

# Boko Haram and National Security Challenges in Nigeria; Causes and Solutions

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## Abstract

Nigeria has been bedeviled by ethno-religious conflicts with devastating human and material losses since the return of democracy in 1999. But the Boko Haram uprising of July 2009 was significant in that it not only set a precedent, but also reinforced the attempts by Islamic conservative elements at imposing a variant of Islamic religious ideology on a secular Nigerian state. Whereas the religious sensitivity of Nigerians provided fertile ground for the breeding of the Boko Haram sect, the sect's blossoming could also be said to have been aided by the prevailing economic dislocation in Nigerian, vis-a-vis the introduction of party politics and politics of anxiety, the associated desperation of politicians for political power, and the ambivalence of some vocal Islamic leaders, who, though they did not actively embark on mutiny, but either did nothing to impede it from fomenting, or only feebly condemned it. These internal factors coupled with growing Islamic fundamentalism around the globe made a highly volatile Nigerian society prone to violence, as evidenced by the Boko Haram uprising. Given the approach of the Nigerian state to religious conflict, this violence may remain a recurring problem which is why this paper documents and analyses the Boko Haram uprising, as well as its links with the promotion of Islamic revivalism and the challenges it poses to the secularity of the Nigerian state and security agencies.

**Key words:** Boko-Haram sect, Islamic fundamentalism, National Insecurity challenges and Secularity of the Nigerian state.

## 1. Introduction

After decades of dictatorships, Nigeria saw its fourth democratically elected president take office in 1999. Today, the country's nascent democracy is being tested by rampant crime and an unprecedented campaign of terror such that in the south, civil unrest threatens safety and stability, to the east; gangs who kidnap expatriates for ransom lie in wait on the roads, in bars, and cities; and to the north, the Islamic terrorist group called Boko Haram is growing both in number and brutality hence the group has posed brazen challenges to the government and issued the ultimatum "leave or die" to Christians living in the northern Nigeria and confidence that the government can protect the people is at all-time low.

According to Alozieuwa (2012), the challenge posed by the Boko Haram sect in Nigeria is not only about the viciousness of either its terror campaigns, or the sect's avowed mission to impose Islamic law on the country, but about the confusion regarding the exact cause(s) of the violence. However, many theories that have emerged to explain the problem, have broadly revolving around socio-economic, political, and religious themes; all of which in my estimation does not explain the reason for such violence, brutality and cruelty in one's own country against his/her brothers.

In view of the above assertion, this paper seeks to unravel how Boko Haram has constituted itself as a national security threat to the continual and harmonious co-existence of the component nations that make up the Nigeria state

## 2. Conceptual Clarifications

### Security

The concept 'security' generally, is a crosscutting, and multi-dimensional concept which has, over the last century, been the subject of great debate. However, long before that, the history of mankind was interspersed by the frenzied search for the best way of ensuring the security of the people, their properties, territories, states and institutions among others. In all places and countries, security has been considered as a "first order value" worth preserving. The aforementioned notwithstanding, there is no consensus on the definition of security. This is not surprising because as a social phenomenon, it is often approached from different perspectives.

Security has been seen as a situation where a person or thing is not exposed to any form of danger or risk of physical or moral aggression, accident, theft or deterioration. Some security experts argued that the concept of security has always been associated with the safety and survival of the state and its citizens from harm or destruction or from dangerous threats. Those conceptions generally hold that the state is the only institution with the primary responsibility and power for the safety of its territory and its people (Zabadi, 2005:3). Therefore the concept of security in this paper is operationalised within the context of a nation hence the concept of “national security”

### **National Security**

The concept of “**national security**” is often misunderstood says (Wolfer, 1962) and as such elusive says (Carey, 2000). Hence a strange phenomenon, a subjective “feeling”, and therefore relational and relatives, rather than an objective “thing” than can be seen and handled.

However, National security is the requirement to maintain the survival of the state through the use of economic, diplomacy, power projection and political power. The concept developed mostly in the United States of America after World War II. Initially focusing on military might; it now encompasses a broad range of facets, all of which impinge on the non military or economic security of the nation and the values espoused by the national society.

Accordingly, in order to possess national security, a nation needs to possess economic security, energy security, environmental security, etc. Security threats involve not only conventional foes such as other nation-states but also non-state actors such as violent non-state actors, narcotic cartels, multinational corporations and non-governmental organizations; some authorities include natural disasters and events causing severe environmental damage in this category. Measures taken to ensure national security include: using diplomacy to rally allies and isolate threats; marshalling economic power to facilitate or compel cooperation; maintaining effective armed forces; implementing civil defense and emergency preparedness measures (including anti-terrorism legislation); ensuring the resilience and redundancy of critical infrastructure; using intelligence services to detect and defeat or avoid threats and espionage, and to protect classified information; using counterintelligence services or secret police to protect the nation from internal threats

Generally, Braithwaite (1988:9) quoting the encyclopedia of the social sciences defines national security as “ability of a nation to protect its internal values from external threat”. Also, Lipmann defines it by stating that “a nation has security when it does not have to sacrifice its legitimate interest to avoid war, and is able, if challenged, to maintain them by war”. Morgenthau (1948) posits that national security and national interests are inter-related; where the former is seen in terms of power and therefore is the essence of politics.

Imobigbe (1981) refers to it as the defense and survival of the state. The danger of looking at national security from this narrow angle according to Nweke (1988:1-2) is three-fold; but we shall concern ourselves with the first two: First is the tendency to equate “defense” with “security” and to bestow undue responsibilities to the military as if the armed forces alone are the guardians of national security. This tendency in turn creates in the minds of the armed forces that it is only through them that security, stability and progress can be achieved. Secondly, national security has been used by civilian statesmen as political rhetorics or slogan for rallying the citizens in the face of perceived internal or external threats to the governments in power and for bolstering their local influence and political base (Adebayo, 1986:23).

Dyke (1966), concludes that there is no doubt that national security embodies the sovereignty of the state, the inviolability of its territorial boundaries, and the right to individual and collective self-defense against internal and external threats. But the state is secure only when the aggregate of people organized under it has a consciousness of belonging to a common sovereign political community; enjoy equal political freedom, human rights, economic opportunities, and when the state itself is able to ensure independence in its development and foreign policy.

Freedman’s (1998:53) view is that once anything generates anxiety or threatens the quality of life in some respect, it is thus labeled a “security problem”. The notion of economic security thus encourages a confrontational approach to trace policy, while that of “environmental security” has often served more to confuse than to clarify by encouraging a search for adversaries.

### **3. Theoretical Discourse**

In the words of Alozieuwa (2012), one of the outcomes of the security challenge imposed by the Boko Haram insurrection on Nigerian society has been the emergent preponderance of theories that attempt to explain the motive of the Islamic group. Unlike the Niger Delta militancy which preceded it,

and which predicated its desire for a separate state from Nigeria on decades of conspiratorial neglect by the Nigerian state and multinational oil prospecting companies in the Niger Delta region, Boko Haram has refrained from articulating and formally presenting its grievances, apart from its declared desire for the strict interpretation of Islamic Law in Nigeria. The confusion also grows out of the changing dynamics in the operations of the sect. For instance, its terror campaign, which initially targeted security formations and personnel, has expanded to include civilians and non-government targets, and the Nigerian public generally.

The theories are divided into two broad spectrums. One views the problem essentially as internal. The other blames external forces. The former looks at socio-economic factors, as well as deep-seated political, religious differences in the Nigerian society. It also includes vengeance over the death of the sect's leader, Ustaz Muhammed Yussuf. The external forces argument has two planks: one characterizes the problem as part of global Islamic jihad and focuses on the sect's links with international terror groups such as al Qaeda or its affiliates as al Shabaab or the al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, (AQIM); the other views it as conspiratorial – a grand strategy to achieve the predicted disintegration of Nigeria by 2015. Within the conspiratorial thesis is the sub-theme that Nigeria is being targeted by envious and troubled neighbours. This aspect also links it to the now 'unemployed' war-hardened returnees from the Libyan crisis and the assorted arms streaming out from that tumult.

How relevant these theories are in explaining the National Security challenges in Nigeria is the question to which this section of the paper addresses. One dares ask if Nigeria is simply convulsing from her many internal contradictions that successive leadership has been unable to resolve, or are external forces actually at work to undermine Nigeria? While each of the competing perspectives indeed may offer some valid ballpark figure of the real cause(s) of Nigeria's security challenge, the multiplicity has tended to frustrate a clear understanding of the dilemma and enunciation of appropriate response to it; leading to the adoption of the conspiracy theory as the theoretical frame of this paper (Alozieuwa, 2012).

This multiplicity of theories brings in the relational theory which according to Alozieuwa, attempts to provide explanation for violent conflicts between groups by exploring sociological, political, economic, religious and historical relationships between such groups hence the belief that cultural and value differences as well as group interests all influence relationships between individuals and groups in different ways. Thus, a number of conflicts grow out of a past history of conflict between groups that has led to the development of negative stereotypes, racial intolerance and discrimination, (Faleti, 2006:54-55).

There is also the socio-economic perspective of the Boko Haram challenge in Nigeria, which seeks to de-emphasize the interpretation of the Boko Haram phenomenon as being a particularly Muslim or northern crisis (Kukah, 2012), hence blames social conditions; as the violence is anchored on the human needs theory of social conflicts whose central thesis is that all humans have basic needs which they seek to fulfill and failure caused by other individuals or groups to meet these needs could lead to conflict (Rosati et al, cited in Alozieuwa 2012).

There is also the Political-Feud point of view which maintained that the crux of the problem is the over-politicization of social life hence we are intoxicated with politics; as the premium on political power is so high that we are prone to take the most extreme measures to win and to maintain political power.

Again, the Islamic Theocratic State Theory suffices as the Boko Haram sect has hardly masked its intention to bring down the Nigerian government, the Kufur system, and ultimately Islamize Nigeria (Alozieuwa 2012) hence Lengmang's (2011) documentation of the allegation that some segments of the northern Muslim population may be unhappy with the compromise of state-level shari'a coexisting side by side with a secular federal system. Hence, although this segment may arguably be small, "they are increasingly becoming radicalized and more willing to periodically express themselves through violence. He attributes resentment to the shari'a coexistence with secular federal system to the view by many northerners that western education is incapable of stimulating meaningful development and prosperity in the region, and so shares the fallacy of western education being incompatible with Islam; all stemming from conspiracy.

But according to Alozieuwa (2012), attempting an explanation of the Boko Haram catastrophe with the conspiracy theories can be marked into two broad categories: one focusing on machinations of internal actors, the other on external actors. Internal actors may include the disgruntled northern power elite who, having lost power, are bent on bringing down Nigeria under a southern leadership, as well as the Jonathan administration itself, which may be sponsoring the crisis in order to rally southern support behind his administration, and there is also the perception that Boko Haram may be a secret society

controlled by some 'invisible' hands that seek to destroy the north ahead of 2015 so as to forestall or weaken its bid for the presidency at that time (Adibe, 2012:58). External actors, on the other hand, may include powerful western states like the United States, or neighbouring African states envious of Nigeria's progress and stability.

He explained further that for the first hypothesis regarding internal actors, our position is that its merit probably lies in the profound feeling of marginalization emanating from the north-east, either in terms of perceived denial of socio-economic infrastructure and/or the Kanuri sense of marginalization from central power. The second hypothesis also contends that part of the support mobilization strategy was to portray Islam in bad light by hitting Christian targets. This hypothesis perhaps draws from instances where attempts or actual attacks on Southern and Christian targets both in the north and south, which were blamed on Boko Haram, but were traced to Christian southerners (Blueprint, Tuesday January 31, 2012). Similarly, in November 2011, the State Security Services (SSS) also paraded a syndicate that circulated terror messages, which prompted some foreign diplomatic missions to issue warnings that emptied Abuja's high-brow hotels. The group was comprised of southern Christians and Non Muslims northerners. From a northern perspective, these cases "suggest that Boko Haram is now the new weapon used by various interest groups to cause violence, mislead and confuse Nigerians in order to achieve their selfish agenda" (ibid). It is difficult to comprehend how Christians who continue to fall victims of attacks on their places of worship and Southerners who are being asked to flee some part of the country from where most have spent the greater parts of their lives and built multi-million naira businesses, and who have asked Jonathan to quit if he cannot lead (Leadership online, May 1, 2102) will rally behind a government which has proved incapable of protecting them.

He added that although the United States continues to deny predicting Nigeria's disintegration by 2015 – pointing out that a private agency, not the US government carried out the survey upon which the report is predicated – those who emphasize this aspect of the external conspiracy theory point to a 2008 war game conducted by the US army which was designed to test its response ability to probable state failure in Nigeria in relation to US energy needs. The oil-rich Middle East has historically been unstable, and resurgent Islam has compounded the problem. Nigeria's far north is contiguous to the troubled Sahel and Maghreb regions, which also are contiguous to the some Middle East states in the grip of Islamism. The US interest in Nigeria's oil does not predispose it to be comfortable with such proximity to this potentially Islamist enclave. At a one-day symposium on 'international conspiracy: towards Nigeria's disintegration in Kaduna, the Association of Muslim Brotherhood of Nigeria (AMBON) noted that there were reasons to believe that the peace and security of Nigeria were being threatened by the western world powers for their economic gains; that the western world threatens the peace of the country in order to protect their economic interest in Nigeria's oil region" (Daily Trust, February 3, 2012). In the opinion of one member of Nigeria's National Intelligence Agency (NIA), the US might be aiming to sever the oil-rich Niger Delta or the south from the far north in order to insulate the former from the emerging Islamist activism in the north with the ultimate goal of securing the vital oil resources in the south. It would be preposterous to assume, however, that the US military could guarantee America's energy interest in Nigeria within the context of a failed Nigeria Balkanized into several fiefdoms.

He admonished that sentiments such as these have led to reservations over state efforts to collaborate with foreign powers to combat the Boko Haram and as such should be watched. Hence according to the Nigeria's former minister of petroleum, Professor Tam David West, "When they come ostensibly for security, they have their own agenda to penetrate our system and subjugate the sovereignty of the country; not only that, they become a powerful force within the country to dictate the political direction" (The Nation, online, January 29, 2012). A member of Nigeria's security forces, Uche Nwogu, shares this concern. Without naming any country in particular, she notes that "by the time these people come in the name of helping us fight Boko Haram, they would have understudied their modus operandi and would themselves start bombing us while we assume it is still Boko Haram".

As a pattern in Boko Haram's insurgency targeting ethnic and religious fault-lines – appears designed to enact the 2025 scenario described above. Hundreds of deaths of members of the Igbo ethnic nationality in the terror attacks in the north, for instance, have precipitated a 'return home' by the easterners and a warning that no ethnic group in Nigeria has monopoly of violence. Amid escalating violence, Igbo leaders have warned that the violence inflicted on their people residing in the north approximate the sequence of events that culminated in the tragedy of the Nigeria civil war (Punch, online, January 29, 2012). On the one hand, there is a perspective that links the attacks on the Igbos to the group's overwhelming electoral support for Jonathan in 2011, which amounted to over 98% of the



votes cast in the eastern region (Daily Sun, online, February 6, 2012). On the other hand, leaders of Jonathan's Ijaw ethnic nationality also warn against "subterranean moves to destroy the fabric of unity of this country at a time the leadership of the country is entrusted to our son and that no ethnic nationality is a sole repository of violence" (Tribune, online, January 10, 2012). From the North, the Arewa Youth Development Foundation, spoke about "recent remarks by South-East (Igbo) and South-South (Ijaw) leaders" and warned that should the tendencies continue, "We would be left with no option than to tell other regions that feel like disintegrating, that the North welcomes it too" (Blueprint, online, January 31, 2012). On the other plane, although the Nigerian Muslim leadership maintains that Islam and Christianity are not at war in Nigeria, (Tribune, online, December 28, 2012), the Christian leadership urges adherents to defend themselves against attacks (ibid) while a leading Pentecostal cleric, Bishop David Oyedepo claimed that God has anointed him "to lead a revolution against the jihadists and that if the church should arise, Nigeria will no more be a nation," (Tribune, January 23, 2012).

Summatively, he averred that allegations of conspiracy by envious neighbours to undermine Nigeria remain highly speculative, especially when considered in light of the military cooperation between Nigeria and its neighbouring countries in the war against transnational terrorism, and their common interest in regional stability (Alozieuwa, 2012).

#### **4. Methodology**

This paper on Boko Haram as a threat on National Security challenges is an ex post facto research depending on the data readily documented overtime.

The study area of course is the entire Nigeria as a country hence the activities of Boko Haram and its concomitant mayhem has cross country effects. This is because each bomb detonated on the Nigerian soil has tremendous effect on the country. It could be in terms of her economy as foreign investors have fled the country in their scores. On the other hand, lives of Nigerian have been lost in the process as some writers have refused to say the estimated figure but there are reasons to believe that about 50,000 Nigerians has lost their lives in the Boko Haram saga hence about 1500 Corps members have also lost their lives. A single life lost in this country is a colossal lost of hope and pride of the nation as human life is sacred. Properties worth billions have been lost in inferno as a result of this saga. Many families have lost their homes and businesses. Some have even lost their marriages in the process. All these losses are national loss, and therefore serve as a threat to the furtherance of the course of the Nigerian state.

The target audience is the entire Nigerians who by chance can get access to this paper; including the students who are the future leaders of this country. The current leaders are not left out of the target as they need to look at the recommendation that this paper outlines. Our policy makers are mostly targeted as it is their primary responsibility to make laws and ensure its implementation. The vulnerable masses are also target so that they will take solace in the fact that people are noticing the malevolence meted out to them and that records are kept of the wickedness that bedeviled them.

Therefore, this paper employs the secondary source of data as its method of data gathering and also uses the content approach to effect the analysis of the data generated via other people's documentations on the effects of Boko Haram sect on the security of the Nation as opinions abound on the activities of Boko Haram.

#### **5. The Boko Haram and national security threats in Nigeria**

Boko Haram's origin seems to lie in a group of radical Islamist youths who worshipped at the Alhaji Muhammadu Ndimi Mosque in Maiduguri a decade ago hence in 2002, an offshoot of this youth group (not yet known as Boko Haram) declared the city and the Islamic establishment to be intolerably corrupt and irredeemable. Thus the group declared that it was embarking on *hijra* (a withdrawal along the lines of the Prophet Muhammad's withdrawal from Mecca to Medina). It moved from Maiduguri to a village called Kanama, Yobe state, near the border with Niger, to set up a separatist community run on hard-line Islamic principles. Its leader, Mohammed Ali, espoused antistate ideology and called on other Muslims to join the group and return to a life under "true" Islamic law, with the aim of making a more perfect society away from the corrupt establishment.

The above assertion cannot be said to be correct as there are conflict in the literature as to the actual date of origin and formation as well as the leadership of the Boko Haram sect hence Alozieuwa (2012) documented that the confusion not only reflects in the narratives about the exact date, and who the actual founder was, but also as to the true source of these expositions. For instance, Adibe (2012), has observed that while the popular belief is that it was founded around 2001 or 2002, Madike, traced the

date to as far back as 1995, and argues that, one Lawan Abubakar, who later left for further studies at the University of Medina, Saudi Arabia, actually founded the Boko Haram sect. Under Abubakar, the sect was known as Sahaba, (Madike 2011 cited in Adibe, 2012: 50). Elsewhere, these expositions are credited to Shehu Sani, a civil right activist in northern Nigeria, who helped broker the first peace deal with the sect which failed (Businessday, online, February 1, 2012). While Uzodike and Maiangwa on the other hand acknowledge the Lawan Abubakar angle, they attribute their source to Ujah et al. in Uzodike and Maiangwa, 2012: 100). They also acknowledge Gusau's (2009) version which traced the origin to an evangelical group formed by Muslim students at the University of Maiduguri, Borno state, who reportedly felt dissatisfied with Western education (Uzodike and Maiangwa, 2012: 100).

He furthered that Muhammed Yusuf to whom the formation is now generally ascribed to, according to the competing narratives only assumed leadership after Abubakar's departure and "indoctrinated the sect with his own teachings, which he claimed were based on purity" (Adibe, 2012: 50). Yussuf's notion of "purity" and teachings were inspired by the works of Ibn Taymiyya, a fourteenth century legal scholar who preached Islamic fundamentalism and is considered a "major theorist" for radical groups in the Middle East (Johnson, 2011), after whom Yussuf named his mosque in Maiduguri (The Nation, May 23, 2012). But just as the sect itself may be less concerned about whom to credit for its formation than waging its war against the Nigerian state, the state too may be less concerned with the origin than it is with the threat that the group now poses to national society. The obscurity surrounding its true origin perhaps informs why initially, the sect "had no specific name as its members attracted several descriptions where they operated based on the perception of the local population" (Okereke, 2012: 450). Such names include Taliban and the Yussufiyah. 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, to which it is now commonly referred to, derives from the sect's anti-Western posturing, literally meaning 'Western education/civilization is sin.'

Narratively, he documented that in the early stages, the Boko Haram sect was widely known to have mobilized its membership from women and children, school drop-outs and unemployed university and polytechnic graduates, most of who tore up their certificates; student members withdrew from school. Okereke posits that "these recruits were indoctrinated by Yussuf to believe that their state of hopelessness was caused by government which imposed Western education on them and failed to manage the resources of the country to their benefits". Although from the outset, the sect's mission was to impose the Shari'a on Nigeria, the leadership went about its preaching peacefully, but not without attracting attention among other Islamic preachers who saw the preaching and interpretation of the Quran as a recipe for violence and an affront to constituted authority. Although incidents of violence have earlier been recorded against the sect, (Uzodike and Maiangwa, 2012: 102), serious concerns over its violent tendencies grew only after the open confrontation between the sect and the government in July 2009 following the death of Yussuf while in police custody, as well as his father in-law and sect financier, Ustaz Buji Foi, and the incarceration of members by state authorities.

Although Yussuf allegedly drew inspiration from radical Islamist, Ibn Taymiyya, he reportedly resisted some of followers relentless advocate that "an Islamic state was realizable through preaching and mobilization of the people to reject secularism, by way of taking up arms and fighting to conquer the unbelievers"; "Yussuf was said to be against any form of violence, saying it was against the teaching of Islam" (Suleiman cited in Uzodike and Maiangwa, 2012: 101). It is, therefore, yet uncertain whether the sect's current level of radicalization is a function of the deaths of its initial leadership and subsequent clampdown by the State or the accession to its leadership of the taciturn psychopath, Abubakar Shekua, a Kanuri native, who once boasted "I enjoy killing anyone that God commands me to kill – the way I enjoy killing chickens and rams," (BBC, online, June 22, 2012). Along with two other top leadership, Abubakar Adam Kamar and Khalid al-Barnawi, Shekau in June 2012 recently made the United States' list of international terrorists (Alozieuwa, 2012) hence the use of lethal weapons such as explosives and guns as well as machetes and dagger for the purpose of meting our mayhem to the Nigerian state which has affected her economy adversely considering the high rate of loss of lives and properties.

In terms of its modus operandi, observers said that the group constructed a "state within a state," with a cabinet, its own religious police, and a large farm, and attracted more and more people under its roof by offering welfare handouts, food, and shelter. Many of the people the group attracted were refugees from the wars over the border in Chad and jobless Nigerian youths. The source of the group's money at this stage of its existence is not clear. Members of the Borno religious establishment say that Yusuf received funds from Salafist contacts in Saudi Arabia following two hajj trips that Yusuf made during this time. Another possible source of funding during this period was donations from wealthy

northern Nigerians. In 2006, a wealthy northern businessman was arrested by the State Security Services after a group of children alleged that they had been sent by the group to an al-Qaeda training camp in Mauritania. The businessman says his donations to the group were an innocent attempt to contribute *zakat*, an obligation of wealthy Muslims to give charitably.

Strategically, until the June 16, 2011, bombing of the Nigeria Police Headquarters in Abuja, the sect had restricted its terror campaign mostly to the North East part of Nigeria. Remarkably, the attack on the Police Headquarters came barely after the then Inspector-General of Police, IGP, Hafiz Ringim returned from a duty tour of Maiduguri where the sect had just carried out some terror campaign and stated he would soon smoke them out. The sect followed up that attack with the bombing on August 26 of the United Nations House, also in Abuja, a place Shekau described as a “forum of all the global evil,” (Thisday, September 19, 2011). Since then, Boko Haram has either claimed responsibility for or has been credited with most terror activities in the northern part of the country. Its operations have also grown in scale and sophistication (Alozieuwa, 2012).

Consequently, the group had gained press attention in Nigeria, and interest from the U.S. Embassy, because of the catchy name locals had given it: the Nigerian Taliban. Hence the gossip that the few survivors of the “Nigerian Taliban” had returned to Maiduguri, where they settled back with others from the youth group that had originated at the Ndimi mosque.

On Christmas Eve 2010 as many as half a dozen bombs were detonated near churches and a market in two districts of Jos, Plateau state, killing scores of people. At the time it was not assumed to be a Boko Haram attack; it was thought to be a nasty twist to the long-standing ethno-political conflict there. Then, on New Year’s Eve 2010 a bomb was detonated in a popular open-air fish restaurant and market inside the grounds of the Mogadishu barracks, just outside Abuja, killing ten people. While it sits very close to a military barracks, the market is frequented mostly by civilians and was loosely protected. Initially it was not certain that either bombing had been carried out by Boko Haram. There had been a bombing three months before at a ceremony in Abuja marking the fiftieth anniversary of the country’s independence for which Boko Haram was not implicated and a leader of the Niger Delta militant organization the Movement for the emancipation of the Niger Delta [MEND] in custody in South Africa, faces charges of planning that attack (Onwudiwe and Berwind-Dart, 2010).

But in early 2011 an FBI investigation concluded that the Mogadishu barracks bomb was constructed using the same techniques as devices in Jos, and suspicion fell on Boko Haram. These attacks showed the group was prepared to strike vulnerable spots and cause civilian casualties. It launched its bombing campaign in the already tense city of Jos, and it showed the authorities it was able to reach them in Abuja.

During the first few months of 2011, the group’s targets for assassination operations in Maiduguri widened beyond the original focus of police and other authorities. In February 2011, for example, a pharmacist in Maiduguri—not believed to have had any previous connection to the group’s treatment by the police—was murdered in a robbery and neighbours attributed it to Boko Haram as cash and a large amount of medical supplies were taken from his shop. Abu Dujana, a senior member of the group had stated that anyone whom the group declared an “enemy” would be killed.

The group began to rob banks, cash-in-transit convoys, and successful businesses, not only in Maiduguri but also in Bauchi, where the group remains strong. The group claims it is permitted to do this by the Quran, as the money it takes is considered to be the “spoils of war.” A source who has followed the group closely states that the group is thought to have made approximately 500 million naira (about \$3 million, or £2 million) from such robberies, but such claims are unverifiable (walker, 2012).

In June 2011 Boko Haram bombed the national police headquarters in Abuja. A car laden with explosives drove into the compound of Louis Edet House, a block of offices previously thought secure in Abuja’s government zone, by following a convoy of senior officers through the gates. It is believed that the driver aimed to put the car near the entrance stairway as the senior officers entered, but he was directed around the back of the building by guards, where the bomb detonated in the car park.

At the time it was questioned whether the bombing was meant to be a suicide attack, because it was possible that the bomber had been delayed in Abuja traffic, but in August 2011 remaining doubts were removed when a man drove a car into the UN compound in Abuja and detonated a massive bomb, killing twenty-three people and wounding scores (Bekoe, 2011). The attack launched Boko Haram onto world news and established it as a militant group with the technical and doctrinal capacity to produce suicide bombs. The organization released a martyrdom video made by the driver of the car. Security intelligence analysts at Stratfor say building successful suicide weapons, like the ones used at the United Nations and police headquarters is very difficult. To perform two successful detonations is good

evidence that there is a foreign hand involved in training Boko Haram. The types of explosives the group use are common in mining and construction, the Reuters have noted, and there are plenty of sources of such explosives in northern Nigeria today.

The way the group contacted the outside world also changed about this time. A journalist in Nigeria says the group tightened its telephone discipline, collecting the numbers of journalists it wanted to contact, rather than having journalists call contacts they had made in the organization. A Boko Haram spokesman with the nom de guerre of “Abu Qaqa” began contacting journalists to claim attacks. The government later claimed that it had captured him, but Boko Haram says that another member had been captured and that Qaqa is still active. The purported leader of the group, Abubakar Shekau, Yusuf’s former right-hand man, also began to post videos to YouTube at this time.

Since August 2011 there have been almost weekly attacks by militants planting bombs in public or in churches in Nigeria’s northeast. The group has also broadened its targets, away from direct revenge attacks on the state to include other representations of authority. This expansion includes setting fire to schools and attacking newspaper offices. In March 2012, some twelve public schools in Maiduguri were burned down during the night, with as many as 10,000 pupils forced out of education. Three alleged members of Boko Haram were killed while trying to set light to a school. The group has told journalists that these attacks are in retaliation for the arrests of a number of Islamic teachers from traditional “Tsangaya” Quranic schools in Maiduguri. In the Tsangaya system of schools, clerics teach children to memorize the Quran. These schools, some with only a few children, some very large, operate not only in Nigeria but also across the whole of the Sahel. The children, known as Almajiris, come to the city from the countryside. Many beg during the day and give their money to the teacher, or *mallam*, who runs the school. The group also says that it is attacking the government school system in retaliation for the government’s attack on the Tsangaya system as a whole (Walker, 2012).

There has also been an increase in reports of people being beheaded in public by Boko Haram. It is believed that these might be internal purges of moderate members, or members in the group who have been arrested and can therefore no longer be trusted.

Big attacks have included bombings on Christmas Day 2011, when bombs were detonated in three states, Niger, Plateau, and Yobe, killing forty-five people. In January 2012 three groups of gunmen and suicide bombers coordinated attacks on three government buildings in Kano—the police headquarters, the office of the immigration service, and the State Security Service. More than two hundred people were killed. The group has also continued its involvement in the long-standing conflict between indigenous groups and Hausa/Fulani “settlers” in Plateau state. Most of the violence in the area has not had a connection to Boko Haram, but in February 2012 a suicide car bomb was detonated at a Jos church. Days later, in March, another suicide bomb was detonated outside St. Finbar’s church in Rayfield, Jos, near the government house. Nineteen people have been killed so far in retaliatory tit-for-tat attacks immediately following those bombings.

More recently, there have been deadly bomb and gun attacks on the offices of *This Day* newspaper in Abuja and Kaduna, the Catholic chapel in Bayero University Kano, and a cattle market in Yobe. Dozens were killed in each attack.

## 6. The Cause and Problems of Boko Haram in Nigeria

One problem is that security expertise is limited in a country where this level of terrorism is a relatively new phenomenon. And training as well as resources for building that type of intelligence gathering capability is lacking.

Another problem was highlighted by Jonathan in a January 9 address where he noted that part of the difficulty in defeating Boko Haram is that the group has infiltrated both the government and the military. Another problem may be corruption as close to 95 percent of the populace believe that the government is corrupt, according to a Gallup survey released in January, 2010.

The U.S.-Nigeria Bi-National Commission, a working group focused on strengthening Nigeria’s security, met at the end of January to discuss strategy. The United States has also pledged support in locating members of Boko Haram.

The *TELL* magazine visited a number of barracks across the country to gauge the temper of the military against the tense situation in the country. It discovered that the soldiers themselves appear to be worried about the insecurity and political situation in the country. Four categories of views were discernible. The lower ranks are really unhappy with the security situation in the country. They explained that they are the ones getting killed in the campaign of Boko Haram. They alleged that there is no motivation for the risks they take every day against Boko Haram. They claimed that each soldier on



24 hours special duty against the sect gets paid N500 a day as allowance, making a total of N3,500 weekly and paid at the end of every week. For N3,500 a week they want us to die for Nigeria (Agbo and Suleiman, 212:52).

As the security situations worsen, military authorities are unhappy that no fewer than 33 out of 36 states of the federation have men of the Nigerian army complementing the police to protect the citizens. Muhammad Abubakar, a Major General and General Officer Commanding the Second Mechanized Division, Ibadan speaking in Osogbo at the launch of a new security outfit for Osun State recently, lamented the precarious security situation across the country involving kidnapping, terrorism, oil bunkering, ritual killings and other criminal activities, which he said made it impossible for the army to stay in the barracks. He said that, the task of security is the primary responsibility of the police but we cannot continue to pretend that we are safe and we cannot continue like this hence security has become worrisome in the entire nation.

According to a cross section of the lower ranks interviewed by *TELL*, who lamented their emotions which could be summarized as disillusionment with democracy. They regretted that after voting massively for Jonathan he has not displayed enough leadership in the management of national security. They also feel that the upgrade of the military hardware for an anti-terrorism campaign envisaged by the over N929 billion budgetary allocations to security is too slow in coming and they are daily exposed to danger. But a security source said some of the military hardware cannot be picked up from the shelf, and therefore have to be ordered for, which takes time (Agbo and Suleiman, 212:52).

The middle level officers on the other hand, believe that they are better off under a democracy. Some explained that the era when a clique determined the career progression of an officer is gone. For the top level officers, they said they are satisfied with democracy but complained of certain indecisiveness on the part of the President.

In the event that the anger becomes apparent in the barracks are the politicians not giving soldiers an excuse to upstage democracy? That will be far fetched, as some military officers insist that the country is now too complicated for a coup to succeed. Not only that, some Statemen are said to be making efforts to ensure that matters do not degenerate to that level, so that the country would not become a laughing stock in the international community.

Bola Koleosho, a brigadier general and director, Army Public Relations, told *TELL* magazine that the army is being transformed positively under democracy and are happy to be subordinated under the civilian authority. He also confirmed the claim of the lower ranks that they are paid N500 a day as allowance. However, he explained that it is just pocket money and an addition to their salaries.

The force also appears too complicated for a forceful takeover of government. Despite the security challenges, there appears no persuasive and legitimate reason for anybody to contemplate a military takeover, which appears to be what Boko Haram wants to precipitate.

He also pointed unemployment, religious intolerance, ethnic rivalry as well as agitations for resource control as some of the monsters breeding hatred and conflict in the country. Studies have shown that factors responsible for violent conflicts in Nigeria include poverty, unemployment, religious intolerance, ethnic rivalry, growing acculturation, resource control agitations and ignorance. "Most critical of these factors however is ignorance, which leads to suspicion and mistrust," (Odiadi, 2012: 52)

There is also the economic consideration. The Nigeria Delta insists it owns the oil that funds the national budget. And Dokubo has warned there will be no oil to export if anything happens to Jonathan. The ex-militants had demonstrated enough capacity to cripple Nigeria's oil production when they reduced crude oil production from 2.4 million barrels daily, mb/d at about 700,000 mb/d. That reality forced the federal government to resort to the Amnesty Programme. Today, oil production is over 2.6mb/d (Agbo and Suleiman, 212:55).

Obasanjo, who was represented by the National Secretary of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Prince Olagunsoye Oyinlola, stressed that the only viable way out of the ugly situation is dialogue and enlightenment programmes for youths, community leaders, village heads, religious leaders, local government chairmen, traditional rulers as well as politicians.

He added that erosion of cultural values due to increasing acculturation and negative external influences have also contributed largely to the spate of violent crimes and insecurity in the country.

Another critical factor worthy of mention is the breakdown of cultural values. Unfortunately, evasion of these values due to increasing acculturation and negative external influences, have also contributed largely to the spate of violent crises and general insecurity we have today (Binniyat 2012:5). Declaring the conference open, President Goodluck Jonathan, who was represented by the Special Adviser to the President on Special Duties, Sarah Pene, said traditional institutions and local

government councils as agents of grass root mobilisation should view the present security problem as a wake-up call to their statutory responsibility. He, therefore, charged them to rise to their role as the chief security officers of their areas of jurisdiction.

In his welcome address, the Executive Secretary, National Institute of Cultural Orientation, Dr. Barclays Ayakoroma, blamed the current socio-political and economic woes experienced in the country on cultural disorientation. He said: In place of the cherished cultural values of fair-play, kindness, patriotism and communal living, our citizens have imbibed negative practices of dishonesty, stealing, disrespect, killings and other related crimes, which were alien to our culture (kajo, 2012: 5) Can the federal government restore security? What is responsible for all the sporadic bombings? Why has Jos remained a troubled spot? These are puzzles that seem to have no answers.

There is also the international community to consider. The global tide is against military governments. In Africa Nigeria has been at the head of resisting military takeover of civilian governments across the continent in Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, Niger, Ivory Coast, Congo and other turbulent African countries. Nigeria had led African Union resistance of forceful change of government. In West Africa Nigeria has stabilized Economic Community of West African States; ECOWAS, as a democracy compliant such region. Nigeria has demonstrated sufficient leadership in Africa regarding the advancement of democracy and any military coup will be an aberration. Consequently, any military incursion into governance in Nigeria will be highly resisted by international stakeholders. Besides, any forceful change has the dangerous potential of working towards the prophecy of a possible break up of Nigeria by 2015.

## 7. Recommended Solutions

The unquenchable aggression against Christian faithful is unacceptable in a multi-ethnic nation like Nigeria. The continuing attacks on Christians by this sect portend great danger to the corporate existence of Nigeria and may plunge the nation into sectarian strife if not quickly checked. We therefore recommend a viable reorientation on the side of the Muslim extremists who have seized to see Christians as fellow countrymen hence these attacks have tended towards a situation where tolerance, assimilation and respect for fellow countrymen irrespective of religious affiliation and regional inclinations have been lost. Therefore a total reorientation on value for life and unity even in diversity is strongly recommended.

That President (Goodluck Jonathan) should rise to this security challenges by matching words with action, hence it is not enough to, after each dastardly attack, assure Nigerians that the government and the security agents are on top of the situation. In fact, the government has failed in its primary function of assuring the security of lives and property of citizens in many parts of Northern Nigeria. Therefore a proactive and pragmatic approach to quelling this menace is recommended.

No doubt, the impoverishment of the North is traceable to the long history of insecurity in the region. This has escalated under Jonathan's Presidency. The insecurity has led to mass exodus of investors from the North on one hand and the exodus of foreign investors from Nigeria on the other. The Northern elites should also broker peace in the region as it is believed that they are lovers of peace and tranquility which the menace of Boko Haram threatens; as it is only in peace that the region will witness development of all sorts.

Refusal to do that, the president, haven identified some of the institutions of government which the sect has allegedly infiltrated, should swing into action and fish out those involved and prosecute them. He should also get at the root of the sponsorship of the rebellious group since the government's partial state of emergency in some states in the north has failed to curtail violence in those areas, as it will not be out of place to invoke full state of emergency in some troubled states in the North as a way of deterring further insurgence of insecurity in the land.

Since the menace has subsided, this is the right time for the Nigerian government to establish special force that counters the terrorism of Boko Haram caliber as well as open a viable channel for information sharing between the government agencies and the individuals or private security outfits because security is every body's responsibility. Let the government and all the security agencies do all that is necessary to stop the continuing bloodletting in Northern Nigeria.

## 8. Conclusion

Boko Haram is an Islamic sect that believes politics in northern Nigeria has been hijacked by a group of corrupt and false Muslims; and also that westernization has bred corruption in the Nigerian polity and therefore wants to wage war against westernization of all sorts in the country by creating a

theocratic state ruled by Shari'a law. Resultantly, since August 2011 Boko Haram has planted bombs almost weekly in public places and churches in Nigeria's northeast. Later on, the group broadened its targets to include setting schools on fire hence in March 2012, some twelve public schools in Maiduguri were blazed down, and as many as 10,000 pupils were forced out of school.

Following the failed rescue of hostages Chris McManus and Franco Lamolinara in northwestern state of Sokoto in March 2012, President Goodluck Jonathan played up the connections between the group and international terrorism to the gallery as western plot to divide Nigeria by 2015. However, links between Boko Haram and the kidnappers are questionable; besides, despite its successful attack on the UN compound in Abuja in August 2011, it cannot be said that Boko Haram is bent on attacking Western interests since there have been no further attacks on international interests since that time.

Tactics employed by government security agencies against Boko Haram have been consistently brutal and counterproductive. From the attacks so far, the group will continue to attack softer targets in the northeast rather than international targets inside or outside Nigeria, which would further threaten the country's unity.

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