

# Towards Understanding the Boko Haram Phenomenon in Nigeria

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## Abstract

Current international media reports on Nigeria indicate that it is having some serious security challenges arising from the destructive activities of Boko Haram insurgent group. Furthermore, similar reports show that attempts by the Nigerian government to overcome the problem appear to be ineffective resulting in loss of lives and properties almost on a daily basis. Thus, prompting the government to seek for international support from United States of America, China and other European states. Against these aforementioned developments, this paper attempts to examine the evolution, operational strategy, effects of Boko Haram insurgent group's activities and response of the Nigerian government. The paper employed qualitative research method and specifically used content analysis to review existing secondary data relating to Boko Haram phenomenon. Among the findings of the paper is that, Boko Haram phenomenon which emerged in 2002 within the North-Eastern state of Borno as a peaceful religious sect has been transformed into a deadly terror organization. Political, external forces and lack of comprehensive approach by the Nigerian government have been identified as some of the factors which contributed in worsening the situation. As a result several lives and properties have been lost. It is therefore, the opinion of the paper that while attempting to overcome the challenges posed by the insurgent group, Nigerian government should at the same time begin to address some of the issues that led to their emergence and spread.

**Keywords:** Boko Haram, insurgency, Nigeria, phenomenon, security

## 1. Introduction

Although, like many countries in Africa, Nigeria has been having facing different forms of security challenges within its over fifty years existence as a sovereign nation, however, beginning from 1999 when the military which has presided over the affairs of the country in most of these years transferred political powers to a democratically elected government to date, the situation has continue to deteriorate. Prominent among the cause of the worsening security situation in the country is the activities of the Boko Haram insurgent group in the north eastern part of the country. The group which publicly emerged in 2002 has now become a major source of security threat to Nigeria's internal stability and international community through its discriminate attacks on security forces, civilians, and destroying public and private buildings including places of worships worth billions of dollars. For example, within the last three months alone (March, April and May 2014) apart from the abduction of over 270 secondary school female students who are writing their final senior secondary school examination at Government Girls Secondary School Chibok in Borno state, thousands of people have been killed through bombs and attacks carried out by the group.

Presently, Boko Haram has not undertaken any attacks within any part of the Southern Nigeria comprising states such as Lagos, Oyo, Ogun, Akwa Ibom, Delta, Rivers, Cross River, Bayelsa, Anambra, Imo, Abia etc. Although the predominant Muslim states of Northern Nigeria has remain the focus of the group, recent report indicates that it has extended its attacks to the neighboring towns and villages of Cameroun Republic. Similarly, the group was reported to have made some attacks on the secular Tuareg -led militia, National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), and the Malian army in Mali. The attacks on Villages and Towns in Cameroun Republic are attributed to the recent introduction of strict security regulations within the Nigerian -Cameroun borders by the Cameroonian government. This measure appears to restrict the ability of Boko Haram insurgents from crossing over to Cameroun in order to have refuge from the Nigerian security forces. The same reason accounts for the involvement of the group in Northern Mali. Therefore, securing the border towns and villages has therefore

become necessary for the group. Apart from giving them refuge, the border areas also serve the group as avenue for training and planning future attacks.

For example, the border towns linking Nigeria and, Niger, and Chad Republics in Borno and Yobe states which are virtually under the control of Boko Haram are specifically used for protection, training, transit, planning of attacks and recruitment of new members. One of the employee of Nigeria Immigration Service and a prominent member of the group captured in 2012 disclosed that himself and 15 other militants some of them security officers were trained in assassinations and other forms of operations in Niger Republic. However, each of the border town presents the group with a particular opportunity to plan and actualize its objectives. Whereas Niger's desert provides the group with perfect training facility and shelter, the existence of impoverished Muslim population in Northern Cameroun is seen as good ground for ideological indoctrination, recruitment and safe haven. For instance, it was reported that Shekau, the current leader of the group once sought refuge in Ngaoundere town after the July 20, 2012 attacks in Kano. Similarly, Kabiru Sokoto, the master minder of Christmas Day Church bombing in Madallah near Abuja in 2011, was arrested on his way to Cameroun in Taraba state about 100 miles to Cameroun in January 2012 (The Punch, February 11, 2012).

The rate at which Boko Haram is gaining momentum and extending its territorial command within the North eastern states of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa seems to suggest that there is potential for its transformation from being a local to a regional or even global threat. Particularly, considering the fact that the group was reported to have gone into alliance with radical groups such as Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA), al-Qaeda in the Islamic Magheb (AQIM), and Ansar al-Din all located within the Northern region of Mali which has been renamed as "Islamic State of Azawad" by the Islamic militias. In addition, Boko Haram has also established connections with other African countries such as Senegal, Burkina Faso, Algeria, Libya, and Somalia. For example, while Burkina Faso is used as one of the group's training ground, Senegal on the other hand is regarded as a home to senior commanders of the group, hence it was recently chosen as venue for negotiation with the Nigerian government (This Day, December 24, 2012).

Apart from the aforementioned countries, Boko Haram is also connected with Algeria through al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) militants which provides funds in millions of dollars to the group as ransoms for kidnapped foreigners, the proceed of which is in turn used to procure weapons from the same AQIM. Similarly, Somalia is reported as the place where Cameroonian Mamman Nur a member of Boko Haram went to receive training on explosives from al-Shabaab group prior to the group's attack on UN building in Abuja in 2011, (Alli 2011). Boko Haram's connection with Libya is in the area of ensuring safe route for importation of weapons. For instance, the man-portable air-defense systems (MANPADS) which is capable of shooting commercial airlines flying within the regions of Niger, Chad and Nigeria, was reported to have been smuggled into Nigeria by the group with the aid of AQIM and MUJWA (African Confidential June 24, 2011, Ogala 2012). Furthermore, many members of Boko Haram are reported to have been trained by the Talibans in Afghanistan, which is why most of the group's tactics appear to be like that of the Talibans (This Day, August 31, 2011).

## **2. Methodology**

The methodology adopted for this study is qualitative. Being an ex post facto research, the study depended on documented data relating to the activities of Boko Haram insurgent group. Specifically, content analysis approach was used to conduct analysis of relevant secondary data. The scope of the study is limited to the historical evolution of Boko Haram in Nigeria. Beginning with an introduction in section one, the second section describes the methodology used for the study. The third section provides explanation on the conceptual meaning of Boko Haram as an insurgent group. The fourth section focuses on the review of relevant literature relating to the meaning and global activities of insurgents/terrorist groups. The fifth section gives a detailed account of Boko Haram evolution in Nigeria. The sixth section describes the operational strategies used by Boko Haram in carrying out attacks on identified targets. The seventh section catalogued some of the effects of the group's activities in Nigeria. The eighth section examines the nature of responses by the Nigerian government towards the insurgent group. Finally, the ninth section being the end of the paper, deals with the conclusion and some recommendations on how to manage Boko Haram insurgent group.

## **3. Conceptualization of Boko Haram**

Boko Haram group derived its name from one of Nigeria's dominant ethnic language Hausa (Boko Haram) which means 'western education is forbidden'. It is generally now used as a name for an Islamic religious sect known as Jama'atu Ahlis Sunnah Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad which is an Arabic word for "people who are committed to the propagation of the teachings of prophet Mohammad (Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him) and Jihad". The term is specifically employed to describe the basic contention of the group which is that a western civilization as

represented by its secular education is a sin and therefore forbidden to adherents of Islamic religion. As an armed group that is against a constituted authority, Boko Haram represents a typical insurgent organization. Kilcullen (2006, p. 112) explained that this type of group is characterized by 'a struggle to control a contested political space, between a state (and a group of states or occupying powers), and one or more popularly based, non-state challenger'.

Boko Haram as an insurgent group has been the most prominent security threat in Nigeria since it intensified its violent attacks in 2009. Even though, there appears to be lack of complete information regarding the origin of the sect and its leadership structure, the activities of the group over the years seems to provide a clue about its ideology. For example, Boko Haram's lack of respect for established authority, laws, rules and institutions suggest that there is a link between the group and the Maitasine religious sect of the early 1980s. Boko Haram group operates on the basis of Quranic verse which states that: "Anyone who is not governed by what Allah has revealed is among the transgressors". Thus, the group emphasis that Islamic ally it is forbidden (Haram) for Muslims to participate in any political or social exercise which bears any form of relationship with western civilization or ideas. Consequently, Nigerian state according to the group is un-Islamic and presided by non-believers irrespective of whether the head of government is a Muslim or not.

Although members of Boko Haram group are not clearly identifiable, according Nigerian State Security Service estimate the group has over 540,000 members spread across the neighboring countries of Chad, Niger, and Cameroun who takes advantage of the porous manned borders in the Northern region to cross over at any time ( Sahara Reporters New York, 2012). In addition, Boko Haram group is highly populated by youths below the age of 40 years. As a member of Salafist sect Boko Haram leader Mohammed Yusuf was influenced by the radical teachings of fourteenth century scholar Ibn Taymiyyah who was well known for Islamic fundamentalism in the Middle East. Although, there appears to be no evidence linking Boko Haram with either Al-Qaeda or the Taliban, its loose structure is modeled after that of the Afghanistan Taliban. In addition, its extreme resentment of the western education and democracy which is its main ideology is fashioned after the Taliban. At a point the group was synonymous with the Taliban as it renamed its first established territory in Kanama village Afghanistan before it was demolished by the security forces.

#### 4. Literature Review

The history of insurgency groups like the current Boko Harm is as old as that of humanity. Thus, for long human society has been confronted with problem of threats emanating from domestic insurgent groups whose major language of sending messages of disagreement is violence. According to Paul et al. (2011) since the end of Second World War in 1949, insurgency has been the most frequent form of global conflict resulting in loss of lives and property in addition to creating a sense of fear and psychological trauma to the people. Thus, all insurgent groups beginning with the early ones like the Hukbalahap of the Philippines, the Spanish Eustakadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), Sendero Luminoso ('Shining Path') of Peru, Hezbollah of Lebanon, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam of Sri Lanka, the Kurdish nationalism of the Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan, the Palastinian Hamas, the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA). Front de- liberation du Quebec (FLQ) of Canada, the Movimieto de Liberation Nacional - Tupamaros (MLN-T) of Uruguay, etc. to the contemporary Al-Qaeda inspired groups such as Boko Haram, Taliban, An- Sarudeens, etc. share the same characteristics. Furthermore, all insurgent groups are related to terrorist groups, (Crouch 2010).

As a result of their shared relationship with terrorist groups, some conflict scholars have been prompted to label insurgents as terrorists over the years. However, Stozier (2007), a US army department publication on tactics in counterterrorism (2009), and Crouch (2010) explains that even though terrorism and insurgency share some characteristics, they are not the same. One of the most common characteristics shared by terrorist and insurgent groups according to US Publication supra is the use of force or guerilla tactics in achieving their objectives. On the other hand, the major distinction among them is in the aspect of scope and magnitude of violence. For instance, while the terrorist group rarely realizes political change own its own, insurgents always aimed at effecting change in the existing political status quo through arms or violence. Thus, while reviewing the activities of the famous Mao Tse-tung insurgent group on guerilla war, Hammes (2006) concluded that despite the passage of time, significant part of his basic observations on insurgency are still valid. For example, insurgency is a form of political and not a military struggle. This is because insurgency is not amenable to a purely military solution without recourse to some level of brutality which is not acceptable to the western world.

Irrespective of the shared characteristics between insurgency and terrorist groups, Hoffman (1998), and Crenshaw (1995) are of the opinions that, the two are not the same. For them, the phrase terrorist is a pejorative term which is usually used against one's enemies and opponents or those who one does not agree with and therefore prefer not to

take notice. Similarly, Jenkins (1980) states that the application of the term conveys message of moral judgment instead of conveying an idea towards understanding the personality. In addition, Weinberg, Pedahzur, and Hirsch-Hoefler (2004), Robertson and III Ellis (2007), explains that the term terrorist is now an essentially contested concept whose meaning has become a subject of continuous dispute without resolution. In the same vein, Gupta (2008), explained that the term terrorism which was coined during the French revolution of 1789 has continued to be a source of confusion, contradiction, and controversy. Meaning a different thing to different people or as the cliché goes, one man's terrorist is another man's hero. Thus, Robertson and III Ellis (2007) asserts that, although majority of scholars are in complete agreement that terrorism is the most prominent global security challenge in the 21st century, few of them have come to agree on a universal definition of the term or what exactly is meant by terrorism.

Furthermore, Robertson and III Ellis supra explained that virtually people who are labeled as terrorist usually do not agree that they are terrorists instead they choose to be addressed as freedom fighters, guerillas, or mujahiddeens. Explaining the difficulties associated with definition of the term terrorism, Schmid and Jongman (1988) states that there was no single uniformity among the 109 definitions made by government institutions, academicians, and think tanks they reviewed. However, Gupta (2008) is of the position that despite the shortcomings of each definition, going through the 109 lists of definitions reveals that words such as violence, civilian, non-state actors and political appears to be consistent. For example, the US State Department defines terrorism as "politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub-national group or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience (Ruby, 2002, p. 10). Thus, they concluded that there is nothing to be defined precisely as terrorism instead "it is a label of convenience that we attribute to the activities of which we do not approve" (Gupta, 2008, p. 10). Therefore, terrorism in a wider perspective according to Gupta supra is "politically motivated violent attacks by non-state actors" (2008, p. 10).

On the other hand, in his work; *Insurgency and Terrorism* O'Neil (1990) states that:

Insurgency is a struggle between non-ruling group and the ruling authorities in which the non-ruling group consciously uses political resources (e.g., organizational expertise, propaganda, and demonstrations) and violence to destroy, reformulate, or sustain the basis of one or more aspects of politics, 1990, p. 13).

Although there are different types of insurgency, Gompert and Gordon (2008) contends that they can be understood by looking at their goal, tactics, size, region, duration, international significance as well as the type of regime which they seek to change. Thus, philosophically while classical insurgent groups were concerned with how to expel invaders away from their defined territory with the ultimate aim of taking over the reign of political power, on the other hand contemporary insurgencies are aimed at replacing the existing social order (Kilcullen, 2006). In addition, unlike their predecessors, contemporary insurgent groups are constantly characterized by dynamism leading to changes in their structures and methods of operations (Metz, 2007).

Mackinlay (2002) and US government in publication (2012) provided a categorization of insurgent groups on the basis of their support roots and main objectives as follows:

- (i) Revolutionary insurgencies: These groups of insurgents seek to replace the existing political order with an entirely different system by promising quick socio-economic transformation;
- (ii) Reformist insurgencies: These types of insurgents do not aspire to change the existing political order but are interested in compelling the government to alter its policies or undertake political and socio-economic reforms;
- (iii) Separatist insurgencies: These categories of insurgents are interested in obtaining political independence for a specific region. In some cases, the region in question spans existing national boundaries;
- (iv) Resistance insurgencies: These are insurgents who seek to compel an occupying power to withdraw from a given territory; and
- (v) Commercialist insurgencies: These groups of insurgents are interested in material gains as such they seek political power in order to have access to economic resources (US Government Publication, 2012).

However, irrespective of their categorization, Gompert and Gordon (2008) assert that, traditionally all insurgent groups are formed with the aim of replacing an existing social order with their own version of political and socio-economic ideologies. Thus, they often resort to undermining the authority and legitimacy of the existing government. Therefore, considering the fact that Boko Haram insurgent group is aimed at changing the existing political order in Nigeria with its strict Islamic law and the nature of its activities, it can be classified under the category of revolutionary Insurgencies as described by Mackinlay (2002) and US government publication (2012) above. Against the above background, this paper therefore seeks to examine the evolution of the group, nature of its operations and the corresponding effects on the Nigerian nation.

## 5. Evolution of Boko Haram

Publicly, Boko Haram insurgent group came to lime light in 2002 following its confrontation with the Nigerian security agents as a result of disagreement between the group and people of Kanama and Gwoza villages in Yobe and Borno states of North Eastern region. However, the emergence of the group can be traced to the Muslim brotherhood movement in northern Nigeria during the 1980s. The Muslim brotherhood movement also known as Tashayyu (Shiism) under the leadership of Sheik Ibrahim Elzakzaky attracted many Muslim youths as a result of its emotional and radical preaching against the Nigeria government among them was Muhammad Yusuf. After few years, the group became disunited and broke into factions with some members remaining loyal to Sheik Elzakzaky while others joined groups such as the Salafiyyah, Jama'at ut-Tajideed ul-Islami (Murtada, 2013).

Following the breakup of the brotherhood group in the early 1990s, Lawan Abubakar established Ahlil us-Sunnah wal jama'ah hijra or Shabaab group (Muslim Youth Organization) in Maiduguri capital city of Borno state in 1995. Under the leadership of Abubakar, the group was not known to be associated with violence. However, when Muhammad Yusuf took over as the leader of the group following Abubakar departure to Saudi Arabia for further studies, Yusuf aligned the group with Ahl us-Sunnah group (Jama'at ul Izalatul Bida'a wa Iqamatus Sunnah) translated as (People who are committed to the removal of Innovation and Establishment of the deeds of prophet) under the leadership of Sheik Ismail Idris (Taiwo & Olugbode, 2009; Adisa, 2012; Bello, 2013). Like the brotherhood group, Jama'at ul Izalatul Bida'a wa Iqamatus Sunnah also broke up into groups as a result of leadership disputes over three masajids in Yobe and Borno which were used as administrative offices of the group. This development further led Muhammad Yusuf and his followers to pitch their allegiance to one of the masajids and subsequently form his own group under the name of Jama'at Ahl us -Sunnah Lid-Dawah Wal-Jihad (people who are committed to propagation of the teachings of prophet and jihad) in 2002 with Alhaji Muhammadu Ndimi Mosque in Maiduguri capital city of Borno state serving as centre of their preaching (Murtada, 2013; Meehan & Speier, 2011).

Not contented with their continuous practicing of their religious doctrine at the Ndimi's mosque in Maiduguri, some of the radical members of the group headed by Mohammed Ali decided that it was time for them to embark on Hijra by moving from Maiduguri to Kanama Village in Yobe state and establish a separate community based on Islamic injunctions within the Nigerian and Niger border. Their reason is that the Nigerian societies under the current secular government are not in accordance with Islamic tenets. Hence, it has become imperative for them to leave the city following the tradition of the prophet who departed Makah to Medina in response to the hostilities confronting the Muslims during the early stage of the Islamic religion (Anyadike, 2013). The group through its factional leader Mohammed Ali, called on other Nigerian Muslims to rise against the secular government and demand for an Islamic system of governance in accordance with Sharia or true Islamic law (Walker, 2012).

However, in 2003 while in Kanama village, the split group was caught in a dispute over fishing rights in the village community pond which led to armed conflict with policemen who came to settle the dispute. In the ensuing confrontation, the group members over ran the police and disarmed them. As a result of this development, the government responded by dispatching army to the community leading to a siege in the group's mosque with brutal force resulting in the death of many members of the group including its leader Mohammed Ali. The surviving members of the group later returned to Maiduguri and teamed up with their old members under the leadership of Muhammad Yusuf at the Ndimi mosque. It was therefore through this particular incidence that the group and its activities were exposed to the public earning them a nickname of Nigerian Taliban.

Few years later, the united group led by Muhammad Yusuf began the process of building its permanent mosque named Taimiyyah Masjid on a land donated by Yusuf's father in-law Baba Fugu Mohammed. Apart from Yusuf's father in-law who donated a land for the group's mosque, it also enjoyed support and patronage from wealthy Muslim and members of the political elites. For instance, between the periods of 2000-2003, the group was reported to have supported the governorship candidature of Senator Ali Modu Sheriff on the basis that the then state government under the leadership of Mala Kachalla was not in support of full implementation of Islamic Shariah in the state. With the support of the group, Sheriff won the governorship election. This period marked the beginning of the group's growth and spread among the Muslims especially youths within the north eastern states of Borno, Yobe, Bauchi, Gombe and other states in the north such as Niger and Kano, and Kaduna (Reinert & Garcon, 2014; Pham, 2012; Walker, 2012).

With Sheriff as the governor of the state in which the group's leadership located, Boko Haram began to get bolder in its defiance and challenge of the Nigerian state. The group according to Walker (2012) constituted itself into a "state within a state", by establishing administrative and institutional structures such as cabinet, police, and large farm. With this, it was able to provide some social and economic relief to war driven refugees from neighboring

Chad Republic and many unemployed Nigerian youths thereby attracting more followers. Mohammed (2014) summarized the evolution of Boko Haram insurgent group in Nigeria from a non-violent to a violent group into three periods. The first period which marked the beginning of the group's transformation is known as the Kanama Hijra (departure from Maiduguri to Kanama Village) in 2003-2005, in which the radical sect of the group led by Mohammed Ali declared war on the Nigerian state and was brutally repelled by the Nigerian army with more casualties on the group. The second period began after the Kanama Village confrontation and their subsequent retreat back to Maiduguri and ended in 2009 following the death of its leader Mohammed Yusuf in the hands of the Nigeria police after he was captured and handed over to them by the army.

It was within this period that the group consolidated its strength through extensive dawah (preaching), debates with other opposing Ulama (clerics) on the issue of western education, western civilization, secularism, and corruption within the state. It also engaged in extensive recruitment of new members, indoctrination, intensive proselytizing and radicalization of its members. The third period began immediately after the extra judiciary killing of their leader in 2009 by the police. The group retreated from the scene for a while to re-organize before re-surfacing in 2010 under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau to avenge for the loss of its leader and other members. Onuoha (2014) explained that during the period of their retreat, Boko Haram regrouped, mobilized, recruited and radicalized its members by preaching the message of martyrdom through the video pictures of the July, 2009 confrontation with the Nigerian security agents.

## 6. Operational Strategy of Boko Haram

When Boko insurgents first declared war on the Nigeria state in 2002 at the Kanama village by engaging in direct confrontation with the Nigeria army, it suffered some serious casualties as many of its members including the factional leader Mohammed Ali were killed. A similar attempt by the group under the leadership of Mohammed Yusuf in 2009 also resulted in heavy loss of the group's members including its leader Mohammed Yusuf in the hands of the Nigerian security agents. However, when the group retreated and resurfaced in 2010, its mission statement was to avenge for the loss of their leader Mohammed Yusuf and other members in 2009.

According to Onuoha (2014) when the group resurfaced in 2010, it had planned and re-strategized on how to carry out its mission. Firstly, the group accepted to use the hard line posture of its new leader Abubakar Shekau and secondly, it redefined its tactics of conducting the war by introducing new flexible violent dimension to its traditional hit-and-run strategy. Thus, at first, they started by attacking and killing security agents in their duty posts and homes while at the same time destroying security installations such as police stations, army barracks, immigration, state security service offices, etc. While, the direct armed confrontation with security agents remained their major terror campaign tactics, other tactics employed by the group include drive-by-shooting, targeted assassination, suicide bombing, use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and kidnapping. However, the use of any these tactics is determined by factors such as the prevailing situation, nature of the potential target, and the desired objective.

The modus operandi of the above mentioned tactics employed by Boko Haram insurgents to carry out their attacks are as follows:

(1) Direct Armed Confrontation - Although this has been group's major campaign tactics since 2009, it also combines some aspects of modified version of the group's traditional hit-and-run tactics. Initially, this tactics involved the deployment of selected members of the group between 10-60 people to confront security agents in direct armed battles. But under the modified system, the group sends large numbers of its men to conduct surprise attacks on selected security outfits such as police stations, army barracks, prisons or civilian populated places such as shopping malls, mosques, and churches. The reason is that, such places are usually crowded by people who can easily overpower the group's operatives in a direct confrontation (Onuoha, 2014; Murtada, 2013).

(2) Drive-by-Shooting - This method involves the use of motorbikes by the group's operatives to hit their target (s) and easily escape apprehension by the security agents. Onuoha (2014) explained that this method is favored by the group because it provide the group's operatives with the flexibility of hitting their target at close proximity and find their way without much difficulties in congested areas especially in urban centers. It is closely related to target assassination tactics. Through this method, prominent politicians, businessmen, and people identified as threat to the group's interest have been killed. Among them are the former Deputy Inspector General of police Saleh Abubakar Ningi on 6 June 2012, and Sheik Albani including his wife and two children on 1st February 2014 (The Punch Newspapers 7 June 2012, Daily Times Newspapers 2 February 2014).

(3) Targeted Assassination - This tactic is used by the group to kill people who have been identified and labeled as its enemy. The method involves trailing of the target by the group's operatives to a convenient environment or ambushing them so that the killing will be done with less difficulty. In most cases, the operatives of the group use

motorbikes when they are trailing their target. The use of motorbikes provide the operatives advantages of killing their victims at close range and at the same time maneuver their ways with ease to avoid arrest. Victims of this tactic have mostly been those who are openly opposed to the group's ideology and activities such as politicians, clerics, and other community leaders. Some of the victims associated with this pattern of attack by the group includes late Imam Ibrahim Ahmed Abdullahi on 12 March 2010, Borno state ANPP governorship candidate Engineer Modu Fannami Gugbio in company of six other people including governor Sheriff's younger brother on 28 January 2011, Kano cleric Alh Muhammadu on 9 February 2012, Borno state Justice commissioner Zanna Malam Gana in Bama town on 17 September 2012, family of four in Kano on 16 September 2012 etc. (Idris, 2011; PM News of 9 February 2012, 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> September 2012).

(4) Use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) - The group adopted this method after the 2009 confrontation. The tactic involves use of improvised explosives devices such as drums, gallons, jerry cans, and used soft drink cans filled with petrol and other inflammable chemicals like trinitrotoluene and ammonia fertilizers. Any of these devices is subsequently planted in bags, dust bins, or un-use empty containers within the premises of the selected target such as car parks, bus stops, lecture halls, places of worships, and other public places. Among the prominent attacks conducted by the group using this method are the coordinated Kano bombings on 20 January 2012, This Day Newspapers Abuja building on 26 April 2012, Bayero University Kano Christian chapel on 29 April 2012, Abuja bus station on 14 April 2014, and Jos market bombing on 20 May 2014 (Nkechi, 2013; Blanchard, 2014; Vanguard Newspapers 21/5/2014, and BBC News 21/1/2012).

(5) Suicide Bombing - This method also involves the use of improvised explosive devices by the group. However, the difference is that, the improvised explosive devices are fitted in the boot of a car and driven by the operative (s) to strike at the target. In this case the driver (s) is also killed by the explosion when the car hits the target or the explosive is detonated by the suicide bomber to avoid detection or apprehension by the security agents. The types of suicide bombings used by the group includes vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIED), motorbikes -borne improvised explosive devices (MBIED), body-borne improvised explosive devices (BBIED), and tricycle-borne improvised explosive devices (TBIED). Through this tactic, the group has undertaken several attacks in different parts of Nigeria. For instance, some of the most prominent suicide attacks carried out by the group between June, 2012 to May, 2014 includes: Abuja Police headquarters car par suicide bombing, UN building suicide bombing in Abuja on 26 August 2011, Madallah Saint Theresa Catholic Church in Niger state on 25 December, 2011, Kaduna army headquarters suicide bombing on 8 February 2012, Taraba state police commissioner convoy suicide bombing on 3 August, 2012, and Maiduguri suicide bombing on 14 January, 2014 (Joe, 2011; Bekoe, 2011; Mark, 2012; Onuoha, 2014).

(6) Kidnapping - This is one of the newly modification in the tactics of the Boko Haram sect. It involves the kidnapping of foreigners, women, school girls, and young able men by the group. While, it is clear that foreigners are kidnapped by the sect for ransom purposes, the group explains that they are kidnapping school girls in order to stop them from pursuing western education. And even though, the sect has not offered any reason as to why they are also kidnapping women, media reports seems to suggest that it is being done to satisfy the sexual needs of the group members. Whatever may be the reason of this tactic, it has generally been assumed that both the girls and the women are being subjected to sexual slavery by the sect. This assumption was recently confirmed by the sect's leader in a televised video message when he asserted that the over 250 Chibok school girls kidnapped by the group have become subjects of war bounties or slaves as such they can be treated in any way. On the hand, the kidnapping of the young men by the group is attributed to their desire to argument the strength of their lost operatives by forcing those who are kidnapped to join the sect (Muhammad, 2012; Ruth, 2014; BBC News 21 April 2014).

Through the combination of the above enumerated tactics, Boko Haram insurgent group have undertaken different types of terror attacks in Nigeria since 2009 which have in turn impacted negatively for the overall wellbeing of the citizens and the country at large.

## **7. Effects of Boko Haram Insurgency**

Beginning from 2003 when Boko Haram insurgent group launched its campaign of terror on Nigeria, there have been corresponding political and socio-economic effects ranging from loss of human lives, destruction of properties, damaging of the country's image, to general insecurity. Recently, Nigeria's President Good luck Jonathan was quoted to have summarized the effect of Boko Haram insurgency as being worse than the country's 1960s civil war. According to President "Boko Haram insurgency is worse than civil war. During the civil war, the battle line was drawn and the enemies known; while in a terror war, the enemies are from within and are faceless" (Daily Trust Newspaper, June 26th 2014). Similarly, Oladesu (2013) observed that:

Since the end of the civil war no calamity of enormous proportion has befallen the fledgling nation state more than

the harrow unleashed by the dreadful sec - Boko Haram. Many lives have been lost property worth billions of naira have been destroyed. Nobody is insulated from the attack. Government officials and buildings, traditional rulers, police and military formations and church worshippers are targets. On daily basis, there is panic. The fear of the invincible agitators has become the beginning of wisdom. (The Nation Newspaper, 2013, p. 4).

Although the exact effects cannot be cumulatively quantified in figures, it is however estimated to be high as the group continues to unleash more terror attacks in different parts of the country. Nwozor (2013) and Onuoha (2014) explained that, apart from the loss of human lives and properties through the use of explosive devices, suicide bombing and assassination tactics by Boko Haram insurgents, there is general atmosphere of insecurity in the polity. This has resulted in creating some negative effects in the country and psychological trauma among the citizens. Aro (2013) categorized the effects of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria along security, political, economic, social dimensions.

### *7.1 Security Challenges*

Generally, the primary aim of all insurgent groups is to create fear and chaos leading to feelings of insecurity in the minds of citizens. Thus, in terms of security, the effect of Boko Haram insurgency has continued to be a source of threat to not only lives and property but to the corporate existence of the country. Many Nigerians especially within the Northern regions are now living in a state of apprehension from Boko Haram attacks which has become a daily routine. The situation is so bad that virtually no day goes by without a report of people being killed here or there.

For example, between the periods of July 2009 to January 2012, the group has undertaken over 160 attacks resulting in over 1000 deaths (Nwozor, 2013). The prevalence of these attacks has created a serious security problem as many people are no longer free or able to go about their daily activities due to fear of being attacked by the insurgents. The implication for this scenario is that people's fundamental right of free movement is being restricted and violated by the violent activities of the insurgents and the government's corresponding security measures aimed at controlling the problem. Furthermore, some politicians and criminals are capitalizing on the security challenges posed by the insurgents to settle political scores and engage in other criminal activities using the name of Boko Haram.

### *7.2 Political Effects*

Politically, activities of Boko Haram insurgents have succeeded in creating more misunderstanding between the political elites of Nigeria's geo-political zones particularly between the North and South. Thus, politicians from the two major geographical divides of South and North are accusing each other of either creating Boko Haram insurgents or being behind them for political reasons. For instance, on the one side Northern political elites are accusing the federal government of President Jonathan a Southerner for using the insurgent group to create insecurity, decrease the population of the region particularly Muslims, and destroy their economy so as to reduce their bargaining powers against 2015 presidential elections.

Similarly, on the other hand, the government of President Jonathan is pointing accusing fingers on the Northern political elites for orchestrating the insurgent group as a mean of preventing his government from fulfilling its campaign promises. The government believes that the whole idea of Boko Haram insurgency is a calculated plan by some Northern politicians to stop him from contesting the 2015 presidential election. Therefore, on the whole, the activities of Boko Haram insurgents are having a serious effect on the ability of the government to deliver on her objectives. Like the politicians and the government, many observers are also of the opinion that the Boko Haram insurgency is a deliberate hand work of some politicians aimed at 2015 presidential elections.

### *7.3 Economic Effects*

Economically, activities of the insurgency have almost crippled daily economic activities in many parts of the Northern states. Both the government and individuals have been affected especially in places like Kano, Maiduguri, Damaturu where many business outfits have closed their shops due to incessant attacks from the insurgents. For example, since the security situation in the country took an ugly dimension, many commercial banks have been attacked and robbed of various sums of money. This has made the banks to resort to reducing their daily working hours and sometimes forced to remained closed in order to safe guard the lives of their staff and public funds in the affected states. In addition, public and private infrastructures such as mobile telecommunications masks, fueling stations, residential buildings, offices, shopping malls, markets, motor parks, and other economic goods estimated in trillions of naira or dollars have been destroyed. The cumulative effects of these unfortunate destructions have greatly impacted on the country's national economy. As many economic sectors of the country are having difficulties attracting foreign investments because potential investors are scared of the prevailing security situation.



#### 7.4 Social Effects

In addition, to the economic and other effects, the activities of Boko Haram insurgents have worsened the existing animosity in the relations among the already polarized population along ethnic and religious affiliations. Prior to the current indiscriminate violent attacks, the insurgents who started their violent campaign by attacking security institutions and their agents latter directed their attacks against the Christians. For example, the bombings of Madallah church in Suleja, Niger state near Nigeria's federal capital city of Abuja and luxurious commercial buses in predominant Igbo speaking population of Sabon Gari in Kano state has led to degeneration of relations between the adherents of the country's two dominant religions (Islam and Christianity). Furthermore, it has also generated criticisms from various people, organizations and attracted other negative responses from the country's non-Muslim populations. By extension, it has strained the diplomatic relations between Nigeria and other countries.

#### 8. Government Response towards Boko Haram

The transformation of Boko Haram from a peaceful group of Islamic sec under the name of Jama'atu Ahlis Sunnah Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad to a violent insurgent group has been attributed to the nature of responses made by the Nigerian government. In particular, the high harden all military approach of the Nigerian government through its security agencies is seen as the major reason why the issue of Boko Haram degenerated into its present condition. Many observers are of the opinions that, from the beginning, the government ought to have adopted a multi-faceted approach comprising political, social and economic dimensions as its major strategy towards the problem. For instance, although the Boko Haram conflict started over disagreement on the issue of Mosque management in Monguno in 2008 between the Izala sect and Jama'atu Ahlis Sunnah Lidda'awati Wal -Jihad leading the death of 67 members of the latter, its leader Mohammed Yusuf made a declaration to pursue the matter through legal means (Mohammed, 2014).

However, subsequent events indicate that the situation was mismanaged by the Nigeria's security agencies through various policies which were specifically aimed at the group. For example, the introduction of joint military operations tagged "operation Flush II" was the first government response to the problem. Unfortunately, the actions of the security agents operating under the task force were reduced to harassment of Boko Haram members during their trips on dawah or preaching activities. Attempt at enforcing the compulsory use of motorcycle crash helmets by riders who were mostly members of the group even though the policy was not strictly enforced in other parts of the country was another act aimed at the group.

Notwithstanding all these provocative measures, members of Operation Flush II security task force launched a direct onslaught by shooting at Boko Haram members who were on a funeral procession at Gwange cemetery at Maiduguri in 2009 killing 17 of the group's members. This particular incident is therefore regarded as the cause of violence between Boko Haram group and the security agents in Maiduguri (Yusuf, 2009). Anyadike (2013) observed that the Nigerian government response to the problem of Boko Haram insurgency is undesirable. She therefore asserted that:

Tactics employed by government security agencies against Boko Haram have been consistently brutal and counterproductive. From the attacks so far, the group will continue to attack softer targets in the northeast rather than international targets inside or outside Nigeria, which would further threaten the country's unity, (2013, p. 22).

Thus, the worsening security situation in the country is blamed on the extra-judicial killing of Boko Haram leader Mohammed Yusuf by the security agents. This incidence according to many observers is considered as the major factor that precipitated the sudden transformation of Boko Haram into a ferocious violent group against the Nigerian state to date.

#### 9. Conclusion

It is apparent that Boko Haram insurgent group from the beginning started as a peaceful Islamic religious sect within the Nigeria's Northeastern state of Borno. However, several factors including political, external forces and lack of comprehensive approach by the Nigerian government have contributed in one way or the other in worsening the situation. As a result of this unfortunate development, the group has now been transformed into one of the most feared and deadly terror groups in the world. Especially now that there are indications linking the group with other acclaimed international terror groups such as Algaeda, Al-Shabab etc.

Therefore, against this background, it is the opinion of the paper that considering the enormous damages and the continuous security risk posed by the group in Nigeria and the rest of the world, the government should address the key issues that gave birth to the emergence of the group in the first instance. For instance, addressing the problems of good governance, poverty, corruption, unemployment among the youths, armed robbery, and moral decadence

which has now become order of the day particularly within the Northern Muslims dominated population of the country will help in reducing the spread of the group. In addition, genuine reconciliatory effort should be vigorously pursued by the government through negotiation with identified leaders of the group. This is because global evidences indicate that one of the methods used by several governments to address problems of internal insurgencies has been that of stick and carrots. Incidentally, many prominent Nigerians including the former President Chief Olusegun Obasanjo have been advocated for the same approach. It is hoped that once these issues are properly addressed, they will go a long way in curtailing the growing Boko Haram phenomenon in Nigeria.

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