

**BOKO HARAM AND TERRORISM IN NIGERIA: REFLECTIONS ON THE
ORIGINS, IMPACT AND GOVERNMENT RESPONSE**

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Abstract

For over a decade, Boko Haram has emerged as one of the biggest security threats facing not only Nigeria, but the larger Sahel and Lake Chad Basin. Government efforts to counter the group are yet to prove successful in eliminating this threat. This article examines the emergence of Boko Haram from a historical perspective that draws attention to old patterns of political resistance dissimilar to other parts of the country from the colonial era. The study highlights the deep social, economic and political impacts of the organization and reflects on the nature of government response. This article argues that while the emergence of the group has strong attachment to economic and political grievances such as poverty, underdevelopment and political marginalization, it is the framing of these grievances into a radical ideology sustained by entrenched ethnoreligious prisms that sustains Boko Haram terror activities in Nigeria. While the article appreciates the counterterrorism measures adopted by the government, it also provides a critic of those measures and attempts to offer recommendations on how they can be strengthened to be more effective.

Keywords: Nigeria, Boko Haram, Counterterrorism, Marginalization, Underdevelopment.

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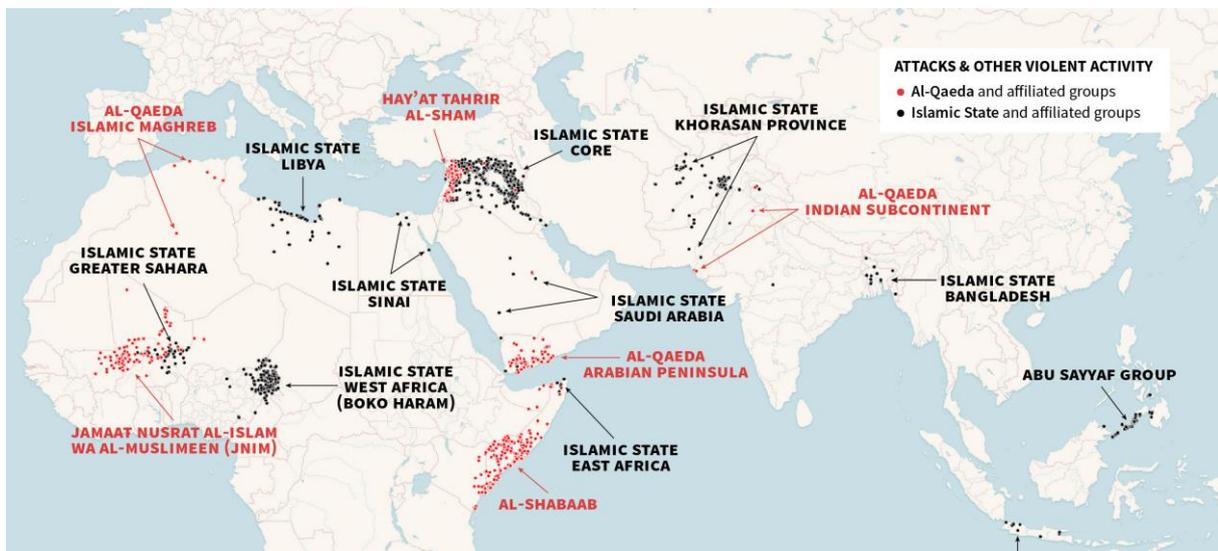
1. Introduction

Exploring the question of terrorism can be complex and emotive. This is because its ability to combine several diverse facets of humanity such as politics, history, philosophy, ideologies, military strategies and psychology, makes it a complex issue. On the other hand, it can also be emotive because of its aptness to arouse strong views and emotions regarding the use of violence by both terror organizations and the state. Nonetheless, one common challenge regarding the analysis or interpretation of terrorism, is the need to be able to acknowledge both the virtuous indignation against activities of terrorist groups, while also attempting to understand the rationale behind terrorism.

Behind these existing complexities, terrorism in itself is not novel to human experience. Extreme violence meted by both states/ monarchies against particular groups or civilians and vice versa, has been part and parcel of human history. However, a more distinct connotation of terrorism identifies that it is the perpetration of extreme violence against civilians or public institutions with the intention to establish fear, panic, and terror amongst people (Nyadera & Bincof, 2019a). Alternatively, Drake (2007) defines terrorism as “the recurrent use or threatened use of politically motivated and clandestinely organised violence, by a group whose aim is to influence a psychological target in order to make it behave in a way which the group desires.”

The evolution of terrorism over the last two decades has illuminated the idea that terror in one particular region is a threat to peace and security of the international community as a whole. Since the 1990s, terrorist groups have sprung up all across the globe committing serious atrocities on innocent civilians. Incidences such as the 1998 Kenya and Tanzania US embassies bombings (Shaffer, 2004; Perl, 1998); the 9/11 attack on World Trade Centre in US (Paust, 2003); Madrid train bombing in 2004 (Miguel-Tobal et al, 2006); and the 7/7 London bombing in 2005 (Hussain & Bagulley, 2012) portrayed a clear picture of the threat posed by terror organizations to not only within the domestic contexts, but also regionally and internationally. Whereas the experiences of these terror attacks reinvigorated domestic and international commitments to address terrorism, they also inspired the emergence of new terror organizations across the globe. Today, terrorism and terror organizations have spread across several regions and countries but more commonly in Africa and the Middle East regions.

Figure 1. Main Terror Organizations Operating in Africa and Middle East



Source: Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 2018

The increase in terror activities has created pressure on governments to initiate counterterrorism measures to address violent extremism with the broader goal of preventing further terror attacks. However, the dependence on coercive measures has inadvertently increased the commitment of terror groups to perpetuate more attacks. This has been exemplified further by the availability of modern technology as instruments for fuelling propaganda especially against government response in which civilians are often caught in the crossfires of the wars between government security agencies and terror groups (Agwanda et al, 2020).

During the last decade, Boko Haram has emerged as one of the dominant topics in terrorism discourses regarding Africa and more specifically, in the social, political and economic contexts in Nigeria. Briefly, some of the recent studies conclude that the crisis of Boko Haram in Nigeria manifests the failure of the Nigerian government to uphold its part of the social contract (Adibe, 2013). Another study, by Onuoha (2014), analyses Boko Haram techniques such as attacks on communication masts and makes a comparison with the experience of the Taliban in Afghanistan. He concludes that emerging terror organizations often tend to adopt strategies implemented by other older terror organizations. In another study by Hentz & Solomon (2017), the failure to incorporate a historical context of how religious ideology is shaped and reshaped has led to the contextualization of the crisis in a rather simplistic manner. This view emphasizes that regional and religious identities in Nigeria reinforce each other and this is manifested more broadly in the political and economic inequalities between the Southern (dominant) and Northeast (marginalized) regions.

This article contributes to this literature by examining other factors such as poverty, international linkages to other terrorist groups, and the political dominance of the Northerners over Southerners in government. This perspective provides a more comprehensive analysis of Boko Haram and Nigeria in the broader context of terrorism, counterterrorism, humanitarian crisis and intrastate conflict.

2. Origin of Boko Haram: A Historical Perspective

Nigeria has had to contend with several radical religious groups particular in the northeast parts of the country which is largely dominated by Islam. While Nigeria remains a multi-religious country, Islam and Christianity are the dominant religions geographically represented in northeast and southern Nigeria respectively. The multiplicity of ethnic, tribal and religious groupings in Nigeria influenced the constitutional provision under Section 10 that stipulates, “The Government of the Federation or of a State shall not adopt any religion as State Religion” (Nmehielle, 2004). While this provision has been subjected to debate, twelve states in northeast Nigeria have adopted Sharia law as part of the judicial jurisprudence.

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Figure 2. States that have Adopted Sharia Law in Nigeria³



Source: Constitution-net⁴

Boko Haram (also known as *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad* 'People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad) is not the first radical Islamic religious group to emerge demanding that the society revert to religious rule and abandon Western ideals and education in Nigeria as a solution to the existing problems facing the society (Nyadera et al., 2020). Since the 1940s, social movements were established around religion (Islam) in northeast Nigeria to oppose British colonialism through violent and non-violent means. To understand the origins of Boko Haram, it is imperative to look at the how religion and politics in northeast religion influenced the emergence of this terrorist organization and which if not addressed will only lead to the emergence of other such groups.

The British, in 1903, occupied both the Borno Sultanate and powerful Sokoto Caliphates which represented today's Niger, southern Cameroon, and northeast Nigeria regions (Buchanan-Clarke & Knoope, 2017). The colonial strategy adopted by the British was one that laid preference for collaboration with rulers from northeast Nigeria who represented political entities and cultural practices deemed 'civilised' and complex (Hausa and Fulani emirs) enough to advance the British colonial agenda (Ochonu, 2017). These attempts by the British established the earliest opposition to Western ideologies, rules and culture and the indigenous communities began to doubt the Fulani political elites because of their cooperation with the British and was further strengthened by the use of Western education to spread Christianity in the region. According to Owalade (2014), the influence of the British and their attempts to initiate socio-cultural and political structural changes led to deep divisions among communities residing in northeast Nigeria who were previously unified by Islam. Two groups, one acting as British agents of colonialization, and the other group vehemently opposed to the Western ideals of the British emerged.

³ See, BBC <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/1962827.stm>

⁴ See, Constitution-net, Sharia and the Nigerian Constitution: Strange Bedfellows <http://constitutionnet.org/news/sharia-and-nigerian-constitution-strange-bedfellows>

The *Talakawas* which translates to ‘commoners’, emerged in the 1940s as a popular social movement in northeast Nigeria under the leadership of Aminu Kano who mobilized an Islamic uprising against the British. The Islamic uprising did not only oppose the British but also the local native rule. Lapidus (2014) documents that the uprising mobilised small traders, farmers, craftsmen and teachers to oppose British rule. By the 1970s and 1980s, other groups such as *Yan Tatsine* which loathed the use of radios, bicycles, watches, and opposed certain aspects of governance in northeast Nigeria emerged under the leadership of Mohammed Marwa. He preached against and condemned the Nigerian government for being entrenched in corruption beyond redemption and for working with Western countries (Buchanan-Clarke & Knoope, 2017). As his brand of radical Islam which also condemned the conventional Muslim leaders in northeast Nigeria for not responding to the plight of the communities adequately, more youths were attracted to his radical preaching that often led to clashes with police because of reprisal targeted attack against the mainstream Muslim leaders in the region. These clashes further led to the involvement of the military by 1980 and consequently the loss of lives of approximately 5,000 people including that of Marwa (Kwaja, 2011).

It is against this background that Boko Haram emerged. While the direct translation of this Hausa dialect name that translates to “Western education is forbidden,” may perhaps sound ludicrous to an outsider, it nonetheless reflects the ideological inclination of the group. In other words, just like the earlier radical social movements that emerged to oppose the state and local leadership in northeast Nigeria, Boko Haram represents a continuation of this dissent anchored on the popular belief that Westernization is the root cause of all ills ranging from greed, domination, poverty, marginalization, corruption and repression that are plaguing Nigeria.

As a group, Boko Haram was established by Mohammed Yusuf in 2002 in the capital of Borno state, Maiduguri, in northeast Nigeria. However, recent debate on the emergence of this group also suggests that Boko Haram emerged as small non-violent organization (Muslim Youth Organization) in 1995 by Abubakar Lawan (Nyadera et al., 2019b). However, similar to the mobilization strategy adopted by Mohammed Marwa, Mohammed Yusuf also sought to mobilize youths in northeast in Nigeria who are disenfranchised by very poor economic conditions and lack of access to basic social services. Yusuf having received higher education in Saudi Arabia during the 1990s in which he interacted with other like-minded Salafi imams, preached against the alleged ills of the Nigerian government that tapped into the already existing anger and discontent of youths in northeast Nigeria. According to Walker (2013), Yusuf opposed any form of Western democracy and education which he blamed for the social ills facing Borno state. As such, whereas it is commonly highlighted that religion is the primary driver for Boko Haram violence, the reality is that economic inequalities and disenfranchisement are the underlying causes of the violence experienced in northeast Nigeria.

Between 2002 and 2009, the membership of Boko Haram grew steadily not only drawing membership from the local impoverished youths, but also other Islamic students, local clerics, and university students who were also mostly unemployed. While this large group led by Mohammed Yusuf often engaged in several previous tensed encounters with the police, it is the events of 26th July 2009 that marked a significant shift in the emergence of Boko Haram as a terrorist organization in Nigeria and the larger Sahel region. A joint security operation seeking to smoke out Boko Haram members from their various hideouts led to the arrest of 7 of its members who were assembling homemade bombs and the seizer of several illegal weapons. The arrest of these Boko Haram members sparked protests across the states of Kano, Bauchi, Borno and Yobe (Mantzikos, 2010). Consequently, the encounters between the police and other security personnel resulted in attacks on police stations, churches, government offices, schools, and the death of over 700 people and thousands others who were left nursing various forms of physical injuries (Solomon, 2012). Violence only subsided after the capture of Mohammed

Yusuf and his subsequent death in police custody on 30th July 2009, forcing Boko Haram members to once more go into temporary hiding. Boko Haram re-emerged from hiding in 2011 under a new leadership of Abubakar Shekau as a fully-fledged terrorist organization and launched a scorched earth insurgency against the government of Nigeria and civilians who did not comply with Sharia Law.

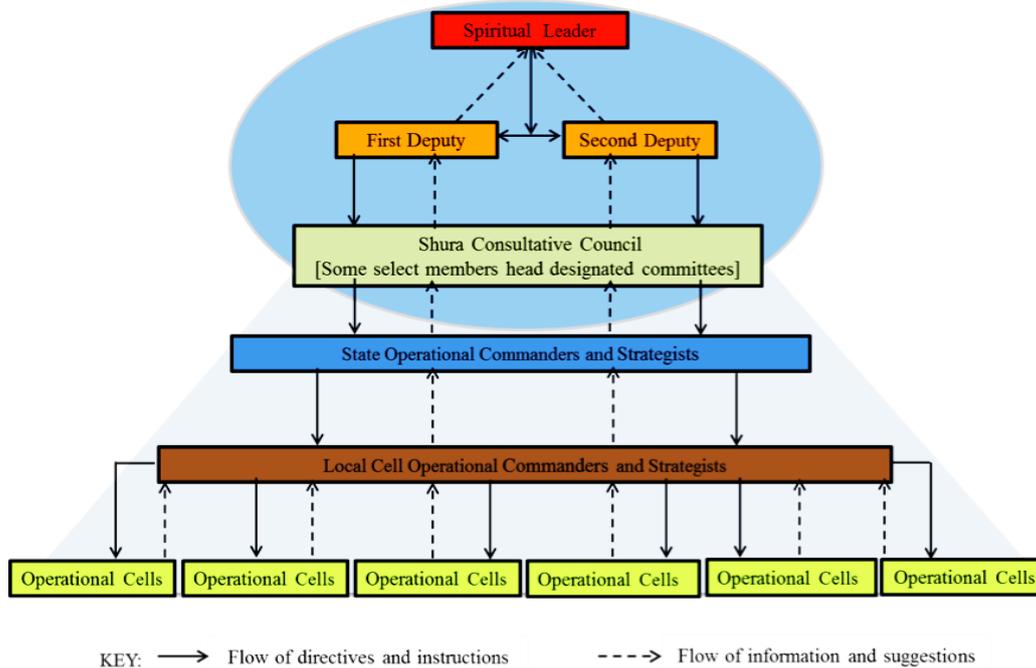
3. Organizational Structure of Boko Haram

In order to understand the impact of Boko Haram, it is imperative to understand its organizational and operational dynamics. Like other terror groups, Boko Haram has manifested elements of being very dynamic. In other words, the terror group has often adopted different approaches and has taken different shapes that facilitate its terror activities and movements from one location to the next. It is important that any analysis of the group should also emphasize on how the organization transforms and its organizational patterns rather than what they only exhibit at a given moment (Zartmen & Faure, 2011). What can be said of Boko Haram networks is that, the group is very dynamic and its continually reshaping to align with its radical religious ideologies while maintaining a ghost-like organizational presence largely characterised by disappearance and re-emergence when necessary (Mishal & Rosenthal, 2005).

The leadership structure of Boko Haram reflects a highly decentralized and complex hierarchical system. At the helm of this leadership hierarchy is the religious leader who is considered as supreme and plays the role of formulating the objectives and ideals of the organization. After the death of Mohammed Yusuf in 2009, his deputy, Abubakar Shekau has occupied this role as the supreme leader of the terror group. However, in-fighting within Boko Haram also led to the formation of a splinter group from Boko Haram headed by al- Barnawi. Below the spiritual leader, are two deputies assisted by members of select committees.

The Shura Consultative Council is also a decision-making organ that is constituted of 30 members. The secretive nature of Boko Haram is a challenge in evaluating the actual size of this committee. Nonetheless, a study by Ojo (2020) highlights that the Shura council is comprised of approximately 30 members. The Shura Council is also overseeing the operations of terror cells at the level of regional States. Some of the departments overseen by Shura Council with the support of regional commanders include ensuring that the families of Boko Haram members involved in suicide bombing are looked after. Other departments are charged with responsibilities of mobilizing financial resources and coordination of terror activities. At the lowest level, local cells maintain confidentiality and operate with some element of independency. Nonetheless, cells maintain communication within the Boko Haram leadership structure largely through the use of courier messages in order to maintain secrecy (World Watch Research, 2015).

Figure 3. Boko Haram Leadership Hierarchy



Source: Ojo (2020)

This decentralized and complex organizational structure of Boko Haram has enabled the terror organization to remain resilient to the several counterterrorism measures by the state as well as its capacity to continue launching several terror attacks. Moreover, its centrality in operating in the largely underdeveloped northeast Nigeria has enabled the group to conduct targeted attacks, recruit, and expand beyond Nigeria to the larger Sahel and Lake Chad Basin (Perliger, 2014).

4. Impacts of Boko Haram

4.1. Humanitarian Crisis

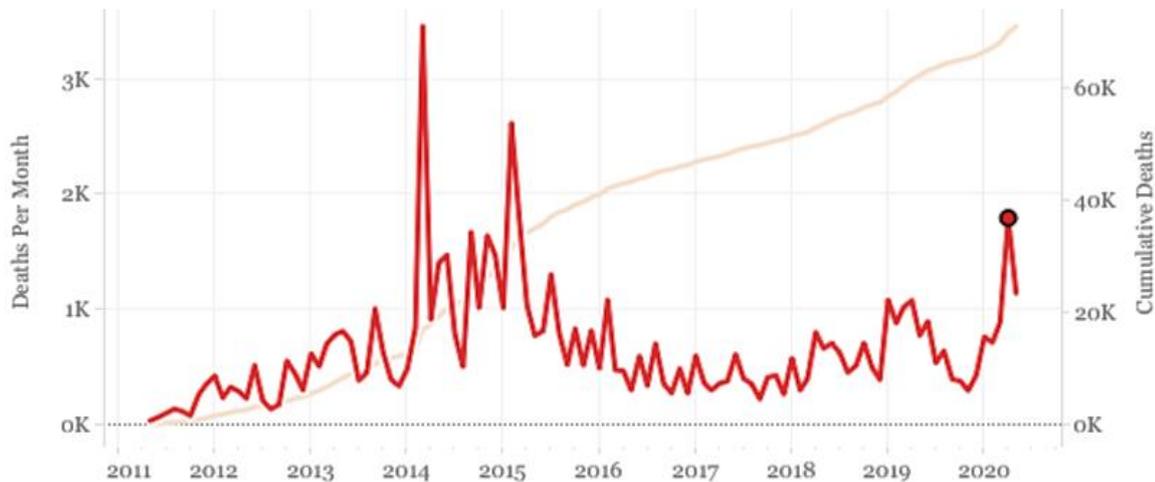
People living in northeast Nigeria have had to contend with dire humanitarian crisis since 2009 when Boko Haram begun its quest to establish Islamic administration in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states. Clashes between the government security forces and the Boko Haram militia groups have adversely affected economic activity in the region rendering communities unproductive and unable to meet their basic needs. By 2019, approximately 7.1 million people in northeast Nigeria were in dire need of humanitarian assistance including over two million people displaced by violence and living in refugee camps (Stoddard et al., 2020). Additionally, the security risks posed by Boko Haram militia groups have confined humanitarian workers to offer humanitarian assistance only within the established garrison towns under government control. This has condemned more than 1.2 million people who are approximated to be living outside these garrison towns to not access the much-needed humanitarian assistance (OCHA, 2019). A similar report also released by OCHA (2018) notes that people who have managed to sneak out of the Boko Haram controlled areas exhibited malnourishment largely because of being kept in hostage-like conditions for several months or years.

4.2. National Security

Boko Haram has evolved into the biggest security threat facing Nigeria over the last decade (Zenn, 2014; Nyadera et al., 2020). Since the emergence of violence in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states, Boko Haram attacks have also expanded outside these states to other regions in the country through targeted attacks. Perhaps one of the most prominent attack that also challenged the Nigerian

government on its status as a guarantor of peace and security is the 25th-30th July 2009 attack in Bauchi. Following the death of Mohammed Yusuf in police custody, clashes between government forces and Boko Haram resulted in the death of more than 1,118 people within a span of five days in northeast Nigeria (Higazi, 2015).

Figure 4. Boko Haram Deaths (2011-2020)



Source: Nigeria Security Tracker⁵

Since 2011, Boko Haram has conducted several terrorist attacks on moderate Islamic religious leaders, targeted Christians, attacked police stations, schools, the military and burned markets and villages. The group attracted widespread international attention when it kidnapped 276 Chibok girls from school in 2014 (Habila, 2014). As demonstrated in Figure 3 above, more than 38,923 people inclusive of civilians, security officers and Boko Haram militants have died from conflict between Boko Haram and the state. The quest to establish an Islamic state under Sharia laws also led to widespread loss of territory from state control to Boko Haram militia groups while also continuously undermining the capacity of the Nigerian military. Nonetheless, it is also important to point out the conflict has also been marred by extrajudicial killings by the state against civilians (Mohammed, 2014).

The group has been able to shift from its previous strategy of targeting only security personnel to also include civilians, non-governmental targets and expand beyond northeast Nigeria regions. In 2011, Boko Haram attacked the United Nations offices in Abuja in a twin suicide bomb. Increasingly, suicide bombings have become one of the major terror strategies of Boko Haram whereby women and children are majorly involved in these suicide bomb attacks. According to a study by Pearson and Zenn (2018), since the use of the first female suicide bomber in 2014, approximately over 468 women (including small girls) have been used as suicide bombers in 240 suicide bombing attacks conducted by Boko Haram as of 2018. These suicide bombings by women are the highest recorded by any terrorist organization and have resulted in the injury of over 3,000 and the death of more than 1,200 people.

4.3. Health

Conflicts often have a direct impact on the health through cases of increased mortality or morbidity rates due to violence (Levy & Sidel, 2016). Violent clashes between different groups can result in the destruction of critical health infrastructure and this indirect impact of conflicts can endure even after conflicts have been resolved (Burnham & Christensen, 2008). In northeast Nigeria, even before the emergence of Boko Haram as a fully-fledged terrorist organization, the region had one of the

⁵ See, Council for foreign relations, <https://www.cfr.org/nigeria/nigeria-security-tracker/p29483>

most fragile health system than the rest of the country. This fragility in the health sector was largely characterised by the absence of adequate health facilities and personnel (WHO, 2019). According to a report by World Health Organization (WHO), since the outbreak of Boko Haram and government clashes in 2011, several health facilities have been destroyed forcing local residents to walk several kilometres in order to access treatment. In an interview by WHO on how the conflict has affected the local residents in terms of access to health, a local resident, Mallam Musa replies:

“Since the insurgents attacked this community, the health clinic has not offered services. We have to travel more than 12 kilometres to access healthcare, resort to unorthodox medication or hope for recovery without medication. Sometimes, we suffer needlessly from treatable ailments” (WHO, 2019).

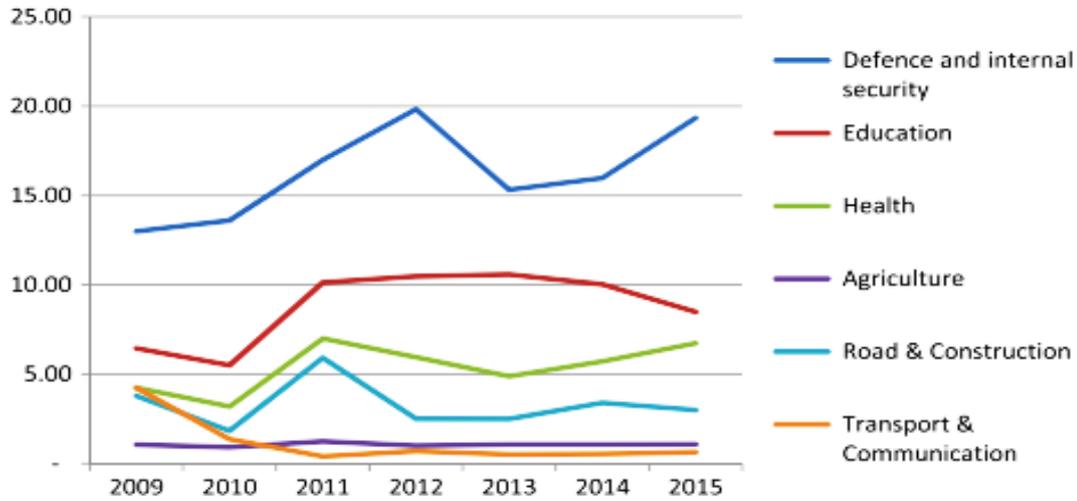
An assessment by WHO (2019) on the availability of health facilities in northeast Nigeria highlights that 46% of health infrastructure in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states were either damaged or completely destroyed. The destruction of these health facilities have consequently resulted in more pressure on the existing health facilities particularly in those localities that have become hosts for displaced people from other areas adversely affected by Boko Haram violence. For instance, a health facility in Yobe state (Kukar Gadu Primary Health Centre) which was designed to provide healthcare services to 11,000 people had to cater for over 21,000 people because of the influx of internally displaced persons in the area. Moreover, a study by Ekhatior-Mobayode et al. (2019), also reveals that over 100,000 children under the age of five, have been denied access to life-saving vaccination and that despite the conflict reducing vaccination rates by 24.8% each additional attack reduces the rate by an additional 6.5%.

4.4. Economic Decline

The threat posed by Boko Haram covers a significant portion of Nigeria where economic activities are under constant disruption either from the government or Boko Haram militia members. Since 2009, the government of Nigeria has had to significantly increase the budgetary allocation to defence and security largely due the counterterrorism initiatives on Boko Haram both at the domestic level as well as on the regional front through the Lake Chad Basin coalition. Financial resources that could have well been redirected towards addressing the critical infrastructural, education, healthcare, manufacturing, mining and agricultural needs of the country have been directed towards the war on Boko Haram. According to Ipke (2017), an exponential rise in public spending on defence and security negatively affects public expenditure on human development. In 2015 for instance, outside the regular financial allocation to the defence and security ministry, the government of Nigeria allocated an additional USD 2 billion for the purchase of more military equipment specifically to counter the threats posed by Boko Haram to the country.⁶

⁶ Premium Times, ‘Court papers show how ex-NSA Dasuki allegedly shared N13.6bn arms money to cronies, politicians’, 14 December 2015. Available at: <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/195173-court-papers-show-how-ex-nsa-dasuki-allegedly-shared-n13-6bn-arms-money-to-cronies-politicians.html>

Figure 5. Expenditure as a proportion of total recurrent expenditure %



Source: Central Bank of Nigeria Statistical Yearbook 2015

As demonstrated in Figure 4, expenditures on defence and internal security have significantly increased from approximately 13% in 2009 to near 20% by 2015. The increase in budget expenditure is a response to the growing threats of Boko Haram in the country. Notably, the budget allocation to defence is in direct contrast to other sectors such as transport and communication; road and construction; agriculture; health and education which have been comparatively received declining or constant financial allocation. This trend is argued by Gupta et al. (2004) that fiscal adjustments of this nature ultimately lead to lower public investments.

On a more contextualized perspective, in states such as Adamawa, Borno, Bauchi, Gombe, Yobe, and Taraba, there has been a clear evidence of economic decline. The northeast Nigeria has been worst affected with high poverty rates of 70% against 61% which is the national average (Ipke, 2017). These high poverty rates partly accounts for the north-south Nigeria divide with the northerners citing economic marginalization (Agbibo, 2013). In terms of GDP output, a comparative analysis of 2007 and 2019 reflects significant decline in economic output (GDP) of regions affected by Boko Haram as shown below.

Table 1. GDP out in Regions Impacted by Boko Haram (2007 and 2019)

State	Contribution to GDP (USD billions) 2007	Contribution to GDP (USD billions) in 2019
Adamawa	4.6	0.144
Borno	5.2	0.18
Bauchi	4.7	0.166
Gombe	2.5	0.124
Taraba	3.4	0.137
Yobe	2.0	0.155

Source: Nigeria National Bureau of Statistics

Prior to the conflict, northeast Nigeria was largely driven by agricultural and commercial activities. The availability of over 75% of arable land and a large rural population facilitated the production of a wide range of agricultural products such as cotton, rice, sorghum and millet.⁷ However, the outbreak of conflict in these regions have greatly hindered agricultural activities through lack of access to farming tools, seeds and land. Most of the people living in the rural areas have been displaced. Additionally, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reports that several communities in northeast Nigeria have been unable to cultivate and harvest crops due to long-standing destruction of farms including the threat of existing hidden land mines. In brief, the economic impact resulting from Boko Haram is largely due to uncertainty, displacement of both labour and consumers of goods and services, increased costs of transactions and reduced access to agricultural inputs.

5. Government Response and Challenges

Addressing terrorism has often attracted debate regarding how governments should respond to terrorist organizations (Khan, 2015). There are those who advocate for coercive counterterrorism measures usually in the form of force on the one hand, and others who emphasize on addressing terrorism through conciliatory measures such as providing amnesty and encouraging dialogue (Lehrke and Schomaker, 2016). With regard to Boko Haram, while the Nigerian government demonstrated preference for force in the form of a heavy military approach, recent developments in the war against terrorism has seen it also adopt other more liberal approaches. This shift can be attributed to the protracted war against Boko Haram which has demonstrated operational and organizational complexity, attracted local support in some communities in northeast, and constant criticism of the government by analysts to change its tact in addressing Boko Haram.

When Boko Haram emerged in 2002, frequent clashes often attracted government response in the form of local police. As tensions increased further and the group begun developing radical Islamic ideals, northeast states such as Yobe developed hybrid approaches combining police and military to respond to specific incidences when Boko Haram threatened the state's peace and security. Following the re-emergence of Boko Haram as a fully-fledged terrorist organization in 2011, the government established the first Special Joint Military Task Force drawing soldiers from the Nigerian Airforce, Navy, Army, Police and the State Security Service (Sampson, 2016). This signified the governments position to challenge Boko Haram in northeast Nigeria through the military force. However, drawing from the operational nature of the military operations, as well as Boko Haram's tendency to camouflage within the local communities, innocent civilians are often caught between the military and Boko Haram conflicts. This has drawn widespread criticism from locals in northeast Nigeria denouncing the nature of government response.

The notorious nature of Boko Haram to conduct suicide bombings has also influenced the Nigerian government to establish numerous police and military roadblocks, protecting key government installations, cordon and search operations, and military patrols (Aminu, 2013). In areas that Boko Haram militias are perceived to frequent, the government has established permanent military checkpoints because such areas have the highest probability of Boko Haram members being identified and subsequently arrested. Additionally, the military is prone to conducting heavy military operations to destroy Boko Haram hideouts, rescue members of the public who have been kidnapped, and reclaiming territories under the influence or control of Boko Haram. Towards this end, the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) has been incorporated to partner with the military forces in order to increase the

⁷ UNDP, Livelihoods and Economic Recovery Survey, 28; National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria Data Portal- Agricultural Data

effectiveness of the raid operations particularly in regard to collecting intelligence on Boko Haram networks, hideouts and cells (Omenmna et al., 2020).

The government of Nigeria also introduced programmes to counter the Boko Haram religious propaganda (Okereke, 2012). Through the Department of State Services, programmes such as the Perception Management Programme was introduced to facilitate rehabilitation and de-radicalization of individuals previously attracted to the Boko Haram radical propaganda. Additionally, government-approved and sanctioned Islamic clerics have also been contracted to spread moderate Islamic preaching through local radio and television stations largely targeting the youths who are more prone to become victims of the radical Islamic teachings of Boko Haram. In other instances, seasoned Islamic clerics have also been contracted to engage in public religious debates with other radical preachers in order to debunk extremist religious beliefs associated with the interpretation of Islamic principles and law.

To support the military approach, the government of Nigeria embarked on the formulation of counterterrorism laws. Prior to the emergence of Boko Haram as a fully-fledged terrorist organization, counterterrorism laws were alien to Nigeria. The first counterterrorism law was enacted in 2011 as the Terrorism Prevention Act 2011 and the Money Laundering Act 11. These acts were meant to criminalise terrorism and deter financial access to terrorist groups in Nigeria respectively. The Terrorism Prevention Act which was amended to Terrorism (Amendment) Act 2013, empowers the Nigerian judiciary to implement punitive penalties ranging from long terms of imprisonment to confiscation of property used to perpetrate terror activities.

The government has also incorporated a multi-dimensional approach through partnership with regional and international organizations such as the African Union, United Nations, European Union as well as collaboration with other countries such as France, US, UK and South Korea. It is important to highlight that when the Boko Haram crisis emerged, Nigeria was very reluctant to seek international support as the government largely perceived the group as a minor threat that was well under the capabilities of state to manage at the domestic level. The government signed cooperation agreements against Boko Haram with the US to facilitate joint military operations, sharing intelligence, negotiating for hostages (Chibok girls), training and providing financial assistance (Security Assistance Monitor, 2015). Another memorandum of understanding was signed between Nigeria and the UK government regarding military cooperation, judicial training on counterterrorism and management of crisis (Hairiya, 2017). The kidnapping of the Chibok girls brought the Boko Haram crisis to the international fore and with it, international support on counterterrorism particularly in regard to finance and intelligence.

Despite these intervention measures, the counterterrorism campaign by the government is yet to demonstrate significant effect in diminishing the threat of Boko Haram. In earlier military counterterrorism offensive by the government such as Operation Restore Order that saw the deployment of 8,000 soldiers in northeast Nigeria, lack of substantial security intelligence led to death of several innocent civilians. According to Onuoha (2012), several military operations launched by the government are characterised by extrajudicial killings, intimidation and unwarranted arrests of local residents. A study by Hansen and Musa (2013) highlights that incidences of military soldiers chasing suspects and gunning them down even inside their house in the presence of family members were common. These military actions had far-reaching negative impacts on the government response. First, the killing of Mohammed Yusuf in 2009, allowed the group to develop strong attitudes for revenge against the state and time to flee into the notorious Sambisa forest to regroup and organize terror activities.

Secondly, the blatant murder of people on allegations of being members of Boko Haram without concrete proof, burning down of villages and intimidation of local communities created a strong feeling of anti-government sentiments within the local communities thereby providing more advantage as the

governments attention was not only Boko Haram, but also trying to establish working relations with the communities. According to Hansen and Musa (2013), police and government soldiers were subjected to widespread hate in regions such as Maiduguri. This only embolden Boko Haram to conduct more attacks on government soldiers and public institution installations such as government offices and police stations.

Other factors such as high poverty rates, entrenched corruption, marginalization, and competing political and religious values have continued to weaken government response to Boko Haram. These challenges act as drivers of the insurgency in northeast Nigeria and also form part of the underlying reasons for the emergence of the group (Onapajo and Uzodike, 2012). Boko Haram has been able to exploit underdevelopment to maintain a supply of youths who are recruited to serve as militia units against the government. The allocation of humanitarian assistance that is meant to alleviate poverty in communities grossly affected by Boko Haram has been highly politicised and development projects particularly those initiated under the Presidential Initiative for the North-East (PINE) to improve economic activities have remained unimplemented. An investigation by the Senate into PINE revealed massive corruption specifically with regard to payments made contractors for work not done amounting to over USD 7.9 million in 2018 (Brechenmacher, 2019).

The lack of commitment and coordination at the federal level has also become a huge challenge to addressing the threat of Boko Haram and its impacts. During the earlier years that were largely characterised by the military approach, there were challenges particularly for donors to assist in the civilian stabilization efforts. Despite the introduction of a much more diversified response since 2016 under President Buhari, coordination between civilian institutions that were formed to address some of the underlying challenges and promote stabilization in northeast Nigeria has remained relatively weak (Brechenmacher, 2019). Some of these institutions include Inter-Ministerial Task Force, Victims' Support Fund, Ministry of Rehabilitation and Resettlement in Borno, and the Office of the National Security Advisor. According to Brechenmacher (2019) many of these institutions have been alleged to be very corrupt, marred with institutional competitions over authority and overlapping responsibilities that have collected yielded to weak government intervention.

6. Conclusion

During the last decade, Boko Haram has emerged as one of the dominant topics in terrorism discourses regarding Africa and more specifically, in the social, political and economic contexts in Nigeria. Briefly, some of the recent studies conclude that the crisis of Boko Haram in Nigeria manifests the failure of the Nigerian government to uphold its part of the social contract. With the start of terrorist activities in Nigeria, Boko Haram caused a humanitarian crisis due to causing the displacement of more than 2 million people, national security weaknesses, the weakening of the health system due to the damage of critical health infrastructure and serious deterioration in economic indicators.

Since the re-emergence of Boko Haram in 2011 and its continued resilience, its impact in terms of physical infrastructure and human lives, underscores the challenges and shortcomings of the counterterrorism measures adopted by the government of Nigeria. The weak coordination between government security agencies and the locals particularly in northeast Nigeria continues to undermine the war against Boko Haram. The military have been accused of perpetrating similar actions to Boko Haram such as burning down of villages as well as being responsible for the death of innocent civilians caught in the wars between government security agencies and Boko Haram militia members. Nonetheless, this article also appreciates the secretive nature of the organization and the complexities that arise particularly in a region that has a history of descent towards the government because of the feeling of marginalization from development discourses that have taken the form of historical injustice.

In conclusion, this article has deduced that the emergence of Boko Haram is largely due to the high rates of poverty, unemployment and illiteracy in northeast Nigeria. But more importantly, these factors have largely been exploited by an underlying radical religious ideology that has nurtured the economic and political grievances amongst young people and transformed these grievances into an ideology that drives terrorism. There is need that the government also counter this radical ideology of Boko Haram by also introducing a counter-ideology that capitulates or appeals to the young generation in northeast Nigeria.

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Çalışmanın yazarları, herhangi bir çıkar çatışması olmadığını beyan etmektedirler.

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.”

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