

**BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON NATIONAL
INTEGRATION IN NIGERIA**

Chukwu, C. James (Doctoral Student)
Department of History and International Studies
Nnamdi Azikiwe University,
Anambra State, Nigeria.

ABSTRACT

*Issues bordering on national integration are very critical for the collective interest of any nation. History has demonstrated the difficult, complex and varied developments needed to integrate people under a government and to create a stable cultural, economic, political, and social community among them. The process is even more strenuous especially where the people to be integrated comprise large groups distinguished by their own customs, language, religion, or separate identity. The phenomenon of militancy is not new to Nigeria. The history of past independent Nigeria is replete with cases of militarised groups threatening the very existence of the Nigerian state. The emergence of the militant sect, Boko Haram and all it represents started like any other protest, but it seems to have been the most enigmatic in terms of *raison d'être*, the most violent in terms of *modus operandi* and the most destructive. It is arguably second to none in terms of brutality, savagery, wanton destruction, callousness and its scope of operation. It is on this background that this work examines the historical evolution of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. The paper also highlights the instances of Boko Haram activities in Nigeria. The study also evaluates, the implications of Boko Haram activities on national integration. Finally, the paper proffers solution by way of recommendation to this ugly phenomenon and thereafter. This work adopts diverse secondary sources such as books, journal articles, newspapers, magazines, internet sources and unpublished works using analytical and thematic approaches. Data obtained from secondary sources formed the bulk of this research's tool of assessment.*

Keywords: *Boko Haram, Insurgency, National Integration, Nigeria.*

INTRODUCTION

Every society across the globe has its peculiar problems and challenges. Nigeria is not an exception. As a developing country, she faces her own share of social, political, economic and cultural problems which has in no small measure affected the well-being of the populace (Adebayo 2013).

Conflict in Nigeria is as old as the nation itself, but the frequency and the toll on human lives and properties of recent conflicts by the militant sect *Boko Haram* and all it represents make them more challenging to address. Even though, the activities of the sect *Boko Haram* began in the North-Eastern part of Nigeria and escalates to the other Northern states; the impact of the conflict to national integration cuts across the geo-political zones in the country. It is obvious therefore, that the activities of the sect, beyond Northern region have a wider implication for the continued co-existence, unity and integration of the people in the country.

According to Shuaibu, Salleh, and Shehu (2005), Jama'ah al-Ahlu al-Sunnah Li al-Da Wah wa al-Jihad known as Boko Haram in Hausa which means Western education is forbidden breeds a growing suspicion among Nigerians about the real identity and motive of the sect. the sect has been described as a group with no headquarters, no known place of doing business, no central leadership or authority working, instead, like a decentralised franchise operation (Fabiya 2012).

Suffice it to say that many authors have written a number of factors militating against national integration in Nigeria while looking at it from different perspectives on the current reality of Boko Haram conflict. This work probes into the implication of *Boko Haram* insurgency on national integration in Nigeria. It also identifies the factors aiding the conflicts with a view to providing solutions to them in forms of recommendations.

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY IN NIGERIA

The history and development of Boko Haram insurgents groups in North-Eastern Nigeria can be viewed from two fronts; its initial activities of peaceful movement when the group mainly organised lectures and charity to the needy which covered a period of 2002 to 2009. And its later activities of violent movement which started between 2009 and continue to this time of writing.

The Initial Stage of *Boko Haram* Insurgency

Jama'ah al-Ahlu al-Sunnah Li al-Da Wah wa al-Jihad, better known by its Hausa name Boko Haram is a jihadist terrorist organisation based in the North-east of Nigeria. It is an Islamic movement which strongly opposes man-made laws. The sect first emerged around 2002 as a peaceful local cabalist Islamic movement. The word *Boko Haram* in Hausa means Western education is “sacrilege” or “a sin”. (Eme, et al, 2012). Some analysts view the rise of this radical

movement, *Boko Haram*, as an extension of the Maitatsine uprising in the 1970s and 1980s (Danjibo, 2011). Idowu Samuel posits, “It is not in doubt that Boko Haram is part of the unaddressed issues on religion which the Maitatsine had attended to raise in the northern parts of the country, starting from Kano more than three decades ago. An offshoot of Islam called the ‘Yari’ tatsine’ violently rebelled against the authorities and non-members” (Idowu, 2011: 27). These radical Muslims estimated between 3000 and 5000 were inspired by Mohammed Marwa, an Islamic scholar who migrated from the town of Marwa in Northern Cameroun to the city of Kano in 1945 (Idowu).

Lubeck (1985) puts: “Maitatsine and his followers became separated from orthodox Islam by denouncing certain parts of the Holy Qur’an and even criticising secular elites and the wealthy upper classes – consumption of Western goods during the petrol boom in 1974 – 81” (Falola, 1990: 143). It is very obvious that Marwa exploited the dwindling economic situation and the *Almajeri* system and was able to attract large followers amongst the commoners, who, unable to afford the basic necessities of life, became die-hard patriots of the sect and Marwa himself. He was then referred to as *Maitatsine* meaning one who curses, and his sect as *Yari’ tatsine* (those who curse) (Danjibo 2011).

From indications, Maitatsine resurfaced in the garb of Boko Haram in 2009 through a 35 years old Mohammed Yusuf. Yusuf was born in Girgir village of Yobe state; a secondary school drop-out who went to Chad and Niger Republic to study the Qur’an. While in the two countries, he developed radical views that were abhorrent to Westernisation and modernisation. Yusuf got back to Nigeria and settled in Maiduguri. According to Shehu Sani, the *Boko Haram* group started as Sahaba group named Shabaab Muslim Youth Organisation since 1995 under the leadership of Abubakar Lawan who later conceded the leadership to Yusuf to continue his education in university of Medina, Saudi Arabia (Sani 2012, Ekanem and Ejue, 2012).

Yusuf officially founded the group in 2002 with the aim of establishing a Shariah government in Borno state in the city of Maiduguri. He had allegedly opened the group to political influence with the support of the former Governor Ali Modu Sheriff . (in the year 2002 Ali Modu Sheriff was a senator and became governor in 2003) (Gilbert, 2014). He established a religious complex that included a Mosque and a school where many poor families from across Nigeria, particularly the Northern states and from neighbouring Chad and Niger enrolled their children (Chothia,

2012). Subsequently, the sect had been conducting its activities peacefully for seven years of the existence of the exemption of Kanamma Skirmishes in 2009 (Cook 2011).

THE LATER AND VIOLENT STATE OF BOKO HARAM

The present *Boko Haram* crises which are the later and violent stage of *Boko Haram* started in 2009. At that time there was new government legislation of wearing helmet for motorcycle riders. The government of Borno state gave the police order to enforce the use of helmet as part of the operation flush out. The members of the sect went out on motorcycles for funeral without wearing helmet and the police stopped them. This resulted in a clash between the police and the sect members, which led to the death of some members of the sect and around eighteen of the members were injured (Uri Friedman, 2014). Human Rights Watch released a report in October 2012, accusing Boko Haram's "widespread and systematic murder and persecution" as likely amounting to "crimes against humanity." In September 2013, Boko Haram was suspected of an attack on a college that killed 40 students. Crisis Group then reported in December 2013 that 200 insurgents, dressed in military uniform, coordinated an attack on state military targets in Maiduguri, and later that month, several hundred fighters attacked military barracks outside Bama. (Briana Burt).

At this point in time, Yusuf became angered and wrote his famous tirade entitled, "An open letter to the Federal Government in which he threatened the government and urged them to respond within forty days with the view to a resolution between the government and the group, and if not then, 'Jihadi' operation will begin in the country which only Allah can stop (Murtada 2013).

Consequently, after forty days, the ultimatum elapsed and the government did not respond to the situation which according to some analysts, the group members started preparing strategies and plans for war. After this incident the leaders of the sect continued preaching for Jihad and armed confrontation (Murtada 2013).

INSTANCES OF BOKO HARAM ACTIVITIES IN NIGERIA

The Nigeria army on 28th July, 2009 reportedly launched an offensive attack on the sect leader, Muhammed Yusuf's compound and a nearby Mosque used by the members in Borno state capital of Maiduguri. This violence between the *Boko Haram* and Nigeria security forces

claimed the lives of 1000 people with over 700 killed in Maiduguri Borno state capital. This crisis later spread to Kano, Yobe and Jigawa states. In Murduguri, 100 bodies were reported to be found beside police headquarters (Umar 2011). Thousands of people fled their homes in order to escape the violence, while several civilian corpses littered the city's streets; many were shot dead after being pulled from cars (BBC Rapport 2009). This violence led to the killing of the sect leader Muhammad Yusuf while in police custody, which brought to the end five days uprising (Murtada, 2013)

Consequently, since the 2009 uprising, the activities of the group appeared to be decimated, but they regrouped and re-emerged in 2010 under the new leadership of Abubakar Shakau. Since the rise of the new leadership, the attacks have escalated in terms of frequency and intensity. The group carried out its first attacks when it orchestrated a large prison break in Septembers, 2010 in Bauchi which led to the escape of more than 700 inmates including its members (VOA Hausa 2010).

Moreover, on 16th June, 2011 the group attacked police headquarters. This is believed to be the first suicide bombing in Nigerian history (Reuters Reporters 2011). In August 2011, a suicide bomber attacked United Nation's headquarters in Abuja leaving many people killed and more than sixty were injured which the then spokesman of the group, known as Abu Qaqa claimed responsibility for (Nossiter 2011).

The attacks from *Boko Haram* have increased both in frequency and intensity since 2009. In January 2012, the sect coordinated and carried out series of deadliest bombing in Kano, a largest commercial city in northern Nigeria. The attack resulted in the death of more than 180 people including large number of security personnel and civilians which is believed to be among the highest death in a single day since the group began its violent campaign in July 2009 (Human Right Watch 2012)

Furthermore, the activities and attacks from the group has escalated in 2013 compelling the Federal Government to declare a state of emergency in three most affected states of the region in May 2013, extending the existing ones that have been declared in some parts of Borno and Yobe in late 2011 (Blanchard 2014). These attacks have increased substantially in frequency between 2013 and 2014 whereby the sect, in April 2014 adopted new tactics of kidnapping female

students and women in the northeastern part of the country. On April 14th 2014, *Boko Haram* kidnapped nearly 300 students from Government Girls Secondary Chibok, as a result of which the United Nations Security Council Committee blacklisted the group on 22nd May, 2014 (Nicholas 2014).

Between 2013 and 2014, more than 5000 people have been killed in Boko Haram violence. United Nation and Nigerian officials reported that more than six million Nigerians have been affected, and more 300, 000 have been displaced. And at least 2000 have been killed in the first half of 2014 (Bianchard, 2014). Consequently, the threats posed by the group recently undermined the existence of Nigeria as one territory. On August 24th, 2014, Shekau, the sect leader declared areas under his sect's control as New Caliphate which would be governed according to strict Islamic codes (Sahara Reporters 2014)

Furthermore, allegation has been raised that the kidnapped school girls by Boko Haram insurgents earlier have been used as suicide bombers. This comes after series of female suicide bombings in the ancient city of Kano during and after *Edi-el-Fitr* (Sallah Festival). A ten-year girl wearing an explosive device was also caught in Katsina state in North-Western Nigeria (Chothia 2014)

Consequently, the group carried out a deadly attack on Kano central Mosque in November 2014. The members of the group set off three suicide bombs and fired the worshippers, killed more than 100 people and injured more than 200 (Nicholas 2014). In a related issue, *Boko Haram* carried out a deadliest massacre in the town of Baga in Borno state in which more than 2000 people were killed. The Amnesty International described the attacks as the worst in the history of the group (Mark 2015).

Nigerian military recaptured Gwoza a historic town in Borno state on 27th March, 2015. Gwoza had been previously captured by *Boko Haram* in August 2014 and was declared an Islamic headquarters by the group whose leader Abubakar Shekau called Islamic caliphate. The Sambisa forest where the insurgents' main camps was located and where the kidnapped Chibok girls were first taken to is also located in Gwoza local government area (Mark 2015).

THE IMPLICATIONS OF BOKO HARAM ACTIVITIES ON NATIONAL INTEGRATION

Socio – Economic Implications

Historically, the regions in Nigeria complement one another. What the North lacks in access to the sea, the South provides. The north wields 78 percent of Nigeria's land which supports most of Nigeria's agriculture (food, cash crops and livestock). The South – West's terrain supports both domestic and international commerce and provides an import/export route. While the South – South and some parts of the South – East wield Nigeria's oil wealth (Business Day, April 18, 2012, retrieved)

With increased intensity of bombings in the North, the gripping tension, insecurity, and suffering occasioned by the sect members and the military actions, subjecting innocent civilians to humiliation, brutalisation, extortion and undue hardship led to the mass exodus of people from the violent zones. On July 2009, for instance, over 3,500 people were internally displaced. More than 1,264 children orphaned, and over 392 women widowed. Properties destroyed including buildings, three primary schools, more than 12 Churches and a magistrate court (Onuoba, 2010).

Dare Dairo argues that the socio – economic implications of Boko Haram activities is not limited to the Northern region as some state governments in the South are already regulating the activities of the Hausa/Fulani in their states. For instance, in Lagos state, commercial activities of Hausa in Magodo and Iseri areas have been restricted and denied in some cases, while some have been suspiciously arrested without legal trial. This no doubt portends threat to national integration. He argues further, "Many of the internally displaced persons, IDPs, reluctantly begin a new life and manage to survive. Those who could not earn their living will be desperate and thus become threat to their host community. As a result different forms of social vices and criminality will set in and consequently are treated with suspicion, discrimination and resistance by the host community. By implication, the thirst for national integration is doomed (Raheen and Babalola 2015). Such consequences include, social disintegration and disruption (among kinship groups, family system, trade linkages, formal and informal associations, disruption of education, gender discrimination and abuse, especially rape and sexual violence often manifest); increase in crime, orphans and street begging, joblessness, marginalisation, food insecurity, increased mortality rate (social stress and psychological trauma). It inadvertently affects the economic well-being and integration of people in the country (Raheem and Babalola 2015)

Psycho – Cultural and Political Implications

Kehinde opines that the crises in the North may have psychological implication causing anxiety, suspicion and showing discord and could affect political relationship between Christians and Muslims on the one hand and Southerner versus Northerners on the other hand in future political dispensation (Raheem and Babalola 2015)

Oluseye opines that “the incessant attacks would adversely affect intra and inter-marriage relationship between the South and the North. The Muslim South and the North would find it difficult to allow contacts of their children on one hand, and to a large extent within the Muslim fold in the South who does not belong to the same religious denomination on the other hand, more less Muslim – Christian marrying to one another. Evident reveals that southerners particularly among Yoruba people are members of the *Boko Haram* (Raheem and Babalola 2015)

Moreover, Olasile argues that the daily trouncing of the security and intelligence services is likely to have a demoralising impact. Low ranking members may begin to doubt the ability of their leaders to make the right calls; and the senior ranks too may begin to doubt the vision and the ability of their superiors. These and other factors are likely to have a negative impact on the cohesiveness of the security and intelligence agencies. Thus disintegration set in within the sector. In addition, civilians and even non – civilians have begun to doubt the leadership capability of the government (Raheem and Babalola, 2015). A government that can’t, or that is unable to secure lives and property, will find it difficult to govern or command respect that could promote integration of the electorate. This may consequently lead to a crisis of leadership and when the centre is in turmoil in the face of ethnic and religious bigotry, integration of these groups within the context of national identity and cultural unity is a mirage (Raheem and Babalola, 2015)

Ethnic and Religious Implications

Despite the fact that *Boko Haram* have not extended their major attacks further South than Abuja so far, the group seems to pose indirect threat to attack southern cities like Lagos, Ibadan and Delta. The threats it poses to the South are more indirect. First the potential for an escalation of

inter – communal ethnic and religious tensions and second, the continued erosion of Nigeria's faith in the central government.

Killings by *Boko Haram* and the fear of becoming targets of retaliation has also led to the exodus of Muslim northerners from the southern parts of the country since the beginning of 2012, especially Delta and Edo States where Mosques were allegedly attacked. Attacks on Mosques and Islamic school in January 2012, in the southern communities of Sapele and Benin City suggest that some retaliatory violence has already begun in the south. In Sapele Delta State, a Mosque, a Quranic school and several persons have been attacked by unidentified people who claimed to be retaliating attack on Churches in **the** northeastern parts of the country (Tajudeen, January 23, 2012, p. 20)

CONCLUSION

As the Nigeria state intensifies its campaign against the activities of the *Boko Haram* terrorist group, so has the group continued to wax strong in its destructive activities. This perhaps, has made the group enigmatic. What began as a North-Eastern problem has threatened to spread to the rest of the North, to fuel inter-communal violence in the Middle Belt. In this religiously and ethnically divided country, many eyes will remain fixed, fearfully, on the militants in the North. The longer *Boko Haram* attacks go on, the greater the potential for such vigilante action, the persistent reminder that crisis is pervasive and threatening national integration. And if the bombings and counter-bombings are prolonged, it will give rise to nationwide political instability which will deepen disunity among the various people of Nigeria living in the North.

Recommendations

1. It is a fact of history that development thrives in a peaceful environment. Consequently, all hands must be on deck to ensure peace and stamp out *Boko Haram* insurgency as it is inimical to national integration.
2. Sponsors and sources of funding for the *Boko Haram* insurgency should be traced. The best way to defeat a man in a battle is to cripple his economy. All *Boko Haram* sponsors and sources of funding should be brought to book and crippled.

3. More so, the Nigerian government should intensify surveillance of her borders with the neighbouring countries to control influx of illegal migrants, curtail all unauthorised routes and weapon links.
4. Furthermore, the government of Nigeria, should partner with the international community in addressing the *Boko Haram* insurgency. Terrorism is a global phenomenon; therefore, it is advisable that it should also be addressed through global collaboration.
5. The government should match words with action in dealing with the security challenges in Nigeria. This should include equipping the military, re-organising the police force, settlement of political, economic and religious disputes without favouritism.
6. In addition, poverty should be addressed across the country through employment generation by governments at all levels, collaboration between government and the private sector, revamping ailing firms and empowering youths and women through skills acquisition programmes and agricultural practices, pursuit of economic growth and other indices of development, will promote national integration. These measures cannot be achieved without government addressing the issue of corruption which is the major cause of poverty in Nigeria.
7. Furthermore, the government should put machinery in place through a collaborative effort between national and state orientation agencies, local government areas, traditional ruler, youths, women and religious groups in carrying out re-orientation and enlightenment campaign, particularly in the northern region. Islamic scholars should be engaged to condemn terrorism and preach true tenets of Islam. This will help to address the misconceptions about western education, government activities and other issues used by *Boko Haram* in convincing the youths to support them.
8. Finally, peace education, whatever angle it is perceived, has the tendency to change the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual abilities of people within the context of their cultural, political and social milieus for peaceful and harmonious living. It is a holistic education that moderates unwanted behaviour in a society. It is based on philosophy that teaches non-violence empathy, trust, tolerance, accountability, rejection of direct violence and respect for differences and people. Hence, peace education should be introduced into the Nigeria Education Curriculum at all levels.

REFERENCES

- Adebayo, A. A. (2013), Youths' Unemployment and Crime in Nigeria: A Nexus and Implications for National Development. *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*. 5(8). Pp. 350 – 357
- Blanchard, L. P. (2014, June). Nigeria's Boko Haram: Frequently Asked Questions. In *CRS Report for Congress, Congressional Research Service* (Vol. 10).
- Briana, Burt, "The Crisis in Nigeria," International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect, retrieved from <http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/index.php/crises/crisis-in-nigeria>, on 30/05/2019
- Chothia Farouk (2012). Who are Nigeria's *Boko Haram* Islamists? *BBC News*, Retrieved 2012-01-25, copied online.
- Cook, D. (2011). *The Rise of Boko Haram in Nigeria*. Rice University, copied online (combating Terrorism Center).
- Danjibo, N. D. (2011) *Islamic Fundamentalism and Sectarian Violence: The "Maitatsine" and "Boko Haram" Crises in Northern Nigeria*, Peace and Conflict Studies Programme, Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, IFRA.
- Ekanem, S. A., Dada, J. A. and Ejue, B. J, (2012). *Boko Haram and Amnesty: A Philo-legal Appraisal*. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(4) 321-338.
- Eme, O. I., et al; (2012). Activities of Boko Haram and insecurity Questions in Nigeria *AJBM* 1(9). pp. 77-99.
- Fabiyi, Malcolm *Boko Haram: An Existential Threat to Nigeria Existence* 2012 Oline<http://www.nigeria70.com/nigerian_news_paper/boko_haram_an_existential_threat_to_the_nigeria_na421989> Retrieved 2017-07-11, Copied Online.
- Falola (1990). Title Unknown, in Danjibo N. D., op cit.
- Gilbert, L. D. (2014). *Prolongation of Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria: The International Dimensions*. *Research on Humanities and Social Science*, 4(11) 150-156.
- Human Right Watch, (2012, January, 24). *Nigerian: Boko Haram widens Terror Campaign*. <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/01/23/nigeria-boko-haram-widens-terror-campaign>.
- Idowu, Samuel *Boko Haram: A Hand Shake Beyond Nigeria's Elbow*. *Nigerian Tribune*, Wednesday, 13, July, 2011.
- Lubeck, M. P. (1985). *Islamic Protest Under Semi-Capitalism 'Yan Tatsine Explained'*, *Africa: Journal of the International Affairs Institute*, 55, 4 pp 369-389.
- Mark, M. (January, 2015). *Boko Haram Deadliest Massacre 2000 feared killed*. *Theguardian*.<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/09/boko-haram-deadliest-massacre-baga-nigeria>.

- Murtada, A. (2013). Boko Haram in Nigeria: It's beginning Principles and Activities in Nigeria. salafimanhaj.[http://download.salafimanhaj.com/pdf/SalafiManhaj_Boko Haram.pdf](http://download.salafimanhaj.com/pdf/SalafiManhaj_Boko_Haram.pdf).
- Nicholas, M. (2014, May, 22). *United Nations Council Committee Blacklists Nigeria's Boko Haram*. Reuters Report.
- Nicholas, M. (2014, November, 29). *Friday Mosque Attack Killed 100 Wounded 135 in Nigeria's Kano State Governor*. Reuters Report.
- Nossiter, A. (2011, August, 28). *Islamic Group says it was Behind Fatal Nigeria Attacks*. The New York Times. 29/08/2011.
- Onuoha, F. C. (2014). A Danger not to Nigeria alone – Boko Haram's Transnational Reach and Regional Responses. Publish by: *Friedrick-Ebert-Stiftung. Regional Office Abuja 12 Marrakash Street. Wuse II, Abuja, Nigeria*
- Raheem, Sodiq Olasile and Babalola, Bola Taiwo (2015). *Boko Haram Activities and its Implications for Integration and Development in Nigeria*. International Journal of Scholaely Reseach. 1(1), pp. 61 – 75.
- Shehu, Sani. *Boko Haram: History, Ideas and Revoit* (6). Vanguard Newspaper, Friday, July 8, 2011.
- Shuaibu, S. S., Salleh, M. A., and Shahu, A. Y. (2015). The Impact of Boko Haram Insurgency on Nigerian National Security. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 5(6), 254 – 266.
- Tajudeen, S. *Boko Haram Defies State of Emergency* TELL Magazine, January 23, 2013.
- Umar, S. (2011). The discourses of Salafi radicalism and Salafi counter-radicalism in Nigeria: A case-study of Boko Haram. *Evanston, IL:Northwestern University, 156*.
- Uri Friedman, (2014), "The Bike-Helmet Law That Helped Trigger an Insurgency in Nigeria On unintended consequences, and Boko Haram's murky origins" retrieved from, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/05/the-bike-helmet-law-that-triggered-an-insurgency-in-nigeria/371301/> on 30/05/2019