BOKO HARAM SECT: BANDITRY, INSURGENCY OR TERRORISM? A GLOBAL /DOMESTIC SYNTHESIS OF AN UNRELENTING GROUP

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Abstract

Boko Haram is synonymous with the name Nigeria owing to the various acts of violence perpetrated by the sect as experienced by the citizens, particularly in the North East geopolitical zone. The activities of the sect have attracted domestic and global condemnation. While some citizens accord the sect activities as banditry, many contend that they are insurgents while others argue that they are terrorists. This paper looks at the conceptualization of bandits, insurgency, and terrorism in line with the activities of the sect. Using the Social Identity Theory as a framework of analysis, the study adopts an explanatory research design, documentary method of data collection, and qualitative descriptive method of data analysis. The findings posit that the sect by its activities stands conceptualized as a terrorist group and recommend amongst others that the government should muster up the political will to treat it as such.

Keywords: *Banditry, Insurgency, Terrorism, and Global/Domestic Postures.*

Introduction

Boko Haram can be said to have been in silent existence since the early 1960s as a non-violent religious movement but gained the attention of the public in 2002. It was made up of small bands of mainly young, middle-class Nigerians in the northern, Muslim-dominated states of Nigeria. Boko Haram began its violent activities in December 2003, initiating unrest in northern Nigeria that prompted an extensive

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security force response. Since July 2010 even up till the year 2022, Boko Haram has adopted a much more active and violent approach to advance its goals, undertaking frequent attacks against civilian and military targets. Although territory held by Boko Haram has varied over time due to national/ regional military operations, its strongholds in the Sambisa Forest in Nigeria and the Mandara mountains on the Nigeria-Cameroon border are still regional issues.

Fundamentally, the Boko Haram sub-sect is officially known by its adherents as Jamā'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da'wah wa'l-Jihād, which means People Committed to the Prophet's Teachings for Propagation and Jihad. It has been adjudged by many as a terrorist organization based in northeastern Nigeria, which is also active in Chad, Niger, and northern Cameroon. In 2016, the group split, resulting in the emergence of a hostile faction known as the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP), (Obaji, 2015, Zenna, & Pierib, 2017, Aja, 2022). The schism was caused by a religious ideological divide over the use of female suicide bombers and the killing of Muslims to which ISWAP objected.

After the death of Mohammed Yusuf, a Nigerian youth born in the village of Girgir in Yobe state, the group was led by Abubakar Shekau from 2009 until his death. The main goal was to "purify" Islam in Nigeria, believing jihad should be delayed until the group was strong enough to overthrow the Nigerian government (Thurston, 2019). Aligning itself with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the sect has been known for its brutality to date. Its' geographic reach outside external contacts has extended to North Central, in the country's South and East, including major cities such as Lagos and Port Harcourt, with this extension, sect-related violence is all but absent yet (Campbell & Harwood, 2021). Since the sect started its outright fatal attacks in 2009, Boko Haram has killed tens of thousands of people, in the frequent onslaughts against the police, armed forces, and civilians. It has resulted in the deaths of more than 300,000 children and displaced 2.3 million from their homes and was during part of the mid-2010s the world's deadliest terror group according to the Global Terrorism Index. Boko Haram has painfully contributed to regional food crises and famines in the northeast and Nigeria in general (Zenna, & Pierib, 2017). Contrary to a notified decline of its operational activities, in 2021 mortal attacks by Boko Haram is largely unchanged. As of

mid-2021, weekly or periodic fatalities have overstepped the records of al-Shabaab in the Somalia theatre (Africa Centre for Strategic Studies, (ACSS, 2022).

Its onslaughts these years have led to the suppression of its operations by the Nigerian military. The group's unexpected resurgence, following a mass prison break in September 2010 in Bauchi, and 14 other jailbreaks between 7th October 2017 to 5th July 2022, was accompanied by increasingly sophisticated attacks, initially against soft targets, but progressing in 2011 to including suicide bombings of police buildings and the United Nations office in Abuja and has today added worship centres attacks and persistent kidnapping which brings it publicity and riches (Arise News, 2022). The government's establishment of a state of emergency at the beginning of 2012 which extended in the following year 2013 to cover the entire northeast of Nigeria, led to an increase in both security force cases of abuses and counter-militant attacks (Hosenball, 2015). This state of dilemma has made citizens seek security in flight into internally displaced camps and others become refugees in neighbouring countries.

Painfully, out of the 2.3 million people displaced by the sect's radical activities since May 2013, at least 250,000 left Nigeria and fled to Cameroon, Chad, or Niger. As if not enough Boko Haram killed over 6,600 people in 2014, and over 2,295 teachers have as well been killed, and over 1,500 schools were destroyed by the sect (Unicef Report, 2021). Nearly all of these schools have not reopened owing to extensive damages or insecurity. Expectedly, corruption in the security services and human rights abuses committed by them, and lack of decisive political will have hampered efforts to counter the unrest rather than accusations and counter-accusations remain the undoing of much-desired efforts within the high-ranking circles in fighting the sect (Wilson, 2018, & International Crisis Centre, ICC, 2021).

In this confusion, in mid-2014 the sect gained control of swaths of territory in and around the home state of Borno, estimated at 50,000 square kilometres (20,000 km), but did not capture the state capital, Maiduguri, where the group was originally based. On 7 March 2015, in an emboldened manner, Boko Haram's leader Abubakar Shekau

pledged allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. According to the BBC, due to internal disputes between the two groups, hundreds of terrorists left Boko Haram and formed their organization, named Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP), (Robyn, 2018). This corporate grouping and regrouping have rather strengthened the sect than weakened it.

In September 2015, the Director of Information at the Defence Headquarters of Nigeria announced that all Boko Haram camps had been destroyed but attacks from the group continued. In 2019, the President of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari's administration noted that Boko Haram was 'technically defeated' (Thurston, 2019). However, attacks by Boko Haram have escalated and it still poses a major threat as we write. Be that as it may, in May 2021, Nigerian officials and a separate investigation conducted by The Wall Street Journal backed the claims that Shekau was dead. However, Boko Haram attacks and activities have continued to hold sway in the North-Eastern part of Nigeria capturing and displacing more villages in Borno state causing anguish and hardship to the populace. Give or take, the Kuje Custodial Centre attack on 5th July 2022 and the Federal Government's declaration of 69 inmates wanted, among whom are some Boko Haram suspects who fled the centre says much about the complicated activities of the sect. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to interrogate the true position on the activities of one of the largest Islamist sect groups in Africa (CFPA, 2022), which has conducted attacks on religious and political groups, local police, and the military as well as indiscriminately attacking civilians in busy markets and villages to infer if the sect qualifies as banditry, terrorist organization or insurgent group, through the national and international perspectives on the sect activities.

Conceptual Clarifications

Banditry

Scholars have conceptual dimensions in the definitions of bandits or banditry. This may be a result of leading variables in their activities. However, it is a social problem that is broad in terms of definition. In

simple terms, bandits are a group of people who forcefully rob or extort the victims of their valuables on the spot and move away while victims nurse their wounds and count losses. Hide-outs are often inaccessible most times in mounts, some other times in swamps, foothills, thick forests, deep rivers, etc. Far from seeking notoriety by reputation or recognition from the outside society, bandits according to (Palma, 1995) operate behind a cloak of anonymity and prefer tranquillity and monotony of landscape and location to visibility.

Going by their activities and lifestyles, (Bankoff, 1998), on the other hand, define bandits as outlaws who alone or in groups commit armed crimes in the forms of robbery, kidnapping, taking of hostages, and racketeering. A bandit according to Henk (1991), as well might be classified as a fugitive, a thief, a rapist, a rustler, a highwayman, an assailant, an abductor, or a murderer who waylay or ambush their targets. From another angle, Okoli and Okpaleke (2014) define banditry as a violent crime that involves the use of force, or threat to that effect, to intimidate a person with the intent to rob, rape, or kill. While banditry is the practice of plundering in gangs, bandits are armed thieves who take part in the act. Decades before now banditry as an activity existed in remote areas and provinces interspersed by volcanic peaks which some scholars like Bankoff (1998) described as "landscapes of crime". In line with this, Prieto et al. (2020) express that the topography of states in Nigeria like Adamawa, and Taraba is characterized by mountain ranges in the eastern part of the states, vegetation ranges from Sahel Savannah to the far North, Savannah grassland in the middle and thick forest in the southern parts have made banditry difficult to contain such states.

Today, the act is a daily nightmare to the entire populace to the extent that it is being likened to terrorism because of coercive intimidation, mass hostages, mass slaughter, and destruction of strategic raw materials and infrastructural facilities. The lamentable state of the situation in the country even around the cities and federal capital territory where the activity of bandits is "out of control" with the effect that the surrounding estates are almost in total threat, the roads full of dangers, the towns sunk in misery from daily theft has

questioned if that of Nigeria is different from conventional banditry. Grossman (1972) typified that in the Philippines just like any other clime around the globe the lone highwayman was not a common feature of bandits. The average gang consisted of between ten and twenty members, though the size could vary from as few as three to as many as sixty bandits. As in the Horn of Africa, environmental stimuli in the geographical areas of Lake Chad have characterized banditry as a profit motive venture that involves cattle-rustling to a wide variety of undertakings than one type to vary their methods of operation (Campbell 2020). Contemporarily, banditry along Kenya's border with Ethiopia and Somalia is the resultant effect of a failed rehabilitation of veterans of the four-year secessionist conflict that was supported by the Republic of Somalia.

Buratai quoted in Campbell (2020) posits that dialogue and sometimes the rule of law are "not a good option" for tackling banditry. If so, according to (Mburu, 1999, p.13) banditry and bandits should have conformed to the rule of law after the disintegration of Mengistu's government in Ethiopia. Instead, there were heavily armed Ethiopian and Kenyan border tribes who engaged in organized cross-border plundering for livestock, shooting dead more than 100 people including 19 Kenyan security officers. If dialogue as a tool stops banditry, the "peace deal" in 2019 secured between armed bandits and the governors of Katsina, Sokoto, and Zamfara in Nigeria that encompassed disarmament, the release of kidnapped civilians, and pardon for the bandits would have stopped the activities of bandits in the mentioned states and beyond, rather, attacks picked up again in 2020. Like all concepts, banditry is an abstraction in the mind of scholars but interpretation in line with characterization is what positions it. Banditry in Nigeria may not be banditry in the conventional sense of it because the forceful seizure of materials, exploitation of environmental resources, and kidnapping have become business-like in the Nigerian case.

Insurgency

As a concept, the nature of insurgency is ambiguous. Against popular perception, an insurgency is not a modern-day development but a changeless feature of human history. Over the millennium, groups unified around political injustice and ideals have emerged to take exception to the established ruling order. Political movements have harnessed feelings of exclusion, discrimination, injustice, and insecurity with the objective of not only capturing the state but in some cases radical social transformation (Boot, 2013). According to Aja (2022), an insurgency is a domestically organized rebellion against an established government. It does not matter if the protest or rebellion is a direct reaction against governance's failure to engage fruitfully the aggrieved groups. When there is a rebellion against the authority (for example the internationally recognized government of the country) and those taking part in the rebellion are not recognized as belligerents, the rebellion is an insurgency. An insurgency is a violent, armed rebellion against authority when those people who are taking part in the rebellion are not recognized as belligerents (lawful combatants) (Fall, 1965; Grau, 2004). Insurgency symbolizes the struggle of the weak with desperation against a materially superior ruling power. An insurgency can be fought via counter-insurgency warfare, and may also be opposed by measures to protect the population and by political and economic actions of various kinds, as well as propaganda aimed at undermining the insurgents' claims against the incumbent regime. However, not all rebellions are insurgencies, as a state of belligerency may exist between one or more sovereign states and rebel forces (Wood, 2003).

For example, during the American Civil War, the Confederate States of America was not recognized as a sovereign state, but it was recognized as a belligerent power, and thus Confederate warships were given the same rights as United States warships in foreign ports. When insurgency is used to describe a movement's unlawfulness by not being authorized by or under the law of the land, its use is neutral. However, when it is used by a state or another authority under threat, 'insurgency' often also implies that the rebels' cause is illegitimate, whereas those rising will see the authority of the state as being illegitimate. Criticisms

of widely held ideas and actions about insurgency started to occur in the works of the 1960s; they are still common in recent studies (Anderson, 2007). From the above chronology, there is a galaxy of definitions of insurgency which in most cases confuse it with other synonyms that have similar but distinct elements.

Insurgency, therefore, has been used for years in professional military literature. Under the British, the situation in Malaya was often called the 'Malayan insurgency' or 'the Troubles in Northern Ireland. Insurgencies have existed in many countries and regions, including the Philippines, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Chechnya, Kashmir, Northeast India, Yemen, Djibouti, Colombia, Sri Lanka, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the American colonies of Great Britain, and the Confederate States of America. Each had different specifics but shared the property of an attempt to disrupt the central government by means considered illegal by that government (Wood, 2003). Besides, the Ambazonia group in Cameroon and FRELIMO in Mozambique are politically motivated and the same is true of Tigray Peoples' Liberation Front (TPLC) in Ethiopia and a host of others in the North African conflict theatre. Characteristically, insurgency aims not to overthrow established authority but to draw attention to uncared grievances in politics, economics, social, and environmental issues affecting the aggrieved groups. In a bid to relate these characteristics of insurgency to the Nigerian situation, one can say that despite the efforts of the government to take care of social and environmental issues yet insurgency is still a daily occurrence in Nigeria.

Terrorism

Terrorism has countless definitions. Simon (1994) states that at least 212 different definitions of terrorism exist across the world and 90 of them are recurrently used by governments and other institutions. Schmid and Jongman (1998) adopted a social science approach to figure out how to best define terrorism. They gathered over a hundred academic and official definitions of terrorism and examined them to identify the main components. They discovered that the concept of violence emerged in 83.5% of definitions; political goals emerged in 65%; causing fear and

terror emerged in 51%; arbitrariness and indiscriminate targeting emerged in 21%; and the victimization of civilians, noncombatants, neutrals, or outsiders emerged in 17.5%. Going by this systematic analysis, one can draw definitions and relate them with the components. Thus, terrorism is, in its broadest sense, the unlawful use of intentional violence to achieve political aims. The term is used in this regard primarily to refer to violence during peacetime or in the context of the war against non-combatants (mostly civilians and neutral military personnel). Viewed in this way, David (1977) defined terrorism as the use of violence to provoke consciousness, to evoke certain feelings of sympathy and revulsion. On its part, Walter (1999) defines terrorism as the use or the threat of the use of violence, a method of combat, or a strategy to achieve certain targets. Operationally, the U.S. Department of Defense (2011), delineated terrorism as the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear, intended to coerce or intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological. In an attempt to resolve our conceptual problems, the U.S. Department of State (1996), defines terrorism as premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine state agents. Sloan (2006), in his view, explained terrorism as a predicament that has evolved, but its political, religious, and ideological goals have practically never changed. In a subjective sense, terrorists aim to induce a state of fear in the victim that is ruthless and does not conform to humanitarian rules with publicity as an essential factor or strategy. The terms terrorist and terrorism originated during the French Revolution of the late 18th century but became widely used internationally and gained global attention in the 1970s during the Northern Ireland conflict, the Basque conflict, and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. The increased use of suicide attacks from the 1980s onwards was typified by the 2001 September 11 attacks in the United States (Wisnewski, 2008; Fortna, 2015).

Since 1994, the United Nations General Assembly has repeatedly condemned terrorist acts using the following political description of terrorism: Criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of

terror in the public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes are in any circumstance unjustifiable, whatever the considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or any other nature that may be invoked to justify them (Mackay, 2009). The operations of groups such as the Red Army Faction. Leila Khaled was described as a terrorist in a 1970 issue of Life magazine, and the 2002 Bali bombings (Sinclair, & Antonius, 2012).

From a broader perspective, the Director of the Task Force on Disorders and Terrorism has defined terrorism as a tactic or technique utilizing which a violent act or the threat thereof is used for the prime purpose of creating overwhelming fear for coercive purposes. It classified disorders and terrorism into six categories:

1. Civil disorder – A form of collective violence interfering with the peace, security, and normal functioning of the community.
2. Political terrorism – Violent criminal behaviour designed primarily to generate fear in the community, or a substantial segment of it, for political purposes.
3. Non-Political terrorism – Terrorism that is not aimed at political purposes but which exhibits conscious design to create and maintain a high degree of fear for coercive purposes, but the end is individual or collective gain rather than the achievement of a political objective.
4. Anonymous terrorism – In the two decades before 2016-2019, fewer than half of all terrorist attacks were either claimed by their perpetrators or convincingly attributed by governments to specific terrorist groups. Some theories have been advanced as to why this has happened.
5. Quasi-terrorism – The activities incidental to the commission of crimes of violence that are similar in form and method to genuine terrorism but which nevertheless lack its essential ingredient. It is not the main purpose of the quasi-terrorists to induce terror in the immediate victim as in the case of genuine terrorism, but the quasi-terrorist uses the modalities and techniques of the genuine terrorist and produces similar consequences and reactions. For example, the fleeing felon who takes hostages is a quasi-terrorist, whose methods

are similar to those of the genuine terrorist but whose purposes are quite different.

6. Limited political terrorism – Genuine political terrorism is characterized by a revolutionary approach; limited political terrorism refers to acts of terrorism that are committed for ideological or political motives but which are not part of a concerted campaign to capture control of the state.
7. Official or state terrorism – this refers to nations whose rule is based upon fear and oppression that reach similar to terrorism or such proportions. It may be referred to as Structural Terrorism defined broadly as terrorist acts carried out by governments in pursuit of political objectives, often as part of their foreign policy (White, 2016).

Other sources have defined the typology of terrorism in different ways, for example, broadly classifying it into domestic terrorism and international terrorism, or using categories such as vigilante terrorism or insurgent terrorism. Other ways the typology of terrorism may be characterized are political terrorism, sub-state terrorism, social revolutionary terrorism, nationalist-separatist terrorism, religious extremist terrorism, religious fundamentalist terrorism, new religions terrorism, right-wing terrorism, left-wing terrorism, communist terrorism, state-sponsored terrorism, regime or state terrorism; criminal terrorism, and pathological terrorism (Fortna, 2015).

Based on an extensive examination of various scholars, terrorism depicts fear, bloodshed, and hellish intimidation of people yet there are problems with attaining an all-inclusive definition. As Yasser Arafat once said in a 1974 speech before the United Nations "One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter". The difficulty in defining or operationalizing "terrorism" is in agreeing on the basis for determining when the use of violence is directed at whom, by whom, and for what objective is legitimate. However, our approach would lie mid-way between idiographic and nomothetic, that is, between situation-centred and law-seeking global generalizations, without ignoring either in adopting a position.

The Difference between Banditry, Insurgency, and Terrorism

Essentially, the definitional framework incorporates an assessment of political objectives, group capacity, and ultimate intentions to offer conceptual clarity on what distinguishes banditry, and insurgency, from terrorism. This distinction is important in guiding counter-banditry, counter-insurgency, and counter-terrorism efforts such that they effectively meet imagined ends with appropriate means. Insurgencies normally field fighting forces orders of magnitude larger than those of terrorist organizations and banditry gangs. Insurgencies have a political purpose, may provide social services, and have an overt, even legal, political wing with mass insurrection, mob action, street riots, coups d'etat, mutinies, and civil disobedience whereas banditry operates behind a cloak of anonymity and monotony of landscapes with robbery and racketeering as a major motive. Terrorism and insurgency are often applied as arbitrary terms to convey moral attitudes toward acts of political violence as much as to describe the strategic nature of those acts. The definitional framework in this study suggests that they describe highly distinct organizational natures and objectives. Yet, banditry is a term applied to outlaws who alone or in groups commit armed crimes in ungoverned spaces which provide soft targets to them. Terrorism is not entirely banditry or insurgent activity, terrorist activities entail all the actions and inactions that terrify and create fear and terror in the socio-economic and political lives of the citizens and nationals. These activities may include suicide bombings, coordinated attacks on civilians, kidnappings, hostage-taking, banditry, armed robbery, arson, psychological warfare, etc. Whereas insurgencies and banditry may not necessarily be actions or inactions that create tensions and fear in the hearts and well-being of the citizens, terrorism, however, is more political and ideological (i.e. rebelling against the power that is) than other elements or aspects of the society. Put simply, all terrorism is insurgency, but not all insurgency is terrorism. Terrorism affects not just the government and its machinery, but everyone in the society/state, but banditry and insurgency affect mostly the opposing forces (i.e. the government and its machinery).

Theoretical Framework of the Study

The study adopted Social Identity Theory as the beacon of analysis. Social identity theory was espoused by social psychologists, Henri Tajfel & John Turner, in 1979. Proponents of the theory include Brown, R. J. Zagefka, H. (2006); Ashmore, R. D. Deaux, K. McLaughlin-Volpe, T. (2004); Haslam, S. A. Ellemers, N. Reicher, S. D. Reynolds, K. J. Schmitt, M. T. (2010). The theory describes the conditions under which social identity becomes more important than one's identity as an individual. The theory also specifies how social identity could influence intergroup behaviour.

Social identity is part of the self that is defined by one's group memberships. The theory has the following tenets:

- Social identity theory is built on three key cognitive components: social categorization, social identification, and social comparison.
- Generally, individuals wish to maintain a positive social identity by maintaining their group's favourable social standing over that of relevant out-groups.
- In-group favouritism can result in negative and discriminatory outcomes, but research demonstrates that in-group favouritism and out-group discrimination

Social identity theory is described as a theory that predicts certain intergroup behaviours based on perceived group status differences, the perceived legitimacy and stability of those status differences, and the perceived ability to move from one group to another.

The theory is apt in this study because it tends to explain the in-group behaviour of the Boko Haram sect and how they perceive the out-group (the Nigerian government and citizens). The theory explains why the sect behaves the way they do against the civil populace and armed forces. This is the reason why the study seeks to bring to the fore the perspectives on the terrorist and/or insurgent nature and perception of the sect.

Boko Haram as- Banditry, Insurgency or Terrorism: Engaging the Perspectives

The Global Perspective of Boko Haram

Boko Haram pledged allegiance to and was accepted as a branch of the Islamic State in March 2015 and renamed itself as Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). A dispute over the leadership of ISWAP in August 2016 resulted in the emergence of two factions of the group. One faction continued to operate as ISWAP and another faction reverted to the use of Boko Haram's formal name Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad. Although Boko Haram has not officially split from ISWAP, the groups are assessed to operate independently. The United Kingdom in July 2013 proscribed Boko Haram as a terrorist group; the United States in November 2013 did the same; Canada in December 2013; the Australian Government proscribed Boko Haram as a terrorist organization on 1 July 2014; New Zealand in March 2014. The United Nations Security Council Committee listed Boko Haram as an entity subject to sanctions on the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions List on 22 May 2014 Counter Terrorism Report, (n.d).

The number of incidents from nationalist separatist groups has remained relatively stable in the years while religious extremism of which Boko Haram is one has grown. The prevalence of Islamist groups in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria, and Syria is the main driver behind these trends (Hosenball, 2015; Obaji, 2015). As stated by Nwakanma, five of the terrorist groups that have been most active since 2001 are Boko Haram, Al Qaeda, the Taliban, Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, and ISIL Nwakanma, (2023). These groups have been most active in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria, and Syria. Eighty per cent of all deaths from terrorism occurred in one of these five countries. In 2015 four Islamic extremist groups were responsible for 74% of all deaths from Islamic terrorism: ISIS, Boko Haram, the Taliban, and al-Qaeda, top the list of perpetrators according to the Global Terrorism Index 2016 Counter Terrorism Report, (n.d.). Since then approximately 200 of these incidents have occurred on a global scale, affecting not only Muslim-majority states in Africa and Asia, but also states with non-Muslim majorities such as the United States, United

Kingdom, France, Germany, Spain, Belgium, Sweden, Russia, Australia, Canada, Sri Lanka, Israel, China, India, and the Philippines. Such attacks have targeted both Muslims and non-Muslims, however, the majority affect Muslims themselves (Counter Terrorism Report, n.d; Zenna, & Pierib, 2017, Nwakanma, 2023).

Boko Haram's Relationships with Other Militant Groups

It has long been alleged that Boko Haram had a relationship with al-Qaeda. In 2011, letters from Boko Haram were reportedly found in Osama bin Laden's compound. Three weeks after the 2009 Boko Haram uprising began, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb expressed sympathy for Boko Haram (Obaji, 2015). Speaking by phone to reporters in November 2012, group spokesman Abu Qaqa said: "We are together with al-Qaeda, they are promoting the cause of Islam, just as we are doing. Therefore they help us in our struggle and we help them, too." This statement was captured in the 2012 Reuters special report detailing how fighters have trained with al-Qaeda affiliates in small groups over at least 6 years (Thurston, 2019).

According to the UN Security Council listing of Boko Haram under the al-Qaeda sanctions regime in May 2014, the group has maintained a relationship with AQIM for training and material support purposes and gained valuable knowledge on the construction of improvised explosive devices from AQIM. The UN found that many Boko Haram members fought alongside al-Qaeda-affiliated groups in Mali in 2012 and 2013 before returning to Nigeria with terrorist expertise. AQIM is one of al-Qaeda's regional branches, whose leader, Abu Musab Abdel Wadoud, has sworn an oath of allegiance to al-Qaeda's senior leadership (Counter Terrorism Report, n.d.).

Despite its historic ties with Boko Haram, al-Qaeda Central has never officially accepted Boko Haram as an affiliate. The issues which divide AQ and Boko Haram are related to the extremism of Abubakar Shekau for his declaration that the entire Muslim population of Nigeria is non-Muslim. Shekau argued that it was legitimate to kill Muslim civilians based on his belief that apostasy was widespread among the general population of Nigerian Muslims because they voted in

elections. Al-Qaeda believes that the general Muslim population of Nigeria should be considered Muslim and based on al-Qaeda's point of view the killing of civilians is unacceptable (Thurston, 2019).

The 2020 Global Terrorism Index ranked Boko Haram as the 3rd deadliest terrorist group in the world in 2016, in 2017, Nigeria maintained 4th position which it held until 2022 when it went down to the 6th position which the report attributed to the death of Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau and the Federal Government's efforts at depreciating Boko Haram killing by 70% (Nwakanma, 2023). Economically, the global economic impact of terrorism reached US$89.6 billion in 2015, decreasing 15% from its 2014 level. There have been three peaks in the economic impact of terrorism since the year 2000 and they are linked to the three major waves of terrorism. The first large increase in the economic impact of terrorism happened in 2001 when the attacks of September 11 in New York City and Washington D.C. took place. The second peak was in 2007 at the height of the Iraq war. The 2007 increase is mainly attributed to al-Qae'ida affiliated terrorist groups and coincided with the coalition troop surge in Iraq. The third wave started in 2012 and is continuing, with the economic impact of terrorism peaking at US$105.6 billion in 2014. The increase in the last four years was mainly driven by increases in terrorism in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan (Wikipedia, 2021).

The National Perspective on the Status of Boko Haram

Essentially, it is worthy to note that the Nigerian government proscribed Boko Haram as a terrorist organization under Nigerian law in May 2013. Despite the wide negative understanding of Boko Haram, the sect appears to have significant sympathy amongst many Nigerian Muslims. Yet, Boko Haram's attacks are occurring at their greatest frequency since the sect emerged from hiding in 2010. The sophistication of its tactics, use of the internet, and its attack on the U.N. headquarters in Abuja all point to a dangerously evolving and unrelenting organization (Obaji, 2015).

Debate exists regarding Boko Haram's status as a terrorist organization. Some people believe it is little more than a grassroots

insurrection or insurgent group with no defined leader or structure while others have likened its activities to banditry. Others believe that core Boko Haram, as it is understood, is a very small group of individuals who simply consider themselves to be the followers of their slain leader Mohammed Yusuf. Despite the lack of understanding of Boko Haram, the sect appears to have significant sympathy among many Nigerian Muslims. By this fact, the grievances that plague the north, the people are readily ripe for recruitment into the sect. Whereas, many believe that the group has metamorphosed into a full-blown terrorist group with devastating effects. Recent evidence alludes to the sect's affiliation with international jihadist organizations. Nigerian, other African states, U.S. and European officials have all expressed concern over the sect's communication with AQIM and al Shabaab. An alliance, or at the very least cooperation between the groups, can prove costly for the stability of Africa, the Sahel, and global peace and security (Thurston, 2019, Aja, 2022).

Selected Boko Haram Attacks in the Last 4 and Half Years

On 1 March 2018 - Boko Haram, armed with small arms, anti-aircraft weapons, and rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs), conducted a well-organized attack against a military base in Rann, Borno State. Nine members of the Nigerian security forces and- 3, UN consultants were killed. Six members of the Nigerian security forces and at least- 4, other humanitarian workers were injured, and a further 3 humanitarian workers were abducted. On 31 October 2018 - Boko Haram conducted a raid on the Dalori Internally Displaced camp and surrounding communities near Maiduguri where at least 8 people were killed and some women were reportedly abducted from the camp. Hundreds of people were displaced as a result. On 18 November 2018 - ISWAP conducted an attack against a military base in Metele and a significant number of soldiers were killed. The group has undertaken similar raids in 2018 with considerable loss of life (Wilson, 2018).

On 16 February 2019 – JASDJ conducted a complex attack on a mosque in southern Maiduguri, killing up to 20 people. On 23 February 2019 – ISWA conducted an indirect fire attack against Maiduguri,

focused on the west of the city, in the area around the airport and the military cantonment. On 17 June 2019 - 3, suicide bombers detonated their devices outside a hall in Konduga, Borno State, where football fans were watching a match on television. At least 30 people were killed and 40 injured. On 13 December 2019 - 4, aid workers from Action Against Hunger (AAH) were executed by Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). Another was reportedly killed in September 2019 (Thurston, 2019).

On 9 February 2020, – Insurgents were reported to have killed at least 30 people and abducted women and children. Victims were killed and abducted while sleeping in their vehicles during an overnight stop in Auno town, on a major highway near Maiduguri. On 9 June 2020, – Insurgents were reported to have killed around 81 civilians in Felo village, Gubio LGA. 13 June 2020 – Insurgents attacked Monguno town, killing at least 38 civilians, and targeting the humanitarian hub located in the town. On 02 July 2020 - Shots were fired at a UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) flight in Damasak Borno State. On 22 July 2020 – 5 aid workers, including staff from Action against Hunger AAH, the International Rescue Committee, ACTED and the REACH initiative, and the Borno State Emergency Management Agency, were executed by Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). On 28 November 2020 – at least 70 civilians were killed and others wounded and abducted in Jere Local Government Area, Borno State, by the sect. Thus, Boko Haram has directly caused the death of over thirty-five thousand persons in Nigeria, in parts of Cameroon, Chad, and Niger between 2011 to 2022 (Dokua, 2022).

Methods of attack have included coordinated armed assaults, rocket attacks, assassinations, kidnapping, use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), bombings (including the use of child and female bombers), car bombings, and arson. The use of military uniforms and vehicles has been camouflaged as a tactic to get close to the intended target.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study agrees and concludes that the Boko Haram sect is a terrorist group and not a banditry or an insurgent group, as the sect is directly or indirectly engaged in preparing, planning, assisting in fostering, or carrying out terrorist acts and advocates the doing of terrorist acts, involving threats to human life and serious property damage. In the course of pursuing its objectives, Boko Haram is known to have committed or threatened actions that cause or could cause, death, serious harm to persons, serious property damage, and endangered life (other than the life of the person taking the action), or create a serious risk to the health or safety of the public or a section of the public. All demands, actions and activities intended to have those effects; are done to advance Boko Haram's political, religious or ideological causes; are done to intimidate the government, the public or sections of the public. For instance, one of the demands of Boko Haram among other things includes a total Islamization of the Nigerian state as well as eschewing all forms of Western education from the national development strategies of the country. This demand seems outrageous and unrealizable in a heterogonous country with over 250 ethnic groups and multiple religious beliefs.

The study recommends that:

1. The federal government should as a matter of urgency deploy all political will in fighting the Boko Haram group to a standstill.
2. Concerted efforts should be made to fish out, investigate, and prosecute all sponsors of the Boko Haram terrorist group.
3. The Nigerian government should create more synergy and partnership with external powerful states to assist in the fight and elimination of the terrorist sect.
4. The presidency should pay keen attention to the major security issues (like terrorism, banditry, and the like) as opposed to chasing shadows or warring against non-violent and unarmed protesters. This should be done devoid of sort of affiliations, and religious and ethnic sentiments.

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