

CIVIC EDUCATION AS A STRATEGY FOR COMBATING INSURGENCY IN NORTH-EASTERN NIGERIA

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Abstract: Today insurgency is considered as one of the major security challenges threatening the corporate existence of Nigerian state. A lot of resources both human and material running into millions of Naira are being destroyed due to the activities of the insurgents, most especially in the North-eastern part of the country. The problem has made significant number of children orphans and many women widows, while thousands of people are displaced as refugees in neighboring Cameroon and Niger republic. Unnecessary attacks on places of worship, suicide bombing, destruction of properties and attacks on security personnel and their stations are common. In other words, the problem has negatively affected the political and socio-economic arrangements of the nation. It has been argued that social and economic injustice, poor religious and moral education are the major causes of the insurgency in the country. In line with the aforementioned, this paper argues that civic education becomes imperative as a strategy to address the problem, because the latter entails inculcation of patriotism and love for national unity and spirit of togetherness in the citizens; as well as making people to be aware of the society's norms and values through value reorientation.

Keywords: civic education, insurgency, security challenges, security efforts, value reorientation

INTRODUCTION

Insurgency is considered as one of the major security challenges threatening the cooperate existence of Nigeria as a nation. The problem is virtually affecting all sectors of the Nigerian society, including economic, social and political spheres. Many lives have been lost, private and public buildings have been destroyed while ideal socio-political relationships have been altered. Government at all levels is making various concerted efforts to address the menace, but the problem still persists. For example, apart from the regular regimental activities of the security agencies, several operational task forces are being put in place with the view to combat the problem. Despite the resources and various strategies adopted, lives and properties are continually being lost.

Consequently, scholars and other stake holders of security are of the view that since the current strategies of combating insurgency have not yielded the desire results, there is the need for more proactive measures. Specifically, people believe that self-centeredness and lack of patriotism of the insurgents, the security agencies and even the general public are the major precursors to the problem. Thus, civic education which encompasses inculcation of patriotism and love for national unity and spirit of togetherness became imperative. Through conceptual and theoretical discussions, this paper argues that, by properly employing civic education the problem of insurgency in the North eastern Nigeria could be reduced to a minimal level, if not brought to an end.

Insurgency: The Concept and the Problem in North Eastern Nigeria

The term insurgency has been conceptualized and explained by many scholars. Like other concepts in the social sciences, the understanding of the term is influenced by ideological stand of the individual viewing the issue. For instance, Sullivan (2002) sees insurgents as traditional rebels (terrorists) with political motives who exercise discrimination in the use of violence and seeking to exercise territorial control. Whatever explanation is given to the term, many scholars (e.g. Gurr (1989), Dyson (2001), Sullivan (2002)) believe that insurgency is a type of terrorism. Defining terrorism is yet another "overly complex" issue. There are so many though different definitions of the term; for example, Sobel (1975), Krieger (1977), Lodge (1981), Friedlander (1981), Combs (2000), Simonsen and Spindlove (2004) and Giddens (2009) among many others.

However, in trying to do away with the complexity and problematic nature of defining terrorism, Bolz et al (2002) cited in Forst et al (2011) have identified certain features that happen to be common to all terrorist organizations to which insurgents groups by extension also possess. Thus, terrorists or insurgents use violence to persuade; they select targets for propaganda purposes and attack unprovokedly with the aim of gaining publicity with less risk. They also use foil to counter security measures, use threat, harassment and other forms of violence as tools not means to an end. Insurgents do not also discriminate women and children among their targets. While they employ “propaganda to maximize the effects of violence”, insurgents sanction members loyalty to their group alone (Forst et al, 2011).

Contemporary discussions on the state of Nigerian nation are filled with the issue of security problems. Specifically, insurgency in the name of Boko Haram, which is more pronounced in the North east of the country, is the most disturbing security problem to Nigerians particularly those in the Northern region. Comprising of Adamawa, Taraba, Borno, Yobe, Bauchi and Gombe states and numerous ethnic groups, the North eastern Nigeria was generally peaceful before the emergence of insurgent activities. But with initial root set in 1990 as an Islamic study group (Grobelaar, n.d.) Boko Haram insurgents turned to violence in 2009 when its leader Mohammed Yusuf was killed by security operatives (Brimah and Adigun, 2013). Since then the group has bombed various private and government establishments, burned places of worship, killed indiscriminately many people including women and children across Nigeria. The activities of the group have displaced over 450,000 Nigerian internally, forcing children to withdraw from schools and productive men and women from active sociopolitical and economic activities (UN, 2014). Recent report by UN Humanitarian Organization has shown that the insurgents’ activities have made Nigeria among the top three in the list of countries losing people lives as a result of terrorists’ atrocities worldwide. According to Center for Democracy and Development (2014), Nigerian government has spent over 1 trillion Naira (more than 5 billion US Dollar), and has allocated another 1 trillion Naira in 2013 and 2014 budgets respectively. The implication of this large spending is that more monies that can be invested to boost other socioeconomic sectors of the society are diverted to security efforts which experts argue is not yielding the desired results.

Apparently, all strategies to counter the insurgency problem have virtually failed as the spate of destructions and lost of lives are still alarming. Both the stick and the carrot have for the meantime failed. The military, who are at the forefront of the counter efforts, are not up to their task as many of them have recently decided to run for their lives into Cameroon, because according to them they are not given enough weapons to face the insurgents. The military are therefore demoralized making it difficult to stand to fight for the unity and peace of the country. This situation calls for urgent moral reinvigoration of the military so that they can become firm and stand for the nation no matter the situation.

The dialogue strategy, which is also very important in bringing the menace to the end, is still facing problem. The insurgents, though many of them are citizens of Nigeria, are not ready to sacrifice their personal and group interests for the peace and stability of the country. As insurgents their loyalty has been always to the group no any other authority or nation (Forst et al, 2011). Thus, they require a kind of education for them to succumb to the pressure to see to the fact that the unity of the nation is far better than their personal interests.

Theoretical Explanation of Insurgency

Many criminological theories have been put forward to explain criminal behaviors. These theories always try to give us, at least, a clue about why a certain antisocial, deviance or criminal behavior exists. For example, social disorganisation thesis, which arguments could be likened to Durkheim’s (1987) Anomie Theory, argues that society is dynamic, it thus changes from simple to complex (Radda and Dumbulun, 2011), village-like to city-like. While Durkheim described traditional village life as moral communities, where social integration and moral integration are available and indeed help people to become conforming members of a society, the life in a city lacks these two important components (Stark, 1989). For instance, a single religion unites members in simple village or traditional society, but in urban society there exist competing beliefs each trying to weaken the other. In fact, people will become confused about which is the correct norm or belief to follow; this leads to normlessness, deviance and even criminal behavior. Looking at the insurgency in the context of this argument, it could be said that the changes northeast Nigeria has witnessed can be responsible for the existence of insurgents group holding a clearly different social and religious beliefs which are however in conflict with the generally accepted norms.

In other words, a subculture (insurgents’ activities) which is against the main culture as counter-culture exist and teaches the members to reject and act contrary to the culture of the society. “Members of subcultures are normally peer groups members. Hence, some people resort to robbery because they have been initiated and pressurized into it by their peer group members with whom they share similar deviant culture (Radda and Dumbulun, 2011: 58)”. Not

only robbery, the peer group members can engage in other violent activities like what the insurgents in the Northeast are now doing.

The Strategies of Civic Education in Combating Insurgency in Northeastern Nigeria

What is commonly understood as civic education is not an entirely new concept in Nigeria's educational system, as the idea has always been part and parcel of the nation's education curriculum in one form or another. Civic education is simply a kind of education which assists *citizens* to become actively involved in their own governance (Centre for Civic Education, 1991). It is thus not restricted to individuals involved in formal educational setting. The Federal Government of Nigeria states the essence of civic education:

“Civic education is geared towards helping Nigeria as a State to live in unity and harmony as one indivisible, indissoluble, democratic and sovereign nation forwarded on the principles of freedom, equality and practice” (FRN, 2004: p6). Thus, Civic Education if effectively taught and disseminated can encourage the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen as well as promote a full integration of the individual into the community” (FRN, 2004: p7).

Related to this, Jakayinfa et al (2010) added that civic education involves the teaching of national values and consciousness from the foundation level, the national values of honesty, obedience, hard work, tolerance and faith which are germane to stabilizing national life are important for determining the development and progress of a nation (as) they regulate the life of the nation and project good image for the country. Moreover, it has to do with the promotion of knowledge system that could help to overcome physical, psychological and structural violence while at the same time ensuring justice (Mamman, 2010). It also involves teaching *citizens* how to play their civic roles especially within the context and confines of nation and global citizenship (Centre for Civic Education, 1991). That is, it is concerned with how citizens exercise their rights as free human beings (Kerr et al, 2006). In this respect civic education is the bedrock of national co-existence, values and identity in Nigeria.

Looking at variables that are responsible for insurgency in Northeastern Nigeria, the current state of the fight against the problem and what civic education entails, one could see the relevance of the latter in combating insurgency. Specifically, Civic Education can help in combating insurgency in Nigeria by playing the following roles:

1. Civic education inculcates virtues of tolerance, cooperation, patriotism, selflessness, honesty, etc among the citizens. This demands the introduction of civic education early in the children's educational career. While value re-orientation programmes with youths (both at schools and places of work) as the main focus should be designed by civic educators and pursued vigorously. This will help in no small measure to change or unlearn those negative impulses such as greed, religious extremism, and oppression. These negative impulses should be substituted with socially desirable behaviors and attitudes.
2. Parents and heads of families should work hard to instill the under listed national values in the mind of their various family members;
 - a. respect for human dignity and human rights
 - b. respect for the rule of law
 - c. the dignity of honest labour
 - d. respect for the constituted authority
 - e. the sense of national unity, pride and patriotism
 - f. respect and appreciation of social justice

It should be stated that the above values are well recognised by religions practiced by Nigerians; they will therefore be well received by Nigerians if the cooperation of the honest religious leaders are sought and involved.

3. Players at various levels of security agencies should recognized the values in civic education and live up to their responsibilities. This will make the leaders in the agencies to be just in their leadership while the subordinates will become patriotic.

Mass media should be utilized to ensure the above measures work properly. Particularly, radio will help in reaching out to the insurgents who are in most cases remote and invincible.

Conclusion

Nigeria is facing one of the most serious security challenges in its history. The *Boko Haram* insurgency largely based in Northeastern Nigeria has negatively affected the region. Although in the Northeast, the problem has affected the nation's socioeconomic and political activities. While government is doing a lot to curb the menace through various security efforts, the strategies so far adopted are not yielding desired results. This paper concludes

that there is the need to adopt civic education strategy to solve the problem, since there is a gap in terms of civic knowledge among the insurgents, security personnel and the general public. This could be achieved through the use of mass media such as social networks and radio.

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