

# TEN YEARS OF BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY IN NIGERIA: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE BUHARI ADMINISTRATION (2015-2019)

OLAWOLE OLUWADAMILARE S.

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, OSUN STATE UNIVERSITY, OSOGBO, NIGERIA

OMODUNBI OLUMIDE O.

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, OSUN STATE UNIVERSITY, OSOGBO, NIGERIA

&

IGE RICHARD A.

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, OSUN STATE UNIVERSITY, OSOGBO

OSUN STATE, NIGERIA

## Abstract

*A fundamental challenge faced by succeeding governments and people of Nigeria since the turn of the century and particularly since the enthronement of democratic government in 1999 is insecurity occasioned by the activities of the Boko Haram insurgents. Insurgency and acts of terrorism in Nigeria since the last decade has seemingly defied all efforts to end the enormous loss of lives and destruction of properties by succeeding governments including the Buhari administration. Using qualitative research design, this paper looks at the activities of Boko Haram in the last years with a view to highlighting the problems faced by the Buhari administration in tackling the Boko Haram menace. It argues that though the government has increased military operations against the insurgents; the root causes of the Boko Haram insurgency have not been fully addressed. As part of conclusion, it is recommended that the government needs to improve the economy situation, provide jobs and infrastructures that will cater for the teeming youths of the northeast which will make joining the Boko Haram sect less attractive.*

*Keywords: Buhari, Insurgency, Sect, Boko Haram, Administration.*

## Introduction

The Buhari administration came into office in 2015. His coming into office followed a turnaround in the electoral process in the country's history. It was the first time that an incumbent lost the seat of office and handed over office to the opposition. This result of the election brought a lot expectation in the heart of many Nigerians on the growth and development that the country have been expecting especially on the insurgency crises that has befall the country.

The primary responsibility of any government still remains that of pursuing and maintaining the security and wellbeing of its citizens and its territory against internal and external threat. However, since the country's independence from Britain on October 1st, 1960, the Nigerian state has faced a lot of political and socio-economic challenges as well as violent conflicts which have threatened the development, peace, and security

of the nation. One of the crises which Nigeria has lived with for a long period of time is the Boko Haram sect. The Boko Haram sect has posed a great threat to national security and socio-economic life of Nigerians. The different issues and interests that are factored into Boko Haram has brought a lot of debate on what exactly her main agenda is.

Nigerians and the international community have put a high hope on the Buhari administration after the president was sworn in into office in 2015. One major reason for this is because of the peaceful transition of power from an incumbent president to an elected candidate from an opposition party. This is the first of its kind in the history of the country. Also, the fact that the president has had a military background which could be an advantage in leading a more successful fight against the Boko Haram sect also

raised the hope of many Nigerians. During his regime as a military government, many have seen him as a disciplinarian who has a high regard towards fighting corruption among top political elites in the country, improving local governance, and tackling insurgency. This high reputation of his has given Nigerians a lot of confidence in the administration towards her fight against insurgency.

At the time of writing, the president have been sworn into office for his second term in office and this makes it very possible to evaluate his performance in office on the Boko Haram insurgency from 2015-2019 to see if his administration has performed up to expectations as some optimist have presumed it to be or whether the fear of those who held a low regard for his tenure are coming true.

In this paper an attempt will be made to determine:

- 1) Whether or not the administration of President Buhari has been effective in addressing the Boko Haram insurgency in the country during her first term in office
- 2) If Nigerians should be expecting more from him or a setback in her against Boko Haram in this ongoing second term in office

### **The Rise of Boko Haram**

The term Boko Haram means that Western Education is not allowed which makes it forbidden and that its influence is considered as a sin, while westernization is sacrilege (Encyclopedia Britannica 2015). The group which was renamed in march 2015 as Wilāyat al-Islāmiyya Gharb Afrīqiyyah which means the Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP) group belief strongly that the reason for ineffectiveness of the state which is linked to political corruption, underdevelopment, injustice in the northern state and inequality can be traced to western influence and that the way out of this challenge faced by the county is Islamic revivalism

It can also be said that the inability government institutions to provide public goods and services with her inability to govern can also be linked with

the fundamental cause of the rise of the Boko Haram sect which has brought audacity in their activities.

Despite this, the underdevelopment in the north which has been in play for a long time which is associated with the non-acceptance of westernization and retaining the ideology of Islam might also be cause of the crisis. Thus, the group emerged as a non-conformist group in 2002 but as the year passes, it has had confrontations with security forces which have been brutal killing thousands of people from its inception till present.

The uprising of this group has been suppressed at different times by security forces in the country killing hundreds of its members which led to the death of its first leader Mohammed Yusuf. It was after his death that a new leader sprang forth (Abubakar Shekau) who transformed the group into an illegal and a secret organization that adopted the strategy of terrorism and insurgency from 2010. The coming into power of Shekau has brought about deadly attack of the group which is targeted towards civilians through assassinations, bombing, assaults, and invasion of border communities and control of domains in Nigeria.

The group since 2010 has received support from the AL Qaida and later pledged allegiance to the Islamic state in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in 2015. The group has received support in the aspect of training, weapons purchase such as Guns, bombs and projectiles. It is believed that the group gets support from some local politicians with the aim of using them for political advantage (Al Jazeera news). These local politicians provide support for Boko Haram with the aim of gaining some political advantage in Nigeria. Also, to ensure the group is properly funded, the militant group has diversified its funding sources by engaging in other illegal activities such as bank robbery, drug trafficking, cattle rustling, extortion, kidnapping for ransom, collection of levies among others.

### **Overview of Boko Haram Insurgency under Buhari Administration (2015 – 2019).**

The Buhari Administration came into office in March 2015. His coming into office marked the

beginning of a new electoral process in the country's history and this is because it was the first time in the history of the country that an incumbent lost the seat of office and handed over office to the opposition. This result of the election brought a lot expectation in the heart of many Nigerians on the growth and development that the country have been expecting especially on the insurgency crises that has befall the country.

Nigerians across the world believed that the president reputation was what was needed in the country now to tackle corruption since the president in the past has placed patriotism before personal gain.

As a candidate, he relied upon his reputation as an incorruptible, no-nonsense martinet who put patriotism before personal gain. This image was

used to his advantage in the face of the corruption and regional mayhem the country experienced as of early 2015.

The need for the Boko Haram crises to be tackled was a key problem to be tackled in his party manifesto as he ensured Nigerians about his ability to end the crises and to ensure that the fight against insecurity becomes successful a list of programs was drawn by his administration. This program was to see that the administration had a coordinated and organized way of tackling the crises in the country. Amongst all other promises and program that was made, a few has been drawn to understand the target of the administration towards tackling Insecurity in the country.

Promises	Description
1	No form of external or internal force will occupy the country under my watch and that I will give my best to ensure the Chibok kidnapped girls are released and reunited to their families.
2	Give special interest to the wellbeing of the armed forces and other security personnel which include the wellbeing of their families and a better state insurance scheme for officers and also to the families of the fallen heroes in the country.
3	Recognition and celebration of the bravery of heroes in the service of the nation.
4	Build up a working relationship with governors of the affected insurgent and also with neighboring countries and also with countries outside Africa in order to seek lasting solution to the fight against insurgency, oil theft, criminality and piracy.
5	Work towards a better a communication link with the National Police Council in other for the agency to carry out its constitutional duties in an accountable and transparent manner.
6	Work towards strengthening the military, police and other security agencies through employment of more personnel, increased professionalism and provision of modern equipment for these agencies.
7	Ensure the oversight function of policemen and nomination of state police commissioner is being devolved. Also work towards how police services are effectively carried out.
8	Recruit a minimum of 100,000 police officials.
9	To create a well-equipped and trained federal multi-agency anti-terrorist task force with the agenda of destroying the Boko Haram sect and form of insurgency in the country
10	Introduce a better payment system, a better pay and an improved working condition for all the five security service in the country.
11	Introduction of an amnesty time limited program for rank and file Boko Haram members who have forced into the group and in returns they lay down weapons and

	ammunition. They also must participate in a program of reintegration into society.
12	Ensure a scheme is established that deals with the compensation of victims of the insurgency.
13	Address the underlying problem of unemployment, poverty and social injustice that caused the insurgency, through a Comprehensive Economic Development Program for affected states and communities.
14	Establishment of commission that seek to address human right abuses that happened during the insurgency and also check issues that fostered the uprising of the insurgent group.
15	Rigorously enforce Agreements, Treaties and Regulations seeking to limit and reduce the incidence of illegal trade in and movement of small arms across the West Africa sub region and into Nigeria.
16	Carry out a comprehensive security surveillance to check the capability and the limitation face by the armed forces, police and other security agency across the country. Carry out a national security audit to determine the state of affairs, capacity and capability deficits in our [Nigerian] armed forces, police and other security agencies.
17	Urgently review the management structures of the five security services which is the the Police, the Navy, the Air Force, the Army and the intelligence services.
18	Review of death and disability insurance and bringing it to at least N1m (one million) only, from the current level.
19	Work towards implementation, promotion and implementation of public accountability strategy which will enhance the efficiency and autonomy of the police, military and other security in the discharge of their duties.
20	Establish a Federal Police Complaints Authority and Ombudsman to provide a transparent process for ordinary Nigerians to raise complaints over police conduct.
21	Introduction CCTV systems in major places in the country.
22	Deliver a Marshal Plan on insurgency, ethnic and religious violence, kidnapping, and rural banditry with the hope of Nigerian children being safe and never again be kidnapped and slaughtered at will.

Source: <http://www.buharimeter.ng/>

The president coming into office began to stress the need for a change in the military reform. There was a need to remove top military personnel who has been seen to be fraudulent, incompetent and lack professionalism. He also observed that corruption in the military was a fundamental reason for its inability to fight the Boko Haram sect during the previous administration which resulted to the country losing fourteen local government areas in the north to the terrorist group in 2015 (Nwabughio, 2016).

It must be noted that the insurgency in the country has led to huge losses, both in human lives and economic resources. In the president first tenure

in office, over 2,307 deaths have been recorded following the activities of the terrorist group. The government fight against this insurgent group has yielded considerable positive outcomes as the activities of the sect seem to have been reduced.

Also, the ability of the sect to hold domains has decreased and over 11,000 abducted persons, especially women and children, in March 2016 alone have been reportedly rescued. This to an extent has won the hearts and minds of the people. Further attempt to convince the people of her effectiveness towards putting an end to the crises have brought the Nigeria government to deploy the military to strategic places in the

country and also adopt an enemy-centric approach and also adopt efforts to combat poverty, injustice and improve the daily lives of the conflict states and displaced persons.

The Buhari's administration began its fight against the Boko Haram group by relocating firstly the seat of power of Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to N'Djamena. The MNJTF is a conglomeration of the five regional countries which are the Chad, Cameroon, Benin and Nigeria joining their military and defense intelligence to tackle the insurgency. This initiative came into existence in 1998. (News Express, 2015; Global Security. org, 2016). Its former headquarter was in Baga, Bornu state Nigeria. The basic reason for its existence is to fight trans-border crime in the Lake Chad region. The sudden of the Boko Haram insurgent group expanded its function in 2012 to the fight against terrorism in the region. The decision to move MNJTF was preceded by an Extraordinary Summit of Heads of States and Governments of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) in Abuja, Nigeria (Ugwu, 2015).

The need for the Nigerian army to meet up with the December 31st deadline given to them by the president led to an offensive strategy by the army in October 2016. This offensive move brought about the military using aerial bombardment and an open fire into Sambisa forest. These actions brought about an interception of the food and logistic supply of the insurgent group. This also led to the arrest of high rank terrorist member in the part of the northeast The Nigeria military also in 2019 released another offensive attack into Sambisa forest after successfully mapping out the area. This was followed immediately by a ground attack as Boko Haram members that survived were on the run after the release of bomb by the Air force fighters.

President Buhari also took special interest in the police reform which has also been a focus in previous administrations. He dismissed the Inspector General of Police, Suleiman Abba and also recruited 10,000 police hoping that this will

help in curbing crime in the country and also serve as a means of addressing the challenge of youth unemployment in the country. (Premium Times, 2016).

The president initial plan from the onset was to ensure that the Boko Haram insurgency comes to an end in 2015. This has been seen as unrealistic and this has called his many to ask when the insurgent group will be totally eradicated.

Despite this, the Buhari administration has recorded a lot of success against the Boko Haram sect as attacks by the group has reduced tremendously. This is not to say that there are no more attacks in the country. The media has revealed that the group in 2017 has had more attack than in 2016. The attacked in 2017 was recorded to be 150 while in 2016 was 127 in the same location (BBC News, 2018). Most of these attacks took place outside the country borders. of the number of attacks in 2016, 80 took place in Nigeria, 26 in Cameroon, 3 in Chad and 18 in Niger, while in 2017, 109 attacks were carried out in Nigeria, 32 in Cameroon, 2 in Chad and 7 in Niger (BBC News, 2018). It becomes important to highlight his basic achievement and strategy in fighting the Boko Haram sect.

- Relocation of the military command and control centre from Abuja to Maiduguri, Bornu state after the inauguration of the new administration
- Forged and strengthened regional and international alliances with countries like Chad, Niger, Cameroon, Benin, United States of America, United kingdom, Canada, France, India and Hungary, etc to improve capacity of security personnel.
- Establish multi-national joint task made up of Nigeria, Chad, Niger, Cameroon and Benin
- Issued directive to security agencies to halt the preoccupation of pirates, the Niger Delta avengers, Boko Haram insurgent group and herdsmen in the country

- Constituted presidential committee on the North East interventions, PCNI, for the development of comprehensiveness, integrated and concerted plan for the development, reconstruction of the North-east region.
- Inaugurated committee to oversee social reintegration of at least 433 terrorists who renounced their membership following the announcement of government's willingness to negotiate with the sect.
- Launched mobile containerized schools in internal displaced persons camps to ensure that school age children have access to basic education while in their respective camps
- Donated 40 million naira to victims of bomb blast in Kano state
- Signed 2.3 billion dollars grant from the united state agency for international development to address poverty in Nigeria, especially in the north east part of the country
- Commenced a process of compiling comprehensive data on all internal displaced person
- Strengthened the police and other armed officer with weapons and ammunition in other to fight the Boko Haram sect
- Rescued Chibok Girl from captivity of Boko Haram
- Facilitated donation of 800 million dollars by the world bank to address poverty in the North east
- Initiated operation safe corridor to rehabilitate and reintegrate repentant Boko Haram members into the society
- Provided 21million dollars to the task force since June 2015

The gains recorded in the fight against Boko Haram are clearly attributable to the efforts of the Buhari administration. The administration used various strategies to tackle the insurgency including strengthening its ties with state governments, as well as countries at regional

and international level. At the regional level, the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) involving Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Benin Republic was strengthened; while outside Africa, countries such as USA, United Kingdom (UK), France, and Japan supported Nigeria in the fight by providing military, technical and financial assistance.

#### **Regional Integration Efforts in the fight against Boko Haram.**

The continuous killing in Nigeria and across the borders of the country brought about the African union calling a summit where the five nations formed a military force called the Multinational joint task force under a single command. The force began operation with 7500 military men and later increased to 8700.

The president also put in enough effort to regional and international cooperation against Boko Haram. His first visit outside the country is to seek support for her fight against insurgency. In addition to meeting with G7 heads and other international actors, Nigeria hosted a Regional Security Summit in May 2016 to advocate for a better military operation against the Boko Haram insurgency and to seek international support for developing states affected by the insurgency, as well as to rehabilitate internally displaced persons (Al Jazeera, 2016). The quest for regional integration to fight Boko Haram in 2015 brought about constant cross boarder attack on the insurgent group in Nigerian by neighboring states. The insurgent group that same year made his first entry into the neighboring states (BBC, 2015).

The Boko Haram group was successfully kicked out of the Gamboru town which is situated in Nigeria by the Chadian army. This action brought retaliation by the insurgent group in Cameroon which led to the destruction of a mosque in Fotokol before the multinational force of the Chadian and Cameroonians repelled them off. The N'Djamena formed MNJTF was later deployed to attack the group.

Buhari plan to restructure the military was a good not just for the country but also for a broader strategic purpose. This plan was a way that the country could seek assistance from different allies outside the country. This action was a way of communicating to the countries like United States, France, and the United Kingdom that the Buhari administration was into the business of ensuring internal security. These actions brought countries like UK and USA to pledge their and share intelligence. Also, the both countries sent 300 soldiers to the country to train the local forces. Infact, the Obama administration in 2016 agreed to sell light attack aircraft to Abuja two years after decline to such a sale of US helicopters in 2014 (Cooper & Searcey, 2016; Coughlin, 2016). The United Kingdom assured the country it would step up its coordination by increasing intelligence sharing, training of troops and also giving military hardware. The country also pledged to spend £860 million in foreign aid largely devoted to this project. Concerns were raised later by the media that a huge part of the money was used instead to target Buhari's opponents in the defeated People's Democratic Party (Coughlin, 2016).

The working together of regional states to push the insurgent group out of urban have proven to be effective over time even before the election of president Buhari. His coming into office also has intensified the operations of the army with regards to taking back the territories that have been claimed by the sect.

### **Conclusion**

The administration has been elected for the second term by the people for the next four year to show how effective she can be to govern them and to tackle insurgency in the country. The truth remains that Nigerians expect more from this administration knowing full well that the promises made by this administration in tackling insurgency has not been totally actualized. The administration needs to show that its capacity to improve effective governance and tackle insurgency is still top on her list. The Boko Haram group before now has been known to be

non-violent and a transition to a violent organization is as a result of the failure of governance and a continuation of poor governance will ultimately fuel conflicts and bring about instability on a long run. If this government work on being transparent, may be the activities of the Boko Haram will reduce drastically and the causes of the conflict and crises will be strategically dealt with.

Nigerians must also awake in her efforts in helping the Nigeria military and other security agencies in fighting insurgency. This can be done by giving this agencies information on how to curb this crises since some of the members of the Boko Haram live among them. Also there is a need for the citizens to watch for any form of suspicious activities that may be happening around them and also calling security operatives to help them in times of difficulties.

The government is currently piloting what it calls Operation Safe Corridor for repentant Boko Haram Members. However, there is a need to focus more on problems associated with social justice, education, health and re-distribution of wealth which are imperative to addressing poverty in the zone.

Government should streamline its economic, social, political and security reform agenda in order to address the divergent causes of the insurgency.

There have been difficulties in strengthening ties among the civil society and the different government agencies. Buhari must work towards ensuring that effectiveness is ascertained for them. The size of the country has made Nigerians call for more recruitment of security agencies knowing full well that most of its forces have been involved in regional peace keeping missions.

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