Rethinking counterinsurgency: A case study on boko haram insurgency in Nigeria

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Recommended Citation
Buba, Abdulqadir Muhammad, "Rethinking counterinsurgency: A case study on boko haram insurgency in Nigeria" (2016). Capstone and Graduation Projects. 11.
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Chapter I
Introduction

The term insurgency has evolved over the decades. Although synonymous with revolt and rebellion, the term “insurgency” has a different connotation. According to Allswell Osini Muzan:

…insurgency is one objective of organized terrorism, terrorism is one of several strategies of insurgency. Both terrorism and insurgency may be used by states in their internal and foreign policy operations. Terrorism and terrorist tactics constitute part of the strategies and tactics of insurgency.¹

Terrorism is a contested concept. While there are many national and regional definitions, there is no universal legal definition approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations (the one proposed by the Security Council in Res. 1566 (2004) is non-binding, lacking legal authority in international law). The Ad Hoc Committee on Terrorism of the 6th (legal) Committee of the General Assembly has, with some interruptions, been trying to reach a legal definition since 1972 - but in vain. In the absence of a legal definition, attempts have been made since the 1980s to reach agreement on an academic consensus definition.²

According to Glenn Greenwald:
The application of the term "Terrorist" by the U.S. Government has nothing to do with how that term is commonly understood, but is instead exploited solely as a means to punish those who defy U.S. dictates and reward those who advance American interests and those of its allies³

The definition of terrorism as compiled by Alex P. Schmid states terrorism:

Is the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property in order to coerce or intimidate a government or the civilian population in furtherance of political or social objectives.⁴


Whereas rebellion can be violent and non-violent, thus, necessarily unlawful, insurgency usually goes beyond civil resistance and implies armed resistance to the authority in Government. In most cases, insurgency is considered illegitimate by Governments since it threatens its sovereignty. Insurgency may take different forms and can last over many years. Historically, many countries around the world, including the United States, France and Germany, experienced periods of insurgency. Oftentimes, insurgency is a natural response of the people to the ineffective and schismatic policies or blatant iniquities of corrupt, oppressive governments. Such insurgents may gain the support of the international community who are sympathetic to their cause for a regime change. For instance, insurgencies which are the result of oppressive Governments who infringe on the rights of its citizens and commit international human right violations most often than not get the support of the international community. The international response to the situation in Libya during the 2011 revolution saw an international outcry by the UN which prompted a NATO intervention. This resulted in the toppling the Gaddafi regime.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, however, insurgency usually borders on terrorism. To some commentators such as I. C Achumba and O. S Ighomereho the two terms may be interchangeable, but it is not always the case. Unlike terrorists, insurgents may pursue their

5 The American Revolutionary War (1775–1783), also known as the American War of Independence. The French Revolution was a period of far-reaching social and political upheaval in France that lasted from 1789 until 1799. The revolutions of 1848–49 in the German states, the opening phase of which was also called the March Revolution


political goals without intimidating civilians. Whereas insurgents seek to hamstrung positions of the national Government, terrorists are not loath to kill innocent civilians in the process. Boko Haram, as one of the most fearsome militant groups in Sub-Saharan Africa qualifies more for the definition of a terrorist group rather than an insurgent army. Yet, there is a tendency in the academic circles to regard the recent offshoot of Boko Haram’s violent activities as the Boko Haram Insurgency. Hence, the discussion in this paper will proceed from the position that Boko Haram is a terrorist group.

Emerging in 2002, Boko Haram originally known as Jamā’at ahl al-Sunnah li-Da’wah wal-Jihād - meaning “people committed to the propagation of the prophet's teachings and jihād” was nowhere close to being an insurgent group. Although the fledgling group embraced the revolutionary idea of establishing an Islamic state in Nigeria, it conducted its activities peacefully. Boko Haram’s members saw western education – the epitome of Nigeria’s secularism and growing westernization – as the main threat to the Islamization of the country. Having consolidated some support from the masses, Boko Haram embarked on the path of insurgency in 2009, unleashing carnage on Governmental agents and innocent civilians. In 2012, Boko Haram evidence indicates that the sect collaborated with Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), which suggests the sect, had international affiliation with Al-Qaeda. By 2015, the militant faction pledged allegiance to ISIS. This also brought about a change of name by the group to al-Wilāyat al-Islāmiyya Gharb Afrīqiyyah meaning Islamic

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88 ibid., 79–99


State West Africa Province, ISWAP. This shift of allegiance could be attributed not only due to the declining fortunes and influence of Al-Qaeda caused by the death of Osama Bin Laden, the similar mode of operations between ISIS and the Boko Haram, but ultimately there was a bigger financial benefit to Boko Haram as ISIS was reportedly worth $2 billion as of 2014. Boko Haram leads deadly insurgency against the Nigerian Government, with death tolls constantly escalating and the area of its conflict broadening. As globalization brought about an increase in interaction between countries, terrorists groups also have seized the opportunity to extend their influence into several territories. Pillar says the process of international integration and development that came with globalization and brought about easy and legitimate movement of people and money across borders, also benefit terrorism. Thus in 2014, Boko Haram spread its tentacles into the adjacent countries of Chad, Niger and Cameroon. For the purposes of this paper, however, Boko Haram’s activity in Nigeria will be discussed and analyzed.

This project begins with an introduction surging into the objective and research questions, the second chapter gives a background information on Nigeria including literature review of the existing academic literature on the topic, focusing on credible academic sources such as journals, articles and books. The third chapter discusses the conceptual and theoretical framework including the description of the methodological approach employed for the purposes of this project. The fourth chapter examines Boko Haram strategy and segues

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into a discussion of counterinsurgency measures that could be taken to contain the threats emanating from Boko Haram and the need for the rethinking of counterinsurgency. The last chapter concludes the project and highlights policy recommendations.

1.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:
The Southern and Northern states have been a hub for militancy. The South, which constitutes a Christian majority population\textsuperscript{16} has also witnessed militancy from groups such as the O'odua People’s Congress (OPC), Movement for Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), and The Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB). OPC is a Yoruba ethnic movement that sort to defend the interests of the Yoruba people to have more autonomy for the ethnic group. Some of its actives included intimidation, attacking other ethnic groups, killed police officers, extort money and engaged in human rights abuses.\textsuperscript{17}

As for MEND its origins in the Ijaw ethnic minority group dispersed across the coastal states of the Niger Delta, MEND is the biggest and most dangerous of all resistance groups to have emerged from the Niger Delta.\textsuperscript{18} According to MEND and its supporters, it attacks oil facilities in the Niger Delta, which is fueled by ethnic grievances over environmental damage.


and political neglect.\textsuperscript{19} Some of their activities also involved attacking the Nigerian security forces and their facilities.\textsuperscript{20}

The objective of the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) was calling for a cessation of the Biafra region from Nigeria. Apart from the civil war (1967-71), some of their activities included engaging the Nigerian army in warfare.\textsuperscript{21} Boko Haram in the Northern region being the primary and most formidable militant group. Boko Haram’s activities have affected not only the Northern part of the country, but the entire nation. At the same time, its activities threaten Nigeria’s neighboring countries. The problem Nigeria faces, albeit largely internal, have become a threat to global security due to the tendencies of the insurgency and its effects spilling into neighboring countries and destabilizing the region. This highlights the importance of exploring the counterinsurgency measures adopted by Nigeria to contain Boko Haram and potentially rid itself from the extremist group.

Given the problem described above, the overarching objective of this project is to review and assess the failure of the Nigerian central Government’s effort to stop the deadly depredations of the Boko Haram insurgent group in Nigeria. Another related objective of the project is to consider new counterinsurgency tactics that could be taken to defeat this daunting extremist group.


1.2 PROJECT QUESTION AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TOPIC:

The failure of the counter-insurgent activities initiated by the Nigerian Government means that the people of Nigeria, especially those in the North-Eastern region, will continue to suffer at the hands of this seemingly determinant terrorist group. Even though the regional coalition of Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and Chad had decapitated the Islamic State of West Africa Province – a self-proclaimed caliphate in the territories controlled by Boko Haram – and liberated these territories by March 2015, the group continues its subversive activities.\textsuperscript{22} It has proved more intransigent and more resilient than all other militant groups in Nigeria’s history. If the group continues its gruesome activities, this could lead not only to the failure of governance in Nigeria but also to greater regional instability. Likewise, uninterrupted Boko Haram’s activities could trigger a stampede of Nigerian people abroad. Many could try to flee to safety to other countries and continents including Europe, thereby compounding the current refugee crisis in Europe. Hence, the need to study the group’s tactics and activities is critical. It could also help to better understand possible strategies to finally end it.

Given the problem as it has been described in above paragraphs, the project questions are the following: to what extent did the President Jonathan led administration’s counter-insurgency measures were effective in their fight against Boko Haram? What other counter-insurgency options the Buhari-led Government adopt to defeat Boko Haram? Why is Boko Haram resilient?

CHAPTER 2
BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON NIGERIA:

The late 19th century should be taken as a starting point for this discussion. This is because the current problem facing Nigeria began during this period. In the late 19th century, Nigeria experienced remarkable changes. Thus, in the wake of the Napoleonic wars, the British Empire – largely unmatched in its power – expanded into Africa. By 1901, the British Empire established formal control over the territories making up today’s Nigeria. In 1914, the British united these territories into a single political entity – the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria – despite the fact that they were populated by different ethnical groups. Nigeria was artificially created. In the ensuing decades, this façade of national solidarity would need to be artificially maintained. Nigeria’s independence in 1960 was a well anticipated thing, as it was preceded by a decade of nationalistic fervor across Africa.

Following independence, representatives of the three largest ethnic groups of Nigeria gained roughly equal representation in the federal Government. Yet, tensions amid these ethnic groups – and, most perceptibly, between Muslim conservatives in the North and Christian Igbos and Yorubas in the South – reached apogee repeatedly in the ensuing decades, culminating with civil war and inter-ethnic conflicts. As the two factions disagreed over the constitutional order in the country, over the form of Government and over other similar issues, secessionist moods cropped up across the country. The country had been gripped by mayhem for several decades following independence. The British had kept all of Nigeria’s 250-odd diverse and antagonistic tribes under the jackboot, whereas the independent Federal


\[24\] ibid

\[25\] ibid
Government failed to accomplish this task. With only temporary respites from civil war, instability (ethnic and religious), military coup d'état and counter coup lasted in Nigeria well into the 1990s. This created an ideal breeding ground for insurgent and terrorist groups.

It wasn’t until 1999 that democracy was restored in Nigeria. From the perspective of consulted experts, it is surprising Nigeria emerged from this protracted period of internal fighting and instability unscathed. The country’s democracy began to rejuvenate and economic development began to surge. Yet, economic development was largely insufficient to compensate for the lost momentum. Similarly, the country remained permeated with corruption. Growing democratization, by contrast, did not appeal to all members of society, especially to the hidebound fundamentalists in the North. It was against this background that the ideology of the new group – Boko Haram – began to resonate with the ever growing number of people.

2.1. LITERATURE REVIEW

It would be logical to begin this section with a general characteristic of the existing literature. Academic sources describes the insurgency of Boko Haram to have heightened the state of insecurity in Nigeria. Samu states that Boko Haram insurgency is due to the revulsion to corruption of secular authorities. They believe that because the Nigerian government does not hold to account, the offenders who are elite engaged in corruption and also other injustices, inequities among the Nigerian people. With these doctrines, they gathered the interest of the disgruntled. Others see this violent rejectionist ideology as the actual cause of the Boko Haram conflict.

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26 ibid


There are multitude of literature dedicated to analyzing the problem with some suggesting that Africa is more likely to house terrorists because of lack of proper security and surveillance; For example, Sambisa forest in Nigeria constitutes a physical safe haven due to the State’s lack a suitable legal framework to prosecute terrorists. Likewise, there is a wealth of articles on Boko Haram’s activity in scholarly journals. After the extra judicial killing of the sect’s founding leader Muhammad Yusuf in 2009; there has been great clashes with Nigerian security personnel, their offices and innocent lives became prime target for the sects in retaliation to the murder of Yusuf. The main objective of the sect is to undermine the powers of the Nigerian government and eventually toppling it, and then replacing it with their own version of Islamic government. For the purposes of this project, the most recent sources of information have been selected.

The majority of authors consulted for the purposes of this project agree that Boko Haram is a violent terrorist organization. Likewise, the overwhelming majority of the authors condemn the activities of Boko Haram. In a lead up to the famous kidnapping of the Chibok

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Girls in April 2014, thus between February 2013 to February 2014, Boko Haram carried at least 13 terrorist attacks which claimed more than 300 lives including civilians and military personnel.\(^{32}\) There is similar agreement among the authors concerning the fact that the group has been increasingly drifting ruthlessness since it settled on the path of insurgency in 2009. From the perspective of Walker, “it is difficult to see how there can be meaningful dialogue between the Government and the group”. He maintains that dialogue is impossible not only because the group is rogue, but also because “there would be no guarantee that someone speaking for the group is speaking for all of its members.”\(^{33}\)

The root cause of the aggression of Boko Haram needs to be addressed and tackled, According to Nwakudu, the nation of Nigeria a secular country designed by alien occupiers. Both under British rule and following the proclamation of independence in the mid-20\(^{th}\) century, the Nigerian populace continued to suffer at the hands of the fledgling country’s military leaders.\(^{34}\) According to Maier, this makes the Nigerian nation akin to a bruised and battered elephant. Maier adds that today this elephant is staggering towards an abyss with the ground crumbling under its feet. “Should it fall, the impact will shake the rest of West Africa,” Maier maintains.\(^{35}\) Although Maier indicates several different reasons why Nigeria is

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Leiden, Netherlands: African Studies Centre


sputtering in social and political terms, he implies that the activities of Boko Haram constitute one of the major threats.

Again, both Maier and other authors note that the emergence of Boko Haram is attributable to more deep-running reasons. One of these reasons, Montclos (2014) explains, is that Nigeria has become – due to historical reasons – a patchwork of tribes, ethnicities and two large religious groups: Muslims and Christians. Thus making it a heterogeneous country with diverse interests and susceptible to conflicts. Comolli further explains that the attempts of the British overlords and later Nigeria’s ruling class to westernize the country have incurred the wrath of many people, so that the emergence of a powerful insurgent movement became a matter of time.36 Unsurprisingly, the consulted authors assert, the Nigerian people from all walks of life have been openly questioning the ability of Nigerian leaders to preserve the country intact.37 These people have also indulged in doubts concerning whether Nigeria should stay autonomous or discard the old colonial borders, leading to the disintegration of the nation into several smaller and – importantly – more homogenous nations.38 Without the leadership working to ally the existing ethnic and religious prejudices, the ideology of the insurgent Boko Haram group will have a chance of falling on fertile soil in Nigeria. Similarly, chauvinism runs rampant in many parts of Nigeria and remains part of the global phenomenon playing out in a host of other African nations.39 Another related factor that contributes to the blossoming of Boko Haram in Nigeria is the politicized tribalism found in the country and elsewhere globally. According to Deutscher & Lindsey, this remains one of


37 Ibid.

38 ibid

39 Maier, 2009.
the most significant threats to internal stability in Nigeria and in the wider region. In the same vein, Deutscher & Lindsey add:

With ever growing frequency, wars are fought not between states but within them. The conflict is neighbor against neighbor, us against them, always the menacing other, whether the differences are racial, religious, or linguistic. What solutions have the nations of the world discovered for such problems? … The answer to that question is complex and multifaceted.  

There is overwhelming agreement among the consulted authors that these factors lead to the strengthening of Boko Haram’s positions in Nigeria. It is within these parameters that Boko Haram continues to thrive.

A common thread from the reviewed literature also suggests that counterinsurgency against terrorism is not working at its full potential in case of Boko Haram in Nigeria. The Government battle against this dangerous group of deadly militants contributes to incessant soaring of the death toll, making it apparent that the current counterinsurgency tactics in Nigeria are ineffective in their basic function. This is evident in Boko Haram’s ability to control 14 local Government areas, estimated to be about 30,000 km2 or the size of Belgium. Around this time, that is 2014 about 10,000 lives were lost.  

Moreover, even as the military stepped up its operations against the insurgency, more villages and towns were lost. Images of Nigerian troops retreating from these towns, seeking refuge in neighboring countries and abandoning caches of arms and munitions, were hard evidence that the military campaign was failing.

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The authors opine that the approach employed by the Nigerian counterinsurgency groups targets not only Boko Haram insurgents but also civilians.\textsuperscript{42} Peaceful civilians die either because of desultory crossfire\textsuperscript{43} or because of the faulty tip-off by the intelligence.\textsuperscript{44} Because of this, the Nigerian people lose their confidence in the counterinsurgency operations. Spooner agrees with this point, elaborating that the confidence of the Nigerian people in the tactics of their security forces is sagging, because Boko Haram continues its activities with a great sense of impunity.\textsuperscript{45}

Statistics provided by Spooner show that the two most successful strategies in containing insurgent activities and decreasing fatality of these insurgent activities by as much as 80\% since the 1960s have been a political process and effective policing. On the contrary, Spooner argues, when nations use military force to contain insurgents, the effectiveness of such counterinsurgency operations is dramatically lower and occasional fatalities substantially higher.\textsuperscript{46} Other authors do not make such peremptory declarations, and some even aver that the use of force is, in fact, the most virile and the most productive.

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item Ibid.
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counterinsurgency approach. Most of the consulted authors, however, tend to concur in Spooner’s suggestion that policing and political improvements bode well for the purposes of counterinsurgency. This brings forward the fundamental point of this report: counterinsurgency tactics must use both short-term approaches like use of force and long-term approaches like political changes.

Importantly, it appears from the reviewed literature that the efforts of Governments in stopping militant activities domestically can reach fruition only when they are linked to the causal factors of terrorist attacks. Montclos agrees with this point, adding that Governments need to take proactive measures to address the root cause of the terrorism in order to make its counterinsurgency operation fruitful.

Authors seeking to explain the reasons why the counterinsurgency operations initiated by the Nigerian Government have failed to destroy Boko Haram contend the militant organization owes its viability to widespread poverty, illiteracy and ramshackle governance. Spooner, for one, explains that Nigeria is plagued with poverty. From his perspective, the

47 Comolli, 2015).


organization has managed to recruit nearly 9,000 disaffected youths from the poorest regions of Nigeria by manipulating with their grievances and frustrations.\footnote{Spooner, S. (2014). \textit{For Nigeria and Kenya, counter-terrorism lessons from other countries}. Retrieved from \url{http://mgafrica.com/article/2014-12-02-for-nigeria-and-kenya}; counterterrorism-411-as-demonstrated-by-other-countries} In fact, the 12 Northern states of Nigeria where Boko Haram is most active are the most destitute in Nigeria. Poverty level is twice as higher as that nationwide and child malnutrition is four times greater than in the rest of the nation. The unemployed and disaffected youths, youths under purported religious guidance called \textit{Alamajiris}, and/or homeless youths are the typical Boko Haram members.\footnote{Umaru, T. (2013). \textit{Christian-Muslim dialogue in northern Nigeria: A socio-political and theological consideration}. Bloomington, IN: Xlibris.}

Agbu, Beckett, and Spooner, agree that the Nigerian Government has attempted to take the abovementioned information in consideration when it was developing new counterinsurgency plans.\footnote{Agbu, O. (2004). \textit{Ethnic militias and the threat to democracy in post-transition Nigeria}. Uppsala, Sweden: Nordic African Institute.} The Nigerian Government has launched a new counterterrorism strategy which emphasizes a non-military approach and places more emphasis on community engagement and education. Called “Counter-radicalization”, the program has also put an emphasis on de-radicalization, empowerment, and job creation.\footnote{Beckett, I. F. (2001). \textit{Modern insurgencies and counter-insurgencies: Guerrillas and their opponents since 1750}. New York, NY: Routledge.} Nonetheless, such correct steps by the Nigerian Government addressing the root causes of terrorist activities of the Boko Haram insurgent group are not fully exploited and, hence, do not bring tangible

\begin{footnotesize}
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\end{footnotesize}
results. An example of the counter-radicalization is the initiative by the Jonathan administration to reform the *almajiri* educational system to integrate them into the formal school system. This initiative failed due to lack proper funding and monitoring. Thus far, military force has taken precedence over political solutions to the underlying problems. The brief overview of academic literature adduced above will serve as a preliminary knowledge basis for further research. It is presented here for the purposes of introducing the reader with the general trends in academic research on the Boko Haram insurgency and the Nigerian Government’s counterinsurgency measures. In the course of writing this project, the reviewed sources of information will be used repeatedly. Importantly, however, the list of sources used will range beyond those referenced in this literature review.

### 2.2. DEMOGRAPHICS OF NIGERIA

It is apparent from the previous subsection that Nigeria is an artificially created entity with a very diverse ethnic composition. Broadly speaking, all Nigerian tribes and ethnicities can be divided into several pigeonholes. Thus, the Fulbe and the Hausa – with the vast majority of them being Muslim – are the largest ethnic groups in the country’s North (see Figure 2). The Igbo, the overwhelming majority of whom are Christian, constitute the most numerous ethnic group in the country’s east (see Figure 2). The Yoruba – with the ratio of Christians to Muslims being about one to one – are predominant in the South-West of the country (see Figure 2). Percentagewise, the Hausa account for about 21% of the country’s total population, the Yoruba – for another 21%, the Igbo – for 18%, and the Fulani – for 9%. The remaining

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31% are a patchwork of minority groups. The ratio of Muslims to Christians is in favor of Muslims: about 50% to 40%, with the rest professing some of the various indigenous beliefs.\textsuperscript{59} The exact ratio is different to pinpoint, because the situation constantly changes. Indeed, The pew survey estimated that Nigeria’s Muslims accounted for 75% of the population in 2009, only to estimate two years later that 51% of the country’s population were now Christians.\textsuperscript{60} In any case, an important thing about the Nigerian Muslims is that the majority of them are Sunnis.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{nigeria_map.png}
\caption{Map of Nigeria showing the distribution of major ethnic groups.}
\end{figure}


Interethnic tensions in the country continue to intensify in part because of the ever growing population. Growing at a rate between 1.67% at pre-independence to 2.63% in 2016. The country’s population is expected to surpass the USA by 2050. Figure 2 below shows that the country’s population is poised to swell to 400 million by 2045.

Figure 2. Nigeria’s population growth. *The Economist*. Retrieved from


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Indeed, as the country’s population balloons, it increases the strain on natural
resources and only compounds the country’s socioeconomic problems. Urbanization is below
the world levels, but nonetheless puts a considerable strain on amenities in the cities.

A large percentage of those consulted for the purposes of this project have opined that
Nigeria’s diverse ethnic groups naturally have different visions of the country’s development,
because they lack a sense of national unity and patriotism for Nigeria. Gordon agrees with
this point, adding that as the outgrowth of British colonial conquest, Nigeria does not reflect
the “affiliations and sentiments of the people living there”.62 Some do not accept the concept
of Nigeria at all. It is unsurprising that Boko Haram has been able to emerge and thrive in
such an environment.

### 2.3. SLIPSHOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

Before analyzing Governance in Nigeria, it is necessary to state that governing a country like
Nigeria is not an easy task. Central Government is often dominated by some ethnic group,
which is indifferent to the problems of other ethnic groups. According to Campbell
“Managing the complex web of interests and identities has challenged governance since
colonial times”.63 According to Obaje, “a total of 774 local Government councils are
recognized in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria”.64 Nigeria is a federal
republic. Devolution of powers by the central Government to the provinces can both be good

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62 Gordon, p.3.


or bad. In developed countries, federalization is often seen as an antidote against secessionist sentiments. Indeed, as some of the academics have averred, federalization is part of the reasons why a diverse country like Nigeria has managed to preserve its colonial borders. Yet, some experts have also surmised that federalization also decreases the influence of the central Nigerian Government in the regions. As a result, it can neither fully implement socioeconomic reforms in these regions nor tackle the problem of insurgency on all levels.

Importantly, Nigeria had spent most of the late 20th century under military rule. In these circumstances, the Government was straddled with the task of preserving the country rather than developing its democratic institutes or economic capabilities. Some of the consulted experts have also expressed an opinion that those military Governments did not even care much about the country’s socioeconomic development. They failed to ride growing oil prices to socioeconomic prosperity. Naturally, the failures of the consecutive Governments to bring about positive changes pestered many Nigerians and contributed to the emergence of various insurgent groups.

Boko Haram was one of such groups. However, throughout the 2000s, Boko Haram did not embark on the path of intimidation and insurgency. The reasons are simple: Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo, who ruled the country from 1999 to 2007, and his successor Umaru Musa Yaradua, who ruled the country until 2010, enjoyed immense support in the North of the country and were seen to be fighting corruption. For instance, President Obasanjo was instrumental in the impeachment, arrest and subsequent jailing of Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, former governor of Bayelsa State over embezzlement of state funds.65 Another example is the arrest of Tafa Balogun, former Inspector General of Police over corruption and money

Although the fight against corruption suffered a somewhat set back during Yar’adua’s presidency there were nonetheless several high profile corruption cases. In 2008, Minister of Health and her deputy including several senior officials of the Ministry were arraigned before court over allegations of sharing of N300 million ($2.5M USD) belonging to the Ministry. Another high profile corruption case is the persecution of Michael Botmang, former governor of Plateau state for allegedly stealing N1.6 billion ($13.4M USD). Several bank executives were also persecuted over bank scandals involving loans in 2009. The Muslim-dominated North was, in fact, an electoral fief for each of these presidents.

Secondly President Olusegun Obasanjo who is a retired army general and a former Head of State was seen as a strongman who ruthlessly dealt with any form of opposition at its infancy under the pretext of National Security. Thirdly while corruption was present in both administrations its level was not as glaring when compared with the successive Government. Lastly the insurgent group was wise not to confront the Government as its membership was insignificant and it was still recruiting.

Boko Haram did not care much about threadbare economic policies of these presidents’ administrations as long as their recruitment and indoctrination continued. The adoption of the Shariah law in 1999 in some of the Northern States, for example, served the interests of fundamental Islamists just fine. In 2010, after the death of President Yar’adua, his vice, Gudluck Jonathan became president. During the latter’s regime economic grievances and frustrations came to play a greater role in fomenting Boko Haram’s sedition and

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66 Retrieved nm.onlinenigeria.com/templates? a=5610
   ThisDay August 6, 2008. p.9.
insurgency. As will be shown in the next subchapter, President Jonathan failed to bring about any meaningful changes in many areas of the country’s development. According to those consulted, this failure has only fanned the fires of insurgency across the country. It must however be reiterated that Boko Haram started its insurgent activities during Yar’adua’s era

2.4. SOCIOECONOMIC CHALLENGES: DISPARITIES BETWEEN NIGERIA’S NORTH AND SOUTH

Slipshod Governance under consecutive Nigerian administrations and especially under President Goodluck Jonathan has translated into persistent socioeconomic problems. One of the reasons why the Government has failed to improve socioeconomic conditions in the country, experts agree, is because of the deeply entrenched corruption. This reasoning also finds an echo with some of the consulted authors.69 Indeed, just as the previous administrations, Jonathan’s administration was loath to lance the boil of corruption. Under President Jonathan, the situation surrounding corruption has only worsened in Nigeria. Rather tellingly, the Jonathan administration did not persecute many of the corruption cases involving top officials. The corruption cases ranged from pension scam, fuel subsidy scandal, and the infamous missing $20 billion.70 Many authors argue that corruption is one of the reasons why the authorities have failed to staunch the Boko Haram insurgency.71 In part,


70 Retrieved: http://www.vanguardngr.com/2013/02/pension-fund-scam-embattled-maina-flees-nigeria/


because of stifling corruption on the Governmental level, ordinary Nigerians have been largely unable to share in the benefits of the country’s envious economic growth.

According to a general perception amongst Nigerians, a big failure of the Jonathan administration was that it abandoned many regions of the country. Even though the South was Jonathan’s electoral fief in 2011 (see Figure 3) the president neglected these parts of the country in many respects. The federal Government was nearly absent in this region, watching as many federal projects collapsed. Recent information from the current Government indicates that in the last 16 years of the PDP led Government including the Jonathan administration did not complete any of their commissioned projects. Thus successive Governments kept on awarding contracts while those already being awarded remain uncompleted. The reason for this is corruption. In the South, the second Niger Bridge--an important project that would link the South-East and South-South- with potential socio-economic benefits was abandoned by President Jonathan. Also in the North, the federal Government neglected many important projects, which could otherwise create jobs and youth empowerment in the region. An example is the dredging of River Niger initiated by late President Yar’adua and abandoned his immediate successor, President Jonathan. The federal Government also failed to attract major investment to this region, prompting many Nigerians to refer to the North as “the sick man of the country” or as “the economic backwaters of Nigeria”.

72 Retrieved: http://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/02/607311/
73 Retrieved: http://guardian.ng/opinion/the-second-niger-bridge-facts-and-figures/
Importantly, while many of the socioeconomic problems – including power shortages and armed robberies – are common both to Nigeria’s Southerners and Northerners, the divide between these two areas of the country is yawning.\(^75\) Apparently, the divide is most perceptible on the ethnic level, playing out during each election. For example, as can be seen from Figure 3, whereas Southern Nigeria voted overwhelming for Gudluck Jonathan a

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Christian from the South in 2011, Northern Nigeria voted with near unanimity for a Northern Muslim candidate – Muhammadu Buhari.

Most important, the divide between Nigeria’s North and South is perceptible in more critical and down-to-earth areas of socioeconomic life than national elections. Likewise, as Tolu Ogunlesi of *The New York Times* puts it, overemphasizing a “Muslim-Christian divide obscures ethnic, linguistic and class divisions that are at the root of many of the problems in this patchwork country”.76 John Campbell of The Huffington Post agrees with this statement, further adding that violent clashes in Nigeria rarely have a religious component. Campbell uses socioeconomic factors to further explain the nature of the insurgency in Nigeria:

> The south is far richer and boasts far better socioeconomic indicators than the north. Extensive oil reserves are located in the Niger delta, and the south has Lagos, the commercial and media capital of the country… The two largest ethnic groups, the Yoruba and the Igbo [concentrated in the south], make up the majority of the diaspora that provides increasingly important foreign exchange remittances from abroad.77

Some of the experts consulted have voiced an opinion that socioeconomic factors like poverty, illiteracy, underdevelopment and bad governance in Nigeria’s North play a larger role in fueling the Boko Haram insurgency than religious divisions do. They also pointed to greater illiteracy levels in the North of the country. Ali-Akpajiak and Pyke too, note that geographical disparities in literacy levels exist across the country. More specifically, they argue that literacy rates are 22% for females and 42% for males in the North of the country, while they are typically 20% higher for Southerners.78 Although things have improved somewhat since the publication of Akpajiak and Pyke’s book, the overall tendency is

76 Ibid., p.1


similarly alarming. As the widely detested Jonathan administration failed to improve literacy rates and to tackle other socioeconomic woes, Boko Haram’s leadership had no problems with recruiting new members. The Jonathan administration lost touch with the common masses, forlornly trying to contain the Boko Haram insurgency with military measures alone. Even with the colossal budget (see Figure 4) allocated to the security apparatus to fight the Boko Haram insurgency, many officers complained of being underequipped leading to the mutiny of some army officers. The National Security Advisor was involved in the embezzlement of $2.1 billion in funds meant for the fight against Boko Haram.

Chapter 3

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Explaining the chaotic evolution of Boko Haram with one single theory would be problematic. Likewise, attributing the evolution of Boko Haram to just one particular cause would be reductionist. Indeed, as it will be shown repeatedly throughout the project, Nigerian and international commentators adduce different factors to explain the outbreak of Boko Haram’s insurgency. Hence, to understand the root causes of the group’s insurgency and, consequently, to be able to make recommendations for successful counterinsurgency, it would be appropriate to find theories that can explain the origins of the crisis. Experts have applied many theories to study the problem. Ted Gurr 1970⁸⁰, for one, has utilized the relative deprivation theory, which posits that political violence arises from the differences in socioeconomic circumstances of individuals. In his book, Gurr provides clear links between socioeconomic deprivation on the one hand and political violence on the other. Published originally in 1970, Gurr’s treatise has become a widely-cited classic. In similar argument Hafez 2003 explained:

Feelings of deprivation result in anger and anxiety that make ordinary people susceptible to aggression and rebellion. Although Gurr’s model introduces a number of intervening variables, such as “dissident institutional support” and “regime institutional support”, the defining feature of his approach remains the frustration-aggression nexus.⁸¹


Hafez also added two other factors that— in addition to economic deprivation— breed insurgency: structural transformations and social alienation.

David J. Kilcullen believes that the war on terrorism is actually a campaign against a globalized Islamist insurgency. Thus, counter-insurgency strategies and tactics need updating to deal with a globalized movement like al-Qaeda, especially increasing participation and cooperation of many states' intelligence and police agencies.82

Regarding terrorism as an integral part of insurgency, which is often the case with Boko Haram, other theorists add psychological causes to the prevalence of insurgency. For example, Neuburger, Valentini, and Hughes averred: “A terrorist does not simply weigh risks against the likelihood of success, as is normally the case, but adds into equation the abstract value of the cause for which he or she is fighting”.83 This is exactly the reason, Neuburger, Valentini and Hughes contend why traditional notions of deterrence do not usually work against such insurgents. Although these notions may be contested, it is evident in the Nigerian President Jonathan administration’s imposition of states of emergency and its subsequent extension in the North-East in an attempt to curb its activities. However, this military intervention did not yield the desired result. The state of emergency was first declared in May 2013 and was extended six month later in the same year.84

Explaining the root causes of Boko Haram’s emergence and the counterinsurgency measures with the theories mentioned above would provide some valuable insight. Social movement theory is one example of a theory that could also be used to reinforce this theoretical framework. The most prudent decision, however, would be to use an integrated,


multi-dimensional theoretical approach. Thus, in addition to the mentioned theories, religious fundamentalism theory and theory of poverty and social alienation could be utilized to enrich the theoretical framework.

According to Welshman, the central tenet of the poverty and social alienation theory is that poverty breeds conflict. Indeed, the idea that poverty contributes to social dissatisfaction and, hence, some sort of social action has been cited and repeated so often that it has assumed the aura of conventional wisdom. What is not as well known is that poverty, when combined with other factors, can contribute dramatically to the rise of violent resistance to Governmental actions. Likewise, the theory of poverty and social alienation recognizes the role of other related factors – including illiteracy and bad Governmental management of these and other socioeconomic woes – in generating insurgency.

The theory of religious fundamentalism, for its part, entwines religion with politics. It links religion to repression, explaining that the rejection of the western interpretation of freedom motivates fundamentalists to action. One of the chief assumptions of the theory is that fundamentalists see western values as inimical to their societies and are ready to embrace insurgency to eradicate these values.

Using the tenets of poverty and social alienation theory, religious fundamentalism theory and theoretical postulates of Neuburger, Valentini & Hughes, Hafez, and Gurr. One

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86 Ibid.


would be better equipped for the discussion of Boko Haram’s insurgency and the Nigerian Government’s counterinsurgency. Based on these theories, it is not difficult to build a conceptual framework for the purposes of this project. Therefore, Boko Haram’s terrorists actions is a reactionary to factors like illiteracy, poverty, misconception of religion and bad governance. Changing these conditions, the Government would have to tackle the problems of poor governance, reinforce security and good economic standing and education among Nigerian citizens, especially within the most affected places in the Northern part of Nigeria.

3.1. METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this project relies heavily on analyzing facts and secondary sources. This will bring about the understanding and visible conclusion of the questions that are proposed and asked in the project topic. Furthermore, it bases its discussion with observers and analysis based on the linkage between poor socio economic conditions such as poverty, illiteracy, corruption and poor social infrastructure to violence and extremism. Analysis of historical development of violence in Nigeria will help in understanding the motivation and the driving force behind Boko Haram.

The discussion of the debate on Boko Haram revolves around the following: the rise of Boko Haram and the main objective of its members, the response of government and its failure to tackle the insurgency. Like any research methodology, the one employed for this research project is not without limitations. Among the limitations of this research is the objectivity and subjectivity of the participants.

Secondary sources will be used extensively throughout the rest of the project. Overall, there has been no problem in gathering secondary data, as there is a wealth of information about each of the areas under investigation: insurgency tactics and counterinsurgency tactics,
Boko Haram’s history and its activities. Likewise, even though the counterinsurgent fight against Boko Haram evolves rapidly, researchers highlight this evolution in a timely manner.

3.2 HYPOTHESES:

**Insurgency is a combination of socioeconomic disparity among individuals and poor governance.**

The gap between the Northern and Southern states in terms of development and poverty levels gave rise to the terrorists group. Boko Haram and its increasing attacks in Nigeria, especially in the North-East of the country, are largely attributable to the lack of development, high incidence of poverty, general illiteracy, persistent corruption and bad governance not only in the region but in Nigeria as a whole. In order to tackle this problem, Nigeria needs to reform its governing system to defeat Boko Haram. Indeed, military operations may decapitate the group’s leadership and temporarily minimize its attacks, they will ultimately be insufficient to defeat the group altogether. As a problem rooted in underlying socioeconomic problems, ineffective management of the Boko Haram insurgency will not be defeated until the problem of poor governance and other related problems are tackled. Only in this case will the government’s counterinsurgency measures achieve really meaningful results.
Chapter 4:

ANALYSIS OF BOKO HARAM’S STRATEGY

According to the generally accepted definition, strategy is a general plan of achieving something over a long period of time. First of all, this definition implies the existence of a goal to be achieved. There is overwhelming agreement among the experts that Boko Haram’s strategy combines elements of strategies that are usually espoused by insurgent armies and terrorist groups. As an insurgent army, Boko Haram intends to disrupt the legitimacy of the Federal Government and to topple it. It has other long-term goals as well. It appears from secondary literature that Boko Haram’s overarching goal is to establish an Islamic state in Nigeria. As a terrorist group, Boko Haram intends to achieve political instability in the country by means of their activities which in turn make the populace question the legitimacy and credibility of their Government. Likewise, as a terrorist group, Boko Haram aims to instill terror in Nigerians who seek to question the group’s motives, legitimacy and intentions.

To achieve its objective, Boko Haram has a comparatively comprehensive strategy. Importantly, as the experts have agreed, the group does not hope to achieve its goals immediately. On the contrary, it has settled into the strategy of a “long war”. This long war begins with the recruitment of new members.\(^\text{89}\) Playing with the feelings of the disillusioned Nigerian youths – who are largely neglected by the authorities – Boko Haram disseminates its ideology and converts new members. This task is one of the most important for the group, the experts agree. Indeed, without new recruits, the group would not be able to maintain its vitality and, hence, to continue its actions on the path towards achieving its strategy.

With sufficient recruitment ensured, Boko Haram resorts to its major insurgent actions – attacking Governmental offices and other Governmental targets. However, as a terrorist group, Boko Haram does not recoil from the use of purely terrorist strategies, such as attacking civilian targets: schools, mosques and churches, bus stations.

Importantly, as most other insurgent groups won’t to do, Boko Haram abstains from direct skirmishes with the counterinsurgent forces. Instead, it prefers to blend with peaceful civilians in the face of the concerted counterinsurgent operations.90 Its vitality and resilience lies in the group’s ability to hide and later resurface to intimidate, terrorize and otherwise threaten local communities. Following a class insurgent strategy, Boko Haram seeks to coerce the population and undermine federal law-enforcement and security bodies on its home turf. Because the group conducts its activities mainly in the territories it well knows, it is able to achieve success.91 As the Government’s counterinsurgency measures were sometimes in discriminatory, the Government loses credibility in the eyes of local communities and Boko Haram gains ground.92

4.1. CHARACTERISTICS OF INSURGENCY

The concept of insurgency remains a largely debated term with often emotional exchanges because of the varying perspectives and positions of the concept diverge. Baluwaife explains, “It has been a global phenomenon, particularly in the Nigerian State with the emergence of groups such as the Niger-Delta ethnic militants in the South-South, Oodu’a People’s Congress (OPC) in the South West, Bakassi Boys and Movement for the Sovereign State of

90 Ibid.

91 Ibid.

Biafra (MASSOB) in the South East that its approach is to unleash force to maintain order.”

The Boko Haram in particular continue giving media insurgency publicity with their deadly actions such as kidnappings, killings, bombing, as well as disruption of public peace. Insurgent activities such as those of the Boko Haram count on the media as a tool of insurgency.94

The Boko Haram exhibit the characteristics of insurgent behavior according to their size, regionalism, goals, tactics, its impact on the international community, and the very character of the Nigerian regime it challenges according to Gompert and Gordon “Many insurgencies also exhibit a combination of these characteristics or such may evolve during the course of the conflict. In line with the base of supporters, John Mackinlay developed the typologies of insurgencies into lumpen, clan, popular and global.”95 From this demographic profile of the insurgent specificity of their goals there stands five typologies:

1. Revolutionary insurgencies seek to replace the existing political order with an entirely different system, often entailing transformation of the economic and social structures.
2. Reformist insurgencies do not aim to change the existing political order but, instead, seek to compel the Government to alter its policies or undertake political, economic, or social reforms.
3. Separatist insurgencies seek independence for a specific region. In some cases, the region in question spans existing national boundaries.

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94 Ibid., 18.

4. Resistance insurgencies seek to compel an occupying power to withdraw from a given territory.

5. Commercialist insurgencies are motivated by the acquisition of wealth or material resources; political power is simply a tool for seizing and controlling access to the wealth.⁹⁶

According to the 2012 ‘Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency’ published by the US Government, insurgencies seek to accomplish the following – Undercut the ability of the Government to provide the population security and public services, including utilities, education, and justice. An insurgent group may attempt to supplant the Government by providing alternative services to the people, or it may be content to portray the Government as impotent. – Obtain the active or passive support of the population. Not all support has to be – or is likely to be – gained from true sympathizers; fear and intimidation can gain the acquiescence of many people. Provoke the Government into committing abuses that drive neutral civilians toward the insurgents and solidify the loyalty of insurgent supporters. Undermine international support for the Government and, if possible, gain international recognition or assistance for the insurgency.⁹⁷

Consequently, the view of the insurgent emerges as a committed group within a nation’s population or the general public seeking alliance with other people for the purpose of achieving their goals. The counterinsurgent represents the Government and all measures taken by it to stop and eradicate activities of the terrorist group. In Nigeria the insurgent tag


applies to Boko Haram and the counterinsurgent applies to the measures taken by Nigerian Government. As explained by Liolio, “The success of both parties thus lies on their ability to successfully persuade the general public.” Others describes this build-up of rebels or terrorists as an attempt at discrediting a nation’s reigning Government through covert and overt efforts of breaking down a Government’s ability to providing national security and services to the populace. The poverty plaguing Nigeria poses the framework of the insurgency in Nigeria but its actions exacerbate the situation by literally stopping any sense of the Government having the ability to provide people security in their homes, their children in schools, places of worship, and literally all aspects of life worth living. In light of insurgency practices maintaining a specific goal also looks at its methodology in achieving this goal as internal products of the society they wreak terror and typically by use of force. The fact the modern characteristics of insurgent warfare evolved to use of protracted strategies without any identified front of activity, frames the unconventional and asymmetric methods of their tactics usually underpinned by guerrilla strategies as explained by Spooner.

4.2. TACTICS AND STRATEGIES

The tactics employed by insurgents are largely drawn from the strategies found linked to the people’s war according to the development by the Chinese Marxist-Leninist

98 Ibid.,


revolutionary/ political leader, Premier Mao Tse-Tung (1893–1976) as the most pre-eminent analyst of revolutionary warfare. McCuen explains center to the methods of people’s war are organizing, control of specific geographic regions serving the needs of the insurgents, institutionalizing the masses. Then increasing the active numbers of support for the militant group as well as mobilization of the population with focus on its prime military goal with the complete annihilation of the counterinsurgency forces.  

Contemporary insurgencies such as the Boko Haram will hide among the Nigerian population as well as in urban areas subsequently attacking at the slightest opportune circumstance. “As a matter of fact, today’s insurgencies draw and plan attacks from a loosely connected networks, often located outside the conflict zones but in urban residential areas.”  

Although as the fight against Boko Haram continues they have been somewhat pushed out of the urban areas even though these urban areas remain targets. Coordinating while gaining expert experience from use of such networking tactics the insurgents also acquire weapons, clandestine funding, and gain ideological support often from external entities. “In view of this point, it becomes clear that insurgencies are not carried out by one or two persons but by a significant amount of persons and this raises the question of why people partake in insurgencies as well as how insurgents succeed in attracting members of the population into their struggle.”  

Other considerations look at the causal factors of recruitment.

4.3 CAUSAL FACTORS OF INSURGENT RECRUITMENT

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104 Ibid.,
According to the rationale of Mao, militant insurgents like the Boko Haram develop because they have the means for planning and carrying out their mobile warfare tactics.\(^{105}\) In addition, the implications of this shows such a fete requires numerous trained and committed agents to the cause of insurgency arguing how increasing the quality of increased numbers in the guerrilla fighting ranks remains the framework of a successful combat campaign.\(^{106}\) At the same time successfully recruiting the youth it attracts into its violent and deadly activities, the Boko Haram initiates powerful messages through propaganda imbued with emotional conviction for their cause.\(^{107}\)

By convincing the majority of the poverty stricken, unemployed, and even starving youth who are normally exploited by politicians for political violence for elections, insurgent groups such as Boko Haram express claims of how their struggle is for these very recruits and the rest of the people of Nigeria convincing the targeted youth that by joining their ranks they indeed prove the hope of the people. Nigeria’s situation proves a classic environment for the likes of Boko Haram developing and even gaining leverage because of the Government’s failure to solve the nation’s poverty, economic issues, and failure to find common elements among the diversity of its cultural, religious, and political factions that compete within the Nigerian system. For Boko Haram it is their radical interpretation of the Islamic religion that


\(^{106}\) Ibid.


frames their message of liberation and rights of the people failing under the current Nigerian regime.\textsuperscript{108}

\textbf{4.4 INSURGENCY AND COUNTER-INSURGENCY}

Originally referred to as \textit{Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna lidda'awati wal-Jihad} meaning People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet’s Teachings and Jihad, Boko Haram became the widely used name of the insurgent group. The group was a locally centered radical Salafist organization morphing into a Salafi-jihadist militant group after 2009 in the North-East of Nigeria.\textsuperscript{109}

In the Hausa language, Boko Haram loosely translates, “Western education or civilization is sinful.” Under the leadership of leader Mohammed Yusuf, the group gained massive following of extremely impoverished 17 to 30 year olds by 2002. By 2008, a religious complex with school and mosque was built in Nigeria’s Northern city of Maiduguri propagating and indoctrinating members in the group’s belief system.\textsuperscript{110}

The Boko Haram group belief of any association with Western or Western Influenced Nations means associating with sin. Its attitude toward the Nigerian religious leanings and its socio-cultural identity reflects the Western influence. This results in what many experts believe will be a difficulty for true Islam to flourish according to Marshall and Shea.\textsuperscript{111}


\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.

According to Liolio, Boko Haram in Nigeria is no longer just an internal threat to Nigeria but now threatens the global security due to its increased violence and deadly attacks on the gamut of lives and institutions. Their destruction and killings extend into neighboring countries such as Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Mali. In Cameroon, churches were set ablaze and missionaries kidnapped and killed. In Niger, Boko Haram attacked prison guards.\footnote{Retrieved: http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/326/html}


Baluwaife explains, “Nigeria’s heterogeneity has at some point been regarded as its strength but it currently (seems) the crack which may cause a predicted break-down.” Consequently, “The religious cum cultural diversity has always threatened the continued existence of the Nigerian nation as one entity such that in the past various opinion leaders have proffered secession as the permanent solution to internal crisis and terrorism in the country which started rearing its ugly head since the early 2000s.”\footnote{Baluwaife, A. A. (2015). Curbing insurgencies in Nigeria: Roles for the media. \textit{Developing Country Studies}, 5(2), 18-27.} As a result, every
instance of insurgency activity extols the dissatisfaction with religion and Government in Nigeria.\textsuperscript{117} Truthfully, the continued disruption of the Nigerian Government, most recent with the beginning of the 4\textsuperscript{th} democratic proclamation, major eruptions among the nation’s various ethnic and minority groups arose because of the federal policies. With the demise of Nigerian President Yar’adua and the takeover of President Jonathan, Boko Harm took the opportunity for unleashing another wave of terror and mayhem in its occupied Northern Nigeria. While the message of Boko Haram (even the meaning of their name) is anti-everything Western, some experts believe the current activities are far more politically motivated than ever. The disruption of life for the Nigerian people where Boko Haram attacked school, churches, and mosques have uprooted the people leaving the insecure Northern Nigeria resulting in a national state of emergency by the Nigerian Government in some of the affected Northern States.\textsuperscript{118}

The irony of the entire insurgency having foundations in poverty because of a weak Government and GNP with rampant unemployment arises from the state of affairs and insecure parts of Northern Nigeria is the main reason foreign investors stay away. This continues hindering of the nation’s economic growth despite oil exploration continuing giving the prospects of investment some unknown future possibility.\textsuperscript{119} Baluwaife describes how, “Several business owners have closed down their businesses and workers have relocated from their places leaving several work places deserted and reducing the means of livelihood of people caught up in the affected areas and increasing poverty in the nation.”\textsuperscript{120}

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\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 22.
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\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 21.
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\textsuperscript{120} Baluwaife, A. A. (2015). Curbing insurgencies in Nigeria: Roles for the media. Developing Country Studies, 5(2)
\end{flushleft}
continued rise of the death toll in Northern Nigeria from twenty to one hundred and fifty every time Boko Haram attacks and consequently adds to the disillusionment among the population of the credibility of the Nigerian adequately protecting the lives of the citizens along with hindering basic life services in the region that include schools and health care.  

Since the Northern region of Nigeria is the major producer of the nation’s food, Boko Haram insurgent activities effectively reduce crops and harvesting resulting in hike in food price. The reality according to Baluwaife is, “Although Nigeria, the giant of Africa, describes her heterogeneity as a situation of ‘Unity in Diversity’, it has become one of violence and terror” along with loss of “property, high level(s) of insecurity, food shortage, price hikes, poverty, and stunted economic growth.”

CONCENTRATION OF BOKO HARAM ATTACKS IN NIGERIA

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121 Ibid., 22.

122 Ibid., 22.
4.5 BOKO HARAM’S ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Reportedly, prior to 2009, the Boko Haram group without a clear political or organizational structure little intelligence existed about its control system and command hierarchy.

According to Liolio, by 2011–2012 the organizational structure of the militant group was made up of complex cell structures locally and internationally. Approximately 26 cells have regional commanders. These same leaders take their orders from the top command leader Abubakar Shekau.\textsuperscript{123}

These demographics show the Boko Haram led by a highly trained and sophisticated leadership structure managing specialized departments. As a result, these departments include specialization such as, “bomb manufacturing, suicide bombers, intelligence, research, welfare/healthcare and other logistics needed for proper execution of their goals.” At the same time, reports indicate top level decisions take place within the Boko Haram by the “Shura Council.”124 Again, the significance of this key knowledge about the Boko Haram indicates they remain a loosely constructed organization and this proves problematic for counter-insurgent actions having effective outcomes making rethinking counter-insurgency tactics against the Boko Haram a clearly poignant reality.125

4.6 RETHINKING COUNTER-INSURGENCY

The demographics show that Boko Haram is proving problematic for the counter-insurgent measures used by the Nigerian Government and supportive international forces. Therefore, we must consider other options in rethinking the current counter-insurgent program. A number of examples may prove a better choice. The following provide a review of the options.

A study reviewing the terrorist activities of the last 40 years completed by the RAND Corporation found the majority of these insurgents were destroyed through intelligence agencies combined with policing, they joined the political process or disbanded their group with arrests or killing off key members. The fact is, according to this report, military force typically proves rarely successful in ending terrorist activities or their groups. Turkey is

124 Ibid., 67.


known for embracing international cooperative techniques addressing its counter-insurgent operations through the development of its massive intelligence network with its current standings through the Turkish National Police and 59 countries signing 99 Security Cooperation Agreements. At the same time, Turkey places great importance using its counter-insurgent units over the use of full military force, claiming the units record reports foiling a number of terrorist organizations’ planned attacks.126

Accordingly, the Turkish counter-insurgent units remain supported by highly developed counter-insurgent institutions including the Counter-Terrorism Academy (TEMAK) and the Intelligence Academy (ISAK) with intelligence department training. Outcomes of these efforts now show over 100 counter-intelligence and anti-terrorism books published about the assessment incorporating scientific methods in evaluating the operational experiences carried out in counter-insurgency activities.127 The Nigerian Boko Haram religious ideology motivating their insurgent militant activities poses another factor in general in initiating counter-insurgent models.

The Boko Haram spurred by misinterpreted religious and political ideologies exemplifies why some countries use a moderate advocacy for addressing social ills as in the case of Morocco 2013 National Strategy. In the Moroccan situation they promoted inter and intra-religious dialogue allowing the Government assisting in building critical trust within and between public institutions and diverse societies existing in the predominantly Muslim nation. The effectiveness of this approach proved so in preventing abuse of religion by militants as well as allowing the development of radicalism.128


127 Ibid.

128 Ibid.
Algeria taking a similar approach developed programs for religious guidance aimed at endorsing peace, respect, and tolerance for human rights with the intention of countering any ideologies exploiting existing disenchantment within the Algerian society at its root causes. Leaders such as Kenya’s President Uhuru Kenyatta demonstrated this approach addressing the nation last December urging Muslims to unify with the country reminding them Islam remains a religion of peace. Having some of the most moderate Muslim faction among African nations, Kenya may prove successful in creating such a platform sustaining against insurgent penetration.\textsuperscript{129}

Use of the law as a counter-insurgent technique in Nigeria against the Boko Haram could serve an important counter-insurgent plan in dealing with the specific characteristics proving problematic in halting the militant horror of Boko Haram. The idea of using the law means instead of outright killing the militants they are processed according to the law punishing those responsible. The intention is the law becomes the deterrent while showing the Nigerian Government respects all diversity of groups within the nation and holds all equal under the law. By doing so, the act of securing the rights of defendants under the due process of the law having a fair trial disproves any misperceptions about the Government discriminating against any particular groups.\textsuperscript{130}

Any chance of long term peace, looks at the critical aspect of undermining the insurgent factions of Boko Haram showing the Nigerian Government intends and does protect its citizens feeling marginalized using violence as its last resort as so clearly those factions in the Northern States of Nigeria fraught with acute poverty and unemployment continue experiencing. In rethinking the counter-insurgent tactics in addressing the Boko

\textsuperscript{129} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{130} Ibid.
Haram it remains prudent considering the challenges Nigeria experiences with its internal security according to Udounwa.131

Nigeria’s internal security challenges have roots in its history, geopolitical structure, ethno-religious composition, and slow socio-economic development. American Military University scholar Lawrence Cline identified British colonial rule and its forced merger of disparate ethnic groups to create Nigeria as a foundational cause for insecurity in Nigeria.132 The Nigerian Defense Academy Professor Etham Mijah observed that the structural imbalance in the ethnic, religious, regional, and political composition of Nigeria and the manipulation of such identities for political power is another reason for violence in the country.133 A Northeastern University scholar William Miles asserted that politicians often create ethnic and religious identities to achieve political advantage. Other observers have attributed recurring violence in the country to economic inequality.134 A poll conducted in 2001 showed religion (25 percent), socio-economic issues (22 percent) and ethnicity (18 percent) as the major causes of violence and insecurity in Nigeria.135

The resilience and rapid growth of Boko Haram was spurred by these three factors. Political patronage and support from politicians and high ranking Government officials who exploited the group for personal and electoral purposes. Others have argued how introduction


of Sharia law in some Northern States as early as 1999 resulted in conferring a kind of legitimacy on the insurgents. Decades ago in the 30-month civil war of 1970 was the last time Nigeria experiences such an internal security challenge as the Boko Haram now poses.\textsuperscript{136} The Iranian revolution success in 1979 proved inspirational to Nigeria’s various religious groups such as the \textit{Maitatsine} calling for the imposition of Sharia Law across Nigeria.\textsuperscript{137} The Maitatsine agitation was encouraged by the return to civilian rule after General Olusegun Obasanjo handed-over to an elected civilian government in the same year.\textsuperscript{138} While the Government using the military took action in May of 1980 repressing the \textit{Maitatsine} threat it nonetheless re-emerged in the mid-2000s still existing today the majority of the Northern most states of Nigeria. “Boko Haram appears to be a more violent mutation of these earlier groups. Boko Haram’s ideological narrative describes a Nigerian version of the global jihadist agenda with deeper roots in Afghanistan and Pakistan.”\textsuperscript{139} Understanding the demographics prodding the Boko Haram as far as character, motivating, and causal factors prove argumentative and diverse.

Further, “It is also suggested that avoiding situations that could lead to insurgency is better than trying to counter one… (Suggesting) social-political and economic reforms as well as amnesty programs as measures if heavily invested in, to help curb Boko Haram as well as insurgency in general.”\textsuperscript{140} The religious aspects of the Boko Haram militant stance

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\textsuperscript{136} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{137} Abimbola Adesoji, “The Boko Haram Uprising and Islamic Revivalism in Nigeria,” 98.
\textsuperscript{140} Retrieved: http://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/pdf/case-studies/Samson_Eyituoyo_Liolio_-_Rethinking_Counterinsurgency.pdf
\end{flushright}
has its own considerations as well. The fact there exists religious underpinnings to the Boko Haram activities as explained by Spooner having the goal of bringing the strict Sharia law in Nigeria shows them intolerant and promoting sectarian and isolation as part of their terrorist methodology. The ineffective efforts of the Nigerian Government solely focusing on a military counter-insurgent policy is not only intrinsically problematic but leaves little room for realistic outcomes. The insecure aspects of the Government itself leaves the Nigerian nation almost a pawn in the hands of the Boko Haram.

As with the majority of third world nations experiencing insurgent and militant uprisings, there exists a weak central Government. This is surely the case in Nigeria with the insurgent activities of the Boko Haram remaining a social plague in this nation. The Nigerian Government narrow approach to counter-insurgency relying heavily on the military is a major hindrance in its efforts. Little outside effort including that of the U.S. assisting in the counter-insurgency tactics of the Nigerian Government has few ways of contributing to effective strategies as long as the political dynamics of this troubled nation continue. A recent study by McQuaid and Asfura-Heim sees the efforts of nations, including the U.S. supporting the counter-insurgent efforts to thwart Boko Haram take place in Chad, Niger, and Cameroon.\footnote{141 McQuaid, J., & Asfura-Heim, P. (2015). Rethinking the U.S. approach to Boko Haram: The case for a regional strategy. Retrieved from https://www.cna.org/sites/default/files/research/DRM-2014-U-009462-Final.pdf} In doing so, such efforts have a more realistic opportunity for preventing Boko Haram from taking root within these national borders where so much of the Nigerian Boko Haram recruitment continues. “While this would not dismantle Boko Haram in the near term, it could buy time for conditions in Nigeria to become more favorable to direct U.S. (and other international supportive) assistance.”\footnote{142 Ibid.} Further implications of the McQuaid and Asfura-
Heim study and analysis of rethinking the current Nigerian counter-insurgency methodology
deserve consideration including a divergent approach.

Such a methodology is considered the most realistic for counter-insurgency according
to McQuaid and Asfura-Heim.\textsuperscript{143} With the lack of success of the current counter-insurgency
approaches to defeating Boko Haram because of its ability for expansion, adaptability, and
development of new and more lethal capabilities despite the efforts of the Nigerian
Government and its international allies including the U.S. dismantling them. Clearly, current
approaches to defeating Boko Haram have not proven to be the most pragmatic approach.

From this point of fact, the insurgency conflict of Boko Haram from a counter-
insurgency perspective must focus on the collaboration of regional partners deciding the
continued pursuit of a strategy with the final approach requiring all stakeholders regularly
conducting military operations or any other counter-insurgent steps within the Nigerian
nation so it adheres to the analysis above thus avoiding the ongoing Nigerian Government
actions that only perpetuate the conflict. “For example, if the military of Chad conducts
additional kinetic operations within Nigeria, it must do so in a way that avoids human rights
abuses and civilian casualties.\textsuperscript{144} The bigger picture looks at the counterinsurgency activities
of Africa as a whole.

In general, the African counter-insurgency (AFRICOM) tactics having a role and
mission could take a more leading position by implementing regional preventative
approaches to Boko Haram:

It should build on existing relationships with Chad, Niger, and Cameroon
to coordinate a focused response aimed at preventing Boko Haram from
spreading. It should integrate relevant civilian agencies in supporting
roles. Currently, by virtue of existing threats on the continent, AFRICOM
is already pursuing many of the activities required to support this

\textsuperscript{143} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{144} Ibid, 56.
approach. For the most part, any change to AFRICOM’s current approach would involve shifting existing current activities, exercises, and operations that involve Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, and tailoring them—to the extent possible—so that they directly support capacity-building efforts to prevent Boko Haram from taking hold.  

Managing the existing relationship of the AFRICOM with the Nigerian Government requires pressuring the leadership in the nation’s capital of Abuja. This means the Nigerian Government needs formal integration with France and any of the other international partners willing to work such a regional approach. Further to the assessment of their study, McQuaid and Asfuca-Heim, found that due to the Nigerian Government’s continued reluctance, taking a bolder and effective counter-insurgent approach to the conflict suggests a particular focus of the U.S. meeting its own national security goals then must stop relying on Nigeria. The U.S. putting its efforts into strengthening its regional allies’ counter-insurgent activities and abilities on the Boko Haram ensuring blocking the group from further spread and potential destabilization of Nigerian neighbors. In this manner, such a shift affords a focused and immediate proactive stance by the U.S. against the continuing and growing threat of Boko Haram.

At the same time, the U.S. continues working with Nigeria with an anticipation the nation’s political leaders hopefully shift the current perspectives of the Boko Haram conflict to another that embraces realistic results. In such a manner, the U.S. holds a better opportunity in providing the Nigerian Government with assistance and support leading to measurable counter-insurgent results with the goal of dismantling Boko Haram. “Until then, focusing on a regional, preventative strategy appears to be a potentially promising means of

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145 Ibid., 58.

146 Ibid.
containing Boko Haram in the short term, while providing time and space for continued efforts to dismantle and ultimately defeat the group.”

This detailed rethinking of the Nigerian Government-led failed counter-insurgency practices against the Boko Haram provides a sound plan of action. According to McQuaid and Afuca-Heim, “The (U.S.) wants Nigeria to undertake a more concerted effort to address the conflict through a broad-based whole-of-Government approach. Given current political, social, and economic dynamics in Nigeria, combined with endemic corruption, the (Nigerian Government) is unlikely to shift its approach on a timeline that the US Government will accept due to its own national security interests.”

Chapter 5
CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Boko Haram owes its vitality to several important factors. The first factor underlying the Boko Haram insurgency is the lack of national solidarity in the country. Created artificially by the British Empire in the early 20th century, Nigeria is a motley collection of diverse ethnic

147 Ibid., 59.
148 Ibid., 57.
and religious groups. Having conflicting interests, these groups envisage a different future to
the country. When such visions run afoul of the central Government’s vision, the most
intransigent elements of the marginalized groups rely on arms and terror to achieve their
goals.

The spread of fundamental ideologies is yet another reason that undergirds the Boko
Haram insurgency. Although the consulted commentators and experts have largely agreed
that religious misconceptions, in isolation, are insufficient to explain the rise of Boko Haram,
they have argued that ignoring these religious misconceptions would be erroneous as well.
Indeed, this paper has shown that Boko Haram has sought to achieve greater role for their
version of Islam in national affairs. For example, Boko Haram has called for stricter
application of the Sharia law in the national political and judicial systems. Likewise, the
predominantly Sunni Boko Haram has commonly targeted not only Christians but also
Muslims of non-Sunni denominations as well as Sunni who oppose their interpretations of
Islam. Yet, it is imperative that the Boko Haram insurgency should be differentiated from
purely sectarian violence, which has been historically rife in Nigeria.

Importantly, however, this paper has shown that the spread of fundamentalist
ideologies should be analyzed together with other factors explaining the vitality of Boko
Haram. Thus, it has demonstrated that the group has been able to recruit new members and to
continue its deadly activities in the face of the Government’s counterinsurgency efforts,
because of the successive Governments’ inability and/or reluctance to tackle socioeconomic
problems. Indeed, because poverty and unemployment are high in Nigeria, many
disillusioned youths are happy to join the insurgency movement in what they see as a
righteous fight against the corrupt Government. Corruption in Nigeria stands at such a
disastrous level that the socioeconomic conditions of ordinary people are not improving
despite the astonishing economic growth. Because of corrupt and irresponsible officials,
regular Nigerians do not share in the national wealth. Furthermore, there is a yawning divide between Nigeria’s North and South. Whereas Southerners are able to reap some benefits of the country’s economic development, those in the North usually are not. Likewise, illiteracy in the North is substantially higher than it is in the South. As a result, it is not surprising that Boko Haram enjoys popularity among many disenchanted illiterate paupers in the country’s North.

Another reason for the vitality of Boko Haram is that the Government has used counterinsurgency tactics and seldom considered counterterrorism strategies. The problem is that Boko Haram is more than an insurgent movement. Employing suicide bomber attacks and deliberately destroying civilian targets, the group is more of a terrorist group than it is an insurgent group.

The consulted participants of this study have agreed overwhelmingly that the Boko Haram insurgency will not burn itself out, as had occasionally happened with other insurgent movements in Nigeria’s earlier history. Hence, the Government would be wise to make its current counterinsurgency approach more comprehensive. Based on the information identified in this paper, it would be logical to identify a series of immediate, mid-term and long-term recommendations that would help the Nigerian Government to ultimately prevail over Boko Haram. First of all, several purely political measures are needed:

- **Promote democracy in meaningful and perceptible ways:** Democracy does not extend significantly further than the voting booth in Nigeria. Once elections are over, elected officials forget about their cavalier promises. Nigerians, however, covet the trappings of the democratic world. Hence, an important recommendation would be to promote democracy in Nigeria in meaningful and perceptible ways. This, of course, would be a long-term recommendation.
• **Promoting interreligious and intra-religious dialogues:** Indeed, even though some authors question the role of religion in breeding the Boko Haram insurgency, the reality is different. Above all, it is necessary to foster intra-religious dialogue, because tensions exist among the country’s Muslims and among the country’s Christians. This could be both a mid-term recommendation and a long-term recommendation.

• **Building trust in Federal Government Institutions:** People do not trust the federal Government, nor do they trust local Governments. Some Nigerians trust tribal leaders; others trust the military. Yet, because elected officials seldom get in touch with their electorate after election, trust in elected authorities is very low. Enhancing communication between the Government and the masses could help this cause.

Another series of recommendations include measures aimed at preventing insurgency, so that the country would need to deal with its consequences:

• **To limit the vitality of Boko Haram and to prevent its attacks in the future:** The Government should try to tackle poverty and let people share in the national wealth. This would be a complicated, long-term task. More specific and immediate measures would include greater criminal responsibility for corruption and greater investment in job opportunities. For example, to really curb terrorism, Nigeria could emulate China’s example and introduce death penalty for corrupt officials. The Government should also create new jobs to curtail unemployment.

• **Expose, Probe and Prosecute:** The Government must expose and prosecute government officials, politicians and individuals who finance or give any form of support to the terrorist group. Government officials and individuals who participate in embezzlement of government funds should be prosecuted in a timely manner as its
effects will be felt immediately and would go a long in the government’s effort of trust building.

- **Invest in education to eradicate illiteracy**: Education is a key to national reconciliation in a country as diverse and illiterate as Nigeria. Measures can be taken immediately, but the results would be felt over the long-term.

- **Study the experience of other nations in tackling insurgency**: By scrutinizing the experiences of other nations, Nigerians will be able to avert some of their mistakes. The Government should act with dispatch and implement this recommendation immediately.

This paper has shown that the Government needs to solve the country’s socioeconomic problems to reduce the vitality of the Boko Haram insurgency. Yet, the consulted authors and participants have also recognized that the military option should not be abandoned altogether.

Finally, several military recommendations should also be considered:

- **Increase transparency and accountability of officials in charge of the counterinsurgency operations**: After all, Boko Haram leaders are sometimes able to bribe these officials, thereby hampering the counterinsurgency progress. The heads of security agencies have been accused of embezzlement. The influence of such a step would be felt immediately.

- **Employ counterterrorism tactics in the fight against Boko Haram**: Indeed, the group’s atrocities have more features of terrorism than insurgency. Even with a Muslim candidate winning the elections in 2015, Boko Haram has not stopped its subversive activities, meaning that it was not simply an insurgency against the widely criticized Jonathan administration due to his religious creed.
• **Strengthen cooperation with other regional states threatened by Boko Haram and with international partners.**

• **Amnesty for Boko Haram Members:** The Government should seriously look into giving amnesty for terrorist members who willing disarm and should also be integrated back into the society after concluding a de-radicalization program.

• **Hold and rebuild areas after their liberation from Boko Haram:** Instead of retreating from the areas after clearing them, the Government should stay to cement tentative gains and to defeat Boko Haram, ruling out the possibility of resurgence.

Should the Nigerian Government follow all these recommendation, it would be able to win the war against Boko Haram. Were the socioeconomic conditions in Nigeria to improve, Boko Haram would lose its appeal among greater swathes of its members and sympathizers. Boko Haram ideologues would not abandon their principles, but the group would certainly lose the support of the disillusioned Nigerians. Likewise, destroying Boko Haram would, either directly or by circumstance, help the country solve many other persisting problems.
REFERENCES


