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INSECURITY IN NIGERIA: THE "BOKO HARAM" DIMENSION

Tajudeen Akanji

Boko-Haram was relatively unknown as a violent or terrorist group before the 21st century. Today, the mention of Nigeria in any social discourse directs focus to issues bordering on insecurity, poverty, ethno-religious clashes, corrupt enrichment, kidnapping, and particularly, Boko Haram terrorism. The over 300 ethnic groups that had enjoyed relative cordiality in the past, even after a few years of civil war, have suddenly become "strange bed fellows" due to the insurgence of the Boko Haram in the northern part of Nigeria. Foreigners now issue warnings to their nationals to either avoid trips to Nigeria completely, or do so with much caution. Boko Haram has claimed responsibility for more than 500 violent incidents in different parts of the country, especially in the north, where the group is domiciled, with more than 3,000 lives so far lost.

ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA

Nigeria has had a long and unfortunate history of communal conflict and ethno-religious violence. Since the return of democracy in 1999 for example, in Plateau state in Nigeria's "Middle Belt", there have been outbreaks of several bloody violent conflicts between different communities. There have also been riots in the northern urban centres of Kaduna and Kano, and for several decades, there has been a recurring conflict in the Tafawa Balewa district of Bauchi, all located between the north west and north east geopolitical zones of Nigeria. Similar violent conflicts have been reported in the south-east geopolitical zone, where foreign nationals, especial those involved in oil exploration, are being harassed, abducted and sometimes killed. In the

southwest and southeast regions, pockets of communal clashes with heavy human casualties are constantly in the news. Although communal clashes occur in virtually all regions of the country, the intensity and casualties are more severe in the “Middle Belt” region, particularly in the states of Kaduna and Plateau, where many people, especially women and children, have been hacked to death in the most brutal manner. In many cases, mobs have burnt humans, residences, churches and mosques, often with retaliatory motives, and with little or no intervention from security forces. These conflicts have affected the reputations of the country with a resulting negative impact on international relations and trade.

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The incidents have often been viewed as ethno-religious conflict, resulting from tensions between Muslim and Christian inhabitants. A closer examination, however, may reveal that the control of government patronage is the primary cause. Election disputes have also led to breakdowns along Muslim and Christian lines, as was seen in the most recent polls in 2011, when youths went on the rampage in Zonkwa, southern Kaduna state, leaving about 300 Muslims dead. When violence erupts in these circumstances, the genesis is usually in the form of one group asserting control of the apparatus of government over another group or groups in a very heterogeneous and ethnically diverse part of Nigeria.

The danger posed by these insurgent groups to the corporate existence of Nigeria is aptly captured by Robert Kaplan in his 1994 article titled “The Coming Anarchy”, in which he states that “the country is becoming increasingly ungovernable. [...] Ethnic and regional splits are deepening, a situation made worse by an increase in the number of states from 19 to 30 and a doubling in the number of local governing authorities. Religious divisions are more serious. Muslim fundamentalism and evangelical Christian militancy are on the rise [...]. The will to keep Nigeria together is now very weak”.¹

1 | Robert Kaplan, “The Coming Anarchy”, *The Atlantic*, 1 Feb 1994, <http://theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1994/02/the-coming-anarchy/304670> (accessed 16 Jun 2013). In 1994, Nigeria had 30 states but was further increased to 36 by General Sanni Abacha, the former military ruler in 1996.

There is also a history of Muslim sects growing in the cities of northern Nigeria. In the 1980s, for example, Yusuf Marwa from Cameroon who founded the violent Maitatsine sect, which claimed that the Prophet Muhammad was not the messenger of Allah, established itself in the slums of Kano. The sect was wiped out very brutally by the security forces of Nigeria, but not without some negative influences on the already fragmented and poverty-ridden society. Several women and children of the sect attacked heavily armed military and police forces with bows, arrows and knives. The present sectarian groups are believed by some to be the offshoot of the former Maitatsine group.

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Meanwhile, corruption flourished. Political elites continued to enrich themselves on the nation's oil wealth. Reports stated that 83 per cent of the nation's oil wells are in the hands of a few northern elites, although there are also reports that over 50 years of the nation's independence have produced more rich southerners than northerners.² In the face of all these inequalities, biting poverty among the general population, especially in large parts of the north, has deepened. This is further worsened by an inept, corrupt and brutal police force that is rapidly losing respect and confidence among the people. All these factors provide an environment for the growth of ethnic and sectarian violence which has now become a daily occurrence in a nation that was expected to be the hub of economic activity in Africa.

The weakness of the institutions of politics and the security services has created a political situation where threats to stability are not dealt with until casualties become serious and violence is widespread. Nigerian authorities have ignored warnings of impending crises many times and have reacted only when sectional interests were directly affected by the threats. Such is the weakness of security institutions that their only method of dealing with any such threat is violence. Boko Haram was created under these circumstances.

2 | A.A. Mazrui and A.D. White, *Nigeria: From Shari'a Movement To "Boko Haram" Global Experts Team*, United Nations Alliance of Civilization, 2012.

THE ORIGIN OF BOKO HARAM IN NIGERIA

Boko Haram is an Islamic sect that believes northern politics has been taken over by a group of corrupt and false Muslims. It wants to wage a war against them, and the Federal Republic of Nigeria in general, to create a “pure” Islamic state ruled by sharia law. Despite efforts by Nigerian authorities to suppress the group, it has often proved itself a hard nut to crack for the security forces, as Boko Haram keeps changing tactics and targets in complicated but organised manners. The group caught the attention of the world in August 2011, when it bombed the United Nations compound in Abuja, killing 23 people. Some observers have claimed that Boko Haram has reached out to allies in other global jihadist movements in the Sahel, yet not confronted Western interests outside Nigeria.

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There are various reports on the origin of Boko Haram in terms of its founding, motivation, goals, positions, structure, funding, affiliations, and the real actors of the organisation. For instance, Adibe noted that contrary to the popular belief that the sect was founded around 2001 or 2002,³ there is evidence that the group could have been formed around 1995 by one Lawan Abubakar.⁴ Some other writers have attributed the formation to Sheu Sani, a civil right activist in northern Nigeria, who helped broker the first attempt at a peace deal with the sect that failed.⁵ There was also the Gusau version which traced the origin of the sect to an group formed by Muslim students at the University of Maiduguri, Borno state.⁶ This version of origin reported that this group of students was dissatisfied with Western education.⁷ There are other reports that have traced the origin of Boko Haram to the earlier notorious

3 | Jidefor Adibe, “Boko Haram: One sect, conflicting narratives”, *African Renaissance*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2012.

4 | N. Madibe, 2011, cited in: Jidefor Adibe (ed.), *Terrorism in Africa*, 2012, 50.

5 | H.O. Alozie Simeon, “Contending Theories on Nigeria’s Security Challenge in the Era of Boko Haram Insurgency”, *Business Day* online, 1 Feb 2012.

6 | Ibid.

7 | Ufo Okeke Uzodike and Benjamin Maiangwa, “Boko Haram Terrorism in Nigeria: Casual Factors and Central problematic”, *African Renaissance*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2012, 100.

Mohammed Marwa was deported to his Cameroon home by Nigerian authorities because his teachings instigated riots in the country which resulted in the deaths of thousands of people.

religious sect that existed in the north in time past. This sect, which was known as Maitatsine, was founded by Mohammed Marwa, who was at the height of his notoriety during the 1970s and 1980s. He was deported to his Cameroon home by Nigerian authorities because his teachings at that time generated many controversies among Muslims and instigated riots in the country which resulted in the deaths of thousands of people.

Muhammed Yusuf, now generally believed to be the originator of the sect, according to the competing narratives, actually became the leader after Abubakar's departure.⁸ He in fact derived the inspirations for his own notion of "purity" from the teachings of Ibn Taymiyya, a 14th century legal scholar who preached Islamic fundamentalism and is considered a "major theorist" for radical groups in the Middle East⁹ and after whom Yusuf named his mosque in Maiduguri.¹⁰ The report believed that Yusuf officially founded the group in 2002 in the city of Maiduguri with the aim of establishing a Sharia government in Borno State under former Governor Ali Modu Sheriff.

The plethora of information regarding the founding and operations of Boko Haram may explain why, at the outset, the sect "had no specific name as its members attracted several descriptions where they operated based on the perception of the local population".¹¹ Such names included Taliban and the Yussufiyyah. The sect soon became formally identified as Ahulsunna wal'jama'ah Hijra – "Congregation of Followers of the Prophet Involved in the Call to Islam and Religious Struggle". The name Boko Haram reflects the sect's anti-Western posturing, literally meaning "Western education/civilization is sin".

Professor Abdullah Adamu, a teacher at Bayero University, Kano, presented a linguistic explanation of the meaning of Boko Haram as follows: "Technically, 'boko haram' means 'deceptive knowledge which is sinful', not 'Western education is sin'. This is because charlatan marabouts – basing their epistemology on faulty interpretation of Islamic

8 | Adibe, n. 5, 50.

9 | Galadima, n. 4.

10 | Ibid.

11 | Ibid.

injunctions to deceive clients – are also technically ‘yan boko’ (dispensers of deceptive knowledge).¹² The fact is that the major intention of Muhammad Yusuf’s lectures and writing was to convince his followers that knowledge inspired by Western ideas is false in some respects, but neither he nor his followers ever actually proclaimed that such knowledge is sinful.¹³

According to Professor Adamu, the pervasive view in the local press that the sect abhorred western education in totality sounded droll to Yusuf and his followers: He thus used the word “boko” in its original Hausa context to mean “false”. It is the process of demonising the movement that created the projected medieval persona of the group as condemning Western education – a fact they found amusing, since they not only use products of Western technology and knowledge (laptops, arms, explosives), but at one stage they even had a full-blown website to proclaim their ideals. In addition, their attack on Bauchi prison in August 2010 was facilitated by extensive use of Google Maps which helped them to map out the prison location and its access roads, and subsequently take strategic locations that hampered counter attack by security agents, as documented in their video release *Gazwatu Abi Ibrahim* (Abi Ibrahim’s War).

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PRESUMED INTERESTS AND GOALS OF THE BOKO HARAM SECT

The available literature on Boko Haram has remained inconclusive about the group’s real motive for its creation, existence and origin. Motivations that have been suggested in literature include crises over citizenship and inter-ethnic rivalries, a lacuna in the 1999 constitution, which is currently in use in Nigeria, institutional weakness and failure of government, poverty and inequalities among groups, colonial legacy and the relics of British monarchy in Nigeria and global political forces.

12 | Cf. Abdalla Adamu, “Insurgency in Nigeria: The Northern Nigerian Experience”, paper presented at The Eminent Persons and Expert Group Meeting On Complex Insurgencies in Nigeria, held at the Nigeria Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies, Kuru, Jos, 2012.

13 | Ibid.

The motivation and underlining interests for the formation of insurgent groups, particularly Boko Haram, are deep-rooted and can be traced to a number of factors. The North, as a regional entity, has suffered a great deal of educational deprivation. Some of these issues may be cultural. Hausa values, on attainment of Nigeria's independence, are disproportionately attached to Quranic and basic Islamic education, an aspect that has not enjoyed government priority attention despite the relative higher population of Muslims than Christians in Nigeria.¹⁴

Yusuf successfully attracted followers from unemployed youth "by speaking out against police and political corruption".¹⁵ Boko Haram was initially resolved to wage Jihad against bad governance, official immorality, and obnoxious modernity teachings. Poor governance and corruption were the central focus of the Boko Haram issues with Nigerian political leaders. As reported by a Nigerian journalist who has interviewed senior Boko Haram leaders and quoted by Human Rights Watch, "Corruption became the catalyst for Boko Haram. Yusuf would have found it difficult to gain a lot of these people if he was operating in a functional state. But his teaching was easily accepted because the environment, the frustrations, the corruption, [and] the injustice made it fertile for his ideology to grow fast, very fast, like wildfire."¹⁶ Some of the issues which the sect often addresses in their indoctrination exercise of the unsuspecting followers include:

Governance

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The group claimed that the entire political system in Nigeria is corrupt, deceptive and "sinful". It noted that politicians enrich themselves at the detriment of the poor majority.

Western education is said to have promoted corruption and should therefore be characterised as a sin. The security forces were largely uncontrolled and wicked. They were

14 | Mazrui and White, n. 2.

15 | See Human Rights Watch, *Corruption on Trial? The Record of Nigeria's Economic and Financial Crimes Commission*, Aug 2011, <http://hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/nigeria0811WebPostR.pdf> (accessed 26 Jun 2013).

16 | Human Rights Watch, interview with Ahmad Salkida, Abuja, 29 May 2012.

constantly manipulated by the authorities to suppress the masses.

Immorality

The sect said that the organisation of the modern school system which allows co-educational schools bred prostitution among the youths. It stated that the modern school system ran counter to their traditional Hausa cultures which have erroneously been termed Islamic values. Issues like early marriage, rights of women and children, and a number of modern social values are being affected by western “animist” education.

Modernity Teachings

A number of scientific beliefs are being questioned by the sect as they run counter to scriptural claims. Issues like the Evolution Theory, the round shape of the earth which they claim is flat, and the source of rainfall which they believe is the work of the Angels are central in their contestations with western epistemology. Some of these teachings and beliefs were rooted in the fact that the leader of the group, Yusuf, had never enjoyed even a primary education, hence his capacity to understand complex scientific facts was limited. This may also explain the fact that the insurgency in the north can be linked to educational deprivation caused by the system.

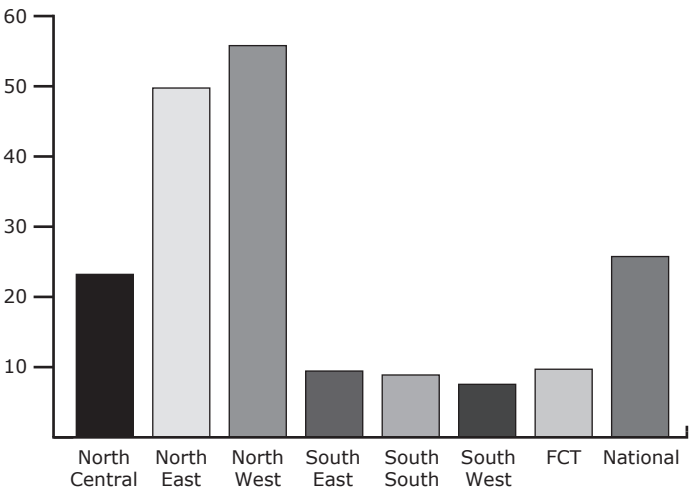
DRIVERS OF THE BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY IN NIGERIA

Economic Drivers

Poverty is a very serious issue in Nigeria. To a great majority of Nigerians, security risks come from hunger, disease, poor education, and even domestic violence aggravated by the present economic woes. With an average of 1,000 maternal mortality cases per 100,000 of the population, an under-five mortality rate of 138 per 1,000 live births, life expectancy of 51.9, over 70 per cent of the population living on 1.25 U.S. dollars per day, and a percentage of GDP expenditure on education at 0.8, Nigeria is among the lowest in human development in the world ranking

notching at just 156 out 187 countries assessed by UNDP in 2011.¹⁷ Even with an estimated population of 162 million, and being the 8th largest exporter of petroleum in the world and the 10th in proven reserves, most Nigerians still live in abject and excruciating poverty with much of the population in rural and undeveloped areas. This shows that bad governance exacerbated by corruption remains the bane of the Nigerians.

Fig. 1
National/Zonal level Analysis of OOSC in Nigeria (Primary), in per cent



Source: "Nigeria Education Data Survey 2008", Federal Ministry of Education of Nigeria. The survey examined the six geo-political zones incl. the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), an arrangement for easy administration of the regions in Nigeria.

Educational Inequality as a Driver

Formal education was introduced early in the South by the Christian missionaries. According to Fafovora, "Churches were virtually barred by the British colonial government from starting schools in the North. The practical effect of this basic preference by the British colonial authorities for the Islamic way of life in the North was that a yawning gap between the North and the South in western education

17 | Abdul Rahaman Danbazau, "Security, Governance and Sustainable Development", paper presented at the Guest Lecture Series, CEPACS, Ibadan, 2012.

began to develop rapidly. This gap is one of the major sources of conflicts and instability in the country, even today. It is directly responsible for the emergence of religious sectarian groups in the North.”¹⁸

A survey published by the Federal Ministry of Education (Fig. 1) shows that about 31 per cent of Nigerian children are not in school and 75 per cent of them are among the Fulani and the Kanuri located in the North West and North East geopolitical zones of Nigeria. This lends credence to the fact that educational deprivation has a multiple impact on the lives of Nigerians and may be precar-

iously responsible for the reported trend and pattern of the upsurge in youth criminalities and the sectarian violence in Nigeria. Further analysis of the educational inequalities that

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exist in the North East and the North West reveal that the states with the highest incidents of Out of School Children are more involved in sectarian violence than the others. The states of Bornu, Yobe and Bauchi, which have the worst records of school attendance, are also worst hit by sectarian violence. Some other structural factors that can be cited as responsible for the structural causes of conflict and violence in the northern part of Nigeria may be cultural. Some northerners still see western education as inimical to their cultural values. In addition, the patrimonial economic system which disempowers women has the tendency to aggravate poverty among the economically active men who are just one third of the entire population. This population has become disadvantaged because of the power shift that has come into play in the political system of the country.

PROXIMATE CAUSES OF ESCALATION: THE ROLE OF THE SECURITY FORCES

There is evidence to suggest that, although the group is militant in its approach, the initial methodology adopted for propagation was relatively non-violent. In January 2006, Agence France Presse reported a statement credited

18 | Dapo Fafowora, “Understanding Insurgencies in Nigeria: Nature, Types, Dynamics and the Way Out”, paper presented at the Eminent Persons and Expert Group Meeting on Complex Insurgencies in Nigeria, held at NIPSS, Kuru, Jos, 2012.

to Yusuf where he says "I think that an Islamic system of government should be established in Nigeria and if possible, all over the world, but through dialogue".¹⁹ These periods witnessed efforts by Yusuf and his deputy to win converts and make them accept their doctrine of purity based on the vision of global political Islam, which is the overthrow of all worldly governments (*Kufur* system) and the enthronement of an Islamic theocratic state. The sect rejected President Jonathan's invitation for dialogue and demands that he converts to Islam or hand over power to a Muslim.²⁰

The response of the security agencies to Boko Haram attacks actually aggravated the problem. The Government put in place Operation Flush, using security forces comprising military, police, and intelligence personnel, known as the Joint Military Task Force (JTF), killing scores of Boko Haram suspects and randomly arresting members of communities where attacks had occurred. Reports from various sources, including Human Rights Watch, say that the

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JTF has engaged in excessive use of force, physical abuse, secret detentions, extortion, burning of houses, stealing money during raids, and extrajudicial killings of suspects. In the end, this has resulted in the death of more than 2,800 people since 2009. There are various video clips on YouTube showing some of these horrendous acts, although official sources have disclaimed many of these incidents, saying that they were probably concocted to discredit the security forces. The weight of evidence from the witnesses in the affected areas does not support the claims of Nigerian authorities.

It was the brutal response of the security forces that led to the declaration of war by Yusuf's group on the people of Nigeria. In a leaflet circulated by the group titled, *In*

19 | Emmanuel Goujon and Aminu Abubakar, "Nigeria's 'Taliban' plot comeback from hide-outs", AFP, Biafra Nigeria World, 11 Jan 2006, http://news.biafranigeriaworld.com/archive/mail_guardian/2006/01/11/nigerias_taliban_plot_comeback_from_hideouts.php (accessed 26 Jun 2013).

20 | "Boko Haram Spokesman, Abu Qaqa, 'Convert to Islam or no dialogue' Boko Haram tells Jonathan", *Peoples Daily*, <http://www.peoplesdaily-online.com/news/national-news/29098-convert-to-islam-or-no-dialogue-boko-haram-tells-jonathan> (accessed 5 Feb 2012).

maye ya manta, meaning, “If Perpetrators have forgotten, the Victims will not”, the call to arms by Yusuf went thus: “Fighting this government is mandatory on everyone. Whoever refuses this will be accountable to Allah. For us, we would rather die than fail Allah on the account of our deeds. Whoever can, join us; if not, shut up, for it does not concern you, leave us alone, and watch what will transpire.”²¹

In spite of various reports in both local and international media on the allegations of widespread security force abuses, there has been hardly anyone prosecuted by the authorities. Apart from the Boko Haram issue, past security forces abuses in Nigeria have hardly been investigated. The culture of impunity has grown to a point that barely anyone is being held accountable for human rights abuses. This serves as catalyst for the escalation of the crises which we witness up to the present day.

THE FIVE-DAY VIOLENT CLASH OF JUNE 2009

The major confrontation that triggered the spate of bombings and aggravated the precarious security situation in the North was the shootings and killings that took place on 11 June 2009, when security forces raided a funeral procession of Boko Haram members on motorbikes in Maiduguri. The mourners had refused to put on crash helmets as required by law. Members of an anti-robbery task force, comprising military and police personnel, opened fire on the procession, which caused the death of about 19 members of the sect. Some accounts of that incident state that a member of the group had fired on the police first, injuring several officers. The leader of the sect was reported to have written an open letter to Nigeria’s president seeking that the killers of his followers be charged. Instead, what followed was the hounding of his followers by the security operatives, an action which Human Rights Watch described as having contravened international human rights standards

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21 | Abdalla Adamu, “Insurgency in Nigeria: The Northern Nigerian Experience”, paper presented at the Eminent Persons and Expert Group Meeting on Complex Insurgencies in Nigeria, held at NIPSS, Kuru, Jos, 2012.

and fuelled further attacks. Yusuf was reported to have released several video messages where he urged his members to take up arms against the government of Nigeria. This he did in deviance of existing laws against this treasonable act. For about three days, the group took over the streets of Maiduguri, attacking police stations, security personnel, and indiscriminately killing innocent members of the public, both Muslims and Christians. The group then attacked police stations in Bauchi and Yobe, killing scores of officers. These events prompted the Bauchi local government to crack down on the group, arresting more than seven hundred of its members.

Reinforcement by members of Operation Flush later overpowered the sect members before prosecuting anyone they suspected of being a Boko Haram member, supporter or sympathiser. Dozens of people were rounded up and executed without trial, including Yusuf's father-in-law, Muhammed Fugu, who in fact was not part of the group but was declared wanted on account of his relationship with Yusuf's wife. Videos showing the execution of young boys, including the son of Buji Foi, a former commissioner, were uploaded on YouTube for the world to see. Although police authorities denied most of these actions, saying that the videos were concocted to attract international sympathy, the events actually contributed to the build-up of tension which escalated the conflict.

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The clampdown on suspected sect members and sympathisers continued in Maiduguri. The Police and army relied on information from the traditional and religious leaders for the massive arrests. A large number of suspects went into hiding, while some actually fled the city. The population of missing people, some of whom could have been executed by the security forces, became enormous. Those who fled the city had their property confiscated and given to the traditional leaders, an action which was soon to cause further mayhem. After a brief return of calm, the sect members returned to Maiduguri and started a guerrilla warfare against the police, often on motor bikes. Gunmen were also reported to have carried out executions of traditional and religious leaders who had cooperated with the security forces. New occupants of the properties were also killed

when found. Police authorities also continued their clamp-down by razing houses of suspected sect members.

THE KILLING OF MOHAMMED YUSUF AND SOME POLITICAL BIG WIGS

The level of insecurity in Maiduguri and its environs has reached an alarming proportion, and inhabitants of the city are living in mortal fear. After the five-day conflict in the city in which scores of people were killed, the activities of Operation Flush were intensified. In the process, Mohammed Yusuf was arrested by the army and handed over to the police, where he was killed almost immediately. As a response, Boko Haram carried out its first terrorist attack in Borno in January 2011. It resulted in the killing of four people. Since then, the violence has only escalated in terms of both frequency and intensity. In January 2012, Abubakar Shekau, a former deputy to Yusuf, who took over leadership after the summary execution of Yusuf, appeared in a video posted on YouTube where he also reiterated the sect's determination to keep up the struggle.

As the 2011 elections drew nearer, political opponents took advantage of the level of insecurity to get at each other. A number of high profile assassinations of political office seekers were carried out. Among the victims were: Alhaji Awana Ngala, a governorship aspirant; Alhaji Modu Fannami Gubio, a governorship aspirant; Alhaji Lawan Yaraye, former Local Government chairman; Alhaji Fannami Ngarrannani, former Local Government chairman. Several others were assassinated, and in fact these killings are still going on.

Soon after, the group became more organised in its attacks, and expanded its targets. At this point, it no longer preached non-violence. Consequently, their demands became more stringent, their attacks more frequent. In January 2012, a group split away to form the Vanguard for the Protection of Muslims in Black Africa (Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina fi Biladis Sudan), better known as Ansaru. It has since carried out a number of high-profile kidnappings and other attacks. By early 2012, Boko Haram was responsible for over 900 deaths. In June 2012, the group claimed to be responsible for the suicide bombings of three churches

in the northern Nigerian state of Kaduna, killing more than 50 people. In August 2012, Boko Haram opened fire inside a Deeper Life Bible church during a service in Okene, the northern State of Kogi, killing 19 worshippers. Reprisal attacks on some mosques were reported at that time in the same town.



UN Memorial for those killed in the Boko Haram attacks on the headquarters in Abuja in August 2011. Since then the sect has successfully carried out eight concurrent attacks on security offices in Kano. | Source: UNDP (CC BY-NC-ND).

The whereabouts of members of the sect that had fled could not be immediately ascertained, but there are reports that they became attracted to the global Jihadist movements around the Sahel zone. Hence some of them went to various troubled zones, where they received more training. The UN Security Council says that Boko Haram members were trained in a Tuareg rebel camp in Mali. The foreign minister of Niger told reporters that Nigerians have been trained in rebel camps “across the Sahel region”. It is believed that the group’s leadership, including Abubakar Shekau, Mohammed Yusuf’s right-hand man, relocated to a hideout in northern Cameroon. The group has become more devastating in the way it carries out its attacks and created considerable stir when it attacked the police headquarters in Abuja through a suicide bombing just 24 hours after the inspector general had threatened to flush them out wherever they were.

Even the declaration of the state of emergency by the government would not sway them. In fact, bombings and assassinations during the period of emergency rule and the introduction of curfew and mass deportation were higher than during the period preceding them. This implied that force simply aggravated rather than abated the situation. The sect gradually extended its reign of terror to other cities, like Kano, Bauchi, Damaturu, Potiskum, Gombe, Yola, Suleija, Okene, Geidam, Azare, Jaji, Kaduna, and many others.

THE REGIONAL LINK

Arming The Boko Haram Sect:

The Influence of Neighbouring Countries

The influence of conflict flash points that share borders with the North East region of Nigeria provide ready sources for arms that can escalate the conflict. This is further worsened by the porosity of borders along the West African sub region. The countries with greatest influence are Benin, Cameroon, Chad and Niger because of their proximity to Nigeria in terms of demographics and socio-economic realities. In particular, the borders of Cameroon and Niger with Nigeria span a distance of 1,690 kilometres, and 1,497 kilometres respectively, which provide unhindered routes for arms deals, smuggling, and a haven for terrorist attackers. For instance, the border with Niger stretches along the states of Sokoto, Katsina, Jigawa and Yobe. Similarly, Cameroon shares a border with Nigeria along the states of Taraba and Adamawa in Northern Nigeria. There are reports of deep involvement by these two countries in some of the Boko Haram sect terror attacks. The 21 May 2012 suicide attack on a police station in Taraba state, on Nigeria's border with Cameroon further supports the view that porous border areas have the potential to increase regional and transnational insecurity in the area. The presence of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in Niger and Mali entails the Salafist ideology that Boko Haram is also associated with. This, again, may suggest some form of relationship when it comes to training, recruitment and arms supply. There are reports that light arms are being

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stockpiled in houses in Maiduguri. Some of these locations are raided and dismantled by security agents. The insecurity in the sub-saharan region, particularly the communal clashes among the Tuaregs in Niger and Mali, and the crises in the Sudan and Libya, seem to provide opportunities for Boko Haram to get their hands on small arms. Some sect members have participated as mercenaries in a number of these crises. After the fall of Ghadafi in Libya, "stockpiles of missiles and other arms were looted and quite possibly fell into the hands of AQIM members who could pass off some of the weaponry to Boko Haram affiliates."²²

Boko Haram confirmed in several statements that they had received training from AQIM and the Al Shabab organisation in Somalia, where they were taught how to construct and detonate Improvised Exploding Devices (IEDs), as well as employ the use of suicide bombers. The implication of this kind of cross border collaboration underscores the need for the international community to show more interest in the Boko Haram issue as the threat posed by the group may be more than the internal issues of Nigeria.

Many of Nigeria's neighbouring countries serve as havens for the attackers. The Maghreb presence of Al-Qaeda and the Al Shabab in Somalia have confirmed a partnership with Boko Haram.

There is evidence, based on various reports, that Nigeriens as well as immigrants from Cameroon, Chad and Sudan, among others, are involved in Boko Haram attacks. Many of these neighbouring countries serve as havens for the attackers. They also provide several other forms of support to the militants. The AQIM groups and the Al Shabab in Somalia have confirmed a partnership with Boko Haram in Nigeria. Nigeria therefore needs to work with regional and international partners, particularly within ECOWAS and the African Union, to break links between international terror networks and the militants. The changes observed in the modus operandi of the sect may be an early warning signal of impending danger unless concerted efforts are put in place to address the issue.

Prior to the attack on the UN Headquarters in Abuja, the 2009 face-off with the security forces revealed the lack of planning and weak capacities of the sect members judging

22 | Human Rights Watch, *Spiraling Violence. Boko Haram Attacks and Security Force Abuses in Nigeria*, 11 Oct 2012, <http://hrw.org/reports/2012/10/11/spiraling-violence-0> (accessed 26 Jun 2013).

from the level of casualties they suffered including the arrest and eventual killing of their leader. Since the sect's attack on the UN Headquarters with numerous casualties that drew the awe of the international community, they have successfully carried out eight concurrent attacks on security offices in Kano. The level of tactical sophistication demonstrated in these attacks, and the fact that they now use suicide bombers and IEDs confirm that they must have received more technical training from their international Jihadist collaborators.

Table 1

Records of Bomb Explosions by the Boko Haram Sect in Nigeria in 2011

Date of attacks	Bombing events
1 Oct 2010	Explosion near the Eagle square, Abuja, claimed twelve lives, leaving many injured
24 Dec 2010	Bomb Explosion in Birkin Ladi, Jos Plateau, killed eight people
30 Mar 2011	Bomb exploded in Damaturu, injuring a police officer injured
8 Apr 2011	Explosion at INEC office, Suleja Niger State, claiming eight lives
9 Apr 2011	Bomb explosion at Unguwardoki Unit polling Unit at Maiduguri
26 Apr 2011	Bomb explosion in a street in Maiduguri killing three people
29 Apr 2011	Bomb explosion at the Army barracks in Bauchi
19 May 2011	Three policemen killed and two soldiers injured in a bomb explosion in Maiduguri
29 May 2011	Explosion at Mammy market of Shandawanka Barrack in Bauchi state
30 May 2011	Bomb explosion on Baga Road, Maiduguri, Borno state, 13 dead, about 40 injured
7 Jun 2011	Incessant bomb explosion in Maiduguri claiming five lives and many injured
16 Jun 2011	Bomb explosion at Damboa, Maiduguri killing four children
16 Jun 2011	Bomb explosion at Damboa, Maiduguri killing four children
11 Jul 2011	Explosion at a relaxation center in Forkados Street, Kaduna
12 Jul 2011	Explosion in a military patrol vehicle claiming five lives
15 Jul 2011	Explosion in Maiduguri, injuring five people
23 Jul 2011	Explosion near the palace of a traditional ruler in Maiduguri claiming eight lives
29 Aug 2011	Explosion at the United Nations' Office in Abuja, Nigeria

Date of attacks	Bombing events
12 Sep 2011	Explosion at Misau Police Station in Bauchi State, killing four Policemen
4 Nov 2011	Incessant explosion in Yobe, killing about 150 people
24 Dec 2011	Explosions in Jos, Plateau killing nearly 80 people
25 Dec 2011	Christmas day bombing in Mandalla, Niger State
20 Jan 2011	Multiple explosion in Kano, claiming over 200 lives

THE COST OF BOKO HARAM TO NIGERIA

The economic and social cost of the horrendous acts of Boko Haram is surely a cause for concern to all stakeholders. The events have caused remarkable changes in migration patterns, cost of insurance in the North, mass repatriation of funds, and a dearth of skilled labour and economic activities. According to a recent report by Human Rights Watch, the human capital loss between 2009 and 2012 to the sectarian violence was more than 935. According to that report, in 2011, Boko Haram struck 115 times and killed 550 people. Within the first three weeks of 2012, the sect killed 250 people with the deadliest being the coordinated bombings in the ancient city of Kano, which claimed 185 lives. Earlier in 2012, another twelve people were killed in a shoot-out between the Joint Task Force and members of the sect in Maiduguri, Borno State. On Sunday, 26 February 2012, suicide bombers hit a Church in Jos, killing four people, with another four in a reprisal attack, and destroying 38 vehicles. Later that night, gunmen attacked Shuwa Divisional Police Station in Madagali local government area of Adamawa State, killing three policemen on guard. In the month of March, 2013, 60 people were killed in a bomb explosion in Kano. This is the trend of the information dominating the newsstand on a daily basis in Nigeria.

Foreign investment becomes negatively affected. The result of this is a high rise in unemployment and aggravation of poverty. Although the direct and indirect finance and investment losses are unquantifiable, the World Investment Report (WIR) of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) estimated that the domestic

economy loss, owing to the activities of terrorists going by the name Boko Haram, is a whopping 1.33 trillion Nigerian naira (approximately 1.2 billion euros) Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).²³



Helen Clark, Administrator of the UNDP, looks at the remains of a car bomb that struck the United Nation's premises in Abuja in 2011. | Source: UNDP (CC BY-NC-ND).

The domestic economy of the north has also been affected, with the ripple effect being experienced gradually in other parts of the country. Commercial activities in Maiduguri, the original home of the sect, has almost crumbled as nearly all non-indigenes have fled the city. The Maiduguri Monday Market, said to be the largest market in the city, is reported to have been turned into a ghost of itself, as hundreds of shop owners, especially Southerners, are said to have abandoned their shops and fled the troubled city.

The situation in Kano, the commercial nerve centre of the north, is pathetic. The city, which used to attract traders from Sudan, Niger, Chad and Cameroon, has become abandoned by foreign traders. The situation in Kaduna is no different. Most hotel owners have relocated to Abuja. The tourism potential of Bauchi and Jos is now becoming history. The implication of this for livelihood in Northern Nigeria is that poverty now grows faster in the area, with corresponding reinforcement of other issues of development.

23 | Okechukwu Innocent Eme and Jide Ibieta, "The Cost of Boko Haram Activities in Nigeria", *Arabian Journal of Business and Management*, 2012, Vol. 2, No. 2.

The fear is that if these factors are allowed to linger on for longer than necessary, the nation may be heading towards the precipice.

The government will have to punish security personnel that have been found to be involved in human rights abuses to end impunity. The new approach to security should combat terrorism by using an intelligence-led approach.

There is no doubt that both locals and Boko Haram militants no longer have confidence in the security forces of Nigeria. Therefore, the government will have to address specific grievances and punish security personnel that have been found to be involved in human rights abuses to end impunity. The new approach to security should adopt tried and tested counter-insurgency (COIN) principles and methods to combat terrorism by using an intelligence-led approach. It would be useful to systematically train the security forces in key COIN approaches which involve engagement with local communities to regain their confidence and support.

There are those who feel that the Government of Nigeria should not engage Boko Haram in any form of negotiation. Unfolding events have shown that the use of force cannot achieve meaningful results. At best, it would push the sect members into hiding, but only for them to resurface, with stronger and more sophisticated approaches. Dialogue and a possible amnesty still remain a useful option.

Government should consider an amnesty as was done with the Niger Delta militants who were drawn out of their hide-outs in the creeks. Although there is still a level of criminal militants in the Niger delta who in late 2012 and 2013 committed acts of kidnapping, extortion of money and the like, this might address some of the critical factors of the agitations in the short and medium terms.

State governments, supported by the federal government, should immediately engage in programmes that will promptly create employment for the teeming young men and women. The agricultural sector participation should be revived to encourage men and women to go back to farming. This will provide food supplies and income security for the populace. There is also the need to improve our electoral processes to restore the confidence of the people. Public spending should be made more transparent in line with the fiscal responsibility law in Nigeria. This will

address the issue of infrastructural decay, and ensure a grassroots delivery of social services like education, health, transportation, housing etc, and reduce public grievances around political influence in decision making.

It is obvious from reports that the fundamental grievance of the Boko Haram sect and indeed the frequent skirmishes in Nigeria is bad governance which has resulted in the increase of Islamism and in the state of hopelessness of the majority of the population. The fact that the basic needs of the people were left unattended to for so long has created two distinct groups of actors: those with the actual grievance of neglect, and those who have exploited the crises to create wider issues. Also, it may be safe to say the lack of a consensus over societal values, including a division over religion, is also a major source of the frequent religious conflicts in Nigeria.