The Inordinate Activities of Boko Haram: a Critical Review of Facts and Challenges

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Abstract: The insecurity caused by Boko Haram's insurgency is among the primary challenges faced by Nigeria. The group's activities in the North have resulted in thousands of casualties, the displacement of more than one million people, the destruction of hundreds of schools, mosques, churches and government establishments and have ravaged the economy of the region. The nefarious actions of the sect even undermine the existence of the country as a single sovereign political territory. In fact, the group's appalling operations made it the deadliest terrorist organization worldwide in 2015. The dynamics, sophistication and boldness of the sect's actions have raised fundamental questions about national security and governance. In March 2015 the faction, through its leader Abubakar Shekau pledged allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and further declared that territories under its control belong to the Islamic State and will be governed under orthodox Islamic Sharia law. The authors contend that economic deprivation and want, poverty, illiteracy, inequality and corruption are among the principal factors propelling Boko Haram's violent rampage across northern Nigeria. This study investigates the activities of the sect, whilst underscoring the need for a permanent solution to terrorism and insurgency in Nigeria.

Key words: Boko Haram, Terrorism, Insurgency, Poverty, Islamic fundamentalism, Northeastern Nigeria

Resumen: La inseguridad ocasionada por la insurgencia de Boko Haram es uno de los mayores desafíos a que se enfrenta Nigeria. Las actividades de este grupo en el norte del país han causado miles de víctimas mortales, más de un millón de desplazados, la destrucción de decenas de colegios, mezquitas, iglesias e instalaciones gubernamentales, sacudiendo la economía de la región. Las dañinas acciones de la secta han llegado incluso a socavar la integridad de Nigeria como Estado soberano. De hecho, las agresivas operaciones de este grupo llevaron a que se convirtiera en el grupo armado que originó más muertes en el mundo durante 2015. Las dinámicas, sofisticación y audacia de sus acciones han llevado a que cuestione la propia seguridad y gobernabilidad del país. En marzo de 2015, Abubakar Shekau, líder de la secta, proclamó su lealtad al Estado Islámico de Iraq y el Levante (ISIL), afirmando además que los territorios bajo control de Boko Haram pertenecen al Estado Islámico y se gobernarán bajo los principios de la sharía. Los autores del artículo sostienen que los principales factores que han hecho posible la devastadora violencia de Boko Haram son las carencias y necesidades desatendidas, la pobreza mate-

rial, el analfabetismo, la desigualdad y la corrupción que caracterizan al noreste del país. Este trabajo estudia las actividades de Boko Haram a la vez que las contrasta con la necesidad de encontrar soluciones permanentes para el terrorismo y la insurgencia en Nigeria.

Palabras clave: Boko Haram, terrorismo, insurgencia, pobreza, fundamentalismo islámico, Noreste de Nigeria

1. Introduction

Since its inception in 2002, Boko Haram's activities have progressed unabated to the very point where we can no longer perceive the sect as a domestic problem of Nigeria. Taking the atrocities committed by this terrorist group into account, it should be an issue of concern for both the Nigerian government and the international community. According to the World Terrorism Index, they became the world's deadliest terrorist organization in 2015, having killed more people than the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levante (ISIL) in the year 2014 (The Institute for Economics and Peace, 2015). Worryingly, the main goal of this terrorist organization has yet to be identified. In fact, there is mixed speculation in different quarters, particularly among scholars and analysts, about the actual goal of the sect. Nevertheless, the most widely-held opinion is that Boko Haram means "anti Western values" and their goal is to repel Western values and ideology within Nigerian society and principally in the northern part of the country.

Another contending goal of this faction is the Islamization of the country (Ajayi, 2012) as well as Jihad against non-Muslims. However, this very goal is disputed due to the fact that Boko Haram has killed more Muslims than members of any other religious group in their numerous attacks in Nigeria. Instead, the sect seems to advocate for a strict implementation of an orthodox Islamic doctrine across the region, which explains their apathy for moderate Muslims. According to Andrew Walker, the terrorist group is influenced by the perception held by members of the sect, that politics in northern Nigeria has been hijacked by a group of corrupt, false Muslims. As a result, they want to wage war against these corrupt politicians as well as the Federal Republic of Nigeria, to create a "pure" Islamic state ruled by Sharia law (Walker, 2012). The sect has attacked different government establishments such as office complexes, police stations and military barracks. In addition, they have kidnapped and occasionally killed Europeans. Besides, this Islamist faction has also attacked international organizations' premises such as the United Nations office in Abuja (Nigeria), which was bombed on 26 August 2011. Taking all this into account, it is absolutely correct to state that the violent activities of Boko Haram have assumed

an international dimension and thus both local and international efforts to stamp out the sect are required. The dynamics and sophistication of the sect's operations and apparently indiscriminate killing of civilians have raised fundamental questions, not only requiring the possibility of the Nigerian government winning the war against insurgency, but also concerning the international community's apparent indifference in the fight against this deadly group.

The previous background sets the framework where this study investigates the activities of Boko Haram in Nigeria, while it underscores the pertinent need for a lasting solution to this present dilemma to the citizens of this country and the international community as a whole. Consequently, this paper is divided into six distinctive parts: the first part is the general introduction; the second part examines the history and emergence of this terrorist group in Nigeria; the third part provides a theoretical framework, while the fourth part focuses on the socio-economic implications of the sect's activities; the fifth part addresses salient factors that stimulate the activities of the sect while the sixth and final part offers recommendations and possible solutions to the menace posed by this terrorist group.

2. A brief history of Boko Haram

The deadly terrorist group popularly known as Boko Haram came into existence in 2002 under the leadership of an Islamist cleric named Mohammed Yusuf (Martín: 2015; Akinbi, 2015). The group's official name is Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad, which means: *People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad*, while skeptics of the group refer to it as "Boko Haram". During their initial period, neighbors who did not subscribe to the teachings of the group perceived their doctrine as antithetical to Western values and ideology. This perception earned the group its now widely recognized name, which translates to Boko (*book or Western education*) Haram (*forbidden)* in the local Hausa language.

Whereas the idea that *boko* came from *book* looked plausible, according to Neuman *boko* is a native Hausa word, originally meaning sham, fraud, inauthenticity, which came to represent western education and learning. According to this author, Boko Haram and its intrinsic interpretation have become a major barrier to a widespread understanding of the sect's agenda. Nevertheless, the group does not entirely despise westernization or modernization as their appreciation and use of Western technology such as mobile phones, online propaganda videos, automatic weapons and cars show well (Neuman: 2015).

It appears that scholars researching Boko Haram and its violent activities have continually neglected a crucial issue that facilitated the emergence of the group, which is the introduction of Islamic Sharia law in many parts of northern Nigeria. Shortly

after Nigeria's return to civil rule in 1999, the Muslim majority states of Zamfara, Kano, Sokoto, Katsina, Bauchi, Borno, Jigawa, Kebbi and Yobe introduced Sharia law across their territory, while Kaduna, Niger and Gombe State introduced Sharia in the parts of their land where there was a large Muslim population. Almost immediately, Sharia law became a competitive and comparative legal principle to the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, whilst Sharia courts were instituted as a main body of civil and criminal justice in these states. Three years after the introduction of Sharia came the emergence of Boko Haram. The sect commenced its activities in Maiduguri -the capital of Borno State-, moving to Kanamma -a border village between Borno and Niger Republic- later in 2004 (International Crisis Group, 2014). While in Kanamma, the sect continued to indoctrinate young, unemployed and hopeless youths until 2009, when state security agents weighed in on their activities.

By mid-2009, the activities of Boko Haram had turned from those of a local peace militia into a violent group (Salisu, Mohd and Abdullahi, 2015). In response to the violent transformation of the sect's activities, government forces clamped down on them in mid-2009, capturing its leader, Mohammed Yusuf, who was later executed by the Nigerian police on the accusation of attempted escape. The violent clashes between government forces and sect members lasted for five days and decimated the group, whose losses were beyond 700 members (Blanchard, 2014, p.3). The death of Mohammed Yusuf paved the way for the ascendance of Abubakar Shekau as the new leader. Shekau's unyielding eagerness to advance his radical agenda and to revenge the death of his comrades killed by the Nigerian forces made him resort to the use of violence and terrorist tactics. Ever since, the group has carried out several terrorist attacks in Nigeria, causing insecurity across northern Nigeria and leaving countless citizens in dire apprehension. The sect has been accused of having links with Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, and there are also suspicions that they have received both military training and finances from Al Qaeda. In March 2015, the group pledged allegiance to ISIL, claiming that it wanted to establish a caliphate ruled under strict Islamic Sharia law in Nigeria.

3. Theoretical consideration

This study approaches the subject from the perspective of cognitive dissonance theory, which was propagated by Leon Festinger (1957), and affirms that if a person holds two cognitions that are inconsistent with one another, he/she will experience the pressure of an aversive motivational state called cognitive dissonance. According to Nkwede; Abah and Nwankwo (2015) this psychological theory defines the propensity of terrorist behavior. Naturally, people seek stability when it comes to their perceptions and desires (cognitive dissonance) and thus they constantly pretend

to address their dissonance by breaching this gap either through actions or altering perceptions (Bem, 1967). Therefore, dissonance is not a reaction that arises only due to a lack of basic needs such as safety, satisfying hunger or self-preservation, rather it represents the pervasive human tendency to rationalize (Griffin, 2006). Consequently, people are motivated to resolve their dissonance by: changing their beliefs, changing their actions and behavior and changing their perception of action (Festinger, 1957). Littlejohn and Foss (2005) contend that a cognitive system is "*a complex, interacting set of beliefs, attitudes, and values that affect and are affected by behavior.*" In any case, cognitive dissonance is the inevitable outcome of dissatisfaction or it could be said to be the middle ground between preferred value and actual value states. The impending danger of such a situation is that it has the tendency to instigate hatred, anxiety, fear and the utmost desire to eliminate and/or curb the source (Alao; Atere and Alao 2012).

Obviously, Boko Haram's insurgence is deeply rooted in the perceived discrepancy between the preferred life conditions and the actual ones together with the tough life experience of most youths in northeastern Nigeria. The preferred experience in this case includes maintaining the sanctity of orthodox Islam (Nkwede et al., 2015) and experiencing a prosperous and vibrant economic environment anchored to youth empowerment models and schemes. Meanwhile, the actual experience is a secular state and a hostile and unpredictable economic environment that has little or no recourse to youth empowerment and emancipation programs. Thus, the situation favors dissonance and the disappearance of the dissonance gives way to terrorism and barbarism.

It is worth noting that, although we chose to focus on the cognitive dissonance theory for our theoretical framework, its premise is not an all-encompassing explanation for terrorism or violent behaviors; instead, it is among the lenses through which we can explain this wholly-threatening phenomenon. Within this theory postulation, we contend that becoming a terrorist supposes a peacemeal process. Our point is that the decision to become a terrorist is never a spontaneous one; rather, it involves an assimilation process that happens step by step within a time span. Maikovich holds that it is within the assimilation process that the influence of cognitive dissonance is undermined or reduced in the individual(s) attraction to terrorism (2005).

4. Social–economic implications of Boko Haram's activities

The activities of this insurgent group have a lot of negative implications on social economic life and activities in Nigeria. The impact of terrorism has been manifested

in food shortages and hunger, forced migration and displacement of people and also in the discouragement of both local and foreign investment in the affected regions.

4.1 Food scarcity and hunger

The northern area of Nigeria has been known for high agricultural production compared to other regions of the country. According to a report by Kathleen Caulderwood (2014) in *International Business Times (ibtimes)*, agriculture accounts for around 5 percent of Nigeria's GDP as well as for the employment of about 35 percent of youths aged 18 to 35. However, due to Boko Haram's unabated attacks in the region, the agricultural production has started to show signs of strain. According to Kingsley Moghalu, who is a former Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, "*in some parts of the north, the security situation has affected farmland production and that has led to some increase in food prices*" (Barnato, 2014). The effect of terrorism on the agricultural sector is largely based on a perceived fear by farmers of the risk of being attacked by insurgents. Outside that, farmlands have become a hideout for insurgents, who then target the agricultural sector for daily supplies. Consequently, there is a huge decline in agricultural production due to constraints in human mobility and attacks on storage facilities. The increased fear of attack has made other factors such as transportation more risky and therefore more expensive, thus adding extra pressure and cost to economic outputs. The overall impact has manifested in food shortages, increased price of food items, poverty and hunger.

4.2 Forced migration and displacement of people

The northern region of Nigeria has witnessed huge migration owing to the insecurity of lives and property caused by Boko Haram's activities (Nkwede et al., 2015). Whilst Southerner's doing business in the North relocate back home, the majority of affected persons who happened to be from the North of the country seek refuge in internally displaced persons (IDP's) camps. A report by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in 2015 reveals that about 1,188,018 people, involving 149,357 households, have been internally displaced in the northeastern states of Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe, while another 47.276 persons involving 5.910 households have equally been displaced in the northern states of Plateau, Nasarawa, Abuja, Kano and Kaduna, making a total of 1.235.294 internally displaced persons in northern Nigeria as of February 2015 (IOM, 2015). By June 2016, more than 1,200 people had died of starvation and illness at the Yola aid camp alone. This camp is located on a hospital compound in north-east Nigeria, which houses people fleeing Boko Haram -according to the medical charity Médecins Sans Frontières. The

humanitarian group found 24,000 people, including 15,000 children, sheltering in the camp during a visit to Bama in May 2016. It was MSF's first trip there since the city was wrested from the insurgent's control in March 2015 (Reuters, 2016).

The IOM report went on to say that 91.98 percent of the IDP's from the northeastern region are caused by Boko Haram activities, whilst 7.96 percent are caused by community and tribal clashes, natural disasters being responsible for only 0.06 percent of them. According to Alao et al., most of these migrants from the North are youths, who are generally farmers who have abandoned their means of livelihood for reasons of safety (2015). In any case, insurgency is a factor that has prompted forced migration in the northern area of Nigeria, as well as increasing the level of poverty and hopelessness.

4.3 Discouragement of local and foreign investment

The activities of Boko Haram have a considerable impact on business and investment in many parts of northern Nigeria. The northern region of Nigeria is characterized by poverty when compared with the southern region. The disparity in wealth may have resulted from high Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the southern region, particularly in the oil sector. As FDI in the south increased, it plummeted in the north due to insurgency in the region. In 2013, the Kano State Chamber of Commerce reported that business activities in Kano had dropped by 80% since 2012 (Durotoye, 2015: 1251). This is the context in which the CEO of Boussac textile, a manufacturing company in Kano state, stated during a press interview in 2013 that, "*lots of projects are being cancelled in the region because people are scared. They are scared that factories can become targets; commuters to work can also become targets*" (Townsend, 2013). On a macro level, insurgency in the north negatively impacted the FDI into Nigeria. According to Townsend (2013) Nigeria experienced a 21 percent drop in FDI in 2012, evolving from $8.9 billion in 2011 to $7 billion in 2012. Townsend argues that the sharp drop in FDI in the period is mainly due to the fear of insecurity in Nigeria.

The decline in FDI comes with sundry implications and consequences for the economy. Firstly, it has a direct impact on the trade and economic growth and progress of any economy. Secondly, it acts as a steroid to the economy by supplementing domestic capital, prompting increased productivity. Thirdly, it stimulates growth in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Taking this into account, a decline in FDI leaves the Nigerian economy vulnerable owing to the high codependency ratio between the inflow of FDI, the Nigerian oil sector, and the country's GDP (Durotoye, 2015: 1252), although one cannot allege that the drop in FDI is wholly caused by insurgency. However, as the activities of Boko Haram progressed to the capital territory Abuja, there was a general fear that it may spread further to the South and, as such, foreign

investor wary about investing in Nigeria for fear of losing their investment. It is estimated that about 73.3 percent of businesses in the northern states of Borno, Yobe, Kano and Sokoto have partially closed due to insecurity and fear of attack (Chukwurah; Eme and Ogbeje, 2013: 376). This represents a huge deficit in both human and financial capital in the northern economy.

4.4 Distraction, economic misappropriation and corruption

Another terrible impact of Boko Haram's activities on the socio-economic development in Nigeria is the disproportionate attention and increased security vote by the Nigerian government (Nkwede et al., 2015: 68). Instead of allocating resources to developmental projects, the government is heavily engaged with the rhetoric of fighting terrorism, which has resulted in micro economic instability, distortion and leakages in the Nigerian economy with the attendant problem of infrastructural decay and hyperinflation (ibid: 69). Concerningly, the fight against terrorism has provided some eminent politicians an embezzlement opportunity by diverting funds meant to fight insurgency. Since December 2015, Sambo Dasuki, a retired Nigerian army colonel who was National Security Adviser (NSA) to the former president of Nigeria Goodluck Jonathan, has been under investigation for diverting a huge US$2 billion, allocated for the purchase of 12 helicopters, four fighter jets and other ammunition meant for the Nigerian military campaign against Boko Haram. The prosecution of Dasuki by the Nigerian anti-corruption agency, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has implicated many more Nigerians who benefited from the infamous deal. The fallout of the arms deal which is now dubbed *dasukigate* is that no one is sure if the Nigerian government is actually fighting Boko Haram or whether Nigerian politicians are only using this armed faction as a mean of filling their pockets. Whatever the case may be, the truth is that on a wider consideration the group's activities also appear to be strengthening corruption among Nigerian political elites.

5. Stimulants of insurgency and terrorism

Although terrorism remains an indefensible behavior, there are certain factors that prompt and sustain the activities of every terrorist group. In the case of Boko Haram, factors such as deprivation and want, poverty and illiteracy play a huge role in the activities and deeds of the sect. Theoretically, relative deprivation is a contrary feeling held by a person, resulting from a perceived dichotomy between the deserved and actual entitlement values. Hae Kim (2014) defined this as the experience of being deprived of something to which one believes oneself to be entitled. It refers to the

discontent that people feel when they compare their positions to others and realize that they have less of what they believe themselves to be entitled to (Kim, 2014). Runciman illustrated it as follows: "*we can roughly say that [a person] is relatively deprived of X when (i) he does not have X; (ii) he sees some other person or persons, which may include himself at some previous or expected time, as having X, (iii) he wants X (iv) he sees it as feasible that he should have X*" (Runciman, 1966). He further stated that: "*the magnitude of a relative deprivation is the extent of the difference between the desired situation and that of the person desiring it*" (ibid). Although this theory was used to illustrate the impact of income parity on the behavior and performance of employees, the literature has assumed that in general, relative deprivation spurs animosity and a feeling of neglect, with a consequent desire to confront and address the source of deprivation.

In the case of Boko Haram, it is obvious that economic deprivation, poverty and illiteracy are among the prime factors fueling the activities of the sect. According to Olojo one significant factor that has stimulated the drive towards violent extremism, recruitment and support for this insurgent group is economic deprivation (2013: 6). Several scholars contend that poverty, a high level of unemployment, illiteracy, economic disparities and marginalization in the northeast made it easy for the terrorist to entice and indoctrinate youths in the region. Furthermore, Adesoji (2010) argues that marginalization and unequal distribution of public resources are the main cause of poverty in Nigeria, whilst poverty made recruitment undemanding for the sect. The failure of the Nigerian leaders to advance economic policies to ameliorate the well-being and the living standard of Nigerians through job creation created a vacuum of unemployment, poverty and illiteracy among youths, and evidently contributed to the emergence of the faction. In addition, the sect took advantage of the grievances emanating from poverty, unemployment and illiteracy to mobilize support and sustain the recruitment of youths, mainly for insurgency and terrorist violence purposes. As noted by David Francis (2014), one of the first western reporters to cover the group's actions, "Most of the foot soldiers of Boko Haram aren't Muslim fanatics; they're poor kids who were turned against their corrupt country by a charismatic leader" (p. 92).

The injustice and immorality at the heart of the state perceived by many swelled the armed group's ranks beyond the marginalized social classes to include disaffected students and university dropouts, who gravitated towards Salafi groups. Even before the open war between Boko Haram and the state, this organization had been growing. Among its ranks were people from all levels of society, from street kids and traders, to disaffected students and wealthy businessmen (Walker, 2016).

6. Recommendations and possible solution

Motivation of combatant soldiers: One of the big challenges of fighting insurgency in Nigeria is the lack of motivation of the Nigerian military. This fact is incumbent upon sundry factors such as the absence of proper salaries, training, weaponry and insurance programs for combatant soldiers. According to Frederick Taylor (1911), workers are mainly motivated by pay. In his theory of Scientific Management, Taylor argues that for workers to be efficient, they must be given appropriate training and tools, whilst pay must be commensurate with labor, output and time invested. Taylor's assumptions were widely adopted as the business world saw the benefits of increased productivity levels and lower unit costs. In any case, proper training and proportionate pay package are key motivational factors. The prolonged fight against Boko Haram by the Nigerian army is well situated in Taylor's theory: there is lack of motivation within the army resulting from a lack of proper training, the unavailability of sophisticated weapons and low pay package and incentives. The minimum wage in Nigeria is 18,000 Naira, which is equivalent of US$91 going by the Central Bank of Nigeria's official exchange rate of 197 Naira to a dollar. Reports have it that an average soldier combating Boko Haram earn between 49.000 Naira to 60.000 Naira, equivalent of US$249 to US$305 and a daily feeding allowance of 500 Naira, less than US$3. In the black market, a dollar sells for an average of 350 Naira since the beginning of 2016 compared to US$250 average in 2015, an indication of the high level of inflation in Nigeria. Despite the low pay package, there have been complaints of salary arrears owed to combatant soldiers. Consequently, there is corruption and sabotage within the military, hindering to the fight against this terrorist group. As Eleanor Whitehead (2014) notes:

> Low morale in the military means that many soldiers are likely to be more willing to accept bribes. It is highly likely that this is a factor in the army's frequent failure to respond to Boko Haram attacks in rural areas. Civilians have frequently complained that the military have failed to protect them, despite having prior knowledge that attacks were imminent. (p. 174)

We suggest that the Nigerian government should provide incentives in the form of special and additional pay package for soldiers combating Boko Haram. Apart from that, there should be a comprehensive and realistic insurance scheme for combatant soldiers. In theory, combatant soldiers are insured. However, reality shows that compensations are rarely provided in the event of the casualty of a soldier. Therefore, it is pertinent that the government should overhaul its military apparatus and address the issues raised above in order to restore synergy and boost motivation among servicemen.

International collaboration: Unlike Al-Qaeda, Al Shabaab and ISIL, Boko Haram's contemptible activities have resulted in little or no concern for the international community and major powers such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia and France. After the infamous kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls from their school hostel in Chibok on the night of 14-15 April 2014, a couple of world leaders expressed in words their sympathy and concern for the sect's activities but nothing tangible has been done in terms of actions to engage the group ever since. As a response to the shocking kidnapping of the schoolgirls, the US, UK, France, China and Israel offered to assist in the fight against Boko Haram, mainly through collaborative intelligence sharing with the Nigerian army. Then on January 31st, 2015, the African Union (AU) pledged to send 7.500 troops to aid Nigeria's fight against Boko Haram (Doukhan, 2015). The AU seems not to have fulfilled its promise after one and a half years, while in September 2015 France pledged to provide what President Francois Hollande termed the "Multinational Joint Task Force" (MJTF) in the West African region to help the local military force established in 1994 to defeat Boko Haram (Iaccino, 2015). The MJTF was implemented in May 2015 and comprised by troops provided by Nigeria, Benin Níger, Chad and Camerun. The NJTF's endeavors have focused on joining all possible efforts to neutralize the sect. The truth is that international collaboration in the fight against Boko Haram is marred with rhetoric and a deplorable lack of practical actions (Dörrie, 2015). As a consequence, Boko Haram is still holding sway in the northeastern region of Nigeria and increasingly using aberrant practices such as children suicide attacks (UNICEF, 2017).

On the other hand, al-Qaeda's rapid expansion through northwest Africa has occurred under the rubric of Algerian state intelligence services -with US, French and British knowledge. The Western power's relationship with the Algerian military junta, responsible for the massacre of hundreds of thousands of civilians, is driven by the usual unquenchable thirst to access what the US energy department estimates as the world's third largest shale gas reserves. According to Prof Jeremy Keenan (2012), a leading Algerian expert at the School of Oriental and African Studies who advises the US State Department, European Union, and Foreign Office on regional security issues, AQIM's expansion across north Africa has focused on oil-rich regions. That expansion has been particularly intense in Algeria, Niger Delta, Nigeria, and Chad; the latter three being precisely where Boko Haram has reportedly received terrorist training. Keenan argues that the West's oil and gas greed has caused several Western governments to turn a blind eye to the role of oil states like Algeria in fostering regional terrorism - instead exploiting the resulting chaos to legitimize efforts to consolidate access to the remaining African energy reserves. If this analysis is correct, then people like the hundreds of innocent girls kidnapped in Nigeria or the thousand

starving in refugee camps are not just victims of Islamist fanaticism; but also victims of failed foreign, economic and security policies tied to an infernal addiction to black gold (Nafeez, 2014).

Given that the activities of the group have spilled-over the border into the neighboring countries of Niger, Chad and Cameroon, their activities should be classified as a regional and also potential global menace. Consequently, an international framework should be put in place on how to tackle the sect and bring their odious activities to an end. It is believed that the inactions of the great powers are due to their perception of Boko Haram as a regional threat without international potentials. For example, during a CNN guest interview on the morning of November 19, 2015, the host Mark Kelly asked the interviewee why the terror attacks in Paris are drawing so much intentional attention and sympathy from world leaders, whilst no such attention and sympathy was given to the numerous terror attacks in Nigeria. In response, Major General James "Spider" Marks had the following to say:

> [...] what is going on in Nigeria is horrible; I mean it is complete madness yet is not a priority. The United States unilaterally could do almost anything it needs to do to root out Boko Haram, it will be a long-term effort, but it can be done. The United States has the capability, all the elements of power, we have those complete but is not a priority, that's the problem. We are committed elsewhere in the world. 'Black' West Africa is not a priority. Very stark, very hard to say, but that's the case right now. It is a regional issue, if we were to see Boko Haram appear in some other regions of the world, white Africa, which is North Africa, or in the Middle East in some way, we would be alarmed but it is a regional issue [...] (CNN News, 2015).

Mark's point was that the U.S. does not see the need to get involved with Boko Haram simply because it is perceived as a regional problem that does not seem to have the capacity to metastasize across to other surrounding areas let alone across the continent. Perceiving the group as a national or regional issue is problematic as this might serve as incubation for more attacks by the group within the West African region and perhaps beyond the region. The international community and great powers should not wait until the sect exports their comrades to carry out terror attacks in Europe or America before they take a bold step to prevent this happening. Although intelligence gathering and sharing is very important, we suggest that other forms of collaboration and assistance such as training of combatant soldiers, provision of logistics and modern weapons are required in order to deter the group. Therefore, the international community and great powers should elaborate a strategy that includes a comprehensive plan as well as practical mechanisms and approaches to fight the sect.

Youth empowerment: Although we have highlighted military strategies that could aid the fight against Boko Haram, the reality is that the Nigerian government needs a comprehensive roadmap on how to deal with insurgency and youth restiveness in Nigeria. The government should provide quality youth education as well as address inequality and deprivation within Nigerian societies. Although today we are witnessing insurgency in the north, not long ago the economy of Nigeria was almost crippled by militant groups operating in the Niger-Delta region and if nothing is done other groups may spring up alongside or after Boko Haram. Therefore, it is imperative that the government addresses the main issues fueling insurgency in Nigeria, being deprivation, poverty and illiteracy among youths representing the most urgent ones. In order to deal with these issues, the authors suggest that the government should revert to technical schools, which offer the opportunity for youths to learn manual skills while pursuing education. Technical schools will offer a huge empowerment opportunity for youths, in the sense that students will graduate with manual skills and the ability to run their own business. In that case, Nigeria will produce more self-employed people or even employers of labor than what is currently obtainable: a situation where tens of thousands are graduated from secondary school (high school) each year without jobs, hope or a well-defined professional profile. Going by the disparity in education ratios across the regions in Nigeria, both primary and secondary education (technical college in our case) should be made free and compulsory in northeastern Nigeria. This will motivate, encourage and empower youths in the region and across Nigeria, as well as dampen insurgency and terrorism.

7. Conclusions

Among the intractable issues facing the Nigerian government is the Boko Haram insurgency, which poses a serious threat to the government and its citizens, as well as to the West African region as a whole. The group has taken advantage of the growing frustration among Nigerian youths over unemployment and joblessness, bad and insensitive governance, corruption and official impunity to sustain its activities and to recruit new members.

Considering the exigency to deal with the contemptible activities of the sect, this paper concludes that the Nigerian government should adopt a more proactive and a multi-dimensional approach to address both the symptoms and the root causes of terrorism and insurgency in the country.

Amid other factors, the paper contends that motivating combatant soldiers and empowering jobless and hopeless youths in Nigeria will go a long way in curtailing the activities of Boko Haram, as well as other types and levels of insurgency in Nigeria. Finally, certain recommendations have been provided towards a plausible

and permanent solution to insecurity and the growing drive for terrorism among the Nigerian youths.

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