

## The Anti-Corruption Crusade and the Fight against Insurgency in Nigeria

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### Abstract

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In Nigeria, the apparent success so far recorded in the fight against insurgency may be attributable to the anti-corruption crusade embarked upon by the current federal government. This paper examined the effect of the anti-corruption crusade on the fight against insurgency in Nigeria. Data was obtained from secondary materials which include books, journals, periodicals the internet, etc. The theory of anti-corruption by Bo Rothstein (2007) was adopted as the theoretical framework while the analysis of data was done by content analysis. The investigation revealed that in the past, corruption led to a situation where soldiers were not adequately equipped to tackle the scourge. It also revealed that the situation changed as the anti-corruption war paved the way to proper equipment/arming of soldiers which is now paying off as the heat turned on the insurgents. This paper commended and recommended the sustenance of the tempo of the war against corruption and that of insurgency.

### Keywords:

Corruption,  
Anti-corruption, War,  
Insurgency,  
Equipment.

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## **Background to the Study**

Late Mohammed Yusuf was a civil servant who disengaged from the service of the Yobe state government. Selkida (2009), narrates that, “in early 2002, Yusuf was seen by many as a likely heir to the renounced late Sheikh Ja'afar Mahmud Adam in Maiduguri on account of his brilliance and closeness to the late renounced scholar”. He came under the influence of one late Mohammed Ali who approached him with reasons, to boycott democracy, civil service and western oriented schools. Mohammed changed shortly after. He migrated to Maiduguri and started his preachings, campaigns and recruitment drive, thus, forming Boko Haram alongside Mohammed Ali. He is known to have started an armed insurrection on what was known as the Yobe Taliban.

In a 2006, press release signed by the sect's Shura (Consultative) council, they stated that Islam permits them to subsist under a modern government like Nigeria but has explicitly prohibited them from joining or supporting such governments in so far as their systems, structures and institutions contain elements contradictory to core Islamic principles and beliefs (Selkida, 2009).

No doubt, government soon realized the need to give the sect the fight it deserves. This notwithstanding, however, incoherence and blames were the order of the day as almost all segments of the country blamed one another for the Boko Haram menace. The Federal Government, headed by then president was not seen to be doing enough in spite of the enormous resources and structures put in place to fight the insurgency. On its part, the armed forces were being blamed for not exhibiting enough professionalism and competence in prosecuting the anti-insurgency campaign. The situation degenerated to a point where the military, charged with the responsibility to protect the territorial integrity of the country in general and to fight and ensure they win the war against Boko Haram insurgency in the country, was almost up-in-arms with the Finance Minister, Okonjo Iweala. Sometime in May 2014, all the service chiefs in the military—the army, air force, and navy including the chief of defense staff, accused the minister of finance of delaying release of defence vote, hence their hiccups in the fight against insurgency. The minister, on the other hand said their votes had been released to them, adding that, “the sum of N130.7 billion was released in four months” (Odebode, Soriwei, Olorok, Adepegba, and Onuba, 2014).

It is surprising to know that the security operatives often times help in smuggling weapons into the country through porous borders. “A former chief of Army Staff, Lt. General Azubuike Ihejirica (Rtd), once reported the arrest of some customs officers for assisting the terrorists smuggle arms into the country” (The Punch Editorial, 2014). This in itself is an aspect of corruption which the country is noted for. Nigeria ranks among the most corrupt countries of the world. The leaders were not doing enough to reduce the scourge. Rather, they encouraged it to flourish, particularly among the political class and top civil servants. Hence, the observable increase in insecurity and insurgency is part of the dividend of corruption.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The manner in which corruption is aiding insecurity in Nigeria is legion. While the illegal possession of weapons is disturbing, it is even more worrisome to observe the disappearance of the sum of N130.7 billion within four months between the finance and defense ministries. For such a security vote meant to tackle insurgency to be carted away by a “rat” within the period, thus causing hiccups in the campaign against insurgency, is quite disturbing. These developments were all associated with the immediate past administration. Now that a new administration is in place, coupled with its anti-corruption crusade, it behoves the curiosity, of a researcher to investigate the extent to which the war against corruption has enhanced the fight against the insurgency.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The broad objectives of the study is to evaluate the effect of the anti-corruption campaign in the war against insurgency in Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Examine the effect of corruption on the achievement of the military in the war against Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria.
2. Ascertain the extent to which the capability of the military has been enhanced by the Buhari administration given its anti-corruption stance.

### **Research Questions**

Answers will be provided to the following questions:

1. What is the effect of corruption on the achievement of the military in the war against the Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria?
2. To what extent has Buhari administrations enhanced the capability and achievement of the military in the war against insurgency in this country?

### **Literature Review**

#### **Boko Haram**

Boko Haram is an Islamic sect that believes politics in northern Nigeria has been hijacked by a group of corrupt, false Muslims. It wants to wage war against them, and the Federal Republic of Nigeria generally to create a “pure” Islamic state ruled by Sharia Law. It is not in the same global jihadist bracket as Algeria's al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghred, or Somalia's al Shabab. Despite its successful attack on the UN premises in Abuja in August 2011, Boko Haram is not bent on attacking Western Interests. There have been no further attacks on international interests since then.

The group emerged from the northern Nigerian state of Borno. Some reports link the insurgency with earlier iterations of Islamist groups that opposed the Nigerian state but lacked the international notoriety of the current organization. These accounts associate Boko Haram with small resistance groups composed of young men that began to congregate in the mid-1990s, led by Abubakar Lawan and later by the pseudonymous Aminu Tashen-Ilimi (“new way of knowledge”). However, a coherent group identity could not be established until Mohammed Yusuf, a charismatic Nigerian cleric, gained prominence among local youth in Maiduguri, Borno state capital. By 2003, Yusuf led a movement espousing a conservative

theology that mimicked Saudi-Styled Salafism and opposed Nigeria's secular state, which it considered corrupt and un-Islamic. Overtime, the sect demanded more economic and political reforms. According to Selkida (2009), the group stated that, "Islam permits them to subsist under a modern government like Nigeria but has explicitly prohibited them from joining or supporting such governments so long as... contain elements contrary to core Islamic principles".

### **Corruption**

Corruption is a common word used by both adults and children because it is found in every aspect of Nigerian life. This monster has now been nick-named in most Nigerian languages especially in the three major languages. Ndokwu (2004) says, the Igbos call it Igbozu, the Yorubas call it Egunje while the Hausas call it Chuachua. "Corruption is a global phenomenon and not the exclusive preserve of any nation, race or section of the world but transcends national boundaries and frontiers and symbolizes phenomenal universal unwholesomeness politically" (Aluko, 2009). This menace has led to situations like, "slow movement of files in offices, police extortion of toll fees, port congestion, queues at passport offices and petrol stations, ghost worker syndrome, election irregularities, among others" (Dike, 2005, Ihenacho, 2004, Oliyide and Odeku, 2002, and Oloja, 2002 in Aluko, (2009).

It is the unlawful use of official power or influence by an official of the government either to enrich himself or further his course and /or any other person at the expense of the public, in contravention of his oath of office and/or contrary to the conventions or laws that are in force (Ekiyor, 2005).

Augustus (2004), explains corruption via faulty recruitment of employees exercise in the Nigeria Public service in the following words: one of the banes of the Nigerian Public service is the recruitment of mediocre or totally unsuitable candidates in preference to candidates of high merit. The reasons for this ugly situation can be traced directly to nepotism. Corruption plays only a little part and is generally prevalent in the recruitment of every junior employee like messengers and clerks. In this category of recruitment, the recruiting agents are generally officials of lower-middle rank who see an opportunity of making some money on the side by collecting little bribes from applicants.

### **Insurgency**

The Oxford English Dictionary (1989). 2<sup>nd</sup> edition defines an insurgency as, "a rebellion against authority when those taking part in the rebellion are not recognized as belligerents". An insurgency can be fought via counter insurgency warfare, and may also be opposed by measures to protect the population, and by political and economic actions of various kinds aimed at undermining the insurgents' claims against the incumbent regime (Paret, 1964). Not all rebellions are insurgencies. "There have been many cases of non-violent rebellions, using civil resistance, as in the people Power Revolution in the Philippines in the 1980s that ousted President Marcos and the Egyptian Revolution of 2011" (Ruberts and Timothy (2009).

## **The Literature**

Studies abound on the nature of the War Against Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. Onabanjo (2016), conducted a study titled, "Has Nigeria defeated Boko Haram? An appraisal of the Counter-Terrorism approach under the Buhari Administration". They study reiterated the campaign promise of Buhari in which he promised to eliminate the insurgents six months after taking office. The administration gave itself pass mark in December 2015 for countering the terrorists as it declared that the group had been "technically defeated". The paper aims to appraise the on-going attempt to eliminate Boko Haram threat under the watch of Buhari. The author then asks the question as to whether the war has actually been won?. The article analytically demonstrates that Boko Haram has continued to pose a threat to Nigeria and the West African sub-region contrary to claims that it has been defeated. Chapman (2016) conducted a study on Boko Haram – Changing the Narrative. The researcher is of the view that, "any policy to reduce the horrific violence of Boko Haram must address the long-time grievances bothering on political corruption, socio-economic inequalities, and impoverishment just as actively as the current military operations. Ignoring these problems will only allow future extremist organizations to rise. Furthermore, government must initiate robust de-radicalization and re-integration programs to aid both hostages and defectors to return home to an accepting community rather than suffer disability from the trauma of their indoctrination. Finally, military action needs to preserve human rights and create synergies with Nigerian security agencies. Military operations should taper off as police officers take the lead in logical policing activities. Collectively, these initiatives represent a whole-of-government approach to dealing with the current extremist threat, Boko Haram, and address underlying issues that could perpetuate the current instability, or enable future extremists to surface.

In a related development, Duke, Agbaji and Bassey (2017), did a project titled, "Corruption and the challenge of Boko Haram Terrorism in Nigeria: A case of the Nigeria Armed Forces". The paper examined the extent to which corruption in the armed forces in Nigeria, has been able to undermine the fight against Boko Haram terrorism in the country. The study relied on the qualitative method of content analysis of secondary data obtained while the theory of the structural functionalism was adopted as the theoretical framework. A thrust through the evolution and acts of terror from Boko Haram in Nigeria revealed that poverty, inequality and corruption led to the rise of the sect and that Abubakar Shehu adopted a more extremist doctrine and approach for the sect after the death of Mohammed Yusuf in 2009. Ever since, meyhem has been unleashed on Nigerians. The sect accounts for over 20,000 deaths and the displacement of over 1.3 million people. The paper argued that corruption has eaten deep into Nigerian armed forces and has undermined the fight against Boko Haram through the embezzlement of defense votes, the purchase of sub-standard weaponry, the creation of fake defense contracts, and the unavailability of logistical support and desertion of soldiers from the frontline. The paper therefore, recommends the adoption of genuine political will in the anti-graft war and the strengthening of existing anti-graft agencies, the diligent monitoring of defence contracts and the performance of offset arrangements in defence contracts, the introduction of socio-economic empowerment programs to create employment for unemployed youths particularly in the Northeast and the prompt provision of adequate military logistics and sophisticated arms and ammunition for the soldiers on the front line.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The indirect “Big Bang” Approach (Bo. Rothstein 1998) is adopted as the theoretical framework of this study. The one major underpinning of this theory is that, as stated by dellaPorta and Vannucci, (1999), “in a thoroughly corrupt setting, even people who think corruption is morally wrong are usually likely to take part because they see no point in doing otherwise since “all” other agents take part in the corrupt game”. For change to occur, this has important implications. Changing norms about what is good or bad is of little relevance since people already know this. The important thing will be to change agents' beliefs about what “all” the other agents are likely to do when it comes to corrupt practices.

From a policy perspective, this has some important implications. First, this approach does not point out any single set of institutions as the most important ones for change. The courts are not more or less important than the civil service, the integrity of the politically elected leaders, civil society or mass media. Secondly, targeting corruption directly is probably not going to lead to change if it is not accompanied by an “indirect” strategy in which many, if not most other public institutions are changed from adhering to particularistic practices to universalism and impartiality. One can liken this as, “the need to reach a shelling type “tipping point” in order to reach a new equilibrium” (Shelling, 1996). If the anti-corruption policy measures are limited to the introduction of small measures (“entry points”), they will not convince enough agents that continuing their corrupt practices are no longer a viable option and the likely result is that the system will not reach the crucial “tipping point” but slide back into its old practices of systemic corruption. As Larry Diamond, one of the most renowned scholars in democratization recently argued: (Endemic corruption is not some flaw that can be corrected with a technical fix or a political push). It is the way that the system works, and it is deeply embedded in the norms and expectations of political and social life. “Reducing it to less destructive levels-and keeping it there-requires revolutionary change in institutions” (Diamond, 2007).

### **Sources of Data and Analysis**

Data obtained from secondary materials are hereby synthesized by the qualitative method of content analysis. The analysis runs in the following order:

**Research Question One (1):** Did corruption affect execution of the war against insurgency in Nigeria?

The enhancement of military operations begins with adequate funding of the security outfit. This is the only way to ensure the procurement of the military equipment required in the prosecution of the war against insurgency. It therefore, necessitates an insight into the budgetary allocations to the Nigerian security/defence sector over a reasonable period.



**Table 1: Budgetary allocations of the Nigerian security/defense sector between 2007 and 2016.**

S/N	Year	Total budget (Naira)	Security/defense allocations (Naira)	Percentage (%)	Administration
1	2007	2.3 trillion naira	213 billion naira	9.26	Obasanjo/Yar'Adua
2	2008	2.45 trillion naira	444.6 billion naira	18.15	Yar'Adua
3	2009	3.049 trillion naira	176.2 billion naira	5.78	Yar'Adua
4	2010	4.6 trillion naira	264 billion naira	5.74	Yar'Adua
5	2011	4.97 trillion naira	380 billion naira	7.65	Jonathan
6	2012	4.88 trillion naira	359 billion naira	7.37	Jonathan
7	2013	4.99 trillion naira	950 billion naira	19.04	Jonathan
8	2014	4.962 trillion naira	968 billion naira	19.51	Jonathan
9	2015	4.59 trillion naira	388.8 billion naira	8.47	Jonathan/Buhari
10	2016	6.06 trillion naira	294.5 billion naira	4.86	Buhari

**Source:** Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) (41); Nigerian Muse (November 8, 2007) (42), Nigeria Eye (March 17, 2011) (43); Breaking Times (April 29, 2015) (44); Udo (May 24, 2014), (45); Guardian (December 18, 2008) (46); Premium Times (March 8, 2013) (47); Umoru and Shaibu (March 16, 2012) (48).

Quoting Sarah Sewell, the United States Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy and Human Rights, *Entrepre News* (2014), reported that “corruption is hindering Nigeria's effort at ending insurgency in the Northeast”. The report cited cases of theft of funds appropriated to the defense sector for combating terrorism. The International Crisis Group (ICG) (2014) observed that, “in a bid to address the escalated terrorism, defense budget was increased from 100 billion naira (\$625 million) in 2010 to 927 billion naira (\$6 billion) in 2011 and 1 trillion (\$6.25 billion) naira in 2012, 2013, and 2014. Despite the huge allocations to the Nigeria defence sector, there is no corresponding outcome due to the inability of the military to justifiably expend the appropriations in tackling security problems in the country. El-Rufai (2012), argues that, “there is no correlation between the amounts of money budgeted for the defence sector and the outcome of transformation in the sector. The case of \$2.1 million Arms Deal Scandal popularly called the Dasukigate, involving the former National Security Adviser (NSA), (Rtd) Col Sambo Dasuki and other top military officers and politicians, lends evidence to the argument,

The kleptocratic capture of the Nigerian defense sector has seen over \$15 billion stolen, leaving the military without vital equipment, insufficiently trained, low in morale and under resourced. This has crippled the Nigerian military in fighting an aggressive ideologically inspired enemy, such as Boko Haram. (Transparency International, 2017).

The study by Duke, Agbaji and Bassey (2017) titled “corruption and the challenge of Boko Haram Terrorism provides a very strong empirical evidence on the extent to which corruption has constituted the major hindrance in the fight against the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria.

Research Question Two (2): Given the anti-corruption campaign, to what extent has the Buhari Administration enhanced the capability and achievement of the Nigerian military in the war against the Boko Haram Insurgency?

The no-nonsense, anti-corruption stance emanating from his election into office as President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Buhari constituted the harbinger that stimulated a range of swift and decisive military offensives against the Boko Haram Insurgency. The promise to stop and end the insurgency by the end of 2015 provided the much needed booster and momentum to domestic and international counter-Boko Haram strategies. “The decision to move the military command center to Borno state capital enabled field commanders with the ability to take timely actions thereby enhancing military effectiveness” (Nigerian Muse, 2007). It is noteworthy that, strong resolve and increased capability, led to great success for Nigeria's military fight against Boko Haram.

At the end of 2015, President Buhari announced that Boko Haram had 'technically' been beaten as it had lost almost all the territories it occupied in the 'Islamic State' that the leader, Shekau declared in 2014 and no longer had the means to take towns. (Zenn, 2016).

The above notwithstanding, Schmitt and Searcey (2016), citing the US director of national intelligence, James R. Clapper, observe that, “despite losing territory in 2015, Boko Haram will probably remain a threat to Nigeria throughout 2016 and will continue its terror campaign within the country and in neighboring Cameroon, Niger and Chad”.

The study by Onapajo provides a strong empirical support to the effect that Buhari Administration which carries the banner of the anti-corruption crusade, introduced the much desired turn around against the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. Being a major campaign promise of the administration, by December 2015, the Buhari led government gave itself a pass mark for countering the terrorists by declaring that the group (Boko Haram) had been “technically defeated”. The paper observes that the declaration has led to debates in the public space as to the veracity of this claim. The article analytically demonstrates that Boko Haram continues to pose a threat to Nigeria and the West African sub-region despite its loss of virtually all territories earlier held by the group. This is contrary to the claim that it has been defeated.

## **Findings**

Results of data analyses in this study, yielded a number of facts:

1. It is obvious that corruption as a phenomenon was the major hindrance in the war against insurgency in the period before 2016.
2. The Jonathan Administration budgeted huge sums for the defence sector. However, much of such funds were known to have developed legs with which they walked to unknown destinations.
3. The National Security Adviser in the Jonathan administration, alongside some top brass of the military bought absolute and unserviceable aircrafts and other military equipments which dampened the morale of troops to the advantage of the insurgents.



4. Endemic corruption is not some flaw that can be corrected with a technical fix or a political push.
5. The no-nonsense anti-corruption stance emanating from the election of Mohammadu Buhari as president constituted the harbinger that stimulated the range of swift and decisive military offensives against the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria.
6. The decision to move the military command to Maiduguri empowered field commanders with the ability to take timely actions which enhanced military effectiveness and ensured success of the security outfit in the fight against Boko Haram insurgency
7. President Muhammadu Buhari's announcement to the effect that Boko Haram had been "technically defeated" makes sense based on the fact that almost all territories taken by the insurgents had been re-taken by Federal troops. Also, the ability of the insurgents to take new cities have been reduced to the barest minimum.
8. In spite of the success recorded by the Nigerian military and the claim to technical defeat by the President, the insurgency still remains a threat to national security.

### **Conclusion**

It is no longer news that corruption has been the major hindrance in the fight against insurgency in Nigeria. A situation where blames were traded between the defense chiefs and the finance minister-Okonjo Iweala on the release of the sum of N130.7 security votes within a period of six months is a clear indication of corruption in high places. This situation becomes worrisome as it affects the lives and property of millions of Nigerians on daily basis. The report on missing N15 billion within the era of the Jonathan Administration and the allegations leveled against the immediate past National Security Adviser (NSA) for which he is currently standing trial is more worrisome. This level of corruption eroded the confidence of not only the citizens of this country, but also that of the international community. Hence, countries like the USA withdrew its support and aid in the fight against insurgency.

It is gratifying to note that the success of Mohammadu Buhari at the polls in 2013 rests on the promise to fight corruption. Thus, on inception, the administration was able to show commitment to this course. This earned it the support of Nigerians and the international community which has so far paid off. Security votes are reasonably appropriated, no diversions, the required weapons were procured and the morale of the military received the necessary boost. Again, this has translated to the gains by the military as almost all territories previously held by the insurgents have been recovered by the Nigerian military. All gains are due to the anti-corruption stance of the Buhari Administration. Although the insurgents have not been totally eliminated, there are reasons to believe that Boko Haram has been decimated.

### **Recommendations**

1. Corruption should be fought even if it means using the last blood in our system.
2. Government should ensure that units or agencies under it receive actual amount budgeted.
3. Effort should be made to ensure that those charged with the responsibility of arms procurement for the Nigerian Armed Forces go for the modern and best arms and ammunition.

4. The decision to shift the command to the Borno State Capital should be sustained for as long as the insurgency lasts.
5. The war against corruption must be sustained for Nigeria to survive.

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