Contending Theories on the Era of Boko Haram Insurgency

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Abstract

The current challenge posed by the Boko Haram sect in Nigeria is not only about the viciousness of its terror campaigns, nor the sect’s avowed mission to impose Islamic law on the country, it is also about confusion regarding the exact cause(s) of the violence. Several theories have emerged to explain the problem, broadly revolving around socio-economic, political, and religious themes, all of which are treated in detail in this study. This paper argues that while none of the perspectives may exclusively explain the problem, analyses that consider the political context deserve particular attention, especially in relation to President Jonathan’s contestation of the 2011 presidential election and the coming election in 2015.

Introduction

One of the outcomes of the security challenge posed by the Boko Haram insurgency on Nigerian society has been the emergent preponderance of theories that attempt to explain the motive of the Islamic group. Unlike the Niger Delta militancy which preceded it, and which predicatated its desire for a separate state from Nigeria on decades of conspiratorial neglect by the Nigerian state and multinational oil prospecting companies in the Niger Delta region, Boko Haram has refrained from articulating and formally presenting its grievances, apart from its declared desire for the strict interpretation of Islamic Law in Nigeria. The confusion also grows out of the changing dynamics in the operations of the sect. For instance, its terror campaign, which initially targeted security formations and personnel, has expanded to include civilians and non-government targets, and the Nigerian public generally.

The theories are divided into two broad spectrums. One views the problem essentially as internal. The other blames external forces. The former looks at socio-economic factors, as well as deep-seated political, religious differences in the Nigerian society. It also includes vendetta over the death of the sect’s leader, Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf. The external forces argument has two planks: one characterizes the problem as part of global Islamic jihad and focuses on the sect’s links with international terror groups such as al Qaeda or its affiliates as al Shabaab or the al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, (AQIM); the other views it as conspiratorial – a grand strategy to achieve the predicted disintegration of Nigeria by 2015, (See “Africa in 2020 Panel” Report). Within the conspiratorial thesis is the sub-theme that Nigeria is being targeted by envious and troubled neighbours. This aspect also links it to the now ‘unemployed’ war-hardened returnees from the Libyan crisis and the assertion of influence by al Shabaab from that turmoil.

How relevant these theories are to the explanation of the current crisis is the question to which this paper addresses itself. Is Nigeria merely convulsing from her many internal contradictions that successive leaderships have been unable to manage or resolve, or are external forces actually at work to undermine Nigeria; if so, how and for what purpose? While each of the competing perspectives indeed may offer some valid approximation of the real cause(s) of Nigeria’s security challenge, the multiplicity has tended to frustrate a clear understanding of the problem and articulation of appropriate response to it. This paper set out to examine the entire gamut of the theories with a view to clearing, rather than adding to the confusion. But we can expect that, as the Boko Haram challenge persists, more theories will continue to evolve.

An Explanatory Note on the Origin and Activities of Boko Haram

The apparent confusion generated by the plethora of theories attempting to explain the Boko Haram challenge also characterizes the origin of the sect. The confusion not only reflects in the narratives about the exact date, and who the actual founder was, but also to the true source of these expositions. For instance, Adibe (2012), has observed that while the popular belief is that it was founded, sometime 2001 or 2002, Madike, he notes, traces the date to as far back as 1995, and argued that, one Lawan Abubakar, who later left for further studies at the University of Maiduguri, Saudi Arabia, actually founded the Boko Haram sect. Under Abubakar, the sect was known as Sahaba, (Madike 2011 cited in Adibe, 2012: 50). Elsewhere, these expositions are credited to Shetu Sani, a civil right activist in northern Nigeria, who helped broker the first peace deal with the sect with these revelations, which failed Businessday, online, February 1, 2012). While Uzodike and Maiangwa on the other hand acknowledge the Lawan Abubakar angle, they attribute their source to Ujah et al. (see Uzodike and Maiangwa, 2012: 100). They also acknowledge that this version which traced the origin to an evangical group formed by Muslim students at the University of Maiduguri, Borno state, who reportedly felt dissatisfied with Western education (Uzodike and Maiangwa, 2012: 100).

Muhammad Yusuf, to whom the formation is now generally ascribed, according to the competing narratives only assumed leadership after Abubakar’s departure and “indocratized the sect with his own teachings, which he claimed were based on purity” (Adibe, 2012: 50). Yusuf’s notion of “purity” and teachings were inspired by the works of Ibn Taymiyya, a fourteenth century legal scholar who preached Islamic fundamentalism and is considered a “major theorist” for radical groups in the Middle East (Johnson, 2011), after whom Yusuf named his mosque in Maiduguri (The Nation, May 23, 2012). But just as the sect itself may be less concerned about whom to credit for its formation than waging its war against the Nigerian state, the state too may be less concerned with the origin than it is with the threat that the group now poses to society.

The obscurity surrounding its true origin perhaps informs why initially, the sect “had no specific name as its members attracted several descriptions where they operated based on the perception of the local population” (Okereke, 2011: 450). Such names include Taliban and the Yawariyyah. The sect soon began formally identified as Ahlusanna wad ‘amma ibn Iahir – ‘Congregation of Followers of the Prophet Involved in the Call to Islam and Religious Struggle.’ The name Boko Haram, to which it is now commonly referred derives from the sect’s anti-Western posturing, literally meaning ‘Western education (book)/civilization is sin.’

In the early stages, the Boko Haram sect was widely known to have mobilized its membership from women and children, school drop outs and unemployed university and polytechnic graduates, most of who tore up their certificates; student members withdrew from school. Okereke posits that “these recruits were indoctrinated by Yusuf to believe that their state of hopelessness was caused by government which imposed Western education on them and failed to manage the resources of the country to their benefits” (ibid). Although from the outset, the sect’s approach was teaching peacefully, but not without attracting attention among other Islamic preachers who saw the preaching and interpretation of the Quran as a recipe for violence and an affidavit to constituted authority (ibid:457). Although incidents of violence have earlier been recorded against the sect, (Uzodike and Maiangwa, 2012: 102), serious concerns over its violent tendencies grew only after the open confrontation between the sect and the government in July 2009 following the death of Yusuf while in police custody, as well as his father in-law and sect financier, Ustaz Buji Foi, and the incarceration of members by state authorities.

Stated desire for the strict interpretation of Islamic Law in Nigeria. The confusion also grows out of the changing dynamics in the operations of the sect. For instance, its terror campaign, which initially targeted security formations and personnel, has expanded to include civilians and non-government targets, and the Nigerian public generally.

One of the outcomes of the security challenge posed by the Boko Haram insurgency on Nigerian society has been the emergent preponderance of theories that attempt to explain the motive of the Islamic group. Unlike the Niger Delta militancy which preceded it, and which predicatated its desire for a separate state from Nigeria on decades of conspiratorial neglect by the Nigerian state and multinational oil prospecting companies in the Niger Delta region, Boko Haram has refrained from articulating and formally presenting its grievances, apart from its declared desire for the strict interpretation of Islamic Law in Nigeria. The confusion also grows out of the changing dynamics in the operations of the sect. For instance, its terror campaign, which initially targeted security formations and personnel, has expanded to include civilians and non-government targets, and the Nigerian public generally.

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The cogency of the relational/vengeance perspective is such that for a long time, it remained the plausible explanation for the terror campaign by Boko Haram as the death of Yussuf in the "Others." The establishment of Alfurqan Islamic School, solely dedicated to the teaching of ethics opposed to Western civilization in Jalingo, capital of Taraba, a North Eastern state in 17, 2012, also highlights the vengeance thrust of the "We" and "Others" psychology. In this instance, the avengers, presumably Christians now constituted the "We," while Muslims became the "Others." The state and other members of Nigerian society who are targets of Boko Haram's violence may indeed find it difficult to understand the sect's penchant for blood-letting. On the one hand, several descriptions where they operated based on the perceptions of the local population [...]. In some communities, where it existed, the sect and its members were described as terrorists. In examining the various perspectives that have attempted to capture the causes of the Boko Haram insurgency since the outset of the problem, we looked at general theoretical frameworks that have been employed universally to explain similar crisis. In this regard, we made reference to foreign and local (Nigerian) sources. At the same time, we paid critical attention to the diverse views provided by the broad spectrum of the Nigerian society. This was in view of the complexity of the Nigerian society, the tenacious relationship among its disparate social groups and the implication of the Boko Haram insurgency on the continuing existence of Nigeria as a single corporate entity. The idea is that resolving the Boko Haram challenge and forestalling a resurgence of the sort in the future may to a large extent depend on a national consensus on what the problem really is and how it will be tackled as was the challenge posed by the Niger Delta militancy. Apart from the dangers it constitutes to Nigeria's immediate neighbours, Nigeria's position as a strategic country in global consideration also warrants that even non-Nigerians share concerns over what may have gone wrong. The paper accommodated such views. We also considered perspectives provided by persons with security backgrounds. Indeed the contemporariness of the problem of state failure has brought all these groups to common knowledge that Boko Haram is that they believe that the premise on which they act is justifiable and that the Nigerian state is at a crossroads, if not an outright enemy (cited in Uzodike and Maiganga, op.cit. p. 98).

Methodology

In examining the various perspectives that have attempted to capture the causes of the Boko Haram insurgency since the outset of the problem, we looked at general theoretical frameworks that have been employed universally to explain similar crisis. In this regard, we made reference to foreign and local (Nigerian) sources. At the same time, we paid critical attention to the diverse views provided by the broad spectrum of the Nigerian society. This was in view of the complexity of the Nigerian society, the tenacious relationship among its disparate social groups and the implication of the Boko Haram insurgency on the continuing existence of Nigeria as a single corporate entity. The idea is that resolving the Boko Haram challenge and forestalling a resurgence of the sort in the future may to a large extent depend on a national consensus on what the problem really is and how it will be tackled as was the challenge posed by the Niger Delta militancy. Apart from the dangers it constitutes to Nigeria's immediate neighbours, Nigeria's position as a strategic country in global consideration also warrants that even non-Nigerians share concerns over what may have gone wrong. The paper accommodated such views. We also considered perspectives provided by persons with security backgrounds. Indeed the contemporariness of the problem is such that as the violence escalates and the State intensifies efforts towards finding solution, fresh perspectives emerge, and the media relay these developments. Reliance on these media may have gone wrong. The paper accommodated such views. We also considered perspectives provided by persons with security backgrounds. Indeed the contemporariness of the problem is such that as the violence escalates and the State intensifies efforts towards finding solution, fresh perspectives emerge, and the media relay these developments. Reliance on these media sources is a function of this contemporariness. Generally, the historical-descriptive method of inquiry was adopted in the study. The Relational/Vengeance Theory

Relational theory attempts to provide explanation for violent conflicts between groups by exploring sociological, political, economic, (religious) and historical relationships between such groups. The belief is that cultural and value differences as well as group interests all influence relationships between individuals and groups in different ways. Thus, a number of conflicts grow out of a past history of conflict between groups that has led to the development of negative stereotypes, racial intolerance and discrimination, (Falleti, 2006:54-55). The differences in value involve culture, social norms by conflict groups and other reference groups, which becomes a symbol for the "We" and "Others" dichotomy. The fact that "others" are perceived as different makes us feel they are entitled to less or are inferior by reason of [...] values. This disrupts the flow of communication between us and them and to that extent, twists perceptions that we have about each other" (ibid.p.55). Okereke notes that sect members "attracted several descriptions where they operated based on the perceptions of the local population [...]. In some communities, where it existed, the sect and its members were described as terrorists and persons with psychiatric challenges" (ibid.p.450).

The state and other members of Nigerian society who are targets of Boko Haram’s violence may indeed find it difficult to understand the sect’s penchant for blood-letting. On the one hand, the former group becomes in this context the “We” and all efforts are being to secure it from savagery of the “Others”, the Boko Haram members. On the other hand, the latter group bond with state and other members of Nigerian society who are targets of Boko Haram’s violence may indeed find it difficult to understand the sect’s penchant for blood-letting. On the one hand, the former group becomes in this context the “We” and all efforts are being to secure it from savagery of the “Others”, the Boko Haram members. On the other hand, the latter group bond with state and other members of Nigerian society who are targets of Boko Haram’s violence may indeed find it difficult to understand the sect’s penchant for blood-letting. On the one hand, the former group becomes in this context the “We” and all efforts are being to secure it from savagery of the “Others”, the Boko Haram members. On the other hand, the latter group bond with state and other members of Nigerian society who are targets of Boko Haram’s violence. The inherent complexities in the states formed by European imperialism made less feasible the prospects of the new states modelled after the Western types (Roth, cited in Jackson and Rosberg, p. 36). Although the African states have come a long way down the road of nation-building process, with many heterogeneous or multinational states having to resort to varying ways of resolving their inter-group relations (Elaiguw, 1997:58), many of the states still constume from one shock after another resulting from those sociological and political diversities; so much so also because “the African state is hardly ever coexistent with a common society” (Ekech, 1989:5) and “the society in which it [the African state] exists is typically segmented into small rival political communities, often with strong localized identities, competing to capture and exploit state power or at least prevent it from oppressing them” (Ake, 1999:42). According to Professor Peter Ekeh, “The political history of Africa has become a tale of drift and instability. [...] Standing above, and set aside and apart from society, the African state has turned out to be immutable, because it operates outside societal rules” (Ekech, 1989:5). The arbitrariness of the African state has conferred on African political culture, attributes of negativity, so that “African political culture has become characterized by a vast array of negative elements such as corruption, violence and mistrust” (ibid.).

With the tendency to blame every of the continent’s woes on the incidence of colonialism, it remains debatable, however, whether it was the nature of the state inherited at the end of formal colonialism or the neo-patrimonial and particularistic orientation of the competing power elites who inherited the post-colonial state that is the problem. Whichever, the African state remains characterized by these disconnection with the social world. Those negative elements identified by Ekech, and much more, have all combined to make the African state irrelevant to the citizenry, thus eroding its legitimacy. Additionally, the state becomes prone to economic dislocation and political instability – which all are indices of state failure (Rotberg 2002: 86 cited in Uzodike and Maiganga). Here, Rotberg’s articulation of the characteristics of a failed state in economic and political terms is illuminating. According to him, the economic sphere is characterized by deteriorated standards of living, a lack of public goods and services, the flourishing of corruption and rent-seeking, and a pervasive economic stagnation (ibid. p.96). In the political sphere, some leaders and their allies readily work to subvert their legitimacy norms by committing crimes and by engaging in corruption, abuse of power, and other ill-gotten gains, stifling the emergence of civil society or space, and abusing security and defence forces for parochial ends. Moreover, the political sphere is dotted with ethnic discrimination and resultant discord. Governments that once appeared to operate for the benefit of all the nation’s citizens are perceived to have become partisan. Corrupt ruling elites invest their ill-gotten gains overseas, building lavish residences and palaces with state funds (ibid. pp.96-97).

Rotberg further argues that in the last phase of failure, the state’s legitimacy will collapse:

Once the state’s capacity to secure itself or to perform in an expected manner recedes, there is every reason to expect disloyalty to the state on the part of the disenchanted and aggrieved citizens. Logically, many transfer their alienations to their clan and group leaders, some of whom gravitate towards terrorism as they strive to secure communal mandate. Mobilizing support from both external and local supporters, the terrorists seek out havens in the more remote and marginalized corners of failed states where they blend in, more comfortably in the prevailing chaos associated with state failure (ibid.)

The various theoretical constructs that attempt to mirror the Nigerian state point to a deep gulf between state and society or in Ekech’s (op.cit) term “the difficult relations between state and society” – from Wole Olatun’s “Hanging State”, Hamza Alao’s “Overlay developed State”, to Teresa Turner’s “Entrepot State”, Gunmar Myrdal’s “Soft State” and Claude Ake’s “Irrelevant State”. In the realm of theory, such disconnect is not only capable of eroding legitimacy but also inducing state failure and the subsequent repercussions that emanate from it such as violent conflicts or terrorism as Rotberg’s postulate suggests. Empirically, Uzodike and Maiganga have articulated the various conditions and features of a failed state as pertaining to Nigeria, ranging from the Failed States index in which the country ranked 14 in 2011, Terrorism and Political Mapping (2010-2011), which ranked her fifth and the Human Development Index Trend Report of 2009, it emerged 156 out of 187 countries. On these grounds they assert that the chaotic and anarchic situation in the Nigeria of 2012 exemplifies the characteristics of a failing or weak state that is degenerating into full failure (Uzodike and Maiganga, op.cit. p. 97).

The Boko Haram challenge in the final analysis seems to reflect the deeper crisis bedevilling the Nigerian state, which the various theories, to which we shall presently focus on attempt to explain. Adibe (2012) captures the depth of the challenge when he argues that:

[...] the Nigerian state, contrary to the media hype, is regarded as the enemy, not just by Boko Haram, but by several Nigerians and groups, each attacking it with as much ferocity as Boko Haram’s bombs, by whatever means they have at their disposal: politicians entrusted to protect our common patriotspoyl the country blind, law enforcement officers see or hear no evil at a slight inducement, government workers drag their feet and refuse to give their best while reveling in moonlighting, organized labour, inducing university lecturers in public institutions go on indefinite strikes on a whim while journalists accept ‘brown envelopes’ to turn their truth on its head or become uncritical champions of a selected anti-Nigerian state identity. Whatever all these groups have in common with Boko Haram is that they believe that the premise on which they act is justifiable and that the Nigerian state is at a crossroads, if not an outright enemy (cited in Uzodike and Maiganga, op.cit. p. 98).

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those minorities in perpetuating the myth of the monolithic political north. A few examples deserve attention. On January 15, 1966, led by a Southern army officer, Major Chukwuma

the southerner, a northern hegemony. This perception may have been reinforced by Kukah’s observation that the ascription of leadership qualities by British colonialism to the Fulanis, later

Hausa-Fulani who constitute the region’s dominant population are predominantly Muslims and as Uche (1989:8) has rightly noted, “the Moslem religion united the vast areas of the North

Yar’Adua’s death manifested in the tension in which Nigeria was soaked in the pre-2011 general elections period.

Yar’Adua’s presidency and was supposed to remain there for another eight years. Despite the constitutional provision that guarantees his succession by his deputy, Goodluck Jonathan, a

southerner was acclaimed to have won. Through ingenious political engineering by the Nigerian power elite, a power-sharing arrangement was devised which rotates central power

eight-year sojourn in the south, where the north grudgingly ceded it to in 1999 following the tumult that resulted from the annulled 1993 presidential election, which Moshood Abiola, a

measures to win and to maintain political power.

The Political Feud Perspective

disadvantage amidst rising illiteracy, poverty, ignorance and general backwardness in the region, (Daily trust, online, February 24, 2012).

Nelson 1969). Chairman of Northern Governors’ Forum, (NGF) Aliyu Babangida has also decried an “unfavourable federation allocation structure in which the Northern states are at great

north. It also agrees with the submission that competition for scarce resources may be of greater importance in explaining political violence in the developing regions (Oberschal 1969; Nelson 1969).

Hence for Professor Jean Herskovits of the State University of New York, to whom “it was clear in 2009 when the insurgency began that the root cause of violence and anger in both the north and south of Nigeria is endemic poverty and hopelessness,” the government must address socio-economic deprivation, which is most severe in the north (Herskovits, 2012).

Indeed the very high incidence of poverty in Nigeria is generally seen as a northern phenomenon. A study by Professor Charles Soludo, shows the three northern regions having an average poverty incidence of 70.1% compared to 34.9% of the south’s three. Ten states in Nigeria with the highest incidence of poverty also are all northern states, whereas the ten states with the lowest incidence of poverty are all southern states, (Lukef, n.d.). Thus, “70% of the people living in the north live below $1 per day, which is equivalent to N129 per day,” (ibid).

The Human Needs/Socio-Economic Perspective

Al-Shabaab also exhibits this tendency (BBC Somali, online, June 21, 2009).

Similarly, to the “Others,” the sect is identified by the “prohibited name,” Boko Haram, (Western education is sin), whereas to the sect itself, the “We”, “our name is

Sunnah Lidda Awati Wal Jihad

widen the sect’s targets, blur the line between the “We” and ‘Others”, and so challenge this perspective.

members’ widows by living members, all sustain the theory. But the reported killing of members who decline suicide missions on the orders of Shekau, the killing in September 2011 of

in the north, the...
symbol of northern solidarity. Known as the Leaders of Thought, the group comprised of [sic] Alhaji Aliyu Makaman Bida (leader of the defunct NPC), Alhaji Aminu Kano (NEPU) and Mr. Joseph Tarka (UMIC) (pp.39-40).

Gowon’s nine years in power (1966-1975) remains the longest any one ruler has occupied Nigeria’s presidency. Again, although General Ibrahim Babangida, a Gwari who ruled Nigeria from 1985 to 1993, hails from the Minority Middle-Belt as Gowon, his eight-year rule was marked by robust obsequious to the Sokoto Sultanate which symbolizes (Muslim) spiritual and (northern) political authority. Babangida’s choice of Sambo Dasuki, (Nigeria’s new NSA) as aide de camp after his a successful coup against General Muhammadu Buhari, a Fulani, could be seen not only in the light of forestalling a backlash from the Hausa-Fulani oligarchy, which installed the latter to power (Olukoshi, 1993) but also as an appeasement gesture towards it.

Beneath the façade of northern hegemony, however, the resentment against Hausa-Fulani hegemony over the rest of the north among other northern political blocs persists. Perhaps the boldest expression of this resentment was the expulsion of the five northerners and predominantly Hausa-Fulani Nigerian states from Nigeria by army major Gideon Orkar in the coup against General Babangida in 1990. Mr. Orkar, a Tiv from the Benue State, a minority ethnic group of northern Nigeria, had accused the Hausa-Fulani of seeking to perpetuate their rule at the expense of the predominantly Christian peoples of Nigeria’s Middle-Belt. The age-old resentment of the old Kanem-Borno Empire towards the over-arching influence of the Sokoto Caliphate in the north also remains. When the late General Sani Abacha, a Kanuri, assumed the leadership of Nigeria in 1993, he retired several top military officers, many of whom were regarded as ‘IBB Boys’ and were mainly Hausa-Fulani. Abacha’s later deserting of the Salute of Sokoto, Alhaji Ibrahim Dasuki, and concomitant prominence accorded the Shehu of Borno by his regime, was perhaps the climax of a revived age-old rivalry between old Kanem-Borno and Sokoto Caliphate. That interlude, however, did not redeem the peripheralist of the Kanem-Borno axis in the northern domination of Nigeria’s political power trajectory.

It is against this backdrop that the political feud theory has generated more interest than any of the perspectives that attempt to explain the Boko Haram phenomenon as it also further exposes the deep division among Nigeria’s disparate social groups. Professor Wole Soyinka view on the problem perhaps captures this scenario most succinctly:

Much play is given, and rightly so, to economic factors – unemployment, misgovernment, wasted resources, social marginalization, massive corruption – in the nurturing of the current season of violent discontent in Nigeria. To limit oneself to these factors alone, is an evasion, intellectual and moral cowardice, and a fear of offending the ruthless political opportunists and criminal leaders desperate to stave off the day of reckoning. Most are highly placed, highly disgruntled, and thus highly motivated – individuals who, having lost out in the power stakes, resort to the manipulation of these products of warped fervor. Their aim is to bring society to its knees, to create a situation of total anarchy that will either break up the nation or bring back the military, which ruled Nigeria in a succession of coups between the mid-1960s and the late 90’s. [..] Again and again they have declared their blunt manifesto—not merely to Islamise the nation but to bring it under a specific kind of fundamentalist strain (Newsweek, January 16, 2012).

The political feud perspective is premised primarily on the argument that while the extra-judicial killing of the leadership of the Boko Haram in 2009 could have triggered a violent confrontation with the state, the violence that has now assumed is the fallout of a fierce political battle in 2011, which we have already referred to. The outcry at that time resounded around forcing Jonathan to give up his 2011 presidential ambition to allow for a return of power to the north and pitted some formidable political forces in the north against similar forces in the most of the south – especially from Jonathan’s minority ethnic Ijaw nationality of the south-south of Nigeria who saw in Jonathan’s ambition an opportunity to placate the restive region over perceived decades of economic and political marginalization in the Nigerian Union. The post-2011 election violence in parts of the north, therefore, did not only symbolize a rejection of the polls result and/or Goodluck Jonathan’s Christian southerner’s presidency, but was also a precursor to the current mayhem.[2]

Miller’s (1975: 28) defines an act of political violence “as an attempted or actual injury (ordinarily not sanctioned by law or custom) perpetrated on persons or property with the actual or intended effect of creating fear, and/or of effecting transformations in political authority, or within economic and/or social system.” In the general context of the theory of northern loss of power, for the Nigerian political system, notorious for its prebendalism, patronage system, and cronism, the stakes for the control of political power can be quite high, and loss of central power could prompt a “highly placed, highly disgruntled, and thus highly motivated individuals” or group towards bringing the country “under a specific kind of fundamentalist strain,” even if illegally (Joseph, 1991; Sklar, 1998).

Very significant in the campaign of violence by the Boko Haram is the corresponding intensity which marked the post-2011 election Nigeria. Apart from anger against Jonathan for violating his party’s power assignment, while international observers viewed the April 2011 general polls in which Jonathan emerged victorious as credible, “many Nigerians, especially in the north, did not” (Herskovits, 2012).

To interpret the terror attacks as orchestrated attempts to undermine Jonathan thus qualifies them as political violence intended for the “transformations either within structures of political authority or within economic and/or social system” (Miller, 1975). With the ultimatum issued by the Boko Haram sect in early January 2012 to southern Nigerians residing in the north to return to their region, the contention that “Boko Haram [is] out to end 1914 amalgamation,” (Saturday Sun, online, January 21, 2012) of the northern and southern protectorates, which formally created the political entity known as Nigeria, implies Soyinka’s thesis that the perpetrators are indeed anarchists who, having lost power, are bent on dismembering Nigeria.

The political feud perspective has acquired more dimensions as it also reveals emergent dynamics in Nigeria’s power relations. Jonathan’s Ijaw ethnic group claims Boko Haram is a northern attempt to undermine the president’s power. At the same time, there is an emergent school of thought that the specific focus of the terror campaign is the 2015 presidential election, an attempt to ensure that power returns to the north by 2015, especially amongst speculations that Jonathan may yet contest the presidency at that time. Senator Uche Chukwumerije, who has canvassed this view, links Jonathan’s accession to power from the vice-president in 2007 to the elected president in 2011, to the Niger Delta militancy spear-headed by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, MEND from the late 1990s. Obasanjo’s emergence as Nigeria’s president in 1999 to him also owed to the militancy by the Yoruba ethnic militia, the Oodua People’s Congress, OPC as an aftermath of the 1993 presidential election announcement. Thus his suggestion to his ethnic Igbos nationalism to mobilize its own militia, Movement for the Sovereignty of Biafra, MASSOB, to “devise a means of constructive engagement with the youth” (Vanguard, online, 29 September 2011) towards 2015. Chukwumerije’s call for the mobilization of the Igbo militia should be seen within the context of ethnic militia for political influence in Nigeria, which forms the central thesis of our essay in a forthcoming volume.[1]

Professor Bolaji Akinyemi’s conceptualization of the Nigerian military from July 1966 to 1999 as an ethnic militia is quite functional in understanding our argument in the essay under reference. In doing so, he has argued that referring to the Nigerian army as an un-classical and unusual case of ethnic militia does not mean that it was made up of only one nationality. Professor Akinyemi’s conceptualization of the Nigerian military from July 1966 to 1999 as an ethnic militia is quite functional in understanding our argument in the essay under reference. In doing so, he has argued that referring to the Nigerian army as an un-classical and unusual case of ethnic militia does not mean that it was made up of only one nationality. In 1999, since certain fundamental changes have taken place in the command structure of the Nigerian military-security institutions to the extent that certain offices, hitherto the exclusive preserve of the north or the Hauza-Fulani, are now occupied by personnel outside of these areas. For example, for the first time in post-civil war Nigeria, an Igbo became the chief of army staff in the person of Lt. General Azubuike Ihejirika. Similarly, a southerner became the national security adviser (NSA) in the person of General buru. (northern) political authority. Babangida’s choice of Sambo Dasuki, (Nigeria’s new NSA) as aide de camp after his a successful coup against General Muhammadu Buhari, a Fulani, could be seen not only in the light of forestalling a backlash from the Hausa-Fulani oligarchy, which installed the latter to power (Olukoshi, 1993) but also as an appeasement gesture towards it.

We have earlier mentioned the Kanuri resentment of the Hausa-Fulani hegemony. That resentment grew from the historical rivalry between the North-West and the Fulani and the old Borno Empire. That rivalry is, for the fact that the political movement thatrose to power in the old Borno Empire “do not only take pride in this but also the fact that they contacted Islam much earlier than what is today’s North-West geo-political region on Nigeria” (Tribune, online, June 27, 2012). These areas are largely made up of Borno and Yobe States in Nigeria and the parts of Niger, Cameroon and Chad Republics. Interestingly, nationals of those neighbouring countries account for foreigner elements among the Boko Haram operatives. We did state that but for the General Abacha period 1993-1998, the Kanuri ethnic nationality had maintained a marginal quotient in the Northern domination of central power in Nigeria. While Southerners, therefore, may erroneously refer to all northerners as Hausas and Fulanis (Uche, 1989:9), to the Kanuri, both Atiku who contested against Jonathan in the January 2011 PDP presidential primary and General Muhammadu Buhari who contested against him in the subsequent presidential election under the Congress for Progressive Change, (CPC) are Fulanis. Their electoral victory would invariably perpetuate the Fulani hegemony. A closer examination of the Boko Haram terror movement thus reveals it clearly as a Kanuri revolt – it is “dominated by Kanuri boys, despite the recruitment of volunteers from areas outside Borno and Yobe States” (Tribune, online, June 27, 2012). Outside of its core old Borno versus Fulani

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context, a statement by Ishiaki Mohammed Bawatte Chief Whip of the House of Representatives of the Nigerian National Assembly and leader of the north-east caucus in the House, further underscores a general north-east angst. According to him, “We felt that over the years, the North-Eastern region has been marginalized in all aspects of life in this country, [and] marginalization is responsible for insecurity in North-East” (“Sunday Trust, online, February 12, 2012).

In the context of the age-long rivalry between the Caliphate and old Borno Empire, a group has emerged, which is believed to be the Caliphate response to Boko Haram. Known as the Jam'at Ansarul Muslimin fi Biladin Sudan meaning the ‘group that dedicates itself to helping Muslims in Africa,’ and led by someone who goes by the pseudonym Abu Usamah Ansar, it states its mission as “to correct the concept, meaning and purpose of Jihad in Islam.” The group claims it will neither attack innocent persons, including security personnel nor non-Muslims because “Islam forbids killing of innocent people including non Muslims” (Desert Herald, online, June 2, 2012). The replacement of General Arazzi, Nigeria’s first ever non-national security adviser, with Col. Sambo Dasuki, a scion of the Caliphate, whatever purpose it supposes to serve, raises the question of the likelihood of the appointment worsening the old animosities between the Sokoto Caliphate and old Borno Empire, which may affect the war on terror itself. The sect’s rebuttal of Dasuki’s claims to have secured its telephone numbers in Pakistan (Xinhua online, July 10, 2012) does not project a disposition to Banku’s gestures.

In the north-central, or Middle-Belt area generally, two developments have combined to change whatever cohesion which existed in the northern region. One, although religious extremism in Nigeria has been a northern phenomenon, re-occurring ethno-religious conflicts in Jos, Plateau state which has pitted Hausa-Fulani Muslims particularly against the predominantly Christian indigenous population has helped to bolster common consciousness among the minority Christian ethnic groups in the region. This common consciousness is defined by shared Hausa-Fulani hegemonic burden, and re-enforces the resentment towards that hegemony. Two, Kukah (1993:xiii) has noted that “the Middle Belt, with its clusters of Christians and traditional religious worshipers, remain central to the geopolitical-political calculation of both the ruling class in the North, and those of the South, with each laying claims on a different basis. While the Muslims in the North lay claim to the area’s religious heritage, the South claims to the area’s geographicalities. Towards the 2011 presidential contest it was explicated by Mozayyan: it believes it can defeat the Nigerian state notwithstanding the sophistication and quantity of weapons at the latter’s disposal. Successful attacks on security formations across the north tend to bolster this feeling. Boko Haram’s refusal to validate its table and itemizes its grievances actually erodes the relevance of the previous presentations in the crisis of the election in favour of the political feud perspective, whether in terms of Herskovits suggestion that while the original core of the group remains active, criminal gangs have adopted the name Boko Haram to claim responsibility for attacks when it suits them (Herskovits, 2012), or Soyinka’s hijack thesis (Soyinka, op.cit) Indeed the importance of Islamic militant groups, especially those linked to al Qaeda or their affiliates, making known their leaders has lucidly been explained. According to the Nigerian essayist Ocherome Nnanna, “the suicide fighters need their ‘inspiration’; and the disclosure of their identity is a statement in cause and defiance” (“Vanguard” online, September 1, 2011). The following examples could support the argument: the al-Qaeda Movement in the Islamic Maghreb, (AQIM) is founded/led by Mokhtar Belmokhtar in Algeria after a delink with Hassan Hatteh’s, Salafist Group for Call and Combat, (SGPC); The Somali Al Shabaab militia, an affiliate of al Qaeda, is led by Sheikh Muktar Robow and Hassan Dahir Aweys, with Mokhtar Abu Zubeyr, leading a faction of foreign fighters. Ayman Zawahiri, former al Qaeda number two, Osama bin Laden after the latter was killed on May 2, 2011 by the US Navy Seals. For the Nigeria’s Boko Haram, except for shadowy individuals making claims on its behalf, there has been formally identifiable leader or successor since the death of Yausuf. Leadership has only been ascribed to Shesau.

The Islamic Theocratic State Theory

The Boko Haram sect has hardly masked its intentions to bring down the Nigerian government, the Kufur system, and ultimately Islamize Nigeria. Lengmang (2011: 101) notes the allegation that the northern Muslim population may be unhappy with the compromise of state-level shari’a coexisting side by side with a secular federal system. Hence, although this segment may arguably be small, “they are increasingly becoming radicalized and more willing to periodically express themselves through violence (ibid). Lengmang attributes resentment to the shari’a coexistence with secular federal system to the view by many a northerner that western education is incapable of stimulating meaningful development and prosperity in the region, and so shares the fallacy of western education being incompatible with Islam (ibid: 99).

However tangential its link with al Qaeda or its affiliates, the Boko Haram insurgents in Nigeria holds the vision of global political Islam, which is the overthrow of the current world order (Kufur system) and the enfranchisement of an Islamic theocratic state. Perhaps its reported rejection of President Jonathan’s invitation for dialogue and demand that he converts to Islam or be barred from the presidency endorses the theocracy (Peoples Daily, online, January 27, 2012). Mehdiad Minues this tended the rise of the radical Islam to three variables. One was the 1979 Iran Revolution that ushered a widespread rejectionist, change, making the Muslims’ view of themselves and their position in the world, as well as their approaches to daily life and politics. The second was the anti-Western feelings in the Middle East traceable to the effect of European colonialism. The third and most recent is the American presence in the Middle East with claims that it brought a corrupting influence (Mozayyan, 2009: 241). In a related way, corrupt and ineffective local political leadership espousing Western ideologies and failing to keep the remaining a major stake to political Islam. Eventually, the Islamists’ gaining and holding power in Iran produced the wake-up call throughout the Muslim world and led to widespread Islamic resurgence, Thus, New standards were now set and a new discourse gained currency that targeted the “enemies of Islam” through revolutionary, militant, and martyred-oriented strategies. Life became readily expendable, especially if it hindered the advancement of Islamic agendas. Islam thus became a means and an end for the frustrated masses, giving rise to leukemia of Islamic communities. This has given rise to the current front’s calls for the removal of the strategic threat posed by the Boko Haram to the Nigerian government and leaders. Their actions have been aimed at bringing the state to its knees, and fear that the group would bring about a coup d’etat as they continue to hold back on the elections or threat to do so. Boko Haram has invoked the name of Allah severally to explain why it carried out its terror campaigns to media sources. The sect’s operatives undoubtedly are imbued with the mind-set of the Islamic Theocratic State Theory.

Professor Fernando Reinares has also argued that political influences such as events in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Middle East generally, Chechnya, Bosnia, etc. could motivate the jihadists (BBC, online, April 29, 2006). For the Boko Haram sect, the inspiration derived from Afghanistan, for instance, may not be limited only to the victory of the Mujahedeen over the Soviet, but rather symbolizes the triumph of Islam over secularity. It derives essentially from the fact that the victory was scored with the primitive and improvised arms (Morozyan, 2009: 242) as compared to the modern weapons of the Soviets. Boko Haram started its campaign of terror in Nigeria with comparatively primitive weapons, but it has moved to Improvised Explosive Devices, (IEDs) and the chaos in Libya has been of great value in terms of weapons and training, (Reuters, January 26, 2012). There is yet a sense in which the Nigerian Mujahedeen can feed up-beat. Mozayyan invokes a religious imagery:

Presently, the war is cast in religious terms, where the likes of David and Goliah are evoked, and true believers are directed into being reminded of the unexpected outcome of that lapsed confrontation. David had contributed his faith, devotion, courage and selflessness, just as Muslims are called to do. God did, and will do the rest. In such instances, it is critical that God be seen “as a personal participant in the fighting process.” It is God that grants victory so that “truth” may “nullify falsehood.” Similarly, when Muslims won […] it was not you who slew them, but Allah (Morozyan, 2009:244).

Boko Haram has invoked the name of Allah severally to explain why it carried out its terror campaigns to media sources. The sect’s operatives undoubtedly are imbued with the mind-set elucidated by Mozayyan: it believes it can defeat the Nigerian state notwithstanding the sophistication and quantity of weapons at the latter’s disposal. Successful attacks on security formations across the north tend to bolster this feeling.

Reinares’ idea of political influence could also extend to the development in Sudan and could be an incentive to the Boko Haram sect. In July 2011, after prolonged bitter conflict that included over two decades of guerrilla warfare, Sudan was split into two countries, essentially along religious lines. Although the Shari’a is yet to be imposed in the Sudan, Islam remains the religion, while the government run by the Arabic north presses on to institute the Islamic legal system. Sudan is predominantly Muslim, while South Sudan is a mixture of predominately African Traditional religion and minority Christian populations. The Boko Haram sect may have focused on this model, just as its ambition may have been bolstered by the Islamist rebels declaration of northern Mali as the AZAWAD republic. But the Aristotelian counsel may suffice here. In his Politica, Aristotle warns that in framing our ideals, we may assume what we wish, but must avoid impossibilities. Nigeria’s geography does not make a clear-cut distinction between a Muslim north and Christian south. Apart from the fact that a great number of the indigenous population of the south-west region are Muslims, a large portion of the population of the north central and to a some extent, the north east areas of Adamawa, Gombe, Bauchi and even Borno, are Christians. Former military President Ibrahim Babangida, a Muslim, puts this aspect in perspective thus:

There are … no such phrases like Muslim North and Christian South. Wherever you go in this country, you will find out that there are Muslims and Christians living peacefully together. You will find out there are Christians in the North and it is the same in the South (Daily Trust, online, January 27, 2012).

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The idea is also bewildering to Christians in the north. For instance, Bolanlewa Yusuff, a Christian from Kogi, a state in the north central wonders where the Boko Haram sect wants him to go. He stressed that he had been born a northerner, like his forefathers, and has no apologies to any one for being a Christian (interview, January 24, 2012). The sect’s position, therefore, raises the following questions: are the south-west Nigerian Muslims no longer part of the global Islamic family; are the northern Nigerian Christians no longer northerners simply for professing their religion or because they too have been targeted for being ‘infidels’? If so, are they not as barh in their views; perhaps they are only as barh because they too are ‘infidels’?

The Boko Haram sect remains a fringe group and antagonizes mainstream northern Nigerian Muslims. It must, therefore, evolve in its campaign, a broad coalition that will accommodate not only a large chunk of those mainstream northern Muslims but also its elite corps. Whereas the Muhajedeen are focused on Islam’s day of glory or great piety, which to them assure the true believer of spiritual salvation and an eternal joyfully exist in the world beyond (Mozayyan, 2009:241), however, the average Nigerian Muslim political elite is most likely uninterested in Boko Haram’s version of Islam. He may, in the words of Mozayyan, be more interested in a “future that guarantees independent thought, social liberty, modernity and economic renaissance in this world” (ibid. p. 243) – progressive Islam. Nigeria’s oil wealth (upon which the Nigerian elites rely for primitive accumulation) is a major disincetiv to the evolution of a post-oil regime that will involve mainstream northern Muslims. For instance, an Estimated seventy-five-five percent of oil reserves in former Sudan went to the South after July 2011 (cited in Haile, 2012). All of Nigeria’s oil reserves are located in the south. Despite talks about the north being capable of surviving without southern oil, efforts to find oil in the north have intensified over the years. The point here is that, while the Boko Haram Muhajedeen may not care about the earthly economy, the northern political elites do. Allegations of complicity by envious neighbours to undermine Nigeria remain highly speculative, especially when considered in light of the military cooperation between Nigeria and its neighbouring countries in the war against transnational terrorism, and their common interest in regional stability.

Allegations of conspiracy by envious neighbours to undermine Nigeria remain highly speculative, especially when considered in light of the military cooperation between Nigeria and its neighbouring countries in the war against transnational terrorism, and their common interest in regional stability. In the same report, Babangida named what he called the ‘Doctrine of Nigeria’s Settled Issues,’ which according to him cannot be compromised. They include, the country’s unity, her republican constitution, the states as federalizing units and the capitalist orientation of the economy. Babangida was a veteran of the Nigerian civil war fought to keep Nigeria as one Order (Turner, 1980: 74).

Conspiracy Theories

The conspiracy theories attempting to explain the Boko Haram crisis can be marked into two broad categories: one focusing on machinations of internal actors, the other on external actors. Internal actors may include the disgruntled northern power elite who, having lost power, are bent on bringing down Nigeria under a southern leadership, as well as the Jonathan administration who may be attempting to bring the northern establishment under his administration, and therefore the political party he represents. The theory that the attack is a plot by the north is based on the hypothesis perhaps drawn from instances where attempts or actual attacks on Southern and Christian targets both in the north and south, who were blamed on Boko Haram, but were traced to Christian southerners (Blueprint, Tuesday January 31, 2012). Similarly, in November 2011, the State Security Services (SSS), also paraded a syndicate that circulated terror messages, which prompted some foreign diplomatic missions to issue warnings that emptied Abuja’s high-brow hotels. The group was comprised southern Christians and not Muslims nor northerners. From a northern perspective, these cases “suggest that Boko Haram is now the new weapon used by various interest groups to cause violence, mislead and confuse Nigerians in order to achieve their selfish agenda” (ibid). It is difficult to comprehend how Christians who continue to fall victims of attacks on their places of worship and Southerners who are being asked to flee to the part of the country from which most have spent the greatest parts of their lives and built multi-million naira businesses, and who have asked Jonathan to quit if he cannot lead (Leadership online, May 1, 2102) will rally behind a government which has proved incapable of protecting them.

Although the United States continues to predict Nigeria’s disintegration by 2015 – pointing out that a private agency, not the US government carried out the survey upon which the report is predicated – those who emphasize this aspect of the external conspiracy theory point to a 2008 war game conducted by the US army which was designed to test its response ability to probable state failure in Nigeria in relation to US energy needs. The oil-rich Middle East by historically has been unstable, and resurgent Islam has complicated the problem. Nigeria’s far north is contiguous to the troubled Sahel and Maghreb regions, which also are contiguous to the some Middle East states in the grip of Islamism. The US interest in Nigeria’s oil does not predispose it to be comfortable with such proximity to this potentially Islamist enclave. At a one-day symposium on “international conspiracy: towards Nigeria’s disintegration,” in Kaduna, North-West Nigeria, the Association of Muslim Brotherhood of Nigeria (AMBN) noted that “there were reasons to believe that the peace and security of Nigeria were being threatened by the west world powers for their economic gain; that the western world threatens the peace of the country in order to protect their economic interest in Nigeria’s oil region” (Daily Trust, February 3, 2012). In the opinion of one member of Nigeria’s National Intelligence Agency (NIA), the US might be aiming to secure the oil-rich Niger Delta or the south from the far north in order to insulate the former from the emerging Islamism in the north in which the ultimate goal of securing the vital oil resources in the south (private discussion with source, January 4, 2012). It would be preposterous to assume, however, that the US military could guarantee America’s energy interest in Nigeria within the context of a failed Nigeria balkanized into several fiefdoms.

Sentiments such as these have led to reservations over state efforts to collaborate with foreign powers to combat the Boko Haram. According to Professor Tam David West, Nigeria’s former minister of petroleum, “When they come ostensibly for security reasons, they have their own agenda to penetrate and subjugate the sovereignty of the country; not only that, they become a powerful force within the country to dictate the political direction” (The Nation, online, January 29, 2012). A member of Nigeria’s security forces, Uche Nwogu, shares this concern. Without naming any particular, she notes that “by the time these people come in the name of helping us fight Boko Haram, they would have understudied their operandi and would themselves start bombing us while we assume it is still Boko Haram” (Discussion with source on the subject, Monday January 30, 2012). The scenario in the North tends to validate these musings. According to Professor Michel Chossudovsky et al., in the Global Research Online Interactive Reader Series (GRIS), Western powers used “Political Islam” – including the Muslim Brotherhood and Al Qaeda-affiliated groups – to pursue their hegemonic objectives. Covert operations, they note, were launched to weaken the secular state, foment sectarian violence, and create social divisions throughout the Arab World. In Libya, they contend, “the pro-democracy rebels were led by Al Qaeda affiliated paramilitary brigades under the supervision of NATO Special Forces. The much-vaunted “Liberation” of Tripoli was carried out by former members of the Libya Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG). “Destabilization of sovereign states,” the authors contend, “is closely coordinated with military planning” (GRIS Book no.1, online, November 2011). The 2005 report was followed by a February 2011 version prepared by US military experts which stated as follows:

Although inherited and chosen layers of identity will be as “authentic” as conventional categories of citizenship and nationality, one category possibly will continue to stand out more than another, as the other difference or otherwise. The challenge of Islamic activism could produce a more intense backlash of Christian activism. Nigeria, Ethiopia, and other places in Africa will remain battlegrounds in this sectarian struggle. In 2025, mass movements of mass migrations and the value of “diversity” could face a combination of challenges from nationalists [and] religious zealots.

A pattern in Boko Haram’s insurgency – targeting ethnic and religious fault-lines – appears designed to enact the 2025 scenario described above. Hundreds of deaths of members of the Boko Haram ranks, including top leaders, has precipitated a ‘return home’ by the easterners and a warning that no ethnic group in Nigeria has monopoly of violence. Amid escalating violence, Igbo leaders have warned that the violence inflicted on their people residing in the north approximately the sequence of events that culminated in the tragedy of the Nigerian civil war (Punch, online, March 2012). On the one hand, there is a perspective that links the attacks on the Igbo to the group’s overwhelming electoral support for Jonathan in 2011, which amounted to over 98% of the votes cast in the eastern region (Daily Sun, online, February 6, 2012). On the other hand, leaders of Jonathan’s Ijaw ethnic nationality ditto warn that the move to strengthen a movement, to destroy the fabric of unity of this country, at the time the leadership of the country is entrusted to our son [and] that no ethnic nationality is a sole repository of violence” (Tribune, Monday January 10, 2012). From the North, the Arewa Youth Development Foundation, spoke about “recent remarks by South-East (Igbo) and South-South (Ijaw) leaders” and warned that should the tendencies continue, “We would be left with no option than to tell other regions that feel like disintegrating, that the North welcomes is a sole repository of violence” (Tribune, online, January 10, 2012). From the South, the free Northern Nigeria Movement noted that “with all the resources available to the government, the northern elite still视ed the need for an effective government to protect the nation’s natural resources and to ensure development of her people” (Daily Sun, online, March 21, 2012). A pattern in Boko Haram’s insurgency – targeting ethnic and religious fault-lines – appears designed to enact the 2025 scenario described above. Although hundreds of deaths of members of the Boko Haram ranks, including top leaders, has precipitated a ‘return home’ by the easterners and a warning that no ethnic group has monopoly of violence. Amid escalating violence, Igbo leaders have warned that the violence inflicted on their people residing in the north approximately the sequence of events that culminated in the tragedy of the Nigerian civil war (Punch, online, March 2012). On the one hand, there is a perspective that links the attacks on the Igbo to the group’s overwhelming electoral support for Jonathan in 2011, which amounted to over 98% of the votes cast in the eastern region (Daily Sun, online, February 6, 2012). On the other hand, leaders of Jonathan’s Ijaw ethnic nationality ditto warn that the move to strengthen a movement, to destroy the fabric of unity of this country, at the time the leadership of the country is entrusted to our son [and] that no ethnic nationality is a sole repository of violence” (Tribune, Monday January 10, 2012). From the North, the Arewa Youth Development Foundation, spoke about “recent remarks by South-East (Igbo) and South-South (Ijaw) leaders” and warned that should the tendencies continue, “We would be left with no option than to tell other regions that feel like disintegrating, that the North welcomes...
This study has examined various theories attempting to explain the driving forces behind the Boko Haram phenomenon. Our position is that each of the perspectives offers some degree of insight into the problem, as well as the general patterns of political tension and social violence in Nigeria, which Boko Haram merely epitomizes.

In any case, it is clear that Boko Haram has metamorphosed from a strictly religious movement to one espousing a political agenda. While acknowledging the difficulties in getting to the root cause of the problem, the government must at least address the issues related to Jonathan’s decision to contest the 2011 presidential elections against the power rotation principle designed by his political party, the PDP, and its speculated 2015 presidential ambition. Irrespective of the constitutional provisions on individual political rights and aspirations, solemn attention needs be paid to professor Ekeh’s postulate that, “The historical condition in which the Nigerian state emerged has precluded its integration into a composite society” (1989:8). Any efforts at effecting enduring stability in Nigeria, therefore, must recognize her complex plurality, respect the sensitivity of the component parts, and refrain from acts of political impunity.

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Footnotes

[1] At a public function shortly before he was removed as National Security Adviser, General Andrew Aziza in reference to the acrimony over Jonathan’s decision to go against his party’s zoning policy that could have prevented him from contesting the 2011 presidential election, referred to Boko Haram as a creation of some disgruntled members of the President Jonathan ruling party, who angered by his emergence, appropriated the group to destabilize his government. Many believe Azizi owed his sack to that statement.


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[3] The voting pattern in the 2011 presidential primary of the ruling PDP made certain significant statements: whereas the Hausa-Fulani appeared to have been appeased by choice of Sambo as Jonathan’s running mate, he lost Sokoto state, the seat of the Caliphate as well Zamfara and Kebbi states, which were carved out of former Sokoto state to former Vice-President, Atiku Abubakar, a Fulani. Atiku also won in Niger, the home state of former military president General Babangida, who not only like Atiku was a member of the Northern coalition that opposed Jonathan’s 2011 presidential ambition but is known to defer so much to the Hausa-Fulani. Atiku however lost Borno state, the home stead of the Kanuris to Jonathan.

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