



## Implications of the Release of Chibok Girls on Nigeria's War on Terrorism

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**Abstract:** The year 2013 marked the emergence of the use of women and girls as hostages by the most dreaded Boko Haram terrorist group in Nigeria. The successful abduction of about 300 girls from the Government Girls Secondary School, Chibok-Borno State, Nigeria, in the dead of the night boosted the effrontery of the sect to undertake more abduction of hundreds of girls and women even in broad day light in North-Eastern Nigeria. The abduction of the Chibok girls generated both national and international concerns and raised the recognition of the group's ruthlessness against women. Various attempts to rescue the Chibok girls by the Nigerian government, humanitarian agencies and the international community failed. Using qualitative descriptive analysis, the paper avows that the controversial release of 21 Chibok girls without battle conditions or reports leaves a lot to speculation. This event represents a symbolism of Boko Haram's ability to hold the Nigerian government to ransom at its own terms. It submits that the gradual release of the girls and the sect's proposal for the negotiation of 83 more girls raises questions on the terms of the negotiations leading to the release as well as queries the strength of Nigeria's anti-terrorism war. The paper recommends that because the release of the 21 hostages may not be the ultimate goal of Boko Haram, the Nigerian state should consciously negotiate on well calculated intelligence and use experts in future negotiation with terror groups in order to construct outcomes that is better than the status quo.

**Keywords:** Boko Haram; Chibok girls; Insurgency; Negotiation; War on Terror; #BringBackOurGirls

## **Introduction**

Terrorism is the “propaganda of the deed” (Laqueur, 1999:43) and “propaganda by deed” (Weinberg and Eubank, 2006:3). This connotes the publicity of the agenda of terrorist groups by their actions. Actions that have serious public impacts tends to have critical impact beyond the effects they have on the immediate targets. Such action are expected to provoke other actions from followers through its messages. Of all the strategies of insurgency, terrorism has been the chosen choice of insurgency obtainable to both religious and political insurgents. The propaganda effects or impacts of the choice of terrorism over other forms of insurgency such as coup d’etat and guerrilla war amongst others make it use deliberate (Agara, 2015).

The relationship between terrorism and gender has been explored by terrorist organisations. Terror groups have propagated their agenda and impacts via direct and deliberate attacks on females. Nowadays, religious based terror groups are committing violence against women than have been ever witnessed in history. For various reasons women have become battlegrounds to be conquered (Barkindo, Gudaku and Wesley, 2013). Terrorist organisations such as al-Qaeda, Islamic State of Iraq and Levant, Hezbollah and Al-Shabaab have adopted the instrument of gender to expand the intensity of propaganda of their deeds, ensure the smooth running of their organisational activities and as weapon of power (Sharoni, Welland and Steiner, 2016).

Since 2013, Boko Haram has significantly contributed to gendered violence against women (Osita-Njoku and Chikere, 2015). The reasons for the rise of gender based violence (GBV),

abduction and use of women by the terror group is the declaration of the state of emergency by Goodluck Jonathan in May 2013 (Zenn and Pearson, 2014; Bloom and Matfess, 2016). The submission of Omego (2015:87) is quite different. He argues that the tactics of kidnapping by the sect began after a raid by the federal forces in which close relations of suspected members of the sect were arrested. According to Barkindo, Gudaku, and Wesley (2013: 22) as cited in Zenn and Pearson (2014) and Gilbert (n.d:1-5), during the raid, over a hundred women including the wives of Abubakar Shekau, the leader of Boko Haram were arrested. Shekau, after this issued a threat in January 2012 to engage in a gender based abduction centered mainly on the kidnap of women “enemies” in return (Associated Press, January 27, 2012). The Vanguard (2013) avows that, Shekau also threatened that “no one in the country will enjoy his women and children” if the relatives of Boko Haram members were not released. Although the second part of the threat which is to spread the terror against women to all parts of Nigeria has not been implemented since then, yet the victimisation of women and GBV became an overt aspect of the activities of the Boko Haram in the northeast (Zenn and Pearson, 2014:46-53; Human Rights Watch, 2014:3-4). Most of the abductions have been carried out in Borno state, the hottest zone of the insurgency in North-East Nigeria. Boko Haram’s adopted kidnapping tactics is similar to that of Al-Shabaab used in the Horn of Africa and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) (Maiangwa and Amao, 2015).

Hostages have tactical values. Terrorist organisations embrace sexual terrorism against their hostages for various

reasons; sex slaves, subjection of victims to rape and early marriage; the manipulation and control of the government and some part of the audience; and sometimes they are assets often used as negotiation tools (Osita-Njoku and Chikere, 2015; Buba, 2015 p.1-12; Yesevi, 2014; Pratt, 2004). The spontaneous rise in the use of females for the accomplishment of suicide bombing missions at the dawn of the intensification of female abductions explains that the abduction of women and girls by Boko Haram is for instrumental purpose such as the furtherance of the agenda of the Boko Haram and the weakening of Nigeria's war against terror. Therefore, this paper seeks to interrogate the politics and intricacies surrounding the negotiation between the Nigerian government and Boko Haram for the release of the 21 Chibok girls as well as discuss its effects on Nigeria's anti-terror war. It questions why Boko Haram after series of failed negotiations with the Nigerian state suddenly agreed on a deal of releasing 21 of the abducted Chibok girls. The paper is therefore structured into six sub-headings. Section one serves as the introduction; the second part addresses the methodology and theoretical framework; part three discusses the concepts germane to the study; part four provides an overview on the abduction of the Chibok girls and the various reactions that ensued afterwards from the national and global contexts; section five tackles the implications of the politics surrounding the release of the 21 Chibok girls on Nigeria's anti-terror war while the six sub-heading concludes the work and provides recommendations for more effective anti-terror war in Nigeria.

## Methodology

This paper relies on secondary data obtained from journals, conference proceedings, monographs, textbook and internet sources. The data sourced through these were analysed through the employment of qualitative descriptive analysis with the backdrop of the Eastonian Systems theory which explains the solidity of the political system as a function of the ability of the system to convert the inputs (demands and supports) to outputs (authoritative decisions) that please majority of the people.

### Conceptual Clarification

#### The Concept of Terrorism

Although terrorism has become a global phenomenon, the acceptance of a common definition amongst scholars has been difficult. Attempts to define the concepts have instigated arguments amongst scholars (Ifemeje, Ewulum and Ibekwe, 2015; Agra, 2015; Joshua and Chidozie, 2014). The reason for this could be traced to the various context within which the term has been used. To arrive at common grounds, attempts to define terrorism has been grouped into two: academic definitions and official definitions. A number of official definitions have been compiled by Schmid and Jongman (2005). The United States (US) Vice President's 1986 task force defined terrorism as "the unlawful use or threat of violence against persons or property to further political or social objectives. It is generally intended to intimidate or coerce a government, individuals or groups to modify their behaviour or policies" (Chaliand and Blin, 2007 p.14). US State Department defines it as a premeditated politically motivated violence perpetuated against

non-combatant targets by sub-national groups of clandestine agents, usually intended to influence as audience (Gadd, Karstedt and Messner, 2011p.192). The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) states that terrorism is “any activity that involves an act that is dangerous to human life or potentially destructive of critical infrastructure or key resources; and ... must also appear to be intended (i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population, (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination or kidnapping” (Gadd, Karstedt and Messner, 2011 p.192). The definition by the Department of Defence and the DHS are more detailed than that of the US Vice President. While the definitions by the Department of Defence and DHS focuses on threat, the actual act of violence, the target of the whole society as well as the government. The Department of Defence however narrows the cause of terrorism to political reasons contrary to what is obtainable in some countries of the world. In modern times, reasons such as religion have been a serious cause of terrorism. This is exemplified in the case of the Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria. The definition did not also distinguish between attacks on non-combatant civilians and on military combatant. Nevertheless, three commonalities can be discerned from these official definitions are the presence of political objectives; the use of violence; and the intention of creating fear in the target population.

Agara (2015) avows that the academic definitions are diverse and complex. There are little consensus as to the root

causes of terrorism, whether they bear economic, political and social symbol. Cline and Alexander (1986 p.32) contends that terrorism is the deliberate employment of violence or the use of violence by sovereign states as well as some national groups assisted by sovereign state in order to attain strategic and political objectives through the violation of law (cited in Prunckun, 1994 p.22). Ladan (2014) avows that terrorism is the calculated use of violence (or threat of violence) against civilians or non-combatants, in order to attain goals that are political or religious or ideological in nature, which is done through intimidation of a population or government or an international organization or coercion or instilling fear to do or abstain from doing any act (cited in Ifemeje, Ewulum and Ibekwe, 2015:40). Rourke (2008:316) has defined terrorism by attempting to highlight the features common to it thus; “terrorism is (1) violence; (2) carried out by individuals, nongovernmental organisations, or covert government agents or units; that (3) specifically target civilians; (4) uses clandestine attack methods, such as car bombs and hijacked airliners; and (5) attempts to influence politics.” From the above, it is clear that terrorism involves the perpetrator(s), the victim(s) and the target(s) of the violence. It is the use of various means and violence to achieve whether political, economic and social goals within a political environment. Terrorism as a social menace has had so much negative effects on human freedom, human inalienable rights and human security.

### **(a) War on Terror**

The “war on terror” is a response to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the United States (US). The concept was coined by former US President George Bush after the incident. National Strategy for Combating Terrorism posits that war against terror is a long term battle against the “underlying conditions that promote the despair and the destructive visions of political change that lead people to embrace, rather than shun terrorism.” The strategies include four major goals which are to defeat terrorist organisations of global reach; deny further support, sponsorship and safe havens of terror groups; diminish the underlying conditions that are already stated above and defend the US, its citizens as well as its interest at home and abroad (National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, 2003). The war on terror conceptualised by George Bush involves overt and covert military operations, the blockage of financial flows to terrorist groups and new security legislations. It involves attempts to mitigate the impacts of terrorism because ancient and current realities show that terrorism goes beyond identifying with an ideology to the impact of the ideology. Therefore, the war on terror involves engaging various avenues and strategies such as military, legal, political and ideological attempts to globally fight against terror groups themselves, the organisations and individuals supporting them with funds, arms, technology and logistics advices; destroying existing terrorist networks and preventing new ones from springing up.

While George Bush’s war on terror is a strategy to protect the US and its allies globally, the idea received the support of western powers such as Britain and other countries that envisaged the strategy as a way of boosting their national security. Through the platform of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Counter Terrorism Committee, the US provided supports to African countries to implement the UNSC Resolution 1373 that requires countries to suppress and prevent funding to terror groups, improve on border security, prevent and suppress recruitment by terror groups and prevent new and existing safe haven of terrorists (Abolurin, 2011:194).

The presence of Boko Haram in Nigeria, terrorism in Mali, the existence of al-Qaeda and the existence of the al-Shabaab amongst others showcase evidences that the war on terror has not been globally successful although since the 9/11terror event, the US has not witnessed such massive spate of terror. However, the existence of terrible terror groups around the world as well as the socio-economic and psychological impacts they cause makes it logical to deduce that terrorism still remains an issue to the US ministry of defence and the UN Security Council. The war on terror has been very demanding on the Nigerian government due to the guerrilla nature of the Boko Haram activities and the loose network of its members. The declaration of the state of emergency, the emergence of civilian joint task force, the deployment of the use of force, negotiations and peace talks are strategies that have been employed. Trillions of naira have been gulped by Nigeria’s war on terror.

## **(2) The Chibok Girls: Abduction and Reactions**

### **(a) The Chibok Girls Abduction Discourse**

In April 2014, Boko Haram adopted a new and notorious tactic of kidnapping female students and women in the north-eastern part of Nigeria. It is also clear that this tactic is very similar to that of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISIL)'s attacks on school girls in the areas it controlled in Iraq. The tragic story of the abduction of the Chibok girls began on the night of April 14 and 15, 2014 when Boko Haram laid siege on the Government Girls Secondary School Chibok (GSSC), a rural town in Borno State and kidnapped 276 students who were writing their final Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSCE) (Maiangwa and Amao, 2015). Disguised as security guards, the terrorists ordered the students out of their rooms for their own safety. The girls were seized from their dormitory and loaded in the back of trucks. While 57 of the girls narrowly escaped immediately after their abduction, 219 were still missing and under the control of Boko Haram (Richmond, 2015). It remains the largest single occurrence of abduction by Boko Haram (Human Rights Watch, 2014 p.3).

On May 5, 2014, Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau in a video took responsibility for the abduction of Chibok girls. He even threatened that more abductions would still occur. Shekau added that he would sell them in the market as slaves (Martel, 2014). He claimed that:

Allah instructed me to sell them...I will carry out his instructions. Slavery is

allowed in my religion, and I shall capture people and make them slaves. He added: Western education is sin, it is forbidden, and women must go and marry. He said the girls should not have been in school and instead should have been married since girls as young as nine are suitable for marriage (cited in John, 2014).

From a video released by Shekau, it is observed that some of the girls have been married off and some sold into slavery. Nevertheless, some accounts holds that they were smuggled into Cameroun and Chad through the porous borders (Peters, 2014:188). The success of the abduction of over 200 girls and the attention the sect received expedited the expansion of its propaganda both internationally and domestically. This encouraged the sect to engage in more of such sacrilegious act and depend on women operatives. It has been observed that:

The abduction of the Chibok girls has become one of the high profile cases illustrating a phenomenon that has attracted increased attention and concern in recent years: violent targeted attacks on students, teachers and education institutions (Richmond, 2015).

### **(b) Reactions to the Abduction of the Chibok girls**

The abduction of the Chibok girls stirred a lot of emotional reactions and rescue efforts from both local and international bodies as the Chibok abduction brought attention to the vulnerability of women and girls in Nigeria (Copeland, 2013). The first controversy that the issue ignited was on the weekend of April 19-

20, 2014, when the Defence Headquarters falsified a report that over 100 of the 129 figure that the ministry said was abducted were released. This was debunked by the GSSC Principal. The military was forced to retract this statement on April 21, 2014. Hope was dimmed at the inability of Goodluck Jonathan, Nigeria's immediate past president to rescue the girls. Then First Lady Patience Jonathan, although breaking protocol decided to intervene by summoning the GSSC principal, Chibok community leaders and some key figures in Borno State government to seek clarifications and amicable solution to the missing girls' conundrum. Her call was heeded only by the principal and a few others. This necessitated the tearful outburst: "Na only you waka come..." that popularised the issue. It also changed the dynamics and raised the tone of the agitation for their release.

The prolonged case was heightened with somewhat confusion on the part of government on what rescue mechanisms should be adopted. A vehement military engagement with Boko Haram terrorism created a vacuum for several stakeholders to volunteer intervention. This birthed the Bring Back Our Girls (BBOG) movement that began as a "One Million March for the Release of Abducted Chibok Girls". The march was led by Ms. Hadiza Bala Usman, the present Director-general of Nigerian Ports Authority. The movement transformed to the BBOG with the appearance of Mrs. Oby Ezekwisi, former Minister of Education and World Bank Vice President, Africa, which gave the campaigning an international prominence, especially with the

#BringBackOurGirls hash tag. Put differently, the frustration ignited by the initial determined and energetic response from the parents, Nigerian authorities and local advocates began the "Bring Back Our Girls" campaign. This popularised the #BringBackOurGirls movement and publicised the hashtag on social media. It demanded that Goodluck Jonathan mounts concerted strength to rescue the girls. The #Bringbackourgirls twitter phenomenon (campaign) had over 3.3 million tweets from all over the globe (Buba, 2015). It boosted the conspicuousness of the girls' abduction and gained international support of well-known figures such as Malala Yousafzai a Nobel Prize-winner and Michelle Obama amongst others (Stein, 2016).

While human rights activists got support through public awareness campaigns and NGOs, Nigeria's international partners, such as France, US, Canada, China, UK, Israel and United States also volunteered to rescue the girls. They provided supplementary military support to augment Nigeria's weak counter terrorism prowess. They provided spy planes, technical experts and also sent Special Forces to assist Nigeria's efforts (Khan and Hamidu, 2015: 25). The US supported Nigeria in getting intelligence by providing drones and unmanned surveillance aircraft (Bloom and Matfess, 2016). The internationalisation and external dynamics of the activities of the sect also gave rise to an African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) under the auspices of which Nigeria have had military involvement in the Sahel. The reasons for the increased international responses is because the acts of the abduction contradicted moral values and humanitarian principles. It

was a crime against humanity. For Mrs. Michelle Obama, the immediate past First Lady of the United States, the act was “unconscionable” (The Hindu, 2014). Unfortunately, the collaborative counter terrorism efforts did not yield positive results especially in the rescue of the abducted Chibok girls as over 200 of them are still in captivity.

### **(c) Responses of the Nigerian Government**

Two major approaches have been employed by the Nigeria state in its war against terror. Human Rights Watch (2012) describes them as the stick and carrot approaches.

#### **(i) Stick approaches**

##### **• Military Engagement**

According to Udounwa (2013), Nigeria has engaged “kinetic strategy” in its war against Boko Haram. This strategy entails the use of hard military power. The strategies and tactics in kinetic operations are similar to how state actors conduct themselves in conventional warfare. This involves massed movement of infantry, the use of manoeuvres and the adherence to rules of engagement in war. Pruitt (2006:374) avers that most government prefer the use of core military force because it “requires no concessions, grants no legitimacy, and is consistent with the norm of punishing illegal violence.” Full military response is also used because of the need to protect the sovereignty of the state as no government will allow a group to usurp part of its territorial sovereignty.

Thousands of soldiers were deployed to the region for direct military offensive against Boko Haram. The military has not had an easy feat in winning the war

against the militants. The military was underfunded and was not adequately equipped with the suitable weaponry for that kind of warfare. Nigeria’s former Chief of Defence Staff, General Martin Luther Agwai astutely observed that: “Our military is properly equipped to fight yesterday’s war” (Siollun, 2015). President Muhammadu Buhari, Nigeria’s incumbent president have achieved much success in the war against Boko Haram because the challenges the military faced were addressed.

#### **- Declaration of the State of Emergency**

The declaration of a state of emergency was necessitated by the constitutional obligation to restore a portion of Nigeria’s territory taken over by Boko Haram. It involves the suspension of constitutional provisions relating to civic rights. According to section 305 (3 (c) (d) (f) of the Nigerian Constitution as amended, the President shall have power to issue a state of emergency only when, “there is actual breakdown of public order and public safety, there is a clear and present danger of an actual breakdown of public order and safety in the federation or any part to require extraordinary measure to restore peace and security or to avert such danger” (Nkwocha, 2012:368). In December 2011, former President Jonathan declared a state of emergency in 15 local government areas of six northern states as an attempt to restore order and regain control of the territories taken over by the sect. On May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2013 the state of emergency was also declared in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states. It was extended until November 2014 in an attempt to crush the Boko Haram



militants. However the security crisis continued to worsen.

#### **- Joint Task Force Initiatives**

At the regional level, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MJTF) was formed in March 2015 by the Federal government of Nigeria along Niger, Chad and Cameroon her immediate neighbouring countries under regional framework of Lake Chad Basin Commission. It had over 8,000 soldiers.

The Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), a citizen-led initiative was created on the rationale that strong knowledge of the local environment would allow the local population to arrest Boko Haram members (Okeowo, 2014). The CJTF mostly made up of vigilante groups, hunters, farmers and youths in the areas also complement the efforts of the military in degrading Boko Haram (US Homeland, 2013). This has been a crucial advantage to the MJTF that were not familiar with the local context or even local languages. The collaboration between the MJTF and the CJTF have been effective in capturing and neutralising hundreds of terrorists on many occasions. However, it is argued that CJTF worsened the distance between the State and the people.

The accession of Shekau after the death of Mohammed Yusuf led the group to a more violent phase. Boko Haram began to employ new tactics and methods, including suicide-bombings which prompted the Nigerian government to establish the Special Military Joint Task Force (SMJTF) in 2011. It consists of personnel from the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS), the Department of State Security (DSS) and the Defence Intelligence Agencies (DIA) (Falode, 2016). The role

of the SMJTF was to join forces, efforts and intelligence in winning the war against Boko Haram.

#### **(ii) The Carrot Approach: Negotiation and the Release of the 21 Chibok Girls**

The carrot approach include the use of peace talks and negotiations. Engagement in peace talks and negotiations with terror group is a common trend amongst the governments of the terrorism infested states. The federal government have engaged in private, public, direct and indirect interactions with Boko Haram over the release of the 21 Chibok girls and in ending the insurgency in general. At the state level, the carrot approach has involved proposals and reconciliations to Boko Haram insurgents. For instance, in 2009 Ali Modu Sheriff former governor of Borno State paid N100 million naira to pacify the anger of the sect when their leader Mohammed Yusuf was killed.

At the national level, the government have tried to bring the sect to the negotiation table as well as offer repentant ones amnesty. Late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua's establishment of a committee of inquiry led by Ambassador Usman Galtimari to ascertain the complaints of the sect and make likely commendations on how to improve security in the north-east (Onuoha 2012). In 2013, President Goodluck Jonathan set up the Committee on Dialogue and Peaceful Resolution of Security Challenges in the North to identify and constructively engage key leaders of Boko Haram and to develop a workable framework for amnesty and disarmament of members of the group (Amaliya and Nwankpa, 2014). As

recommended by one of the panels, efforts by the government to engage the group in talks have failed mostly due to difficulties in identifying Boko Haram's demands (Thurston, 2015).

At the assumption of President Buhari to office, there has been much silence over the rescue of the girls. During his media chat on December 2015, he disclosed that there were no concrete intelligence about the Chibok girls. Following the media chat, in April 2016 the sect released a video taken in December showing "about 15 chubby looking and relaxed Chibok girls" (Thisday, 2016). The government responded to this video with Operation Crackdown and bombardment of Boko Haram enclaves in Sambisa forest to free the girls. This ended with no success recorded.

The government of Nigeria has had some failed attempted negotiation with Boko Haram. Shehu Sani, a civil right activist in northern Nigeria, was the first to help broker peace deal between the government and the sect. Secondly, by May 2, 2014, the then President, Goodluck Jonathan announced that his government was making uptight efforts to rescue the girls. The hopeful assurances issued by the Jonathan administration was countered by the statement issued by the sect in a video on May 12, 2014 in which the leader of Boko Haram Abubakar Shekau, was shown cladded by over 130 of the girls with a long Islamic chador and hijab, and called for a prisoner exchange. It was against the backdrop of this that Ahmad Salkida, a journalist, brokered a pact to ensure the release of the girls in exchange for 100 Boko Haram prisoners detained in various prisons in Nigeria. However, this plan was abandoned after

the consultation of Goodluck Jonathan with United States, Israeli, British and French governments in Paris where it was agreed that force be used instead of prisoner exchange (Iroegbu, 2016). Thirdly, former Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo also attempted to negotiate between the sect and the Nigerian state. At the end of the negotiation, the demands by the sect were the prosecution of policemen responsible for the death of Yusuf Mohammed; demands for a ceasefire which included an end to arrests and killings of their member; and payments of compensation to families of sect members killed by security personnel (Uchegara, 2014). Fourthly, attempts was also made by Datti Ahmad, president of the National Supreme Council on Sharia to broker a deal between the Nigerian state and the sect in 2012 to no avail.

Around August 2016, there was a ray of hope that came with Islamic State (ISIS) announcement of Abu Musab Al-Banarwi as the new Boko Haram leadership. Abu Musab Al-Banarwi was said to be more inclined to negotiate the freedom of the Chibok girls in exchange for some of their commanders (Iroegbu, 2016). After the negotiations brokered by the officials of the Swiss government and in which the international Committee of Red Cross played a neutral intermediary role, a date and location was agreed for the release of the girls (Ukpong, 2016). On October 13, 2016 the nation, international community, concerned citizens and the families of the abducted girls experienced a happy moment that all have been eagerly waiting for. 21 of the Chibok girls abducted in 2014 were

released to freedom at Kumshe some kilometres away from Banki close to Nigeria's border with Cameroon (Ogundipe, 2016). It is one of the greatest achievements of the government since the beginning of the Boko Haram ordeal.

### **(3) Implications of the Politics of the Release of the 21 Chibok Girls on Nigeria's Anti-Terror War**

States negotiate with terrorists for both strategic and tactical reason. However, state-versus-terrorists negotiations has raised so much debates because it opposes the standard doctrine which holds that "one should not negotiate with terrorists". The traditional perception about the relationship between the state and terrorists has been to launch a military attack on terror groups (Zartman, 1990 p.165). Eland (1998) avers that "most attention has been focused on combating terrorism by deterring and disrupting it beforehand as well as retaliating against it after any attack on the state." Less attention has been paid to what motivates terrorists to launch attacks against innocent citizens and the state. In line with this traditional view on state-terror groups negotiation is the concept of the war on terror and Ronald Reagan's debates on negotiating with terrorists. The Regan debate is that:

America will never make concessions to terrorists. To do so would only invite more terrorism, once we head down that path there would be no end to it, no end to the suffering of innocent people, no end to the bloody ransom all civilized nations must pay (Cambanis, 2010).

The Regan debate summaries the traditional position on state-terrorists

negotiations. While the issue of states negotiating with terrorists is a complex one, various reasons have been attributed to the why democratic states must never do such. In the actual fact, states detest negotiations with terrorists because terrorism is an overt disrespect for state sovereignty. Negotiation with terrorists is unacceptable and illegal because of their affection for violence, disrespect for the principle of the rule of law and other legal framework (Hoxha, 2015). By 2001 president George Bush stated that the only way to deal with terrorists whose only goal is deaths is to bring them to justice which definitely is not by talking to or negotiating with them but punishing them (Bush, 2003). In 2004, Vladimir Putin, a former president of the Russian Federation, stated that "the universally recognized method of fighting terrorism is denying any negotiations with terrorists because any contact with them encourages committing new, bloodier crimes" (Putin, 2004). Similar perception was also held by Nigeria's former President Goodluck Jonathan, who saw the violence and hostage taking of women and children as the declaration of war against Nigeria and the undermining of the authority of the state. In response to this, Goodluck Jonathan vowed to take all necessary action to putting an end to the impunity of terrorists in Nigeria.

Other arguments includes that arriving at a middle ground is a support of violence as well as an avenue of rewarding terrorists. Democracies must never give in to violence, and terrorists must never be rewarded for using it. It is also argued that negotiating with terrorists tends to legitimise or justify the terror group and undermine the actors that pursue

political change through peaceful means (Toros, 2008: 408; Neumann, 2007). Martha Crenshaw (1983: 25) argues that “the power of terrorism is through political legitimacy, winning acceptance in the eyes of a significant population and discrediting the government’s legitimacy.” As such Toros (2008: 408) opines that such a course of action would legitimize the terrorists and set a bad precedence. In practice, there are cases of democratic governments that negotiated with terrorists. The British government maintained a secret back channel to the Irish Republican Army even after the IRA had launched a mortar attack on 10 Downing Street that nearly eliminated the entire British cabinet in 1991. In 1988, the Spanish government dialogued and negotiated with the separatist group Basque Homeland and Freedom only six months after the group had killed 21 shoppers in a supermarket bombing. In 1993, the Israeli government secretly negotiated the Oslo accords even though the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) continued to launch its terrorist campaign and refused to recognize Israel’s right to exist. The US negotiated with the Taliban for the release of Bowe Bergdahl (Neumann, 2007).

Hayes (2002) avows that state-terror group negotiation mostly occurs in hostage situations like that of the Chibok girls. Prisoners are used as instruments to achieve strategic gains. Put differently, hostages have strategic values as assets that are often used as negotiation tools. The use of hostages as a point of strength in negotiations is a common trend in terror groups. Whether the Nigerian government should negotiation with Boko Haram generated

mixed reactions from Nigerians. According to Agbibo and Maiangwa (2014), a survey conducted by CLEEN Foundation in August 2012 projected the public opinions of Nigerians on whether the government should dialogue with Boko Haram or not. The northern and southern parts of Nigeria were divided over the acceptance of negotiation. Opinions from southern Nigeria averred that there should be no negotiation with the sect, rather force should be more effective in dealing with the terrorist organisation. Opinions from Northern Nigeria asked for negotiation contending that a coercive strategy would be ineffective in resolving the insurgency. Definitely, the reasons for the varying opinions between the north and the south is not far-fetched. Support for negotiation in the north could be because of the intensity of the attacks in the region, the high rate of deaths, maiming, displacement, general violence and terror experienced by the civilians in the region. On the other hand, the south could afford to reject negotiation because the north has been the terrain of the violence and therefore has not experienced the terror the North experienced from the insurgency.

The failure of warfare led the Nigerian government to ensure a successful negotiation with the sect. Finally, after intense dialogue and compromises 21 of the Chibok girls have been freed during the current administration of President Muhammadu Buhari. With no clues from the partners in the talks, Nigerians amidst the jubilation with the families of the girls only speculated what the deal would have involved. In the light of the above, a public opinion on Premium Times News (2016) discussion forum

argues that President Buhari sees the release of the girls as a medium for the release of Sunni terrorists. A Nigerian who mediated previous failed negotiation attempts between the Nigerian government and Boko Haram stated that the Swiss government paid some “handsome ransom” to the tune of millions of dollars on behalf of the Nigerian authorities for the release of the girls. The minister of information Mohammad Lai, representing the Nigeria government claimed that no ransom was paid for the girls and Boko Haram commanders were not released in exchange for the girls (Okakwu, 2016). The Minister credited the release of the 21 Chibok girls to “painstaking negotiation and trust on both sides” (Campbell, 2016).

The fact remains that negotiation involves compromise. Negotiation is a direct process of dialogue and discussion taking place at least between two parties who are faced with a conflict situation or dispute. The goal of the parties involved in the negotiation is to arrive at an agreement on the causes of the conflict between them (Best, 2007:105 cited in Obiajulu, 2011). Self-interest of the parties underpins the negotiation process but it often ends in the show of empathy to the other party. The continuation of warfare between the state security forces and the Boko Haram as well as the release of another 82 hostages by the sect buttresses the speculations that the Nigerian government paid some forms of due to Boko Haram. Iroegbu (2016) opines that “it is an arranged prisoner exchange programme.” Supporting this stance, Okakwu (2016) avers that there are signs to prove that four Boko Haram prisoners were exchanged for the girls in

Banki in North-East Nigeria. This also brings to the fore a statement issued by the sect months before the release of the girls that the girls would only be released as exchanges for Boko Haram commanders (Al Jazeera, 2016).

Premium Times News (2016) discussion forum contends that there is a relationship between Boko Haram and President Buhari. Nigel (2016) argued that the release of the girls is a political strategy for the retention of political power and office (cited in Premium Times News, 2016). The argument also follows that the gradual release of the girls by Boko Haram is to make Nigerians believe that the president and his party are effective and should be voted for in the forthcoming general elections in 2019. Nonetheless, the #BringBackOurGirls campaigners avers that the release of the 21 girls confirms the development of the capacity of the government in the anti-terror war. Karen Bass, a member of the House Foreign Affairs Sub-committee on Africa and a member of the United States Congress avers that:

The release of 21 Chibok young women from the grips of the terrorist group Boko Haram into the custody of the state services department is bittersweet news. The negotiations – brokered by the International Red Cross and the Swiss government – have resulted in the greatest breakthrough since the beginning of this ordeal. However, I join the rest of my colleagues in wanting to see the release of the remaining 197 girls who remain in captivity and are still enduring

systematic abuse, rape, and forced labor at the hands of these militants (Okakwu and Ukpong, 2016).

This paper takes a position that it is wrong to view negotiation, mediation, and dialogue with terrorist groups like Boko Haram as a sign of weakness or compromise for the acceptance of violence. This is because it was wise for the option of negotiation and other methods of conflict resolutions to be embraced when over the years the use of force have failed. As terror groups are founded on imagined or real demands, dialogue helps state to understand the demands and grievances as well as conveys a message of the understanding of their plights by the state. However, the release of the Boko Haram commanders poses security risk to the Nigerian state as the act is an empowerment of the sect for more violence. Since the released commanders are not repentant or ex-members of the sect they remain enemies of the state and would act against the peaceful existence of the state as they did before their arrest.

This paper aligns with one of the arguments of the traditional state-terrorist negotiation thoughts that the release of hostages does not mean the victory of the state over the terrorist group. The release of the 21 Chibok girls is not equal to the victory over the insurgency. However, the Nigerian state has attached the release of the girls to part of the criteria for measuring its victory over terrorism. Contrary to the state-centric analysis of the implications of the state-versus-terror group negotiation, the paper contends that it is not the actual act of negotiation that

encourages terrorism and the reuse of terror tactics by terror groups but the degree to which terrorist groups is able to achieve their demands via negotiation. The negotiation may strengthen the faction in the insurgent group that is in favour of non-violent and political solution or engagement. Negotiation could draw insurgent groups down a path of change, moderation or transformation towards non-violence. Weiss (2003) argues that the acceptance and willingness for terrorists to negotiate occurs after a realisation that its goals are unachievable. Therefore agreeing to negotiate portrays that the organisation is weak; connotes the possibility of changing their ideological position and strategy as well. Hence, Weiss argues that rather than dwelling on the negative effects as perceived by the traditional school of thought, negotiation could be a platform for states' victory over insurgent groups- to bring terrorists to positive change. On this note, while the swap of the girls represents an achievement for the BBOG campaign, it shows that negotiating with moderate elements within the Boko Haram could be explored by the Nigerian government to win the war on terror in Nigeria. The Nigerian government need to engage the moderate group of Boko Haram in discussing the sources of their grievances which will be addressed via effective policies.

Negotiation theory states that negotiation should be carried out by experts from various but relevant segments of the society. On the contrary, the negotiation between the government and Boko Haram was conducted by politicians. The National Security Agency (NSA) assured that the government engaged the

right set of people which does not include the military. As such the negotiation was a political decision and the military continued military combat against Boko Haram (Saharareporters, 2016). This position is a deviation from the traditional model of state-versus-terrorists negotiation. Modern perception on state-terror group negotiation states opines that sole dependent on military action is an inadequate strategy for winning the war on terror. Military solution can never solve the problems. The establishment of the amnesty Committee reflects President Goodluck Jonathan's acknowledgment that purely military means cannot resolve the current impasse (Thurston, 2013). Military actions are inadequate because most of the wars is usually caused by political, social, economic reasons. The paper argues that the success of the military in the theatre of war was of great help to the success of the negotiation.

### **Conclusion**

Many modern-day governments have insisted time after time that they will not negotiate with terrorists which in practice have not been so. Over the years, calls from the Nigerian government, individuals, international agencies and the global communities for negotiations with Boko Haram for the release of the girls have failed. The sudden willingness of the sect to negotiate with the government for the release of the girls in batches is quite surprising and calls for caution. It brings Nigeria to a decisive point or juncture of whether it will win the war on terror or not. Subsequent upon the conclusion of

this study, the following recommendations are put forward:

The fight against insurgency and anti-insurgency policies should be implemented by experts. Prior to the release of the girls most of the anti-insurgency efforts involved the use of force. On the other hand, the negotiation deals have been strictly political. Both approaches although crucial to defeating the insurgency have their weaknesses and effects on the fight against terror in Nigeria. This paper proposes that there should be a firm relationship between the military anti-insurgency strategies and political negotiation. For effective counter-terrorism operations, the obviously existing politico-military institutional divisions should be addressed in further negotiations with terror groups.

The Nigerian government should understand that negotiation cannot bring the Boko Haram insurgency to an end as it is not an all effective instrument in curbing terrorism. Certainly, buying the entirety or part of the group off does not epitomize a long-term solution. There is no absolute guarantee that the hard core of fighters would be bought off via negotiations. Rather, a long lasting solution to the insurgency should address the causes of their grievances which are fundamental political, economic, and social problems rooted in society.

Lastly, while negotiation should not be completely ignored as an approach to resolving contending issues, the government needs to understand that the release of hostages is not the ultimate goal of the terrorists but is a symbolism or an avenue for the establishment of their influence. The government

however need to understand that the negotiation also offers it the opportunity to exert influence. It should therefore try to construct an outcome that is better than the current status quo. In the light of the above, Nigeria needs to develop a

well drafted strategy of engagement that will be used for future negotiation. The strategies should ensure that the sovereignty of the state and other rights the state enjoys within international laws are not compromised.

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