

Ethical Issues in the Contemporary World: The Case of Boko Haram in Nigeria

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Abstract

Contemporary ethical issues predominantly proliferate in particular continents and among certain religions. They are issues arising from gay- marriage, abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, extermination of or amnesty to adherents of Boko Haram and the Niger Delta militant. The case of Boko Haram in Nigeria argues for a re-definition of “ethics” according to some selfish opinions and even more, from erudite powerful influential voices. A proper response to an ethical issue should comply with what people consider moral, acceptable and convenient despite all arguments. The solution of the contemporary ethical issues cannot lie on which school of thought is politically right, which continent is more developed, or whose ideas could be tagged primitive. Without falling into the mean arising out of two evils which is logically unacceptable, one ought to determine the historical origins of Boko Haram, the proponents and its vision. A grasp of attendant issues will enable one discern whose convenience the Sect serves and to whose detriment. The case of Boko Haram’s emergence will in this way be seen as attracting no ethical sympathy. Innovation, as Plato’s view on Education holds, should lead people out of the cave (Stumpf, S.E., 1971) and not endanger human species. Ethical solutions should be just, impartial and objective.

INTRODUCTION

In this contemporary age there are several ethical theories to the extent that Situation Ethics argues for no absolute moral norm on specific issues in all situations. (Fletcher J. and Montgomery J.W., 1972). There are, however, burning controversies whose resolutions defy common human agreements. Each school of thought retires with its opinion and praxis. We have for example the issue of test-tube babies, racial exclusion within particular cultures (*Osu*), regional boundary adjustments (Cameroon and Nigeria), Gay marriages, prohibition of women from exclusively performing the rite of handing their daughters over in marriages and the gross denial of the female folk from traditionally breaking the kola nut even though they purchase the same from the markets for their husbands. Feminist elites interpret the ongoing phenomena that affect them as gender suppressing. In each case, there is a defense of a certain correctness based on one school of thought or the other.

One would have totally heaved a sigh of relief in the breakthrough of modern technologies. Unfortunately, there are varying continental ethical standards as a result that there is a rapid growth in conflicting and multiple global ethical theories. Through the instrumentality of some uncontrolled Nigerian militants, the acquisition and miss-application of technologies turn round to harm humans whom they are meant to improve. Worse still, the perpetrators militancy increase in multiple forms. “The case of *Boko Haram* in Nigeria” will highlight its history, the anti-innovative activities of adherents, the ethical impropriety of their quest and the importance of arresting the movement for the sake of national stability.

The Emergence of *Boko Haram*.

Nigeria’s militant Islamic group, *Boko Haram*, an arm of *Al Qaeda* and a type of *al-shabaab* has caused havoc in Africa’s most populous country – Nigeria through a wave of bombings. It is fighting to overthrow the government and create an Islamic state. Its followers are said to be influenced by the Koran’s phrases such as: “Anyone who is not governed by what Allah has revealed is among the transgressors”. The group’s official name is *Jama’atu Ahlis Sunna Lidd’awati wal-Jihad*, which in Arabic means “People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet’s Teachings and Jihad”. (Farouk C. 2012). *Boko Haram* promotes a version of Islam which makes it ‘*haram*’, or ‘forbidden’ for Muslims to take part in any political or social activity associated with the Western society and yet they kill and destroy with the aid of Western built bombs, move with western vehicles, and enjoy Western-oriented agro-based developments not to talk of their usage of the Western electric power generators. They vote during Nigeria’s elections, wear shirts and trousers of Western origins, receive secular educations and erect buildings of Western architecture and materials despite their anti-Western ideologies (Farouk C., 2012) *Boko Haram* sect is based in the North Western Nigeria and was founded by one late Mallam Muhammad Yusuf who was born in Girgir village of Yobe State, Nigeria. *Boko Haram* group started as *Sahaba* group in 1995 under one Abubakar Lawan who actually entrusted the Movement to Yusuf as he travelled to

Medina for his studies. Yusuf and his sect vowed at a time to fight corruption within the government quarters to a successful end. In the light of the current developments that initial motif can be interpreted as tact to divert the attention of the government to enable the Sect to develop at that embryo stage. The later nefarious activities of *Boko Haram*, the fundamental and ultimate motives of the membership will go a long way to argue out their original sinister motif, the necessity to check these militancy in order to sustain innovative projects in Nigeria.

The Nefarious Activities of Boko Haram.

As a form of the Taliban in Afghanistan and an arm of Al-Qaeda, the Sect considered any Western institution totally un-Islamic and therefore infidel. Between 26th July 2009 and 16th June 2011, the Sect registered 21 menaces which include the 2011 Christmas Day bombings in Damaturu on the outskirts of Abuja, the 2010 New Year Eve attack on a military barrack in Abuja, the explosions around the time of President Goodluck Jonathan's inauguration in May 2011, together with the bombings of the police headquarters in Abuja. (Shehu S., 2013).

One would want to know the reasons for the exclusive targeted areas of attack. The militants focus on Christian institutions because they regard Christians as infidels; they attack the government belongings and agencies because the government is not only against them but also fight to uproot them; they fight the Islamic leadership or any utterances against their one dimensional philosophy of Islam in Jihadism. And yet Islam is a Religion that professes and ought to promote peace.

An extract of their chronological destructive meanders appear as follows:

- 26th July, 2009 – the first clash with security agencies in Bauchi State after an all-night attack on Dutsen-Tanshi Police. In this attack 39 of their members, 7 police men and one soldier were killed.
- 27th July, 2009 – First attack in Yobe State at Potiscum Divisional Headquarters. This led to the death of 3 police men and one fire service officer.
- 29th July, 2009 – Confrontation with security men at Mamudo Village, along Potiscum Damaturu road, Yobe. 33 *Boko Haram* members were killed.
- 29th July 2009 - All night battle issued with the security operatives at Railway Terminus, Maidugiri, Borno State. Scores of *Boko Haram* members were killed and their operational base was destroyed.
- 8th September, 2010 – The Sect set ablaze Bauchi Central Prison and freed members of the Sect who were jailed there.
- 28th January, 2011 – *Boko Haram* Sect killed the governorship candidate of Borno State Chapter of the All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP) Alhaji Modu Fannami Gubio and 6 others at Lawan Bukar ward, Maiduguri.
- 2nd March, 2011 – The Sect killed 2 policemen attached to the residence of a Divisional Police Officer (DPO), Mustapha Sandamu at Rigasa area of Kaduna State.
- 30th March, 2011- *Boko Haram* was responsible for the bomb explosion in Damaturu. A policeman was injured.
- 2nd April, 2011 – The Sect bombed Dutsen-Tanshi Police Station and injured 2 policemen.
- 4th May, 2001 – The Sect shot dead a prison-warder at Maidugiri Prison on Kashim Ibrahim Way.
- 5th May, 2001 – It also shot a Duty Officer at Maidugiri Government House, Umaru Shehu, at his Abuja Talakawa residence of Maisandami ward, killing a 13 year old boy and injured another.
- 9th May 2011 – The Sect killed 2 Islamic clerics, Sheikh Goni Tijani and Mallam Alhaji Abu at their residencies in Mairi and Bulabulum wards of Maidugiri.
- 9th May, 2011 – On the same day, the Sect killed the Bauchi State Chairman of National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), Ibrahim Dudu Gobe and injured his son, Mohamed.
- 13th May, 2011 – Two people were killed through bomb explosion by the Sect at LondonChinki, Maidugiri.
- 15th May, 2001- The Sect planted bomb at Lagos Street, Maidugiri which injured 2 soldiers, 3 policemen as another police man was shot dead in the city.
- 20th May, 2011 – *Boko Haram* bombed Bauchi barrack and killed 14 people.
- 31st May, 2011 – The Sect shot the Shehu of Bornu's brother – Alhaji Abba Anas Garba El-kanemi.

- 1st June, 2011 – It killed 5 people during an attack on a police station in Maidugiri.
- 16th June, 2011 – The Sect killed 4 children in a bomb explosion at Damboa town, Maidugiri.

The regularity and the distribution of these menaces only within the Northern Region highlight the Sect's optimal caution in their operations even though they do embark on suicidal bombings. The militants restrict themselves within their Northern borders to maximize security even in the carriage of their weaponry. The persistence of Boko Haram's activities in an exclusive Region challenges the National House of Assembly that has so far failed to point accusing fingers at the culprit(s) for the immediate arrest of the situation and for the termination of the anti-innovative activities of adherents.

Boko Haram's Ultimate Intention

Boko Haram is certainly being used by some Northern powers to re-establish their envisioned hegemony which cannot be realized except by removing the Southern president in power. The second mission is to create an Islamic state even though it stands against the provisions of Nigeria's Constitution. A Southern politician had quoted Gumi (a Northern influential leader) for insisting on the intolerance of a non-Islamic leadership in the Nigeria he knows. (Nzeribe A., 1988). According to Gumi, "if Christians do not accept Muslims as their leader, we have to divide the country" (Nzeribe A. 1988). One can readily read the hand writing on the Islamic wall that motivates such utterances. In the eyes of Gumi, says Nzeribe, "The ideal Nigeria in which there is peace, unity, and social justice is one in which all the citizens are Muslim ... " (Nzeribe, A., 1988). It is this fundamental Islamic argument that nurtured the emergence of Boko Haram even though the Sect claims to cleanse the nation of the Western Culture. The President is not unaware of the ideological starting point. The success of the entire scheme depends basically on the Northerners' grasp and seizure of the presidency through which the Islamic State would be realized. How can all Nigerian presidents come from the North under a democratic dispensation and through free and fair elections? It is impossible. This reduces Gumi's scheme to a day-dream and envisions an unending *Boko Haram's* menaces unless there is a military therapy.

The Anti-Innovative Potential of *Boko Haram*

We cannot but agree with Tony Marinho that the supporters of *Boko Haram* are co-conspirators, politicians and political terrorists (Tony Marinho, 2013). We also agree that the implementation of any reform for successful service delivery is a function of the political environment in which the reform is taking place (Olaopa T., 2012). According to Olaopa, there is a need for a political will to bring innovative ideas to bear on the development of a people; and these innovative ideas are practiced as means of promoting social development (Olaopa T., 2012). If the environment is not fertile, there can be no implementation of any economic or political program. A relative peace becomes a requisite for this political will to be converted to any enabling development agenda. It is this relative peace that *Boko Haram* robs the entire nation and consequently the attendant innovative schemes. This argues for the necessity to arrest the distractive menaces of the Sect in order that Nigeria may sustain and queue up with the innovative global trends. No nation would want invest in a country of high volatility. If the Sect can withstand and kill about 150 and 16 soldiers to the knowledge of other nations on its match to realize an Islamic State, what hope and reason has that industrial nation to invest in Nigeria (Westfälischer Anzeiger, September 2013)?

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical Issues deal with morals or principles of morality. They are concerned with what is right or wrong in conduct. The issues express moral approval in accordance with principles of conduct that are considered correct. They are arguments that question moral values. 'Ethical' seeks to distinguish what is socially correct from what is incorrect (<http://www.ask.com/question/definition-of-ethical-issues>). The Case of *Boko Haram* remains an ethical issue in the contemporary world from the standpoint of the Sect's emergence to the quest for amnesty. The emergence is totally unacceptable as it fights to (a) actualize an Islamic State in a secular nation, (a) appropriate the right to rule the country in a democratic government and (c) do away with anything Western in this global scenario. One would judge its vision as ethically wrong. No one religion would impose its supremacy unto the other in a country where citizens share equal rights. Its second unethical conduct can be better presented against the backdrop of the rise of The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND).

The Rise of MEND and the Impropriety of *Boko Haram's* Amnesty Quest

It is to the knowledge of many Nigerians that the late President Umaru Yar'Adua-led Federal Government granted the warring Niger Delta militants in 2009 a sum \$1 billion for an unconditional amnesty. It becomes immediately necessary to explain the background to this grant before entering into the quest of the members of *Boko Haram*.

The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) constitutes one of the militant groups in the Niger Delta zone. The Movement's aim is to expose the exploitation and oppression of the people of the Niger Delta, the devastation of the environment by both the Federal Government of Nigeria and her allied oil corporations. MEND had been linked with attacks on petroleum operations in Nigeria. MEND engages in sabotage, theft, property destruction, guerilla warfare, kidnapping and killing. MEND feels that it has not benefited from the oil operations taking place on its tribal soil. On the contrary the Niger Delta environment has been totally polluted and can never again be economically productive by the inhabitants. When the MEND unbarred its mind to the then President – Olusegun Obasanjo, it aimed at totally destroying the capacity of the Nigerian government to export oil (Howden D. 2006). From the point of view of MEND and its supporters, the people of the Niger Delta have suffered an untold degradation of their environment due to unchecked pollution produced by oil industry which dispossesses people of their land in favor of the foreign oil interests. The people live to suffer the consequences of the pollution. Kenneth Roth, Executive Director of Human Rights Watch once said: "The oil companies can't pretend they don't know what's happening all around them. The Nigeria government obviously has the primary responsibility to stop human rights abuse. But oil companies are directly benefiting from these crude attempts to suppress dissent, and that means they have a duty to try and stop it". Howden D. 2006) Ken Saro-Wiwa –an Ogoni poet-turned activist was the most famous in this protest (Ken Saro-Wiwa K., 1995) against the military government and the protest was thought to have been finally silenced. Till today, MEND is demanding the moral justification for impoverishing the Niger Delta Land without any version of compensation till the intervention of President Umaru Yar'Adua.

The laudable amnesty program was intended to (a) assist in disarmament, (b) demobilize the Deltans, (c) rehabilitate them and (d) integrate the militants. Under the program, thousands of youths were expected to undergo vocational training in various centers within and outside the country for acquisition of skills in relevant fields. Some would also be enrolled in formal schools. A school of thought held that so long the Niger Delta Militants were granted amnesty, presented a grant to the tune of \$1 billion, the *Boko Haram* militants' hands should also be greased in order to discontinue terrorizing the nation. The ethical question then emerges. For what is *Boko Haram* militants fighting over which they should be granted a monetary amnesty? What harm have they suffered from the Nigerian government? What is the moral justification for the amnesty when one considers the emergence of *Boko Haram*?

In all, one hardly finds the reason(s) why the sect should be granted any amnesty as advocated by a school of thought. For the Federal Government to be committed to such a cause means that any group can take up arms at any time in Nigeria and demand some compensation for having been destructive. The MEND has a case to make against the Oil Companies and the Federal Government for the pollution of their environment. That explains why it sought a union of all relevant militant groups since 2006 till the present day as the Federal Government has not even fulfilled the \$1 billion rehabilitation promise. "But it is regrettable that since the demise of Yar'Adua on May 5, 2010, it seems the amnesty programme for the Niger Delta militants has developed cold feet (Daily Independent). On the contrary, the Sect- *Boko Haram* has no case but simply sets up a case in order to embark on attacks promoted by the fundamental Islamic motive. Where the sect doggedly insists in waging the Islamic war and in request of the amnesty which lacks ethical backing, the government will be pressed to confront the Sect by a state of emergency as a political means of arresting the contemporary issue to maintain a united country (Egem J., 2012). Apart from that strategy, the MEND thought of a confrontational scheme.

The MEND's Intended Reaction

The MEND's intended reaction would have resulted into another civil conflict that perhaps could have enabled the *Boko Haram* Sect to get exactly what they wanted, at least within the upper segment of the country where they really operated. The Christian militants that essentially constitute the MEND threatened to attack Muslim targets in response to the bombings carried out by *Boko Haram*. The umbrella body of armed groups in Nigeria's oil-rich Niger Delta decided to launch a new terror 'in defence of Christianity'. According to the spokesman, "The bombings of mosques, hajji camps, Islamic institutions of clerics that propagate the doctrines of hate would form the core mission of the crusade"(Hirsch A., 16.4.2013). The News that a counter attack against *Boko Haram* would commence

appeared to gain some grounds but suddenly remained only a story. A lot of thinking went into the reprisal exercise. A tribal war could start, followed by a religious war which does not end as envisaged. The ethical value of this scheme did not lend value to its execution. That notwithstanding, the strength of the MEND, the fire-power, and their immediate preparedness remain handicaps in spite of their willingness. It would, however, look as if the President was using his tribesmen to arrest the *Boko Haram* insurgency. It has to be a national affair.

Assembled Suggestions

On account of the jittery nature of these Sectarian harassments, many concerned citizens have presented views that appear somehow feasible at least as possible working guides. These views, in their opinion may reduce the escalation of both *Boko Haram*'s and MEND's activities.

- (a) Effective poverty alleviation policies and enforcement by the government. By this they attribute the general disturbances as the aftermath of mass poverty. This can be relevant to MEND and not to *Boko Haram* because their sponsors must have been sufficiently wealthy to import arms and vie for the presidency.
- (b) Isolate and address the grievances of all interest groups as fair as possible. This appeal recognizes the existence of other local militants such as Ansaru, Arewa People's Congress, Bakassi Boys, Bakassi Movement for Self Determination, and Egbesu Boys that are spread over the Federation in quest of self survival (<http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php> - Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta).
- (c) Enhanced criminal intelligence by the security agencies.
- (d) Police Reform.
- (e) Enhance border Patrol and regulations of the influx of immigrants or aliens.
- (f) Policies to enhance effective leadership, good governance transparency and a mechanism to check, prevent and totally eliminate corruption.
- (g) Put in place effective to conflict mediation and resolution and also an alternative dispute resolution.
- (h) Enhance the relationship between the citizens and security agencies for the maintenance of internal security. (Shehu S., Nairaland 2013).

It must be said that the other militant groups do not threaten the democratic state of the nation nor intend to force the citizens into one religious belief. They fight for the welfare of their ignored citizens and remain loyal to the constituted authority. It means that the scheme of *Boko Haram* is not only unconstitutional but also anti-democratic and unethical.

CONCLUSION

The rise of contemporary ethical issues is practically on account of how humans want to dominate the world, and how the limited intellect intends to clasp at objectives irrespective of the challenging consequences. The case of *Boko Haram* is mounted on a false belief that victory must be won by share application of force guided by the dictates and promise of religion. As a global issue, it is a corruption of the mind to presume the capabilities of ethnic groups or races. No one can actually engage on a war with the other if it becomes obvious that one would lose. The rise and sustenance of *Boko Haram* and the thought to Islamize the nation presume the weakness of the other religions and tribes, the superiority of Islam and its adherents. In the thinking of Moslems, Allah is more powerful than God, when both are the same. The correction of this mindset has become a necessity. And this is exactly the stand of the MEND though presently ill-equipped. If taking up arms to check the upsurge of Islamic menaces has become the only solution, Christian leaders would then face the dawn of the Christian message: namely that they were sent to work among wolves (Lk 10:13). To survive therefore, they must respond to the injunction to sell the coat and provide for a sword. (Lk 22:36) The Nigerian Government had once led hands on the sword in the North through a state of emergency to curb off Islamic excesses. Where a political solution cannot bring about peace, a military method should be applied. It is on account of no convincing presence of a Supper Counter Force that can always suppress menaces that several attempts are being made.

Over and above all, as all cultivate religious tolerance, no one religion or class of people should presume to be the approved servant(s) of a higher God. *Boko Haram* whose equivalents are now

proliferating all over the world should be addressed with all available human resources before its terror totally hampers global innovation and threaten the remaining of human species

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1)The World Organizations like the UNO or OAU, should be mandated to wage outright war on any menacing Sect or group that may impose its might on any nation or people.
- (2)Reports from Human Right Activists should be taken more seriously. The situation ought not to be referred to as exclusively an internal affair.
- (3)Religious activities that sound unethical should be proscribed. The leadership should be called to order.
- (4)Political and Financial Supporters of these fighters should be brought to book and be treated as enemies of the nation.
- (5)The government must have a close watch at all borders and not be a respecter of personality as arms are imported into the country through sacred cows.

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