020). Besides, the activities of these Fulani informal networks give the utmost prominence to the enduring Fulani herdsmen insurgency in Nigeria (Vanger and Nwosu, 2020).

It is purported that, President Buhari's established affinity with MACBAN has inundated his clear-headedness in rebuking their lawlessness as seen in their threats issue to the Benue state government (Vanger and Nwosu, 2020). Ultimately, the threats amounts to impelling the Benue state government from performing its functions of securing lives, property, livelihoods, and maintenance of law and order restrained by Section 3 (b) (1) of the terrorism prevention Act 2013 as amended. The execution of the threats infringes on the C part of Section 3, Sections 5 (1) and 11 (a) of the Terrorism (Prevention) (Amendment) Act, 2013.

What can be added is that in spite of these obvious infringements, President Muhammadu Buhari has failed to proscribe the herdsmen insurgency on patronage grounds, finding *alibi* in the farmer-herder conflicts narrative (Chabal and Daloz, 1999). What can be added to this argument is that the seeming indifference or perhaps complicity on the part of President Muhammadu Buhari in the handling of the killing of Christians by his kinsmen reverberate patronage for familiar networks.

Understanding the Patronage Politics of Counterinsurgency in Nigeria

The impetus for the impunity with which insurgents terrorise the Nigerian state derives from the indisposition of the government to austere censure previous incidents and dish out sanctions to the *dramatis personae* and their benefactors appropriately (Chabal and Daloz, 1999; Vanger and Nwosu, 2020). Implicitly, the actions or inactions of key state actors according to Moritz are determined by 'belly politics' which thrives on the 'political instrumentalisation of disorder'. In this, Moritz explains that belly politics formalized or not, is inherent in a neopatrimonial state, especially in West Africa (Moritz, 2006). Nevertheless, it is important for counterinsurgents to establish the grievances of the insurgents and corresponding tactics to employ in extinguishing the insurgency (United States, Nagl, Petraeus, Amos & United States, 2007).

In the case of the Boko Haram, political patronage by key northern state actors has undermined the success of the counterinsurgency operations (Olojo, 2013). To be sure, former President Goodluck Jonathan in January, 2012 blamed the failed counterinsurgency operations against Boko Haram Sect on patronage by key state actors and the military. For instance in Borno State, key state actors like Alhaji Buji Foi, a Commissioner in Borno State in-charge of Religious Affairs was accused of sponsoring the Sect and its leader, Mohammed Yusuf for election purposes particularly the 2003 and 2007 general elections (Olojo, 2013). Similarly, sympathy for the Boko Haram Sect was evident in the State patronage of Mohammed Yusuf who was appointed, representative of Borno State on Nigeria's Supreme Council of Sharia (Olojo, 2013). Ultimately, the allegations and counter-allegations by some key northern state actors as regards their affiliation with Boko Haram bears interest and interrogation.

Another evident of the patronage for the Boko Haram sect unfolded when General Mohammadu Buhari the nominated lead mediator of the sect berated former President Goodluck Jonathan of anti-north disposition and political patronage in the clampdown on the Boko Haram insurgents, the declaration of state of emergency in the north-eastern states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa while pampering the Niger Delta militants with amnesty (“Buhari faults clampdown”, 2013). It is purported that General Buhari’s outburst against former President Jonathan reflect primordial sentiments and confirms the claim of neopatrimonial disposition of the political class in Sub-Saharan African states (Chabal and Daloz, 1999). Seemingly, the state and its paraphernalia are tuned to demonstrate the aspirations and wishes of big men in the country (Chabal and Daloz, 1999).

Similarly, patronage for the Boko Haram sect could be seen in the claims by Amnesty International on the raid and abduction of 110 school girls at the Government Girls Science and Technical College in Dapchi, Yobe state that the Nigerian security forces declined to respond to 5 security tip-offs between 2pm and 6.30pm that the Boko Haram Sect was advancing towards Dapchi four hours before the raid and abduction of over 110 school girls on February 19, 2014 (Ojigho, 2018).

Amusingly, at the Yobe state Security Council meeting with federal government officials, the security chiefs, the military officials operating in the area and representatives from the school and parents, held in Damaturu the state capital on February 25, 2014 barely six days after the abduction, no queries were raised as to the security lapses especially that the authorities were aware that the military ignored the security tip four hours before the raid and abduction (Ojigho, 2018). Besides, the Nigerian Army through the Acting Director of Army Public Relations, Colonel Sani Usman had confirmed the arrest of nine persons suspected

to be Boko Haram terrorist’s accomplices and saboteurs which had at least two Army officers, two men of the Nigerian Army as well as two policemen (Usman, 2016).

Ultimately, the subsistence of the culture of ‘strong men’ encumbers the effective functioning of the state and its paraphernalia and thus reverberate fragmentated social control often left in the jurisdiction of powerful informal networks (Migdal, 2001). Congruently, the interim report of the investigative committee on arms procurement setup by President Mohammadu Buhari revealed an arms procurement scam (*Dasukigate*) in the Office of the former National Security Adviser, Col. Sambo Dasuki involving interventions in local currencies in the tune of N643, 817,955,885.18 and foreign currency amounting to \$2,193,815,000.83 respectively approved for the procurement of military hard and software to combat Boko Haram insurgency (Adesina, 2015).

On the assumption of office by General Mohammadu Buhari as the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on May 29, 2015, it was thought that Boko Haram insurgency and all other forms of insurgency and banditry in the country will be surmounted given his wealth of experience as a retired General, former Head of State and lead mediator in the peace deal between the Nigerian state and the Boko Haram. However, there are insinuations that ascriptive and particularistic values have overwhelmed his clear headedness to arrest insurgency in Nigeria (Olojo, 2013).

To be sure, some soldiers combating the Boko Haram insurgents in the north-east have decried the setting free of 1,400 of their killers termed ‘repentant Boko Haram insurgents’ (Owolabi, 2020). Meanwhile, with the continuous detention of some of the Chibok and the Dapchi girls and Leah Sharibu by the Boko Haram insurgents, the pampering of the sect members who are increasingly set free and

accorded luxurious education and choice employments by the Nigerian state bears interest and analysis. In the same vein, southern groups have called out President Buhari for his pro-north security appointments which violate Section 217(3) and Section 14(3) of the constitutional provisions and the federal character requirements for the composition of National Defense Council and National Security Council (Ojoye, Oketola, Falodi, and Alagbe 2016; Ojoye and Baiyewu, 2018).

Socio-political undercurrents like the belly politics tend to undermine the effective and cohesive execution of counterinsurgency in Nigeria. Implicitly, as long as the insurgency last, certain key security and political leaders will continue to benefit from this political instrumentalised disorder. For instance, the federal government allocated a proposed sum of N2billion for legal services in the Justice ministry's 2021 appropriation sent to the National Assembly. Of the said sum, N350 million has been budgeted for the trial and prosecution of Boko Haram suspects (Iroanusi, 2020).

Paradoxically, since the commencement of the trial of suspected Sect members in October 2017, majority of the 1,669 suspect's were charged for negligible offenses like providing material and non-violent support to the Sect while the prosecutors excluded affected victims or communities from featuring as witnesses or testifiers in the court proceedings (Ewang, 2018). Implicitly, concerns over fair trial and due process were raised as most charges were inappropriate, vital details were jettisoned by the prosecutors and most trials lasted for just about fifteen minutes (Ewang, 2018). Purportedly, the lapses in the trial of suspected Boko Haram members reflect political patronage and bears interest and interrogation.

In the case of the herdsmen insurgency in Nigeria the seeming helplessness of the President Buhari led federal government to halt

the insurgency is interpreted to subtly underpin an economy of affection towards his Fulani kinsmen and their socio-cultural networks of influence (Hyden, 2016), to whom President Muhammdu Buhari is a key benefactor (Vanger and Nwosu, 2020), conveying political patronage (Adesoji, 2010), portraying the state and its paraphernalia are tuned to demonstrate the aspirations and wishes of big men in the country (Chabal and Daloz, 1999).

What can be added is that despite these obvious infringements on the Terrorism (Prevention) (Amendment) Act, 2013, the President Muhammadu Buhari failed to proscribe the herdsmen insurgents finding an *alibi* in situating the extremism within the farmer-herder conflicts narrative ignoring the incident and fatality rates occasioned by Fulani herdsmen which has inundated that occasioned by Boko Haram insurgency (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2019; Institute for Economics and Peace, 2017).

Understanding the Population-centric Approach to Counterinsurgency

The study is anchored on the population-centric approach to counterinsurgency revitalized and popularized by a group of French theorists and practitioners: Marshal Thomas Robert Bugeaud, Joseph Galléini and Hubert Lyautey in the 19th century, derived from the 16th and 17th century writings of Don Bernardino de Mendoza and Mercenado de Santa Cruz (Bimberg, 1999; De Durand, 2010; Porch, 1986; Porch, 2013). Nevertheless, Marshal Thomas Robert Bugeaud is considered the proponent of the modern population-centric counterinsurgency approach anchored on the dual strategy of coercion and accommodation (Porch, 2013), which was purportedly influenced by his personal experience of the French pacification campaign in Algeria (1830-1862). Interestingly, the population-centric approach has evolved overtime with its recent focus on population

friendliness which emerged between 2004 and 2007 (Miron, 2019).

At its core, the approach juxtaposes the concerns of securing public trust and appreciating the undercurrents that birth insurgency (Kilcullen, 2010). Implicitly, counterinsurgency is about harnessing public trust (Miron, 2019). With this, the insurgents are alienated from the public to minimise civilian casualty incident (Kilcullen, 2009, 2010), and the insurgency inducing factors are tended especially that "revolutionary war is only 20 percent military action and 80 percent political" (Galula, 1964/2006). Ultimately, the population-centric approach to counterinsurgency is enmeshed in "a combination of offensive, defensive and stability operations", while simultaneously addressing the popular grievances that birthed the subsisting insurgencies (United States et al., 2007).

In relation to counterinsurgency in Nigeria, we demonstrate that the Nigerian state like most insurgency besieged African countries is bereft of population-centric counterinsurgency strategies (Day and Reno, 2014). Intriguingly, the behaviour of key actors in the military institution in patronage based regimes in Africa is conservatory of the politics of incumbent regimes, demonstrating preference for dominating the conduits of patronage and the allotment of resources thereof (Day and Reno, 2014). Suffice that, the counterinsurgency strategies of African states are therefore endogenous to regime politics (Day and Reno, 2014).

Pointedly, what determine the response of a patronage regime to insurgent groups are the ties it shares with the patronage regime (Day and Reno, 2014). Implicitly, President Buhari's tolerance for the impunity of his Fulani kinsmen concerns his appellation as the Grand Patron of Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (Vanger and Nwosu,

2020), this is interpreted to subtly underpin an economy of affection and neopatrimonialism (Hyden, 2006; Therkildsen, 2005; Vanger and Nwosu, 2020). President Buhari's inability to resolve the Boko Haram insurgency is purportedly connected with his patronage for the group to massage established affinity for which the group nominated him as lead mediator in the dialogue with the Nigerian state in 2012 and in which case, he berated former President Jonathan for exhibiting patrimonialism in the clampdown on the group. Thus, President Buhari's intolerance for cattle rustlers but pampering of Fulani herdsmen insurgents reverberate the culture of strongmen in the country.

Conclusion

The paper sets out to establish a connection between counterinsurgency and patronage politics of the Nigerian state. From the analysis of the study, the concern derives from the understanding that counterinsurgency in Nigeria like other patronage regimes in neopatrimonial states in Africa are enmeshed in ascriptive and particularistic responses to insurgent groups based on established affinity which reverberates patronage politics and demonstrate an economy of affection towards familiar networks. It is purported that, while the insurgency masterminded by other nationalities is aggressively and effectively repelled by the Nigerian state and her military, the state appears seemingly feeble in effectively repelling insurgency that originates from the northern part of the country which portrays particularistic responses and patronage politics. For instance, General Mohammadu Buhari had accused former President Goodluck Jonathan of particularistic response to counterinsurgency by pampering the Niger Delta insurgents with amnesty programme while killing and destroying the properties of the Boko Haram insurgents and unwittingly declaring a state of emergency in the north-eastern states of

Adamawa, Borno and Yobe which was anti-north.

Ultimately, socio-political undercurrents tend to undermine the effective and cohesive execution of counterinsurgency operations in Nigeria. In this, belly politics and the subsistence of the culture of 'strong men' bears interest and interrogation. Pointedly, counterinsurgency operation becomes lucrative as a conduit for looting state funds hence the beneficiaries of this corrupt network concoct instrumentalised political disorder to keep their lucrative venture alive. To be sure, the proposed 2021 appropriation bill sent to the national assembly by the federal government has a proposed sum of N350 million budgeted for the trial and prosecution of Boko Haram suspects whose trial is seemingly a fulfillment of all righteousness.

Thus, claims by former President Goodluck Jonathan that some collaborators and sponsors of the Boko Haram Sect had infiltrated all three arms of government and the military institution bears interest and analysis as the behaviour of the military in Nigeria as it stands appears more of a conservatory of the politics of incumbent regimes with a demonstrated penchant for dominating the conduits of patronage and the allotment of resources thereto. Going forward, the Nigerian state should adapt the population-centric approach to counterinsurgency aimed at winning over the majority of the population while simultaneously addressing the popular grievances that birthed the subsisting insurgencies.

Recommendations

Drawing from the analysis of the study, it is apparent that:

- a. the central government of Nigeria needs to earn public trust by eschewing ascriptive and particularistic responses to insurgent groups based on established affinity that is

interpreted to demonstrate an economy of affection towards familiar networks, consistent with belly politics and the subsistence of the culture of 'strong men' to be able to successfully execute counterinsurgency in the country.

- b. similarly the central government of Nigeria should adopt a population-centric approach in its counterinsurgency operations which prioritizes the alienation of the insurgents from the the public to minimise civilian casualty incident by addressing the popular grievances that birthed the subsisting insurgencies and other agitations especially that "revolutionary war is only 20 percent military action and 80 percent political".
- c. the central government should pay keen attention to the activities of key actors in the military institution to ensure that there is transparency in the counterinsurgency operations such that the counterinsurgency operations do not become lucrative as a conduit for looting state funds hence the beneficiaries of this corrupt network concoct instrumentalised political disorder to keep their lucrative venture alive.

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