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Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria

Man, the state, and the international system

Hakeem Onapajo and Ufo Okeke Uzodike

Since the July 2009 Boko Haram terrorist outburst in Nigeria, there have been increasing questions on the phenomenon in the country. There has not been any substantial analysis on the emergence of the Boko Haram group and its terrorist activities in Nigeria as the outrage continues. This study is advanced to explain the phenomenon of Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria. It employs the levels of analysis framework popular in the field of international relations to explain the terrorism at three major levels: individual, state and international. The study relies on dependable news reports, which include interviews with key actors relevant to the subject matter, and finds that Boko Haram terrorism has its roots in the ideology and motivations of its founder and members, the failures and deficiencies of the Nigerian state, and the modern trend of religious terrorism in the international system.

Keywords Boko Haram, levels of analysis, individual, state, international system

Introduction

In July 2009, Nigeria was again drawn into the limelight following the outbreak of terror by the Boko Haram group in the northern part of the country. What appeared from the onset to be merely a public disturbance gradually advanced to a major security threat to the nation and the world, most especially after the group's attack on the United Nations' (UN) office building in Abuja on 26 August 2011. Prior to this attack, the group had been notable for several bombings and killings in Nigeria, against the backdrop of its outright opposition to Western education/civilisation and call for the Islamisation of the country. The government's mishandling of the group's terrorist activities by the summary execution

of its leader, Mohammed Yusuf, and the arrant use of force on its members, also intensified the belligerence of the Boko Haram group, which has, as a result, declared a 'holy Jihad' on Nigeria.

As expected, there have been questions around the emergence of the Boko Haram group and its terrorist attacks in Nigeria. Only a few studies have provided scholarly responses to these questions. However, these studies have not offered adequate representation of the phenomenon. For instance, the group is inappropriately equated with those of Islamic revivalism by Abimbola Adesoji, who chiefly cites the case of the Maitatsine group and its uprising experienced in the same region of Nigeria in 1980.¹ The concept of Islamic revivalism implies a move aimed at dislodging an existing status quo, given its perceived discrepancy with the standards of the authentic Islamic tradition, and restoration of traditional Islamic social order.² In this light, Maitatsine and Boko Haram have little or no connection with Islamic revivalism. Mohammed Marwa of Maitatsine claimed to be another prophet of God and advanced heretic beliefs that clearly contradict Islam.³ On the other hand, Boko Haram, given its wanton killing of innocent individuals including Muslims (whom it claims to represent) and its ideological pursuits, as will be shown, is also miles away from the tradition of Islam and Islamic revivalism. The Boko Haram phenomenon is also examined within the context of the inherent deficiencies of the Nigerian state by Onouna Freedom.⁴ Perhaps because of the time of the inquiry, Freedom could not present sufficient evidence for his analysis and also left many questions unanswered, especially the international dimension to the terrorism of the Boko Haram group.

This study aims, then, at advancing a more compelling explanation for the Boko Haram terror in Nigeria. To capture better the phenomenon and also to avoid the error of a single-cause analysis, this article employs the three levels of analysis framework popularised by Kenneth Waltz on the causes of war and mostly used in the field of international relations. Boko Haram terrorism is therefore explained at the individual, the state and the international system levels.

The paper is organised into six sections. The first section discusses the levels of analysis framework, its usage in modern political and international studies, and as an analytical guide for this article. The second section gives a synopsis of the Boko Haram group, including its origin, philosophy and activities in the country. The third section provides a discussion on the explanation for the terrorism of the group from the perspective of the major individuals that constitute its membership. The fourth section advances a discussion of the group's terrorist activities from the angle of the state, while the fifth section explains the group and its terror within the framework of modern trends in the international system. The sixth section ends with a conclusion and possible suggestions on how to address the terrorism of Boko Haram in Nigeria.

The levels of analysis framework

Social reality exists at various levels, ranging from the micro to the macro.⁵ Given this, the levels of analysis have often been used in the social sciences to explain events at various levels as they relate to the phenomena under investigation. In the field of political and international studies, it was first established by Kenneth Waltz in his seminal work *Man, the State and War*, in 1959. Waltz examined the sets of arguments that have been advanced to explain the causes of war and categorised them according to three levels: the individual, the state,

and the interstate or international system levels, otherwise known as the ‘three images’ of international relations.

The individual level is constructed on the argument that man’s nature and behaviour are central to the outbreak of war. This presupposes that the personality traits, as well as the mental and emotional state of key actors in a state, may have a relationship with the occurrence of wars in the international arena.⁶ The state level is built upon the assumption that the internal composition and condition of a particular state may also explain the outbreak of war. By this, the regime types and internal defects within a state can condition the individuals within it to have a penchant for violence and explain the state’s aggressive approach to issues in the world system.⁷ Finally, the international system level is founded on the position that the anarchical nature of the international arena – where there are sovereign states with no serious legal system to regulate their behaviours, which as a result permits individual states to act on their own to address injustice and pursue ambitions – explains the outbreak of war.⁸

This study employs these three levels to organise systematically and offer explanations for the Boko Haram phenomenon in Nigeria. It demonstrates the extent to which individuals that constitute the *dramatis personae* of the Boko Haram group explain its terrorist activities. This study also explains the terrorism of the group at the state level by establishing a linkage between it and the present condition of the Nigerian state – characterised by deficiencies and failures. While at the international level, the study seeks a relationship between the current wave and rage of religious terrorism in the modern world, which is largely informed by an increased opposition to cultural and economic imperialism in the present world system – and the outbreak of the Boko Haram terror in Nigeria.

The Boko Haram group: origin and ideology

The popular term ‘Boko Haram’ implying ‘education is forbidden’ in the Hausa language is not a registered name given to the group by its founders. It is a media construct that is derived from the perception of the public on the operation of the group. The group is also referred to as *Yusufiyah*, which suggests ‘the movement of Yusuf’ (the founder of the group), by the public. Furthermore, the group is linked to the name *Ahl as-Sunnah Wa al-Jama’a ala Minhaj as-Salaf* (people of the way of the Prophet [SAW] and the community of Muslims in line with the earliest generation of Muslims).⁹ However, the most reliable of all identities attached to the group is that emanating directly from the group itself in a February 2011 release in Maiduguri-Borno state, under the name *Jama’atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda’awati Wal-Jihad* (people of the tradition of the Prophet [SAW] for preaching and striving).¹⁰ This has also been confirmed by one of its major members, Aliyu Tishau, in an interview with African Independent Television, in which he said, ‘I want people to understand that our correct name is *Jama’atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda’awati wal-Jihad*. Those calling our group Boko Haram do so to discredit the group and its ideas.’¹¹

The exact period of its emergence cannot really be ascertained as various conflicting reports abound. In some quarters, it is argued that the group came into existence in 1995 under various names, run under the leadership of one Abubakar Lawan.¹² To others, it emerged in 2002 after some undergraduates from the University of Maiduguri who were disenchanted with Western education met Mohammed Yusuf and established a teaching and evangelisation structure, which later metamorphosed into the group.¹³ The group draws its

membership from all parts of the northern region, including unemployed youths, university undergraduates, migrants from neighbouring countries, and a few elites and their children.¹⁴ Contrary to popular belief that the group is only opposed to Western education, the ideology of the group is centred on its opposition to the totality of Western culture upon which its educational system is founded. Clarifying the issue, the group maintained that:

Boko Haram does not in any way mean 'Western education is sin' as the infidel media continue to portray us. Boko Haram actually means Western civilization is haram. The difference is that while the first gives the impression that we are opposed to formal education coming from the West, that is Europe, which is not true, the second affirms our believe [sic] in the supremacy of Islamic culture (not education), for culture is broader; it includes education but [is] not determined by Western education.¹⁵

In another instance, the founder of the group asserted that seeking knowledge is permissible. However, it must not be contrary to the teachings of Islam. For him, 'any knowledge that contradicts the [principles of] Islam is not allowed by Allah. Astronomy is a kind of knowledge but Allah has forbidden it'.¹⁶ According to him, Western education as a product of the Western culture corrupts Muslims and society, and thus represents the major factor inhibiting the realisation of an Islamic political order.¹⁷ He further stated that, 'democracy and the current system of education must be changed otherwise this war that is yet to start would continue for long'.¹⁸ In addition, Yusuf maintained the belief that the current social system is an imposed one which has historical roots. When questioned on the principle of co-existence in the history of Islam, he gave the following response:

Kafirci [unbelievers' social system] was never imposed on the Prophet (SAW), he came and met it and gradually turned it into an Islamic state but our land was an Islamic state (Northern Nigeria) before the colonial masters turned it to a Kafir land. The current system is contrary to true Islamic beliefs.¹⁹

As a result of the above, members of the group distance themselves from government and private establishments, which they see as being associated with Western culture. Besides, the structure of modern establishments, according to them, prevents a Muslim from observing his daily prayers accurately. Following this, earnings from these establishments are also considered forbidden. In addition, they are opposed to various forms of modern technologies, including televisions, video players and other gadgets, owing to their belief that all these serve as a form of distraction from the worship of God.²⁰

Furthermore, the authorities of the state are conceived to be agents of Western culture. The state serves the purpose of the West by being the major factor that facilitates the promotion of Western ideas in society. As a result, personalities managing the machinery of the state are labeled disbelievers and wrong-doers. In this regard, Yusuf declared that, 'we don't have any quarrel with the public, only the authorities, unless the general public supports the authorities'.²¹ In another instance, the new leader of the group, Abu Muhammad Abubakar bin Muhammad, in his February 2011 address declaring a new attack on their targets, warned members of the public not to 'sit close to where security agents or politicians are living [for the attack] because such people are behind the illegalities being meted on the Muslims'.²² The group also perceives its southern neighbour as an enemy because of its adoption and promotion of Western civilisation in Nigeria. It declared:

We promise the West and Southern Nigeria, a horrible pastime. We shall focus on these areas which is the devil empire and has been the one encouraging and sponsoring Western Civilization into the shores of Nigeria.²³

In addition, Islamic scholars who tend to oppose its teachings are considered enemies and targets of attack. This is evident in the words of a Zaria-based Islamic scholar Sheikh Mohammad Auwal Al-Bani, who accused the group of complicity in the death of a prominent Kano-based Islamic scholar, Sheikh Ja'afar Mohammed, over doctrinal issues. According to Al-Bani:

...at the last lecture Mallam Ja'afar delivered on them [Boko Haram], he was whisked away from the venue, because the Boko Haram people besieged the mosque with dangerous weapons, as he was speaking, they will be shouting 'it's not true, you're a liar, you're an unbeliever,' that was how Ja'afar was whisked away. There and then, they threatened to pursue him to Kano and deal with him; that is why I said they should be the prime suspects.²⁴

The above allegation was never confirmed by any security agency or convincingly proven in a court of law, which makes it difficult to be completely trusted for a serious study. However, the group has mentioned in its recent address that:

We are just fighting those who are fighting us, soldiers and police and the rest; and anybody, even if he is a learned Muslim teacher, if we confirm that he exposes us to the government, his children will become orphans and his wife will become a widow, God's willing. That is our way.²⁵

Jihad is declared on identified enemies. The group's conception of jihad is for self-defence and its members who are killed in the process are conceived as martyrs. Mohammed Yusuf stated thus:

I received information that my followers were attacked in different locations at Bui. Initially I thought it was an attempt by the authorities to justify their plan to arrest me but I later gathered reliably that our brothers were doing what Allah said, arm yourself to defend yourself and your religion in the face of an attack and an attack was eminent. This was what Malam Hassan [bomb victim] was doing when he became a martyr.²⁶

The ultimate goal of the group is the establishment of a socio-political system based on its conception of the traditional Islamic model. According to the Da'wah Coordination Council of Nigeria, the group advocates 'another system of education based purely on the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah as understood by the earliest generation of Muslims (*Salafs*)'. It is, however, suggested by this Council (consisting of learned Islamic scholars) that a curriculum for this system of education does not exist.²⁷ Furthermore, the group anticipates a political system modeled after the Taliban's in Afghanistan. By this, it attempts an independent state that comprises all the characteristics of the modern state, including a government, population, territory and strong security base, which would be run by its ideology. It also advocates an economic system that would basically be characterised by trading and farming as alternatives to the modern economic system characterised by capitalism.²⁸

The individual level: Mohammed Yusuf and others

Many scholars have painstakingly searched for answers to the reasons why individuals become terrorists. They have forwarded some explanations for the motivations behind terrorism from different viewpoints. In the first perspective, it is postulated that terrorism is an outcome of psychopathology or ‘maladjusted personality syndromes’.²⁹ This suggests that individuals that engage in the act of terror have some level of mental disorder or abnormal personality traits. This argument has, however, been substantially proven to have little connection with terrorism from several angles. For instance, Silke noted in the body of literature around the thesis of psychopathology that ‘the critique finds that the findings supporting the pathology model are rare and generally of poor quality’.³⁰ Similarly, Kruglanski and Fishman write that ‘the systematic quest for a terrorist psychopathology or for a unique terrorist personality profile has yielded disappointing results’.³¹ Following this, it is further established from findings that most terrorists have a mental and personality state like any other normal individual.³²

Given the failure of the psychopathology perspective on terrorism, some scholars have advanced an argument on the combination of personal and socio-environmental factors to understand an individual’s gravitation towards terrorism. By this thesis, factors including socioeconomic circumstances, education, ideology, history, poverty, relative deprivation, parental upbringing, culture and others that surround a personality may contribute to its resolve to engage in terrorism.³³ As a result of this, several motives may therefore inform the resolve to go into terrorism by an individual. In this light, Kruglanski and Fishman categorise these motives into three factors: the ideological, personal, and ‘sense of social duty and obligation’.³⁴ The set of belief systems an individual adopts may condition his behaviour and explain his involvement in terrorist activities. Individuals may also get involved in terrorism for personal reasons, which might be centred around seeking revenge, material benefits, glory and honour, and significance, or informed by alienation and humiliation.³⁵ In addition, individuals may also engage in terrorism upon the feeling of the duty to promote or uphold the ideals of their immediate society.³⁶

Boko Haram and the ideological factor

The animosity between the Boko Haram group and the Nigerian state was originally informed by the ideology and preaching of its former leader and founder, Mohammed Yusuf. Going by reports, Yusuf was a brilliant student of a prominent and influential Islamic scholar in Kano, Sheik Jafar Mohammed – who was assassinated on the eve of the 2007 general elections in Nigeria. Prior to the death of the latter, Yusuf had fallen out with him over doctrinal matters.³⁷ This explains the position in some quarters that Yusuf did not acquire enough Islamic education from the *madrasah* and therefore lacked the capacity to promote an Islamic ideology and make pronouncements on important Islamic matters. As mentioned earlier, Yusuf’s belief system and behaviours were predicated upon a strong opposition to the philosophical underpinning of Western education and civilisation. He also saw the state as an image of Western ideas and systems, given its secular nature. Because of this, he and his followers isolated themselves from the state and flagrantly disobeyed constituted laws. Yusuf maintained the belief that he and his followers ‘will rather die than to succumb to the corrupt system in the country’.³⁸ It is against this backdrop that the group had a series of clashes with state security operatives before the July 2009 event that brought the issue of Boko Haram into the limelight.

The bloody event in July 2009 occurred after the group refused to obey a new national law on the use of crash helmets by motorcyclists, on the premise that, according to Boko

Haram's doctrine, the government is illegitimate. Following this, a violent encounter ensued between the group and the state agency responsible for the enforcement of this law in Operation Flush. Seventeen of its members were shot and injured in this process. Many others were also arrested, while their bases were invaded by the security operatives. The group eventually mobilised its members for a reprisal attack, which led to the death of several policemen and innocent individuals. This generated intense violence that spread rapidly to several parts of the North as the group's members across the region unleashed terror in support of their headquarters and brethren in Maiduguri.³⁹ In response to this, the state launched a massive crackdown on the members of the group in their bases, including mosques and the private homes of their relatives. Mohammed Yusuf was apprehended in the process, and summarily executed. Some other prominent members of the group, including its alleged financier, Alhaji Buji Foi, were also summarily executed. As it soon became apparent, the aftermath of this event seems to be an important factor in the ongoing terrorist attacks by this group in Nigeria.

Boko Haram on revenge mission

Crenshaw argues that 'vengeance on behalf of comrades' represents 'a single emotion that drives the individual to become a terrorist.'⁴⁰ Evidently, this is the case with many members of the Boko Haram group after the carnage that followed the massive clampdown by the state in the July 2009 incident. It is important to mention here that Mohammed Yusuf and other prominent members of the group, and their family members, were executed in an extrajudicial manner by the state. After being caught alive, Yusuf was openly shot dead at the premises of the Police Command Headquarters. The Command's spokesperson said afterwards that 'he [Yusuf] has been killed. You can come and see his body at the state police command headquarters'.⁴¹ His bullet-ridden body was also grotesquely displayed for journalists and others to photograph. Similarly, Buji Foi – a former commissioner in Borno state alleged to be the financier of the group – was also arrested, paraded and summarily executed at the Command Headquarters twenty-four hours after Yusuf's execution.⁴² Also murdered was Yusuf's father-in law, Alhaji Baa Fugu Mohammed, who had no connection with the group, after he reported to the police for interrogation.⁴³ More than 800 people were reportedly killed, most of whom were innocent, during the terror unleashed on the group by the state. It was also reported that Muslims in the region had to shave their beards to avoid police intimidation, arrant arrests and killings during the crisis.⁴⁴

Following these horrendous killings, prominent members of the group resolved to retaliate and make Nigeria ungovernable. For instance, Abubakar Shekau, Yusuf's deputy and proclaimed leader of the group, declared that 'I have the intention to retaliate' after he resurfaced from his hideout a year later.⁴⁵ It was also reported that the group 'passed a death sentence' on the incumbent governors of Borno and Bauchi states for the killing of their members in those states.⁴⁶ Furthermore, members of the group vouched to continue with its guerilla warfare in the country in an address sent to the media given 'the nonsense going on in this country. They claim that they want to reconcile with us, yet they poison our brothers to death and then bury them in a mass grave'.⁴⁷ Similarly, Aliyu Tishau, another prominent member of the group, informed the media that

government should rebuild houses, mosques and schools demolished in Bauchi and Borno states. Government should not interfere in the genuine worship of our group and

ensure justice for all. If these are not in place, I predict that the Nigerian situation may become like what is happening in Somalia.⁴⁸

In the same light, the attorney of Yusuf's in-laws, Anayo Adibe, also mentioned that 'Boko Haram became violent because of the perceived injustice done its members in the past'.⁴⁹

Monetary benefits

There is also ample evidence that some members of the group are involved in terrorism because of the monetary rewards that accompany it. In some cases there are direct payments for recruitment into the group. The case of Abdulrasheed Abubakar is a good example. Abubakar told journalists upon his arrest that he was paid the sum of US\$500 to be trained as a bomb specialist in Afghanistan and was promised another US\$35 000 if he returned for more training.⁵⁰ Others are paid directly to engage in suicide bombing. It was reported by the *Nigerian Tribune* that 'a fee of N10 million [approximately US\$63 500] is being used as a bait to recruit each suicide bomber used in the attacks so far'.⁵¹ Similarly, it was also reported that Mohammed Manga, the man who carried out the June 16, 2011 suicide bomb attack on the Nigerian police headquarters in Abuja, was paid the sum of 4 million Nigerian naira (approximately US\$25 400), which he willed to his family members.⁵² Besides these, some simply enjoy the proceeds from attacks on banks. This is against the backdrop of a series of attacks on several banks in the metropolis of Maiduguri and other areas of their operation. They usually justify the act by the assertion that they 'investigated the affected banks and found that the owners and majority of its depositors were big men who siphoned public funds and kept them there. We also discovered that even if we take the money, government would definitely pay them'.⁵³

State level: Nigeria as a failing state

Chinua Achebe, a Nigerian poet, wrote in 1983 that Nigeria 'is an example of a country that has fallen down; it has collapsed'.⁵⁴ This statement perfectly illustrates the chaotic situation in present-day Nigeria, though things had not reached this perilous state at the time of Achebe's writing. Today, Nigeria typifies a good example of a failing or weak state that is fast gravitating towards a failed or collapsed state like Somalia and others. The extant literature on state failure and its categories seems useful in this regard. According to Robert Rotberg, 'nation-states fail because they can no longer deliver positive political goods to their people'.⁵⁵ These political goods include security, education, healthcare, social infrastructures, employment opportunities, and the legal framework for law and order.⁵⁶ As a result of this, the government loses its legitimacy in the eyes of its citizens. The state is therefore characterised by an intense and 'enduring' violence, which is usually directed against the existing government.⁵⁷ Nigeria clearly fits into this graphic description. It has for long appeared on the danger list of the *Failed State Index* published annually by *Foreign Policy*. At present, it ranks 14th of the failed states in the world.⁵⁸

State failure in Nigeria has a direct connection with the state's high level of corruption, as Rotberg has rightly argued: 'state failure is man-made and not merely accidental'.⁵⁹ Nigeria is a country where corruption is celebrated as a political culture. State resources are usually siphoned by political elites to enrich themselves and oppress the masses. Regimes are irresponsible, and irresponsive to the demands of the people. The country's transition to democracy in 1999 after a series of military regimes has translated into nothing meaningful for the

people. Rather, there have been increasing rates of poverty and unemployment in the country. A recent report from the World Bank indicates that 54.7 per cent of the nation's population lives in abject poverty.⁶⁰ Hence, there is general discontent in the country from an army of unemployed youths. Non-state actors including religious and ethno-tribal leaders often intervene to ameliorate the sufferings of the people and thus enjoy absolute loyalty from them. These actors easily employ the masses, most especially the youths, to advance their personal, political and economic interests. They further exploit the porosity of the state's borders and general security deficiencies in the country to smuggle all manner of arms and ammunitions to cause chaos in the state for the promotion of their individual interests. This has driven Nigeria back to the Hobbesian state of nature in which life is 'poor, nasty, brutish and short'. Recently, Nigeria has been a theatre of war following a series of ethno-religious, ethno-tribal and political conflicts that have left thousands of people dead – particularly in the Niger Delta and northern region of the country.

It is within the context of the above that the terrorism of Boko Haram can be properly understood from the level of the state. It must be noted that the menace of Boko Haram thrives in the northern part of Nigeria, which has the highest rates of poverty and illiteracy in the country. Data from the national office of statistics indicate that the North consistently topped the list of poverty incidence at a regional level in the country between 1980 and 1996.⁶¹ Indeed, Charles Soludo, the immediate past governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, raised the alarm that the consistently high rate of poverty in the country is a 'northern phenomenon' and a 'national crisis' that deserved urgent attention. Supporting his argument with statistical facts, he confirmed that eight out of the ten states with the highest incidence of poverty in the country in 2008 were from the northern regions, and that poverty in some of the northern states was as high as 95 per cent.⁶² It has already been mentioned that some members of the group are motivated by monetary benefits, coupled with the fact that most of its members are unemployed youths. This, no doubt, shows the extent of the needs and grievances of the people involved in the group's terror. The factor of widespread poverty and unemployment was also specially highlighted in the final report submitted by the Presidential Committee on the menace of the group to the government in September 2011.⁶³ This informs the assertion of the former president of the country, Olusegun Obasanjo, that he would have addressed the issue of poverty and unemployment in the region as a major strategy to end the consistent killings from the group.⁶⁴

Besides poverty, inadequate security, the negligence of security officers and general impunity in the country are clearly significant factors that aid the activities of the group. It was reported that there were a series of warnings and reports to the police and government of the imminent danger of the group by imams within its areas of operation, but there was no response to these warnings until the group's major clash with security operatives in July 2009.⁶⁵ Similarly, reports indicate that Mamman Nur, the mastermind behind the August 2011 attack on the UN building, and others in the group were earlier arrested and released by the country's State Security Service (SSS). According to the report, 'top security officials in the administration of then President Umaru Yar'Adua, released the rounded-up men shortly after their arrests, with some facing a few hasty sham trials'.⁶⁶ In addition, after the attack on the UN building the National Security Adviser (NSA) to the President also admitted the weakness of the security apparatus of the state in the following words:

This morning, I was asked to brief the council on security issues across the country. We reviewed what we believe was the true situation. There are security issues all over;

problems in the Niger Delta, crisis in Jos, kidnapping in parts of the country, but the focus was on what was considered topical at this point. Explosives everywhere, especially Police Headquarters, UN building and although there are claims as to who was responsible, the important thing is that we as a nation should realise that we are facing challenges that are relatively new to us.⁶⁷

Furthermore, the Presidential Panel commissioned to probe the menace of Boko Haram submitted that 'there was no effective and co-ordinated intelligence gathering and deployment to forestall crime' following the most recent attacks by the group.⁶⁸ The porosity of Nigeria's borders has also aided easy access to arms and ammunition used by the group. An Islamic scholar, Sheik Mohammad Auwal Al-Bani, familiar with the operations of the group said that its members 'load weapons on top of camel[s] in the name of grazing and enter Nigeria' from neighbouring countries including Chad and the Niger Republic.⁶⁹ In addition, thriving illegal bomb manufacturing in the country has also facilitated the terrorism. For instance, in September 2011 in Chechnya village, in a remote part of the Tafa Local Government area of Niger State, the SSS raided a bomb-making factory that had a significant connection with the group.⁷⁰ Similarly, a bomb-making industry was discovered in Rafin Guza area of Kaduna state in April 2011.⁷¹ This is also coupled with the fact that the Nigerian judicial system is slow in its prosecution of suspected terrorists and general criminal cases. It has been reported that more than 200 arrested members of the group are still being held in various prisons in the country, without trial.⁷² This is also somewhat informed by the general insecurity in the country. It was reported that judges were reluctant to try the suspects for the 'fear that they and their families may become targets of attacks by members of the sect if they appear before their courts'.⁷³

International system level: religious terrorism in the modern era

David Rapoport has provided a useful analysis of the nature of terrorism in the modern international system in his study on the 'four waves' of terrorism in history.⁷⁴ According to him, the modern wave of terrorism is religious in nature and 'Islam is at the heart of the wave'.⁷⁵ It was dramatically kick-started by the Iranian revolution and the resistance to the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan, both in 1979. The success of these two historic events caused ripples across the Muslim world. It was perceived as a symbol of the triumph of Islam against external values and influences, most especially those of the West, in the Muslim world. This produced a community of militant youths who violently expressed their long and deep grievances over the consequences of the defective structure of the international system engineered by Western imperialism. This has been exacerbated by the American 'war on terror' in Muslim countries following the September 11 attacks. Muslims perceive this as an agenda by the West to marginalise and oppress them further.⁷⁶

Manuel Castells believes that this violent trend is a 'defensive reaction' to the contradictions that accompany a neo-liberal world of globalisation. He sees the root causes of fundamentalism in the Muslim world as an outcome of the 'failure of economic modernization' in the 1970s and 1980s that 'could not adapt to the new conditions of global competition and technological revolution'.⁷⁷ Similarly, John Esposito posits that the wave of Islamic revivalism in the Muslim world relates to the wrong equation, by Muslim political elites, of the concept

of modernisation with Westernisation. Muslim political elites misconceived development with Westernisation by making everything Western and secular.⁷⁸

The north of Nigeria, a predominantly Muslim society, has undergone rapid transformations over the years with the modern age of globalisation. This has occasioned dramatic effects on its conservative society, most especially in cultural and economic terms. For instance, the intense penetration of foreign cultures into the society in northern Nigeria via globalisation has given rise to new social developments in its modern society, which strongly contradict its traditional culture. Rudolf Gaudio's ethnographic study⁷⁹ of the northern Nigerian society gives an excellent account of the recent increase in '*yan daudu* (homosexuals) and *karuwanci* (prostitution) in the city of Kano, considered 'the hub of a transnational network of '*yan daudu* and independent women' in the modern Hausa-speaking community of Nigeria.⁸⁰ The immediate effect of this trend has been an increasing death rate arising from HIV/AIDS, which had been low in the region before. Also, the new age of cinema and video cultures, which are fast enveloping the society in this digital age of advanced video technology and cinematography, and which was enhanced by the liberalisation of the Nigerian media in the 1980s, provides another good example. Previously, cinema life was confined to the *Sabon Gari* (foreign quarters) inhabited by migrants from southern Nigeria, popularly classified as 'an enclave of disrepute' and characterised by 'dissolute characters', with reasons close to the preservation of the people's Islamic culture.⁸¹ In recent times, the cinema has grown rapidly and 'has become for many Hausa a condensed sexual space, an arena of pleasure and desire'.⁸² The prevalence of the cinema in modern Hausa society challenges the local culture of the region, including the *kulle* (female seclusion) suggesting the restriction of women from 'mixed-sex spaces', which the cinema symbolises.

At the economic level, agricultural activity, representing the traditional economic enterprise of the people, has also been severely dislocated in the age of modern globalisation. Ronald Baxter, on the eve of Nigeria's independence in 1960, described the region as a hub of farming as it 'draws its life from the good earth' and that about 19 out of every 20 northerners made their living from the earth.⁸³ As a result, the North was synonymous with the age of groundnut production in the early economic history of Nigeria. However, the increasing changes in the global economy and its corresponding transformation of the Nigerian economic structure have displaced the inherent farming institution in the region. The arrant liberalisation of the economy via the International Monetary Fund's Structural Adjustment Policy (SAP), religiously pursued by the regime of Ibrahim Babangida between 1986 and 1993, significantly contributed to the fall of the agricultural economy of the region. ZA Bonat's study provides an excellent insight into the extent to which the region suffered a great setback in farming under the regime of structural adjustment in the country.⁸⁴ According to him, the deregulation of the nation's economy set the stage for the sharp decline in farming in the north. It affected the pattern of allocation and ownership of resources for agricultural enterprises in the region. All efforts towards addressing the situation have weakened further, as economic liberalisation remains the only considered approach to national growth by recent regimes. This has afforded Chinese textile investors ample opportunity to dominate the nation's textile industry, thereby frustrating all attempts geared towards the revitalisation of the region's economy, which also had a booming textile industry before the SAP.⁸⁵

Against the backdrop of the above, there has been a heightened repugnance for Western values in the north of Nigeria. Many Islamic radical and militant groups have sprung up recently to express their outright opposition to Western systems. Most of these were also significantly motivated by trends in other parts of the Muslim world. In this regard, a recent

survey of the Washington-based *Terror Free Tomorrow* indicates that more Nigerian Muslims than their fellow Christians are opposed to US anti-terrorism efforts in the world, especially in the Muslim countries.⁸⁶ This global trend, to some extent, has a close connection with the general implementation of the Sharia system in the northern part of the country in the early phase of Nigeria's democratic era.

It is within this context that the international dimension of the Boko Haram issue can be better explained. The group advances an ideology that completely rejects modernity in Western and secular terms. It sees Western modernity as the cause of myriad social crises within its conservative Islamic environment. For instance, it explicitly mentioned in one of its addresses that:

In this case, we are talking of Western ways of life which include constitutional provision as it relates to, for instance the rights and privileges of women, the idea of homosexuality, lesbianism, sanctions in cases of terrible crimes like drug trafficking, rape of infants, multi-party democracy in an overwhelmingly Islamic country like Nigeria, blue films, prostitution, drinking beer and alcohol and many others that are opposed to Islamic civilization.⁸⁷

In addition, it claims to have an affiliation with other international terrorist networks and to operate in line with their global agenda for the institutionalisation of a united system for Muslims of the world. In this regard, it states that:

the Boko Haram is an Islamic Revolution which impact [sic] is not limited to Northern Nigeria, in fact, we are spread across all the 36 states in Nigeria, and Boko Haram is just a version of the Al Qaeda which we align with and respect. We support Osama bin Laden, we shall carry out his command in Nigeria until the country is totally Islamised which is according to the wish of Allah.⁸⁸

The group has also been consistently linked to the Taliban in Afghanistan and al-Shabaab in Somalia. It was reported that some of its members underwent bomb-making training in Afghanistan following confessions from Abdurashheed Abubakar.⁸⁹ Furthermore, a top US Military Commander for Africa, General Carter Ham, suggested that the Boko Haram group was in the process of establishing an operational relationship with al-Qaeda in the Maghreb and wanted to have a 'loose partnership' with al-Shabaab.⁹⁰

The group's attack on the UN building in Abuja also clearly indicates that its grievances and targets are transnational and multinational in nature. It issued the following statement after the attack:

All over the world, the UN is a global partner in the oppression of believers. We are at war against infidels. In Nigeria, the Federal Government tries to perpetuate the agenda of the United Nations.... We have told everyone that the UN is the bastion of the global oppression of Muslims all over the world.⁹¹

Following this, the US Ambassador to Nigeria, Terence McCulley, suggested that the Boko Haram group had gone transnational as 'it wishes to expand its scope beyond the domestic' and 'it would only be foolish to consider that we [US] are not a possible target as well'.⁹² It is against this backdrop that the US Congress expressed that 'Boko Haram has quickly

evolved and poses an emerging threat present to US interests and the US homeland.⁹³ The US Congress therefore advocated for a partnership between the government of the US and Nigeria to fight the threat posed by the group.

Conclusion

Having established that the current terrorism of the Boko Haram group in Nigeria has multi-dimensional factors that are located within the parameters of the individual, state and international system levels, it is plausible that strategies to address the issue should also be multi-dimensional in consideration of these three major variables. It should start right from the lowest levels of the household and religious institutions. There is a need for families and religious leaders to guide their wards and followers away from uninformed ideological currents that tend towards terrorism. It should be re-emphasised at the state level that the government needs actively to respond to the plight of its people. Increasing rates of poverty and unemployment should be seriously addressed. Some gravity also needs to be accorded to security issues in the country. The government also needs to ensure adequate protection of domestic cultures and economies in the age of neo-liberal globalisation. In addition, the international system must also offer meaningful cooperation with Nigeria to build its state capacity and also combat the scourge of violence in the country, including the Boko Haram menace. Finally, global injustice causing disaffection in many parts of the world, most especially in the Muslim world, requires serious attention. Countries need to be subjected to the basic principles of international law for the achievement of meaningful peace in the world.

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