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The Terror Campaign of Boko Haram: Its Transformation and Challenges to Nigeria's Security

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Abstract: This paper is geared toward analyzing the patterns and dynamics of the Boko Haram attacks and the challenges they caused to the country's security. The report uses the assumptions of the instrumental approach, which states that the purpose of terrorism is to bring about insecurity in an actor's environment. The pattern of terrorism follows an action-reaction process. Thereby it responds to what Government does. It also utilizes the data collected from secondary sources and qualitatively analyses it. The paper discovered that Boko Haram, a proscribed international terrorist organization, is continuously posing serious security challenges to Nigeria that have resulted in the loss of over 30,000 lives and the destruction of public and private properties worth billions of US dollars. The group has committed itself to asymmetric warfare. Since its re-emergence, it had tried to mimic and adopt the tactics and strategies of global Salafist movements, which manifested in armed assaults, bombings, and abductions. The paper recommended that a comprehensive approach be adopted that would take care of both kinetic and non-kinetic measures to end the menace of terrorism in Nigeria. Training and retraining of security personnel on asymmetric warfare are required to balance the increasing adaptability of the terrorists.

Keywords: Terrorism, Counter-Terrorism, Boko Haram, Security

1. INTRODUCTION

Since 2009, Nigeria had been bedeviled by political violence caused by the criminal terror group called Boko Haram. Over 30,000 lives were lost and still counting. About three million population in the Northeast are displaced and many were also living in refugee camps in the neighboring countries. The socio-economic costs are amounting to over 20 billion US dollars. The asymmetric nature of the violence and the group's ability to maneuver and adapt to changing tactics proved challenging to cope with by the Nigerian security operatives. Boko Haram violently advocates for radical social and educational reforms throughout Nigeria, essentially eliminating any western influence and purely replacing it with Islamically accepted based methods that marched its interpretation of shari'ah. Ideologically, group members are forbidden to partake in or identify with any activity that is western or western-based and considered such an act of infidelity. Throughout this period of political upheaval, the Nigerian state had adopted various security measures to counter the group's terror campaign. Prominent among them is the ongoing military offensive against it and its members, the declaration of the state of emergency, and the recent de-radicalization program of the repentant Boko Haram members. Although numerous successes were recorded, due to many structural and institutional reasons, the group is yet to be defeated. Today, the group is no longer a monolithic entity as other splinter groups that are ideologically and militantly competing for influence and popularity. Therefore, this paper aims at analyzing the patterns and dynamics of the Boko Haram attacks and the challenges they posed to Nigeria's security. It is divided into four main sections. Section one covers the essential aspect; section two focuses on the conceptual and theoretical frameworks. Section three dwells on the overview of the group emergence and its transformation, patterns, and nature of its attacks. The final section, however, deals with the conclusion and recommendations.

1.1. Conceptual Definition of Terrorism and its Review

Terrorism is defined as an attempt to coerce an indirect target utilizing terror produced by the use of threat or violence against a direct target (Wellman, 2013). From this definition, it is worth noting that the author uses two critical terms: terror and coercion. Terror is an essential means, while coercion is the crucial end. Here, terror is synonymous with threat, which is often accompanied by fear. In contrast, coercion can be seen as forceful compliance to the actor's demands (aggressive influence to affect the subject's behavior). According to Wellman (2013), terror can be violent and nonviolent. Still, it should be considered as morally wrong because it (a) attempts to coerce indirect target (b) through terror, (c) produced by the use or threat of violence against a direct target, and (d) who is thus used merely as a means of coercion. As political, it undermines the trust in the content of mutual dependence. It put liberal society into conflict within itself (just like in Nigeria and Boko Haram). It undermines the individual and collective capacity for autonomous self-government and disrupts the pattern of social activities that sustain the social order in the polity (Wellman, 2013). The capacity of the Nigerian state as an independent and sovereign entity has significantly been ridiculed by the fact that Boko Haram violent campaign has tested the country's ability to defend itself from internal aggression. Flint (2003) also posited that contemporary terrorism is a form of netwar, which is a use of network forms of organization, doctrine, strategy, and technology to engage in conflicts (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 2001 cited by Flint, 2003). The role of geography, according to him, is to prevent geographic simplifications that will create negative security implications when trying to counter terrorist netwar.

Terrorist cells can be found in different territories of different nations and often exist as nodes of the nets whose permanency varies dramatically from one another. It is from these nodes that the pulsing attacks structured by networks emanate, and the targets are often important nodes, too (they can be any world city or area deemed to be attacked). Therefore, to counter terrorist threats, the decision-makers need to identify these nodes of terrorist networks and access their permanent nature and connections. Asuelime and David (2015) looked at the issue of Boko Haram from a socio-economic perspective. They based their argument on the nexus of the socio-economic backwardness of Africa that connectedly made the continent a haven for terrorists and an easy catchment for their recruitment. One can see the connection between this factor and the flourishing of terrorist organizations in Africa. But one thing that the thesis considers contradictory in their argument is that most of the terrorist attacks in Africa countries are contagious due to their connection with their former colonial masters. It may partly play some roles, but like that of Boko Haram, their original claims and justification for their violence were entirely rested on their interpretation of how an Islamic society should be governed. Their violent campaign was also a reaction to the draconian crackdown of their group, which led to the killing of their leader in 2009.

Quite strongly, in their many propaganda videos, Shekau had repeatedly claimed that they are fighting the forces of evil (the unjust secularist system) in Nigeria. This does not exempt anybody from being their direct target if such targets (institution, group, or individual) do not physically join forces with them or agree to their campaign; thus, they consider them to sustain the system. Their barbarisms have become so drastic that they could not spare the lives of their close relatives (Asuelime and David, 2015). Agbiboa (2014a) tries to trace the origin of the deadly sect from a socio-economic point of view. However, he took a more comprehensive glance at some of the factors which made Northern Nigeria vulnerable to violent religious extremism backed by the antecedences of sequentially related cases of ethno-religious conflicts which occurred in the region rights from the period of the country's independence in 1960. Other factors fuelling this religious and sectarian violence are common across Nigeria; they include the political manipulation of religion and ethnicity to disputes between supposed local groups and settlers over the distribution of public resources. The failure of Nigeria's government to address the widespread poverty, corruption, police abuse, and longstanding impunity for a range of crimes has created a fertile ground for violent conflicts" (Agbiboa, 2014a). On this fertile to violent land, the seed of Boko Haram was planted—coupled with its socio-economic backwardness compared to other regions in Nigeria. It, therefore, upheld that a downward spiral of economic decline. They were often exacerbated by official corruption and mismanagement. Has created governments that are at or

near the point of collapse and that are being often challenged violently. by their citizens and hence economic decline has hastened the process of national disintegration and vice versa (Agbiboa, 2014a).

Iro and Osumah (2012) argued that the failure of African leaders to associate the notion of security with human development was the genesis of the lingering conflicts in most countries within the continent. Instead, security is personalized to represent the interest of the ruling elites and the survival of their respective regimes and was rooted since the period of colonial administration. Compounded with the pervasiveness of massive corruption, Africans have seen little in respect of the abundant wealth the elites siphoned and shared with their cronies and associates. Consequently, the frustration occasioned by relative deprivation has pushed many desperate individuals and groups to embrace criminality, including terrorism, as a survival strategy (Iro and Osumah, 2012). In substantiating their claims, they traced the long profiles of violent uprisings in Nigerian history. They concluded that Boko Haram terrorism is an end to the factors which instigated the past upheavals. Agbiboa (2014b) explicitly assumed that until the Nigerian state begins to look into the dangerous characterizations of religiously motivated sects and the manifestations upon which the group based its campaign. Coupled with other factors which led to its emergence and nurturing, the war against Boko Haram is just a beginning (Agbiboa, 2014b). He examines the concept of religious terrorism and its difference from the secular ones and made three hypothetical statements. Firstly, he assumes that religious terrorists have anti-modern goals of returning society to an idealized version of the past, and are therefore necessarily anti-democratic and anti-progressive. Secondly, religious terrorists employ a different kind of violence compared to their secular counterparts; and thirdly, he states that religious terrorist groups can invoke total commitment and fanaticism from their members (Agbiboa, 2014b). Although the first and third hypotheses appeared to be accurately correct, the second is the problem. For instance, when Schmid (1983) considers, one can clearly understand that rights from 1936 terrorist groups, whether religious or secular, have used similar rather than different kinds of violence. The significant contention here is reconciling with the increasing dilemma of designating groups as terrorist organizations, usually linked with either international or domestic politics. To the Turkish Government and its friends, PKK, a secular group, is a terror organization, and it uses all sorts of violence to achieve its goals.

2. Theoretical Framework: Instrumental Approach to Terrorism

According to this approach, violence is seen as intentional. It is a means to an end. Government and terrorist groups are analyzed as if engaged in a typical conflict in which each party's actions are aimed at influencing the behavior of the other. Accordingly, terrorism is one form of violent coercion, a bargaining process based on the power to hurt and intimidate as a substitute for the use of overt military force (Crenshaw 2001). Therefore, as assumed by this theory, terrorism is meant to cause or produce a change in the national Government's political stance and position, not necessarily the destruction of its military potential (Crenshaw 2001). However, the groups (such as Boko Haram) using terrorism are assumed to act based on the calculation of the expected benefit or value gained from their actions. The cost of the attempt and its failure, the consequences of inaction, or the value sought is overwhelmingly significant; the prices of trying any action are low, the status quo is intolerable, or the probability of its success is high. Therefore, terrorist organizations can act out of expectation of reward or out of desperation, in response to an opportunity or the threat from Government (Crenshaw 2001). In summary, this approach assumes that:

- a) The act of terrorism represents a strategic choice;
- b) The group using terrorism acts as a unit based on collective values;
- c) The means of terrorism are logically related to ends and resources. Surprise compensates for weakness;
- d) The purpose of terrorism is to bring about change in an actor's environment;
- e) The pattern of terrorism follows an action-reaction process. Therefore terrorism respond to what the Government does;
- f) Increasing the costs of terrorism make it less likely; decreasing costs or increasing rewards make it more credible;
- g) Terrorism fails when terrorists do not achieve their stated political objectives.

Conclusively, policy responses associated with this approach depend on denying the terrorist the opportunities (mainly matter of defense) and affecting incentives to use it. Reducing chances may also minimize motivations for terrorism. It is also recommended that governments use intelligence to learn the locations and plans of the terrorists. Calculative terrorists are presumed to be responsive both to raising the cost of attacking and threatening subsequent punishment (Crenshaw, 2001). The epoch of terrorism and state response in Nigeria can best be understood from the above theoretical assumptions. Boko Haram chose to use terror attacks for political purposes, the end at which to attract state reaction, which further changes the Nigerian state's behavior by adapting to new security measures to counter it. The exception is the ability of Boko Haram to adjust to the increasing offensive from the Government. Though it does increase the cost of carrying more terror attacks, the failure of the Government to sustain the offensive against the group was the reason for its fierceness and violent resurgence.

3. Boko Haram: Origin and Transformation

Boko Haram can be semantically translated from Hausa and Arabic to mean "Western education is forbidden. However, its adherents do not call themselves Boko Haram a label applied to them by the Government and the media. Officially the group is called Jamaa'atu Ahlus Sunnah lid-Da'watu wal-Jihad (JAS), an Arabic phrase which can be translated to mean Association of Sunnis [adherents to the teachings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad S.W.A] for the Propagation of Islam and Holy War (Campbell, 2013b, Guide, 2012). The origin of the movement as an offshoot of Ahlus Sunnah is directly hinted at by Boko Haram's official designation, Ahlus Sunna lid Da'watu wal-Jihad 'ala Minhaj al-Salaf (Association of the People of the Sunna for the Missionary Call and the Armed Struggle, according to the Method of Salaf). The group broke away from *Ahlu Sunnah*, a Nigerian group established by graduates of the Islamic University in Medina and principally devoted to teaching and implementing the *Wahhabi da'wah* (Proselytisation) against the traditional scholars and the Sufi orders, as well as lobbying political elites for the implementation of Sharia in public life. The popularity of Boko Haram's nickname in the national and international press might be explained by two different reasons. For the northern Muslims, especially those ideologically close to *Izala* and *Ahlu Sunnah*. The label "transforms the radical group into an exotic eccentricity and hides its embarrassing connection to the leadership of a well-established Salafi organization in the country. For the southern Nigerian Christian press, on the contrary, as well as for the global Western media, the nickname Boko Haram magically captures all the stereotypes that have daily currency in islamophobic discourses: at the same time obscurantist, primitive and ferocious, Boko Haram embodies all the prejudices associated with the supposed essence of Islam (Brigaglia, 2012).

The message of the movement has transformed over the years. Before 2009, it was characterized by the blistering speeches of its leader Mohammed Yusuf. This period was characterized by proselytization (*da'wah*), which included verbal assaults on secular authority and traditional rulers. However, from 2010 onwards, Boko Haram committed itself to asymmetric warfare. Since its re-emergence, the group had tried to mimic and adopt the tactics and strategies of global Salafist movements such as Al-Qaeda. Although heavily influenced by the message of Al-Qaeda and external developments, Boko Haram's grievances remained local at inception; however, there have been attempts to link local grievances to international developments in Mali and beyond (Brigaglia, 2012). The group forcefully advocated for radical social and educational reforms throughout Nigeria, essentially eliminating any sort of western influence and purely replacing it with Islamically accepted based methods. Thoroughly, ideologically austere, group members are forbidden to partake in or identify with any activity that is western or western-based (Guidere, 2012). The group marked its existence internationally in 2009. In July of that year, the Nigerian Government began an official investigation of the group activities, following the security report that alleged the group aggressively arming itself. In response, several group members were put to jail in prison in Bauchi state, and the ensuing fight with the Nigerian security forces began to kill many people. During that attack, Muhammad Yusuf was extra-judicially killed on 30 July 2009 in Maiduguri. Since then, he was succeeded by his deputy (an internationally designated terrorist by the United States) Muhammad Abubakar Shekau (Guidere, 2012).

As the military crackdown intensified, they became desperate and more militant, thereby resorting to more desperate measures, which they had despised in the past. Such as the burning of school buildings, attacking telecommunications base stations, killing and kidnapping of foreigners, slaughtering as opposed to the shooting of opponents, and killing of health officials at routine vaccination clinics, as well as the random shooting of pupils and teachers at schools (Mohammed, 2014). The pace and intensity of the group's attacks vehemently increased after the imposition of emergency rule in the mid of 2013. This culminated in the emergence of a new popular movement in the form of Vigilantism in July 2013. Inspired by the Joint Task Force (JTF), the Vigilante group, popularly known as Civilian Joint Task Force (Civilian JTF), helps the military identify members of Boko Haram credited for flushing them out of Maiduguri.

Consequently, they fled to other towns nearby and into the famous Sambisa Forest Reserve and Mandara Mountain Range, which runs from Gwoza in Southern Borno State into Cameroon. The group began to launch frequent and sporadic attacks on remote villages in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states from these locations. Subsequently, it took control of more than ten significant towns across the states. By January 2015, about 19 Local Government areas have fallen into total control of Boko Haram and incorporated them into its purported Islamic Caliphate declared in August 2014 with its headquarters in Gwoza near the Cameroonian border. By March 2015, the group under Abubakar Shekau pledged allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). In its effort to expand its territorial landmass and create a sub-regional Caliphate, Boko Haram intensified cross-border raids and attacks in neighboring countries of Cameroon, Chad, and Niger (Monguno and Bagu, 2017).

Members of Boko Haram are drawn primarily from the Kanuri tribe (roughly 4 percent of the population of Nigeria), who are concentrated in the northeastern states of Nigeria like Bauchi, Borno, and Yobe. The Hausa and Fulani (29 percent of the Nigerian population) spread more generally throughout most northern states (Forest, 2012). The UN report (2017), as revealed by the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, pursuant of Resolution 2.368, stated that the predominance of the cash economy in Nigeria is the primary factor fuelling the violent nefarious activities of Boko Haram in Nigeria. It also identifies that extortion, smuggling, remittances, kidnapping, and charitable donations are sources the group is funded (Haruna & Agency Report, 2018). It is significant to note that Boko Haram is not a unified, monolithic entity. In essence, there are separate factions within the group who disagree about ideology, tactics, and strategic direction; in some cases, they compete against each other for attention and followers. It is indicated that the group may have split into three factions: one that remains moderate and welcomes an end to the violence; another that wants a peace agreement; and a third that refuses to negotiate and wants to implement strict Sharia law across Nigeria. There is at the very least evidence of disagreements among some Boko Haram members. In July 2011, a group calling itself the Yusufiyya (i.e., the followers of Muhammad Yusuf) Islamic Movement distributed leaflets widely in Maiduguri denouncing other Boko Haram factions as evil (Forest, 2012). For instance, in 2016, Abu Mus'ab Al Barnawi, son of the group founder Muhammad Yusuf led dissident members (Yusufiyya) against Abubakar Shekau and formed Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) who was also dethroned in 2019 by Abu Abdullahi Umar Al Barnawi (*Ba Idrisa*) but later he was reinstated. Today another splinter group has emerged in Lake Chad and called itself Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) under Adam Bitri Bakura. Not to forget the increasing presence of Ansaru in the North West of Nigeria, who previously was under Boko Haram (Al-Hussaini, 2020).

The most antagonizing warring relations can be found between JAS and ISWAP. Both factions have often described each other as *khawarij* (renegades). The intense rivalry between the two culminated in the alleged killing of *Shekau* on May 20, 2021, by ISWAP fighters led Bako Gorge. With this development, the territory under late *Shekau*, especially in Southern Borno, has been taken over by ISWAP. For ISWAP, Boko Haram has been the major distraction in their fight against the Nigerian military. Getting rid of *Shekau's* leadership may win over most of his fighters to their fold and eliminate that distraction in confronting Nigerian forces. It was reported that about 70 percent of *Shekau's* top commanders have swapped to the ISWAP faction before the final onslaught against him (Salkida, HumAngle, 2021).

4. Violent Attacks and Terrorism of Boko Haram in Nigeria

Primarily focused in north-eastern Nigeria, Boko Haram terrorism and insurgency has reportedly left more than 30,000 dead, about 9 billion dollars worth of public institutions and private properties destroyed and displaced at least three million people (BBC Monitoring, 2018). One needs to understand that, from 2015 onward, the attacks were carried out by either JAS or ISWAP but only attributed to Boko Haram. Accordingly, between 2011 to February 2020, about 26,412 people died from this violence in Borno state alone (Hum Angle, 2020). Even though the scopes of its attacks are primarily within the northern part of Nigeria, the wave effects it resulted in cover Nigeria entirely. Initially, the modus operandi of Boko Haram was limited to gun attacks on security personnel and clergy; the group campaign of violence took more radical forms after the death of Muhammad Yusuf in 2009. Since then, the group has attacked police stations and patrols, politicians (including village chiefs and a member of parliament), religious leaders (both Christian and Muslim), and individuals they deem engaged in un-Islamic activities, like drinking beer and gambling. Boko Haram has also carried out several mass-casualty attacks and is the first militant group in Nigeria to embrace the use of suicide bombings (Forest, 2012). The group also made significant leaps in its operational capability. There are indications that members of the group have received weapons and training in bomb-making and other terrorist tactics from al-Qaeda affiliates in Sub-Saharan Africa (Forest, 2012).

The group was responsible for releasing over 700 inmates from Bauchi prison on September 7, 2010. On December 31, 2010, Boko Haram attacked Mogadishu Cantonment in the Federal Capital Abuja. Prior, it had launched twin bomb attacks that killed more than 80 people in Jos, Plateau state on Christmas Eve. On 26 August 2011, Boko Haram conducted a suicide attack on the United Nations building in Abuja, which resulted in the killing of 24 persons, including its staff. This marked the group's internationalization of its terror acts (Guidere, 2012). On January 20, 2012, Boko Haram launched coordinated attacks on security formations in the Northern city of Kano which led to the death of almost 200 persons, including innocent civilians and security personnel (Guidere, 2012; Hill, 2012).

Since 2009, the number of Boko Haram attacks has increased and that, the majority of Boko Haram's attacks have come in just two forms: armed assaults and bombings. From 2009 to 2011, the group had been responsible for more armed assaults than bombings, but there has been a very significant increase in bombings since mid-2011. Further, the number of casualties from Boko Haram bombings is now more than twice their armed assaults. However, the lack of empirical study and central database in Nigeria has resulted in various estimates and projections about the exact figure of the group's attacks and casualties. For example, modest estimates by (Human Rights Watch, 2012) put the total deaths at 935 in some 164 attacks. The report also estimates that 550 people were killed in 115 Boko Haram attacks in 2011 alone, while (Amnesty International, 2012) estimates that, in 2011, at least 500 people were killed in attacks by Boko Haram, often targeting police officers and government officials (Bamidele, 2012).

Similarly, from January to May 2012, Boko Haram had carried out 118 attacks in six northern states and the FCT, killing 308 people the states include Bauchi, Borno, Kaduna, Niger, Yobe, and Plateau, according to Nigeria's Minister of Police Affairs (Vanguard, 2012). Accordingly, In the first nine months of 2012 alone, more than 815 people died in 275 separate attacks in 12 northern and central states and Abuja (Human Rights Watch, 2012). Significantly, the scope of the group attacks has also expanded from its original areas of operation (Bauchi, Borno, and Yobe) to other states in the Northern part of the country, like Adamawa, Kaduna, Kano, Niger, Plateau, and the Federal Capital Abuja (Forest, 2012).

Although there was a decrease in the scope of Boko Haram attacks in Northern Nigeria since the declaration of Emergency Rule by the Federal Government in May 2013, the group had conducted numerous and deadly attacks, mainly in Borno and Yobe states. The most outrageous attacks were carried out on schools in these two states. According to Lucy Freeman, from 2012 to 2013, hundreds have been killed in these horrific attacks. Thousands of children have been forced out of schools across communities in northern Nigeria, and many teachers have been forced to flee for their safety. In 2013 alone, at least 70 teachers and scores of pupils have been slaughtered and many others wounded. Some

50 schools have been burned or seriously damaged, and more than 60 others have been forced to close (Amnesty International, 2013).

Similarly, according to Human Rights Watch's Nigeria researcher, Mausi Segun, Boko Haram's attacks in major cities like Maiduguri had reduced since early July 2013. Still, it has stepped up attacks in rural towns and villages, particularly Borno and the Yobe States. As a result, about 700 people have lost their lives in over 40 attacks since May 2013. The group has also started abducting young women and using young boys as fighters and intelligence gathering (Daily Maverick, 2014). On 2 December 2013, Boko Haram fighters also launched a ferocious attack in Maiduguri, pounded an Air Force base, an Army barracks, and a divisional police headquarters in the first such violence in the city for five months. The fighters first raided the 33 Artillery Regiment of the Nigerian Army along Maiduguri-Damaturu road, destroying most buildings there. They then moved to the 79 Composite Group of the Nigerian Air Force and destroyed most structures. Helicopters, vehicles, mechanical workshops, offices, and personnel homes were killed (Daily Trust, 2013). With the continued military offensive by the Nigerian Government in the affecting states under emergency rule, Boko Haram's capabilities have been severely limited. The group has found it difficult to expand its attacks beyond villages and other rural areas in Borno state.

From 2009 to 2014, the group had become popular in the abduction of women and girls. Within that period, a total of 500 women and girls were abducted. On April 14, 2014, Boko Haram successfully abducted 279 schoolgirls from Government Secondary School, Chibok, consequently creating a global awakening on the danger of Boko Haram activities and establishing the famous campaign called "Bring Back our Girls" (Monguno and Bagu, 2017). From 2011 to 2016, there were 890 Boko Haram attacks and 262 attacks attributed to Boko Haram and Nigerian security forces, with Borno State taking an enormous toll in both, respectively. It is worth noting that, due to inaccuracy of data with the profile of Boko Haram attacks and resulting casualties, the Nigerian Government estimated the deaths to be within 20,000, which might have informed the BBC monitoring 2018 report. However, based on the records obtained from the Nigeria Security Tracker (NST), a platform of the United States as cited by Monguno and Bagu (2017), there were 1,152 attacks from both actors resulting in the killings of 26,940 people. Boko Haram conflict is winding down as military operations by Nigerian forces and its North-eastern neighbors (Cameroun, Chad, and Niger) intensified against the insurgents. An estimated 550 civilians died in Boko Haram attacks in 2016 compared to almost 3,500 in 2015. The group resorted to suicide bomb attacks in crowded places, like Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps, markets, and mosques, using primarily women and girls to bypass security. On February 11, two young women detonated suicide bombs in Dikwa, Borno camp, killing about 58 IDPs. A third girl confessed to security agents that she backed out of the suicide assignment when she recognized her relatives sheltering in the camp (Human Rights Watch, 2017). However, security forces have recovered most areas controlled by the group and rescued thousands of residents. However, 197 of the 276 Chibok schoolgirls abducted in April 2014 and over 300 elementary school students abducted from Damasak, Borno, in November 2014 are still missing. Apart from Maiduguri, Borno state capital, which has been essentially free from attacks, many parts of the state remained unsafe and inaccessible. In July 2014, a team of United Nations humanitarian aid workers were attacked by suspected insurgents as they traveled the 53 mile Bama to Maiduguri road. Two people were injured in the attack, and the UN temporarily suspended aid deliveries following the incident (Human Rights Watch, 2017).

The naming in August 2014 by the Islamic State of Abu Musab Al-Barnawi as the new leader of Boko Haram spurred a rift between his followers and those of Abubakar Shekau, who insisted he remains the leader. The Nigerian military declared in late August that Shekau had been killed in a military air raid. Previous claims of Shekau's death had proved untrue (Human Rights Watch, 2017). However, the BBC Monitoring (2018) research shows that the group had killed more than 900 people in 2017, marginally more than it did in 2016. It consistently mounted attacks during the year, defying President Buhari's assertion that the militants had been routed and technically defeated. Boko Haram reportedly mounted a total of 150 attacks in 2017, increasing the 127 attacks it is said to have climbed the previous year. In both years, the group launched its highest number of attacks in January.

The group's attack locations have broadly remained the same over the last two years. Nigeria suffered the majority of attacks. It was recorded that there were 80 attacks in 2016 and 109 in 2017,

with Borno State - the birthplace of the insurgency - being the most common target. At the same time, it carried out 26 attacks in Cameroun, 3 in Chad, and 18 in the Niger Republic (BBC Monitoring, 2018). Boko Haram proved it could still strike further afield in 2017, with reported 32 attacks in Cameroon's Far North region, seven (7) in Niger's Diffa region, and two (2) in the Lake Chad region, all of which border north-eastern Nigeria. This broadly mirrors where it chose to attack in 2016, but there are slight differences between the two years, with Nigeria experiencing more attacks in 2017 while Niger saw fewer (ibid). Boko Haram reportedly launched 73 armed assaults in 2016 and 90 in 2017 and 38 suicide attacks in 2016, and 59 in 2017, respectively. In 2016 there were 52 armed assaults in Nigeria, 8 in Cameroun, 1 in Chad, and 12 in Niger, while there were 19 suicide attacks in Nigeria, 14 in Cameroun, 2 in Chad, and 3 in Niger. In 2017 there were 71 armed assaults in Nigeria, 12 in Cameroun, 2 in Chad, and 5 in Niger.

In contrast, there were 38 suicide attacks in Nigeria, 20 in Cameroun, and 5 in Niger, with none recorded in Chad. Nigeria bore the brunt of these attacks, with the most common method being armed assault. Across the border in Cameroon, the group appeared to follow a different strategy, mounting more suicide attacks than armed assaults. The same methods in these two countries were also seen in 2016 (BBC Monitoring, 2018). At least 967 people were reportedly killed by Boko Haram attacks in 2017, an increase in the previous year when 910 deaths were reported. The highest concentration of fatalities in 2017 was in Maiduguri, which has seen its population double to two million in recent years as people flee Boko Haram violence in rural areas. Elsewhere in Nigeria, there were also high concentrations of fatalities in the localities of Magumeri, Konduga, Damaturu, and Mubi. There have been no significant changes in the group's targeting in the last two years, with Boko Haram attacking hard and soft targets. Its most common targets in 2016 and 2017 were villages and militaries (BBC Monitoring, 2018).

Boko Haram also continues to target mosques and internally displaced people (IDPs) fleeing the violence. The relationship between IS and Boko Haram is unclear. Only 13 of 151 reported Boko Haram attacks in 2017 were claimed by IS, suggesting operational links between the two groups are weak. This may be due to the military pressure placed on IS in Iraq and Syria, where the group lost its so-called caliphate in late 2017. The disparate nature of Boko Haram may also make it difficult for IS to issue claims as it cannot verify which faction is behind an attack (BBC Monitoring, 2018). According to the narration of Ali Ndume (Chairman Senate Committee on Army), from 2013 to 2019 alone, 847 soldiers were killed by Boko Haram and buried in the military cemetery in Maiduguri, Borno state. So far from the record, we saw in the graveyard. I think we lost over 847 soldiers by their history there, which is in that cemetery alone from 2013 to date (Daily Trust, 2019). Despite military successes against Boko Haram, it remains a dangerous asymmetrical threat in Nigeria and neighboring states in the Lake Chad region. It is ranked as the second deadliest terrorist group in the world and remains number one in sub-Saharan Africa, according to the Global Terrorism Index report of 2020. Boko Haram has recorded a surge in its terrorist activities in 2019 following a period of steady decline. Of the 1,068 deaths attributed to Boko Haram in 2019, 69% occurred in Nigeria, while the remaining occurred in Cameroon, Niger, and Chad at 20%, seven (7) %, and four (4) % respectively. However, within the eleven months of 2020, the group has killed 1,606 people in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states in the 125 fatal incidents (SBM Intelligence Report, 2017).

5. Conclusion

Despite the many pronouncements by the Nigerian Government that Boko Haram has been defeated, the overriding evidence has continued to show that the group is still a severe national security threat. ISWAP and JAS are conducting their terror attacks across the Lake Chad areas. In Nigeria, they have individually carried out bold attacks against many military formations, carting away military hardware and other weapons. Various military operations were conducted against them, but they still can resurge. Lives are continuously being lost, and the relative peace restored is now dwindling. Many of the recaptured areas are neither accessible nor habitable. Gradually the hope for ending the violence is still far from realization. The Nigerian military is being overstretched, and the morale of the soldiers is sliding low. To thwart this unwarranted situation, the Government needs to overhaul its security

blueprint by recognizing the intervening socio-economic factors that breed the group's emergence in the first place. The Government needs to increase its attacks on the group, thereby increasing the cost of its terror attacks. There is also a need for more cooperation among Nigeria's security institutions. This, in effect, would enable coordinated operations and sharing of intelligence. More covert operatives are needed to unearth the group's plans and targets and gather essential intelligence. Training and retraining of security personnel on asymmetric warfare are required to balance the increasing adaptability of the terrorists. More incentives that would boost the morale of the operatives should be provided as of when due.

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