



Insecurity, Insurgency and Boko Haram Terrorism in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Although existing country and global data suggest that Nigeria witnessed a reduction in deaths associated with terrorism, the country continues to occupy an unviable position in world ranking of the most terror ridden countries. While insecurity in Nigeria is driven by several factors and players, the Boko Haram sect stand out as the most vicious contributor to the figures that make the country occupy the unhealthy position of the most terror infested country in the world. Boko Haram has been responsible for deadly bomb attacks strategically directed at a wide range of public and religious spaces. This sect has also conducted targeted assassinations of politicians, ordinary citizens and religious/traditional leaders. Boko Haram claims to be on a divine mission to purge corruption and bad governance from the Nigerian society and implement the Sharia Islamic laws across the country. In course of carrying out its supposed divine mission, the Boko Haram has wreaked havoc on the Nigerian system. While the whole country is affected by the activities of Boko Haram, the north-east remains largely the epicentre of the attacks. The activities of this terror group has affected the economic, social, religious and political well-being of the people of Borno State and Nigeria at large. This study contends that in order to mitigate and reduce the impact the terrorist group, the Government should seek international assistance and/or partner with neighboring countries to promote secured borders to prevent the inflow of Boko Haram insurgents. Government should also embark on infrastructural development, empowerment programmes and also create enabling environment for foreign direct investments employment opportunities.

I. INTRODUCTION

Being a Country endowed with abundant mineral and natural resources, the discovery of crude oil particularly, in 1956 in the Niger Delta region, brought a rapid growth in Nigeria economy. The Niger Delta region has a population of 27 million covering an area of 70,000 square kilometers, with 500 communities and 50 ethnic groups (Dafinone, 2018). Paradoxically, since the dawn of oil exploitation the region has remained significantly impoverished and marginalized, which is evident in the destruction and distortion of the ecological balance of the region as a derivative of pollution of surface and underground waters resulting to general extinction of aquatic life, loss of clean water and a complete annihilation of nature – made goods.

After years of complaint by the people living in the region successive governments and those in the Oil producing companies seem to be insensitive, apathetic and indifferent over the plight of these people whose lives are being maimed indirectly on a daily basis. Meanwhile, failure of the government and oil producing companies to ameliorate the incalculable hazards resulting from their actions, led to the establishment of some militant groups such as Niger Delta Volunteer Force, Niger Delta Liberation Movement and Movement For the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), which was a more organized group and serves as a fountain of strength to all other groups. These militant groups became outrageous and dangerous in their *modus operandi*, destroying lives and property complemented by abduction of oil workers, kidnapping, oil bunkering, destruction of pipe-lines, and other oil producing facilities.



However, shortly after handing over of power to President Yar'Adua in 2009, the Amnesty Programme was granted to militants simply to disarm them and to restore peace and serenity in the area. The question that has been simmering around the issue of amnesty is whether the programme is both necessary and sufficient to tackle the crisis of insurgency in the region especially in the long-run. Apart from that, there is also the worry from policy analysts as to the fact that Amnesty might be an incentive for proliferation of violent and terrorist groups in the country given that Nigeria does not have a reward system for peace (Adaekoya & Rasak, 2016).

While it seemed like crisis in the Niger Delta has subsided, the Northern youths energized under the auspices of the Boko Haram movement reached an elastic limit with severe bombings that have led to so many lives and properties being lost. Formed by late Muhammed Yusuf in 2001, the group which is built on Islamic Jihad framework, claim to be a structural resistance to the infiltration of Western values into the North (Adebayo, 2013). Central to Boko Haram's ideology is the notion that many aspects of Western life—including democracy, the consumption of alcohol, and women's and gay rights—are antithetical to Islamic civilization. Although the group's name is widely translated as "Western education is forbidden/sinful," Boko Haram's leaders insist that the name refers not just to Western education but also to Western civilization in its entirety.

Boko Haram is considered to be a major terrorist threat affecting Nigeria and other countries, and US officials believe it is potentially allied with Al Qaeda. U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) Commander General Carter F. Ham stated in September 2011 that three African terrorist groups - Shabab of Somalia, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb across the Sahel region, and Boko Haram - "have very explicitly and publicly voiced an intent to target Westerners, and the U.S. specifically" and that he was concerned with "the voiced intent of the three organizations to more closely collaborate and synchronize their efforts" (Chinwokwu, 2014). According to Chinwokwu:

This group since 2009 had claimed dozens of lives among which were basically Christians, destroyed property worth billions of naira, bombing of Christian Churches and Military/Police barracks, indiscriminate release of prisoners and perpetration of all forms of evil acts in the country (page, 8).

While the Boko Haram specter has continued to haunt Nigeria, it is easy to see that the emergence of most youth insurgencies in the country is a product of structural historical facts that have been strongly undermined by the leadership of the country. For instance, the widespread unemployment that has engulfed the teeming youths in the country creates a necessary army for all sorts of social unrest. Suffice it to say that, most Nigerian crisis especially among the youths cannot be divorced from a long history of ethnic bias, high rate of unemployment and abject poverty. Quoting Shettima the Governor of Borno State, Adesina posit that:

The seeds of the problem had been sprouting in Borno State and in the country for the past 30 years due to a failure of leadership at various levels. For example, he said, in the last two years, the ten local government areas that make up Borno North produced only two students with 5 GCE credits and above, "and even those two, I heard, were the sons of soldiers posted to the area. So apart from the children of elite, there were no children of ordinary persons in the whole of Borno North who were qualified to secure admission into the university (Adesina, 2013, p. 20).

In the sense, socio-economic deterioration can be readily indicted as the key drivers of recruitment into the terror group. It has been reported that the Boko Haram' leader Mohammed Yusuf, "despite his misguided ideology, retained the loyalty of his supporters by providing one meal a day to each of his disciples. He also had a youth empowerment scheme, under which he helped his disciples to go into petty trading and wheel barrow pushing. He also arranged cheap marriages between sect members, which enabled many of them to marry given them personal dignity and self-worth in a society that has offered absolutely nothing to them (Adesina, 2013)."

Adverse socio-economic conditions notably unemployment as we all know disrupts normal transition into adulthood. Unemployed persons are denied the opportunity of being independent to their parents hence are faced with frustration, hardship, demoralization, dejection and prevents them from enjoying normal social life. This is a situation that amounts to increased criminal acts which indicates feeling of unfair treatment, unequal resource distribution and the pure fact of poverty that is related to alcoholism, drug addiction, violence, rape, prostitution, and ultimately behaviours that are termed terrorist.



Boko Haram's series of bloody terrorist attacks in northern Nigeria has announced their activities to an international audience putting Nigeria into the league of terrorist nations in addition to the negative social, economic, religious and political consequences for the country. Boko Haram has certainly sparked off a wide-reaching international debate about its very nature and the extent to which it poses a global threat.

The Boko Haram phenomenon, though may have political and religious dimensions as is being frequently canvassed, is in my view more poverty and education-related; and efforts to correct this anomaly should represent the focus of policy. A person with no education and no means of livelihood will likely place little or no value on his life, and his mind could be negatively twisted or influenced with ease. We must draw a comparison with the young man who set himself ablaze in Tunisia, which triggered the Arab Spring, and his counterpart in Nigeria who in the process of committing suicide decided to kill other innocent people. While the Tunisian was educated and would rather die alone in protest against social deprivation, his Boko Haram counterpart in Nigeria, who is most likely an illiterate and has therefore been easily brain-washed, would for one morsel of food kill himself and other innocent people without qualms. It must be noted from their tactics that none of the leaders of Boko Haram wants to die, but they have many foot soldiers who are socially deprived and would, therefore, readily serve as cheap cannon fodder.

The Origin and Chronicles of Boko Haram Crisis

The first indication of the possible rise of terrorism in Nigeria came in 2004 which warned that a potent mix of communal clashes, radical Islamism and Anti-Americanism would produce a black hole for terrorism with deleterious consequences for the legitimacy and stability of Nigeria (Lyman & Morrison, 2004 in Maiangwa, 2013). It is eight years since this observation was made, and unfolding events in Nigeria seem to corroborate the hypothesis of the authors of an impending terrorist threat in the country. Ever since the return to democratic rule in 1999, Nigeria continues to battle serious socio-economic and political problems, which exposes the country to attacks by radical groups such as Boko Haram. Since its violent uprising in 2009, Boko Haram has been responsible for a spate of bomb attacks and assassinations that have left more than 3,000 people dead. The sect's attacks have been strategically

directed at the Nigerian security forces and prominent northern politicians, innocent civilians, media houses, communication centres, hotels, beer parlours, religious houses and public structures. The avowed mission of the sect is to establish a government in Nigeria functioning under the Islamic Sharia law. The sect reiterated on 24 April 2011: We are warriors who are carrying out jihad, that is, religious war in Nigeria, and our struggle is based on the traditions of the Holy Prophet. We would never accept any system of government apart from the one that is stipulated by Islam, because that is the only way that the Muslims could be liberated. (Oshisada, 2012). In fulfillment of its overarching objective, Boko Haram has rejected the amnesty offer made by the Nigerian Government and has become implacable. The sect has heightened its violent campaign of terror on innocent civilians and seem undeterred by the heavy-handedness of Nigeria's security forces who have also intensified their military tactics against the sect since the beginning of 2013. In its beginnings in 2009, the sect mainly attacked security forces, hotels and other government establishments using machetes and small arms. However, by late 2010, after the sect's leader—Mohammed Yusuf—was reportedly killed by the Nigerian Police, Boko Haram augmented its modus operandi and embarked on suicide bombing missions by employing highly sophisticated weapons including Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (VBIEDs) to bomb churches, schools, mosques and other public places in northern Nigeria.

Given the alarming proportion of attacks, the Boko Haram phenomenon remains the most severe terrorist threat that Nigeria has had to confront since its emergence as an independent nation-state in 1960. The snowballing effects have manifested in the killing of humans and the destruction of properties and public infrastructure with the northern region of the country faring the worst (Forest, 2012, 1). Although Boko Haram terrorism is fanned by a complex web of domestic factors within Nigeria, its ideology resonates with those of other terrorist groups in Mali, North Africa and other parts of the world where terrorists are holding sway. Worse still, an environment like northern Nigeria with its chequered history.

Boko Haram, a pejorative name that the Jama'at Ahlis Sunna Lid-Da'awat wal- Jihad (Group committed to propagating the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad) bears in Nigeria, is a combination of Hausa and Arabic languages that



literally translate into Western education is forbidden. The group started as an Islamic sect with a puritanical, conservative literalist approval to Islamic theology sometime in 2002 – Maiduguri, the North East part of Nigeria (Katsina 2011:28). Boko Haram, as an organization may have begun in 2002. However, its transformation into an armed group started around July 2009 when about 17 of its members were massacred in cold blood by the Nigerian Security Personnel (Sani 2011). Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf was the founder of the Islamic sect.

Studies show that he established a religious complex in Maiduguri in 2002 that included a Mosque and a school where many poor families from across Nigeria and neighbouring countries enrolled their children. The school also served as a recruiting center for the Jihadists that fight the Nigeria State. The center was later moved to Kanamma, Yobe state, where he set up a base called “Afghanistan”. (Ojukwu 2011:64).

Accordingly, the Boko Haram began like the “Taliban” and was first moved to Yobe state in 2003 during the build up to the 2003 elections. The group was to be used by the politicians in the state as hatchet men during the elections, but things failed to work out as planned. Thus, the group was abandoned and later forced out of the state. Perhaps, it was as a result of that that the group, on December 22, 2003 struck in Yobe state, with a repeat of such an attack on December 31, 2003 (Galadima 2011). According to Herskovits (2012) Boko Haram turned to violence after the killing of its leader, Muhammed Yusuf, in cold blood while in police custody. Till date, not a single person is tried and punished for this extra-judicial killing.

Boko Haram leaders still cite Yusuf’s death as one of the main factors driving the insurgency. The group remains fiercely anti-government and anti-authority and resentful of the decades of corrupt, poor governance that have impoverished its home region. At first, Boko Haram was involved mostly in fermenting sectarian violence. Its adherents participated in simple attacks on Christians using clubs, machetes and small arms. Boko Haram came to international attention following serious outbreaks of inter-communal violence in 2008 and 2009 that resulted in thousands of deaths. By late 2010, Boko Haram had added Molotov cocktails and simple Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) to its tactical repertoire. This tactical advancement was reflected in the series of small IEDs deployed against Christian targets in Jos, Plateau State, on Christmas Eve 2010. Boko Haram

conducted a number of other armed assaults and small IED attacks in early 2011.

The IEDs involved in these attacks were either improvised grenades constructed by filling soft drink cans with explosive - which were frequently explosive-which were frequently thrown from motorcycles or slightly larger devices left at the target. This attack paradigm was shattered June 16, 2011, when Boko Haram launched a suicide VBIED attack against the headquarters of the Nigerian National Police in Abuja. Though not overly spectacular (security measures kept the device away from the headquarters building and it exploded in a parking lot), the successful deployment of a large VBIED and a suicide operative represented a dramatic leap in Boko Haram’s capability. An organization does not normally develop such a capability internally without some signs of progressive advancement in its bomb making capability. For example, a group could be expected to employ medium sized IEDs before it employed large VBIEDs. That is skipped a step prompted (Stewart 2020) to believe reports of Boko Haram members receiving training from al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb in northern Africa or from Al Shabaab in Somalia (or some other outside group). Boko Haram conducted its second suicide VBIED attacks in Abuja in August 26, 2011, this time targeting a U. N Compound in the city’s diplomatic district. This attack proved far more deadly because the driver was able to enter the compound and reach a parking garage before detonating his device near the building’s entrance.

The attack against the U.N compound also marked a break from Boko Haram’s traditional target set of government and Christian facilities. If the intelligence that triggered the warnings of hotel attacks in November 2011 is accurate, it appears the group may also have considered transnational targets at least to the extent of seeking to eliminate involvement by the international community in Nigerian in order to undercut Abuja. This shift in targeting raised concerns that the group’s contacts with al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and / or al Shabaab had influenced it.

According to the Adesina (2013), for militant groups, claims of al-Qaida membership bring the temporary boost of credibility and kudos, and therefore of funds and recruits. But we should be wary of taking the supposed links to al-Qaida too seriously. Claims that Boko Haram leaders met al-Qaida in Saudi Arabia during the pilgrimage to



Mecca should not be dismissed outright. But it is unclear whether it was an encounter with Saudi Arabian militant – of whom there are very few these days – or with figures from “al-Qaida Central”, who would have taken an enormous risk by traveling. Both scenarios are theoretically possible. The conventional wisdom in intelligence circles is that Boko Haram has received cash, possibly large sums of euros paid to criminal “jihadi” factions in the Sahel, from the al-Qaida affiliate al-Qaida in the Maghreb. The latter group is fragmented but tenacious, and is also believed to have provided Boko Haram with training in contemporary urban terrorism, particularly suicide attacks. However, the Nigerian group remains a local phenomenon that does not pose an international threat, British and other officials say. The fact that it appears to be boasting of links with al-Qaida – which has suffered significant losses in recent years – does, however, indicate that the brand created by the late Osama bin Laden may remain more attractive and durable than some analysts have thought.

It also raised fears that due to its rapidly involving attacked capability, Boko Haram now was on a trajectory to become the next jihads franchise group to become a transnational terrorist threat, following in the steps of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, the Yemen-based al-Qaeda franchise group. The January attacks provide us an opportunity to evaluate the theory. For instance, according to the new Boko Haram leader in Nigeria, (Abu Qaqa) said in a recent interview that the group’s members were spiritual followers of al-Qaida, and met senior figures in the network during visits to Saudi Arabia. He goes on to posit that the group recruits from neighboring Chad, Cameroon and Niger Republic (Adekoya & Rasak, 2016).

From the indices above, (Stewart, 2020) captured this al-Qaida linkage analysis in the following thematic forms: First, the group appears to have no shortage of explosive material. In addition to the devices the group employed in the attacks, the police reportedly seized some 300 improvised grenades and 10 VBIEDs (Adekoya & Rasak, 2016). It also appears Boko Haram has access to large quantities of commercial explosive, rather than being forced to rely on less reliable and less stable improvised explosive mixtures. A good deal of mining occurs in central Nigeria, and it appears that the group is either stealing commercial explosive from mining companies, extorting mainlining companies for explosives or has

somehow been able to purchase commercial explosive using a front company or companies.

The Nigerian government has sought to tighten control on commercial explosives in response, but its efforts so far do not seem to have affected the group’s ability to procure large quantities of explosives. Boko Haram also appears to have competent bomb makers. While the improvised hand grenades the group is issuing are quite rudimentary, being made by inserting a non-electric detonator with a short piece of time fuse in a soda can filled with high explosive their devices are functioning as designed. The same can be said for their suicide vests and VBIEDs: They are simply yet functional. This stands out, since IEDs commonly malfunction. Bomb making is an art that normally follows significant learning curve absent outside instruction from a more experienced bomb maker. Boko Haram’s proficiency suggests the group’s bomb maker(s) indeed received training from experienced militants elsewhere. The group also appears to have had no problems recruiting militants, including suicide bombers. The January 20 attacks alone involved dozens of militants. Two people served as suicide bombers for the VBIEDs while perhaps two other suicide bombers worked on foot; others threw IEDs from motorcycles and conducted armed assaults (Fakunle, 2016).

That said, the group’s operational planners do not appear to be as advanced as their bomb makers and recruiters. Though they have proved fairly successful in attacking soft targets, they have not had much success in their attacks against harder targets. For example, the attacker in the January 20 strike on the State Security Service Office in Kano was shot and killed before he could approach the building. Likewise, security forces were able to repel the attackers in the January 22 attempted bank robbery in Tafawa Belewa (Fagade, 2020). All three January attacks also occurred in Boko Haram’s traditional central regions of Nigeria. These areas are both familiar and accessible to the group and it has strong support there. (It also has significant support in the area around Abuja). Joe Bavier, a writer who is a frequent visitor to the region, told CNN that the Federal government has completely lost control of the north-east, despite deploying thousands of troops and establishing a Joint Task Force. Now, he says, it looks like this insurgency has broken out of the north-east”. And what’s worrying, he says, is that there’s “not a whole lot of visible effort from the federal government to calm things down (Adekoya & Rasak, 2016).



Philippe de Pontet, Africa analyst at the Eurasia Group, says that Boko Haram's main aim appears to be humiliating Jonathan's government, tapping into an existing sense of grievance among Muslims in the north. He and other analysts say the government's heavy-handed response has played into Boko Haram's hands (Thomas & Kujenya, 2012). "The impulse is to hit back hard and there are political pressures for a crackdown," de Pontet argues, "but Jonathan is so weak in the north that he needs to be careful not to alienate people there further" (Adesina, 2013). Among the poorer part of Nigeria, the north lacks infrastructure such as reliable power. Since the end of military rule, much of the region has felt excluded from the system of patronage that fuels Nigerian politics. When he ascended to the presidency in April last year, Jonathan broke the unofficial rotation of Christian and Muslim as head of state. Bavier, who is with the Pulitzer center on Crisis Reporting, says poverty has fed Boko Haram's ranks. It is no longer a sect of Islamic fanatics but has the support of disgruntled politicians and their paid thugs (Fagade, 2016). The group has yet to display any ability to project power outside its traditional operational area into less familiar and more hostile environments. Some ask whether Boko Haram is merely a political tool used by northern politicians to pressure the Nigerian Federal government in much the same way politicians from the Niger Delta have used militant groups such as the movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta to ensure what they believe is their fair share of Nigeria's oil revenue. While undoubtedly some northern politicians and Boko Haram exist, it would be simplistic to suggest such politicians completely control Boko Haram.

According to report, in major newspapers recently, which was culled from an online publication, 247 ureports.com, a senior official of Boko Haram allegedly granted an interview detailing how the sect had been on the payroll of a few governors of the North. The unnamed official had claimed that the stoppage of the financial support by the new government in Kano had warranted the massive bomb attacks on the state. "Most of them pay us monthly to leave their state alone," he was quoted to have said. The two state governments specifically mentioned in the report (Kano and Bauchi) have however, denied the allegation. The spokesman of the Bauchi State governor described it as a "very strange allegation because, Isa Yuguda (the governor) cannot be involved in such ...we in Bauchi have been living in

peace. We are not involved in that," His Kano counterpart spoke in the same vein.

However, the Boko Haram official let on that way back in 2004, the sect reached an agreement with former Kano State governor, Ibrahim Shekarau's government to receive a monthly payment of N5 million which was later increased to N10million in 2009. The agreement, just as in the one reached in Bauchi State, also included 'infrastructural support'. However, both agreements were said to have been broken by the state governors in 2011 and the payments were stopped. This, according to the sect's spokesman, warranted the recent bombings in the two states. These allegations are in line with the long-held opinion of security operatives and keen watchers of the emergent situation that the Boko Haram was the creation of politicians, especially some governors who needed them to win elections, to intimidate opponents, score political points and extract relevance at the national level. These groups, over time, became larger, unwieldy and difficult to control by their sponsors. In fact, it had become an open secret that the former governors of Borno and Yobe states who held sway in the Northwest zone for eight years were the grand conspirators in the Boko Haram saga.

Sometime last year, these two governors had to tender unreserved public apologies to members of the Boko Haram sect, and they have since remained largely in hiding in Abuja, not venturing into their states for fear of being harmed. Such was the level of open admittance of guilt and complicity by politicians at such high levels. It would therefore, not be surprising if there are other governors and politicians who have been secretly funneling state and private funds to the Boko Haram sect or a coterie of other sects in the North. A sitting Senator of the Federal Republic is currently undergoing trial for allegedly funding the group; so is a high court judge. Recently, the alleged mastermind of the Christmas Day Madalla Catholic Church bombing, Kabiru Sokoto, took refuge in his state's Abuja Governor's Lodge en route to escaping abroad. A serving Air Force officer was featured in the plot to spirit him abroad and when he was finally arrested, his escape from police detention in very suspicious circumstances has presented Nigerians with a classic case of official collusion of a most dirigible kind albeit, traceable high up the police hierarchy.



All these evidences, though largely circumstantial, point clearly to the fact that the Boko Haram sect is a Frankenstein monster created by some elite of the North. At the very least, however, these recent attacks tell us that before the group can become an existential threat to the Nigerian government – or legitimate transnational threat – it will need to develop the ability to deploy its IEDs and suicide operatives to the point that it successfully can attack hardened targets. It will also need to develop the ability to work beyond its traditional areas of operation. Until it can master those skills (and display an intent to use such skills), it will remain a regional, albeit deadly, threat. Recent treats by the group to attack Sokoto and the recent arrest of some of the suspected Boko Haram members in Enugu, Anambra and the recent arrest of some of her members in Cameroon have gradually rendered the above thesis irrelevant. This is because, the recent security alert by the Cameroonian authority and the Nigerian Government decision to close temporarily her borders with Chad, Niger Republic and Cameroon have made the threat a serious one. Moreover, most of the recruits are from these areas.

II. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Boko Haram has become a security issue owing to its advancement in committing terror activities using sophisticated equipment and the ability to escape at will. The present day Borno State and Nigeria at large faces the problem of this terror group in spite of vigorous efforts towards combating this group. It is quite disappointing to note that the activities of this group are growing and spreading in various forms.

Boko Haram since its emergence in the public scene in 2009 has been perceived by most Nigerians as a ‘terrorist organization’ as a consequence of its heinous activities and public disorder. A perusal of extant literature shows that the activities of this terror group has affected the economic, social, religious and political well-being of the people of Borno State and Nigeria at large. Drawing from various media reports, the Islamic sect is poised to continue to cause more havoc and threat to human lives until the battle is won. This study recommends the following, which are expected to guide policy actions in the quest to mitigate the challenges involved in the fight against Boko Haram:

- There is the need for the restructuring and the re-organization of the security agencies to take them through a new re-orientation high – tech

training and retraining. This also suggests that every Nigeria should become committed security/personnel within and around his/her domain. The government should also equip the agencies.

- Seek international assistance and/or partner with neighboring countries to promote secured borders to prevent the inflow of Boko Haram insurgents.

- The Government should embark on infrastructural development, empowerment programmes and also create enabling environment for foreign direct investments employment opportunities.

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