BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY AND THE NIGERIAN FEDERATION: A SOCIO-POLITICAL ANALYSIS OF CAUSATION AND STRATEGY FOR PEACE AND SECURITY

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Abstract: The phenomenon of anti-state militant movements is not new to the Nigerian federation. Just a few years after the birth of the Nigerian State, a militant group under the leadership of Adaka Boro, an ex-police officer, attempted to create the Niger Delta Republic out of the nascent federation. From 1967 to 1970, the Federal Government was locked in a devastating civil war with eastern region secessionists intent on carving out the State of Biafra out of Nigeria. Between 1980 and 1983, the Maitasine uprising unleashed large-scale terror and destruction of lives and property in the northern part of the country. Previously peaceful agitations in the Niger Delta over economic and political marginalization snowballed into an armed conflict between militant groups and the Federal Government from the 1990s, and only began to simmer down in just about two years ago. During the same period, the Oodua People Congress (OPC), a Yoruba ethnic militia emerged as a protest movement against General Ibrahim Babangida's annulment of the June 12, 1993, Presidential elections widely acknowledged to be free and fair and won by Chief Moshood Abiola, a Yoruba politician and business mogul. OPC eventually became a thorn in the flesh of the Nigerian state for a long while. In addition, the Bakassi militant group emerged as a resistance force in response to the grave insecurity of lives and property orchestrated by a so-called "Mafia" in major markets in South East Nigeria. However, the *Boko Haram* insurgent movement currently rocking the country is unique in terms of its avowed objectives, organization, tenacity, sophisticated strategy, weaponry and audacious operations. Causes of the insurgency have received diverse explanations from various quarters overtime. While some observers conceive of *Boko Haram* as an extremist Islamist sect bent on Islamizing Nigeria (or at least Northern Nigeria) by any means, some others see it as a mere nihilist movement with the sole intent of bloodletting, destruction, panic and chaos. Yet, in some other quarters, *Boko Haram* is viewed as the epitome of the political agenda of certain Northern elements. In its response to the insurgency, the Federal Government of Nigeria adopted a two-pronged conflict management strategy: force and diplomacy. But the crisis persists, unabated, living in its wake wholesale destruction of lives and property, palpable tension and fear of the unexpected. This paper is a socio-political analysis of the *Boko Haram* insurgency and government's strategy to restore peace and security. The study shall also explore alternative strategies that could enthrone peace and security in the affected areas, and avert the spread of the insurgency to other regions of the country. The study adopts the historical research methodology of intellectual discourse. Research data was obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Sources of primary data comprise of oral interviews, while the secondary data consist of books, journal articles, newspapers, magazines, etc. The study concludes that the basic causes of the *Boko Haram* insurgency are an admixture of complex socio-economic and political factors which require appropriate immediate and long- term government policies for the restoration of peace and security.

Keywords: *Boko Haram,* Causation, Insurgency, Nigerian Federation, Peace/Security Strategy.

Introduction

Since the abortive attempt by the Adaka Boro – led rebellion to create a Republic of Niger Delta out of the nascent Nigerian state in 1963, insurgencies became a recurrent decimal in the political history of the country. From time to time, armed and violent groups have emerged in different parts of the country and challenged constituted authority and the very existence of the state. This means that anti-state movements, like *Boko Haram* that is currently rocking the country, are not new to the Nigerian federation. However, while there appears to be a convergence of opinion across the country on the condemnation of the wholesale destruction of lives and property by *Boko Haram*, perception of the reasons for the insurgency as well as the appropriate strategy for restoring peace and security varies among individuals and groups, even within official circles. This paper, therefore, is a socio-political inquiry into the real causes of the *Boko Haram* insurgency, and the nature and effectiveness of government's counterinsurgency strategy. In addition, the study shall explore complimentary and alternative strategies to restore peace and security to the affected areas and forestall escalation of the conflict to other units of the federation. The discourse proceeds in five parts:

 (1) Brief Note on Concepts
 (2) Origin and Evolution of *Boko Haram*
(3) *Boko Haram* Insurgency and the Nigeria Federation: A Causal Explanation
(4) Appraisal of Government Strategy for Peace and Security
(5) Conclusion

Brief Note on Concepts: Insurgency, Counterinsurgency, Historical Causation

Insurgency as a concept has been defined in varied ways by different commentators. To some people, insurgency refers to "the quality or circumstance of being rebellious"[1]. To some others, it connotes the state or condition of being insurgent, "Rebellion against an existing government by a group not recognized as a belligerent", or "rebellion within a group by members against leaders'[2]. It has also been defined as "an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through use of subversion and armed conflict"[3]. Yet to some, it is an "organized opposition to authority; a conflict in which one faction tries to wrest control from another"[4]. In another vein, Metz Millen[5] explain that atimes insurgency forms background noise to competition or conflict between great powers. At other times, it is strategically significant, undercutting regional stability, drawing outsiders into direct conflict and spurning humanitarian disasters. They argue further that "from a systemic perspective, the lower the chances of direct armed conflict between great powers, the greater the tendency of major powers to sponsor insurgency of a form of surrogate conflict. In a more definite and elaborate sense, they defined insurgency as "a strategy adopted by groups which cannot attain their political objectives through conventional means or by a quick seizure of power characterized by protracted, asymmetric violence, ambiguity, the use of complex terrain (jungles, mountains, urban areas), psychological warfare and political mobilization – all designed to protect the insurgents and eventually alter the balance of power in their favour"[6]. In terms of overall objective and *modus operandi*, insurgents may strive towards the seizure of power with a view to replacing the incumbent government, or they may nurse more limited goals like separation, autonomy, or alteration of a particular policy[7].

Insurgency ideology has become somewhat fluid since the twentieth century. During that century, insurgents were largely motivated by Marxism, religion, or nationalism, or a combination of these factors. However, modern insurgencies are usually of more complex character involving irregular actors with widely divergent objectives. Quiet often, at least some of the principal actors are motivated (or claim to be) by a particular ideology, but that ideology may not necessarily permeate the entire insurgent network [8]. Modern insurgencies are characterized by a number of salient features. First, the charisma and personality of insurgent leaders can sometimes be more crucial than ideology in the process of winning more members for the movement. Second, some insurgent actors ranging from the unemployed youth who gets paid to fight, to the criminal gang leader who exploits a state of lawlessness, will be more interested in monetary benefit than ideology. Third, the basic socio-economic and political needs and grievances of the populace may have little or no bearing on the intellectual ideology of insurgent leaders, but may however be exploited to garner support. Fourth, the combatants, sympathizers and supporters who justify their actions with the rhetoric and symbols presented by insurgent propagandists may not have full comprehension of the ideology. Fifth, mutual hatred that evolves from armed conflict, usually upstage the individual motivations that propelled individuals and groups to join the insurgency or support the government. Sixth, in tribal societies, especially in South and Central Asia, the Middle East and Africa, the support of a tribe or faction for the government may incline tribal rivals to join ranks with the insurgents, and vice versa. Seventh, in its earliest stage and period of organization, insurgent movements are usually weak, disorganized and rudimentary. Eight, in order to

achieve its objectives, at some point every insurgency launches direct operations against the government in the form of guerrilla warfare, terrorism, assassinations, sabotage and other kinds of irregular or asymmetric violence. Lastly, the greater the mass of idle, bored, suffering, angry and dissatisfied young men in a society, the more veritable ground for insurgency organizers to operate?[9]. In virtually every respect, the *Boko Haram* insurgency in Nigeria fits into the conceptual models highlighted above.

Counterinsurgency, put simply, is government's strategic response to insurgency. It is a process by which the state seeks the neutralization of the insurgency. To elaborate, counterinsurgency connotes he entire military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological and civic measures adopted by government to conquer insurgency. Counterinsurgency is an offensive action encompassing all elements of national power. It's key components comprise of strategic and operational planning, intelligence gathering, development and analysis, training, material, technical and organizational assistance, advice, infrastructural development, and tactical – level operations[10], among others. In a nutshell, a credible counterinsurgency strategy with a good chance of achieving success must adopt a wholistic approach covering multifarious elements including defense, diplomacy, law enforcement, information, finance and socio-economic development reforms.

The history of social actions and developments gives prime attention to causation, that is, the identification of causes in the process of historical explanation. The issue of causation in history has overtime received extensive conceptual analysis by a wide range of scholars[11]. Thus, it would suffice here to merely restate and emphasize the relevance of multi-causality to intellectual inquiry into historical developments like the *Boko Haram* insurgency that is the subject of this current study.

Origin and Evolution of *Boko Haram*

The origins of the *Jama'atiu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad* (Congregation of the People of Tradition for Proselytism and Jihad) popularly known by it's Hausa name, *Boko Haram*, is as controversial as it's real objective as well as government's counterinsurgency strategy. While many observers claim that the group was founded in 2002, available evidence indicate that the origins of the movement lay in the deep past. Ekanem, Dada and Ejue[12] have indeed asserted that *Boko Haram* had existed since 1960, only gaining attention as from 2002. Other's trace the roots of the movement to 1995 under the name *Shabaab* Muslim Youth Organization under the leadership of one Mallam Lawal[13]. Following Mallam Lawal's exit to Saudi Arabia to further his education, the group's leadership passed on to Mallam Mohammed Yussuf under whom the organization allegedly became exposed to political influence and public attention. The formal establishment of *Boko Haram* is traceable to 2002 when Mallam Yusuf founded the organization in Maiduguri, capital of the northeastern state of Borno, with the avowed objective of creating Islamic government in Borno and surrounding states[14].

Regarding the ideological underpinnings of *Boko Haram*, it is important to note that etymologically the group's name translates to "book (Western Education) is sin"[15]. In fact, the group's founding leader, Muhammed Yusuf once declared that education spoils the belief in one God[16]. Yusuf himself by 2002, was a trained *Salafist* (*Salafism* being a school of thought usually linked with Jihad), and was highly influenced by Ibn Taymiyyah, a fourteenth century legal scholar, advocate of Islamic fundamentalism and an important symbol of radical groups in the Middle East[17]. In a similar vein, *Boko Haram*'s modern incarnation has been linked with Islamic fundamentalist groups like the 1980s Maitatsine Movement led by Camerounian dissident cleric Muhammadu Marwa, the *Jama'atu Izalatil Bidi'a Wa'iqamatic Sunna* (Society of Removal of Innovation and Re-establishment of the *Sunna*) established in Jos in 1978, the Islamic Movement of Nigeria, a *Shiite* organization under the leadership of Sheikh Ibrahim El-Zakzaky, financed by Iran and in which Yusuf was believed to be a major actor. The last two groups however, deny the existence of any such links. In recent years, *Boko Haram* has also been associated with Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)[18]. Beyond all these, however, the extent to which the *Boko Haram* insurgency is Islamist ideology driven remains highly contentious.

In terms of organization, *Boko Haram* cannot be described as a homogenous entity. The movement lacks a definite hierarchical or command chain[19]. It's cell – like structure has given rise to factionalization, with the group reportedly split across about five factions and a splinter group called Ansaru[20]. Although at present, the movement's main leader is Abubakar Shekau, the group remains diffuse and dispersed such that many of it's leaders are far- flung across wide areas including the Adamawa mountains, Cameroun and Niger. In addition, *Boko Haram* is so diffuse that many of its foot soldiers do not necessarily know or belief in the Salafi doctrine [21]. With this kind of structure, there can only be little or intangible centralized consistent control over the various cells and factions of the movement.

Strategy and *modus operandi* of *Boko Haram* has been transitional. Its main operational field covers Borno, Adamawa, Yobe, Bauchi, Kano and Kaduna states in Northeastern Nigeria. At the early stage (2002 – 2009), the group sought to achieve its objectives through methods that were largely non – violent. At this stage too, the movement's agenda did not include the violent overthrow of   government. Instead, its leader at the time, Yusuf canvassed Nothern muslims to desist from participating in or supporting what he perceived as corrupt, illegitimate and non-Islamic political entity [22]. Federal Government's violent crackdown on the group in 2009 transformed *Boko Haram* into an armed movement[23], similar to a previous occurrence in the Niger Delta where decades of peaceful agitations for socio-political and economic reforms snowballed into widespread armed rebellion against the Nigerian state following Generals Babangida and Abacha regimes' brutal crackdown on peaceful protests [24]. There is need to state that government's response was necessitated by growing concern about reports that *Boko Haram* was arming it's members. Before this, however, government had allegedly ignored repeated warnings about the rising militancy of the movement[25]. If government at all levels had taken these early warnings seriously and had been proactive enough, the messy and counterproductive crackdown would have been unnecessary.

Boko Haram's strategy and operations, nonetheless, became increasingly violent, frequent, sophisticated and expansive across a widening geographical space after the 2009 suppression operation. Its operational field has expanded considerably, covering at least fifteen of the federation's thirty-six (all twelve states already operating *Sharia* code inclusive), plus Abuja, the country's capital [26]. To elucidate, in September 2010 (during the Ramadan festival) *Boko Haram* hatched a prison break and allegedly released about seven hundred inmates[27]. Since then, the group has launched several and frequent attacks against a wide range of targets including the Nigerian military, police, universities, teachers, banks, markets, Card-Players, drinkers, traditional rulers, politicians and government officials, Christian preachers, antagonistic Muslim clerics, churches, mosques and United Nations (UN) presence. More recently *Boko Haram* expanded it's attacks to targets such as pupils of secular state schools, pro-government villages, and polio vaccination workers[28].

Attack modes which in 2009 comprised mainly of poison arrow-equipped bows, drive-by shootings and fuel-laden motor bike bombings soon broadened to include kidnappings (of Nigerians and foreigners alike) and suicide attacks. While kidnappings were no longer new to Nigerians, the *Boko Haram* suicide attacks against the Nigeria Police Headquarters and the UN Headquarters both in Abuja on 16 June, 2011 and 26 August 2011 respectively were novel and stunning. This was particularly so, given the fact that suicide bombings were previously unknown in Nigeria and West Africa as a whole where suicide is considered to be anathema from the cultural standpoint. Ever since, the spate of suicide bombings has continued unabated with well over thirty attacks recorded so far, including the bombing of a commuter bus station in the densely populated Nyanyan areas of Abuja in April 2014. During the same month, *Boko Haram* again rattled the government and people of Nigeria with the abduction of about three hundred school girls in Chibok, Northeast Nigeria threatening to sell them, a development that sparked international outrage and intervention [29]. Given the increasingly diffuse and dispersed structure of *Boko Haram* coupled with excruciating socio-economic conditions of youths in Northern Nigeria, the extent to which the emergent international intervention will transform the festering conflict remains a matter of conjecture.

Boko Haram Insurgency and the Nigerian Federation: A Causal Explanation

Several reasons have been adduced for the *Boko Haram* insurgency since inception. In this section, we seek to shed more light upon the subsisting discourse with a view to providing a more concise, lucid and adequate explanation for the insurgency. This is important because a proper understanding and acknowledgement of the underlying factors for conflict are always critical to its resolution.

From the potpourri of reasons often advanced for the *Boko Haram* insurgency, five major strands of arguments are identifiable. These can be captured under the following phrases:
 (a) Radical Islamist State Theory
(b) Political Maladministration and Social Injustice Theory
(c) Relative Deprivation / Human Needs Perspective
(d) North – South Dichotomy Theory
(e) Nihilist Perspective

The Radical Islamist state theory conceptualize the *Boko Haram* insurgency as purely the product of an extremist Islamist agenda[37] to establish an Islamic theocratic state in Northern Nigeria or across the federation as a whole. The name, *Boko Haram*, itself (as we noted earlier) etymologically means "Western education is sin", or "Western education is forbidden". It should be noted that *Boko Haram* now prefers the second interpretation on the grounds that "while the first (interpretation) gives the impression that we are opposed to formal education coming from the

West which is not true, the second (interpretation) affirms our belief in the supremacy of Islamic culture (not education), for culture is broader, it includes education but not determined by western education [31].

In advancing the radical Islamist state theory, some observers situate *Boko Haram*'s ideology within deeply traditional Islamism and views it as one of the many variants of radical Islamism that have emerged in Northern Nigeria overtime. Adherents of this ideology are influenced by the *Quranic* injunction. "anyone who is not governed by what *Allah* has revealed is among the transgressors " [32]. To further strengthen their argument, protagonists of the theory under consideration stress that the *Boko Haram* insurgency was inspired by the memories of the radical Maitatsine Movement (earlier mentioned in this paper) that orchestrated violent intra – religious demonstrations in Northern Nigeria during the early 1980s. In this wise, the *Boko Haram* movement is aggrieved by what is perceived as western assault against traditional values, beliefs and customs of Northern Nigeria Muslim communities. Indeed, its erstwhile leader, Yusuf declared in 2009 that:

"Western style education is mixed with issues that run counter to our beliefs in Islam that Our land was an Islamic state before the colonial masters turned it to a Kafer (infidel land)… The current system is contrary to true Islamic beliefs [33].

In a similar tune, Shekau, the group's main leader at present, in January 2012 accused the United States of America (USA) of waging war against Islam [34]. As strong and persuasive as the radical Islamist theory may seem to be, it does not represent a full picture of the *Boko Haram* phenomenon in terms of causal explanation. As an illustration, and as we noted earlier, *Boko Haram* is so diffuse that many of its soldiers are not adherents of the *Salafi* (Jihad) doctrine. It is also interesting to note that in July 2011, the *Yusufiya* Islamic Movement allegedly founded by Mohammed Yusuf, and which like *Boko Haram*, is seemingly linked to the *Yusufiyya* sect, circulated leaflets across Maiduguri dissociating itself from *Boko Haram* ostensibly due to Shekau's more extreme ideology and tactic. The leaflet emphatically stated:

We are concerned that some people with evil motives have infiltrated our genuine struggle with a false Holy war that is outright un-islamic… we call this evil group to desist, failing which we shall have no option than to expose and hunt them [35].

The North – South Dichotomy theory views the *Boko Haram* insurgency largely as a product of the age – old political power struggle between the Muslim dominated North and the Christian dominated South geopolitical regions of the federation. It should be recalled that from independence in 1960 up to 1999, Nigeria was governed largely by military officers, a number of whom were northern Muslims. In that period, while Nigerian Islam was riddled by doctrinal debates and disagreements between the *Salafists* and the *Sufis*, Christians were heavily proselytizing across the federation, particularly in the middle belt area. The growth of Christianity was reflected in the 1999 election of Olusegun Obasanjo (re-elected in 2003), and the continued southern Christian domination of Goodluck Jonathan (successor to the brief Muslim presidency of Umaru Musa Yar'Adua in 2010) administration [36]. Subsequently, the Muslim dominated North responded to the Christian dominated South's political ascendancy with a vigorous campaign between 2000 and 2003 to impose Islamic legal system in twelve of the northern states where they had the majority [37]. The enthronement of Sharia law in these states, to a large extent, united the previously quarreling Muslim groups [38] but many radical Islamists (such as the vanguard of *Boko Haram*) remained dissatisfied, either because they considered the form of *Sharia* not pure enough or that they desired wholesale transformation of the secular Nigerian federation as a whole into an Islamic state [39]. Furthermore, the furore generated by the 2011 election results, which claimed over eight hundred lives, provided an additional element for the North's grievances against the ruling south. It would appear that many Nigerians of Northern origin see the presidency of Jonathan, a southern Christian, as illegitimate, having ignored an informal power rotation pact that would have ensured the enthronement of a Northern Muslim president at the time[40]. In this context, *Boko Haram* is seen by many, especially southerners as a northern plot to destabilize Jonathan's administration and thus make the North's return to power in 2015 a *fait accompli* .

The Relative Deprivation or Human Needs Theory proponents tie the *Boko Haram* phenomenon to the deplorable socio – economic conditions prevalent in Nigeria, especially in the North. This perspective of the discourse is predicated upon the argument that all human beings have basic needs which they aspire to meet, and failure (engendered by other individuals or groups) to fulfil these needs could result in conflict. In this regard, relative deprivation is a perceived disparity between value expectation and value capabilities and that the lack of a need satisfaction – defined as a gap between aspirations and achievement generally – relies on the psychological state of frustration and aggressive attitudes emanating from it" [41]. Extant data on the socio-economic status of Nigerians appear to support propositions of the human needs theory. As an illustration, the Human Development Index Trend (HDII) placed Nigeria 156th out of 186 in 2011. To be specific, within the context of this theory, the socio-economic

causative factors responsible for the *Boko Haram* insurgency are widespread unemployment, abysmal poverty, worsening standard of living, deep anger and frustration among the youth population, particularly in the North[42]. To underscore this point, it has been observed that while the religious dimensions of the conflict have been misconstrued as the primary driver of violence, disenfranchisement and inequality are actually the root causes. At the base of this is a political system that operates laws that give regional political leaders the power to determine who is an indigene and who is not. This system which determines whether citizens can take part in politics, acquire land, get employment or have access to education, is extensively abused to secure political support from some people while excluding others [43]. Clearly, this condition of acute socio-economic deprivation and disaffection created a sustainable base for Boko Haram's recruitment drive and operations.

Closely related to the Relative Deprivation or Needs Theory is the Maladministration /Social Injustice Theory. Like in most parts of West Africa, governance in Nigeria since independence has been plagued by abysmal official corruption and inadequate institutional development both of which have continuously undermined the rule of law and social services. Tribal, clan, family, and other primordial loyalties have become the basis of governance. In this scenario, the quest for political office is often geared towards gaining access to state resources as a means of enriching oneself and cronies rather than an avenue for service to the generality of the populace [44]. The net effect of this is superfluous wealth and bliss for a privileged few, and chronic poverty, hardship and frustration for the majority. Furthermore, social injustice epitomized by police brutality and impunity and other violations of human rights and rule of law constitute an additional source of discontent and anger among the populace. According to Amnesty International, Nigeria's security forces committed grave human rights violations in their responses to the *Boko Haram* insurgency including forced disappearances, extrajudicial executions, house burning and unlawful detentions for lengthy periods without trial. Almost one thousand people, mostly Islamist militants, reportedly died in military custody during early 2013 alone. Worst still, Nigerian authorities rarely hold erring security personnel accountable for violations of the rule of law. In 2011, government commenced the trial of five police officers in connection with Yusuf's death, and began the court martial of a military commander responsible for the soldiers that allegedly killed forty-two *Boko Haram* members in 2009, but both proceedings remain inconclusive till date. Former military Head of State, General Yakubu Gown recently gave tacit allusion to the maladministration/social injustice theory when he declared that uncontrolled general injustice would naturally degenerate into serious financial and other crimes and ultimately, corruption. It is instructive to note that the insurgent movement has continuously adopted the growing grievances against bad governance and social injustice to advance the notion that an Islamic state would enthrone a better and fairer government [45].

Finally, there is the dimension that can be tagged "*Nihilist*" perspective. Since 2009 when the *Boko Haram* insurgency began to thicken, it became common place (particularly in the south) to hear phrases such as "What are they even fighting for?" What do they even want? Metaphorically, these and similar expressions suggest that *Boko Haram* exists and operates for no tangible reason. At some point, even government seemed to be buying into this seemingly pedestrian perception of the insurgency with its branding of the movement as mere terrorsism[46]. It is germane to note that in the past, militant agitations in the Niger Delta over evident socio- economic and political issues were given similar interpretation in some quarters. While this present author would not hold brief for *Boko Haram* or any violent organization, it must be stated clearly that it is both dangerous and counterproductive to downplay and demonize group or sectional grievances, especially in a fragile federation like Nigeria.
To draw the curtains on our discussion in this section, we affirm   that while the enthronement of an Islamic theocracy in Nigeria may have been the primary aspiration of *Boko Haram*'s founders at inception, widespread unemployment, abysmal poverty, general despondency and related socio-economic grievances against the Nigerian state are the main factors that have sustained the group's continued mobilization, recruitment and operations.

Government Strategy for Peace and Security: An Appraisal

The resultant effects of the *Boko Haram* conflict on the Nigerian federation have been catastrophic. The breakdown of peace and security within the affected areas has caused the loss of over four thousand lives, displacement of about five hundred thousand persons, destruction of hundreds of schools and government facilities, and ruined an already ravaged economy, especially in the Northeast, one of the country's poorest regions [47]. This scenario has further undermined Nigeria's national image in the eyes of the international community.
The federal government of Nigeria responded to the dire situation created by *Boko Haram* insurgency with a two-pronged conflict management strategy: force and diplomacy.

Government's military force counterinsurgency strategy   began with the 2009 suppression operation. As we noted earlier, this operation was launched to curb the rising militant profile of *Boko Haram vis-a-vis* the sustained political

pressure to which government was being subjected. After government issued warnings to people to move out of the area, security forces stormed and shelled the group's mosque and headquarters on the night of Wednesday 29 July, 2009. In the ensuing fire fight with the insurgents who were armed with homemade hunting rifles, fire-bombs, bows and arrows, machetes and scimitars, up to eight hundred persons (mainly sect members and civilian bystanders) died. In a similar operation in the fishing town of Baga, near Nigeria's border with Chad, in April 2013, a resident, Mallam Bana reports that the soldiers were mindless that night as they killed, burnt houses and chased everyone including women and children into the bush [48]. Yusuf's killing and that of some of his compatriots as well as innocent civilians drew condemnation to the government.

In May 2013, due to Federal Government's realization that the Joint Task Force (JTF) of military and police units earlier deployed in the   Northeast were not yielding the desired results, it declared a state of emergency in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states, and also secured the National Assembly's approval to deploy additional soldiers to the region with the creation of a new formation, the 7th Division of the Nigerian Army, Maiduguri. It is noteworthy that emergency rule at the outset recorded considerable success as the military forced a large number of *Boko Haram* fighters into retreat from Maiduguri to remote areas of Borno state and across the border to Cameroun. However, government and its civilian JTF ally adoption of extra-judicial killings, enforced disappearances and unlawful arrests and detentions escalated Muslims (local) grievances against the state, and were openly condemned by the Sultan of Sokoto, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch[49]. In its desperation to contain *Boko Haram*, government's overzealous and high-handed tactics have been counter – productive by demeaning its integrity and also alienating crucial local support. Moreover, the tenacity and escalation of *Boko Haram*'s violent operations in terms of scope and frequency is further indication that the military force strategy is not achieving the required results.

Concurrently with the military force strategy, and perhaps due to the realization that the military option was not achieving the desired objectives, government also resorted to diplomacy (negotiation) in a bid to resolve the *Boko Haram* impasse. In 2009, Ali Modu Sheriff, then Governor of Borno state, was said to have given *Boko Haram* the sum of one hundred million naira to pacify the group following the killing of Yusuf. In July 2011, the incumbent governor of the state, Kashim Shettima invited the group for talks.[50] In 2012, efforts of Datti Ahmed, President of the National Supreme Council on Sharia (NSCS) to broker talks with *Boko Haram* hit the rocks after the group accused government of insincerity. We may recall that   in January that year, the State Security Service (SSS) announced the arrest of *Boko Haram*'s spokesman, Abul Qaqa, in Kaduna. The group, however, denied this and stated that the arrested sect member was in fact Abu Dardaa and not Abul Qaqa. Qaqa later declared in a statement that "the arrest of Abu Dardaa is an outright deception and betrayal by the Nigerian government and security agents. They proclaimed dialogue and are doing the opposite. His arrest has proven to us that they were waiting for us to avail ourselves so that they can arrest us [51].

In a move similar to late President Yar'Adua's peace initiative in the Niger-Delta (sustained by the incumbent administration), President Jonathan in 2013 announced an offer of amnesty to *Boko Haram* in return for disarmament. A presidential committee on Dialogue and Peaceful Resolutions of Conflicts in Northern Nigeria (PCDPRCNN) was subsequently established by government on 24 April, 2013 to work out modalities for the programme. The committee, headed by the Minister for Special Duties, Kabiru Taminu Turaki and comprising past and present government functionaries, religious authorities and human rights activists, was given the mandate of identifying and engaging principal leaders of *Boko Haram* with a view to creating a practicable framework for amnesty and disarmament [52]. Surprisingly, the group rejected governments' offer outrightly, claiming that it had done no wrong to warrant forgiveness, and that it was government itself that needed pardon for alleged atrocities against Muslims [53].

Propaganda has also been a salient component of government's response to the *Boko Haram* insurgency. In modern statecraft, propaganda has been a veritable weapon by which governments influence public opinion, attitudes and actions for their own benefit. Propaganda is of utmost importance to both insurgent movements and governments in the crucial quest to win the minds and hearts of the civilian population. Insurgent groups use propaganda to spread their ideological message in order to rally support while governments adopt propaganda to demonstrate their resolve to triumph, and also to secure international assistance[54]. Elsewhere in this paper, we have commented upon *Boko Haram*'s persistent public message about the ideology and desirability of the Islamic theocratic state. For government, the use of propaganda has centered   mainly around the drive to brand and discredit *Boko Haram* as no more than a terrorist organization. As Buba Galadima, former National Secretary of the defunct Congress of Progressive Change (CPC) puts it: "What is really a group engaged in class warfare is being portrayed in government propaganda as terrorism in order to win counterterrorism assistance from the West [55]. Inspite of

government's propaganda, *Boko Haram* has successfully and consistently established its power over Nigeria's Northeast. This is mainly so because the group has effectively exploited discontent among Northern Muslims who are dissatisfied that the adoption of *Sharia* system is yet to curtail official corruption[56] and maladministration alongside their concomitant effects such as acute unemployment and poverty, among others. It is even more worrisome that some Northern Muslim soldiers deployed to infiltrate the group have allegedly joined it. Indeed, no fewer than fifteen military officers including ten generals were recently reportedly court-martialed and found culpable for providing high - class security information and ammunition to members of *Boko Haram*[57]. The military of any credible state ought to be its most patriotic and nationalistic institution that must remain above sectional and primordial sentiments at all times. However, if the allegations of Pro-*Boko Haram* sabotage against some Nigerian soldiers are true, then it would be proper to assert that the Nigerian army is conforming to Morritz Janowitz's postulation that the military in the Third World countries is a reflection of their "social and political environments" [58]. It would be more profitable for government and beneficial to the Nigerian populace if the administration devotes more attention and resources to finding real solutions rather than dissipating energy on propaganda that seems to be achieving little or nothing.

Amidst mounting local and international pressure to surmount the *Boko Haram* menace and restore peace and security (especially in the Northeast) the Nigerian government recently accepted offers for international assistance from the U.S.A, France, Britain and some of Nigeria's neighbors such as Chad, Niger, Cameroun and Benin Republic to help rescue the abducted Chibok school girls [59] and to defeat the insurgents. But international cooperation between Nigeria and conventional actors predated this time. A few examples would suffice here. In 2010, former National Security Adviser of Nigeria, Gen. Owoye Azazi (Rtd) held talks with Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director Leon Panetta. In 2011, Azazi met with Gen. Carter Ham, Commander of United States Africa Command (U.S AFRICOM), and other U.S. government functionaries. In the same year, he visited the USA during the Congressional panel's preparation of it's report on *Boko Haram*, and also took part in a CIA conference around the same period. In addition, in the aftermath of *Boko Haram*'s Christmas Day bombings in that year, the United States President office confirmed that the US and Nigeria were collaborating against the movement[60]. Yet, the insurgency and its attendant destruction of lives and property continued to escalate. It is germane, therefore to ask: What prospects does this fresh international cooperation for peace and security in Nigeria offer?

Although the new international collaboration against *Boko Haram* is still at a rudimentary stage, we can, however, observe a preliminary action plan. The U.S.A is proposing assistance through the deployment of a combination of military, law enforcement and similar resources including a 24- hour satellite television channel in Northern Nigeria to counter *Boko Haram*'s aggressive propaganda and recruitment drive. France has put its West African intelligence and military apparatus (including a specialized unit) at the disposal of the Nigerian government. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is to invoke it's counter – terrorism protocols to bolster Nigeria's efforts [61]. Britain has reached agreements with Nigeria on intelligence sharing and coordinated border patrols. The British Prime Minster has also announced a long – term policy of providing more practical assistance to Nigeria and other West African states to strengthen their security, defense and counter – terrorism institutions.

In addition, the British Foreign Secretary, William Hague, is scheduled to host an international ministerial summit in London on June 12, 2014 to deliberate upon security in Northern Nigeria and coordinate international efforts against *Boko Haram*. According to Hague, the meeting, which is to be attended by officials from Nigeria, Chad, Cameroun, Benin, Nigeria, U.S.A. France, Canada the European Union (EU) and host Britain, will build on the Anglo-Nigerian agreements cited earlier (62). The United Nations (U.N) on its part, has designated *Boko Haram* as an affiliate of Al-Qaeda and AQIM in order to subject the Nigerian group to international asset freeze, travel and arms embargo, as well as shutting off vital sources of funding (63). Arguably, no cost is too high for the security of lives and property of the citizenry. Nonetheless, over-reliance on outsiders for national security is a sad commentary on Nigeria's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Conclusion

The *Boko Haram* insurgency is a multi-causal phenomenon borrn, nurtured and sustained by complex sociopolitical and economic factors which are themselves rooted in the historical contradictions of the Nigerian federation. These contradictions have continued to provide the breeding grounds for militant anti-state philosophies, elements and organizations such as *Boko Haram*. It is lack of faith in the Nigerian project that would make any right thinking Nigerian seek the dissolution of the federation, especially through violent and destructive means. It is the large army of unemployed, idle, suffering, angry and frustrated youths in the country particularly in the North) that feed the recruitment needs of insurgency movements. The creation of an Islamic theocracy out of the Nigerian federation

may have been the prime objective of *Boko Haram's* founders at inception, the larger movement, especially the foot soldiers, are   motivated by widespread unemployment, acute poverty, injustice, general despondency and similar socio-economic grievances against the Nigerian state. These are the main factors that have sustained the group's mobilization, recruitment and operations. Government's failure to comprehend and acknowledge the magnitude of these issues as the real drivers of militancy during the formative period of *Boko Haram* deprived it of the opportunity to respond timely and appropriately to nip the insurgency in the bud before it solidified and got out of control.

Government's strategy to restore peace and security to *Boko Haram* traumatized areas has been largely ineffectual and leaves much to desire. We are yet to see a coordinated and consistent intellectual cum professional counterinsurgency response to the *Boko Haram* onslaught. The information sharing system of government security agencies is suspect, given the inaccurate or conflicting reports by different agencies [64]. In one breath, Abuja declares its determination to crush the insurgents, and in another, expresses its readiness for dialogue, as the rig-maroll continues. In view of the factors already detailed upon in this paper, it is now crystal clear that the Nigerian state lacks the capacity to achieve total military victory over *Boko Haram* in the foreseeable future. Government should not be carried away by the deluge of pledges of international assistance pouring in from all directions. International intervention needs to be complimented by domestic commitment by the Nigerian administration in the form of urgent reforms in relevant sectors of national life.

To energize government's counterinsurgency efforts against *Boko Haram*, the following measures are necessary. First, government should adopt conflict transformation as the guiding principle of its counterinsurgency strategy. In this wise, government should pay greater attention to transforming the relationships, interests, discourses and issues that underline and sustain the conflict. Second, government at all levels (Federal, State and Local) should ensure immediate implementation of a genuine and comprehensive programme of rapid socio-economic development of Northern Nigeria, like the Niger-Delta scenario. Third, the entire apparatus of the Nigerian security system, particularly the police force, needs to be thoroughly reformed in terms of improved remuneration and welfare, better training and capacity building, as well as better discipline, professionalism and accountability to the rule of law. Fourth, Nigerian authorities should emphasize more on better intelligence gathering and civil-military relations because the previous Niger Delta insurgency and the current one by *Boko Haram* have shown that brute force is not an effective counterinsurgency strategy. Fifth, The Nigerian state should vigorously pursue the reversal of prevailing conditions of socio-economic injustice and official corruption that makes *Boko Haram* rebel. Sixth, the Nigerian government and electorate should immediately cultivate the culture of credible elections in order to make democracy work and thus minimize the incidence of violent conflicts over political interests like *Boko Haram*'s. Finally, the power and fiscal make-up of the Nigerian federation requires urgent change. The so – called federation that operates more like a unitary state must be decentralized considerably indeed and not by mere official declaration of intent. The administrative and fiscal powers of the central government are simply too much. Adequate real powers should be devolved to state and local governments to enable them discharge their duties to the people properly. Definitely, the task of accomplishing these reforms is daunting, but the Nigerian state must summon the political will to do so. This is the sole guarantor of the soul of the Nigerian federation.

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