

ARMS PROCUREMENT MIRAGE, CORRUPTION AND INSURGENCY IN NIGERIA

I. S. LADAN-BAKI

Department of Political Science and International Relations, Nigerian Turkish Nile University,
Abuja, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Bedeviled by the nefarious terrorist organization, Boko Haram has literally destroyed the north eastern part of Nigeria. In an effort to save the country it became sacrosanct to purchase armaments and other military hardware in order to checkmate the insurgency in the north east. The reverse was the case when monies amounting to trillions of Naira were diverted into private pockets by corrupt Nigerian government officials and elites who were friends of the government. To this end the insurgency in Nigeria gained momentum and the security operatives at the war front became handicapped and the terrorist took over the north east. Therefore it is the aim of this paper to establish a correlation on how corruption and the fake arms purchase aided insurgency in Nigeria. The paper subscribed to the use of secondary data in explaining the variables. This paper concludes that the diversion of monies meant for arms procurement contributed to the poor state of the arms and military hardware used by the Nigerian forces to combat insurgency is one of the reasons why the insurgents overran some parts of the state and also the superior weapons used by the insurgents was no match for the Nigerian forces. However this paper recommends that government needs to be firm in issuing out contracts of such magnitude in order to avoid diversion of funds and also government needs to strengthen the judiciary so as to punish perpetrators and also deter others from engaging in such acts in the future.

Keywords: Corruption, Fraud, Nigeria, Insurgency, Boko Haram

1. Introduction

Plagued with the epileptic attacks carried out by the criminal organization, Boko Haram which camouflaged under the name of Islam, the federal government of Nigeria in its bid to strengthen the military and also wipe out the criminal organization decided to source for money to fund the military and other security agencies in the country. But with dismay it was revealed that the monies allocated to the security agencies is estimated to be in millions of dollars, found its way into the pockets of army generals, friends of government and other government officials. This was done to the detriment of the continued escalation and degrading armaments and welfare of the officers and men at the battle fields. A few months after President Muhammadu Buhari was sworn into power, he ordered the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to investigate the companies and individuals involved in the procurement of two non-recommended, not air worthy helicopters for \$136,944,000.00 instead of \$30m each (Vanguard News, 2016).

Due to the desire, greed, and hunger to acquire wealth by whatever means necessary, these top military officers syphoned funds from government coffers in order to sustain their exorbitant life styles. Millions of dollars were recovered from the accounts and homes of the military officers. It was overwhelming to discover that one of the top military officers who had a mansion in Badagry area of Lagos, Nigeria gave strict directives that there should be two sewage chambers. One was wired for the storage of waste while the other was dug and fitted with expensive tiles and had drainage channels in case of flood (News Rescue, 2016). This was discovered when the men of the EFCC raided the property after an intelligence report and discovered the sum of \$1million stored in plastic containers and then submerged into the sewage chamber or soak-away. This was seen by some scholars of psychology as a disease or madness as how man will go to such wicked lengths to steal monies exclusively meant for the fight against terror in the Nigerian state. It was further discovered that the Nigerian soldier's welfare was not catered to or short paid and at some point when there was no food at the battle ground, they were forced to confront Boko Haram on empty stomachs (Premium Times, 2014).

To this end a lot of the vibrant and high caliber young air force pilots lost their lives when the shabby and poor air crafts bought by the senior air force commanders began to fall from the sky because they were simply not air worthy. Soon after the EFCC began to probe deeper and make arrests, other revelations began to surface and monies meant for the procurement of arms, military kits and for the welfare of the

men and women of the armed forces found their ways into private coffers which originated from the transfers made from the account of the then National Security Adviser (NSA) Colonel Sambo Dasuki (rtd). To this end this paper will attempt to demonstrate how the lies in the purchase of arms by senior Nigerian military officers translated into corruption which weakened the Nigerian military towards the fight against insurgency thus strengthening the Boko Haram group because the military lacked the kind of armaments needed to confront the dastardly criminal organization Boko Haram. The paper is divided into five different parts which are the introduction, conceptual framework of corruption, theoretical framework, arms scandal in Nigeria, conclusion and recommendations.

2. Conceptual Framework of Corruption

There is no doubt that corruption is tagged as an unethical means of procurement while in public office. According to Justice Mustapha Akanbi (2003) the former Chairman of the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), corruption in the Nigerian state is categorized into three groups:

- i. Street level corruption which explains corruption in administration as demonstrated in day to day experiences of the citizens in their daily interactions with government officials.
- ii. Business corruption that occurs between low medium sized businesses with or without collaborated active connivance of a public sector official.
- iii. High level corruption, which involves huge sum of money in high power centers in finance, public service and public administration.

However, this explains why public office holders engage in corruption so as to satisfy their desires of wealth accumulation and acquisition especially top military officers who jointly collaborated to gang rape the military accounts in their custody. As posited by Obasanjo (2004) cited by Afolabi (2007) who enumerated the various forms of corruption to include advanced fee fraud popularly known as (419), money laundering and unconventional and fraudulent trade practices, misappropriation and diversion of funds, kickbacks under and over invoicing, bribery, false declaration, abuse of office and collection of illegal tolls.

Adigun Agbaje (2004) in his study contextualized corruption within the scope of public service listed such damming factors as an act of perversion of public rules and regulations and misuse of official powers exclusively aimed at satisfying ones selfish motives. To him, other forms of corruption are ones deliberate move to declare assets on the assumption and expiration of public office and or course using ones official status to prevent the administration of justice which is common in Nigeria. Akinyemi (2004)

described corruption as the procurement of that which one as a member of the society not public official alone is not entitled to. In his view this involves offences of misconduct in public offices and is also covered by a variety of internal regulations.

3. Theoretical Framework

In this study, it is clear that top military officers have allowed their brains to be overshadowed by their thirst and hunger to acquire wealth and assets while in public office. Therefore this paper will analyze this nasty behavior of these military officers by using the Social Contract Theory and the Modernization Theory. In analyzing the crude behavior of top military officers in their involvement in corrupt practices of embezzling public funds thereby impeding the success of the Nigerian military, Hobbes (1651) opined the phrase “State of Nature” where he described man to be selfish, wicked, nasty and brutish. He further explained how man was naturally born evil, wicked and would go to greater lengths to satisfy his egoistic desires. To this end it is clear that the display of greed by the military officers of Nigeria could be explained by Hobbes.

Looking at the Modernization Theory, it is clear that the political and economic changes in the society have led to a high degree of inequality in the social and economic systems. Hence this has made the top military officers and other public office holders to steal government monies in order to maintain and sustain the high way of lives they live. Adefulu (2007) concurs that the process of economic and political development in modernizing societies tends to breed corruption, political instability and inequality which in other words means the use of political powers to achieve private goals.

4. Arms Scandal in Nigeria

On the eve of the 2015 elections in Nigeria, the presidential candidate of the All Progressive Congress (APC) party and other scholars were of the view that funds meant for the welfare of security forces predominantly the army and air force were being diverted and shared by politicians and top military officers of the country. This was done by carefully and surgically using the escalations of the Boko Haram crisis to camouflage the request for funds for the procurement of arms but in reality it was actually to get the funds from the Nigerian Senate after convincing the then president Goodluck Jonathan with lies and then shear the billions of dollars among a microscopic few.

With the killings of both civilians and military forces on the increase, questions were being asked on where and how the monies allocated to the military were spent. Nigerians needed to understand why the terrorist attacks were not reducing but instead were on the increase because the main point identified by

the top military officers and also the former NSA Col. Sambo Dasuki was that, the military lacked the weapons to fight terrorism in the country. But in reality the arms and other military hard ware were never purchased but instead the money found its ways into the private pockets of wicked and unpatriotic Nigerians.

However at a point in time in Nigeria, the citizens woke up in the morning to hear a report of how a private jet carrier belonging to Pastor Ayo Oritsejafor the president of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) was arrested at South Africa along with all the people on board when \$9 million dollars was discovered which was not declared, the laws of the country prohibited the possession of such huge amount of money. When the news broke, Nigerians were told that the money was meant for the procurement of arms to combat the Boko Haram Menace in the state. At this point I asked myself, if the USA needed to buy arms will they need to involve Bill Gates or borrow his air craft? I don't think so.

After President Buhari was sworn in on the 29th of May 2015, swiftly the anti-corruption agencies began to investigate and zero in on the suspects on the watch list of most corrupt Nigerians of which arrest were carried out. Investigations revealed that the office of the NSA which was not an operational office but an advisory office was involved in the over inflation of invoices in the procurement refurbished military aircrafts which were quoted to be new but were not. Sadly the aircrafts began to fall from the skies one after the other thereby killing the young and vibrant air force pilots.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations:

The actions of the top military apparatchik and politicians are seen by many as a treasonable act. These people connived and collaborated to steal the money meant for the purchase of arms and armaments to fight Boko Haram. At a point virtually all the states of the north eastern part of the country were taken over by Boko Haram. This was as a result of ill equipped and porous armed forces. It was believed that the terror group was better equipped than the Nigerian armed forces. Due to the high level of corruption in the state especially at the high level, the terror group gained momentum and at the same time took control of local government areas incrementally.

With the new government in office the whole game has changed and Nigerians have begun to see the difference between the former and the latter. Boko Haram has been decimated and almost destroyed due to the renewed moral and brute fighting force the military has. Those involved in the arms scandal have been arrested and are facing law. The government has introduced the Treasury Single Account (TSA) to monitor and control the flow of cash in all government agencies. The TSA was originally the idea of the Goodluck Jonathan administration but the policy never saw the light of day and was never implemented.

However based on the above, the following recommendations are provided to curb corruption and insurgency.

1. Government should introduce death penalty for special cases of corruption which involves the excessive looting of public funds especially when it involves funds meant for the security of the state.
2. At the elementary education level government needs to introduce anti-corruption subjects to the minors at a tender age so that at that young age, corruption will be discouraged and the pupils will understand the ills of corruption.
3. Government needs to introduce more stiff measures that will prevent individuals from diverting the funds meant for the public especially at this time when the state is fighting insurgency.
4. Government needs to increase its military strength, capacity and bases so as to have military presence at least every 400 kilometers so as to protect the citizens from nefarious attacks in the future.
5. Government needs to improve the standards of living of Nigerians and reduce poverty by creating more jobs and providing an enabling environment where entrepreneurs can flourish and at the same time employ the jobless at the same time.

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