



Boko Haram: Nigeria’s Invincible Enemy

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Abstract

Boko Haram is identified as famous Nigeria’s insurgent group that emerged in the first decade of the 21st century. The group’s deadly attacks affect the general public including the civilians and the security forces. This causes distress especially in the northern part of the country. The aim of the write up is to elucidate the insurgent activities vis-à-vis security/insecurity of the nation. Using the content analysis of the available literature, it has been observed that the group gains momentum and strengthens its territorial dominance. And, this situation exposes the security system as weak and unreliable. Some of the factors associated with the whole scenario include among other things; law enforcement corruption, proliferation of unemployment/poverty within the teeming populace and poor/inadequate modern crime fighting tools for the security agencies. Unless and if the stakeholders and Nigerian communities join hands in fighting the enemy, it will continue to be invincible. This as security experts believe will cause nothing but a total collapse of the national system.

Keywords: Boko Haram, civilian populace, invincible enemy, Nigerian government, security/insecurity.

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“Until recently, the greatest course of anxiety in terms of personal security is violent crime. Today, bombing of targets in occupied public buildings or in the open areas where people congregate has become the greatest anxiety of personal security for almost all Nigerians and non-Nigerians living in Nigeria”(Obasanjo, 2012).

“It is my belief that Nigeria's security challenges both in content and context are purely internal and remedies could therefore be found through domestic efforts. In other words, the reference point should be on how to improve on the major basic areas of grievances ranging from the provision of basic essential needs of the people, improved infrastructures and good governance in general,”(Muhammad, 2013).

“Bad governance has been responsible for the security challenges bedevilling the country. So many things are still going wrong because the leaders in the country have refused to allow things to work properly. The security challenges facing the country wouldn't have degenerated into the present situation if those in power did what were expected of them” (Abubakar, 2013).

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INTRODUCTION

Boko Haram as the name implies is a combination of two words from *Hausa* and *Arabic* languages. It signifies that western education that came to Nigeria through colonial domination is forbidden. According to the sect's ideology, the nation shall be Islamized as the current system is contaminated. To achieve this goal, revolution must be on the move. Therefore, the group embark on insurgent activities as the only alternative to make its ambition realistic. This in a more stylish form accelerates the strength of the sect in an ever unexpected fashion. Consequently, the advent of these insurgent activities had caused and is still causing a great loss to the economy and social setting of the Nigerian polity (Achumba, Ighomereho, & Akpor-Robaro, 2013). Some researches carried out have identified unemployment among the teeming youth, illiteracy and poverty as responsible factors for insurgents' movements (Azahalu, Akwara, John, Morufu & Joseph 2013). Others, as scholars argue include; law enforcement corruption and inadequacies vis-à-vis police personnel and policing strategies (Idris, 2013; Smith, 2007). Gofwen (2004) argued that, violence such as ethno religious affect the nation building process. Recent studies indicate that criminal gangs' members are largely the youth born out of unemployment/poverty disasters (Akande & Okuwa, 2009).

Affirming the argument, members of the insurgent group are found within the tender youth ages. This gives the insurgents more confidence and power spirit in the context of their struggle. Along this line, the group gains momentum to superseding government's strength (Eme & Ibietan, 2012). More evidently, the year 2014 witnessed a territorial secession by *Boko Haram* sect in three northeast states. This is a failure to Nigeria's government and success to insurgency (www.hrw.org/news/2014/07/15/nigeria; www.un.org/en). The paper looks at these in the context of *Boko Haram* emergence, activities and effects. This is done in the nexus of national security. The three quotations above from three eminent Nigerians tell a lot about the current precarious condition in the country.

OBJECTIVE OF THE PAPER

The major objective of the article is to find out the reasons behind the emergence of *Boko Haram* and the effect of the group's activities on the Nigerian polity. It is aimed at finding out, the sect emergence, growth, strength, impact and territorial dominance.

METHODS

This paper is based purely on literature review. It is conceptual by type. Scholarly articles from different scholars and experts were used to generate academic discussions in understanding the subject. Analysis is being made to relate some responsible factors with the current insecurity situation brought by insurgent activities. The articles consulted consist of those written by scholars in Nigeria and those outside the country.

STRUCTURE OF DISCUSSIONS

The analysis is divided into sections: The emergence of *Boko Haram*, the sect activities and effects in Nigeria, government and the public welfare, security system versus *Boko Haram* in Nigeria, Terrorism in the global context. Lastly, conclusion is drawn on the basis of the discussion made.

THE EMERGENCE OF BOKO HARAM

Founded by Late Mohammed Yusuf in 2002, Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad alias *Boko Haram* sect emerged in northeast of Nigeria (Cook in Eme & Ibietan, 2012). As an Islamist movement, it strongly opposes man-made laws. The organisation seeks to abolish the secular system of government and establish Sharia Law in the country. Its name in the popular Nigeria's *Hausa* language literally translates as '*Western education is forbidden*'. The group first gained international recognition following its eruption in 2009. It propagates that not only interaction with the Western World life style is forbidden, but it is also against the Muslim establishment and the government of Nigeria (Bartolotta, 2011). Today,

the sect is responsible for thousands of killings in the country (Eme et al., 2012, p. 47). It is which Baiyewu (2012, p. 9) called something like “Bermuda Triangle,”

THE SECT ACTIVITIES AND EFFECTS IN NIGERIA

Since its outburst with security forces in 2009, *Boko Haram* has created widespread insecurity across northern Nigeria. The group increased tensions between various ethnic communities, interrupted development activities and frightened off investors. Its members have been responsible for nearly daily attacks in the northern states (Eme et al., 2012, p. 45). These combats claimed a lot of damages to the general polity. And, below is a summary of losses incurred from 2009-2012.

Table 1: Summary of the attacks by the sect and the losses incurred

Year	State(s) Affected	Number of Attacks	Casualties		
			Killed	Injured	Destructions
2009	Yobe	1	4	-	
2010	Plateau, Abuja	5	330	Many	-
2011	Borno, Kaduna, Yobe, Niger, Bauchi, Abuja, Zaria, Katsina, Plateau, Adamawa	23	373	101	Many vehicles
2012	Adamawa, Kano, Kaduna, Kogi	7	361	80	-
Total	12	36	1,068	181	Many

Source: Adapted from (Achumba, Ighomereho & Akpor-Robaro, 2013)

In the first three years (2009-2012) the statistics show that there were no attacks in the seven states of the north. These are, Kwara, Benue, Zamfara, Gombe, Taraba, Sokoto and Kebbi. Those affected were twelve, although the seven are being affected by the recent sectarian violence. However, recent statistics released by the human rights watch indicated that an estimate of two thousand and fifty three (2053) people were killed by *Boko Haram* in over ninety five (95) times attacks in more than seventy (70) towns/villages in the first six months of 2014. Similarly, United Nations reported more than six hundred and fifty thousand (650,000) inhabitants were displaced within the same period. And, two hundred and thirty four (234) secondary school female students were abducted by the same insurgent group (www.un.org/en).

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In economic terms, the effects are a systemic distortion of existing economic patterns and structure in the Northern region. In another report by the Human Rights Watch (HRW), the region lost more than 935 of its human capital between 2009 and 2012. In terms of finance and investment, though direct and indirect loses are unquantifiable, a World Investment Report (WIR) of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), estimated that the domestic economy lost a whopping ₦ 1.33 trillion Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), owing to the activities of insurgents going by the name ‘*Boko Haram*’. And, these conditions create fears making investment chances for investors narrow (Suleimanin Eme & Ibietan, 2012). Analysts argued that the Nigerian transportation/aviation industry that makes ₦ 3 billion every day is being reduced to half due to *Boko Haram* insurgency. UNCTAD report indicates that, FDI flows to Nigeria fell to \$6.1 billion (₦ 933.3 billion) in 2010, a decline of about 29 per cent from the \$8.65 billion (₦1.33 trillion) realized in 2009 fiscal year. Also, statistics obtained from the 2010 annual report by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) showed that the total foreign capital inflow into the Nigerian economy in 2010 was \$5.99 billion. The record showed that FDI represented about 78.1 per cent drop from \$3.31 billion in 2009 (Okereocha in Eme & Ibietan, 2012).

GOVERNMENT AND THE PUBLIC WELFARE

It is apparent that there is a poor public welfare in the country. In general, a lot of under privileges suffer from the vicious cycle of poverty consequent upon the inherent factors of the collapse of the rule of law, unemployment, and corruption. By way of evaluation, the study of Obadan and Odusola (2001) indicated that, unemployment in Nigeria became more acute since 1980s, and this trend has been on increase ever since. Okafor (2011) added that it carries some negative consequences encouraging criminal behaviour.

Few among these effects include the emergence of street youths and urban urchins (“area boys”). However, the 2010 Nigeria’s population estimate was 160,000,000. During this era, an average of only 50,200,000 (31%) were employed. The other 109,800,000 (69%) were either unemployed or lack job satisfaction (NBS, 2010). Fifteen percent (15%) of the nation’s work force was unemployed in 2008 while the figure rose to 20% in 2011 (CBN, 2013). Additionally, 40% to 60% of unemployed Nigerians were aged between 15-25 years (Akande & Okuwa, 2009). Incidentally, the paraded members of criminal groups fall within these stipulated ages observed (Azahalu, Akwara, John, Morufu, & Joseph, 2013).

Although underdevelopment is a common phenomenon in Nigeria, the northern case is the most precarious. A UN based study captured by Eme and Ibieta (2012) shows that poverty in the most northern states is nearly twice that of the rest of the country. The health indicators reflect this. Educational standards are just as bad. Literacy in the far north is 35 percent as opposed to 77 percent in the rest of the country. Seventy-seven percent of women in the far north have no formal education, compared to only 17 percent in the rest of the country. Generally, the factors narrated in the context of national security which government fail to manage are possible reasons behind *Boko Haram* insurgency.

SECURITY SYSTEM VERSUS BOKO HARAM IN NIGERIA

A burden that largely lies in police hands could be better understood by looking at the meaning of police and policing in the context of modernity. Alemika (2009, p. 483) defined policing traditionally ‘as the diverse mechanisms or measures (consciously) employed by the community to enforce its values, norms, and rules through protective devices (target hardening), surveillance, detection, and apprehension of suspects’. Similarly, police are law enforcing agents whose main function is to provide security and maintain law and order in the societies, states and nations (Ahmad et al., 2013, p. 72). It was argued that ‘police are agencies of the state employed to maintain the social order (Chukwuma, 2005, p. 2).

Law enforcement agencies within the Nigerian context as argued by Alemika and Chukwuma (2003) include other Para military such as NDLEA, Customs and concise, FRSC, Civil Defence, Immigration, SSS etc. The common obligation of these agencies is to protect lives, properties vis-à-vis security maintenance. At this point, both police and the military are a connecting bond in the war against *Boko Haram* to maintain the internal security in the country. Meanwhile, quality must be put in place for the agency to be effective and serve the purpose for which it has been established (Nilson & Oliver, 2006; Alemika & Chukwuma, 2003). Williams and Williams (2007) in another context argued that availability of modern devices to law enforcement police agencies play a vital role in the management of nation’s security. Some of these devices include; patrol cars and laptop computers (Mobile Computer) which all make homeland security effective.

Ironically, the situation in the country shows that *Boko Haram* gains momentum because the weapons used by the sect members are more sophisticated than those of the Nigerian security forces. Consequently, the middle of 2014 witnessed an invasion of more than ten towns in the northeast states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe by the group (www.hrw.org/news/2014/07/15/nigeria). Alemika and Chukwuma (2003) observed that, the problems of inhuman condition of police cells, poor working gadgets (that include; communication devices and transportation vehicles) and un-hygienic working environment are few among many things that disturb the security sector in Nigeria. Other obstacles are; low commitment to duty from the officers, indiscipline, police criminal connivance, poor police-public relations, poor knowledge of law, lack of integrity and a total disregard of human rights (Le, 2008). Okunola and Ojo (2012) added that, problems of resources management inadequacies is another impediment. The sector is full of sentiments, selfishness and corruption which scholars such as Smith (2007) opined to be more common phenomenon in Nigeria. Ladapo (2012) maintained that the outstanding obstacle is inadequate funding.

Aremu, Pakes and Johnstone (2011) further explained factors responsible for promoting corruption among law enforcement agencies. They include; the security system itself, poor remuneration, poverty, recruitment procedures and organisational climate. Incidentally, Holmes (2012) relates corruption to lack

of commitment of some government's policies. Memoli and Pellagata (2014) see the effect as being systemic in the current global era. Studies continue to show that corruption in the Nigerian security sector has diminished its capacity to maintain effective law and order (Okiro, 2007). Idris (2013) concluded that there exists a perfect correlation between corruption and insecurity in Nigeria. The institutional controls become weak and ineffective to deter evil. This testifies the Merton's (1968) anomie theoretical postulation where relative sense of normlessness exists in society. Individuals are stereotyped into conformists, innovatists, ritualists, retreatists and rebellions. In this regard, corruption engulfs security sector in Nigeria as the security managers accept the cultural goal (+) and reject the institutional means (-). Empirical evidences from transparency international (TI) and Mo Ibrahim foundation confirmed corruption/insecurity nexus in the country (Idris, 2013).

Table 2: Transparency and Corruption Ranking of Nigeria (2001-2010).

Year	CPI	Transparency (%)	No. Of Countries Covered	Ranking	Corruption (%)	Ranking
2001	1.0	10	91	90	90	2
2002	1.6	16	102	101	84	2
2003	1.4	14	133	132	86	2
2004	1.6	16	145	144	84	2
2005	1.9	19	158	152	81	6
2006	2.2	22	163	142	78	21
2007	2.2	22	179	147	78	32
2008	2.7	27	180	121	73	59
2009	2.5	25	180	130	75	50
2010	2.4	24	178	134	76	44

Source: Adapted from Idris (2013).

From the table above, Nigeria recorded poor results in terms of transparency considering the corresponding CPI grade in the ten year period. The country achieved the highest transparency score of 27 only in 2008. The transparency % score is seen as bi-modal having common scores of 16 and 22 with each appearing twice in the years of 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2007 respectively. Similarly, the average % of corruption across ten year period is 80.5% which is very high and retrogresses instead. However, the average corruption ranking is 22. It still sounds discouraging taking into cognisance the highest number of countries covered upon which the analysis is made. That is, a maximum of 180 countries each in the years 2008 and 2009. Generally, Nigeria's corruption is worse.

Table 3: Security and Insecurity Ranking of Nigeria (2001-2010).

Year	Score on Security (%)	Security Ranking	Score on Insecurity (%)	Insecurity Ranking
2001	43	43	57	10
2002	42	43	58	10
2003	42	43	58	10
2004	41	45	59	8
2005	43	43	57	10
2006	42	44	58	9
2007	44	43	56	10
2008	47	36	53	17
2009	44	-	56	-
2010	46	36	54	17

Source: Adapted from Idris (2013).

It could be inferred that, the highest score of security in Nigeria was recorded in 2008 with 47%. Unfortunately, it dropped to 44% and 46% in the years of 2009 and 2010. The distribution of percentage score is uni-modal, recording a common value of 42% in the years of 2002, 2003, and 2006. The highest security ranking was 45, only in the year 2004. In terms of insecurity, the country achieved the least 8th

position only in 2004. The ranking across ten year period in this regard is also uni-modal as the nation had a common position of tenth in the years 2001, 2002, 2003, 2005 and 2007. This could be augmented by the country's current global security position of 148th as against the 146th in 2012 (GPI, 2013). This is far worse than before. And, the least said the better. Although the country is more secured ahead of Iraq (159th), Syria (160th), Somalia (161st) and Afghanistan (162nd).

TERRORISM IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

It became globally and popularly known violent crime after the saga of September 11th 2001. Experts believed that terrorism generally involves the illegal use of force against innocent people to achieve a political objective. According to US State Department, the term terrorism means premeditated, politically motivated violence, perpetrated against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience. The term international terrorism means terrorism involving citizens or the territory of more than one country.

A terrorist group is any group practicing, or that has significant subgroups that practice international terrorism (US code, 1999). Usually, it involves a type of political crime that emphasizes violence as a mechanism to promote change. Terrorists systematically murder and destroy or threaten such violence to terrorize individuals, groups, communities or governments into conceding to the terrorists' political demands (Wilkinson, 1977, p. 49). This act is distinguished from conventional warfare, because it requires secrecy and clandestine operations to exert social control over large populations (Gibbs, 1989). Looking at these explanations, it can be understood that, Boko Haram insurgency, although a localised terrorism has impacted greatly on the national economy of Nigeria. However, the security dilemma brought by the group gains momentum within the African continent. The effect of Boko Haram goes beyond Nigeria, but other countries such as Niger, Cameroun, Chad and Mali.

CONCLUSION

The major objective of the paper is to elucidate the strength of *Boko Haram* sect and analyse the insurgent activities to see how it affects the socio-economic wellbeing of the country. However, its emergence and subsequent activities cause severe havoc to the peace and progress of the Nigerian state. The genesis of this security dilemma shall be traced to the overwhelming factors such as poor governance, unemployment and poverty hunting the northern part of the country. Other relevant issues are law enforcement corruption and illiteracy among the teeming populace. Also, inadequacies in police agency vis-à-vis personnel and tools that could not cater with the rising security challenges stand to be another factor. Available evidences from different scholarly views indicated that there is a correlation between these factors and the *Boko Haram* emergence. Similarly, it can be inferred that a lot of damages have been in course since 2002 (when the group's campaign started) to date. Although the major strides came up in July 2009 during which the founder (Late Yusuf) was killed, *Boko Haram* insurgency still seems impeccable. Nonetheless, the Nigerian security system have been indolent in facing these challenges. A saga that had today gained popularity not only among Nigerians, but the international community. Meanwhile, the speed at which the group accelerates and overtakes Nigeria's territories, entails nothing but an element of secession. The first of its kind after the end of civil war in 1970. Also, with the kind of weapons and war strategies the group adopts, it will be very difficult if not impossible for the authorities to overcome the insurgency. This is because *Boko Haram* can evidently be portrayed as indestructible, invisible and invincible enemy. However, to succeed in managing the insecurity bedeviling the nation or a total eradication of the sect, the following measures need to be put in place.

1. Public welfare shall be improved in the rural areas of the country especially in the north.
1. Unemployment must be tackled with an upper hand.
2. Poverty eradication strategies shall be introduced to touch the life of the common man.
3. Corruption especially among the law enforcement agencies must stop.
4. Rule of law must be restored.
5. Trainings, additional personnel and weapons shall be supplied to Law Enforcement Agencies.

6. Transparency and accountability must be the engines of government at local, state and national levels.

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