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Boko Haram

Anatomy of a Crisis



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Boko Haram

Anatomy of a Crisis

EDITED BY
IOANNIS MANTZIKOS

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Introduction

IOANNIS MANTZIKOS
E-INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

During recent years the phenomenon of Boko Haram has dominated policy debates among academics and policymakers interested in Nigerian and African politics. Yet, many issues about the sect remain unclear and contested. The exact reasons triggering radicalization, the methods of recruitment, the profiles of its members, its affiliation with other regional terrorist powerhouses such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, Ansar Dine in Mali or Al-Shabaab in Somalia, are all within the scope of discussion. Academics working on state theories and post-colonial studies understand the group as a symptom of Nigeria's failing state. Sociologists and several social anthropologists attribute it to poverty. Southern Nigerian politicians and lobbyists blame Northerners' domination of the state. Counter-terrorism and security experts focus on the international linkages of the group and the threat that poses to the stability of Western Africa. By examining these debates, this collection is essential reading for those interested in Nigeria, and the broader issues of state building, terrorism, humanitarian emergencies, conflict resolution and intrastate violence.

One of the few Nigerian analysts who has written extensively on Boko Haram, Jidefor Adibe, contributes the first article in the collection. He states that Boko Haram and similar groups represent a retreat from the Nigeria project, with the State increasingly unable to fulfill its part of the social contract. Secondly, Freedom Onuoha explores Boko Haram attacks on the telecommunication infrastructure in Nigeria. His piece draws from the Taliban case in Afghanistan to demonstrate that emerging jihadist groups tend to copy tactics or strategies adopted by other terrorist groups.

In the third article Hussein Solomon argues that the simplistic and narrow counter-terrorism lens ignores the historical context in which religious identities are being shaped and re-shaped in Nigeria. That view also appears to gloss over the fact that regional, ethnic and religious identities often reinforce each other. And, that the socio-economic context in Nigeria has exacerbated the economic imbalance between relatively rich South and relatively poor North. Boko Haram does not merely dominate security and counter terrorism discussions among Africanists. It has also attracted attention for its alleged involvement in the "new" cyber-warfare discourse. Denise Baken sheds light on this by using Boko Haram as an example and suggests an alternate approach that leverages the chaotic political situation and burgeoning supply of talented cyber

personnel within Nigeria and the Sahel.

While the international community has been concerned about how to tackle the group, two articles examine the responses of the Nigerian state from differing perspectives. Osuma Oarhe examines the dilemma of the defense and intelligence Establishments in responding effectively to Boko Haram's security challenge in the absence of mutual confidence amongst them. Olakunle Onapajo highlights the role of ethnicity as a factor in Nigeria's inability to crack down on the group.

Abeeb Salaam analyses another parameter of the group: the psychological profile of Muhammad Yusuf - the founder and former leader of Boko Haram. Creating such a profile furthers the understanding of the individual attributes and/or behavioural characteristics that may contribute to radicalisation. Caitlin Poling continues the coverage by offering important insights into the policy debate within the United States Congress. From first hand experience in Congress, think tanks and policy making cycles in Washington, she examines the attempt to designate Boko Haram as a Foreign Terrorist Organization, and the way ahead for U.S. policy makers.

Finally, Dr Joseph Siegle closes the collection with an analysis with a view outward - examining the international connections of Boko Haram and potential links between the group and volatility in Mali.

What do we really know about Boko Haram?

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Since 2009 Boko Haram has become a metaphor for insecurity in Nigeria after the government launched a clampdown on the group, which resulted in some 800 deaths, mostly of the sect members.¹ Mohamed Yusuf, the group's leader, was killed in that attack while in police custody. In what was apparently retaliation for the extra judicial killing of its leader, the group carried out its first terrorist attack in Borno in January 2010, at Dala Alenderi Ward in Maiduguri metropolis, Borno State, which resulted in the deaths of four people. Since then the sect has intensified its terrorist activities. On June 16, 2011, for instance, it bombed the Police Force headquarters in Abuja, Nigeria's capital, in what was thought to be the first case of using a suicide bomber to carry out a terrorist activity in Nigeria. On August 26, 2011, another suicide bomber blew up the UN headquarters in Abuja, leaving at least 21 people dead and dozens more injured. On January 20, 2012 it attacked Kano, leaving more than 185 people dead. In fact, a day hardly passes these days without news of attacks by the sect. The government has also intensified its military action against the sect, capturing some of its leaders. But what do we really know about Boko Haram?

Though Boko Haram has dominated the security discourse in Nigeria since early 2010, nearly everything about the sect still remains contested – from the meaning of its name to the reasons for its emergence and radicalisation, and whether it is now affiliated to foreign terrorist groups such as Al Shabaab in Somalia, and Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). It is also contestable whether the group is actually responsible for all the numerous terrorist atrocities attributed to it.

Name

It is believed that members of Boko Haram actually prefer to be known by their Arabic name – Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad – meaning 'People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad'. In the town of Maiduguri, North-eastern Nigeria, where the group was believed to have been formed, the residents call them 'Boko Haram' – a combination of the Hausa word 'boko' meaning 'Western education' and the Arabic word 'Haram' which figuratively means 'sin' and literally means 'forbidden'. Boko Haram has therefore been commonly translated as 'Western education is sacrilege' or 'Western education is a sin'. Some, such as Ioannis Mantzikos, have, however, suggested that such a translation will be more a transliteration of the two words and that what the

users of the expression meant to convey was that 'Western Civilisation is forbidden' rather than that 'Western education' is forbidden' or a sacrilege because what the group is opposed to really is Western civilization – which includes of course Western education, but is not limited to it.²

Apart from calling the sect 'Boko Haram' locals in Maiduguri also call the group by other names such as 'Taliban' even though there is no evidence it has links with the Talibans of Afghanistan. In fact there are some who contend that the group has no specific name for itself – just many names attributed to it by local people.

Origin

Just as there are contestations over the name of the sect or the meaning of Boko Haram, there are also controversies over the origin of the group. The popular belief is that it was founded around 2001 or 2002 by Mohammed Yusuf. This belief has however been challenged by Isioma Madike who contends that the sect was actually started in 1995 as Sahaba and was initially led by one Lawan Abubakar who later left for further studies at the University of Medina in Saudi Arabia.³ Yusuf was said to have taken over the leadership of the sect after the departure of Abubakar and immediately embarked on an intensive and hugely successful membership recruitment such that he had over 500,000 members before his demise. Madike also alleged that Yusuf taxed each member one Naira per day, meaning that he realized about N500,000 (roughly £2000 pound sterling) per day.

Whatever may be the truth about the origin of the sect, what is not in dispute is that Yusuf was responsible for raising its profile. He was in fact said to have established a religious complex that included a mosque and a school where many poor families from Nigeria and the neighbouring countries enrolled their children.

The Radicalisation of the group

There is a general consensus that until 2009 Boko Haram conducted its operations more or less peacefully and that its radicalisation followed a government clampdown in 2009 in which some 800 people died.⁴ Mohammed Yusuf was killed in that attack while in police custody. In what was apparently retaliation for the extra judicial killing of its leader, the group carried out its first terrorist attack in Borno in January 2010 at Dala Alenderi Ward in Maiduguri

metropolis, which resulted in the deaths of four people. In January 2012, Abubakar Shekau, a former deputy to Yusuf, who was thought to have died in the government clampdown of 2009, appeared in a video posted on Youtube and assumed leadership of the group.

Opinions differ on the reasons for the government clampdown in 2009. One version is that the government got wind that the group was arming itself and then struck. Another version traced was to a motorcycle incident. According to this view, some members of the sect were shot dead on 11 June 2009 following a row with the police over the members' refusal to wear crash helmets in Maiduguri. Yusuf was said to have vowed to avenge the death of his members, which he allegedly did three days after the incident and which led to some of the sect members being arrested and paraded by the Borno State police command. According to this version, the apparently coordinated attacks on the police in Bauchi and other states in the North from mid-2009 following this incident were reprisal attacks for the police arrest and humiliation of their members.

Another version on why Boko Haram became radicalised was that some politicians in Bornu State who were apparently using the sect members as thugs became frightened when they suddenly became too powerful for them and therefore had to invite the government to deal with them.⁵ Former Bornu State Governor Ali Modu Sheriff has been linked to the sect in this narrative – which he has strongly denied. Ironically, in the 2011 Bornu South Senatorial District election, the sect was said to have supported Ali Ndume who had decamped from the ANPP to the PDP against Modu Sheriff. Senator Ndume who won the election has since been charged to court by the Nigerian government for being one of the sponsors of Boko Haram – a charge he strongly denies.

Explaining the Boko Haram Phenomenon

Just as there are contestations over the reasons for the radicalization of the group, there is also no unanimity on how the emergence of the sect could be explained. Several theses and theories have been proffered. For some, Boko Haram is a symptom that the Nigerian state has become either a failed, or failing, state. Others blame it on poverty and poor governance, while yet some locate its emergence in a frustration-aggression hypothesis. Here members of the sect are said to be generally frustrated with the situation of things in the country, especially with the position of Northerners and Northern

Muslims in the current configuration of political and economic power in Nigeria.⁶ In this view Boko Haram's terrorism is simply misplaced aggression.

For other analysts, Boko Haram is more a symptom of the crisis in Nigeria's nation-building.⁷ This crisis, it is argued, has triggered a massive de-Nigerianization process, with several individuals and groups retreating into primordial identities where they seek to construct meaning as they feel let down by the Nigerian state. In this view, those withdrawing from the Nigeria project instinctively see the state as an enemy and attack it by using whatever means are at their disposal – those entrusted with husbanding the country's resources steal it blind, law enforcement officers turn the other way if you offer them a little inducement, organised labour, including university lecturers, go on prolonged strikes on a whim, students resort to cultism and examination malpractices, and workers drag their feet, refuse to put in their best and engage in moonlighting.⁸ Essentially, everyone seems to have one form of grouse or the other against the Nigerian state and its institutions.

External Linkages

Just as there is no agreement on how to explain the emergence of the Boko Haram phenomenon, opinions also differ on whether the sect now has linkages with Al Qaeda and other international terrorist groups. While the government thinks so or will want the world to believe that it does, there is as yet no empirical proof of such alliance – although the increasing sophistication of the sect's methods is persuading many to conclude that the sect must be enjoying such a linkage.

It can be argued that the Nigerian government has a vested interest in presenting Boko Haram as having such an international linkage. One, it will make it easier to attract international sympathy and technical assistance from European countries and the USA, which since September 11 has been especially paranoid about any group rumoured to be linked to Al Qaeda. Two, linking Boko Haram to Al-Qaeda will be face-saving, making it easier for the government to rationalise its inability to contain the group and its activities – after all, if the USA and European countries have not been able to defeat Al Qaeda, why will anyone see it as a sign of weakness that an African government has not been able to defeat an organisation it sponsors? Three, by linking Boko Haram to Al Qaeda, the government may

hope to use innuendos and name-dropping of US involvement to frighten the sect and help to pressure it to the negotiating table.

Assuming that Boko Haram does not already have such an external linkage, it will however also be in the sect's interest that it is being portrayed as an organisation working in cahoots with the dreaded Al Qaeda. Such a portraiture will not only increase the awe with which it is held but may also even help it to attract the attention and sympathy of Al Qaeda and similar terrorist organisations – if it does not already have such an alliance with them.

The paradox here is that if the USA becomes openly involved in fighting Boko Haram, it could galvanise the support of anti-USA forces globally, and even domestically behind the sect. It could also fire off a wave of nationalism that may end up winning the sect sympathisers even from Nigerians stoutly opposed to the sect's activities. It may in fact be argued that the sect's attack on the UN office in Nigeria was not only aimed at raising its profile, but also to use any internationalisation of the fight against it for recruitment purposes. A similar thing could be said about its attacks on churches, which some believe is usually aimed at triggering a sectarian war which will be a veritable source of membership recruitment for the sect.

Conclusion

What seems obvious from this article is that there are several, often conflicting narratives, on virtually every aspect of Boko Haram. This, in my opinion, is evidence that much of what is known about the sect remains in the realm of speculation and highlights an urgent need for a rigorous empirical research to fill the void.

Endnotes

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Understanding Boko Haram's Attacks on Telecommunication Infrastructure

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The ramping up of violent attacks on diverse civilian and military targets in Nigeria by Boko Haram (henceforth BH) since July 2009, when it launched a short-lived anti-government revolt, has effectively made the group a subject of interest to states, security agencies, journalists and scholars. The revolt ended when its charismatic leader, Mohammed Yusuf, was finally captured and later brutally murdered by the police. Following the death of Yusuf and the mass killings and arrest of many of their members, the sect retreated and re-strategised in two ways. First was the adoption of Yusuf's hard-line deputy, Abubakar Shekau, alias 'Darul Tawheed', as its new spiritual leader. Second was the redefinition of its tactics, which involved perfecting its traditional hit-and-run tactics and adding new flexible violent tactics, such as the placement of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), targeted assassination, drive-by shooting and suicide bombings.¹

Its attacks had traditionally focused on the security establishment and personnel, community and religious leaders, politicians, centres of worship, and other civilian targets. Over time, it has added markets, public schools, hospitals, tertiary institutions, media houses, and more recently, critical infrastructure such as telecommunication facilities to the list of its ruthless attacks. While the scale and impact of its attacks have earned BH intense local and international media coverage, neither the tactics employed nor its evolving targets suggests anything hitherto unknown to the history of jihadist and terrorist violence.

Focusing on its attacks on telecommunication infrastructure in Nigeria, this piece draws from the Taliban case in Afghanistan to demonstrate that emerging jihadist groups tend to copy tactics or strategies adopted by older terrorist groups in dealing with any problem or achieving their strategic objectives. Effort will be made to highlight the costs of such attacks, as well as proffer recommendations for the protection of such critical infrastructure. Before proceeding to addressing these issues, it is pertinent to begin with an understanding of the sect.

Understanding Boko Haram

Most media, writers and commentators date the origin of BH to 2002. However, security operatives in Nigeria trace its true historical root to 1995, when Abubakar Lawan established the Ahlulsunna wal'jama'ah hijra or Shabaab group (Muslim Youth Organisation) in Maduigiri,

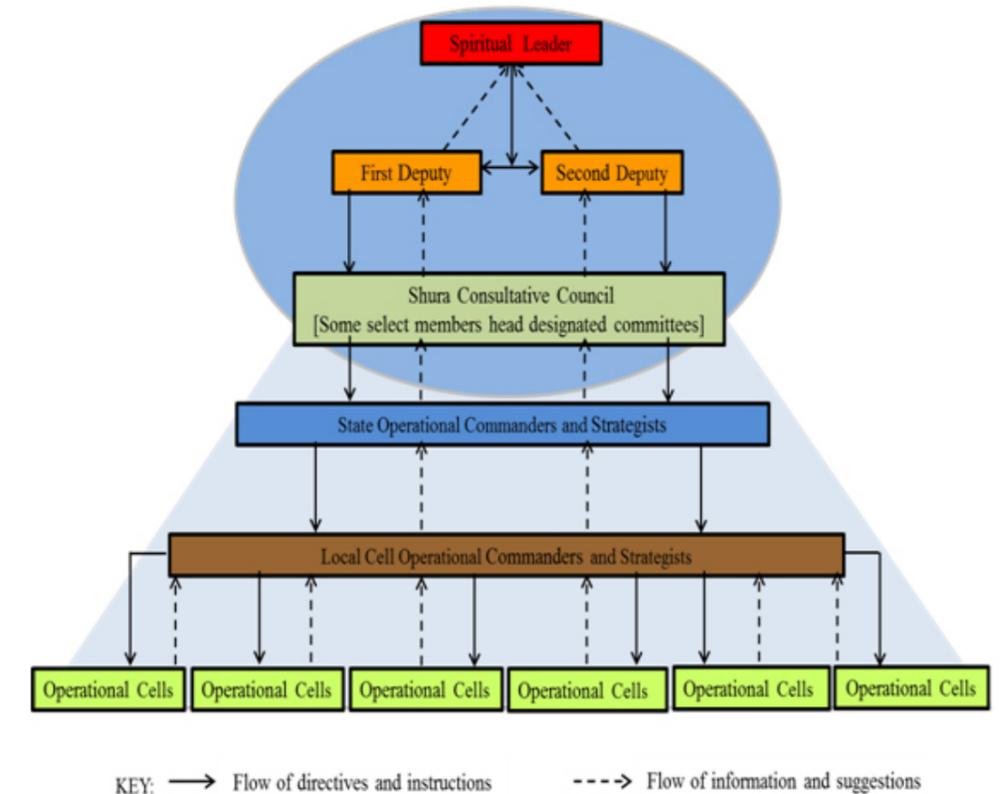
Borno State. It flourished as a non-violent movement until Mohammed Yusuf assumed leadership of the sect in 2002. Over time, the group has metamorphosed under various names like the Nigerian Taliban, Muhajirun, Yusufiyah sect, and BH. The sect, however, prefers to be addressed as the Jama'atu Ahlissunnah Lidda'awati wal Jihad, meaning a 'People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad'.

BH considers western influence on Islamic society, particularly western education, as the basis of the religion's weakness. Its ideology is rooted in Salafi jihadism, and driven by Takfirism. Salafism, for instance, seeks to purge Islam of outside influences and strives for a return to the Islam practiced by the 'pious ancestors', that is, Muhammad and the early Islamic community. Salafist Jihadism is one specific interpretation of Salafism which extols the use of violence to bring about such radical change.² Adding to the Salafi Jihadi ideological strain is Takfirism. At the core of Takfirism is the Arabic word takfir—pronouncing an action or an individual un-Islamic.³ Takfirism classifies all non-practising Muslims as kafirs (infidels) and calls upon its adherents to abandon existing Muslim societies, settle in isolated communities and fight all Muslim infidels.⁴ BH adherents are motivated by the conviction that the Nigerian state is a cesspit of social vices, thus 'the best thing for a devout Muslim to do was to 'migrate' from the morally bankrupt society to a secluded place and establish an ideal Islamic society devoid of political corruption and moral deprivation'.⁵ Non-members were therefore considered as kuffar (disbelievers; those who deny the truth) or fasiqun (wrong-doers), making such individual or group a legitimate target of attack by the sect. Its ideological mission is to overthrow the secular Nigerian state and impose its own interpretation of Islamic Sharia law in the country.

BH was led by Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf until his death just after the July 2009 uprising. Before his death, Muhammad Yusuf was the Commander in Chief (Amir ul-Aam) or leader of the sect, and had two deputies (Na'ib Amir ul-Aam I & II). Each state where they existed had its own Amir (commander/leader), and each local government area where they operated also had an Amir. They also organised themselves according to various roles, such as soldiers and police, among others.⁶ In the aftermath of Yusuf's death, one of his deputies, Abubakar Shekau, became the new spiritual leader of the sect. Abubakar Shekau inherited, if not modified, the

organisational structure of the sect (figure 1). Under Shekau, the sect maintains a loose command-and-control structure, which allows it to operate autonomously. It now operates in some sort of cells and units that are interlinked, but generally, they take directives from one commander.⁷ Abubakar Shekau heads the Shura Consultative Council that has authorised the increasingly sophisticated attacks by various cells of the sect since the July 2009 revolt.

Figure1: Hypothetical Organisational Structure of the Boko Haram under Abubakar Shekau.⁸



At its early stage, the sect was entrenched in Borno, Yobe, Katsina, and Bauchi states. Over time it has recruited more followers and established operating cells in almost all northern states, probably nursing the intention to spread further South. The majority of its foot soldiers are drawn from disaffected youths, unemployed graduates and former Almajiris. Wealthy Nigerians are known to provide financial and other forms of support to the sect.

BH finances its activities through several means: payment of membership dues; donations from politicians and government officials; financial support from other terrorist groups – Al Qaida; and

organised crime, especially bank robbery. Analysts have posited that the sect may turn to other criminal activities such as kidnapping, trafficking in SALWs and narcotics, and offering protection rackets for criminal networks to raise funds.⁹

Boko Haram: A History of Violence

The sect resorting to violence in pursuit of its objective dates back to 24 December 2003 when it attacked police stations and public buildings in the towns of Geiam and Kanamma in Yobe State. It was then known in the media as the 'Nigerian Taliban'. In 2004 it established a base called 'Afghanistan' in Kanamma village in northern Yobe State. On 21 September 2004 members attacked Bama and Gworza police stations in Borno State, killing several policemen and stealing arms and ammunition. It maintained intermittent hit-and-run attacks on security posts in some parts of Borno and Yobe States until July 2009, when it staged a major anti-government revolt, in revenge for the killing of its members by state security forces. The fighting lasted from 26 to 30 July 2009, across five northern states: Bauchi, Borno, Kano, Katsina, and Yobe. The revolt ended when its leader, Mohammed Yusuf, was finally captured by the military and handed over to police. Yusuf was extrajudicially murdered in police custody, although police officials claimed that he was killed while trying to escape. Several other arrested members were also summarily executed by the police.

Since the July 2009 revolt, the sect has evolved into a more dynamic and decentralised organisation, capable of changing tactics as well as expanding or reordering target selection. A conservative estimate of over 3,000 people have been killed by the sect since 2009, aside from damage to private and public property. Critical infrastructure such as telecommunication facilities forms part of BH's expanding targets of attacks.

Cell Wars: Terror Attacks on Telecom Facilities

Recent confrontations between state security forces and insurgents or terrorists in countries such as Afghanistan, India, and Iraq have shown how critical telecommunication infrastructure can easily become both a target of, and battle ground, for the actors in conflict. Analysts have dubbed this reality 'cell wars'. The experience of Afghanistan offers a perfect precedent for underscoring the Nigerian experience vis-à-vis BH attack on telecom facilities.

Mobile phones were introduced in Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban in 2001. It has since then become the principal means of communication and one of Afghanistan's fastest-growing and most profitable sectors. Even the Taliban that once shunned using mobile phones later found itself increasingly relying on this instrument of modernity to communicate and coordinate their operations, spread propaganda, and to activate IEDs.

Attack on telecom facilities in Afghanistan dates back to 2007 when the Taliban began attacking transmission masts (resulting in limited damage) to extort money from telecom companies.¹⁰ From 2008, the purpose of attack became different (strategic) and the frequency and extent of damage more severe. In the first of such attack, the Taliban on 1 February 2008 destroyed a tower along the main highway in the Zhari district of Kandahar province, which belongs to Areeba, one of Afghanistan's four mobile phone companies.

On 25 February 2008, a Taliban spokesman, Zabiullah Mujaheed, threatened that militants will blow up further towers across Afghanistan if the companies did not switch off their signals at night for 10 hours. According to him, the Taliban have 'decided to give a three-day deadline to all mobile phone companies to stop their signals from 5 p.m. to 3 a.m. in order to stop the enemies from getting intelligence through mobile phones'.¹¹ It was believed that the US and NATO Special Forces' night-time decapitation and capture operations against the Taliban relied substantially on intelligence gleaned from tipoffs and phone intercepts. To be sure, the US forces had killed more than 50 mid- and top-level Taliban leaders, by conducting specific military raids at night.

Telecom operators initially did not heed the order. In retribution, the Taliban started mounting crippling attacks on the network of transmission masts. Attacks soared, with an estimated 30 towers being destroyed or damaged in one 20-day period. Towers owned by companies such as the Afghan Wireless Communication Company, Areeba, and Roshan, were hit by militants in Helmand, Herat, Jawzjan, Kandahar, Logar, and Zabul provinces. Under pressure from these attacks, the major carriers began turning off their signals.

Despite US pressure and a decree by President Hamid Karzai ordering phone companies to defy insurgent demands, telecom operators resisted complying completely, fearing even more attacks

on their facilities, offices and staff. The targeting of cell towers by the Taliban was both strategic and symbolic. The strategic objective of the Taliban was to deny US, NATO and Afghan forces of information or intelligence that would aid the capturing or killing of its members. In symbolic terms, it signifies the capacity of insurgents to hit targets listed as 'enemies'. Tactics like the cellphone offensive have allowed the Taliban to project their presence in far more insidious and sophisticated ways. By forcing a night-time communications blackout, the Taliban sends a daily reminder to hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of Afghans that they still hold substantial sway over their future.¹²

Faced with a similar situation in Nigeria, BH pulled a similar stunt. By way of brief background, the Global System of Mobile communication (GSM) was introduced in Nigeria in August 2001. Before then, only about 500,000 telephone lines were provided by the national telecoms monopoly (NITEL) in a country of about 120 million people.¹³ Given the liberalisation of the telecoms sector and coupled with a favourable regulatory regime, the telecom sector in Nigeria continues to witness significant growth in both investments and mobile subscriptions. While local and foreign direct investment in the sector stood at \$25bn in mid-2012, mobile subscriptions have surpassed over 150 million; 113.1 million of which were active at the end of December 2012.¹⁴ The sector has proven to be the live wire of the Nigerian economy, facilitating cross-industry linkages, efficiency and productivity across the economy and providing the platform for the fledging banking sector.

The proliferation of Base Transceiver Stations (BTS), also known as base stations, telecom masts or cell towers, is one of the visible features of the rapid growth of the sector. These base stations facilitate effective wireless communication between user apparatuses, for instance, mobile phones and networks. A breakdown of the 20,000 base stations across Nigeria shows that MTN owns 7,000; Globacom, 5000; Airtel, 4000; and Etisalat, 2,000. The Code-Division Multiple Access (CDMA) operators accounted for 2000 masts.¹⁵

The traditional threats to the integrity of telecom facilities such as base stations, generators, and fiber cables have been vandalism, with the intent of stealing valuable parts, accidental damage due to road construction and maintenance work, and natural disasters such

as flooding. However, targeted attacks on this critical infrastructure by members of BH is now a major threat to the operation of the sector.

In July 2011, President Goodluck Jonathan revealed his administration's plans under the purview of the National Security Adviser (NSA) to make telecommunications operators dedicate emergency toll-free lines to the public to fast-track its intelligence gathering on the sect.¹⁶ On 14 February 2012, a BH spokesman, Abul 'Qaqa', threatened that the group will attack GSM service providers and Nigeria Communication Commission (NCC) offices for their alleged role in the arrest of their members. As he puts it: 'we have realised that the mobile phone operators and the NCC have been assisting security agencies in tracking and arresting our members by bugging their lines and enabling the security agents to locate the position of our members'.¹⁷

The sect made good its threat on September 2012, when it launched a two-day coordinated attack on telecom masts belonging to several telecom operators across five cities in northern Nigeria: Bauchi, Gombe, Maiduguri, Kano, and Potiskum. A statement purportedly issued by the BH spokesman, Abul Qaqa, admitted responsibility for the bombing of telecommunication facilities, claiming that they launched 'the attacks on masts of mobile telecom operators as a result of the assistance they offer security agents'. BH has mounted several such attacks, mostly targeting base stations. Attacks on telecom facilities add a new dimension to the pre-existing security challenges, as entire base stations are destroyed with IEDs, suicide bombers and other incendiary devices.

Overall in 2012, some 530 base stations were damaged in Nigeria. While 380 were destroyed by floods that affected many communities in many states of the federation, 150 were damaged in northern Nigeria by BH.¹⁸ Like the Taliban in Afghanistan, the strategic objective of BH attacks on telecom infrastructure is to choke one of the supply lines of intelligence to Nigeria's intelligence and security system. However, when terrorists or insurgents successfully attack critical telecommunication infrastructure, it generates costs that could be assessed from different angles depending on the nature and criticality of such a facility to the economy and security. The BH attacks on base stations have generated at least three dimensions of 'costs', namely:

- **Casualty Cost:** Damage in the form of death, bodily injuries and trauma are obvious consequences of violent terrorist acts. In the BH case, both fixed assets and staff of such telecom providers are legitimate targets of attacks. Therefore, the death of any member of a family from such attacks leads to a deep fracturing of kinship structures. Some children have been left without parents, husbands without wives, and vice versa. Hence, for every person killed or injured, there are many more who must cope with the psychological, physical and economic effects that endure in its aftermath.
- **Service Cost:** Attacks on telecom infrastructure obviously leads to network outages and poor services delivery, which manifest in the form of increased dropped call rates, poor connections and lack of voice clarity. Apart from voice calls, data services are also impaired such that the use of modems to browse the internet will not be effective. This disruptive effect cascades through the entire national system (such as banking services) that rely on voice calls and data services provided by the telecom sector.
- **Financial Cost:** Another cost is that network operators will spend money initially earmarked for network expansion and optimising existing infrastructure on replacing the damaged facilities. Telecom operators in Nigeria have lost about N75bn (naira) to damage caused by BH and flooding in 2012. Telecoms infrastructure analysts have put the average cost of a base station in Nigeria at \$250,000 (N 39.47 million), and it will cost some N15.9 billion to replace the damaged base stations.

Conclusion

The foregoing analysis shows that terrorist groups follow a 'learning and responding curve' to deal with similar challengers or situations. The targeting of telecom infrastructure by BH in Nigeria followed the same strategic trajectory as the Taliban in Afghanistan. With several telecom facilities scattered in isolated places in Nigeria, BH can always attack and destroy them at ease. However, the position such facilities will occupy in the priority list of targets will definitely depend on the extent to which BH judges the telecom operators as undermining their security. Therefore, the persistent damage to telecom infrastructure as a result of terror attacks calls for a more robust mechanism to safeguard the integrity of this sector which is critical to the economy and security. To better protect critical

infrastructure more generally, and telecom facilities in particular, the Nigerian government in partnership with relevant stakeholders needs to adopt the following steps: a) carryout a Telecom Infrastructure Vulnerability and Risk Assessment (TIVRA) of the sector with a view to designating such facilities as critical infrastructure and key resources (CI/KR); b) develop a robust Telecom Infrastructure Protection Plan (TIPP), based on the findings from the TIVRA; c) activate coherent, preventive, responsive and offensive measures informed by the TIPP, for protecting these facilities; and d) integrate the entire effort into a broad national counter terrorism strategy.

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Boko Haram, Identity and the Limits of Counter-Terrorism

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Nigeria, Africa's Leviathan, has been in the throes of escalating violence since July 2009 when the shadowy Islamist sect, Boko Haram, began a campaign of terrorist violence. Invariably the counter-terrorist approach has been adopted by academics in understanding the Boko Haram phenomenon and by Nigeria's security establishment seeking to end the scourge of violence in northern Nigeria. However, the simplistic and narrow counter-terrorism lens ignores the historical context in which religious identities are being shaped and re-shaped in the country. That view also appears to gloss over the fact that regional, ethnic and religious identities often reinforce each other. A narrow counter-terrorism lens also ignores the socio-economic context in Nigeria which has exacerbated the economic imbalance between relatively rich Southern and relatively poor Northern Nigeria.

This paper seeks to shed light on one phenomenon – the interplay of religious, ethnic and regional identities – in the development of Boko Haram.

The Religious Identity

Often academics stress the religious identity of Boko Haram – its strong Wahhabist Islamist identity, for instance. Such a view could be supported by much historical evidence. Indeed, historical precedents to Boko Haram go all the way back to 1802 when Uthman dan Fodio, a religious teacher and ethnic Fulani herder, declared his jihad to purify Islam – in the process establishing the Sokoto caliphate which exists to this day. More recently the Maitatsine uprisings of 1980 in Kano, 1982 in Kaduna and Bulumkutu, 1984 in Yola and 1985 in Bauchi, represent an effort to impose a religious ideology on a secular Nigerian state in much the same way that Boko Haram is attempting to force Abuja to accept sharia law across all 36 states of the Nigerian polity. Between 1999 and 2008, 28 religious conflicts were reported – the most prominent being the recurrent violence between Muslims and Christians in Jos in 2001, 2002, 2004 and 2008.

Whilst the religious factor is important in explaining Boko Haram, and cannot be discounted, I would argue that such a view is overly simplistic. Religions, after all, do not exist in a historical vacuum. They are interconnected with issues like ethnicity, politics, economics, migration and violence. To understand the recurrent resurgence of religious violence in northern Nigeria, therefore, we

need to explore the context in which this Islamist fundamentalism thrives. As Hall has eloquently observed, 'Religious violence is embedded in moments of history and structures of culture'.

A Case of Reinforcing Identities and Fault lines

It would be wrong, however, to assume that religion is the only fault line confronting the Nigerian polity. Other demographic factors constitute fault lines or compound the situation. Consisting of 160 million people divided into 350 ethnic groups speaking 400 languages, Nigeria has since independence struggled to define a common Nigerian nationality. Africa's most populous country is further divided into 50 percent being Muslim, 40 percent being Christian and 10 percent adhering to indigenous faith traditions.

Given the ongoing ethnic, cultural and religious conflict in Africa's Leviathan one could well conclude that the nation-state project has foundered in Nigeria. This is certainly the conclusion of Watts who notes that, 'What, we have, in other words is not nation-building but perhaps its reverse; the "unimagining" (contra Benedict Anderson, that is) or deconstruction of a particular sense of national community'. Concurring with Watts, Said Adejumo has argued that, 'More than ever before, there has been an unprecedented denationalisation of the state, with sub-national identities challenging, and in many cases, unravelling the nation-state project'.

I really do not subscribe to the primordial view which espouses the notion of the inevitability of conflict between these ethnic identities. One could point to several examples of multi-ethnic polities in which harmonious co-existence has been possible. However, I agree with Adejumo that in situations where there is shrinking social resources, excruciating economic crises, a retreat of the welfare state and its consequences on contracting social services, and a market ideology of 'fend for yourself', sharp divisions are wrought in social relationships, in which the identity issue becomes a major weapon of economic and social competition. It is within this context that political elites exploit resurgent identities for both political and economic gain. For instance, there is evidence, that northern political elites exploited Boko Haram's founder Mohammed Yusuf in 1999 as a cynical response to the population's desire to curb spiralling crime levels by the introduction of shari'a law. Having used shari'a law and Yusuf's support as a vote-catching device, these politicians then discarded Yusuf. Feeling used, an embittered Yusuf went on to form

Boko Haram in 2002.

Ikelegbe posits that ethnic, communal, religious, regional and sectarian identities are on the rise in Nigeria since they provide a safe haven for increasing numbers of people fleeing an incompetent, insensitive and, at times, predatory state. The antipathy with which Nigerians view the state and the concomitant trust with which they view religious leaders is seen in a Pew Global Attitudes Project. Asked if religious leaders should play a role in politics, a staggering 91 percent in Nigeria agreed with the statement. This was the highest of all the countries surveyed.

Exclusionary Character of the Nigerian State

This antipathy towards the state is made worse by the exclusionary character of the Nigerian post-colonial Nigerian state which is designed to accentuate and not attenuate differences. For instance, local and state governments are clearly exclusionary in how they differentially confer rights on people living in respective jurisdictions. At local government level, for example, there is a marked distinction between 'natives' or 'indigenes' who share the same ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic characteristics and who are termed 'local citizens' and 'immigrants' or 'settlers' who are considered to be 'non-citizens' who share different ethnic, cultural, religious, or linguistic characteristics from the 'locals' irrespective of how long they have resided in a particular area and the fact that they are all Nigerian citizens. Indeed until three years ago, 'indigeneity' was a criterion for qualification to contest in local elections, and not residency – irrespective of whether you lived your entire life in that locality. The consequences of the exclusionary nature of the politics of the Nigerian state are clearly seen in narratives amongst ordinary Nigerians when explaining the violence. Religion, ethnic and regional identities all feature. Sadly, there is no articulation of a common Nigerian citizenship which effectively transcends these differences.

Although the media has portrayed the conflict as a Muslim vs Christian issue, there is another ethnic dimension in which the conflict is being waged as a case of reinforcing fault lines. Whilst the Islamist Boko Haram may be targeting Christians living in the north, the perception is that the Hausa-Fulani Boko Haram are targeting the Igbo ethnic group resulting in perceptions by the Igbo that this is 'systematic ethnic cleansing' and that the 'Igbos should just secede'. In response to a Boko Haram ultimatum that all Christians should

leave the north or face death, the Igbo group, Ogbunigwe Ndigbo, gave all northern Muslims living in the south two weeks to leave or face death. In Lokpanta, the Muslim Hausa community, which were living among the Igbo for decades, took the warning to heart and were soon leaving the area by the truckload. This perception is given added credence by Corinne Dufka, a senior West Africa researcher at Human Rights Watch. Following extensive research on the victims of Boko Haram violence, Dufka is of the opinion that, 'Boko Haram is targeting and killing people in northern Nigeria based on their religion and ethnicity' (my emphasis).

In a similar vein, whilst the recurrent violence in Jos has been portrayed as Muslim-Christian violence, it is fundamentally a land dispute between ethnic groups who happen to also belong to different faiths. Interestingly, residents of Jos are more aware of the complexity of the conflict than analysts. Commenting on the origins of the conflict Mohamed Yakuba, a Hausa-Fulani and Muslim resident of Jos, stated, 'It is the Berom who cause the problem, trying to get their land back'. Another Jos resident, Toma Davou, a Christian Berom, also speaking on the origins of the conflict argued, 'The Hausas want to push us out, and although it is about land occupation, they say it is religious so that they can get the sympathy of Saudi Arabia and Al Qaeda. Christians should arm to the teeth to meet this threat from them and Boko Haram'.

Despite the religious overtones of the conflict which Boko Haram has encouraged in Jos, the reality is that the dispute is primarily one over land among people who happen to be divided along lines of both ethnicity and religion. Vanda Felbab-Brown and James Forest also make the point that much of the conflict in northern Nigeria emanates from the migration by the ethnic Hausa Fulani into Yoruba lands. They go on to note that the '...fact that the Yoruba are predominantly Christians and the Hausa Fulani Muslims matters only secondarily. Rather, the Hausa-Fulani Boko Haram is infusing religion into a long-churning brew of grievances about wealth and power distribution...'.

Conclusion

For social scientists, the preceding urges us to be wary of labelling a conflict as religious merely on the basis of its religious overtones. To the contrary, the terrorist dimension of Boko Haram's operations in Jos underscores the argument that no amount of militaristic counter-

terrorism instruments will resolve the religious tensions generated without other efforts aimed at addressing the land issue.

Increasingly counter-terrorism experts are coming to understand that history and context matters. RAND's Project AIR FORCE, for instance, urges policy makers to adopt a long-term perspective seeking to eradicate the conditions which give rise to terrorism or extremist elements. RAND's Senior Policy Analyst, Angel Rabasa eloquently argues, 'This will occur only if hard security measures are linked with a broader array of policies designed to promote political, social and economic stability. Otherwise, there is little chance that counter-terrorism efforts will work'.

General Carter Ham, Head of the United States' African Command or AFRICOM, seems to have understood this, by employing not only combat soldiers and intelligence officers, but also aid specialists. Unless more of this thinking takes place and unless policy makers view movements like Boko Haram as the complex phenomenon that they are, there is no hope of defeating the recurrent insurgencies in northern Nigeria.

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Nigeria's Vulnerability to Cyber Warfare

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In August 2012, Boko Haram reportedly hacked the personnel records databases of Nigeria's secret service. The individual who successfully compromised the covert-personnel data system indicated the breach was executed in the name of Boko Haram and as a response to Nigeria's handling of interactions with the group.¹ The retaliatory attack revealed the names, addresses, bank information and family members of current and former personnel assigned to the country's spy agency. The attack would not have tremendous significance in and of itself. However, it represents a substantial shift in tactics for a group whose name connotes an anti-Western stance. Until recently Boko Haram attack strategy was far from technological. However, since its association with Al Qaeda, Boko Haram has demonstrated a vastly changed approach to executing its attacks. Attacks are now more violent and reflect the markings of training by al Qaeda personnel. Given that cyber space has been part of the terrorists' warfare tool kit since 1998 when the Tamil Tigers executed a distributed denial of service attack,² and al Qaeda has used the Internet as a vital communication vehicle since 1996, Boko Haram's incorporation of cyber into its arsenal is almost inevitable. More importantly though, Boko Haram's access to an individual who can execute such a successful attack is indicative of the cyber arsenal workforce capability available to any group or nation that wants to employ it. Boko Haram's tactic advancement clearly demonstrates that Nigeria and its neighboring Sahel region neighbors are ripe for exploitation as a cyber warfare hub.

Cyber warfare is experiencing a boom. The success of activities like Ghostnet, Stuxnet, Byzantine Hades, and Titan Rain has shown that the demand for such products will not slow anytime soon. Nation-states have begun to incorporate cyber warfare against opponents' cyber space attacks into their national security strategy.³ However, the reality is that nations executing these attacks do not always want to be identified as the perpetrators. Case in point- after a student from the University of Electronic Science and Technology of China executed a vast nation-state intrusion called 'Ghostnet', several media accounts of the attack wondered if China was involved. China denied any knowledge of the attacks and the sensitive information retrievals from 103 invaded national security databases remained unclaimed. The Chinese continued their public stance of denying culpability when a report on corporate intrusions specifically named the Chinese Peoples Liberation Army's Unit 61398. According to the report investigators traced several intrusions into United States

(U.S.) corporate and government secure information technology systems to the PLA unit.

Just as China prefers a public stance of denial, so might other nations. Public response to Ghostnet and Stuxnet made it apparent nations would not always want it known that they were perpetrators of an attack. It was clear that for nation-states to continue to incorporate this new weapon, they had to accommodate the sensitive diplomatic nature of such attacks by finding an alternate approach. But we have to acknowledge that their appetites for these attacks will not diminish. If anything, they will grow. What could this mean? If we use Boko Haram as an example, we can suggest an alternate approach that leverages the chaotic political situation and burgeoning supply of talented cyber personnel within Nigeria and the Sahel. Executing attacks from this third-party cyber location, offers attack perpetrators and the cyber arms industry the ability to outsource, just as manufacturing does.⁴

If we use the impact of improvised explosive devices on Afghanistan and Iraq as an example, Nigeria and the Sahel can offer resources for 'nigging' attacks that target nation-states with 'improvised explosive device' level attacks. These attacks would cause damage that is cumulatively significant, but individually not.⁵ The costs could remain low, as the readily available workforce functions in a region with an average annual income of \$1180 (U.S. dollars). The nation-states employing this workforce will have a great cost-benefit ratio and the workforce itself will achieve success in their chosen field.⁶ While the Vice Chancellor of Osun State University is not pleased that the stated goal of computer science students was 'making money in cyber crime'⁷ the reality is perpetrators of cyber warfare can use the demographic of Nigeria and the Sahel to train recruits and execute attacks without impunity. The Sahel has an economic environment that is conducive to cyber crime activities, an exploitable sophisticated cyber highway, and an area where officials are more focused on political distractors than enforcing information communication technology regulations.

Impact of Cyber Technology

Africa is a changed region because of cyber technology (Figure 1). Areas that only had a few users a short 10-12 years ago are now experiencing extraordinary use growth that exceeds 26,000 percent. Areas such as the Sudan and Somalia experienced rates of change

of 21,564% and 62,935%, respectively.⁸ Algeria has a 26,050% growth over the same time period.

Country	Users 2000	Users 2012	Rate of Change
Algeria	20,000	5,230,000	26050.00%
Burkina Faso	10,000	518253	5082.53%
Cameroon	20,000	1,006,494	4932.47%
Chad	1,000	208,537	20753.70%
Egypt	450,000	29,809,724	6524.38%
Gambia	4,000	200057	4901.43%
Kenya	200,000	12,043,735	5921.87%
Libya	10,000	954,275	9442.75%
Mali	18,800	414,985	2107.37%
Mauritania	5,000	151163	2923.26%
Niger	5,000	212480	4149.60%
Nigeria	200,000	48,366,179	24083.09%
Senegal	40,000	2269681	5574.20%
Somalia	200	126,070	62935.00%
Sudan	30,000	6,499,275	21564.25%
Tunisia	100,000	4,196,564	4096.56%

Figure 1. Internet Users' Rate of Change for Selected African Countries* (Source: Internet World Stats, as of 30 June 2012, <http://internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm>)

Users are now aware of previously unknown opportunities because of the Internet- opportunities that offer those with an entrepreneurial spirit, an avenue out of poverty, hunger and unemployment. That avenue, cyber crime, has such a strong attraction as a career path that a 2008 survey of senior secondary students found 83% of the surveyed students agree or strongly agree that students use others' credit cards to buy merchandise, 73% strongly agree or agree that students deceive investors for money and 70% strongly agree or agree that students steal trade secrets or research documents about new products. There is also a 48.3% opinion that 'students help terrorist groups (Osama's group) to use Internet in furthering their agenda'.⁹ This acceptance of cyber crime carries over to University computer science students who have professed a desire to enter the cyber crime industry upon graduation.¹⁰ Then there are the Yahoo

boys. Young university educated men who have already entered the cyber crime industry and are now making more than their parents.¹¹ With a young 'up and coming' workforce ingrained in cyber crime, cyber warfare perpetrators have a potential mercenary cadre already equipped with a psychological propensity for the employment field. In addition to this workforce with its appropriate value system, cyber crime perpetrators can benefit from safe haven attributes of; 1) a nation-state with sufficient political distractors; 2) economic environment conducive to cyber crime activities; 3) modern fiber-optic information communication infrastructure, and; 4) exploitation potential of a sophisticated cyber highway.¹²

Nation-state with Sufficient Political Distractors

Nigeria and its Sahel neighbors have many cultural influences, particularly from a tribal perspective. In addition, there are many natural resources available for state use to contribute to the country's gross national product. But while this should be a positive, they are heavily affected by the corruption and direct disregard demonstrated by government leaders. As a result, unemployment is high, there is minimal foreign investment, and the black market runs the shadow economy with money laundering, bank fraud and identity theft running rampant. These factors contribute significantly to many of the nations in the region ranking high on the Failed State Index, from a total perspective and reflecting a high economic decline total.^{13, 14}

Country	Rank on 2012 Failed State Index	Failed State Index Total	Economic Decline Total
Burkina Faso	41	87.4	7.7
	26	93	6.5
Chad	4	108	8.3
Gambia	63	80.6	7.4
Mali	79	77.9	7.5
	38	87.6	7.6
Niger	18	96.9	8.6
Nigeria	14	101.1	7.5
Senegal	71	79.3	6.9

Figure 2. Failed State Index 2012 Ranking with Economic Decline Indicator (Source: Fund for Peace Failed State Index 2012)

Economic Environment Conducive to Cyber Crime Activities

The Sahel has become a haven for Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. Illegal activity functions in the region as if political borders do not exist. Organized crime and terrorist groups attack freely, conduct business and exploit the weak controls that are enforced only on a limited basis. These business activities include drug trafficking, counterfeiting, kidnapping, blackmail, document forgery, robbery, and immigrant smuggling.¹⁵ There are no real economic resources and the graft and corruption severely limit any enforcement that could occur. The economic decline/failed state status of the region as a whole is ripe for additional corrupt and/or illegal behavior. Students who already participate in cyber crime activities boast of the controls they have over law enforcement officials who could/should limit their activities.¹⁶ During interviews with the Yahoo boys, the young cyber criminals were confident of their hold over local officials. They spoke of bribes to ensure no interference from law enforcement personnel.¹⁷

Modern Fiber-Optic Information Communication Infrastructure

In the year 2000 only 4.5 million of Africa's one billion people were categorized as Internet users. That was a little more than .42%. However, as the continent, its resources, and potential 2050 workforce were combined to become opportunities for investors, it became apparent to these investors, and the African nations where this workforce lives, that tremendous improvements to the continent's information highway were imperative. Those improvements started with the Eastern Africa Submarine System (EASS) fiber-optic cable proposal in 2003.¹⁸ Other improvements were the 2009 fiber-optic submarine cable system Seacom, the 2010 Western Africa cable system, and the 2014 projected finish of the 'connectivity' project. The continent now boasts over 15% Internet users, with some individual states experiencing much higher usage.¹⁹ World Bank nations that recognized this need and invested in the highway's improvements include Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC). South Africa joined the effort when it became a part of BRIC in 2010. With these state of the art advancements, countries like Mozambique, Tanzania, Kenya, Somalia and the Sudan enjoy connectivity via mobile telephone technology to almost anywhere in the world. The continent is now seen as an attractive foreign investment destination pursued by more than the initial chance takers. Residents of almost any state can access mobile technology, changing the definition of 'remote Africa' and the number of marginalized populations. But these same potential economy-boosting continental links also serve

as the tool for cyber criminals to advance their entrepreneurial skills.

Cyber Warfare Attacks

The attacks executed by the perpetrators of Stuxnet, Ghostnet, and even Flame, were initially conceived and deployed incognito. Flame functioned for almost two years before discovery, and when found, the United States did not initially acknowledge its role. The negative international response to Flame and Ghostnet was enough for nation-states to realize that today's military strategy-international diplomacy equilibrium demands a more discreet employment of this new weapon. One that does not jeopardize current diplomatic relations or upset conventional weapons partners. The nations left vulnerable after each of these attacks also recognized that they would be at a disadvantage if they did not begin to include strategic cyber offensive and defensive operations into their national defense blueprint. While the Flame attack was directly attributed to the United States, the Ghostnet attack was never conclusively identified as China directed. The young researcher identified as Ghostnet's perpetrator was a well-known hacker who never implicated any other person or entity in the effort.

What if a nation-state employed the tactic and this type of workforce on a future attack? That is: if a nation-state employed a third-party entity that is willing to NOT implicate the nation-state, could that nation-state successfully execute such a cyber warfare attack and not have to face the wrath of its international partners? Rafal Rohozinski, one of the investigators of Ghostnet and cofounder of Information Warfare Monitor, has suggested that such outsourcing could become a wave of the future. Rohozinski cites the factors that could contribute to the trend. Nations need an alternative that offers anonymity preserves current diplomatic balances and employs resources that are outside the nation's jurisdiction. According to a 2011 Harvard School of Public Health assessment Africa is expected to contribute 49% of the world's 2050 population growth. Rohozinski insists this 2050 workforce will have a demographic that is conducive to cyber crime: young, talented, from a developing nation, possessing a value system that has previously, and would in the future, support participation in or instigation of acts of cyber crime. If Rohozinski is correct, then we have to recognize that developing nations without strong ICT rules and regulation enforcement, nations with civil unrest or nations that lack services could serve as third party locations and perpetrator source.

The perpetrator source could easily begin with the University students who have professed a desire to work in the cyber crime industry. Taken together these factors make Africa attractive to almost any investor, especially any who inhabit the shadowy world of cyber crime. To hacking investors the limited resources needed to establish a presence is particularly inviting. There is already an experienced cyber crime workforce, a reduced enforcement of ICT rules and regulations, a strong malware history and an economic environment that makes the potential very attractive. As a business venture, there are few negatives.

Which Cyber Crimes?

Criminal use of the region's Information Highway already include electronic mail scams, scam letters that range from the purchase of real estate, disbursement of money from wills, to the sale of crude oil at below market prices. Communication usually occurs through electronic message via fax, e-mail or cell phone. Verification is difficult so victims ultimately pay the fees without evidence to validate the claim of the perpetrator. While these types of cyber crime are perpetrated on a large scale in countries like Nigeria, the crimes themselves are not target specific. The perpetrators initiate several scams at a time so that the perpetrator financially benefits, on average, from some, if not all, of the scams. No one victim is regarded as the single important prey.

Given the ideal conditions the region offers for third party cyber warfare attacks, several questions must be answered for national security strategists to understand the threat they could potentially face: would these same Nigerian or Sahel region cyber crime perpetrators initiate their perfected scams for another entity? Are they willing to expand their skill set and advance into target specific entities? Finally, if they were willing to initiate target specific entities, would they execute an attack on infrastructure? If they initiate the crime, is there a limit to the type of crimes they will launch?

There is already a perception/acceptance of students who "steal" trade secrets, research documents or supplier's agreements. If the Boko Haram attack is an indication, they very well may be. An almost unencumbered access to high quality information communication technology, combined with the computer literate young of 2050, make it wise for potential target nations to understand the threat this region could represent for them. They must accept the

reality that the opportunity this new industry offers the Sahel's employment-opportunity-constrained workforce, and the potential to earn a living far above the current \$1180 (U.S dollars) annual income, make the Sahel's attractiveness as a cyber warfare third-party haven almost irresistible.²¹

Conclusion

The Sahel is already home to a variety of illicit activities, and adding cyber warfare to that list is not far fetched. Nation-states could benefit from expanding their repertoire of weapons, terrorist actors could include it in their arsenal against the West, and both would achieve their goals and objectives without significant infrastructure modifications. This could redefine cyber crime if both the nation-state and the terrorist actors, reconcile their value system by incorporating this approach to expanding their warfare arsenal.

These perpetrators of ill intent (whether nation-state or terrorist actor) recognize that, in today's world, their victims do not have the option of 'no presence on the web'. They can, therefore, inflict damage, pinpoint attacks, and execute attacks without significant cost. Their potential victims must therefore learn how to counter this attack approach while minimizing the negative impact on the already fragile economies of the Sahel and, even, Nigeria.

The nations in the region, themselves, have to also include this consideration as they develop their law enforcement approach to information communication technology regulation enforcement. Each nation already has shadow economies from the illicit crime and that economy feeds, houses, and clothes many of its citizens. The governments of the area have to form a coalition with investing countries and identify alternates for these potential "failed state mercenaries" and their robust cyber warfare attack tools. We underestimated Boko Haram in the past. We should not underestimate the bellwether Boko Haram's cyber attack may represent.

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The Psychological Make-up of 'Muhammad Yusuf'

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Although much has been written about the Boko Haram movement and its insurgent activities, there has been little comprehensive reporting on Ustaz Muhammad Yusuf, the founder and former leader of the group. Yusuf, an indigene of Girgir village, Jalasko, Yobe State, Nigeria, was born on 29 January 1970. He had four wives in total and twelve children. Despite his oratorical skills and charisma, the young Yusuf was reported to have dropped out of secondary school. To compensate for this, coupled with a zeal for religious education that appears common among Northern Nigerian Muslims, Yusuf enrolled for and received a Quranic education in the Chad and Niger Republic. Analysts however suggest that he imbibed radical ideology during his Quranic education in those neighbouring countries.¹ While this assertion cannot be scientifically verified, the exegesis of Yusuf's involvement in religious activities can be traced back to the early 1990s, when he joined the Islamic Movement of Nigeria headed by the Late Ibrahim el-Zakzakky (a Shiite). Perceiving the movement to be led by Shia Muslims, Yusuf broke away and joined the Jamaatul Tajdid Islam (JTI) in Borno state. Still dissatisfied with the doctrines/etiquette of this group, Yusuf crossed over to another organisation called Ahlulsunna wal'jama'ah hijra or Shabaab.

Given his growing clout and reputation within this new organisation, Yusuf emerged as the leader of the Ahlulsunna wal'jama'ah hijra, displacing elderly sect members. This occurred when the Amir (President) of the group, Mallam Abubakar Lawan, went to the University of Medina in 2002 to undertake further studies. No sooner had Yusuf taken on the mantle of leadership than the doctrine of the sect changed and he devised tenets strongly condemning Western education and civilization as taquut (evil) that should be forbidden by every Muslim. With this perspective, the group became popular under the name 'Boko Haram', and its original names (Ahlulsunna wal'jama'ah hijra had already been changed to Jama'atu Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda'Awati Wal Jihad -'People Committed to the Prophet's Teachings for Propagation and Jihad') were hardly known among the general public.

The name 'Boko Haram' is derived from a combination of the Hausa word boko meaning 'book' and the Arabic word haram, which means something sacrilegious or sinful. Literally, it means 'the sacrilegious book', but its contextual meaning is that Western education and civilization are sinful, ungodly, and should therefore be forbidden. Yusuf benefitted immensely from the timing of this message, that

coincided with the public resentment precipitated by the social uncertainty arising from excruciating poverty, and so was able to lure many vulnerable, religiously-inclined youths to embrace his new, emerging 'utopia', that promised better alternatives to their misery. Until his alleged extra-judicial murder by the Nigerian police following the riots of July 2009, Yusuf commanded a large following, with new members emerging from neighbouring states such as Yobe, Katsina, Kaduna, Bauchi, Adamawa, Gombe and Kano.

Within the context of this brief background, a psychological profile of Muhammad Yusuf, the founder and former leader of the Nigerian Boko Haram insurgent group is presented to provide a more comprehensive overview of his antecedents and the ideological and psychological characteristics that may have influenced his radical ideology. The article posits that Yusuf's resolve to preach and engage in violent/religious radicalism could have been a result of psychological deficiencies (e.g., ideological intolerance, moral absolutes, vengeance, relative deprivation, selfishness and/or delusional thinking) within his personality. To curb individuals with similar traits and/or psychological attributes before they become a security threat, this paper advocates the need for the introduction of offender profiling within the Nigerian criminal justice system.

A highly peculiar and common trait of contemporary radical elements, which Yusuf might also have possessed, is ideological intolerance, which describes a belief system that specifically refuses to tolerate the practices, beliefs, and/or tenets of other individuals or groups. It encompasses bigotry and the demonstration of bitterness and/or enmity towards those who dissent or disagree with one's belief systems (presumably the right doctrine), or some aspect of it. Ideological intolerance can even exist within individuals practising the same religion, but who hold different ideological tenets. Relating this to our current theme, in addition to Yusuf's strict adherence to the orthodox principles of Islam, which abhors western modernism; he manifested elements of ideological intolerance by moving from one Islamic organisation to another, before finally settling for Jama'atu Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda'Awati Wal Jihad (later Boko Haram). Of particular importance to the current theme is the fact that he left the Islamic Movement of Nigeria to join Jamaatul Tajdid Islam (JTI) because Ibrahim el-Zakzakky (a Shi'ite) was the leader of the former. While it is appreciated that both Sunni and Shia Muslims share fundamental Islamic beliefs and articles of faith, the differences

between these two main sub-groups within Islam stemmed from certain religious etiquette. It therefore follows that Yusuf may have been one of the Sunnis who must not compromise the tenets of his sect at the expense of Shi'ite doctrines. Given this clarification, and to further buttress the elements of ideological intolerance within Yusuf, other reports suggest that Yusuf once studied under the highly influential, well-known Kano-based preacher, Sheik Jafar Muhammad, who was shot dead while leading dawn prayers in 2007. Prior to Sheik Jafar's death, Yusuf was believed to have quarrelled with him over doctrinal matters,² which explains the insinuation that the Sheik was killed by elements suspected of being Yusuf's foot soldiers.

Second, and concomitant to the above, was his inordinate belief that the Muslim way of life had been systematically hijacked and exploited by 'nefarious western values'. According to Yusuf and his group, it is an abomination for true Muslims to operate or work within the system created by 'secular western civilisation', which they regard as taqqut (irredeemably evil). It was within this perspective that the group sometimes withdrew to the desert (Zagi-Biriri) in 2003 to set up a separatist community run on hard line Islamic principles. Their aim was to create a more perfect society, away from the corrupt secular establishment. This, to them, could make them completely immune from what they perceived to be the products of 'western evil' and enable them effectively to dedicate themselves to a life of prayer and study of the Qur'an. Consequent upon this, Yusuf and his group chose certain negative or derisive labels, such as 'kuffar' (disbelievers; those who deny the truth) or 'fasiqun' (infidels), to demonize anyone who failed to embrace their cause.

Another conspicuous trait that was common among the contemporary radical elements (including Yusuf himself) was the bitterness and vengeance necessitated by what they termed 'evil, scheming western interests' in Muslim countries. Following the American-led invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan in 2001, there emerged several vocal and radical religious leaders in many Muslim areas, including Northern Nigeria (predominantly a Muslim region, where Yusuf and his group operated). These vocal, radical religious leaders seemed to radicalise religiously-inclined, vulnerable youths into believing that Americans and indeed the West as a whole were pursuing an anti-Islam, anti-Muslim World agenda. Their message was strengthened by: broadcast images and rumours of the

mistreatment of prisoners in American- and British-run detention facilities (especially water boarding, physical torture, and the stress positioning of suspects); the cycles of chronic violence between Israelites and Palestinians and the perception that the US and the West unfairly favour Israel; and broadcast images of civilian casualties and other collateral damage that occurred during military operations in Muslim countries. Against this backdrop, there emerged fleets of radical, vocal religious leaders, including Yusuf, who centred their preaching on the need for a devout Muslim to create a ditch defence against an aggressive, belligerent West that had never abandoned the idea of the crusades and the invasion of Islamic lands.

The relative deprivation necessitated by the seeming collapse of the state structure due to the government's inability to manage corruption, the rising inequality between rich and poor, the gross violation of human rights, and inaccessible education, could also facilitate radicalisation.³ Due to ineptitude and corrupt practices, the political leadership of Nigeria failed judiciously to utilize the naturally endowed resources (crude oil) to address the many social problems facing the country. The poor became poorer, while a small fraction of the political elite became wealthier, which generated many social problems, including religious bigotry, mass illiteracy, poorly-funded administrative institutions, the unavailability of basic health care for most, and fraudulent elections. Given this myriad of problems (e.g., excruciating poverty, unemployment, and mass illiteracy), especially among the religiously-inclined vulnerable youths in Northern Nigeria, individuals like Muhammad Yusuf were able to seize the opportunity to seek relevance by preaching an alternative platform for disenfranchised, vulnerable youths and consequently radicalize them to attack the system which, they believe, is largely responsible for their situation.

Additionally, due to what some critics perceived as the inconsistency between Yusuf's preaching and his own material circumstances,⁴ it can be deduced that there was an element of selfishness within him. While Yusuf condemned Western civilisation and encouraged his foot soldiers (i.e., followers) to stay clear of its trappings, he did not reject or refuse to use technological products himself, such as motor bikes, cars, mobile phones and AK-47 guns. It should however be noted that individuals with a selfish personality tend to control everything within their domain and are ready to emit inconsistent information

and/or misrepresentations for selfish ends. Yusuf may have fallen within this category. As noted earlier, despite his supposed espousal of anti-modern, ultra-fundamentalist ideas, he was reported to have obtained a passport and visa, and even travelled on airplanes - all creations of western civilisation. In addition to using ultra-modern facilities, other reports confirm that 'the food items found in Yusuf's house when he was arrested contrasted sharply with his beliefs, as many were imported, canned foods compared to the dates and fruits eaten by his followers'.⁵ While his followers have attempted to debunk these inconsistencies following Yusuf's death, by arguing that modern technology (in contrast to Western education and civilisation) was completely acceptable under Islam, the inescapable truth is that western technology is an offshoot of civilisation and the two concepts are inseparable.

Concluding Thoughts

Prior to the Boko Haram riots of July 2009, few Nigerians had heard of Muhammad Yusuf. The available reports however indicate that this individual had been arrested, detained, charged and released on several occasions prior to the incident that led to the group's insurgency. What is unclear however is why the security agencies were unable to tame his activities and those of the group before they became a security threat that threatened the corporate existence of Nigeria. The reason for this may be the lack of a criminal database, criminal records and offender profiling within the Nigerian criminal justice system. While this position may need to be subjected to empirical research, the current article has created a possible psychological profile of Muhammad Yusuf, the founder and former leader of Boko Haram. We believe that creating such a profile could play an important role in furthering our understanding of the individual attributes and/or behavioural characteristics that may contribute to radicalisation. We further hope that the Nigerian security/intelligence agencies may use this information to monitor individuals with similar attributes and/or antecedents and consequently track down potential insurgents before they turn into a real threat and cause havoc in the country.

Endnotes

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Why Nigeria is Not Winning the Anti-Boko Haram War

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With an aim to restore order in the northern region of Nigeria, the epicentre of Boko Haram, the Nigerian government in June 2011 created the Joint Task Force (JTF) as a special military task force, involving the main components of the state's armed forces, to counter the increasingly sophisticated terror attacks by the insurgent group. Since its emergence, the JTF, as claimed, has launched a massive crackdown on the terrorists' den and successfully arrested or killed a huge number of the members of the group including its key leaders. For example, it was reported on 24 September 2012 that 156 members of the group were arrested and 35 of them killed, including one of their key leaders in a major military raid on the group's enclave in Yobe and Adamawa States.¹ In October 2012, it was reported that 30 members of the group were killed in a battle with the military.² Other major clampdowns occurred on different occasions in March 2013, which saw the death of 72 members of the group.³ Given this anti-terror military onslaught and the acclaimed high number of casualties from the insurgent group, the Nigerian government has been trumpeting its success in the war on terror. It is in this light that the Nigerian Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant-General Azubuike Ihejirika, pointed out that:

When you consider the fact that for every bomb that goes off; several others have been stopped from going off. Arrests have also been made. Only this week, and the week before, bomb batches were uncovered; in some instances, the perpetrators were killed; in some other instance, others were arrested. So I think we are making tremendous progress.⁴

Despite the acclaimed success of the Nigerian anti-terror military operations, it is indeed paradoxical that the terror campaign of Boko Haram is yet to abate and is rather becoming more sophisticated, lethal, and producing some other splinter groups. It is noteworthy that a new terror group has emerged from Boko Haram with the name Jama'atu Ansarul Musilimina fi Biladin Sudan with fiercer attacks in Nigeria.⁵ This new group claimed the abduction and killing of seven foreign nationals in Nigeria. With these developments, therefore, it is clear that the acclaimed success of the counter-terrorism campaign in Nigeria is, after all, not totally reliable. It therefore suffices to say that Nigeria is not winning its war on the Boko Haram terror. The next question that should then follow is: Why is Nigeria not winning the anti-terror campaign in the country? The subsequent sections of this piece attempt an answer to this important question.

Why Boko Haram Persists

The insufficiency of intelligence on Boko Haram and others alike marks a critical point to start with. Clearly, the Nigerian government is still struggling to acquire adequate knowledge of its own enemies. Amazingly, five years after the emergence of the Boko Haram phenomenon, the Nigerian government still perceives the group as faceless and unidentifiable. President Goodluck Jonathan during his official visit to Borno State (the stronghold of Boko Haram) in March 2013 still classified the group as a 'ghost'! Obviously, this explains the reason why the government is clueless on which particular group represents the authentic Boko Haram. In January 2013, a man believed in governmental circles to be the commander of the group, Abu Mohammed Ibn Abdulazeez, claimed to have had a series of peace talks with the government and as a result declared a ceasefire on behalf of Boko Haram.⁶ In a spontaneous reaction, Abubakar Shekau (who had been rumored dead after being shot by JTF) dissociated himself as the authentic leader of Boko Haram and his group from Abdulazeez.⁷ A few weeks later, multiple bomb attacks traced to the group were recorded in the metropolis of Kano State, which killed many southern Nigerians.

The ethnicisation and politicisation of the discourse on Boko Haram is also another factor militating against the government's anti-terror efforts. It is useful to mention at this juncture that the multi-ethnic character of the Nigerian state manifests in all aspects of its life. The discourse on Boko Haram has undoubtedly become another ethnic issue in the country. It is noteworthy that the Boko Haram crisis, coincidentally, became fiercer and popular at a time when there was intense mutual suspicion and tension between the northern and southern elites over the issue of rotation of state power. The northern elites saw themselves being shortchanged in a certain 'zoning formula' after the emergence of Goodluck Jonathan as the president following the sudden death of Umar Musa Yar'Adua. Given this, the general belief in the South – the origin of President Jonathan – is that Boko Haram is politically motivated, and an outcome of the general grievance from northern Nigeria. On the other hand, this belief has also fuelled a continuous distrust in the North about the sincerity of the Jonathan-led government's effort to counter Boko Haram.

In light of the above, it is popularly believed in the North that Jonathan's government is somewhat behind the Boko Haram terror attacks in order to strengthen the belief that the northern elites are

sponsors of Boko Haram; hence the concept of 'Federal Government's Boko Haram'. In addition, northern elites also nurture the belief that the government is not sincere with efforts to tackle Boko Haram especially with its military approach. They see this as a deliberate attempt to destroy the North and its economy given that only innocent people are being killed by JTF. What they perceive as the best solution to the crisis is the declaration of an amnesty for Boko Haram members, similar to that of the Niger Delta, as a solution to the crisis. At the inception, the president including some sections in the South, as well as the Christian population – under the auspices of the Christian Association of Nigeria – registered their stiff opposition to an amnesty for Boko Haram members. Although the presidency later accepted the amnesty option for the group which has been pooh-poohed by the leadership of the insurgent group, the lack of consensus on the best approach to fight Boko Haram as a result of ethnic and political considerations has undoubtedly continued to be an albatross in the counter-terrorism process.

The political will to fight Boko Haram is also suspect. In January 2012, President Goodluck Jonathan shockingly announced that 'some of them [sponsors and sympathisers of Boko Haram] are in the executive arm of government, some of them are in the parliamentary/legislative arm of government, while some of them are even in the judiciary'.⁸ Given the increasing sophistication of the attacks of the group, one cannot agree less with President Jonathan that there are truly some Nigerian 'big men' that sponsor the operations of the group. However, the government has yet to publicly identify and prosecute the elites in governmental circles who have direct or indirect connections with Boko Haram. This is despite the fact that some Boko Haram members have mentioned some names within the circles of the Nigerian elite. Besides, it is equally unclear if justice would be done on a few politicians that have been arrested for their links with Boko Haram as a result of the corruption and hijacking of the Nigerian judiciary. In a similar vein, two people appointed on the amnesty committee – Datti Ahmad and Shehu Sanni – declined their appointments on the grounds that earlier reconciliatory efforts they facilitated were frustrated by the government. According to Ahmad, 'since it is the same government, I will not participate in a program which outcome will be mismanaged. They failed to work with what we mutually arrived at in the past, so I will not be part of this one'.⁹

The counter-terrorism effort of the government is also being challenged by humanitarian concerns from domestic and international quarters. There are mounting criticisms by human rights organisations, international organisations, and Western nations over the casualties of the anti-terror activities of JTF in northern Nigeria. In its 2012 report, Amnesty International raised concerns about the 'unlawful killings, dragnet arrests, arbitrary and unlawful detentions, extortion and intimidation' by JTF in Borno State in its war on terror. Similarly, the local National Human Rights Commission has complained about extrajudicial executions in the ongoing war on terror.¹⁰ As a result, reports suggest that there has been a great deal of migration of people out of the areas in order to avoid killings and arrests by JTF. A migrant was quoted by a local newspaper thus, 'We want to leave because yesterday morning (Sunday) military men came shooting in our places....A woman was hit by a stray bullet in her breast. We don't know where to go...Nobody is cautioning the JTF, they arrest anybody and have been breaking into our houses'.¹¹ The Baga military raid in April 2013 is another good example. It was reported that over 187, mostly civilians, lost their lives and lost several properties in the military action. Human Rights Watch and the United States prominently registered their displeasure with the attack. In fact, it was reported that the United States withdrew its military assistance following the outcome of the raid.¹²

Conclusion: The Need for National Consensus

Certainly, the issue of Boko Haram has continued to pose a serious security threat to Nigeria. It is a matter of emergency to the country. Recent reports suggest that the government is about to change its strategy on Boko Haram following the realization of the ineffectiveness of the present military approach. The government is now considering a carrot and stick approach on Boko Haram and jettisoning the 'all-round force' approach.¹³ This might be a good step. However, there is a need for a good collaboration between the government and the people, especially the northerners, on the current war on Boko Haram. It is dangerous to play politics with a serious security issue such as terrorism. Nigeria needs a national consensus on how to contain Boko Haram. It is only when Nigerians gain this consciousness, and drop ethnic and tribal sentiments, that there can be a meaningful solution to the Boko Haram terror in the country.

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Responses of the Nigerian Defense and Intelligence Establishments to the Challenge of Boko Haram

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Since the end of the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970), the Boko Haram (BH) insurgency in the northern part of the country represents, perhaps, the gravest security threat and challenge to Nigeria. The insurgency has attracted the substantial deployment of the nation's defense and intelligence establishments, as the Joint Task Force (JTF), which is comprised of the police and army, has been deployed in ten states in the north. Also, at border points, there has been tightened security, strict searches, and the deportation of illegal aliens. In spite of the presence and strategies of the defense and intelligence communities, the violent activities of the sect have remained frequent, causing heavy carnage and loss of property. The nature of the bombing seems to increase the stakes over previous actions and inclines towards the dangerous grounds of reprisal. There is a mass exodus of non-indigenes from the affected areas, which tends to create a new hegemony and spatial control by the sect. Thus, a number of people who seem overwhelmed with the BH insurgency have contended that Nigeria is cascading into another civil war.¹ This article attempts to address the following questions: is the BH sect clearly ahead of the Nigerian defense and intelligence establishments in intelligence and the deployment of tactics and weapons? What are the dilemmas of the defense and intelligence establishments in responding effectively to the BH security challenge? What steps can be taken to ensure the effectiveness of the defense and intelligence establishments in response to the BH security challenge? Before proceeding with these central issues, for pedagogic purposes, an overview of the BH phenomenon is provided.

BH Construction

The BH sect, officially known as Jama'atu Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda'Awati Wal Jihad, or 'People Committed to the Prophet's Teachings for Propagation and Jihad', evolved from a small religious sect formed in 2002. In the Hausa language, it translates literally to mean 'Western education is unlawful'. Mohammed Yusuf is believed to be the founder of BH. Yusuf was killed along with some other prominent members of the sect such as Baba Mohammed (Yusuf's father-in-law), and Alhaji Buji Foi, the former Commissioner of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Borno state, who was brought into police custody in 2009. Since the demise of Yusuf and others, BH operations, which started in Borno, spread later to other parts of the north.²

BH is a composite of actors including Islamic extremists, the frustrated poor and idle, as well as marginalized youths, who have been incited, mobilized and supported by some politicians to destabilize the Nigerian polity. The members of BH are recruited from within and from neighbouring African countries including Benin, Chad, Niger, Sudan, Somalia and Mauritania.³ It has been claimed that BH has commenced the recruitment of women into its fold as couriers for arms and ammunition, and for intelligence gathering and operational information purposes. Allegedly, the sect planned to use women to get the addresses and locations of some prominent politicians who are considered enemies.⁴ Also, the sect reportedly uses street-traders and hawkers for gathering operational information and launching attacks on targets.

The Nigerian defense and intelligence establishments contend that the sect has links to international terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), which operates principally in the Sahel region.⁵ The sect reportedly derives financial support from loot from bank robberies, and sympathetic groups in the Middle East and North Africa.⁶ This support, perhaps, helps the sect become more complex and acquire sophisticated weapons.

The sect opposes the secularity of the Nigerian state, repudiates western education, democracy, and seeks to fight for justice.⁷ The operational base and activities of BH have been in major cities in states in the Northeast geo-political zone, such as Maiduguri. Its operations have been extended to other cities such as Kaduna, Kano and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. One fundamental feature of the operational base of BH is that the level of unemployment, poverty, and economic destitution is higher than in other geopolitical zones.⁸ Like the Niger Delta militias, the sect has been highly adaptable. Its members operate independently from different locations and claim responsibility through press releases using central email facilities in the wake of every attack. With the use of motorcycles in launching attacks, they are able to meander away afterward.

It is believed that there is a splinter BH group, known as Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina fi Biladis Sudan (JAMBS), which roughly translates as Vanguard for the Aids of Muslims in Black Africa. JAMBS, which emerged in January 2012, was said to have been created because of disenchantment with the leadership style of BH's

commander and spiritual leader, Mohammad Shekau, especially the tendency to kill Muslims. The sect, an affiliate of AQIM, is led by Abu Usamatal Ansary. It has claimed to be motivated by an anti-Nigerian government and anti-western agenda. JAMBS has claimed responsibility for various acts of terrorism, targeting mostly police, military, and foreigners. Its first major attack was on the Special Anti-robbery Squad detention centre in Abuja on November 26, 2012. It also claimed responsibility for the kidnapping of a French engineer in Katsina, citing France's push for military intervention in Mali as justification. On January 19, 2013, Nigerian soldiers, on their way to Mali as part of an African peacekeeping mission, were ambushed by JAMBS in the Kogi state, killing two soldiers.⁹

It has been reported that while BH focuses on local targets, JAMBS concentrates on foreign targets. This new sect is believed to receive major financing and training from Mali.¹⁰ JAMBS is believed to be more dangerous than BH. According to the President of the Northern Civil Society Coalition, Mr. Shehu Sani:

What makes this group very dangerous is their mobility. You cannot say this is where they are located. They operate a mobile command and no part of Nigeria is immune to their acts... It is difficult to estimate their actual number because they are not in a particular position, but I can tell you that they have high capacity to inflict lethal damage and to also carry out operations without being caught.¹¹

In several respects, BH seems to represent a unique problem compared with earlier insurgent groups in the country such as the Odua People's Congress (OPC) in the Western region; the Movement for the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) in the Eastern region, and the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) in the oil-rich Niger Delta. First, unlike past insurgent groups, BH's goals, demands, and grievances are controversial. They are not clearly articulated in any known document. BH's much touted Islamization mission in the country seems not to enjoy popular support even from its immediate constituency. A number of notable Muslim clerics in the North have openly denounced BH as extremists. Second, the group, unlike the earlier militia groups, uses suicide bombers in launching attacks on government establishments, churches and private enterprises, as well as innocent citizens, especially non-indigenes and Christians in the North. Third, it

allegedly receives strong support from foreign actors in the areas of financing and training.¹²

The BH Security Challenge

The BH militia has been implicated in perpetrating egregious human rights abuses, particularly acts of violence against civilians and security operatives resulting in maximum damage. The sect has on various occasions launched attacks on churches, secondary and tertiary educational institutions, including Bayero University, Kano, and strategic government establishments such as police stations, including Force Headquarters in Abuja, Immigration Service Office in Kano, Prisons Service in Lokoja, the Army Defense College in Jaji, Kaduna and other high profile places, such as the United Nations Office in Abuja and media establishments.

Though there are conflicting figures over the exact number of casualties so far recorded since the BH onslaught began, the United States based Human Rights Watch has declared that a total of 935 people have been killed in the 164 attacks suspected to have been masterminded by the sect since July 2009, when the group began its violent campaign. Out of this number the organization also reported that 550 people were killed in 2011 alone, in 115 separate attacks, and some 253 people killed in 21 separate attacks in early 2012.¹³

Overwhelmed by the operational strategies and daring activities of BH, President Goodluck Jonathan held that the sect's activities are worse than the Nigerian civil war in the late 1960s because of the difficulty in telling who its members are. In his words:

the situation we have in our hands is worse than the civil war we fought. During the civil war, we knew and we could predict where the enemy was coming from, you can even know the route they are coming from, can even know the caliber of weapon they will use and so on. But the challenge we have today is more complicated ... this is a particular time when the country has major security challenges. There are explosions everyday... people are killed daily without any reason.¹⁴

The economic activities in Nigeria, especially in the north, have nosedived on account of conflation of BH's violent campaigns with other social upheavals such as kidnapping and communal clashes in various parts of the country. According to the National Economic

Summit Group (NESG) at its summit held in December 2012, Nigeria's Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has declined from 12.8 billion in 2011 to 10.4 billion in 2012.¹⁵ BH inflicts deep psychological trauma on the society. By day, fear, anxiety, hopelessness, frustration, crippled altruistic instincts and jeremiads about the atmosphere of insecurity increase among many Nigerians.¹⁶

Furthermore, the BH insurgency has heightened regional, ethnic and religious tensions in the country. There has been a mass exodus of Christian-non-idigenes from the north to their states of origin on account of BH's attacks and its call on southerners to leave the north, a situation reminiscent of the pogroms and mass migrations that preceded the Nigerian civil war. Between November 30 and December 5, 2012, according to a News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) report, the Nigerian Red Cross said some 1,042 refugees made up of 520 children and 306 women had arrived in the Diffa region of the Niger Republic fleeing BH violence. The refugees reportedly settled in the villages of Guessere and Massa, 25 kilometers away from the Nigerian town of Diffa. The worst-hit governments in the south-east of Nigeria often arrange transport to evacuate their indigenes from the troubled spots and also burials for victims of the attacks. The BH attacks sent murderous ripples through most states in the north-east such as Borno, Yobe, Gome, Adamawa and Bauchi.¹⁷

Response of the Defense and Intelligence Establishments

The Nigerian police are statutorily charged with ensuring internal security and public order. In addition to the police, Nigeria's intelligence community, such as the State Security Service (SSS), which is responsible for domestic intelligence; National Intelligence Agency (NIA), which is responsible for foreign intelligence and counterintelligence operations, and Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA), which is responsible for military intelligence, has reacted to the violent activities of BH.¹⁸

Since 2009, when the federal government deployed the JTF, it has continued to maintain a substantial presence in strategic cities in the BH heartland, in places such as Bauchi, Yobe, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, Adamawa, Niger, Plateau, Kaduna, and Kano states. The JTF, in a bid to combat the BH security challenges, has undertaken various operations such as house-to-house searches; stop and search operations, and raids of suspected hide-outs of BH militias.

The violent or repressive mode of response is often reinforced by hefty military expenditures of purchasing military operational gadgets. For instance, the Borno State government donated 10 armoured vehicles to the police, apparently to enable the Force to effectively combat the sect. In the 2012 budget, the government allocated a staggering \$5.947 billion to defence and national security, translating to N921.91billion. This figure represents 20 per cent of the total budget and the highest allocation ever for defence and security in the history of the country. This also makes Nigeria the biggest spender on defence and security in Africa. The 2012 allocation is also a marked difference from the N233 billion in 2009, N264billion in 2010, and N348 billion in 2011.¹⁹ The government has also ensured that Nigerian security agents receive up to the minute training in counter-terrorism, and every other capacity building initiative available in the world today for combating terrorism. This training has been continuous, taking place both in and outside the country. There has been speculation that some 300 Nigerian soldiers were sent to the United States to receive counter-insurgency, counter-terrorism and bomb-disposal training specifically aimed at fighting BH. However, Nigerian Army sources were reported as denying this. US officials would not comment on whether such activities were linked to BH.²⁰

The operations of the defense and intelligence community to contain the violence and associated costs have resulted in destructive and devastating consequences. The JTF has been accused of gross human rights violations, mass murder, extra-judicial killings, physical abuse, secret detentions, extortion, burning houses, and stealing money during raids.²¹ Despite allegations of widespread security force abuses, the Nigerian authorities have rarely held anyone accountable, which further reinforces the culture of impunity for violence.²² In fact, the security community seems to rationalize their operations to retaliate for the deaths of some security operatives from the BH violence. As the JTF, through its spokesman Lt. Col. Sagir Musa, noted 'we should not forget that several security operatives have been killed or maimed by the terrorists, a lot of police stations and military installations have been destroyed'.²³ Though there is no exactitude in the number of BH militia fighters that may have been maimed and killed by the security operatives, the casualties may be reasonably substantial. Human Rights Watch estimated that over 2,800 persons have been killed by BH and the Nigerian security forces since 2009, when BH became the gravest security threat.²⁴

In spite of the military offensives of the JTF, BH has grown more sophisticated. The sect has executed reprisal attacks for the offensive operations of the security agencies against its members. Since the death of Yusuf Mohammad in police custody, the sect has executed a number of attacks on security formations. On December 24, 2003, when BH militias launched an attack on a police station and public buildings in the towns of Geiam and Kanamma in Yobe, a joint operation of soldiers and police was deployed to crack down on them. On 21 September 2004 the militants again launched attacks on the Bama and Gworza police stations in Borno State.²⁵

In 2012, high profile military and police commands were targets of BH attacks. The Church facility at the Command and Staff College, Jaji in Kaduna State, was attacked on November 25. Also, on November 26, the Special Ant-Robbery Squad (SARS), headquartered in Abuja, was attacked. These attacks, perhaps, underscore the impotence of the Nigerian State. Indeed, in the first nine months of 2012, not less than 815 people were killed in 275 attacks, according to Human Rights Watch. This number is more than half of the not less than 1,500 casualty figure for three years, 2010, 2011 and 2012.²⁶ A total of 185 policemen and residents were killed in the 20 January 2012 bomb blasts, which targeted mainly security formations in Kano - the deadliest single operation so far.²⁷

Dilemmas of the Defense and Intelligence Establishments

The main dilemma of the defense and intelligence establishments in responding effectively to the BH security challenge is the absence of mutual confidence amongst them. There is undue rivalry and suspicion among the sister organizations, and a quest for personal glory at the topmost levels of the agencies. For instance, it was reported that lack of teamwork was responsible for the failure of the security agencies to prevent the United Nations building attack. Though information about the plan was reportedly received about nine days before it was executed, it was denied by the then National Security Adviser.²⁸

Also, a central challenge to the defense and intelligence establishments in effectively responding to the current security challenge of the BH insurgency is the porosity of Nigerian borders. Nigeria shares borders with the Niger Republic, Chad, the Benin Republic, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe. The Nigerian Immigration Service disclosed it has discovered along

the borders about 1,487 illegal routes into Nigeria and 84 regular routes.²⁹ The sheer breadth of these numerous entry points can challenge even the best security plans. Thus, the porous borders are perhaps exploited by the BH for their insurgency, bringing arms and illegal immigrants into the country and escaping from the security agencies in the wake of attacks.

Former National Security Adviser, General Azazi Owoye, cited the exclusionary politics of the ruling-PDP as the cause for the resurgent, widespread BH attacks.³⁰ Some senators such as Mohammad Aliyu Ndume, representing the Borno South Senatorial District; Ahmed Khalifa Zannah, representing the Borno Central Senatorial District; and the former Governor of Borno State, Senator Ali Modu Sheriff, have been variously accused of having ties with the Islamic sect.³¹ Also, some retired military generals and ex-heads of states before the General Sani Abacha administration, a former vice president in the first eight years of the current democratic dispensation, northern state governors (Isa Yaguda of Bauchi), and Muslim traditional rulers have been identified as sponsors and allies of BH.³² More poignantly, President Goodluck Jonathan held that the activities of BH have become difficult to combat because the sect has infiltrated sensitive government institutions such as the legislature, presidency, executive, judiciary and even security apparatuses such as the police and armed forces.³³ In his words:

Some of them are in the executive arm of government, some of them are in the parliamentary/legislative arm of government while some of them are even in the judiciary. Some are also in the armed forces, the police and other security agencies. Some continue to dip their hands and eat with you and you won't even know the person who will point a gun at you or plant a bomb behind your house.³⁴

In addition, the seeming intractability of the BH security threat has also been linked with cover provided by some communities. The authorities of the defense and intelligence establishments have accused residents of some communities of accommodating, shielding and allowing members of BH to use their houses as escape routes after attacks.³⁵ This may be for fear of retribution from the sect or the inability of the security agencies to provide them security.

Corruption is another factor which undermines the ability of the

defense and intelligence establishments to combat the BH security challenge. For example, BH militias claimed that they offered bribes to navigate their way through the numerous checkpoints mounted by different security agencies to execute the attack on the UN office in Abuja.³⁶ Also, the defense and security establishment has little impact on the organization and campaigns of BH. This stems from its inability to keep pace with the indoctrination, recruitment and training of members to carry out suicide bombing at different locations. The terrorist organization preys on the unemployed, marginalized and disillusioned Muslim youths in the north, who are fed up with corruption and have limited economic opportunities. In the north, 72 percent of the population lives below the poverty line, compared to only 27 percent in the south.³⁷ As the spokesman of the sect noted 'there is a large number of our brothers, all eager to carry out suicide missions because of the abundant reward that awaits the person. So, we decided to introduce balloting to avoid disharmony among us'.³⁸

Also, BH operates asymmetrically. When it is losing to security agencies it declares a cease-fire and readiness for dialogue while soliciting for unconditional amnesty and the release of its detained members in various locations. The situation is further complicated by the fact that intermediaries of the group refuse to disclose the identities of the members of the sect.³⁹ This asymmetric mode of operation contributes to the difficulty of the defense and intelligence establishments in effectively responding to the BH security challenge.

Conclusion

Nigeria is sliding into anarchy on account of the BH insurgency as the defense and intelligence establishments seem to be losing their grip on the security challenge. From observation and analysis, the responses to the BH security challenge have been inadequate. The ineffectiveness of the defense and intelligence establishments is attributable to a number of complex and interlocking dilemmas such as the disconcertion of the various security apparatuses, corruption, the prevailing poor economic condition, the crowded nature of the cities in the north, porosity of Nigerian borders, and the complicity and support of some political elite with the sect.

Thus, for the defense and intelligence establishments to have a greater impact in their responses to the BH security challenge, several steps must be taken.

1. There is the need for the various apparatuses to share intelligence among one another and coordinate their responses to such intelligence.
2. There is the need for effective management of borders, which are routes for illegal arms, illegal immigrants, criminals and contrabands. The security establishment should deploy officers to patrol the illegal and regular routes to Nigeria. This cannot be done by one arm of the defense and intelligence establishments. The Nigerian Air Force should be tasked with air patrol; the Navy should handle the maritime sides of the border, and the Nigerian Immigration Service should work with the customs, police and other security agencies in policing the borders. These establishments should be provided with the necessary surveillance, logistical and operational facilities to effectively patrol and manage the borders. Also, there should be inter-service training among the defense and intelligence establishments aimed at coordinated patrol of the borders.
3. To respond effectively to the BH security challenge, the defense and intelligence establishments need to seek the cooperation of the security outfits of Nigeria's neighbouring countries. They also need to elicit the cooperation of local communities in the affected areas of their operations. To be able to elicit the cooperation of the local communities, the defense and intelligence establishments need to respect the fundamental rights of the residents.
4. The defense and intelligence establishments need to muster the courage to confront the political elites allegedly behind the sect.
5. BH capitalizes on widespread poverty and limited economic opportunities in the north. The poor economic condition and inequality, which conflate to create a climate of desperation, must be dealt with by the Nigerian government if the defense and intelligence establishments are to ensure sustainable counter-terrorism operations.
6. In view of the crowded nature of the houses in the BH areas of operation, there is the need for urban renewal. Tall fences should be lowered. Intelligence gathering and analysis, community policing, an operational and strategic approach to policing, vigilance and awareness by the public, renewed public campaigns and a joint integrated approach of all the security agencies are measures that should be employed against the BH

- security threats.
7. There is also a need for international assistance especially in the areas of intelligence sharing, counterinsurgency operations, the detection of improvised explosive devices, forensic analysis, intelligence gathering and analysis, and the mounting of a de-radicalization programme.
 8. Experience from countries that have encountered so-called home grown terrorism and counter insurgency and have successfully dealt with it and minimized the risks and levels of terrorist attacks have done so with boots on the ground, soldiers and elite forces patrolling in groups in the terrorists' main areas of activities. Essentially, the combined operations of the Army and Police in the areas where BH operates will significantly limit and minimize their attacks and also help restore normalcy in the lives of citizens living in the areas.

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U.S Congress and Boko Haram

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The attack on the United Nations building by Boko Haram in Abuja, Nigeria sent the nascent terrorist group into the headlines worldwide in August 2011. The attack also sent the group to the top of the U.S. House of Representatives Homeland Security Committee's (HHSC) priority list. The Committee's Chairman Peter King had long been concerned with emerging threats to the U.S. Homeland. He believed this attack signaled a threat to U.S. and Western interests once Boko Haram showed that it was capable of staging an attack like that which took place in Abuja.¹

Following the bombing in Abuja, HHSC staff began studying Boko Haram more closely, receiving briefings from the Council on Foreign Relations, Congressional Research Service, National Counterterrorism Center, and the Sahel Blog.² Their research and attention to the issue culminated in a HHSC report and hearing on Boko Haram, several letters to the Obama Administration, and legislation on a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) designation for the group. Prior to the HHSC hearing and report released in November 2011, Boko Haram received little attention on Capitol Hill. Before the U.N. attack the group was merely tangentially mentioned as a concern in Nigeria in committee testimonies before both the House and Senate by Director of National Intelligence James Clapper and Director of the National Counterterrorism Center Matthew Olson earlier in 2011.³

The U.S. Congress has many avenues through which it can bring change or attention to an issue of importance, such as the growing threat of Boko Haram. As Congress has the "power of the purse," it sets budgets for policy ideas to become a reality—such as funding for the Trans Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) or defense budgets for U.S. Africa Command.⁴ The various committees of jurisdiction can hold hearings and issue reports to draw attention to an issue, demand accountability and answers from administration officials and other experts, and spur further analysis on issues.⁵ Individual members of Congress can draft legislation to bring about policy changes or require parts of the administration to act. In the case of Boko Haram, the House and Senate have been active in all of these ways. This article will discuss the legislative actions taken by the U.S. Congress on Boko Haram and the policy disagreement that ensued between the Congress and the U.S. Department of State (DOS).

Emerging Threat: Counterterrorism and Intelligence Subcommittee Hearings and Report

On November 30, 2011 the HHSC's Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence held a hearing entitled 'Boko Haram—Emerging Threat to the U.S. Homeland', and released a full committee report under the same name.⁶ Subcommittee Ranking Member Jackie Speier stated 'our report and hearing today should serve as a solid starting point to raise awareness of a potential new threat and spur further discussion and examination to build an effective strategy for dealing with Boko Haram'.⁷ At the time of the report and hearing, there was a dearth of scholarship or in-depth study of the group. The report summarized the Committee's extensive study of Boko Haram's history and current activity and pulled together disparate pieces of open source intelligence on the group to present the fullest picture available at the time. The Committee's report used the examples of al Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula (AQAP) and Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) to illuminate the potential threat from the emerging Boko Haram.⁸ Subcommittee Chairman Patrick Meehan stated:

It is critical that the U.S. Intelligence Community thoroughly and carefully examine the extent of the threat from Boko Haram to the U.S. Homeland. Our report found that the August attack on the U.N. represented a major escalation in the targeting and tactics of Boko Haram, an evolution that mirrors the rise of other al Qaeda affiliate groups, including Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.⁹

The report outlined key findings and explored options for U.S. engagement and assistance to the Nigerian government. The key findings detailed that Boko Haram has evolved rapidly and poses an emerging threat to the U.S. Homeland, and that the United States should work to preemptively counter the nascent terror group.¹⁰ The report also gave five recommendations for dealing with the threat. The report stressed the importance of avoiding underestimating the threat of Boko Haram. Additionally, the Committee recommended determining whether Boko Haram should be designated an FTO, increasing U.S. intelligence collection on the group, increasing outreach to the American diaspora community, and increasing U.S. support for Nigerian counterterrorism and intelligence programs.¹¹

Congress, the State Department, and the FTO Debate

While there was not a contentious debate within Congress on the FTO designation for Boko Haram, a tense debate ensued between Congress and the DOS on this issue. In order to understand the ongoing debate on the FTO designation for Boko Haram, one must be familiar with the process to designate a group as an FTO and the results that can be achieved from such a label. First and foremost, it is important to note that the Secretary of State must initiate the designation of a group as an FTO.¹² According to the HHSC report as well as independent analysis by The Heritage Foundation, an FTO designation would help the U.S. intelligence community in its efforts to curb the activities of the group.¹³ An FTO designation allows the United States to impact financing and immigration of group members; sanctions can include the denial of visas, blocking of assets, prosecution of supporters who provide material support or funds, and deportation of members.¹⁴ Adding a group to the FTO list can also influence other nations to make similar designations, which further hinders the group's ability to access its resources or travel abroad.¹⁵

Lisa Monaco, head of the Department of Justice's national security division sent a letter to the DOS in January 2012 requesting that Boko Haram be added to the FTO list.¹⁶ In her letter, Monaco stated that though Boko Haram attacks thus far have occurred only within Nigeria, the U.S. should not underestimate the threat the group represents to American interests. She also highlighted the links Boko Haram has forged with 'transnational terrorist groups', including AQIM, and that Boko Haram has 'openly espoused violence against the West'.¹⁷

The Chairs of the full HHSC and the Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence sent two letters to Secretary of State Clinton, urging the FTO designation for Boko Haram on March 30 and May 18, 2012. In their first letter, the Chairs noted:

Currently, neither the Departments of Justice nor Treasury can take such actions without FTO designation creating unnecessary risk. In addition, FTO designation will also ensure that all other members of the U.S. Intelligence Community have every military, intelligence, diplomatic, and economic tool at their disposal to disrupt and deter Boko Haram's operations, planning, and fundraising both internationally and domestically.¹⁸

The second letter expressed the concern of the Chairs that the DOS had neither taken any action regarding the designation—despite repeated calls from the Committee as well as from the DOJ—nor responded to the first letter.¹⁹ The Chairs stressed:

[d]esignating Boko Haram an FTO is essential to giving our intelligence and law enforcement agencies the legal authorities to deter individuals who might be providing support to Boko Haram in the U.S. and abroad, and freeze any known Boko Haram assets. FTO designation can no longer wait.²⁰

Despite these calls from Congress, the DOS repeatedly referred to Boko Haram as 'not a monolithic group' whose 'aims are largely to discredit the Nigerian government', and do not represent a threat to the U.S. Homeland.²¹ Members of the House and Senate have generally reached a consensus on the growing threat of Boko Haram in that at least the majority of them would like to see rationale on why not to designate from the DOS. The general consensus within Congress was that the DOS should issue a report to Congress on the threat of Boko Haram and on why the group should or should not be listed as an FTO, but did not direct the Secretary to designate the group as an FTO.²² In Congressional hearings, few members even expressed opposition to an FTO designation.²³

On June 21, 2012 the DOS designated three Nigerian leaders of Boko Haram as Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGT): Abubakar Shekau, Abubakar Adam Kamar, and Khalid al-Barnawi.²⁴ Per Executive Order 13224, 'those foreign persons that support or otherwise associate with...foreign terrorists' are subject to SDGT listing.²⁵ The DOS claimed that the SDGT designations were sufficient for Boko Haram, and that designating individuals allowed the U.S. to focus on the people most responsible for threats and extremist violence, thus obviating the need for a group FTO designation²⁶ Several Members of Congress disagreed with this assessment.

Members of Congress used hearings on Boko Haram, al Qaeda affiliates, and Nigeria to ask meaningful questions regarding the growing threat of the nascent terrorist group. Most importantly, Members of Congress used these hearings to question DOS officials on its resistance to designating Boko Haram as a Foreign Terrorist Organization. Questioning in a House Foreign Affairs Africa

Subcommittee hearing on U.S. policy toward Nigeria focused heavily on the resistance of the DOS to designate Boko Haram as an FTO.²⁷ Representative Chris Smith (R-NJ) asked Ambassador Johnnie Carson why the DOS had classified individuals, and not the entire organization as an FTO. Smith also inquired how often the DOS designates leaders of a group as terrorists, but not the entire group—a question to which he never received a response.²⁸ Congresswoman Bass was the sole Member who expressed views in line with those of the DOS by asking ‘do you feel that if the organization was labeled [as an FTO] that it would embolden them?’²⁹ Ambassador Carson replied that FTO designation would serve to enhance Boko Haram’s status and assist with recruitment and fundraising. In that same hearing, Dr. Darren Kew echoed the DOS’s rationale, stating that ‘[a]n FTO designation now would hand the hardliners a public relations victory, since under their logic the condemnation of the United States is a badge of radical Islamist legitimacy’. Kew also claimed the FTO designation would make the Nigerian government appear weaker and could provoke a Boko Haram attack on U.S. interests.³⁰

Legislative Action

As it became increasingly apparent that the DOS would not act on an FTO designation for Boko Haram, and attacks waged in Nigeria, Representative Patrick Meehan introduced H.R. 5822, the Boko Haram Terrorist Designation Act in May 2012.³¹ In the Senate, Senator Scott Brown (R-MA) introduced companion legislation identical to Meehan’s bill, S.3249 just one week later.³² In addition to ‘stand alone’ legislation, Members can also use the amendment process to attach provisions regarding Boko Haram to germane legislation.³³ H.R. 5410, the National Defense Authorization Act of 2013, as passed by the House of Representatives contained a provision requiring the DOS to determine if Boko Haram qualifies for FTO status.³⁴ The Senate amendment to the NDAA contained a provision that would require the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) to submit an intelligence assessment on the threat posed by Boko Haram, following which, the Secretary of State would be required to submit a report to Congress on the U.S. strategy to counter this threat.³⁵ The Senate-passed version contained a similar provision that was introduced as an amendment by Senator Scott Brown.³⁶ The 2013 NDAA, including the Boko Haram provision, was signed into law on January 2, 2013.³⁷

Several other Members of Congress weighed in on the issue of Boko Haram, thanks in part to the attention drawn to the group on Capitol Hill by the work of the HHSC. Congresswoman Michele Bachmann (R-MN) led a letter to Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan regarding the growing violence of Boko Haram and suggestions for countering the insurgency.³⁸ Congressmen Mike Pompeo (R-KS) and Michael Capuano (D-MA) also sent a letter to Secretary Clinton with the House International Religious Freedom Caucus, asking that the Secretary denounce Boko Haram’s actions and acknowledge the religiously-motivated nature of their attacks. The letter also encouraged Secretary Clinton to consider USCIRF’s recommendation to designate Nigeria as a Country of Particular Concern.³⁹

The Way Ahead: The 113th Congress and Beyond

As Congress awaits a response from the DNI and Secretary of State, pursuant to the Boko Haram provisions in the 2013 NDAA, Senator Risch introduced S. 198, The Boko Haram Terrorist Designation Act on January 31, 2013. S.198 would require the DOS to submit a report to Congress within 30 days of passage that, after consultation with the intelligence community, determines whether Boko Haram meets the criteria necessary to be labeled as an FTO. Additionally, this legislation takes a harsher line on Boko Haram, by adding that ‘[i]t is the sense of Congress that Boko Haram meets the criteria for designation as a foreign terrorist organization...and should be designated as such’.⁴⁰ Additionally, during the Senate Armed Services Committee hearing for General David Rodriguez, the new commander of U.S. Africa Command, several questions were raised by Senator Kelly Ayotte (R-NH) and others regarding the threat of Boko Haram and American strategy to counter that threat.⁴¹

Despite the continued attention to the group, Congress did miss several opportunities to call even greater attention to the group. Confirmation hearings were held in early 2013 for the three highest national security positions in the administration: Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, and Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. Unfortunately, political controversies dominated the line of questioning from senators during these hearings on issues ranging from use of drones to dedication to Israel, and no questions were asked regarding Boko Haram.⁴²

The U.S. Congress should, and will, continue to shed light on the nature of the threat to the U.S. posed by Boko Haram as well as provide oversight and recommendations for military and diplomatic strategies to counter the group's threat and influence. As crisis rages on in Mali, with evidence of Boko Haram fighters involved, Congress remains attentive to the group.⁴³ Representative Edward Royce (R-CA), the new Chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, has been following the rise of Boko Haram since at least 2009, as is documented by his 'Foreign Intrigue Blog', posts on the group. As Chairman, he will have many opportunities to draw attention to Boko Haram in Congress.

In a recent speech, AFRICOM Commander General Carter Ham likened Boko Haram to AQ of the 1990s, which shows his perspective on the group's future potential.⁴⁴ In a time of fiscal austerity and uncertainty, it is essential that individual Members of Congress and Congressional Committees continue to highlight the threat of Boko Haram in order to maintain funding for intelligence collection as well as crucial programs and partnerships such as the USTSCP and humanitarian aid to Nigeria. It is imperative that Congress maintains its careful attention to the rise of Boko Haram and takes all steps in its power to prevent an attack on American interests abroad or the U.S. Homeland.

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²⁴ 'Terrorist Designations of Boko Haram Commander Abubakar Shekau, Khalid al-Barnawi, and Abubakar Adam Kamar', [press release], United States State Department, 21 June, 2012, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/06/193574.htm>

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Boko Haram and the Isolation of Northern Nigeria: Regional and International Implications

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Boko Haram's violent campaign for an Islamic state in northern Nigeria has led to the growing isolation of this region. Trade in Kano, the economic hub of the north, is estimated to have been cut by half in recent years. Roughly \$15 billion worth of annual trade and two million traders from neighboring countries used to flow through Kano. As Boko Haram's violent attacks have increased, fewer traders are crossing the border to take the risk. This coincides with a stream of businesses leaving northern states from Borno to Kaduna for greater stability in the south. Boko Haram's high-profile kidnapping of French tourists in February 2013 accelerated the plunge in travel in the region. Internet and cell phone access have similarly been restricted due to Boko Haram's bombing of 24 base transceiver stations belonging to at least six telecommunications companies in the northeast.

While President Goodluck Jonathan's declaration of a State of Emergency in May 2013 applied only to the three northeastern states of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa, the cumulative effect of Boko Haram's violence and intimidation is the growing seclusion of an entire tier of northern states. Such isolation serves Boko Haram's aims well. Ideologically, the sect claims it seeks a purified version of Islam. Severing the region's links with the outside world curbs the influence of external ideas, technology, and resources – leaving more space for the group's message.

The growing isolation of northern Nigeria parallels patterns observed in northern Mali in the years prior to the French-West African military intervention in January 2013 when Islamic militants gained influence and control of large tracts of territory. Comparable patterns of isolation were seen in Pakistan's Tribal Areas and southeastern Somalia under al-Shabaab. In the latter case, this control included barring humanitarian assistance to the famine-affected areas in the 2011 East Africa drought.

Regional and International Implications

Isolation is not only problematic for northern Nigeria but also holds important regional and international implications. To start, it confounds external understanding of the complex dynamics unfolding on the ground. This includes assessing the relevance of Boko Haram within the surge of Islamic militantism across the Sahel. While Boko Haram originated and still largely exists as a homegrown insurgency, it has increasingly taken on international features. The group is now

reported to have fighters from Benin, Chad, Mauritania, Niger, Somalia, and Sudan. The funneling of these combatants into northern Nigeria is likely to increase as al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and its militant partners are forced from their redoubts in northern Mali. Boko Haram's dramatic jump in capacity in 2011, its declared association with al-Qaeda, and the adoption of tactics used in the global Salafist playbook, such as the use of suicide bombers and improvised explosive devices, suggest active influences and support from the international jihadist network.

From the perspective of external actors, ambiguity created by the fluid dynamics in the north fosters hesitancy for the government's stabilization efforts. This is reinforced by reports of human rights violations perpetuated by the Nigerian security forces in pursuit of Boko Haram. Withdrawal of external technical and political support would weaken the stabilization effort, however. The Nigerian government can benefit from the hard-earned lessons of population-centric domestic counter-insurgency operations gleaned from its regional and international allies. Failure to make adjustments to Nigeria's military response risks inflaming the legitimate grievances of communities in northern states and stimulating a recruiting boon for Boko Haram. This will expand the duration (and likely scope) of the instability leading to further isolation and deterioration of living conditions for those living in northern Nigeria.

Experience from other parts of Africa and beyond shows that the longer a low-intensity conflict lingers, the greater the likelihood this crisis will metastasize. This could take numerous forms including: Boko Haram splintering into even more violent and politically irreconcilable parts (a process that may already be underway), the acceleration in the spill-over of instability into neighboring countries, an expansion in the number of displaced and exiled persons, Boko Haram's linking up with transnational narcotics traffickers to boost funding for its insurgency, an increase in inter-religious attacks elsewhere in Nigeria, and the shifting of terrorist attacks to soft targets throughout the country, among other possibilities.

There are other important but indirect regional and international implications posed by the Boko Haram instability. Nigeria's sustained deployment of troops in its northern states means Nigeria will be less able to contribute peacekeeping troops to regional peace operations. Nigeria has historically played a leadership role in such regional

security initiatives, and is Africa's second largest troop-contributing country with forces serving in 10 different peacekeeping missions in Africa in 2013. This includes the largest contingent of troops in northern Mali.

In addition to other trade, Nigeria typically supplies almost half of the Sahel's cereal needs. As a result of the conflict in the north, production is down and prices have spiked causing serious food security concerns in the Sahel, particularly import-dependent, Niger. Isolation, furthermore, undercuts developmental prospects. This is poignantly seen in the global campaign to eradicate polio. Northern Nigeria is one of three locations in the world today where the polio virus persists (Pakistan and Afghanistan being the others). Inaccessibility to the northern region as well as misinformation regarding the purpose of vaccination campaigns risk derailing the latest drive to eradicate the disease – and free up billions of dollars in resources for other public health initiatives around the world.

Politically, the threat posed by Boko Haram and the, at times, heavy-handed response by the Nigerian security sector also threaten to undercut the perceived legitimacy of the government and support for Nigeria's evolving democratization process. In fact, a key element of the narrative put forward by Boko Haram is that the government is corrupt, uncaring, and unrepresentative of interests in the north. If this perspective is accepted by a large enough percentage of northerners, then the validity of future elections and the willingness to resolve competing interests through democratic institutions will be crippled. Perceptions are already widespread in the north that should President Jonathan seek reelection in 2015, the region will be further disenfranchised. Lacking this basic trust poses fundamental challenges to the governability of the north – and the perceived viability of democracy in Africa's most populous state. This, in turn, shapes democratic prospects elsewhere on the continent.

Conclusion

While commonly perceived as solely a domestic problem, the threat posed by Boko Haram has important multinational origins, drivers, and implications. Accordingly, it is important that both the Nigerian government and external partners make a priority of keeping links between northern Nigeria and the outside world open. Ultimately, this is a battle for the trust of the local population. Communications is a central element of the stabilization equation. External

engagement can accelerate the government's learning on this front as well as the broader question of how to confront a dangerous domestic adversary with restraint and sensitivity for civilian casualties. Comparable challenges are being faced in contexts from the Sahel, the Maghreb, and East Africa, to Latin America and East Asia. No one country has all the answers. Yet, opening channels of information-sharing with legitimate actors in these contexts can help avoid some of the most costly mistakes. Enhanced regional security cooperation, particularly with Nigeria's northern neighbors – Chad, Niger, and Cameroon – is of particular priority given the regional elements of the militant threat.

Given the levels of distrust in northern Nigeria, regional and international partners can also play vital roles as honest brokers in fostering dialogue between local communities and the Nigerian government. This, in turn, can contribute to enhanced legitimacy of government leaders. External actors, moreover, can play a vital role in ensuring development resources are reaching communities that have been historically marginalized and hold genuine grievances. Such development assistance may likely be best provided by civil society organizations that have long ties to the local communities. Domestic and international civil society actors can similarly provide a valuable layer of accountability for Nigeria's security sector.

The challenges posed by Boko Haram are emblematic of an emerging security paradigm in Africa today where local grievances are fused with international ideology, funding, and technology. Effectively addressing the multilayers of this threat will require the cooperative engagement of Nigeria's neighbors and international partners.

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