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RESEARCH ARTICLE

INSURGENCY AND COUNTER INSURGENCY: THE CASE OF BOKO HARAM INSURGENT GROUP IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the interplay between insurgency and counter-insurgency elements within north-eastern Nigeria as a result of the activities of Boko Haram insurgents that emerged since 2002 with the sole aim of implementing the Islamic Sharia in the country. Other factors also assist in the emergence of the Islamic fanaticism such as socio-economic and political factor. We examined the effectiveness of security force operations as the main strategy adopted to counter the insurgent group and its effectiveness or otherwise. Qualitative method of data collection was adopted which includes interview of stake holders, use of journal materials, newspapers government reports and internets also formed sources of data collection as well. The findings of this study shows that the military approach adopted in countering the insurgents has been ineffective due to poor performance of the military arising from obsolete arms, inadequate training and corruption within the military and the country as a whole. This paper then went on to recommend the alternative strategies such as carrot and stick and winning hearts and minds through human security approach.

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INTRODUCTION

Boko Haram emerged in 2002 and till today it is still very active in its insurgency activities. It is an Islamist movement with religious motive as its immediate drive and particularly to turn Nigeria into a nation to be governed by Sharia law. With its hatred to the western ideals brought about its common name Boko Haram translated as "Western education is forbidden" (Pham, 2012:1). Boko Haram insurgents came into existence in Nigeria camouflaged with religious purposes, even though, it has some other reasons. The insurgent's main intention is for the country to fully implement Sharia Islamic law. According to Nossiter, Muhammad Yusuf, Boko Haram's leader did not agree that the Sharia law as been practice was normal and hence wants it properly enforced with the aid of Jihad (Nossiter, 2010:1). Political and socio-economic factors as witnessed in Nigeria leads to frustrations in almost all parts of Nigeria and most especially the north-east zone where the sect is more pronounced is as a result of some socio-economic vices which are much higher in the north-east part of Nigeria. This development contributed to evolution of the Boko Haram insurgents in the north-east part of Nigeria.

Fundamentally, it is the duty of nations in the world to safeguard its citizen's lives as well as property; this protection is expected to take place in Nigeria as a country and should also include the protection of its boundary territorially. The safety of Nigerian people and also the socio-economic as well as the good governance of the country are all pertinent. On the reverse, this as not been the case with Nigeria as a country, due to Boko Haram's destructive activities and its threat to national security (Duru and Ogbonnaya, 2010:2). Given the above scenario, leads us to say that the Nigerian context at the moment can be hinged upon elements of Hobbesian theory – that hypothesized that in the absence of strong central governance where there are no trust between the government and the governed then comes the situations where there is a "war of all against all" (Hobbes 1988: 15). Boko Haram which started initially as a domestic based insurgent group was mainly involved in preaching and later started carrying out attacks on the people through the use of crude and local war items such as bow and arrows against the Nigerian security agencies In July 2009, the group was confronted for anti-government preaching, the confrontation then led to the killing of about 700 of their members as well as the leader of the group, Muhammad Yusuf, the group accused the government of extra-judicial killings of its members without fear hearing (Pham, 2012: 3).

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Boko Haram commenced its transformation in 2010 after it clashed with the security forces in 2009 after which it became more reinvigorated with leadership and power, and was also able to challenge the security agencies of the Nation through improved method and tactics in violence attacks by showcasing under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau in the same as those of some of the international terrorist organizations in Algeria's AQIM and Somalia's Al-Shabaab which commenced insurgents activities before them. The insurgent group started suicide bombings firstly by mid 2011, with vehicle bomb improvised explosive device (VBIED), hit police headquarters in Abuja, the Federal Capital of Nigeria (*Daily Trust News Paper* 2011). It was also reported that few months after that, the same bomb was used on the UN Headquarter, this time against its first international targets (U.S Homeland security, 2011).

These attacks and killings are still going on up till today without stopping. The group's attacks using suicide bombs targets locations such as police, military facilities, U.N buildings, Nigerian Police Headquarters, churches, schools, beer halls and newspapers offices (Uzodike, 2012: 91). Other targets of the group's attacks include assassination of Muslim clerics, traditional rulers in the north who are suspected to be cooperating with the Nigerian government. The activities of the insurgent includes killing of women, children and foreigners (HRW, 2012 and Agbiboa, 2013).

From the above development, this paper wishes to analyze the counter-insurgency roles displayed by the Nigeria's security forces as the primary proponents to confront the threat posed to the Nigeria's national security through the insurgent activities of Boko Haram. to examine its attempts to (re)assert control over the state. Examine the central hypothesis on the ability or inability of the Nigerian security forces' in its discretion in use of violence and then determine the probability of whether it would successfully create an atmosphere from which security and stability can emerge in Nigeria.

## Literature Review

The term insurgency is regarded as a group that rebel in violence means towards taken over a territory from the authority in power, for instance an independent authority recognized by the U.N. In most cases, while the insurgents involved in this act are regarded as a group or entity, it will never be allowed to continue in its struggle but contained through military force; through wish the civilians may be safeguarded. The government in power will also strive to protect the political and socio-economic position of the government of the day through counter-insurgency (Robert and Timothy, 2009) (Eds.).

The nature of insurgencies is an ambiguous concept, but its foot soldiers are more in number compared to those of terrorist organizations, for the main fact that it has political undertone and it may provide for the people some social services which the government might not been able to provide. The insurgents provide some wings for different purposes such as the wing which attacked Nigerian security agents the public with tactics such as raids and ambushes; they also carry out attacks that cause deliberate civilian casualties.

According to the United States Department of Defense, insurgency is "an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict" (U.S DOD, 2007). The definition as above can be said to only focus on the kinds of illegal violence activities carried out towards specific aim which may be regarded as political, religious or ideological. From the above perspective, the definition of insurgents as seen above can be argued to have failed to situate it from the perspective of moral relativity which states that "one man's insurgent/terrorist is another man's freedom fighter." Therefore, it could be argued that while violence may be "unlawful" to the victim, to the insurgent group, their activities may be regarded as positively better acts (Morris, 2005).

Viewing Boko Haram as an insurgents movement allows us, therefore, to not only consider the use of strategies of terror by the group, but also wider tactics that further help to explain the response elicited from the Nigerian state as well as the ensuing cycle of violence. After the emergence of Boko Haram in 2002 and its subsequent 2003 clashes with Nigeria's security forces, there has been a non-stop cycle of brutal repression and violent revenge from then till today with more that 20,000 people killed Boko Haram members inclusive. As can be seen, Boko Haram constitutes approximately 5 per cent of all violent deaths in Nigeria since their peak in fatalities from 2009 (Campbell, 2011; Aghedo and Osumah, 2012; Walker, 2012; Murdock, 2013).

As a result of the claim by Boko Haram referring the society as not worthy to stay led to the initial settlement established by Yusuf's followers at Kanama which appeared to be a largely non-violent at the beginning, an action meant to mirror the actions of Islam's Prophet Mohammed during his *hijrah* (migration) from Mecca to Medina in 622 AD as a means of fleeing threats and persecution (Masud 1989, Onuoha 2012). According to Onuoha, Boko Haram was not initially out for violence in defense of its religious agenda hence its initial clashes appeared to be localized communal violence. This violence was accompanied by increasingly anti-government activities, such as encouraging followers to tear up higher education degrees and establishing communal police and judicial systems to openly challenge existing state institutions (Onuoha 2012).

In view of these violence activities by the sect, which serves as a direct threat to the legitimacy of the Nigerian federal government's right to rule over northern Muslims, especially Yusuf's followers led to the response by the military and the security agency even though delayed following the initial small-scale clashes with police forces (Cook 2011), yet the response was unavoidable given Boko Haram's growing number of followers and staunch opposition to central government authority. Another clash between Boko Haram and the police was as a result of the conflict between the sect and the indigenes of Kanama in 2003 who challenged their rights to use fishing waters in lands not owned by the sect, it raised concerns with local authorities and eventually led to clashes with local police (Walker 2012). In the said clash, the police were over powered owing to a lack of training and capacity, which continues to plague the police to this day (Okunola

2013); the sect went ahead and destroyed two local police stations and then looted the police armories which aided them with improved weaponry and increased the urgency of the Nigerian security apparatus to counter the sect as quickly as possible (Cook 2011; Onuoha 2012). From the above episode, the police stations and police themselves became routinely assaulted throughout Nigeria by Boko Haram (Ikelegbe 2005; Udo 2013). The one concerning and uniquely distinguishing factor about Yusuf and his followers, nevertheless, was the content of their vocal contempt and disregard for the legitimacy of the Nigerian state, a contempt which in some regards exceeded that of more financially, ethnically, or purely grievance-driven movements.

This more overtly religious element, especially the social exclusion and public withdrawal aspects, possibly increased the stakes of the situation in the minds of the security officials tasked with resolving the problems in Yobe State (Adesoji 2011; Marchal 2012). To counter the activities of the Boko Haram insurgents at the early stage, the Nigerian authorities established what it referred to as Operation Flush units, among other such operations, throughout the country to deal with near endemic crime rates (Joab-Peterside 2007). These units as established and intended to fight crime were not properly trained or skilled in dealing with militant social movements.

The clashes in and around Kanama village in Yobe State was the genesis of the crisis of the Boko Haram and its gradual progression to becoming more violent its operational modes. The clash, as previously stated, was possibly inevitable since the sect had by this time already taken a position of absolute disregard for the legitimacy of the Nigerian state and afforded no respect or regard to security and law enforcement agency (Onuoha 2012; Walker 2012). The attack on the police stations in yobe led to the death of about seventy sect members in the raids of the Boko Haram by the police in addition to the arrests of others almost decimated the nascent Islamic insurgent movement (Cook 2011; Walker 2012).

The killings as explained above represented the first in a series of arguably disproportionate state counter-insurgent. The above incident provided Boko Haram with the current actions to substantiate the sect's previous claim against the Nigerian government and also assisted the sect in the recruitment of further disaffected youths to restore and add to the insurgent's active membership. Eventually, the movement regrouped and was able to pose an even greater threat to the national security of the Nigerian state (Cook 2011; Onuoha 2012; Walker 2012).

Another clash that took place between the JTF and members of Boko Haram was the deadly 2009 uprising across several Nigerian states as a result of the sect members participating in a funeral procession and were involved in the altercation with the JTF in Maiduguri due the enforcement of the use of helmet which eventually led to several unarmed sect members being shot and dozens of others arrested (Cook 2011; Walker 2012). This again led to fomenting anger and a desire for revenge among Boko Haram members (Walker 2012). The ensuing uprising resulted in several hundred fatalities, of which approximately 200 were alleged to have been sect members, according to local media reports on JTF statements. In

addition, this led to the widely condemned extrajudicial killings not only of Mohammed Yusuf who was killed by the police after he was handed over to the police who claimed that he was killed while attempting to escape (Cook 2011; Onuoha 2012; Walker 2012). Following the uprising and violent crackdown, the group once again dispersed, into remote areas of Nigeria and into neighboring countries, until they were able to reorganize and again recruit (Onuoha 2012). This encounter ushered in a new evolution of the Boko Haram insurgents group and this time, the group was said to have embraced the far more violent tendencies under its new leader, Abubakar Shekau (Cook 2011; Onuoha 2012; Rodgers 2012).

After the 2009 conflict with the police, the group built on the charismatic anti-establishment preaching of its former leader Muhammed Yusuf and from hence, the group transformed into a full-blown insurgency, which has trapped the North-east and Nigeria in particular into a seemingly never-ending cycle of violence and retaliation. The group not only changed in its willingness to initiate and instigate violence, but it began to adopt tactics and methods more akin to global terrorist organizations. This evolution dramatically altered the dynamic of the battle between the sect and the Nigerian security forces with respect to the counter-insurgent measures to be adopted by the government.

## METHODOLOGY

The method of data collection for this paper was that of qualitative one. It is a research based on behavior; person's live functioning of organization, interaction between nations and cultural phenomenon (Straus and Corbin, 1998). The research adopts several approaches in this study which include emphasis on documentary as well as library researches. Particularly, the emphasis on sources of data for this paper was historical sources which were data from Nigerian online media sources, as well as globally recognized news agencies such as the BBC, Reuters, AP, and AFP, For the Nigerian media sources we relied on all major reputable outlets but focused more on northern and central Nigerian based media sources like *Leadership*, *Blueprint* and *Daily Trust*. This paper is empirical in nature and so data was also collected through interview of respondents because it is from an ongoing research work.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this paper are as discussed in the following sequences under the various subheadings below:

### Insurgents Activities of Boko Haram in Nigeria

This study attempts to provide all known incidents of insurgent activities attributed to Boko Haram from 2002 to the most recent in figures year by year. The group at the initial period of its activities only target Christians and Churches with the use of local and substandard implements.

The group later changed tactics and implements from local to a more modern and sophisticated weapons in their attacks (Scott, 2012, sighted in James, 2012: 65).

It should be noted that while other groups such as Maitetsine and MEND described previously has carried out some form of attacks during their period, the present insurgent group in the north-east part of Nigeria has caused more havoc on lives and properties than all other ones before it in Nigeria, as will be seen in this study, Boko Haram insurgents agreed by itself to have been responsible for more attacks carried out by insurgent group in Nigeria than all other groups put together (James, 2012: 65).

### Effects of Boko Haram Incidences of Attacks

The first and most important effect of Boko Haram insurgent activities is on its threat to National security which is the most commonly misunderstood term, as it could both be taken to mean only the protection of territorial integrity and sovereignty. The above is just one of the meanings of the term national security and so does not explain in full the meaning of the concept called national security because it also includes human security.

From the above therefore, it can be seen that the threat to National security in Nigeria by the insurgents calls for serious concern for those who really care for the unity of Nigeria at heart. For now, the country has to count with damaging effect from the sects in attacks and killings of innocent people as well as destruction of property. Churches and schools are burnt, police stations are set ablaze, and both Christians and Muslims are killed including vulnerable such as women and children abducted. Therefore it can be agreed that the activities of the Boko Haram insurgents has negatively affected the national security situation in Nigeria (*This Day Newspaper*, 2012).

Another sector that the Boko Haram incidence has adversely affected is the economy of the country and particularly that of the north-east zone. Due to the activities of the insurgents, the socio-economic situation in the north-east particularly has been devastated. There are the issue of killings and bombings in the north-east zone of the country especially in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa with the economic and commercial enterprises of the area totally destroyed and many people have relocating to other parts of Nigeria (Adebayo, 2014). A typical example is in Maiduguri of Borno State, where the insurgents is more prevalence, the frequent bombings and clashes between the group and the security agencies have seriously affected the commercial and business activities in the city because many business activities have reportedly crumbled while many people have fled the state (Adejumola, and Tayo, 2012). In respect to the above impact of Boko Haram on Nigeria, Dauda, (2014) states as follow:

Also the insurgencies of Boko Haram have reduced drastically government derivation from the affected region due to restiveness in those places as well as reduced investment and growth of business in the affected places without excluding government executed project. Insecurity in Adamawa, Borno, Yobe, Kano etc alone has cost the Nigerian economy N1.3trillion (\$6 billion) as a result of attacks by the Boko Haram group (Dauda, 2014:255). With regards to the above, comes an argument by Mailafia who stated that terrorism or insurgency has always had huge financial repercussion and

burden to the affected areas and by extension the country, he gave an example of New York, where it has been reported that the city of New York alone lost US\$21 billion as a result of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The attack led to the establishment of the Homeland Security through which the U.S Government now has to spend a whopping some of \$500 billion on security alone. Globally, it has also been calculated that world Gross Development Product (GDP) has reportedly decreased by a whopping some of \$3.6 trillion in 2002 as a direct and indirect consequences of terrorist activities in 2001. This amount can be put in perspective when we realize that it amounts to a third of the GDP of the United States and exceeds the combined GDP of Argentina, Italy and Britain.

It was also reported that due to the activities of Boko Haram and other challenges in the country made youths to be left unemployed because of the inability of the industries to operate made it possible for numbers of youths to be ready available to be recruited by the Boko Haram insurgents. With respect to the above view, Okafor stated that: In 2009 alone, some industries were unable to remain in production, while other remaining ones managing to operate are been classified as "ailing", a situation that poses serious threat to the survival of the manufacturing sectors as well as the business environment in the country. Many of these firms that collapsed or closed operation are regarded to be as a result of factors such as insufficient availability of power supply among other factors (Okafor, 2011:40).

Concerning the number of people killed by the Boko Haram insurgent group, a respondent stated that the figure given by the Nigerian president should be closer to the authentic figure when he stated as follow "The president told the country in the month of May 2014 that about 12,000 Nigerians has been killed by Boko Haram, this figure must be more authentic than any other one because he is the president of Nigeria. But from then till date more people has been killed by the sect leading to serious increase in the number of those killed by the group" (Edogbo, 2014.interviewee). The attacks carried out by the Boko Haram insurgent group since inception are said to be over 1,106 with over 30,000 people killed and over 5,678 people injured. Over 250 Chibok school girls were also abducted in the year 2014 and still held captive by the sect till this moment. The insurgent activities of the sect include attacks on both police station, churches and Mosques of late with vulnerable women and children among those reportedly killed by them (Nossiter, 2013, BBC, 2014 and Akingbule, 2015)

### Government's Counter-Insurgency

Countering Boko Haram insurgents in Nigeria by the government include the adoption of measures to contain, deter, as well as responses to be used in bringing to an end the violence activities of Boko Haram group. Some scholars referred to counter-measures as "a complementary efforts with any contingency measures such as emergencies that have the ability to respond to insurgents/ terrorist attacks and limit their space of operation" (Steven and Gunaratna, 2004: 102). There is the augment that governments must have goals in venturing into countering insurgents/ terrorist activities. For instance,

Ganor, (2005) distinguishes three aims of counter-terrorism/insurgents to include, eliminating terrorism/insurgents, minimizing damage caused by terrorism/insurgents and avoiding the increase of terrorism/insurgents (Ganor, 2005:25). Ganor went further to state that: The destruction of a terrorist organization is the ultimate goal, albeit perhaps one of limited probability. Minimizing damage caused by terrorism/insurgent may include efforts to reduce the number of future attacks or prevention of certain types of attacks such as suicide bombings or mass killings. A decrease in the amount of damage done to property and infrastructure may also be of relevance (Ganor, 2005:26).

In view of the above, government is expected to counter the escalation of Boko Haram insurgents in Nigeria by ensuring that the activities of the group should not spread and also to make sure that the scope of attacks does not continue, therefore, governments need to seek counter measures to prevent the insurgent group from achieving some political success such as obtaining of support from foreign countries.

In response to the activities of Boko Haram, the Nigerian government first commenced with the adoption of series of counter-measures for the purpose of containing the insurgents and the first of its kind was the attack on the insurgents in July, 2009 when it was reported by Nossiter as follow:

In Bauchi, at least 39 militants were killed on Sunday, in Yobe State, fighters used fuel-laden motorcycles to bomb a police station, and at least 55 people have been killed in the two-day wave of violence, and then, was the news reports quoting the country's police inspector general, Ogbonna Onovo, as saying that militants were "battling with the police" and the Police fought back, in those places on Monday (Nossiter, 2009:1). Below are the various counter-measures adopted by the Nigerian government and their effectiveness.

### **Military Counter-Measures**

Boko Haram started as a domestic based insurgents group at its early emergence with little or no attacks until it clashed with the security agents in July 2009 when the federal government adopted the strategy centered on armed repression. At this stage, the group was contained through the deployment of military units alongside the police to suppress the group. The result of this repression was the extra-judicial elimination of Mohammed Yusuf, the leader of the group as well as the arrest of hundreds of his followers (*This Day* newspaper, 2011).

It was also argued that the security forces, mainly military, police force and state security services officers arrested and detained those suspected to be members of Boko Haram along with their wives, children and other relatives. The leader of the group, Muhammad Yusuf and others were extra-judicially killed by the police. The brutal massacre of the members was condemned all over the world especially with Aljazeera releasing its clips on the killing in the late 2011 (ibid). To the Nigerian government, it seems as if the strategy of repression adopted against the then domestic based Boko Haram insurgency was effective, because members of the group who escaped the security crackdown fled to the north-east between the periods of July 2009 to July 2010, which witnessed almost

zero activity by Boko Haram. This gap of non activities by the group created the impression that the military counter-measure strategy as adopted in July 2009 was effective (Ahmed, 2014). The resurgence in the group's violent attacks from August 2010 was argued that the one year interlude from the Boko Haram was put to good use for total transformation of itself to establish links with international terrorist organizations which resulted in the re- emergence of attacks (Crisis Group, 2013). The group's attacks since then changed from that of guerrilla tactics, hit and run strategy to that of encirclements which continued to that of medium scale urban guerilla warfare against the Nigerian state. This strategy adopted by the group became more devastating in creating panic, fear and terror on the citizens and the country (ibid).

The above view was supported in sun online when it confirmed that the military counter-measure adopted by the government is not helping the situation due to some variables when it was stated that: "Not only that Boko Haram has always been a test for the country's Armed Forces on their preparedness to defend and protect the nation, but the group's earlier successes in killings and destruction of properties methodically exposed the vulnerability of the military strength and capability of Nigeria" (Sunonline,2015).

As the Boko Haram's attacks became more devastating beginning from 2010, the federal government had to accept the fact that the group had once again become a national security threat. Moreover, the insurgent group claimed responsibilities for all the attacks they carried out. With this realization came the need for a security strategy to deal with the group more frontally through the formation of the joint task force as a booster to the initial military force.

### **The Formation of Joint Task Force (JTF)**

The Federal governments of Nigeria to adopt a phase two of its counter-measures in which by 12 June 2011, President Goodluck Jonathan inaugurated the combined security forces, named operation restore. The JTF is saddled with the responsibilities of restoring peace and security of lives and property in the north-east zone where the insurgent is more prevalent (Amnesty International, 2012, 9). The Nigeria Police (NP) is primarily responsible for the protection of lives and property, as well as that of maintenance of domestic law and order, the Armed Forces constitutionally is mandated to aid in civil authority by assisting the police in the maintenance of law and order, but they are only to be called upon if the situation was beyond police capability, as the case is at the moment with the Boko Haram insurgents. While the Nigeria Immigration Service is responsible for immigration issues, with the DSS and DIA charged with the responsibility of intelligence gathering (Umar, 2013, 38).

The JTF is primarily responsible with the duties of subduing the group through offensive military crackdown. The aims of the JTF actions were mostly to put a limit to the attacking space for the group and eliminating its activities as well as arresting members of the group and their supporters. The JTF designed strategies in quest to achieving its aim of military-oriented operations which include road blocks, checkpoints, arrests, cordon and search.

It also entails guarding of key points, surveillance, protection of very important persons and offensive military raids among others (ibid). In view of the above plans, effective from early 2011, the government sent a total of 3,600 security personnel to Maiduguri and other major north-east towns as part of the coverage areas by the Joint Task Force (JTF). Those securities above were also augmented by small contingents from Chad and Niger, due to their membership of a Joint Multi-National Task Force (JMNTF) which was established on 20 January 2015 at Niamey in Chad, to combat smuggling (Crisis Group, 2013).

### **Formation of Civilian Joint Task Force**

The JTF operations in the north-east that is meant to counter the Boko Haram insurgents have been supported by civilian vigilantes referred to as Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF). Youths within the cities in the north-east organized themselves into the above named group to patrol streets of the affected towns to locate members of Boko Haram. They search homes of known and suspected members and subsequently hand them over to the JTF (Crisis Group, 2013).

The CJTF armed themselves with locally made weapons meant to be used in playing some vital roles in countering the insurgents. The CJTF are organized into neighborhood sectors and they operate under the supervision of JTF sector commands (Crisis Group, 2012). With the record of assistance rendered by the civilian vigilantes to the JTF in driving most of the insurgents from Maiduguri and thereby preventing the group from killing and bombings in the zone. The activities of the CJTF cannot be said to have its own negative effect, because it has been argued that it was accompanied by human rights abuses (ibi).

To avoid the unruly activities of the CJTF, from misusing their privilege, the JTF spokesman informed that the military was "guiding and monitoring the activities of these youth groups". As a result of which they were given identification cards and also organized them into units in designated areas. Even though they serve as volunteers, they are paid some stipends, more so, the JTF takes care of treatment of those that sustained injuries while in operation with Boko Haram and in case of death of any member of the CJTF, financial assistance are given to their families. With the assistance of the CJTF, the security situation in the north-east has improved significantly (Crisis Group, 2013).

Despite the counter measures carried out by the CJTF in conjunction with the JTF, the measures have not defeated Boko Haram because, there are daring attacks on military facilities as well as subsequent strikes on civilian communities which made Governor Kashim Shettima of Borno State to warn that the north-east was moving towards "a state of war" and that "given the present state of affairs, it is absolutely impossible for us to defeat Boko Haram" (Daily Trust NewsPaper, 2014). It could be recalled that despite the efforts by both the JTF and the CJTF to counter the activities of Boko Haram. The group still went on to attack the Giwa barracks in Maiduguri, Borno state where they set free about 1,000 detainees, who were arrested after been suspected of being members of the group or sympathizers.

All the attacks were claimed by Boko Haram, for instance, the leader of Boko Haram, Shekau stated of the attacks in a video in April, 2014, that the group would go beyond the north-east and attack oil refineries in the Niger Delta and also kill several national leaders (Premium Times, 2014). On the effectiveness of the civilian vigilantes' (CJTF), it has been argued that even though the group has won praise for helping to drive many Boko Haram members out of Maiduguri and other cities in the north-east zone yet there are complaints from people concerning the fact that the CJTF insult and manhandled motorists at checkpoints. The vigilantes' operations have also brought about increased insurgent revenge attacks against the people of the local communities who may be suspected of collaborating with the security forces.

There is also the fear by residents that the vigilantes who originally are remnants of the area boys that were earlier used by politicians referred to as "ECOMOG" whose many of them are drug users, brought about the fear that they could on the long run become another source of insecurity, hence the Borno State government has started giving them skills acquisition training so that they can become productively engaged (*Blue Print Newspaper*, 2013 and *Premium Times*, 2013). Generally, it is argued that the counter-measures as adopted by the use of force was said to have been hampered by the lack of proper coordination within the JTF at the infestation stage which sometimes led to the death of innocent people and lots of security personnel. There have also been cases when the searches irritated the civil populace who view it as an infringement on their fundamental human rights (Umar, 2013: 42).

According to Campbell, a former U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria and now a fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations corroborated with the above views when he said, "the security forces have proven remarkably ineffective in securing territory or people within the areas in the north-east where Boko Haram is more prevalent" (Campbell, 2012). Apart from the major counter measures discussed above, others includes cordon and search and military raid operations; guarding of key points since 2009; armed military patrols; legislation on insurgents and anti-terrorism prevention law; declaration of state of emergency; installation of closed circuit television cameras; and imposition of curfew

### **Why the Nigerian Government has failed to contain the Boko Haram Insurgents**

Despite the efforts of the government as evaluated above, the Nigerian government realized that as a result of many factors, the use of force could only be a stop-gap tactics in dealing with the Boko Haram. Some of these factors are the guerilla tactics adopted by Boko Haram which is not amenable to conventional military engagements. The following are some of the factors responsible for the inability of the government to contain the Boko Haram insurgents.

#### **The Military**

It could be recalled that Nigeria's military has been known for its good performance and reputation internationally due its involvement in several peace keeping missions in Africa which are still fresh in minds.

Yet the government's inability to contain the Boko Haram insurgency can be adduced to the non performance of the military through its wrong approaches. For instance, the military has a poor human rights attitude which made the people not to have confidence in them. Another problem that bedeviled the military which contributed to its poor outing against the Boko Haram is their sub-standard equipments, insufficient training or none at all and most importantly, low motivation from their commandants (BBC, 2014).

### Political Factor and Leadership Failure

Prior to the emergence of the present administration of All People Congress (APC), the political leadership of the three states in the north-east where Boko Haram has been worse heat were controlled and ruled by opposition party. While Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) is the ruling party, the north-east has been under the control of the opposition, the All Progressive Congress (APC). The above scenario made some loyalists to the president to ill advise him and hence, he distanced himself from the Boko Haram insurgents at the early part of its activities, the stance that brings about his inability to nip the activities of the group in the bud. This postulation was supported by an environmental activist, Mr. Mtee, when he said that "People around the president, his closest allies, informed him that this Boko Haram is manufactured by the Northerners to play politics," particularly when it was stated by the North after the 2011 election that the country would be made ungovernable for the elected President been a Southern president (BBC, 2014). The above scenario led to the non seriousness on the part of the government to confront the insurgent group immediately.

### Corruption

Corruption is another area that aided the failure of the government's fight against Boko Haram in Nigeria and this can be viewed from the procurement and administration, poor maintenance of acquired weapon meant to prosecute the war against the insurgents. The most serious aspect of corruption is the internal frustration that led the soldier's ranks and files to engage in what the military referred to as mutinies and refusing to take orders so as to engage in the fight since September 2014. The repercussion was that 66 soldiers have been sentenced to death for that act. It is also recorded that desertion rate is high among the armies (Obasi, 2015).

The main reason for the emergence of Boko Haram could be regarded as religious fanaticism but corrupt practices among government officials and few rich ones in the society also led to protest against government neglect, because the masses did not benefit any shares, especially those in the north-east that happen to remain traditionally the poorest and least influential part of the Nigerian population. The challenges is that the present government is unpopular in the fight against the insurgency without capable security forces who are under-paid and ill-trained soldiers who rape and commit other crime against humanity such as Boko Haram which they were supposed to contain (HRW, 2013). More so, on corruption as a factor responsible for the ineffectiveness of Nigerian government to counter the insurgents was the prove that there

are corrupt individuals within and outside the government that are corruptly benefiting from the fight against the insurgency through contracts and supplies to government. These people encouraged the government to handle the insurgents as freedom fighters rather than terrorists, so that the group will continue with its attacks to enable them, the contractors to remain in business (Akpan, and Ekanem, 2014).

Despite the continued attacks by the Boko Haram along with its threats to the National security, the JTF has continued its counter-measure strategy against the insurgents and was able to pursue the insurgents into the border towns of Cameroun. At the moment, states under threat of Boko Haram include Kaduna, Kano, Adamawa, Taraba, Benue, Plateau and of course, Abuja, the seat of government (Ahmed, 2012). Dispersed but provoked, members of Boko Haram group fleeing the intensive fire power of the military in the north-east now freely operate as herdsmen and carrying out heavy assaults on citizens across north-west and central, buttressing the non-effectiveness of the military to combat the insurgents. It is reported that not less than 1,000 peoples have been killed via these camouflaging called 'herdsmen versus farmer's violence' in Katsina, Benue and Kaduna (*The Sun Newspaper*, 2014).

### Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the regenerative nature of Boko Haram, there is nothing to suggest that the Nigerian security forces are in a position to pave their way to stability in the North-east part of Nigeria. Therefore to return to a reasonable sense of security, a serious shift away from the current reactionary strategies and the heavy-handed tactics currently employed by the Nigerian security forces is likely to be the only viable option but with other counter-measures to be introduced.

The fact that operating environments have improved with public support, even in counter-Boko Haram operations, it has been greater in areas where the security forces have not so strictly adhered to such heavy-handed is evidence to that end (Garba 2012). In the relatively short history of security force operations against Boko Haram, there have been far too many incidents of inexcusable abuses of state power, from extrajudicial killings to indiscriminate retaliatory responses. Such events have continued to contribute to the ever-growing sense of insecurity amongst the people. The peaks and troughs in overall violence within the Nigerian security response speak to the reactionary nature of the strategy.

In the war currently being waged amongst the people, the reactionary strategy being employed by the Nigerian security forces must be re-evaluated and altered to better address both the causes and results of the ongoing violence. With a more cohesive operational focus and tempo, knee-jerk retributions of uncontrolled violence can be better controlled. Until such time, the majority of the insecurity burden will continue to be shouldered by the public. The public are in no position to bear such a burden, and in such an environment there will almost certainly be no substantive security gains. In view of the foregoing therefore, this paper suggests that the counter-insurgency approach should include that of carrot and sticks as

well as human security which should include the “hearts and minds as adopted during the Malaya guerrilla warfare in Malaysia between 1945 to 1967.

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