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Has Systemic Grand Corruption Shaped Boko Haram's Terrorist Landscape in Nigeria?

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Abstract:

Research indicates a strong relationship between the systemic grand corruption in Nigeria and the ongoing onslaught by Boko Haram terrorist group. Both concepts currently shape and redefines the overall economic, political and social landscape of Nigeria as they no doubt impact adversely on the lives and human rights of the people. Drawing from the theoretical frameworks on Resource Curse, Captured State and Frustration-Aggression theories, this paper offers a rigorous scrutiny of the presumed relationship between endemic grand corruption and Boko Haram's terrorist threats. The paper achieves this by the qualitative content analysis and evaluation of some relevant secondary data. It argues that the systemic grand corruption in Nigeria evidenced by weak institutions has sustained Boko Haram terrorism. It contends that the emergence of the regional military coalition and further global procurement of advanced military hardware may not eradicate Boko Haram's threat in the absence of strong political and national will to tackle grand corruption. The paper recommends robust anti-corruption intervention particularly in the allocation and disbursement of the military budget and other public expenditures as well as eradication of mass poverty through the realization of Socio-economic rights.

Keywords: Nigeria, grand corruption, Boko Haram, terrorism, socio-economic rights

1. Introduction

Scholars and analysts have highlighted the numerous impact of corruption on the economy and mostly on the vulnerable segments of the population (Agbakwa Shedrack C, 2002; Carter Charles, 2013; Hough Dan, 2013; Human Rights Watch, 2014; Mungiu-Pippidi Alina, 2013; Susan Rose-Ackerman Susan, 1999). Empirical evidence from Human Rights Watch (2014) suggests that "the Nigerian state is a victim of high-level corruption causing the retardation of national development and a ceaseless cycle of crisis arising from peoples' discontent against the government".

This paper argues that there is a nexus between corruption and insecurity, which can be deduced as violent opposition to the prevailing appalling socio-economic conditions and a near absence of a framework for a change. Kofi Annan, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations foretold this relationship during the 2003 adoption by the General Assembly of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), stating that corruption: "[H]as a wide range of corrosive effects on the societies...allows terrorism and other threats to human security to flourish..." (UNCAC, 20003). In a very recent publication, Transparency International argues that there is a strong link between corruption and insecurity, especially, the Boko Haram threats in Nigeria.

Nonetheless, while the scholarly debate on the role grand corruption plays in fuelling insecurity has increased; there appears to be no coherent and consistent framework to reflect and build on the relationship. This underscores the argument of this paper in interrogating how years of endemic grand corruption in Nigeria could, to a very large extent, have shaped Boko Haram's terrorism landscape.

2. Grand Corruption in Nigeria?

Susan Rose-Ackerman (1999) defines grand corruption as "high-level" corruption by elected politicians or by higher-level political appointees...." This is the type of corruption that scholars argue plagues Nigeria (Dan Hough, 2013; et al). Nigeria has a population of more than 160 million people. This comprises of more than 350 ethnic groups and 36 states, the Federal Capital Territory and 774 local government areas (LGAs) each with its distinct language. Like many other African countries, it won independence in 1960 from Britain (Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, 2014, p.4). Nigeria's economy is sustained mostly on its abundant natural petroleum resources, which has unfortunately presented a case of "natural resource curse" (Duruigbo Emeka, 2005; Leite Carlos; Nicholas Shaxson, 2007; Weidmann Jens), and a paradox of lack amidst plenty (Nonyelu, Nkemdilim; Uzoh Bonaventure; and Anigbogu Kingsley, 2013). Research further indicates that the existence of huge petroleum deposits emanating from the dawn of the oil boom guaranteed excess

revenue for Nigeria which, to a large extent triggered the propensity to loot the public treasury (Duruigbo, 2005; Shaxson, 2007). The reports from county surveys and indices tracking corruption conducted by Transparency International and the World Bank accentuates the popular opinion that Nigeria is plagued by endemic grand corruption, notwithstanding the plethora of anti- corruption legislations and agencies it has.

YEAR	SCORE	RANK
2001	1.0	90
2002	1.6	101
2003	1.4	132
2004	1.6	144
2005	1.9	152
2006	2.2	142
2007	2.2	147
2008	2.7	121
2009	2.5	130
2010	2.4	134
2011	2.4	143
2012	2.7	139
2013	2.5	144
2014	2.7	136

Table 1: Transparency International Corruption Perception Index Scores/Ranking of Nigeria from 2001-2014

The score of 2 or less indicate countries that are plagued with endemic corruption or “not clean” states and Nigeria falls within this category. This can be juxtaposed with countries scoring 9 or higher indicating no or low Corruption “very clean countries” for example, Denmark (Transparency International 2014).

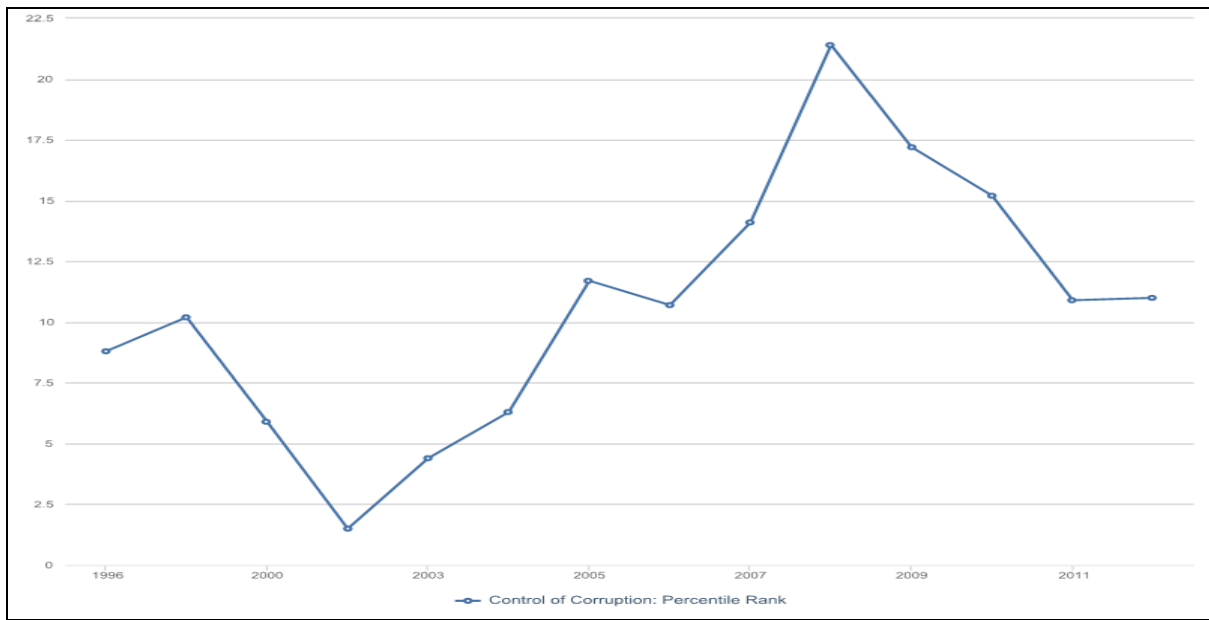


Figure 1
Source: The World Bank perception of corruption in Nigeria from 1996-2011

While the data from the Transparency International (2008-2014) indices show that there were slight improvement of the ranking and the perception of corruption in Nigeria compared to the ratings a decade ago, this paper argues that, notwithstanding the present improvement on the figures as shown by the perception ratings, grand corruption still pervades most spheres of the Nigerian public sector.

The history of grand corruption originated from the colonial times, according to Stephen Pierce as “British authorities complained about governmental corruption from the very beginning of the colonial period” (Steven Pierce, 2006). Bernard Storey asserts that “before independence, there have been cases of official misuse of resources for personal enrichment” (Bernard Storey, 1953). Over the years, Nigeria has seen its wealth withered with little to show in the living conditions of the citizens due to high-level corruption in the public sectors.

The emergence of the military in the Nigerian political sphere worsened the corruption issues in Nigeria. Prominently, the massive looting of the public treasury by former military president General Ibrahim Babangida who is yet to account for the sum of US\$12.67 billion earned during the Iraq/Gulf war exceptional oil boom (Daniel Agbiboa, 2013), and late General Sani Abacha, his family and cronies (Emmanuel Onyebuchi Ezeani, 2005) who looted the treasury of Nigeria to the tune of about US \$50 Billion (Agbiboa) are typical evidence of military institutionalised grand corruption.

The hand-over of the state power to the civilian administrations of president Obasanjo, Yaradua and Goodluck Jonathan further escalated the already volatile situation leading to prominent grand corruption scandals including: the Halliburton affair (United States v KBR LLC), Alamiyeseigha's case (Federal Republic of Nigeria v Alamiyeseigha), James Ibori's case (Melvin D Ayogu and Julius Agbor, 2014), Tafa Balogun's case (The BBC, 3rd April, 2005) Joshua Dariye's case (Federal Republic of Nigeria v. Dariye) and recently the \$20 billion dollar petroleum revenue case (The Financial Times, 13th March, 2015) are just a few of the numerous grand corruption cases that have challenged Nigerian transparency and integrity. Other consequences of the grand corruption include "undermining democracy and rule of law, violation of human rights, distorts markets, erodes the quality of life and allows organized crime, terrorism and other threats to human security to flourish" (UNCAC, 2003).

3. Boko Haram a Terrorist Group?

Terrorism has no universally accepted definition and scholars like Bassiouni (1988) suggest that to "define terrorism in a way that is both all-inclusive and unambiguous is very difficult, if not impossible". However, this paper adopts the definition advanced by Yonar Alexander (1976) that "terrorism is the rise of violence against a random civilian target in order to create generalised pervasive fear for the purpose of political goal". Alexander's definition is apt and relevant to Nigeria's current terrorist upheaval from Boko Haram since it targets the few in a way that attracts global attention and outcry. Martha Crenshaw (2007) notes that 'terrorism is interpreted as a response to external stimuli, particularly government actions'. In the case of Nigeria, such 'government actions' can be argued to be tied to systemic grand corruption which arguably could have propelled a violent revolution due to fierce competition for the possession of scarce resources. It goes to say that proponents of terrorist ideologies believe that it is aimed at bringing about revolutionary changes in the political system. How these revolutionary changes in the political system could happen as a result of Boko Haram's campaign is unclear since their modus operandi portends "a conspiratorial style of violence calculated to alter attitudes and behaviour of multiple audiences" (Martha Crenshaw, 2007). Accordingly, terrorism is characterised by extreme violence while most common terrorist objectives are media propaganda, provocation, force, indoctrination, insurrection, and intimidation. The terrorist strategies include "creation of societal dislocation or chaos; discrediting or destroying a particular government; rendering economic and property damages; 'bleeding' other state security services and creating military damage; and spreading fear for the international effect" (Jatin Kumar Mohanty, 2012). Are these features relevant to the activities of Boko Haram to warrant its classification as a terrorist group by the United States and others?

Boko Haram is a Sunni Jihadist group founded by cleric Mohammed Yusuf, who was previously a leader within a Salafist group in the 1990s, and was inspired by 14th century fundamentalist scholar, Ibn Taymiyyah (Mohammed Aly Sergie, 2014). Boko Haram (translated as western education is sin) started unleashing audacious attacks in northern and central Nigeria including bombing churches, bus stations, bars, military barracks and police buildings and the UN headquarters in the capital, Abuja in 2009 (The BBC Africa, 4th May, 2015). The group's official name is Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awatiwal-Jihad, which in Arabic means 'People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad' (The BBC Africa, 4th May). The radical arm of Boko Haram according to (T Brinkel and S Ait-Hida, 2012) emerged in the mid-1990s after the Nigerian Maitatsine religious crisis of the 1980s, however, research indicates that under the leadership and tutelage of Mohammed Yusuf, the group absorbed his radical Islamic preaching, and became very extremist and violent.

The Clarion Project Fact Sheet (2013) reports that so far, more than 3 million people are affected by the Boko Haram terrorism. The audacious kidnapping of about 300 Chibok school girls in April, 2014 sparked international outrage (The BBC News, 21st April, 2014). Amnesty International maintains that more than 2,000 people died during the terrorist massacre in the Baga town between January 3 and January 7, 2015 (The Guardian, 12th January, 2015). In response to the incessant attacks by Boko Haram, Nigeria passed the Terrorism (Prevention) (Amendment) Act, 2013. This Act amends the Terrorism (Prevention) Act No. 10, 2011 and provides for extra-territorial application of the Act as well as strengthening terrorist financing offences. In response to the atrocities that Boko Haram constantly unleash on the people, the United States declared it a terrorist group in 2013 (The Guardian, 12th January, 2015). This classification appears to embolden them with the attendant consequence of more violence and rapid expansion within the north-east region of Nigeria. Boko Haram has reached a regional dimension crystallising further into a 'Cross-Border Terrorism'. A 'joint military mission' comprising a regional force of about 8,700 troops from Niger Republic and Cameroun already deployed in the territory of Nigeria.

Reading from the analysis of Martha Crenshaw and Jatin Mohanty, this paper agrees that the tenets of Boko Haram qualify its categorisation as a "terrorist" group. Irrespective of its nomenclature-terrorism, insurgency, military fundamentalism, extremism or radicalism, the group's activity is severely distressing the world order.

4. Boko Haram: Nexus with Grand Corruption?

Recent empirical research from Transparency International (May, 2014) suggests that there is a nexus between grand corruption and insecurity. While this claim may not be exhaustive, well-known indices tracking corruption and insecurity reveal a visible linkage, for instance, countries with acute corruption are susceptible to conflicts and insurgency. According to Transparency International (2014),

twelve of the fifteen lowest-ranking countries on the 2013 Transparency International's Corruption perception Index are experiencing insurgencies, plagued by extremist groups or wrecked by violence which threatens their internal security. The World Bank figure below (see figure 2) affirms this:

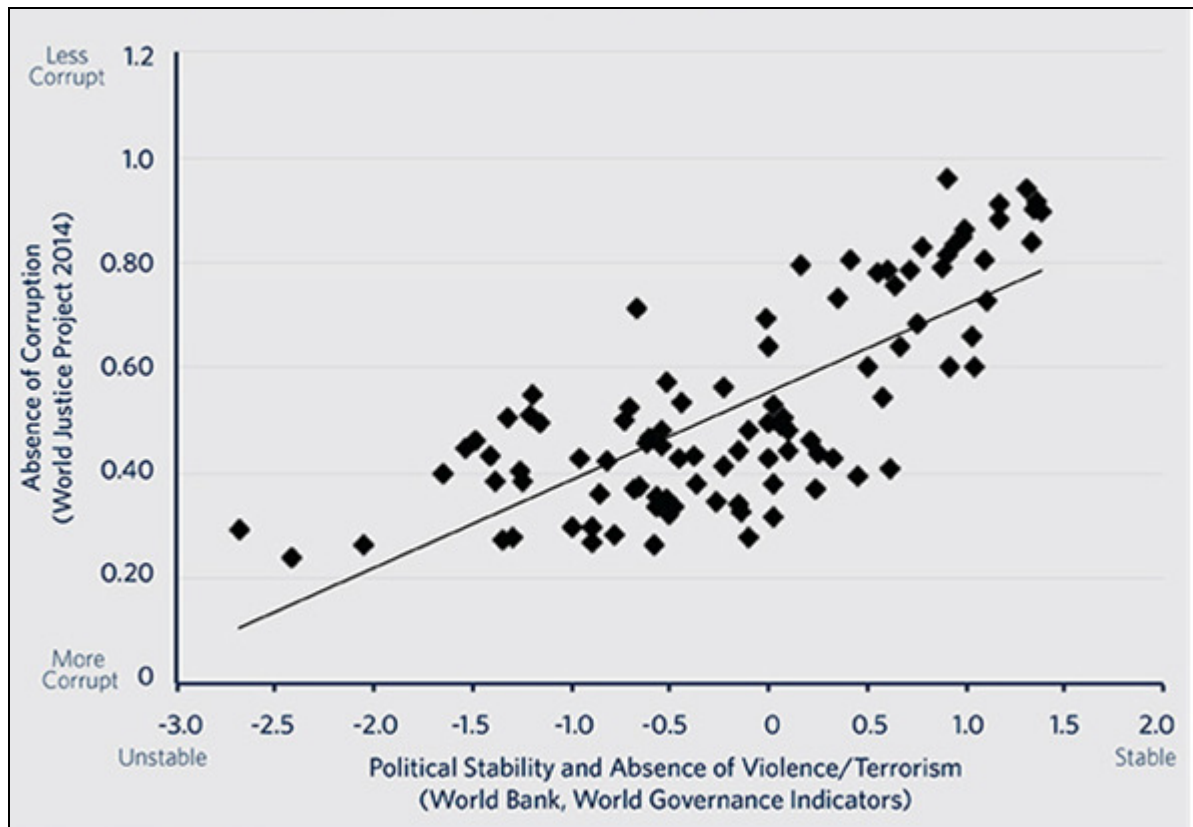


Figure 2: Political Stability and absence of Corruption

Sarah Chayes (2014) argue that “acutely corrupt governance aids extremist organisations not only by motivating indignant citizens to join them, but, also by providing a haven and logistical support for those very same groups, as officials become lax-for a fee”. Chayes (2014) posits further that “corruption can ignite in its victims and the likelihood that some will express that rage in violent or destabilizing ways. Countries that harbours an extremist insurgency today suffers from kleptocratic governance...”. Could this be true for Nigeria? The spate of violence from radical violent groups in Nigeria conforms to the argument of Chayes (2014) that “the failed, corrupt and inept leadership coupled with inclement domestic socio-economic environment has provided a fertile ground for unleashing terrorist attacks on Nigeria”. Grand corruption has ensured poverty resulting from lack of employment opportunities and unavailability of basic infrastructures. Such was the situation that the founder of Boko Haram, Mohammed Yusuf exploited this, in building the structure of his Islamic school in Maidugri, Borno state, Nigeria, in 2002 for the less privileged (Almajaris), who being vulnerable, became dangerously indoctrinated and radicalised. Yusuf’s appeal thus, was to a “population dominated by unemployed, poor males” (Onuoha, 2010). These men were angry and frustrated over the perceived corruption of the Nigerian government, on which Yusuf lectured, and mass unemployment (IRIN News, 18th July, 2011). In the words of Hakeem Yusuf (2013), the vulnerable marginalised individuals are instruments in the hand of Boko Haram leaders who “slip through institutional arrangements to become easy recruits in the hands of all forms of ethnic, political and religious irredentists who challenge the state”. It goes to say that chronic mass poverty in Nigeria, entrenched by government corruption proved advantageous to the radical Boko Haram preachers.

In support of the argument as to the nexus between extreme poverty, terrorism and grand corruption, Carmody (2011) observes “it is estimated that Nigeria has made over 400 billion dollars from oil exports in six decades but more than 80% of that figure has accrued to a mere 1% of the population”. The bulk of the funds which ought to be used for providing social infrastructure end up in personal accounts in overseas safe havens and ‘white elephant’ projects (Okonjo-Iweala). Given the level of poverty in the country despite surplus oil earnings, it is little wonder there is widespread dissatisfaction within the populace resulting in insurgency, violence and terrorism as manifested through mayhem unleashed by groups like the Boko Haram. Yusuf (2013) argues that “the governance gap leads to social disillusionment and produce large number of citizens who become disconnected from the state and the institutions”.

This paper argues that Socio-economic rights (food, water, shelter, education, healthcare and housing) should be prioritised in Nigeria. This prioritization would ensure that most state funds are spent on social projects and this may also aid in combating corruption since there may not be much left for officials to siphon if national funds are dedicated to genuine social projects. Achievement of the Socio-economic rights could be attained through other legal and administrative frameworks and social protection policies, but considering the nature and population of Nigeria, this paper suggests that they are made justifiable. This provides a more fixed protection and

could go a long way in reducing poverty and dousing social tensions, a sort of social guarantee. Nigeria ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) in 1983 and the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights in 1993 and flowing from the obligations by virtue of customary international law entrenched in Article 26 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties are bound by the provisions of the Treaties (*pacta sunt servanda*). However, despite the treaty implications, little effort is made to make ESC rights justiciable in Nigeria. In *Attorney General of Ondo State v Attorney-General of the Federation and 35 Others* (ICPC case), the court ruled that it is only through the enactment of relevant laws that the provisions of the fundamental objectives and directive principles could be enforced. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to exhaustively analyse the justiciability of socio-economic in Nigeria, it is worth emphasising that the consequences arising from its prolonged denial in relation to the ongoing terrorist campaign in Nigeria cannot be underestimated. A hungry man they say, is indeed an angry man and this emphasises the frustration-aggression theory.

Grand corruption has also played very prominent role in undermining military procurement processes as according to Nicholas Okai (2014), reports indicate that the procurement system is compromised resulting in the purchase of sub-standard and unserviceable weaponry. Most importantly, grand corruption has ensured the concentration of easy disposable cash/funds in the hand of a few political elites. In the bid to maintain and consolidate their grip on the affairs of the state, such funds are engaged into sinister projects including sponsorship of terrorist groups (Nicholas Okai, 2014). While it is uncertain at this point to state empirically who sponsors Boko Haram, it is probably certain that the bulk of finances available to the group chiefly originates locally. It is very difficult for the sponsorship links to be trailed since the systemic corruption in the system has ensured that due processes are not always followed in public dealings including the banking transactions. It goes to say that as a result of the porous public system, sponsors of Boko Haram continue to invest their surplus funds to support the terrorist group while cleverly using the same system to evade detection.

5. Conclusion

This paper has explored the suggestion that there is a serious relationship between endemic grand corruption and insecurity. The internal relationship in Nigeria shows that the non-realization of Socio-economic rights plays a prominent role in the current Boko Haram imbroglio. The non-regulation of fiscal policies have resulted in the concentration of enormous cash in the hands of few political elites while at the same time there is no corresponding internal audit and control policies to balance it. This spells doom and as it plays out, evidence suggests that such funds have been successfully channelled into bad projects notably terrorist sponsorship.

In a nutshell, Nigeria has failed in the constitutional mandate to provide security for the citizenry reading from Chapter 11 of the 1999 Constitution, relating to the Fundamental Objectives and Directive of State Policy in Section 2 (b). The state has failed to adhere to section 15 (5) of the 1999 Constitution, which provides that “the state shall abolish all corrupt practices and abuse of power”. In essence, while severe economic disparities caused by local economic, environmental and geographic factors remain relevant in this discourse, the other risk factor fuelling Boko Haram insurgency is religion. This is an area deserving further academic enquiry. The paper advocates for law reform in order to make socio-economic rights achievable in Nigeria. It argues that funds siphoned off through phony defence/military contracts and budgets should be channelled to the realisation of the Socio-economic rights (Reuters, 15th September, 2014). The paper suggests a rekindling of the anti-corruption efforts of the government in order to enthrone transparency.

Finally, acute grand corruption remains a factor rife in untangling the web of Nigeria’s present insecurity. However, despite the stark correlation, the role grand corruption may be playing in aggravating the Boko Haram terrorism may have been overlooked. Is the answer to Boko Haram’s threat then, an increase in the acquisition of more sophisticated weaponry or in the reinforcement and dispatch of additional military personnel to the troubled zones by the Nigerian government and its regional allies? Does the answer lie in a broad new approach to governance, which includes a determined war against grand corruption and a holistic overhaul of the political system; thereby stimulating an awakening of the need to rethink and reconceptualize Socio-economic structures through transparency in governance? Accordingly, this paper concurs that systemic grand corruption to a very large extent has shaped Boko Haram’s terrorism in Nigeria.

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