

CONTEXTUALIZING INSURGENCIES IN AFRICA: THE CASE OF BOKO HARAM IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

An emerging trend of terrorism is fast developing in Sahel/Sub-Saharan Africa. Examples are in Mali and Nigeria. Greater part of Northern Mali until recently was under the control of an Islamic rebel terrorist group strongly linked to Al-Qaeda. In Nigeria Boko Haram, an Islamic fundamentalist sect has grown into a terror group. The purpose of this paper is to critically examine what factors push insurgencies in Africa from protests, conflict to terrorism, using the Boko Haram fundamentalists in Northern Nigeria as a case study. Could there be any significant relationship between the growing sense of Islamic fundamentalism sponsored and encouraged by some state governments and the recent upsurge of Islamic fundamentalist terrorism in Nigeria? Are there prevalent socio-economic and political conditions in Nigeria (and Africa) which spawn terrorism? What are the responses of African states to terrorism, and how are the insurgencies likely to shape African society and its development, including internal migration patterns and social security. Using content analysis, newspaper reports, government statements and those of the insurgents, victims and eye witness accounts, the paper concludes that Boko Haram is an aspect of political Islam, an extension of the struggle for political power, using religious fundamentalist ideology to achieve other ends. And societies confronted with such religious conflicts face bleak future.

Key words: Boko Haram, religion, fundamentalism, insurgency, terrorism, Sahel/Sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria.

Introduction

This paper is an interrogation of the complex and unsettling cases of terrorism and insurgencies in Africa especially in Sahel/Sub-Saharan Africa. It examines Boko Haram terrorism and insurgency in Nigeria and argues that it is a dimension of an emerging phenomenon in the Sahel region of West Africa arising from internal political contradictions in Nigerian, but underpinned by international terror organizations encircling the sub-region. The rate of escalation of Islamic religious fundamentalism which has led to

terrorism and insurgencies in Sahel /West African has posed such security threats, generated such concerns that have underscored reference to the region as developing into an 'arc of terror' in Africa. Perhaps contrary to expectation, Obi (2006) had suggested that terrorism in West Africa collaborating with Niger Delta militancy in the Gulf of Guinea was unlikely. Obi was able to identify in Nigeria the following ingredients of terrorism: 'Taliban' in North-East Nigeria, (which modeled itself after the Taliban of Afghanistan) suspected to be affiliated to Al Sunna Wal Jamma, militant Nigerian Muslim university and polytechnic students, the arming and training of militant groups in the North of Nigeria funded by groups in Saudi Arabia and radical Islamic countries, activities of militant Islamic preachers and terrorist network operating along the trans-Sahara routes (Obi, 2006: 16). In spite of the identified threats, Obi concluded that:

From the foregoing, it is not difficult to fathom why there are concerns that Northern Nigeria could become an incubating site for militant Islam and possibly terrorism. However, it would appear that some of the claims about the existence of a terrorist threat are overstated. This is because Islam in northern Nigeria is largely conservative and welded into traditional structures and cultures. Militant groups are relatively few and exist on the fringes of society where they are also visible (Obi, 2006: 16).

While terrorism of the Islamic fundamentalist sect may be unlikely in the Niger Delta for reasons Obi suggested, the second half of his study, terrorism in Nigeria fueled by terror activities in the Sahel/West Africa has fully manifested, and is presently a serious concern not only in Nigeria but in the whole of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Indeed a lot have happened in the Sahel region since Obi wrote, part of which are the discourses in the rest of the paper. For example the fact that Islamic fundamentalism (and terrorism) in Nigeria is beginning in North Eastern Nigeria may not be surprising to those familiar with the history of Islam in

West Africa (Northern Nigeria). At the inception of Islam in West African in the 17th century A.D. Borno embraced radical Islam (the Tijaniyya), meaning 'Islam for the poor' which focused on social reform and grassroots Islamic revival; different from Sokoto Caliphate (the Qadiriyyah) which was conservative, hierarchical and elitist (Nunwick, 1972: 267-288). And till date Borno has remained different, and contested Islamic authenticity with Sokoto. Borno and Sokoto remain the headquarters of the two main streams of Islamic sects in Muslim Nigeria (Abubakar, 2001a; Abubakar, 2001b; Balogun, 2001; Lavers, 2001). So, it is not unexpected that Borno is more susceptible to Islamic radicalism and fundamentalism than Sokoto. Sokoto, in the North West of Nigeria has remained peaceful in the more than ten- year period (2001-2013) of Islamic fundamentalism, terrorism and insurgency in Nigeria. It has experienced no single terrorist attack since the inception of terrorism in Northern Nigeria.

The work is so replete with the two concepts 'insurgency' and 'terrorism' that it may be necessary to define briefly their uses in the context of this work. In this work terrorism refers to acts meant to intimidate, cause harm, including death in order to meet a specific objective, most often political, of the group of perpetrators. It is used in a pejorative sense to describe life threatening actions perpetrated by politically motivated self-appointed sub-state actors. An insurgency is an armed rebellion against a constituted authority, for example, an authority recognized as such by the UN when those taking part in the rebellion are not recognized as belligerents.

Thus, the purpose of this paper is to critically examine the factors in Nigeria (Sahel/Sub-Saharan Africa) which push conflict to insurgency and terrorism; also to find out whether there is a relationship between Islamic fundamentalism sponsored and encouraged by some Northern Nigerian state governments through the imposition of Sharia law in 2001 and Islamic fundamentalist terror groups in the country. The study also examines critically the extent to which religious fundamentalism and terrorism may be related to socio-economic and political conditions (poverty, unemployment and grand corruption in

government) of the country. Furthermore, the paper investigates to what extent the import/export of terrorism (Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb/Al Shabaab in Somalia) may be a significant factor in the emergence of terrorism in Nigeria and indeed all of Sahel/West African sub- region. And finally, we will explore the relationship between the nature of Nigerian state and the festering of insurgency and terrorism.

Contextualizing insurgencies in Africa

Insurgencies under the various contexts (five in number) indentified below, and in particular in the context of the focus of this paper, are intended to assist us in defining the intensity, regularity duration of insurgency and terrorism. The contexts also underscore the nature of the states subjected to insurgency and terrorism. In addition, the context will guide the approaches to getting insurgency and terrorism resolved. Terrorism and insurgencies in Sub-Saharan Africa may be identified under the following contexts. The contexts are not rigid; they may overlap. The development of the contexts is based on the factor or factors which were major, and most pronounced, and which most likely constituted the 'threshold of criticality' (Deutsch, 1961) at the outbreak of crises and conflicts.

- i. Citizenship/ethnicity/nationality conflicts: Rwanda, Uganda, D. R. Congo (the Great Lakes region of Africa), Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Chad, Sudan, Sudan/Darfur, Somalia, Mali, Ethiopia/Eritrea, Morocco (Southern Sahara).
- ii. Autonomy/resource conflicts: Nigeria (Niger Delta), Sudan/Darfur/South Sudan, D. R, Congo.
- iii. Ethno-Religious/political conflicts: Algeria, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan/South Sudan, Mali (Chad/Niger subsumed).
- iv. Election/political violence/conflicts: Algeria, Nigeria, Kenya, Cote d'Ivoire.
- v. Good governance/resource protests: Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Nigeria (Niger Delta).

Further scrutiny of the contexts below isolates countries according to their involvement in insurgence and/or insurgence and terrorism:

1st context manifested in insurgency alone in the following countries: Uganda, D. R. Congo, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Chad, Sudan (South Sudan), Sudan/Darfur, Somalia, Mali, Ethiopia, Morocco.

1st context manifested in insurgency and terrorism in the following countries: Somalia, Mali.

2nd context manifested in insurgency alone in the following countries: Sudan (South Sudan), Sudan/Darfur.

2nd context manifested in insurgency and terrorism in the following countries: **None**.

3rd context manifested in insurgency alone in the following countries: Algeria, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, Mali.

3rd context manifested in insurgency and terrorism in the following countries: Algeria, Nigeria, Somalia, Mali.

4th context manifested in insurgency alone in the following countries: Algeria, Cote d'Ivoire.

4th context manifested in insurgency and terrorism in the following countries: Algeria.

5th context manifested in insurgency alone in the following countries: None.

5th context manifested in insurgency and terrorism in the following countries: None.

While the 1st context is more encompassing, involving many African countries and shades of conflicts, the 3rd ethno-religious /political, has remained the most serious and deadly. The 3rd context resulted in first degree terrorism in all the countries confronted with ethno-religious/political conflicts. It may be observed further that Nigeria, the focus of our study, is the only country which is involved in all the five contexts above at various times in her history since political independence in 1960. The reasons, among others, may have to do with the big geographical size and ethnic and religious complexities of the country. Sudan is the next country, involved in three contexts; again partly because of her big geographical size and ethnic and religious complexities (South Sudan became a separate country only in 2011 after 55 years of insurgency, 1956-2011). This paper focuses attention on the third context of conflicts, insurgency/terrorism in Africa that is, the ethno-religious/political conflicts.

Certainly an emerging trend of terrorism is fast developing in Sahel/ Sub-Saharan Africa, connecting Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb region and Sahel/West Africa, and Al Shabaab in Somalia. Members of the terrorist groups receive military and ideological training, financial and military weapons assistance, and other forms of collaboration from Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb - 'Boko Haram starts free training for terrorists', (Saturday Punch, 31 December, 2011: 6); 'Boko Haram: Sahel security chiefs invite Nigeria to Mauritania summit (Daily Sun, 24 January, 2012: 15). Presently, the terror groups include Boko Haram and Ansaru in Nigeria, Ansara Dine and Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) in Mali, Niger and Chad - Al-Qaeda leader excited as Somalia's Shabaab joins group' (Daily Sun, 10 February, 2012: 14). The terror groups are nearly forming a Maghreb/Sudan/Sahel/West African dangerous ring of insurgencies and terrorism (the 'arc of terror'). There is a policy of recruitment and indoctrination of members based on Islamic fundamentalist ideology. It is important to observe that all the groups are Muslim religious fundamentalists, and operate in states predominantly Muslim. In other words, there is a common thread that binds them, i.e. Islamism: Islamic fundamentalist ideology and anti-establishment dispositions, a form of political Islam (Ayoob, 2005; Fuller, 2003; Beinín and Stork, 1997). Also they share a common geo-political circle.

The aim of the terrorists in the Sahel/Sub-Saharan Africa is to establish Islamic states, and use the base as haven to mount attacks on Western interests in the region. Al-Qaeda had earlier identified the region as appropriate base for training and for launching attack on Western interest; according to it, because some of the countries in that region are allies to the West - 'Al-Qaeda plots fresh attacks on Nigeria, others; ...Ghana drafts soldiers to its international airport' (Sunday Punch, 26 August, 2012: 2).

According to Salamatú Hussaini Suleiman, ECOWAS Commissioner for Political Affairs in an address to UNSC meeting in New York, the objective of the terrorist groups and transnational organized criminals is clear: It is to create a safe haven and a coordinating centre in the north of Mali (and Sahel Africa) for continental terrorist networks ... If that objective is realized no country in Africa

or outside the continent will be safe. Suleiman named al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQMI), the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), the Nigerian radical group Boko Haram and the Somali extremist group al-Shabaab as being among those seeking a base in northern Mali (www.vanguardngr.com). Of the terror groups Boko Haram appears to the latest to emerge in the sub-region, based in North East of Nigeria bothering Cameroon, Chad and Niger Republic.

The emergence of Boko Haram in Nigeria

Boko Haram literally means Western education (as opposed to Islamic education) is evil. Indeed Western education and a secular state (or a non-Islamic state) are viewed as sources of evil and must be rejected by true Muslims. The group swore to Islamize Nigeria (through Jihad). About a year and a half ago Boko Haram had a splinter group called *Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina fi Biladis Sudan* (ANSARU for short). Prior to the emergence of Boko Haram, the North of Nigeria had two similar Muslim religious fundamentalist groups. They were the *Maitatsine* in Kano in the 1980s and the '*Taliban*' group in the North East of Nigeria in 1999. These groups shared similar anti-establishment ideology (against the Nigerian state and Western education) with Boko Haram. They have no regard for other Muslims (or non-fundamentalist Muslims) and of course they treat Christians with disdain. According to the fundamentalists, the non-fundamentalist Muslims, Christians, and all others have moved away from true worship of God and are treated like enemies to be converted or killed if they reject conversion.

Though Boko Haram only came to prominence and on international spot light in the last four years (2009), yet existing records, including Federal government of Nigeria panel reports, indicate that Boko Haram had existed since the 1990s. Indeed five different panel/committee reports are said to have been received by the Federal Government on the security threats of Boko Haram. Out of the five, three are revealing as to how much the federal government knew about Boko Haram, yet no action was taken to address their security threats. One is a panel instituted by late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua.

Members of Yar'Adua Panel were: the then national security adviser (NSA) to the late President, Gen. Sarki Mukhtar (rtd). The panel had eleven members which included: former Chief of Defense Staff, Air Chief Marshal Paul Dike, Alhaji B. U. Maitambari, Major Gen. B.M Mongonu, DIG A. O Ajao, Y. M. Bichi, Ambassador Haruna Wando, Brig. Gen. M. Bala Ali, and Mr. M. Sani. One Mr. Haliru served as Secretary of the panel, while another Mr. T. A. Othman was Deputy Secretary (Sunday Sun, 14 April, 2013: 5,7).

The panel had the following responsibilities: to examine the incident of 2009 in all its ramifications with a view to determining the culpability of individuals and groups in causing and or preventing its resolution; to examine the adequacy or otherwise of responses by security forces and to identify the logistics, administrative or operational lapses that hampered quick resolution of the crisis; to establish the 'likely correlation between the Boko Haram sect and any other radical organizations in the country'; and to also identify any possible foreign interest and the level of foreign involvement in the crisis. The indications were that this report was not examined by the President Jonathan administration (Sunday Sun, 14 April, 2013: 5).

A second was a Post-Mortem Committee Report on Sectarian Crisis in Kano, Bauchi, Yobe and Borno states of 27 August, 2009. The report traced the history of Boko Haram sect to one national of Niger Republic named *ABUBAKAR KILAKAM*, who was said to have been deported by the Borno State government in 2008. This was one clear year, during which period government could not react, before the group declared war on Borno and other parts of the country in 2009. According to the report, *ABUBARLAR KILAKAM* might have indoctrinated the late *Mohammed Yusuf* and initiated him into preaching against constituted authority (Sunday Sun, 14 April, 2013: 5).

The panel, which was courageous enough to list at least eleven names, which according to its findings, were sponsors of the group, further submitted that the activities of the sect had attracted the attention of the Governor of Borno State since he assumed office in 2003. When security reports revealed the

threat posed by the sect, the Governor convened security meeting which recommended and effected banning the sect from preaching in the state, as well as the arrest and eventual deportation to Niger Republic of the then sect's leaders, *ABUBAKAR KILAKAM* (Sunday Sun, 14 April, 2013: 5).

In a third report written by Chairman of the Presidential Committee on Security in the North-East, Ambassador Usman Gaji Galtimari, the origin of Boko Haram was traced to the blistering preaching of some clerics in Borno State. Ambassador Galtimari report was the outcome of a 13-member committee set up by the then Borno State government shortly after the 2009 insurrection in that state (Sunday Sun, 14 April, 2013:5,7). According to the report, the idea of Boko Haram was not a new phenomenon in Borno state. It noted that the idea had been there for several years before the late *Mohammed Yusuf*, who it seemed only met a fertile ground and capitalized on it to spread his 'gospel'. The report further traced the remote causes of Boko Haram insurgence in Borno State to the levity and naivety with which the media in that part of the country gave prominence to the preaching of fiery Islamic scholars, and the leverage the society gave such preachers to propagate anti-government messages. The report also added that the Boko Haram group derived its messages largely from the ideology of the al-Qaeda, following the contacts its leader, the late *Mohammed Yusuf* had established with the late Osama bin Laden (Sunday Sun, 14 April, 2013: 5,7). It was the view of the 13-man committee that the frequent arrests and releases of the late *Mohammed Yusuf* without conviction before he was extra-judicially killed, contributed in no small measure to the expansion of Boko Haram in the Borno state and beyond (Sunday Sun, 14 April, 2013: 5,7).

An immediate observation to make about the reports is the puzzle that the reports were ignored by government in spite of the serious security threat posed by the activities of Boko Haram; and also

regardless of the high caliber of government officials who were members of the panels. From the foregoing, therefore, government was negligent, and under-estimated the capacity of the group to develop into the serious, maximum security threat it is presently. Accordingly, as will be argued shortly government's inaction regarding those reports may provide some understanding of the nature of the Nigerian state, and her level of seriousness or preparedness (or lack of them) in addressing the Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism.

The advent of civilian government in Nigeria in 1999 and the democratic elections that came with it led to the usual practice whereby politicians recruit thugs to fight for their electoral victory. Many of these thugs, usually unemployed youths, were often abandoned without jobs after the elections. So by the return to civil rule in 1999 many of such thugs in most parts of North Eastern states of Nigeria, and indeed in other part of the country, were abandoned and left without jobs by the politicians who recruited them. In the North East, in particular, Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states, most of the abandoned political thugs became willing tools in the hands of already existing religious fanatics and fundamentalists groups like members of the *Muhammed Yusuf* sect.

The religious fundamentalist activities became avenue for the new members (the abandoned former political thugs) to vent their anger and frustration against the politicians and governments that abandoned them. At the early stages (2000-2003), under the leadership of *Mohammed Yusuf*, the activities of Boko Haram included religious preaching together with membership drive. The activities were most effective in Borno, Yobe and Bauchi states in the North East of Nigeria. There were also occasional skirmishes with and resistance of law enforcement agencies, especially the police. The police would disperse them during their religious preaching and would make some arrests.

Their preaching was directed against constituted authorities. They criticized the state governments in the North for corruption, stealing public funds, and oppressing the poor. *Mohammed Yusuf* indoctrinated his followers into believing that the state was illegitimate and those occupying power were impostors and corrupt, and were those who rigged elections in order to win political power. The Borno state government banned them from preaching but this was most often violated. It was the same time that Boko Haram commenced forceful release from prison or police custody some of their members detained by the police. The extra-judicial killing of *Mohammed Yusuf* during one of the encounters with the Nigerian police in 2009 certainly marked the beginning of Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria.

Therefore from all indications, Boko Haram by omission and/or commission was the creation of some Nigerian politicians from the North East of Nigeria. Former Governor Boni Sheriff was one of the earliest politicians accused of being a sponsor of Boko Haram. He severally denied this – ‘Ali Sheriff and the Pen Judges’- (Saturday Sunday, 26 May, 2012:9). Arrested members of Boko Haram claimed links with government officials, senators, governors, etc. For example, a senator, Ndume has been investigated and charged to court of law for security breaches through some of his activities with Boko Haram considered treasonable. In the process of investigation his cell phone was found to have several calls/discussions with Boko Haram leadership for months-‘Government re-arraigns Senator Ndume’-(The Guardian, 13 December, 2011: 6) ‘Boko Haram: Ndume knows fate July 24’ (Daily Sun, 20 July, 2012: 7); ‘Yuguda denies ties with Boko Haram’ (The Punch, 27 January, 2012: 9); ‘Shekarau denies sponsoring sect’, (Daily Sun, 30 January, 2012: 7); ‘SSS invites Senator Zanna over Boko Haram commander’ (The Punch, 22 October, 2012: 13). Some high ranking members of Boko Haram have been arrested in senior government reserved residential areas of major towns and cities in the Northern part of the country. A renowned newspaper columnist had this to say about the government officials ‘cavorting with Boko Haram’:

Going by the situation we have on our hands, it is clear to one and all that law and order have

broken down in Borno and Yobe states, for instance. The two states have become ungovernable. The governors of the affected states have been overwhelmed.

In most cases, they have been accused of complicity or duplicity in the terrorist acts that have been taking place in their states. The governor of Borno state, for instance, was believed to be cavorting with a Boko Haram terrorist, Kabiru Sokoto, who masterminded the Madalla bombing. In fact Kabiru Sokoto was arrested at the Governor's Lodge in Abuja. That tells a lot of story' (Daily Sun, 16 May, 2013: 56).

In more than two occasions, arrested Boko Haram members escaped from detention with the assistance of security officials,- 'Kabiru Sokoto: One escape too many, its politics, intrigues'- (Daily Sun, 26 January, 2012: 24); 'Senate probes escape of Boko Haram suspect' (Daily Sun, 20 January, 2012: 13); 'B'Haram: Sokoto's escape, a shame' (The Punch, 19 January, 2012:15). These incidences revealed the contacts and collaborations that might have exist between Boko Haram and some prominent politicians/agents of government. Indeed it is not misleading to argue that the degree of meddling or 'cavorting' between the insurgents and state officials of Northern Nigeria, the circumstances of some of the arrests of members of the terrorist group, seem to underscore the political undercurrent which may in part explain Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria.

In fact, the Nigerian President himself, Goodluck Jonathan in apparent desperation, complained in 2012 that Boko Haram (and its network) had infiltrated his government - 'Boko Haram has infiltrated my government- Jonathan'- (The Punch, 9 January, 2012: 8). The public re-action to the President's statement was mixed. The statement was considered sensitive, perhaps should not have been made by the President of the country at the time the statement was made. On the other hand some demanded that the President should give more details about Boko Haram in his government, perhaps provide

names – ‘Northern Elders demand identities of Boko Haram in government’ (The Punch, 17/4/2012: 9); “Editorial, ‘Boko Haram in government’” (Saturday Sun, 14 January, 2012: 8); ‘Federal Government goes after Boko Haram backers in Army, SSS, NIA...’ (The Punch, 25 February, 2012: 5). Nevertheless shortly afterwards names of politicians and government officials who were nose-winking with Boko Haram, and other suspects began to appear in the daily newspapers, examples of which had been provided immediately above.

Traditional leaders, politicians and some eminent individuals from Nigeria’s South-South Zone, the President’s own region of the country, accused traditional leaders and prominent politicians from the Northern half of the country of not speaking out strongly enough against the activities of Boko Haram – ‘Boko Haram: Clark urges IBB, Atiku, others to speak out’ (Daily Sun, 2 August, 2012: 8);

‘Call Boko Haram to order, Clerk tells Northern governors’ (Daily Sun, 30 May, 2012: 8); ‘Solution to Boko Haram lies with Northern police chiefs’ (Saturday Sun, 4 February, 2012: 57). The position of the political leaders from South-South zone of the country was that the traditional leaders from the North knew who the members of Boko Haram were, and they, the traditional leader had the responsibility to call the members of Boko Haram to order, and end terrorism - ‘Boko Haram: Northern Elders should speak up – Ambassador Olusola’ (Sunday Sun, 22 January, 2012: 62); ‘Lamibo tasks emirs on insecurity’, (The Guardian, 13 December, 2011: 9).

A few months before the intensification of Boko Haram attacks and the President’s outcry that Boko Haram had infiltrated his government, General Mahumaud Buhari (retired), a former Nigerian Military Head of State (1984-1985) had threatened violence in the country because of the elections he claimed he lost as a result of electoral malpractices. General Mahmudu Buhari, a Northerner, and a presidential candidate in the 2011 general election to one of the largest opposition political parties, Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), denounced and rejected the results of the election of April 2011. In the midst

of the upsurge of Boko Haram terror, there was concern among many Nigerians, whether it was really only a co-incidence that insurgency intensified astronomically after the election of 2011 won by a Southern and a Christian, Goodluck Jonathan, and lost by General Buhari, a Northerner and a Muslim; and after Buhari's had issued threats of violence? We shall return to this perspective and context of Boko Haram terrorism and insurgency hereafter in the paper.

Regardless of how Boko Haram came about as a terror group, partly sponsor by politicians and government agents, or converted by religious fundamentalist, the sect now has a life of its own, and this was between 2003 and 2007 (Obi, 2006). Part of the implications of sustainability was the training of members in acts of violence. And because the politicians, their erstwhile 'godfathers' considered them illiterates, or only literate in Islamic education, and subject to the inherent limitations of those not adequately educated, the politicians underestimated the options and capacities to which the members of this group could put into use their training in violence. But at the intensification of their insurgencies, which began about 2009 with the death of their then leader, *Muhammed Yusuf*, it became evident that Boko Haram was headed by leaders who were university graduates of various academic disciplines from Nigerian universities. Those in charge of their arms/weapons operations unit were engineering and science university graduates.

Further analysis of the comments of some of Boko Haram leadership show that the erstwhile political masters misjudged or underestimated the growth, international connections and the capacity of Boko Haram by making occasional pay-offs to members as ways of keeping them quiet or buying them off. Nevertheless, some of the known cases of government officials 'cavorting with Boko Haram' show that some payments were deliberately made to sustain the terror organization. Indeed the insurgents claimed they were on the payroll of the Northern Governors - 'We are on the payroll of Northern Governors' - (Vanguard, 24 January, 2012: 1).

Boko Haram objectives and modus operandi

With the extra-judicial killing of *Mohammed Yusuf*, Boko Haram began to build itself into cells and/or activate its cell. Reports also showed that a little before his death, *Yusuf* had started exhibiting teachings and activities typical of terror groups, for example there were systematic recruitment drive not only in Nigeria but in Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Sudan – ‘Boko Haram begins fresh training for terrorists’ (Saturday Punch, 31 December, 2011: 6); ‘Lawyer’s absence stalls trial of Al-Qaeda, Boko Haram suspect’ (The Guardian, 8/3/2012: 80); ‘Boko Haram: Sahel security chiefs invite Nigeria to Mauritania summit’ (Daily Sun, 24/1/2012: 15). The group had regular contacts, training/logistics support from Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb and Al-Shabaab in Somalia – ‘Uncovered: Boko Haram base traced to Mali’, intelligence report identifies training, operational base’ (Saturday Sun, 27 October, 2012: 13); ‘Boko Haram receiving training in Mali’ (Daily Sun, 15 March, 2013: 7). Government reports earlier in this paper indicated that *Muhammed Yusuf* had met Osama Bin Ladin. While details of the encounter or encounters were not known, the ideology of Islamic fundamentalism propagated by Bin Ladin and other fundamentalists was not in doubt at this time.

A study of the operations and attacks of Boko Haram, and a thorough observation of the modus operandi of other Islamic terrorist groups elsewhere, suggest that the aim of Boko Haram is primarily to change government through pressure. The group wants to achieve this by attacks directed against innocent civilians, media houses, public building and institutions (including UN building in Abuja, Nigeria), police and military barracks/ institutions, Christian Churches and places of worship, public places like major bus stations, and attacks on foreigners. And it hopes that by creating fear and a general sense of insecurity the government will be made unstable, and if possible these forces will bring about premature change of government, and possibly the imposition of an Islamic state at least in Northern Nigeria (this is Boko Haram’s utopia). Also Boko Haram would like to disrupt socio-economic and political activities in the country, create division in society along

ethnic and religious lines (North/South, Muslim/Christian divide), and saddled the government with ethno-religious conflict. Its *Jihad* is against all people who do not share the fundamentalist religious ideology of Islam. The group also aims to discourage foreign investors from coming to do business in Nigeria by its terrorist activities. Boko Haram activities and modus operandi have as well elicited debate, for instance why Boko Haram in Nigeria at all, and why now and not then. The next section of the paper examines suggestions explaining the emergence of Boko Haram and the attendant insurgency and terrorism in Nigeria.

Explaining Boko Haram: Nigerian state fundamentalism and political Islam

Several attempts have been made particularly since the 1990s with the escalation of terrorism, to explain the upsurge in fundamentalist movements. To this end, Huntington examined the 'clash of civilizations. . .', which underscored among others the unending hostility and conflict between the history of Christianity and Greco-Roman civilization on one hand and the Islamic world on the other (Huntington 1998). Huntington asks, 'why does the cultural commonness drive the cooperation and cohesion among people, whereas cultural differences strengthen separation and conflict' (Huntington, 1998: 113). According to Huntington the 'root of clash (between cultures) is the essential differences in social and cultural aspects' (Huntington 1998: 250).

In the case of Nigeria it is highly debatable whether the clash of cultures is significantly and sufficiently rigorous in explaining Boko Haram present insurgency in the country. Boko Haram is not the conveyor of Islamic teaching and civilization (in Nigeria). The organization does not represent Islamic culture, however defined. Boko Haram members are in an extreme minority in terms of number; they are extremists, and not the mainstream Islamism; they are rejected by overwhelming majority of the people. The difficulty of using 'clash of civilizations' to sufficiently explain Boko Haram terrorism applies in the use of 'clash of civilizations' in the overall thinking about Arab/Islamic versus Western/Christian

culture clash. Internal contradictions, man's inhumanity to man even within the same culture is historically as conflict ridden, if not more conflict ridden than the differences in the other cultures (Yue Yang, 2009).

Another attempt at explaining fundamentalism and political Islam is contained in Herriot's (2007) 'self identity theory' which in two parts examines social identity and self-categorization model. There is also 'structure, chance and choice theory' developed by Almond et.al. (2003). The attempts of the last two Herriot (2007) and Almond et.al (2003) centre on psychoanalysis of the individual personality involved in fundamentalism: who he is, why he is a fundamentalist, the group he belongs to, his attachment to that group, what he hopes to benefit from the group, how he thinks the group makes him different from others, the imagined security/protection he feels he receives from the group, the milieu under which fundamentalism is being propagated. These and others help to define and explain the psychology of a fundamentalist.

In their formulation, Almond et.al (2003) focus on three related social conditions which instigate and shape fundamentalism: long term contextual or structural conditions, contingent chance factors and the particularities of human choice and leadership. Almond et.al *structural conditions* refer to large and long term contextual factors like social class and status –wealth, income distribution, and social rank- the organization and penetration of the state, education and its content and distribution, cultural and sub-cultural differences. By *chance*, Almond et.al (2003) refer to short-term and contingent variables such as fluctuations in productivity, trade, international and domestic security, etc. By *choice* they refer to the creativity of leadership (or their decline in creativity) and to collective psychic response of one kind or another.

The approach by Almond et.al (2003) views religious leaders as the players in founding and shaping fundamentalism. According to them the centrality of religious leaders underpins fundamentalism

because from their various privileged positions in the community, they contest certain interpretations of sacred texts and practices and legitimate orders. This is to say that a given leader who inclines towards extremism nurtures the character traits and elements of fundamentalism in the members within the religious community over which he exercises authority. Above all, structural factors such as structural unemployment may create a pool of potential recruits, while people who feel relative deprivation because of inconsistencies between status and income may express grievances through a fundamentalist movement; persecuted ethnic groups, dislocated people, victims of war, or migrants looking for identity and community may join them. Also *Chance* influences the size and social location of fundamentalism. For example, an area where a riot, strike or social unrest has galvanized the population (or part of it), or where there exists a pool of the unemployed, may be a fertile ground for the recruitment of fundamentalists. In such a case there may be genuine reasons for collective grievance. This is more or less the case for fundamentalism and terrorism in the North East of Nigeria (Ashiru, 2013).

While these explanations appear to provide insight into the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, they are not fundamental. These conflicts are taking place in the context of *a Nigeria*. What role has the Nigerian state played or failed to play in such a serious security threat. According to our findings above in this paper, five reports on Boko Haram security concerns were presented to the Federal Government of Nigeria between 2006 and 2011, and yet no appropriate action was taken by government to address a certainly major national security threat. The inability of the state to even perceive that it had a serious security challenge has a lot to say about the character of such a state.

Indeed as indicated above, some agents of state, federal and state government officials were accused of fraternizing or even clearly supporting and encouraging Boko Haram terrorists. Furthermore, between 1999 and 2001, Zamfara and six other State Governments in Northern Nigeria introduced Sharia law as

the legal system in their states. This emboldened and encouraged extremists who viewed the introduction of Sharia legal system as government endorsement of Islamism to be the only accepted social value and religion of the society. Therefore those who did not accept the Sharia law, like Christians and moderate Muslims were seen as antagonists/enemies to Muslim religion. Research has shown that the introduction of Sharia legal system in all intents and purposes encouraged religious fundamentalism, and forms of 'jihad' of which terrorism is an aspect (Ashiru, 2013). Put differently there is a political under current associated with Boko Haram insurgency which is encouraged by the ideology of political Islam found to be interconnected with the insistence on Islamic fundamentalism of Sharia law. It may therefore be necessary to provide further theoretical explanation for the very fast escalating Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, that which explores the character of the Nigerian state.

The nature of the Nigerian state, more than any single factor explains the upsurge of Boko Haram terror. For over three decades the use of the nature the Nigerian state as an explanation for the challenges of national development have remained the same; what the World Bank study has referred to as 'state capture' – a form of grand corruption (Hellman and Kaufman, 2001; Hellman, Jones and Kaufman, 2000); also within the same premise identified as lack of relative autonomy, or very limited autonomy of the state (Ake, 1985; 1994). The state institutions, agencies and instruments of state are so much under the control of agents of state that most times these agencies disproportionately serve the interest of those in state power. Accordingly, the state is unable to play its role as an arbiter in the affairs of all members of the society. Under those circumstances, there is serious disregard for the rule of law which in turn encourages 'form(s) of grand corruption', the breakdown of law and order. These situations gave rise to the 'state failure' thesis (Rothberg, ed. 2000; Zartman, ed. 1995). Those situations weaken the state, and deny it the capacity to govern (Jinadu, n.d.), and unable to contain insurgency and terrorism by organizations like Boko Haram. Ake explored this character of the state in Nigeria (and indeed in Africa) in several of his writings (Ake, 1985: 1-32; 1994: 7-9). Agents of state were so pre-occupied with their

personal and group interests to a point where for over a decade a terror group was festering and it never caught the attention of the agents of the state, and never gained policy agenda status of government.

The character of state under 'capture', to a large extent explain why for nearly a decade, Islamic religious fundamentalism was growing around Nigeria in all of the Maghreb and Sahel regions of Africa that have large and porous borders with Nigeria, yet there was no proactive measures by the government of Nigeria to begin counter terrorist/insurgency measures. With historical hind sight, Islamic fundamentalism should have been expected: this is because of the open and vast territorial borders and routes between Nigeria and the Sahel region, which aided the spread of Islam in West Africa from across the Sahara between the 17th and 18th centuries. Agents of state who are nationalist, and who have sense of history would know that it would only be a matter of time for Islamic religious fundamentalism to take root in the Northern part of Nigeria bothering those Sahel countries.

The same character of state, a weak and subordinated state, and a parasitic leadership, largely explain government's inability to adequately understand the implications of the imposition of Sharia law in some Northern States of the country. The imposition of Sharia encouraged fundamentalism, because in itself the Sharia law is *fundamentalist in application*. And an attempt to enforce it in a secular state like Nigeria will generate conflict. Also the demand of Sharia law for religious purity and authenticity in itself will spawn fanatics who will subjectively define what is pure and authentic about the Sharia law. And in a country where for many years freedom of religion had been emphasized, the introduction of Sharia law was fundamentalism waiting to engulf society. Certainly the introduction of Sharia law encouraged fundamentalism both in teaching and in practice. By the time the Nigerian government reacted, it was already late. Boko Haram had opened and consolidated it training camps in Borno, Yobe, Bauchi Adamawa, Kaduna, Niger, and Plateau states, and some other states in Northern Nigeria with the help

of international terror organizations. Also, Boko Haram had plans to infiltrate the South of Nigeria and attack Lagos, the commercial capital and industrial nerve center of the country - 'Boko Haram, Ansaru target Lagos, others'-(The Punch, 23 February, 2013: 5); 'Boko Haram: Lagos shut down prayer houses, blames infiltration of foreigners' (ThisDay, 10 May, 2012: 29); 'Five Boko Haram bombers arrested in Port Harcourt, Army puts formation on the red alert' (Sunday Punch, 22 January, 2012: 2).

In a search for ways out of Boko Haram terrorism, national debate shifted to whether or not to dialogue with the group and grant amnesty to it. In spite of some advice to the contrary government set up a committee to negotiate amnesty with Boko Haram terrorist group – 'Don't negotiate with Boko Haram, US, EU warn FG'(Saturday Punch, 9 July, 2011: 3); 'It is difficult to get Boko Haram for talks – Jonathan' (The Punch, 27 January, 2012: 2); Editorial 'Boko Haram: The amnesty option' (Sunday Sun, 14 April, 2013: 6); 'Jonathan raises committee on Boko Haram, small arms. . .' (Daily Sun, 18 April, 2013: 3); 'Boko Haram amnesty: Why we made U-turn, by Jonathan' (Daily Sun, 25 April, 2013: 5). When it became clear the amnesty intent would yield no positive result, the government declared a state of emergency in three states most affected by terrorist attacks, Borno, Yobe and Adamawa on the 14th of May 2013, keeping the states under full military operations - 'Jonathan imposes emergency rule on Adamawa, Borno and Yobe' (Daily Sun, 15 May, 2013: 6). Earlier in January 2012 government imposed limited or partial state of emergency in parts of Borno, Yobe, Niger and Plateau states - 'Jonathan declares state of emergency ...orders borders shut, security forces to monitor Lagos, other' (Sunday Punch, 1 January, 2012: 11). The current debate is whether the state of emergence will bring an end to Boko Haram terrorism. This is addressed at the conclusion.

Conclusion: Boko Haram political Islam and the state of the nation

The Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria is intriguing to analyze. In 2001 when the Zamfara State Government introduced Sharia law as the governing legal system, the then President of Nigeria, Olusegu

Obasanjo, with hindsight, what may be considered a mature and pragmatic position, referred to Sharia law in Zamfara as 'political Sharia'. By this position the President played down the Christian/Islam religious conflict which could have ensued if the President, a Christian, had taken a hard line on the policy. The President's hard line would have been hinged on the fact that he was by election as President mandated to defend the constitution of Nigeria as a secular state. Section 10 of the 1999 Constitution states that: 'the government of the federation or of the state shall not adopt any religion as state religion' (1999 Constitution). Thus the position taken by the President saved Nigeria from a serious religious conflict because Christians living in Zamfara state of Nigeria, and other parts of the country would resist what they would have considered an imposition of Sharia law in the country, since the Sharia was deemed a religious law and the heart of Muslim religion.

Certainly there are many Northern Nigerians (like Nigerians from other parts of the country) who have very genuine reasons for grievances against government, particularly in the area of provision or lack of provision of social services (referred to in Nigeria as 'democratic dividend'). And Boko Haram members had become aware that government's lack of capacity to provide social amenities was directly related to the high level corruption in government. Therefore Boko Haram insurgency has been partly a direct rejection as well as reaction against corruption in government. These also explain in part the attacks directed at government agencies, institutions, and personnel, including the army and the police.

Nevertheless, there is much of 'political Islam' underpinning aspects of Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism. Boko Haram has issues more political than religious but which are only nuanced: a feeling of loss of political power by the North of Nigeria. An examination of some of the demands of Boko Haram shows that the terror group is principally contesting state power in a religious guise. For instance some of their demands are political and nearly impossible in Nigeria: turning Nigeria into an Islamic state, and insisting that the President of Nigeria, a Christian, must convert to Islam in order to qualify to rule

Nigeria – ‘Boko Haram threatens Jonathan, Become a Muslim or...’ (Saturday Sun, 28 January, 2012: 65).

Other demands are the abolition of Western system of education in place of an Islamic education system. In that regard the organization burns down schools, kill teachers and school children.

As observed earlier in the paper, the initial use of members of Boko Haram was for electoral (power) struggle. In other words, Boko Haram members were exposed to forms of power struggle in Nigeria, which include political violence (Anifowoshe, 1982). And indeed forms of violence were unleashed at the time by the men who are now ‘boko haram’- ‘Gun battle at rally’, 4 killed as shooting disrupts Shekarau’s Maiduguri campaign, another bomb blast foiled’ (Daily Sun, 30 March, 2011: 6); ‘PDP, Senator behind Boko Haram’ (The Nation, 26 October, 2012: 2); ‘PDP governors bought guns for tugs – Atiku’ –(Sunday Punch, 12 May, 2013: 5).

In other words, there is patent anger and frustration in many parts of core Islamic North of Nigeria in the way they lost power after the death of President Musa Yar’Adua. The majority of Islamic North was convinced it was supposed to hold power at the Federal Centre from 2007-2015. Even after the death of President Yar’Adua (in 2010) a Northerner, the North still were convinced they should hold the Presidency after the acting capacity of Yar’Adua’s Vice-President, Goodluck Jonathan. The way and manner the North lost that bid to hold power, particularly from 2011-2015 has been a source of no mean anger and frustration to them. And it is argued that one of the channels of escape from the frustration is the insurgency and terrorism by Boko Haram. General Andrew Owoye Azazi (retired), the then nation’s Chief Security Adviser captured this context when he accused the ruling party, PDP, of being behind insecurity in the country. He made this observation:

The issue of violence did not increase in Nigeria until when there was a declaration by the current President that he was going to contest. PDP got it wrong from the beginning. The party started by saying Mr. A can rule,

and Mr. B cannot rule, according to PDP conventions, rules and regulations, and not according to the (Nigerian) constitution. It is possible that somebody was thinking only Mr. A could win, and if he did not win, he could cause problem in the society – ('Azazi's sizzler', Daily Sun, 4 May, 2012: 64).

On their part, there is muted anxiety in the South-South of Nigeria, the President's own region, that prominent politicians and traditional elders in the Muslim North 'do not mind' Boko Haram as a way of making President Jonathan's administration uncomfortable and ungovernable as he insisted in 2011, after his acting position as the President, that he must rule Nigeria. It is not misleading to argue that terror attacks against Christian Churches in the North, where most worshippers are Southerners, the President's own region, is another Boko Haram choice of hitting hard at the President and Nigerians from his own side of the country; those who 'usurped' power from the North. This is with total disregard of the democratic electoral processes in 2011 which were judged to be the best in Nigeria since democratic rule in 1999. It is even suggested that if today in 2013 the President should assure Nigerians that he would not seek re-election in 2015, the Boko Haram attacks will subside - 'Jonathan should sacrifice 2015 ambition for Nigerian's peace –Akin John' (The Punch, 13 April, 2013: 16); 'Any day Jonathan declares non-interest in 2015 presidency, Boko Haram will die – Major –General Yellow-Duke' (Saturday Sun, 11 May, 2013: 45).

In addition to all these factors, Boko Haram has benefited from international terrorism, collaborating with Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb and Al Shabaab in Somalia, and Ansara Dine in Mali. The insurgency in Mali from 2010 to 2013, until the French (and African) intervention in that country, and the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria are said to have been aftermath of the fall of Muammar Gaddafi of Libya. It is suggested that the civil war in Libya and the availability of easy weapons as a result of that war, and the displacement and movement of rebel fighters from Libya, gave impetus to the conflict and insurgency in

Mali led by the Ansara Dine and Movement for Islam and Jihad in West Africa. These in turn assisted in no small way to encouraged and provide opportunity for Boko Haram execution of terror.

Cases of terrorism in other regions of the world indicate that terrorism has never resolved national disputes. Their end results have not brought about development or good governance. Therefore it is in the interest of Africa to find ways of avoiding the emergence of terrorist groups in the region. In order to achieve these there is the need for:

- i. International collaboration in the fight against terrorism everywhere in Africa. For example, France/European Union, UNO and ECOWAS collaboration in the fight against terrorism in Mali which is positively impacting the fight against Boko Haram in Nigeria. Already Nigeria and the US are creating a new focus on security as a different aspect of the US-Nigeria Bi-National Commission established in 2010. This is to enable US military Chiefs and their counterparts in Nigeria to deliberate on Niger Delta, Boko Haram and other regional security issues (Editorial, 'Nigeria-US cooperation on security', Daily Sun, 24 January, 2012: 18).
- ii. There is need for international collaboration in the control of small arms; the developed countries have a major role to play as they are the sources of supply. Perhaps it is instructive and encouraging that the international agreement on the control of small arms is being signed by UN member countries about now, June 2013 in New York.
- iii. There is need for surveillance, intelligence gathering on the part of African governments to identify source of funding of the insurgent groups with the aim of blocking such sources.
- iv. Good governance is key to considerably reducing insurgency and terrorism. There is no doubt that high level corruption in government is judged to be one of the most critical security threats which instigate violence and insurgency in parts of Africa. Governments

- have to considerably reduce grand corruption, and provide the citizens basic social amenities.
- v. On the long run the citizens need persistent and sustained provision of universal basic education with proper ideological content, especially ideology of nationalism, to enlighten the people and provide them alternative social values. “Western’ educational system provides more liberal attitude and social values than Islamic education, and so better placed to accommodate the religion and culture of other people. In spite of the fact that it is the target of rejection by Boko Haram, yet ‘Western’ educational system is better placed to provide more liberal orientation, tolerance, and the accommodation of other cultures. An example is the comparison of the practice of Islam in South-West Nigeria and in the core Muslim North (North East, North West and parts of North Central zones). It is evident in Nigeria that the practice of Islam in the South West of Nigeria is more tolerant and accommodating of other religions than in the core Muslim parts of Northern Nigeria. Thus South-West (Yoruba) liberalism in the area of religion is a direct result of the liberal socialization blend of ‘Western’ education which has exceedingly penetrated the Yoruba more than what is the case in core Muslim North of Nigeria. Put differently one of the measures to contain insurgency, indeed on the long run, is a proper nationalist ideological orientation through liberal philosophy of education. Islamic education will compound the problem of intolerance, fundamentalism and political Islam which in many more cases result in conflict which may degenerate into terrorism, insurgency, and demand for Islamic statehood. Religious wars have never in history created any development. They will not bring any development to Africa.

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