

Contending Theories on Nigeria's Security Challenge in 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 imposed 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 predicated 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 vengeance over the death of the sect's leader, Ustaz Muhammad Yussuf. 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 assorted arms streaming out from that tumult.

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 leadership has 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 as to the true source of these expositions. For instance, Adibe (2012), has observed that while the popular belief is that it was founded around 2001 or 2002, Madike, he notes, traces the date to as far back as 1995, and argues that, one Lawan Abubakar, who later left for further studies at the University of Medina, 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 Shehu 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 Gusau (2009) version which traced the origin to an evangelical group formed by Muslim students at the University of Maiduguri, Borno state, who reportedly felt dissatisfied with Western education (Uzodike and Maiangwa, 2012: 100).

Muhammed Yusuf, to whom the formation is now generally ascribed, according to the competing narratives only assumed leadership after Abubakar's departure and "indoctrinated the sect with his own teachings, which he claimed were based on purity" (Adibe, 2012: 50). Yussuf'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 Yussuf 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, 201: 450). Such names include Taliban and the *Yussufiyah*. The sect soon became formally identified as *Ahulsunna wal'jama'ah Hijra* – '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 Yussuf 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 mission was to impose the Shari'a on Nigeria, the leadership went about its preaching 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 affront 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 Yussuf 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.

Although Yussuf allegedly drew inspiration from radical Islamist, Ibn Taymiyya, he reportedly resisted some of followers relentless advocate that "an Islamic state was realizable through preaching and mobilization of the people to reject secularism, by way of taking up arms and fighting to conquer the unbelievers"; "Yussuf was said to be against any form of violence, saying it was against the teaching of Islam" (Suleiman cited in Uzodike and Maiangwa, 2012: 101). It is, therefore, yet uncertain whether the sect's current level of radicalization is a function of the deaths of its initial leadership and subsequent clampdown by the State or the accession to its leadership of the taciturn psychopath, Abubakar Shekua, a Kanuri native, who boasts that "I enjoy killing anyone that God commands me to kill – the way I enjoy killing chickens and rams," (BBC, online, June 22, 2012). Along with two other top leadership, Abubakar Adam Kambur and Khalid al-Barnawi, Shekua in June 2012 recently made the United States' list of international terrorists.

Until the June 16, 2011, bombing of the Nigeria Police Headquarters in Abuja, the sect had restricted its terror campaign mostly to the North East part of Nigeria. Remarkably, the attack on the Police Headquarters came barely after then Inspector-General of Police, IGP, Hafiz Ringim returned from a duty tour of Maiduguri where the sect had just carried out some terror campaign and stated he would soon smoke them out. The sect followed up that attack with the bombing on August 26 of the United Nations House, also in Abuja, a place Shekua described as a "forum of all the global evil." (Thisday, September 19, 2011). Since then, Boko Haram has either claimed responsibility for or has been credited with most terror activities in the north of the country. Its operations have also grown in scale and sophistication.

Theoretical Considerations: Deeply Divided Society, State Failure and Violent Conflicts in Nigeria.

Sociologically, most African countries are multiethnic societies with populations that are sharply divided along racial, cultural, linguistic, religious, and similar cleavages. Most are composed of several and some, of many different traditional societies, each with distinctive institutions to which members of other traditional societies are not only detached but also disinclined, if not actually opposed (Jackson and Rosberg, 1998:36). Politically, from the perspective of the European colonial powers, a colony was not arbitrary. But from the perspective of subject Africans, colonial government was essentially arbitrary. It was imposed from outside and worked in accordance with alien and unfamiliar rules and regulations in disregard, often in ignorance, of indigenous institutions. Guenther Roth (1968) sees the divided plural society as an impediment to the realization of modern, rational-legal institutions (cited in Jackson and Rosberg, 1998:36). Therefore, the African state rather than being a public force tends to be privatized, that is, appropriated to the service of private interests by the dominant faction of the elite (Ake, 1996: 42). Thus according to Chabal and Daloz (1999), "its formal (rational-legal) structure ill-manages to conceal the patrimonial and particularistic nature of power" (cited in Uzodike and Maiangwa, 2012:96). In the words of former Senegalese leader, Leopold Sedar Senghor, politics no longer is "a question of the art of governing the state for the public welfare in the general framework of laws and regulations. It is a question of politician politics – not even ideological tendencies – to place oneself, one's relatives, and one's

clients in the *cursus honorum* that is the race for preferment – ‘the image of personal rule’” (see Jackson and Rosberg, 1998:17).

The inherent complexities in the states forged 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 (Elaigwu, 1997:58), many of the states still convulse from one shock after another resulting from those sociological and political divergences; so much so also because “the African state is hardly ever coextensive with a common society” (Ekeh, 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 arbitrary, because it operates outside societal rules” (Ekeh, 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 huge disconnect with the society.

Those negative elements identified by Ekeh, 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 – all which are indices of state failure (Rotberg 2002: 86 cited in Uzodike and Maiangwa). 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 prevailing democratic norms by coercing legislatures and bureaucracies into subservience, compromising judicial independence, 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 disenchanting and aggrieved citizens. Logically, many transfer their allegiances 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 Ekeh’s (op.cit) term “the difficult relations between state and society” - from Wale Olaitan’s ‘Hanging State’, Hamza Alavi’s ‘Over-developed State’, to Terisa Turner’s ‘Entrepot State’, Gunnar 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 Maiangwa 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 (2011), where Nigeria emerged 156 out of 186 countries. On these basis 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 Maiangwa, op.cit. p. 97).

Amidst the overwhelming symptoms of state failure, as the Nigerian state vigorously contest the classification, such economic sabotages occurring on daily basis in Nigeria, committed by the citizens such as breaking of oil pipelines to siphon oil, cannibalization of vital infrastructures such as electricity, railways, bridges etc, go beyond ordinary criminality to mirror citizens’ sense of exclusion from and lack of ownership of the common patrimony. On the political front, Nnamdi Obasi’s ‘Ethnic Militias, Vigilantes and Separatist Groups in Nigeria’ and Tunde Babawale’s ‘The Rise of Ethnic Militias, De-Legitimization of the State and the Threat to the Nigerian Federation,’ among others, all provide theoretical and empirical proofs that even if Nigeria has not totally collapsed, it has met the necessary requirement of a weak state. Indeed if Karl Maier’s political biography of Nigeria, *This House Has Fallen: Nigeria in Crisis* (2000), is dismissed as the cynicism of a foreigner, renowned Nigeria novelist, Chinua Achebe, apart from decrying the leadership problematic of the Nigerian State some decades back notes that “Nigeria is an example of a country that has fallen; it has collapsed (Achebe, 1983:1 cited in Uzodike and Maiangwa, 2012:97).

The Boko Haram challenge in the final analysis seems to reflect the deeper crisis bedeviling 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, using whatever means they have at their disposal: politicians entrusted to protect our common patrimony steal 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 truth on its head or become uncritical champions of a selected anti-Nigerian state identity. What 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 unfair to them, if not an outright enemy (cited in Uzodike and Maiangwa, 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. In doing this, adequate consideration was given to all the shades of opinions representative of the various divides of the Nigerian society. This was in view of the complexity of the Nigerian society, the tenuous 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 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, (Faleti, 2006:54-55). The differences in value invariably creates 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 either by the common purpose of fighting the “unbelievers” for Allah, or feeling of deprivation or both sees the remaining members of the Nigerian society as the “Others”. In the circumstance mutual antagonism exists and can be violently expressed. On the part of Boko Haram, killing of members by government security forces- the “Others” attracts reprisals from it, the “We”. The retaliatory attacks against Muslims in the Goni Gora area of Kaduna state by an irate mob following the multiple suicide attacks on churches in the state on Sunday June 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 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 Nigeria (ACSRT Journal, 2(1), December 2011), exemplifies an effort to institutionalize the “We” and “Others” dichotomy. In parts of the North, some segments of the northern Muslim population are allegedly unhappy with the compromise of state-level shari’a coexisting side by side with a secular federal system (Lengman, 2011:101).

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 police custody, and the hunting and incarceration of the members by the Nigerian security forces were seen to have fired the “we” and “others” psychology, and have been a major factor in the sect’s resolve to avenge its members through the terror campaigns (Daily Sun, online, January 23, 2012). Jail-break operations to rescue incarcerated members and marrying of dead

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 Babakura Fugu, an in-law to Yussuf, for allegedly accepting blood money from the government (Thisday, September 19, 2011) which signifies existence of faction within the group, all widen the sect's targets, blur the line between the "We" and "Others", and so challenge this perspective.

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 *Jama'atu Ahlus Sunnah Lidda Awati Wal Jihad* (Saharareporters, online, January 22, 2012). Beside its pejorative connotation, in the sect's perspective, the name does not capture its objective and has been a motivation to violence. Its spokesman, Abu Qaqa offered this, in particular, as reason for the sect's targeting of the Nigerian media (Saharareporters, online, May 1, 2012). Somali's Al-Shabaab also exhibits this tendency (BBC Somali, online, June 21, 2009).

The Human Needs/Socio-Economic Perspective

The socio-economic perspective of the Boko Haram challenge in Nigeria, essentially attempts to de-emphasise the interpretation of this being a particularly Muslim or northern crisis (Kukah, 2012). The perspective which blames social conditions for the violence is anchored on the human needs theory of social conflicts. Its central thesis is that all humans have basic needs which they seek to fulfil and failure caused by other individuals or groups to meet these needs could lead to conflict (Rosati et al, 1990 cited in Faleti, p. 51). The theory is similar to the frustration-aggression theory of violence, which posits that aggression is always a consequence of frustration (Dougherty and Pfaltzgrate Jr, 1990: 266). According to the theory, relative deprivation is a perceived disparity between value expectation and value capabilities and that the lack of a need satisfaction – defined as a gap between aspirations and achievement generally – relies on the psychological state of frustration and aggressive attitudes emanating from it (Midlarsky, 1975:29).

Unlike the relational/vengeance theory, the perspective goes beyond the trigger to focus on the underlying factor(s) that could have bred such groups. It has its largest proponents from the intelligentsia, and is particularly viewed by some foreign governments such those of the United States and Britain as explanations for the problem. Nigeria's socio-economic indexes seem to validate the assumption of human needs theory. The Human Development Index Trend, for instance, ranked Nigeria 156 out of 186 in 2011. The socio-economic factors being adduced as the root causes of violence in Nigeria include unemployment, especially among the youth, poverty and a deteriorating standard of living, especially in the north. But perhaps its relevance in the interpretation of the Boko Haram problem is that while its proponents admit of endemic poverty and hopelessness generally in Nigeria, they note its severity in the north. 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 incident 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, (Lukman, 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 high conflict potential of the developing areas could indeed be a function of frustration caused by economic deprivation, (Dougherty and Pfaltzgrate, Jr. 1990: 266). Frustration-aggression tendencies often also manifest misplaced aggression. This trend has featured in the series of violence inflicted upon the ordinary citizens of Nigeria, most of who have no direct connection with political and economic elites whose mismanagement of the country's resources engender the unemployment, poverty and deprivation that breed frustration and foster violence. As Dougherty and Pfaltzgrate Jr. have rightly noted, hostilities in such instances, are directed "toward someone or something not responsible for the original frustration" (ibid).

A more profound explanation of the north's socio-economic crisis lies in a perspective that sees a nexus between its depilating patrimonial economic system, which dis-empowers women, and the dysfunctional state system that places distribution above production (Aregbesola, 2012). The governor of the south-western state of Osun, Rauf Aregbesola, a Muslim, who is credited with the idea, argues that while the economic disempowerment of women does not itself lead to violence, it means that about or less than one-third of the adult males sustain that society; much of the population, especially the elite, have been socialized into sustaining a lifestyle out of sync with economic productivity. He posits that the anomaly has been encouraged for a long time by the dysfunctional (state) system, which places distribution above production. Sustaining that lifestyle has increasingly become difficult, especially with the north having lost control of the centralized power structure. This means that the elites are no longer satisfied, not to talk of the crumbs that come to the masses. This, he strongly contends, is largely responsible for northern unrest (Aregbesola, 2012).

Perhaps of further interest about this perspective is its politicization by the northern elite, which tends to becloud the real issue. Rather than focus on its merit in relation to solving the problem, it has become the basis for some elements among the northern elite to seek to expand their frontiers of accumulation, which with a history of unconscionable criminal appropriation to the detriment of the poor masses, offers no prospect for a better deal for the latter. The idea of a "direct link between the very uneven nature of distribution of resources – the 13 per cent derivatives going to oil producing states of the south and the rising level of violence – Boko Haram's insurgency" (Financial Times, January 27, 2012), as espoused by CBN governor Lamido Sanusi, a scion of Northern establishment, clearly raises the resource distribution issue, which Aregbesola (op.cit) has identified as fostering the endemic poverty of the 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). Chairman of Northern Governors' Forum, (NGF) Aliyu Babangida has also decried an "unfavourable federation allocation structure in which the Northern states are at great disadvantage amidst rising illiteracy, poverty, ignorance and general backwardness in the region, (Daily trust, online, February 24, 2012).

This perspective has encountered severe criticisms recently, even from the north. Senate President David Mark argues that poverty and unemployment no longer offer a cogent explanation for the insurgency as these adverse socio-economic conditions are not exclusive to the north, (Peoples Daily, online, June 26, 2012). While socio-economic deprivation could be most severe in the north, except for the north-east where it originated, no such violent group as Boko Haram is known to have sprung up in states in the north-west and north-central. Hordes of beggars who line Katsina streets reflect the poverty in that north-western state, yet it has neither bred nor harboured such a violent group. Evidence pertaining to Latin America and Sub-Saharan African urban settings similarly challenge the relevance of the theory of the "revolution of rising expectation" (Midlarsky 1975: 30).

The Political Feud Perspective

The crux of the problem is the overpoliticisation of social life [...] We are intoxicated with politics: the premium on political power is so high that we are prone to take the most extreme measures to win and to maintain political power. Claude Ake

In political terms, the Boko Haram phenomenon is perhaps more interesting because of the specific historical context in which it is occurring. First, while other Muslims may want to disassociate themselves from its activities, Boko Haram remains an Islamic movement. It is also occurring in a multi-religious political setting in which religion itself is a major factor in determining the distribution of political power (Kukah, 1993: x). Second, its emergence was preceded by intense political bickering between some, mainly Muslim political actors in the north and their counterparts in the south in the period leading to the electoral victory of President Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian and southerner. In a political environment in which the power of incumbency is a major factor in determining electoral success, the fact that the victor in the contest superintended over the machinery of the state at the time of the election is a critical variable in conveying a sense of fair play or otherwise to the losing side. Importantly, Jonathan's electoral victory came barely three years after power returned to the north, from an 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 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 between the north and south. After eight years in the south via Olusegun Obasanjo's presidency (1999-2007), power had returned to the north in May 2007 via the Umaru Musa 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, the north was sour for having 'lost' power again to the south by virtue of Yar'Adua's death in May 2010 barely three years into office. The sense of loss, which ensued from Yar'Adua's death manifested in the tension in which Nigeria was soaked in the pre-2011 general elections period.

Attention needs to be paid, however, to the general misconceptions about the north as a monolithic political entity. Apart from the Hausa language as a *lingua franca* in the north, the 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 to the extent that Southerners erroneously refer to all Northerners as Hausas and Fulanis, without regard for the other minority tribes that have been eclipsed by the Hausa-Fulani majority." Thus what in reality to the northern minority was Hausa-Fulani hegemony, which in Reverend Mathew Kukah's calculation held sway between 1966 and 1979 (Kukah, 1993:36), was to 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 took root in the latter's minds and made them unresponsive to the quest of other citizens for a place in the power ladder in Nigeria (Kukah, 1999: 98). Added to this was the role played by 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 Nzeogwu not only terminated the country's political leadership headed then, as it were, by a northerner, but also resulted to the death of top northern leading political figures, most of who were of Hausa-Fulani extraction. Following the inability of the coup-plotters to form government, however, the most senior military officer at the time, Major-General Aguiyi-Ironsi, a southerner, assumed power. The subsequent fear by the north of power slipping from its hands led to what Billy Dudley referred to as the "Return Match of 29 July, 1966" (cited in Kukah, 1993: 39), which was marked by the assassination of Ironsi and many southern military officers, mostly of Igbo origin. It latter degenerated to a pogrom against the Igbos living in the north, and finally led to the Nigerian civil war. Not only was the leadership which emerged in the country after the 'Return Match' led by a northern minority, in the person of General Yakubu Gowon, a Middle-Belter, citing (O'Connell, 1971) Kukah reports that it was "the Middle-Belt (Northern Minority) non-commissioned officers and soldiers that put Gowon in power," (Kukah, 1993: 39). Alan Feinstein's observation as cited in Kukah (1993: 93) is quite illuminating in this narrative:

[...] the ruling (Hausa-Fulani) ruling class was quick to sense the dangers that loomed towards its interests, and it acted decisively and pragmatically. The northern ruling class may have beaten back that threat of southern domination, but could not have done all that only to surrender power to those it had ruled and used as political cannon fodder all these years. It worked behind the scenes, scheming and plotting its political interests on the canvass of northern interests. To strengthen their cause, a major move was made by bringing together three erstwhile political enemies, representing the three power blocs in Northern Nigeria. They were brought together and made to tour the North as

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 (UMBC) (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 obsequiousness to the Sokoto Sultanate which symbolizes (Muslim) spiritual and (northern) political authority. Babangida's choice of Sambo Dasuki, (Nigeria's new NSA) as his *aide de camp* after his 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 northernmost and predominantly Hausa-Fulani Nigerian states from Nigeria by army major Gideon Orkar in the coup against General Babangida's regime in 1990. With Babangida (IBB) viewed generally as a proxy for the Hausa-Fulani, Major Orkar, who was of the Tiv ethnic minority 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 deposing of the Sultana 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 peripherality 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's 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 caucuses that have unleashed terror on society, a refusal to stare the irrational in the face and give it its proper name – and response. This horde has remained available to 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 '90s [...] 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 severity that the violence has now assumed is the fallout of a fierce political battle in 2011, which we have already referred to. The outcry at that time resonated around forcing Jonathan to give up his 2011 presidential ambition to allow for a return of power to the north and had 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 political and economic 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/a Christian southerner's presidency, but was also a precursor to the current mayhem¹¹.

Midlarsky (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 consequences of effecting transformations either within structures of 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 rotation arrangement, 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" (Midlarsky, 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, approximates 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 amidst 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 annulment. Thus his suggestion to his ethnic Igbo nationality to mobilize its own militia, Movement for the Sovereign States 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 of context of the mobilization of ethnic militia for political ascendancy in Nigeria, which forms the central thesis of our essay in a forthcoming volume²¹.

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. Instead, while it is composed of representatives of many of the nationalities of Nigeria, it is only the northern Hausa-Fulani military representatives who have a sense of collective interests to advance and protect (Akinyemi, 2003: 21). Since 1999, 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 Hausa-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 Andrew Azazi. The appropriation of the Nigerian military as northern and/or Hausa-Fulani militia was perpetuated by that monopolization. Thus, the loss of such monopoly has obviously removed the appropriation of the Nigerian army as the ethnic militia by the north and/or Hausa-Fulani. Significantly, in 1999, retired army captain and former military intelligence operative, Sagir Mohammed, formed a northern militia, the Arewa People's Congress, (APC) to "protect and safeguard the interest of the North wherever it is" (Obasi, 2002:43). Outside of the north, the APC is perceived by some as "the maintenance of [northern] hegemonic control in national politics" (ibid). As Akinyemi (2003: 22) has argued: "Unlike the other ethnic militias who seek change, the Arewa People's Congress seeks the maintenance of the status quo, irrespective of its crises of marginalization". Although the APC appears to have now disappeared, in the general context of Northern angst over the loss of central power, Boko Haram may be conceived of as a resurgent Northern ethnic militia or in the specific context of the Kanuri sense of marginalization, an emergent militia for that ethnic group.

There remains a need, however, to examine the Boko Haram crisis in terms of its implications for the 2015 presidential election in specific historical and contemporary context, given the changing dynamics in northern politics. Beginning with the north-west and north-east blocs, after becoming president on May 5, 2010, following Yar'Adua's death, Jonathan had chosen Namadi Sambo as his deputy, a Muslim and then governor of north-west Kaduna state. In the 2011 presidential poll, Jonathan also nominated Sambo as his running-mate, who went on to become the vice-president. By those choices, Jonathan was able to assuage to some extent the north-west and Hausa-Fulani over the loss of Yar'Adua³¹.

We have earlier mentioned the Kanuri resentment of the Hausa-Fulani hegemony. That resentment grew from the historical rivalry between the North-West or the Fulani and the old Borno Empire. The rivalry derives from the fact that the old Borno Empire was never really conquered by the Fulani jihadist movement. Garba Shehu notes that the entire areas covering 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 also 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

context, a statement by Ishiaka Mohammed Bawa the 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 *Jamaatul Ansarul Muslimina fi Biladin Sudan* meaning the 'group that dedicates itself to helping Muslims in Africa,' and led by someone who goes by the pseudonym Abu Usamatul 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 Azazi, Nigeria's first ever non-northern 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 contact for possible dialogue (Xinhua online, July 10, 2012), does not project a disposition to Dasuki'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 worshippers, remain central to the geo-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 on the basis of geographical congruity, the South lays claims to religious brotherhood." Towards the 2011 presidential polls, this tendency was exploited to mobilize support for Jonathan. The patronage accruing to this region emanating from that support towards Jonathan's electoral success, and the increasingly Christian brotherhood consciousness fostered by the ethno-religious conflict in Jos, have combined to rally strong support for the Jonathan administration within the region. Although the Plateau has been a site of violence of late, Boko Haram's terror campaign in the area has spiralled in recent times including those of July 7 and 8, 2012 in the Barkin Ladi area of the state, in which over 90 persons died (Xinhua online, July 10, 2012). With Plateau counted as one of the north-central states most likely to support Jonathan's speculated 2015 presidential bid (People and Politics, June, 2012, p. 26), targeting the area may just be a strategy to discourage Jonathan's support ahead of 2015.

Boko Haram's refusal to reveal its identity and table its grievances actually erodes the relevance of the previous theories in the explanation of the crisis 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 explored. According to the Nigerian essayist Ocherome Nnanna, "the suicide fighters need their 'inspiration'; and the disclosure of their identity is a statement in courage and defiance" (Vanguard online, September 1, 2011). The following examples tend to 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 Hattab'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 Mukhtar Abu Zubevr, leading a faction of foreign fighters. Ayman Zawahiri, former al Qaeda number two, took over from 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 no formally identifiable leader/successor since the death of Yussuf. Leadership has only been ascribed to Shekau.

The Islamic Theocratic State Theory

The Boko Haram sect has hardly masked its intention to bring down the Nigerian government, the Kufur system, and ultimately Islamize Nigeria. Lengman (2011: 101) notes the allegation that some segments of 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). Lengman 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 all worldly government (Kufur system) and the enthronement of an Islamic theocratic state. Perhaps its reported rejection of President Jonathan's invitation for dialogue and demand that he converts to Islam or hand over to a Muslim underlines this tendency (Peoples Daily, online, January 27, 2012). Mehrdad Mozayyan has traced the rise of the radical Islam to three variables. One was the 1979 Iran Revolution that ushered a widespread rejectionist philosophy, changing 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 colonization. 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 improve people's well-being remain a major stimulus 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 martyr-oriented strategies. Life became readily expandable, especially if it hindered the advancement of Islamic agendas. Islam thus became a means and an end for the frustrated masses, giving rise to leaders who spoke in terms of Islamic communities, and pushed the need to restore Islam to its former position of power by removing the corrupting Western influences (Western Civilization is sin) that hinder the promotion of their own millenarian beliefs (Mozayyan, 2009: 242).

Despite its debt to the Islamist regime in Iran for the Islamic awakening, the current radical or jihadist Islamic movement, was founded by the late Osama bin Laden and has its origin in the anti-Soviet resistance in Afghanistan. There, the "links among individual and different national groups were forged" (Crenshaw, 2009:403). It is most unlikely that any of the Boko Haram's operatives in Nigeria ever fought in Afghanistan. But the triumph of the jihadists in Afghanistan has had a bolstering universal effect on jihadists across the globe, so that as Crenshaw rightly observes, "other men [and women] who were too young to have fought in Afghanistan [...] emulated what they saw as the jihadist model." (ibid: 404). Lengman reports further that as a way of identifying with the Taliban, during one of its violent attacks on a police station in Kanamma, Yobe State, members of Boko Haram briefly flew the black Taliban flag, a gesture symbolizing commonality of cause (Lengman, 2011: 98).

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 (Mozayyan, 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 feel up-beat. Mozayyan invokes a religious imagery:

Presently, the war is cast in religious terms, where the likes of David and Goliath are evoked, and true believers are directed into action by being reminded of the unexpected outcome of that lopsided 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 (Mozayyan, 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 state 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 predominantly 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 *Politics*, 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 chunk 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. Where ever 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).

The idea is also bewildering to Christians in the north. For instance, Bolarinwa Yussuf, 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 different religious beliefs other than Islam? Perhaps as has been demanded of President Jonathan, they too are expected to repent and convert to Islam.

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 Mujahedeen are focused on Islam's days of glory or great piety, which to them assure the true believer of spiritual salvation and an eternally joyful existence 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 remuneration in this world" (ibid. p. 243) – progressive Islam. Nigeria's oil wealth (upon which the Nigerian elites rely for primitive accumulation) is a major disincentive to the evolution of any broad coalition that will involve mainstream northern Muslims. For instance, an Estimated seventy-five per cent 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 Mujahedeen may not care about the earthly economy, the northern political elites do. Allegations of complicity of elements from among northern politicians with the Boko Haram sect have been rife (Daily Sun, January 23, 2012), but governors of the North's 19 states, out of which only four are Christians, denied the charge off any collusion with the sect or any plots to disintegrate Nigeria. Babangida words perhaps, sum up what could pass for the feelings of the Northern Muslim political cum economic elites to the threat to Nigeria's corporate existence:

You see in this country we fought the war for almost three years for the benefit of living together. I have a bullet in my body, so nobody will talk to me about secession or breaking away. If you do, I would always say yes, get my tailor to take my measurement, get on my khaki and I go back to fight a war to keep this country together (Daily Trust, January 27, 2012).

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 federating units and the capitalist orientation of the economy. Babangida was a veteran of the Nigeria 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 itself, which may be sponsoring the crisis in order to rally southern support behind his administration, and there is also the perception that Boko Haram may be a secret society controlled by some 'invisible' hands that seek to destroy the north ahead of 2015 so as to forestall or weaken its bid for the presidency at that time (Adibe, 2012:58). External actors, on the other hand, may include powerful western states like the United States, or neighbouring African states envious of Nigeria's progress and stability.

For the first hypothesis regarding internal actors, which we have treated in great detail under the political feud theory, our position is that its merit probably lies in the profound feeling of marginalization emanating from the north-east, either in terms of perceived denial of socio-economic infrastructure and/or the Kanuri sense of marginalization from central power. The second hypothesis also contends that part of the support mobilization strategy was to portray Islam in bad light by hitting Christian targets. This hypothesis perhaps draws from instances where attempts or actual attacks on Southern and Christian targets both in the north and south, which 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 part of the country, from where most have spent the greater 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 deny predicting 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 has historically been unstable, and resurgent Islam has compounded 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 (AMBON) noted that "there were reasons to believe that the peace and security of Nigeria were being threatened by the western world powers for their economic gains; 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 sever the oil-rich Niger Delta or the south from the far north in order to insulate the former from the emerging Islamist activism in the north with 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, they have their own agenda to penetrate our system 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 country in particular, she notes that "by the time these people come in the name of helping us fight Boko Haram, they would have understudied their *modus 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 Arab states 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. Islam will remain a robust identity. Sectarian and other differences within Islam will be a source of tension or worse. 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, notions of multiethnic integration 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 Igbo ethnic nationality in the terror attacks in the north, for instance, have 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 approximate the sequence of events that culminated in the tragedy of the Nigeria civil war (Punch, online, January 29, 2012). On the one hand, there is a perspective that links the attacks on the Igbos 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 also warn against "subterranean moves, to destroy the fabric of unity of this country, at a time the leadership of the country is entrusted to our son [and] that no ethnic nationality is a sole repository of violence" (Tribune, online, 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 it too" (Blueprint, online, January 31, 2012). On the other plane, although the Nigerian Muslim leadership maintains that Islam and Christianity are not at war in Nigeria, (Tribune, online, December 28, 2012), the Christian leadership urges adherents to defend themselves against attacks (ibid) while a leading Pentecostal cleric, Bishop David Oyedepo claims God has anointed him "to lead a revolution against the jihadists. [And that] If the church should arise, Nigeria will no more be a nation," (Tribune, January 23, 2012).

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.

Conclusion: Any Hope for Optimism?

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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.

[2] Alozieuwa, S. “Violence as a Political Tool in Political Ascendancy in A Multi-Ethnic Society: The Nigerian Example.” In Mbachu, Ozoemena (ed) Military, Terrorism and the Nigerian State (forthcoming).

[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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