

**T** ERRORISM IN NIGERIA: A CASE OF BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY**\*ASHIGAR A. K. SATOMI & \*\*DANJUMA ABUBAKAR UMAR,***\*Department of Languages and Liberal Studies, Ramat Polytechnic Maiduguri.**\*\*Department of Industrial and Labour relations, Ramat Polytechnic Maiduguri.***ABSTRACT**

**T**his paper explores the current problems posed by Boko Haram terror group in Nigeria and the confusion regarding the exact causes of the violence. Many theories have been advanced to explain the socio-economic issues revolving around the problems, all of which are treated in it. The paper also posits that as a result of the geographic proximity of Nigeria to Cameroon, Chad and Niger, the linkage of people from the four countries and the porosity of Nigeria's borders in the North-East geopolitical zones, Boko Haram has developed into a system of conflict. Therefore, it cannot be annihilated without a synergy.

**Keywords:** *Terrorism, Terror Group, Insurgency, Extremist group, Terrorist and Boko Haram*

including suicide attacks. The most vulnerable targets include the security facilities, worship centres, market places, government offices and international buildings as well (Agbiboa, 2013). Furthermore, the extremist group

**INTRODUCTION**

Nigeria is a country located in the Gulf of Guinea with abundant natural and human resources. However, it is currently facing a multiplicity of security challenges, such as sectarian violence, Niger Delta militancy and above all the Boko Haram insurgency in the North-Eastern part of the country. In the year 2009, the country started experiencing the vulnerability of terror act and criminality. The extremist group began a violent campaign that resulted in the death of well over 17,000 people and forced more than 2.6 million from their homes (BBC News, 2016). The group has carried out a lot of attacks and bombings,

assassinated religious clerics and other community leaders largely in the North-Eastern part of the country for allegedly cooperating with government authorities (Ibid).

Boko Haram has been conducting sophisticated and coordinated attacks targeted towards ordinary citizens and security agents in an effort to take over power and impose strict sharia laws (Premium Times, 2013). In the last two years, the terror group has killed, kidnapped school children, mostly notably the Chibok girls and taken over control of 14 local government council areas in the North-East, which was almost the size of Belgium in Europe (BBC News, 2014).

The available records show that Boko Haram was founded in 2002 in Maiduguri Borno state, Nigeria, by an Islamic cleric called Muhammad Yusuf (Salaam, 2012). But its official name is Jama'atu Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda'awati Wal Jihad (meaning people committed to the teachings of Prophet Muhammad). The name Boko Haram came into existence as a result of the public perception of the group's basic preaching and beliefs, especially how it distances itself from the western education. The word Boko Haram derived from two different languages, Hausa and Arabic. Boko means school while Haram means forbidden. The combined meaning of Boko Haram is that western education is sinful or forbidden (Agbiboa, 2013).

Those who believe in the idea that western education is sinful are seen as living a righteous life that fits into their interpretation of God's will while those who do not believe with that idea are considered as infidels or disbelievers. This kind of belief is the hallmark of the group's way of life and those who disagree with it are considered as the opposition (Salaam, 2012). Boko Haram as terrorists' organization is linked to Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb and seems to be active in Niger, Northern Cameroun, and Chad. It has been involved in clashes along the borders of these countries with Nigeria (Ras, 2015).

The aim of this paper is to analyse the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria and propose some alternative counter-response strategies in eradicating the menace. Therefore, the researcher used the explorative method to analyse from the existing literature.

### **Boko Haram networks and its global reach**

According to Blanchard (2014) the sophistication and coordination of Boko Haram's attacks that boosted its profile among the United States (U.S.) security officials. In 2013, the State Department included the extremist group, along with

others like Ansaru, as foreign terrorist organizations (Elden, 2014). Also, Blanchard (2014) observes that the group presently appears to pose threats, particularly to the local community in Nigeria, the government and international targets, including citizens of western countries living in the area. However, the extremist group has issued threats against western citizens most particularly to American citizens through media propaganda, but to date, there is no western citizens are known to have been killed by the extremists (Ibid).

In March 2014, the U.S. State Department reiterated Africom's military assessment of the extremist focus as initially a local effort when compared to other extremist groups, operating in Africa like Somalia's Al-Shabab and Ansaru (Elden, 2014). The Boko Haram's allegiance to other terrorist groups and the concentration by some of its members by having a transnational program have complicated policy makers concern. However, the United States Director of National Intelligence has issued a warning that the decentralisation of the Al-Qaeda group has led to springing up of new power centres, and this has brought more threats by a network of similar extremist groups with allegiances to many groups (Blanchard, 2014).

### **Theoretical Analysis of Boko Haram**

Many variables have been used by different scholars to contextualise what drives Boko Haram members to carry out arms and ferocious attacks against the citizens of their country. Some have used religion to explain their act of terror by simply arguing that their action linked to religious influences. However, this argument seems to be plausible because there is no significant relationship between being a Muslim and being an insurgent or a terrorist (Walker, 2012). Apart from that, the extremist targets both Christians and Muslims. For example, the terror attack on Kano central mosque on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2014 and that of Madalla church on 25<sup>th</sup> December 2011 (Regens et al., 2016). Therefore, religion may be one of the many causes of Boko Haram terrorism in the country.

Some other scholars have used other variables like political, social and psychological to explain the action of this extremist group (Akpan, Ekanem and Adeoye, 2014). The key message is that terrorism is not caused by a single factor or phenomenon. Rather, it is caused by many factors. For us to understand the terrorism in Nigeria, particularly the Boko Haram insurgency, the multi causal approach is expected to provide a better understanding of the extremist than the religion-focused idea which is mono causal in nature. The Mrazek and Haggerty

(1994) and Salaam (2012) risk factor theory and Sigmund Freud Frustration-Aggression theory are all multi-causal approaches.

The Frustration-Aggression theory of Freud suggests that aggression tends to occur as a result of frustration. They argue that whenever individual members of society are enmeshed with poverty, lack of opportunities, marginalisation, injustice, discrimination, lack of education and other basic necessities of life, they would get frustrated. Therefore, this kind of frustration often breeds militancy or violent tendencies among the people, most particularly the young ones. In the case of Nigeria, the country is known for its economic fortunes but these available resources are poorly distributed. According to World Bank (2014), Nigeria's population stood at 173.6 million people and still remains the Africa's largest economy with Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of 479 billion dollars annually. However, despite the availability of these resources Nigeria remains with 62% of its citizens lived in abject poverty and poor infrastructural facilities (World Bank, 2014). In general, Nigeria ranked third in the world poverty index in the corresponding year. This could be a strong indicator of frustration. The country has enough resources to provide the basic necessities of life for its citizens such as electricity, portable water, health, education, and food, yet the citizens lived in abject poverty. Therefore, whenever people lack especially the basic necessities of life, they are likely to lose hope in the authority and get frustrated. Therefore, this argument is also supported by Obua (2012), that the poverty and underdevelopment of Nigeria are caused by official corruption.

Nigeria was geographically divided into two protectorates North and South prior to its independence. And these regions still maintain their name politically and otherwise. There are more of differences than similarities in terms of education and economy. The northern part is educationally and economically disadvantaged compared to the southern part. According to Salaam (2012), the northern part of the country is poorer than its southern counter-part, where poverty is as high as 70.1% of incidence rate, compared to 34.9% in the south.

In addition to poverty is the educational gap between the north and south which is also one of the important indicators or 'risk factors' as referred to by (Mrazek and Haggerty, 1994; Salaam, 2012). Despite the several efforts to close the educational gap between the two regions by previous governments and international organisations such as UNICEF and World Bank, the disparities still remain clear. The Nigerian Educational Data Survey (2014) indicates that northern part has less than 30% of its young adults going to university compared

to the southern part which has 60% attendance rate. Taking into consideration in a wider perspective, the Borno State, where Boko Haram was founded is located in the north-eastern part which has 72% of children from ages 6-16 never attended school (Ibid). The above statistics indicate that majority of young adults in Borno State are not educated and poor. So, as the saying goes 'a hungry man is an angry man', the hence tendency for aggression is going to be high. In the case of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria a greater percentage of them are uneducated, unemployed and poor, who expressed frustration for the existing unequal distribution of wealth by the government (Vaaseh, 2015).

Another issue that compounded the problem of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria was the introduction of Crash Helmet law in 2008 (Borno State Motor Vehicle Administration and Other Matters Connected Therewith) by the government of Borno state and its subsequent enforcement throughout the state. Boko Haram members viewed the introduction of this law as alien to the practice of Islam, therefore, refused to comply with the law. Their reason was that they were using the Middle East traditional head dress called 'Kufiya' and therefore, cannot use with the Helmet concurrently. Then Boko Haram members who were not having Crash Helmet later arrested and their motor cycles seized by the authority. This singular scenario angered them more (Vaaseh, 2015).

The probable variable factors or risk factors to Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria are the poverty, unemployment, lack of education and above all the social injustice.

**Sustainable Counter Insurgency Strategies in Case of Nigeria (Boko Haram)**

The available literature shows that there is a general consensus among Nigerians that government's response to Boko Haram extremists was reactionary rather than proactive. Those who share this idea argue that Nigeria government in most cases waits for the terrorists to launch their attacks on people and institutions of government before it reacts.

From 2009 to 2013, the insurgents have killed more than Al-Qaeda did on September 11, 2001, in the United States of America (U.S.A.) and were still creating havoc and killing without the government being able to deflate them (Akpan et al, 2014). It is pertinent to note that, though it took the U.S.A. not less than ten years to trace and kill Osama Bin Laden, but it ensured that Al-Qaeda was not able to pose new threats on its soil, throughout the hunt for Al-Qaeda leader lasted.

In the case of Nigeria, in spite of the fact that state of emergency had been imposed in states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa by then government of President Jonathan, the insurgents were attacking both security agents and innocent civilians. This simply signifies that government's counter strategies did not yield the desired results. One may like to know what those strategies are.

To sum up all, the then President Jonathan's administrative frame work which has been implemented with reference to Boko Haram as narrated by Voll (2015) are things such as; troops had been reinforced, leadership of the movement was targeted, state of emergency has been declared, Civilian Joint Task Force have been established, Multi-National Join Task Force has been put in place, a curfew has been imposed and many other measures within the purview of the security officials. But nobody knows what those measures are, for the so called security reasons. It was nothing more than a denial. In addition, Nigeria's heavy-handed response to terrorists, operations have also affected ordinary civilians and the complicated United States intention to pursue bigger counter- terrorism cooperation with the government of Nigeria (Blanchard, 2014). That has significantly affected Nigeria in terms equipment and information sharing. Similarly, Voll (2015) opines that Nigeria's security force response have been constrained by many factors, notably mismanagement and corruption. From the available literature, the positive result the above measures yielded, was a reduction in scope but not in the impact of extremists' mode of operation. In the case of scope, the extremist activities are mostly limited to northern part of the country but the impact of the insurgents' operation is being felt throughout Nigeria. The reason for the failure is that government used the same methods such as force, administrative panel and negotiation in addressing the problem of Niger Delta Militancy to tackle Boko Haram terrorism (Akpan et al, 2014). This is because they have different goals and objectives. Also, the Niger Delta militants have visible leaders and their demands were well captured in Kaima declaration. While Boko haram is not having a clear and visible leader since after the death of its founder Muhammad Yusuf, not even Abubakar Shekau the self-acclaimed leader can have effective control of the group, taking into consideration the differences that exist. According to Walker (2013), the Boko Haram is a 'cell-like structure' facilitating factions and split. In a similar vein, John (2013) views the group as 'diffuse' without having a clear structure.

Based on the above facts, it is desirable that government should change its strategies in order to counter the ugly situation by defeating, disrupting and

preventing the emergence of insurgents and their nefarious activities. Just as Vaaseh (2015) suggests, sustainable counter insurgency needs the processes that inhibit the growth, development, and succession operation of extremists.

A sustainable counter-response or strategies are not an only immediate military action to deter and prevent terrorist operation but also includes long-term initiatives that would take care of the future after the insurgents might have been eliminated to prevent re-emergence. As argued by Walker (2013), counter-response strategy should be anchored on things like preventing individuals from turning to terrorists, protecting citizens, investigating and disrupting support network. Others include responding and minimising the consequences of their attacks. These strategies are expected to be effective and practical to government security agencies.

In fact, every insurgency or terrorism is environmentally determined and diverse in nature. Therefore, applying other countries strategies may not be feasible in Nigeria's case. Perhaps this may partly explain why the government of Nigeria has not been winning the war on terrorism (Dorris, 2015). Summing up from this, therefore, the way forward to counter Boko Haram insurgents in Nigeria is likely to be effective through the following strategies.

1) Following the inauguration of the president of Muhammad Buhari on May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2015, the effort being put by Multi-National Joint Task Force led by Nigeria in the region of Lake Chad is quite commendable, though not in full operation. Judging by spreading of the insurgents' networks into neighbouring countries of Chad, Niger, and Cameroun, it is necessary that military resources are mobilized with clear cut mandates to help flush the insurgents out of the region. It is also important that the Multi-National Joint Task Force in collaboration with the members of the local communities must ensure that intelligence gathering and information sharing is prioritised. This would help in identifying their sponsors, recruiters and training camps within the Lake Chad sub-region.

2) Although the role being played by Civilian Joint Task Force is also commendable in the fight against Boko Haram insurgents, their limitations must be identified and corrected by the government according to the international best practices. For example lack of coordination and human rights violation perpetrated by them.

3) The mere integration of civilians into the counter operations to work with professional soldiers alone is not enough, rather, the government can enrol them into rigorous military training for at least six months after which they can be co-

opted into the mainstream military. This kind of strategy has worked well in other countries, especially Israel. Platoons of part time soldiers were found to be effective in time of needs and emergencies (Senor and Singers, 2011).

4) Another major strategy in curbing the problem of Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East is through providing the dividends of democracy most especially poverty alleviation programs aimed at job creation, the establishment of recreational centres and entrepreneurial development programs. The rate of poverty in the country is so alarming, most especially the North-East sub-region, where is now regarded as a breeding ground for home grown terrorists.

5) Another area of concern in building a sustainable counter insurgency strategy in the country is that effort must be made by the government to curb down corruption in order to minimise the cost of governance. Recently the former National Security Adviser, Col. Sambo Dasuki has been accused of corruptly enriching himself from the money meant for defence by the present administration.

### **Conclusion**

Boko Haram is a home grown insurgents group with an international clout, where its operational headquarters is located in a Northern-Eastern part of Nigeria. Although Boko Haram insurgency is linked to the high rate of poverty, low level of education and social injustice in North-Eastern Nigeria, manhandling the insurgency has greatly contributed to its uncontrolled attacks and deaths of innocent civilians. This is a clear indication of lack of effective and articulate strategies of the government, particularly the last administration of President Jonathan. In order to defeat this terrorist group, all efforts must be geared towards the adequate funding of the Multi-National Joint Task Force in the Lake Chad sub-region. Also, there is a need to concentrate on intelligence gathering and information sharing particularly in identifying terrorists and their sponsors. There is an urgent need to upgrade the operational and logical equipment of the security forces to boost its intelligence gathering and effectively discharge its surveillance functions. In addition, security personnel should be trained and retrained in line with the best global practices this will help in acquiring new skills in addressing terrorism. The training should include the technicalities of being proactive rather than being reactive. This would give them skills to address advance warning with seriousness. The porous borders should be manned adequately in order to check the influx of illegal immigrants and importation of



weapons. Also, the government of Nigeria must pay urgent attention in areas of poverty eradication programmes, such as skill acquisition schools, loan facilities and providing agricultural equipment to farmers. The issue of corruption should be addressed in all sectors of government. Also, education should be prioritised particularly in the North-Eastern part of the country.

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