

Interrogating the Nexus between Globalization and Boko Haram Insurgency in North East, Nigeria in the 21st Century

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Abstract

Globalization and Boko Haram insurgency are connected but how information and communication technology (ICT) as an instrument of globalization affects the insurgency is the motivation for this study. Boko Haram in Nigeria is part of a global jihadist movement. Consequently, the sect has a connection with globalization that has not only influenced its activities but facilitated and exacerbated its reach and effectiveness. Therefore, the broad objective of this study is to evaluate the impact of globalization on Boko Haram insurgency in North East, Nigeria and specifically to ascertain how information and communication technology (ICT) aids its operations in Nigeria. The paper adopted Interdependence Theory as the theoretical framework in order to analyse the interaction of Boko Haram within Nigeria and the global environment. It employed qualitative method of data collection and descriptive content analysis as the method of analysis. The paper established that information and communication technology (ICT) aids the operations of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. It recommends that the Nigerian government should evolve cyber security measures to regulate the use of information technology to checkmate the nefarious activities of the insurgents in Nigeria. That service providers, regulatory authorities and security agencies should monitor and track down websites that are used for insurgency activities.

KeyWords: Globalization, Insurgency, Boko Haram, Relationship, Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Introduction

The contemporary world has become a global village. Connectivity has made this possible by narrowing geographical distances and making territorial boundaries less significant. In view of this, (Arora, 2013, p.14) conceives globalization as “the increasing, intensifying and hastening up in recent times, worldwide interconnectedness in most aspects of social life.” Also, Khalid (2007) cited in (Ezeugwu, 2012, p.262) adds that globalization denotes increasing global connectivity, integration and interdependence in virtually all spheres of endeavour like political, economic, technological, social, cultural, and etc. Globalization binds nations, people, organizations and communities together through various channels.

Globalization is a welcome development for mankind because of its associated benefits. For example, better connections in an open world improves people’s lives by making products, services and ideas readily and universally available, breaking down restriction on trade, communication, transportation as well as increase in interdependence across the globe. Also, the availability of information from around the world, via improved information and communication technologies e.g. internet services and interconnectivity among people and global mass media are attributes of globalization.

However, the most worrying aspect of globalization is that some groups and individuals are turning its positive attributes into dastardly act of inhumanity to man. To this end, criminal elements in the world such as insurgents are using the advantages provided by globalization to achieve their clandestine objectives. Hence, there is a connection between globalization and insurgency especially Boko Haram in Nigeria. Boko Haram is a movement for the propagation and consolidation of Islamic theocratic state. It seeks to overthrow the Nigerian government and establish an Islamic state ruled by Sharia law. This informs the brutal war the sect is waging in Northeastern Nigeria. Abdullahi (2015) opines that scholars of globalization and insurgency state that the forces of globalization

have unleashed the “infrastructure of uncivil society” and accelerated the transnational flows of clandestine groups, terrorists, insurgents, militias and criminal syndicates; thereby increasing their organizational efficiency and deadliness. Therefore, Boko Haram insurgents in Nigeria have uniquely positioned itself to exploit the benefits of globalization to execute their sectarian objective and to undermine peace and security. It is against this backdrop, that this study interrogates the nexus between globalization and Boko Haram insurgency in North East, Nigeria. This is with a view to ascertaining how information and communication technology (ICT) aids the operations of the insurgency in Nigeria’s north east.

Kalb (2000) states that as a result of globalization, individuals and geographical locations around the world are increasingly more extensively and closely linked to each other as a result of growing international flows of capital, goods, services, information, and ideas. It has also made human and societal lives easier through innovations in transportation, technology and information especially information and communication technology (ICT).

In effect, globalization is of positive value given its contributions to mankind. But this beneficial aspect has been exploited and turned into negative use to the disadvantage of the society. For instance, advancement in technology has resulted in the development and use of internet, cell phones, etc; the manufacture of light, heavy, biological, and chemical weapons. These instruments are at the reach of criminals such as terrorists and insurgents, hence the connection between globalization and Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria.

The questions agitating the minds are: How has the sect grown in sophistication and strength? Has the platform provided by technology any effect and influence on insurgency’s operations in Nigeria? How does information and communication technology (ICT) aid Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria? The broad objective of this study is to evaluate the impact of globalization on Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. The specific objective is to ascertain whether information and communication technology (ICT) aids the operations of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria’s North East region.

Conceptual Clarification

Globalization

Globalization is a concept that is laden with several definitions in the literature. Therefore, various scholars have explained it in different ways depending on their stand on global divide. Ogu,, Iyanda, & Ogu, (2015, p.72) conceive globalization as “the process of world contracting, of narrowing distances, things getting closer. It has to do with the increasing ease with which people at one side of the world can relate, to in a beneficial manner, with others on another side of the world.” According to them, this definition is more concerned with the consequences and effects of globalization while the important aspects of globalization such as the course, process and equipment (artifacts) have been left out of the definition.

Therefore, Reich (1998) cited in Ogu et al (2015, p.72) avers that globalization is “multi-dimensional linkages and interconnections that cut-across the nation states (and by implication the societies) which make up the world system. It defines a process through which events, decisions and activities in one part of the world can have significant consequences for individuals and communities in quite distant parts of the globe.

The above agrees with the views of Obasi, and Nnamani, (2014, p. 291) “the intensification of worldwide social relations which connect distant entities in such a way that local happenings are influenced by events occurring in far away places and vice-versa (this accounts for the influence of dollar as an international currency over other local currencies)”. what this means is that the dollar though an American medium of exchange is an international currency with implications on socio-economic activities across the globe as it affects the value of many local currencies in terms of quantity and quality of goods and services they can purchase.

Elucidating further, Ogbonnaya, (2013, p.60) infers, “the concept denotes the expanding interdependence of the people and countries of the world.” According to David, Anthony, David & Jonathan, (1999) cited in Eze, (2014, p.290) “generally, globalization can be referred to as the widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide, interconnectedness in the life of the people from social to cultural, criminal to financial and to the spiritual.”

On the other hand, Abudllahi, (2015, p.59) opines “globalization entails the trans-border spread of knowledge and information through new technologies such as the world wide web, mobile telephone and liberalized media.” According to Henderson, and Jeydel (2010:242) “globalization broadly refers to the ever increasing integration of economies, peoples and societies in all parts of the world.” Also, Thomas, (1999) cited in Henderson, and Jeydel, (2010, p.242), stresses that globalization is “the relentless integration of markets, countries and technologies to a level never observed before in a manner that is enabling people, businesses and nation-states to interact around the world farther, faster, deeper and cheaper than before.”

Also, Ikotun, (2009) cited in Ezeugwu, (2015, p.263) states, “globalization is a process of integration of not only the global economy but also the integration of technology, governance and all forms of development. This process is marked by diminishing space, contracting time, disappearing national borders and it embraces all dimensions of human life. This process is powered by technology, most especially the information and communication technology.”

Beck (2000) refers to globalization as the numerous connections between individuals, corporation, states and societies which constitute the modern world system. It describes the process by which events, decisions and activities in one part of the world can have significant impact on peoples and communities in quite distant parts of the globe. Implicit in these views is that globalization is concerned with or centered on people and (entities or states), involves transmission of information, facilitates contacts and relationships, narrows distances through transportation and communication. Therefore, it affects the social, political, religious and cultural life of the people in different parts of the world.

Insurgency

According to Wikipedia “An insurgency is a rebellion against authority (for example, an authority recognized as such by the United Nations) when those taking part in the rebellion are not regarded as belligerents. This means that insurgents direct their nefarious activities against states recognized by the UN and at the same time not recognized as armed participants in warfare.

Hellesen (2008, p.14) sees insurgency as “organized movement that has the aim of overthrowing a constituted government through subversive means and armed conflict” Also, this suggests that insurgent groups have set objectives that may be political, religious, social or ideological and mostly employ unlawful or illegitimate means of achieving them.

Siegel (2007, p.328) states that, “the goal of insurgency is to confront and overthrow an existing government for control of power, resources or for power sharing”. According to US Government (2012) “insurgency is a protracted political-military struggle directed toward subverting or displacing the legitimacy of a constituted government or occupying power and completely or partially controlling the resources of a territory through the use of irregular military forces and organizations”. The common denominator for most insurgent groups is their objective of gaining control of a population or a particular territory, including its resources. This objective differentiates insurgents from purely terrorist organizations.

This view conforms with Boko Haram’s goal of overthrowing the legitimate government of Nigeria and if this cannot be achieved, to take control of the entire northeast of the country in terms of its people and resources.

Insurgencies have some commonalities or characteristics and are categorized into types depending on their objectives.

Some of the characteristics of insurgency as provided by American Guide to Analysis of Insurgency are: (1) Insurgency is a violent political struggle for control of people and resources. (2) Undercut the ability of government to provide the population security and public services. (3) Insurgent warfare is characterised by lack of frontlines, sequenced battles, and non-conventional military tactics including guerrilla warfare, terrorism or ethnic cleansing. The distinction between civilians and combatants is blurred in insurgency, often resulting in proportionally higher civilian casualties than suffered in conventional conflicts. To every observer of Boko Haram activities, the insurgency has since inception exhibited these dangerous and heinous characteristics by previously taking control some of the northeastern parts of Nigeria and seriously undermining the capacity of government to protect lives and property as well as provision of services. But more pathetic is the loss of lives and property through suicide bombings and guerrilla attacks.

The Guide further classified insurgencies into types such as: (1) Revolutionary (2) Reformist (3) Separatist (4) Resistance and Commercial insurgencies. These names explain the specific objectives pursued by each insurgent group. It also states that revolutionary insurgencies seek to replace the existing political order with entirely different system, often entailing transformation of the economic and social structures. Fundamentally, Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria perfectly fits into this category because it seeks to overthrow the federal government of Nigeria and enthrone an Islamic system.

Boko Haram

Obinna, (2011) and Sanni, (2011) cited in Oladimeji et al, (2012, p.5) noted that, “Boko Haram was derived from Hausa and Arabic words. Boko in Hausa means “western education” and “Haram” an Arabic word means “sin”. These scholars, among others noted that the term means “western education is forbidden” is due to the strong opposition to anything western as it is believed by the sect to have corrupting influence on Muslims.

On the other hand, Barna, (2014, p.5) asserts “Boko Haram is the name commonly used to refer to the organization ‘Ahlisunnah Lidda await wal-jihad’ or the ‘people committed for the propagation of the prophet’s teachings and Jihad’. Boko Haram emerged in early 2000s as a small Sunni Islamic sect advocating a strict interpretation and implementation of Islamic law for Nigeria. While the sect’s original leadership did not initially call for violence, its followers engaged in periodic skirmishes with Nigerian police during its formative years. At that time the group’s activities were limited in scope and contained within Nigeria’s predominantly Muslim northeast.

Beyond its core militants, who ascribe to violent Sunni extremist ideology, the group appears to draw support from a broader group of followers, predominantly young men from northeast Nigeria and the border areas of Southeast Niger and Northern Cameroon.

According to US officials, it is estimated that Boko Haram has between 4000 and “hard core” fighters and has demonstrated a significant operational flexibility in its nearly seven- year insurgency. The group shifted from unconventional guerilla-style or terrorist strikes against government and civilian targets, towards a conventional offensive to seize and hold territory. Estimates of territory held by Boko Haram vary, but it is suggested that by early 2015 the Nigerian government might have lost between 40% -70% of Borno State and some territories in neighboring Yobe and Adamawa States, including border areas near Cameroon (Blanchard, 2016).

North East, Nigeria

The North East region of Nigeria consists of six (6) states namely: Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe. It is inhabited by diverse ethno-cultural, religious, linguistic and traditional groups including the Kanuri, Hausa, Fulani and others Ostein, (2015). According to NNPC (2020), the region is sustained mainly by agricultural

sector but other natural resources like solid minerals abound there. The zone is plagued by insecurity as a result of Boko Haram activities and the concomitant displacement of a significant population as well as the disruption of socio-economic activities (Internal Displacement Centre, 2020). North East, Nigeria is characterized by high level of poverty and there is limited or rather lack of access to critical and basic services such as education and healthcare (World Bank, 2018).

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopted Interdependence Theory as its theoretical framework. Thibaut and Kelly (1959), developed the theory. Kelly and Thibaut (1978), further expanded the theory to investigate how interdependent partners assess their interaction as well as behave towards one another in different situations. The theory acknowledges that globalization which is associated with increased interconnectedness and positive outcomes, at the same time creates vulnerabilities that can be exploited by non-state actors like terrorist groups. It has been proven for example, that Boko Haram has been leveraging global networks for recruitment, sourcing funds and spreading of its ideology. The theory accepts that globalization reshapes state sovereignty and in addition to influencing national security dynamics by granting non-state actors such as Boko Haram access to exploit global systems. The theory is very useful in analyzing and understanding the relationship between globalization and Boko Haram insurgency. It explains how Boko Haram insurgents vis-à-vis other terror groups and cybercriminals, leverage global interconnectedness to actualize its goals.

Methodology

A qualitative method of research design was adopted by the paper to interrogate the nexus between globalization and Boko Haram insurgency in North East, Nigeria. It helped in exploring how Boko Haram insurgents leverage and exploit the instruments of globalization like information and communication technology (ICT) such as the internet, mobile phones and etc for recruitment, training, funding and indoctrination. Secondary sources were employed in the collection of data, which included books, journals and internet sources. In addition, qualitative descriptive analysis was used to establish the relationship between globalization and Boko Haram insurgency in the North East, Nigeria.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Operations of Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria

Advances in science and technology have undoubtedly served the interest of clandestine groups such as terrorists and insurgents, through the use of internet, mobile telephones, social media and etc. Technological innovation according to Theohary and Rollins (2011), is used by international insurgents, jihadists and terrorist organizations as a tool for achieving set goals.

Therefore, Oluwafemi et al (2013), contented that terrorism has profited immensely from the technological and social advances of the 20th century, in terms of the level of destruction that can be created and the height of public anxiety it can spawn. Terrorists take advantage of ICT due to its ability to improve communication and aid organization. According to them, after the 9/11 attacks in the US an investigation of the use of ICTs by terrorists began and it was discovered that the terrorists used the internet to prepare for the attack. This is against the backdrop that the attacks were not cyber in nature, since it was not internet-based, yet the internet was used as one of the tools in the preparation. Today it is a common knowledge that terrorists use ICTs and the internet for recruiting, promoting propaganda, gathering of information, publication of training materials, communications, preparation of real-world attacks, and financing, etc .

Against this background, insurgents Theohary and Rollins (2011), noted, maintain several dedicated websites, including one with Arabic language, online magazine and publish daily electronic press releases. They distribute audio, video, and graphic products online. Boko Haram has utilized all these especially the internet effectively. It always issues press releases concerning its operations, highlighting major feats such as successful attacks and

rebuttal of claims of government's successes in counter-insurgency operations. To ensure global reach, it disseminates information in international languages such as Hausa, Arabic and English.

Terrorists use the internet not only to learn how to build bombs but also to plan and co-ordinate specific attacks. Al-Qaeda operatives relied heavily on the internet in planning and coordinating the September 11 attacks. Hamas activists in the Middle East, for example, use chat rooms to plan operations and operatives exchange e-mail to co-ordinate actions across Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, and Israel. (Weimann, 2004, p.10).

More so, Baylis et al (2008, p.380), stress "e-mail and cell phone contacts among geographically separated group members allow them to conduct their attacks in separate locations or converge on a specific target area".

The technologies associated with globalization, such as internet, e-mail and other forms of social media are used by Boko Haram members for communication among themselves and between members of other terror groups. They are also deployed in the coordination of various attacks at different towns and cities within the northeast of Nigeria. This explains why the insurgents are able to attack simultaneously Maiduguri, Bauchi, Gombe, Yola, and parts of Yobe State, all within the theatre of insurgency war. On why and how terrorists/insurgents use the internet,

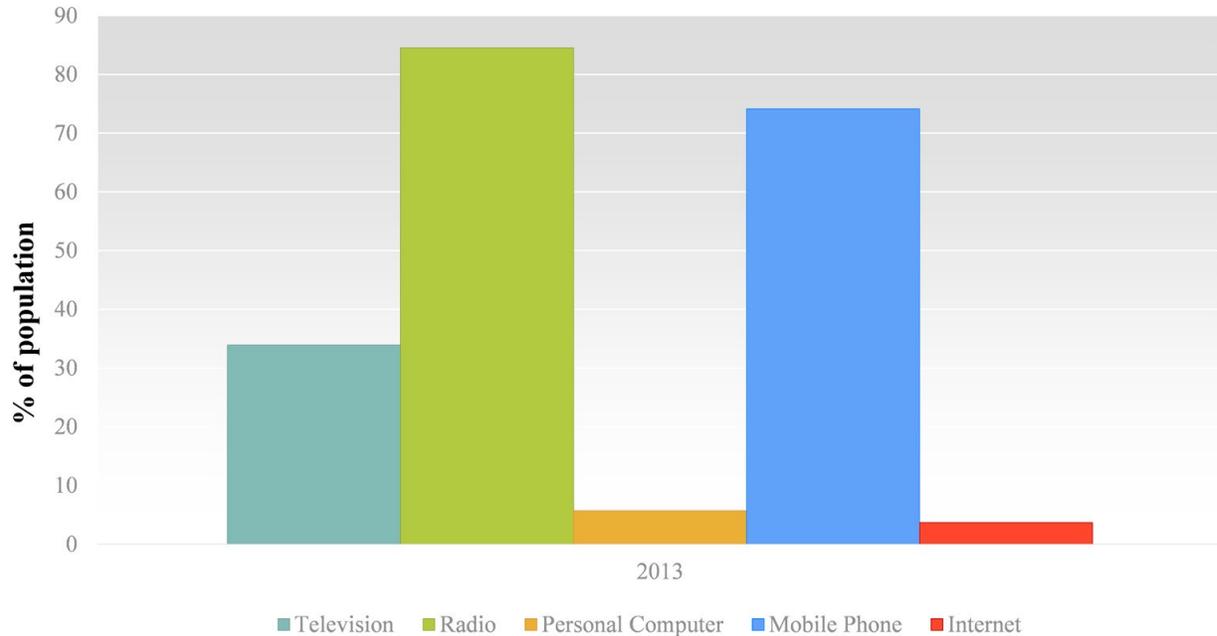
Extremists use chat rooms, dedicated servers and web sites, and social networking tools as propaganda machines, as a means of recruitment and organization, for training grounds and for fund-raising through cybercrime. These web sites and other internet services may be run by international terrorist groups, transnational cybercrime organizations, or individual extremists. You Tube channels and Face book pages provide networks for terrorists. (Theohary & Rollins, 2011)

According to (Vasti, 2015, p. 98) "the last 20 years has seen a huge increase in the use of new media (internet) in Nigeria. The internet has had a major impact on Nigerians today as approximately 43 million people have access to the internet. This is complemented by the growing popularity of mobile phones."

"Boko Haram has made extensive use of mobile phones, video cameras, DVDs and YouTube in its operations." Walker, (2012, p.7) However, the group has made use of internet and mobile phones in the co-ordination of activities as well as to communicate messages to the world. The internet enhances Boko Haram's ability to reach out to the people. Their use of the YouTube to upload videos is a case in point as YouTube is accessible to millions of people.

Furthermore, Vasti (2015) states that free availability of encryption programmes has also provided insurgents with the ability to communicate with one another via secured conduits without detection. In addition, it is extremely difficult to effectively track insurgents communications when they are utilizing emails as account information is usually anonymous or email messages are encrypted. The increased availability of and access to technology has given individuals and groups including insurgents increased access to the world at large.

Figure 1: **Information and Communication Technology Access in North East, Nigeria**



Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2013)

From the figure above, the internet usage in northeast Nigeria is low, approximately 10% compared with other means of communication. But its use is gradually increasing and since the emergence of Boko Haram and has been a tool in the hands of the insurgents. Therefore, the growth and deployment of internet has a great implication on the operations of Boko Haram insurgency. The expansion in internet subscription means that more segments of the people can be reached by the insurgents. Consequently, the internet provides Boko Haram the platform for publicizing its activities such as indoctrination, fund raising, recruitment, teleconferences as well as highlighting its successes in attacks.

Also the figure indicates that radio remains the most popular communication medium in northeast Nigeria representing 85% of the population. But according to NBS though that the standard of living and level of income in northeast is far below the national average, mobile phone has achieved comparable high penetration in a relatively short time as the radio. The percentage of the population connected to GSM phones is 75%. Most of these mobile phones such as Satellite phones and Thuraya are at the disposal of Boko Haram insurgents to plan and execute attacks at different locations within northeast and its environs.

Jacob and Akpan (2015) stress on the instantaneity of mobile communication, which eliminates temporal delays. This capability is essential for planning and executing attacks, surveillance, timing and precision of surprise. Boko Haram relies on the simultaneity of mobile communications to co-ordinate attacks and activates cell members based at different locations proximal to target. By bridging temporal and spatial dimensions of their activities, the sect achieves simultaneity in attacks.

Ogu et al (2015) still posit that these attributes of globalization discloses the explosive contradictions and conflicts inherent in it and that the technologies of information and communication that facilitate globalization can also be used to undermine and attack it, and generate instruments of destruction. It is observed from the analysis that terrorism globally, is largely influenced by globalization, whether directly or indirectly. That several opportunities provided for by globalization; perhaps for the development of society have turned out to be means of terror and war on the state and unfortunately on civilians too.

Conclusion

Globalization is a process that has affected the course of events in the world including the activities of clandestine groups like the insurgents. Therefore, the study discovered that because of interconnectedness of goods, services, people and places that globalization has a linkage with Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. It established that the instruments of globalization are the major forces driving and sustaining the activities of the insurgency. It found out that information and communication technology (ICT) aids as well as enhances the operations of the insurgency in Nigeria

Recommendations

1. International protocols, treaties and resolutions on free movement of people, goods, services, and financing of international terrorism/insurgency should be implemented by the global community to checkmate Boko Haram's nefarious activities.
2. The federal government of Nigeria should evolve cyber security measures through legislative and legal frameworks to deal with the infrastructure of international insurgency.
3. Efforts should be made by ICT providers, regulatory authorities and the security agencies to monitor, track and subsequently shut down websites being used for insurgency operations.

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