

THE *BOKO HARAM* INSURGENCY AND DEMOCRATIC TRAJECTORY IN NIGERIA

Abosede Omowumi Babatunde, PhD.

Centre for Peace and Strategic Studies,

University of Ilorin, Nigeria.

Senior Research Fellow (IFRA)

Email: bose_babatunde@yahoo.co.uk

ABSTRACT

Nigeria's democratization experiments have midwived three republics. However, the crises which have rendered the Nigerian democracy palpable persist. Since the transition to democratic rule in 1999, Nigerian has been battling the challenges of electoral malpractices and violence. The 1999, 2003 and 2007 elections were globally adjudged to be marred by electoral fraud and violence. However, the 2011 election was adjudged by both local and international observers to be a marked improvement on previous elections in Nigeria. Yet, after the election, Nigeria has been facing serious security challenges which the government has not been able to manage. This situation poses risks not only to the country's fragile democracy, but to internal security, stability and development. The northern part of the country has been hit by scores of bombing and shootings attributed to the *Boko Haram* Islamist group, which has been linked to al-Qaeda. A string of attacks has also hit Abuja, the capital of Nigeria. The security challenges rather than abating, continue to escalate to the level whereby the state assumed the character of a failed state. Thus, this paper examines the implications of the *Boko Haram* insurgency for the democratisation process in Nigeria. Data were derived from existing studies on security and democracy in Nigeria. The paper argues that the security challenges may jeopardize the forward trajectory of democratic consolidation. Indeed, the ineffectiveness of the government in addressing the security challenges has grave implications for the positive trajectory of democratic consolidation such that Nigeria's serious internal instability may be fatally aggravated.

Keywords: *Boko Haram*, Insurgency, Security challenges, Democratic trajectory, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has been battling ethnic, religious and communal conflicts since the return to civilian rule in 1999. It would seem that the transition to democratic rule which provided the citizens freedom to express their loyalties more openly, has become a threat to the central control of power. Nigeria's democratization experiments have midwived three republics. However, the crises which have rendered the Nigerian democracy palpable persist (Babatunde, 2011). Nigerian political history is dominated by prolonged military rule during which no ethnic-nationalism movements or radical Islamist group emerged to challenge its authority for fear of brutal repression. However, there was a resurgence of radical Islam during the brief period of democratic rule from 1979 to 1983. This was the Maitasine sect which made its violent appearance in Kano and other areas of the north (Ero, 2011; Majuk, 2012). In the present democratic dispensation, however, the most destructive form of radical Islam in Nigeria is the *Jamaatu Ahlil Sunna Lidawali wal jihad*, otherwise known as Boko Haram, which has operated in Nigeria since 2002, but first came into limelight in 2004 during its operations against the Nigerian police. It has been argued that Boko Haram is the descendant of the group that in 2002 was referred to as the Nigerian Taliban (Cook, 2011).

Boko Haram activities began in 2002 in Maiduguri, capital of the north-eastern state of Borno, which borders Cameroon, Niger and Chad. However, as Cook (2011) stated, Boko Haram gained recent notoriety because of its transition from being a local radical Salafist group, which until 2009 had a largely quietist nature, to a Salafi-jihadi group that has demonstrated the capacity to carry out major operations, including suicide attacks in central Nigeria and the tendency to destabilize Nigeria for the foreseeable future. Thus, this paper examines the implications of the *Boko Haram* insurgency for the democratisation process in Nigeria. Data were derived from existing studies and articles on security and democracy in Nigeria. I argue that the security challenges may jeopardize the forward trajectory of democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

The apparent relative calm that much of northern Nigeria had enjoyed for several years was broken by the violent emergence of Boko Haram in 2004. The northern part of the country as well as Abuja, the capital of the country has been hit by scores of bombing and shootings attributed to the Boko Haram Islamist group, which has been linked to al-Qaeda. Indeed, the Nigerian state has been put under the crushing weight of terrorism unleashed mercilessly by the

Boko Haram sect (Njadvara, 2010). The violent insurgency continues to escalate as a result of the inability of the security agencies to effectively tackle the security challenges.

It is hardly contentious that Nigeria is teetering on the brink of instability with the various incidence of ethno-religious and communal violence witnessed in all the nooks and crannies of the country. In mid-2005 alone, it was estimated “that at least 50,000 people have been killed in various incidents of ethnic, religious and communal violence and between 2009 and 2012, the incidence of Boko Haram has threatened the national co-existence of ethnic groups in Nigeria (HRW, 2012). The violent insurgence of Boko Haram has been attributed to the environment of mass poverty, social dislocations and associated intense religiosity in Nigeria, which reflects the deep malaise and frustration with the Nigerian state. This environment has spawned various radical groups across a spectrum of diverse causes across the country (Ostien and Fwatshak, 2007; Ero, 2011).

As with other parts of Nigeria, the north, where Boko Haram sprang from, suffers from pervasive poverty and unequal distribution of public resources. Majuk (2012) argued that there is a strong relationship between mass poverty and Islamic radicalism in Northern Nigeria from the period of the nineteenth century jihad to the present Boko Haram phenomenon. In Nigeria, despite the huge revenue generated from oil wealth, illiteracy stands at 40 per cent, and poverty is rising, with 100 million people, or 61 per cent of the population, now living in absolute poverty on less than \$1 a day (Majuk, 2012). According to the World Bank, the whole region comprising north-eastern Nigeria, Chad, Eastern Niger, Northern Cameroon and South Sudan is one of the poorest in the world (Abimbola, 2011).

A survey carried out by the Federal Ministry of Education in collaboration with the National Population Commission in 2010 attested to the high rate of poverty and illiteracy in the North in comparison to the South. The survey showed that only 28 out of every 120 children in Zamfara State and 29 out of every 120 children in Borno State are in school. In contrast, 119 and 117 out of every 120 children are in school in Ondo and Anambra States respectively in Southern Nigeria (Akowe, 2011). On expenditure of households on education, while an average household in Lagos spends N25,185 on education per school term, in the north households in Bauchi, Jigawa and Gombe spend on the average less than N2000 each per school term (Akowe, 2011). This army of poor and unemployed youths became easy tools that are susceptible to be exploited and recruited into any movement that promises improved living condition provided it carries the

banner of Islam. However, the high rate of uneducated, illiterate, ignorant, poor and frustrated youths in the North should be baffling, given the fact that the Northern region ruled Nigeria for more than three decades out of the five decades since independence.

Out of the 11 Heads of State since independence, 7 are from the North while 4 are from the South (Mahmudat, 2010). However, it would seem that access to and control of political power was a tool utilised by the Northern elites to expand the horizon of their accumulation and achieve selfish and parochial ends (Aluko 2003). While the Northern elites were in power, the North did not witness any meaningful development, rather poverty became more entrenched while the political elites who have control over the spoils of office squandered and siphoned off public funds to enrich themselves at the expense of basic health and education services for most ordinary Northerners (HRW, 2007). In this light, Human Rights Watch (2012) lamented that several hundred billion dollars of public funds have been lost due to corruption and mismanagement and that over the past few decades, poverty has increased, and key public institutions have crumbled (HRW, 2012).

The elections which ushered in the democratic rule in 1999 also complicated the quest for national unity and stability as a result of the massive electoral fraud and violence. Nigeria has been battling the challenges of electoral malpractices and violence such that the 1999, 2003 and the 2007 elections were globally adjudged by local and international observers to be marred by electoral fraud and violence (International Crisis Group, 2007). However, the 2011 election has been adjudged by both local and international observers to be a marked improvement to previous elections in Nigeria.

Yet, after the election, in which the North lost the presidency to President Goodluck Jonathan, a southerner from the Ijaw ethnic group, which is considered a minority ethnic group as against the three dominant ethnic groups in Nigeria-the Hausa, Yoruba and Ibo, violence broke out in the region. Since the assumption of authority by the present government, Nigeria has been facing serious security challenges which the government has not been able to manage. Moreover, the media has also complicated the situation through sensational reportage and misinformation that could inflame ethnic and religious sentiments (Stroehlein, 2012). This situation poses risks not only to the country's fragile democracy, but to internal security, stability and development. In the build-up to the national elections of 2015, there is palpable fear that the

Boko Haram insurgency and the associated violence can have a polarising effect on the wider country (Ogbonnaya, 2012).

As a result of the inability of the government to effectively tackle the Boko Haram insurgency and establish control over the monopoly of violence, the security challenges rather than abating, continue to escalate to the level whereby the state assumed the character of a failed state. According to the Nigerian Chief of Army Staff (COAS), at the last count, the Boko Haram Islamic sect has killed about 3,000 people (Onuorah et al., 2012). In a recent report, the US Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, stated that Africa experienced 978 terrorist attacks with Nigeria alone accounting for about 20 per cent. The report specifically noted that Africa experienced 978 attacks in 2011, an 11.5 percent increase in terrorism attacks on the continent when compared with 2010, which is attributable in large part to the more aggressive attack tempo of the Nigerian-based terrorist group Boko Haram, which conducted 136 attacks in 2011 (Ikuomola, 2012).

Indeed, Human Rights Watch (2012) reported that Boko Haram has carried out numerous gun attacks and bombings, in some cases using suicide bombers, on a wide array of venues including police stations, military facilities, churches, schools, newspaper offices such as *This Day*, and *The Sun*, Police headquarters and the United Nations building in the capital, Abuja. Maiduguri, regarded as the headquarters of the group, has had its story re-written for the worst. Yobe and Borno states are the epicentre of Boko Haram activities which has extended to Bauchi, Gombe, Kaduna, Katsina, Kano, Taraba, Kogi, Adamawa, Plateau, Sokoto and Niger states as well as the FCT Abuja (*The Guardian*, 2012). Thousands of lives and properties are lost in the Northern part of the state leading to economic paralysis. This impacted negatively on the socio-economic, political and religious life of the people of the region. Nigeria is currently categorised by the United States as one of the most dangerous places to live in the world. Nigeria is now regarded as a terrorist nation and included in the list of countries to be avoided by tourists and foreign investors (Ikuomola, 2012).

In its attacks on Christians, the group has forced Christian men to convert to Islam for fear of death and has assassinated Muslim clerics and traditional leaders in the north for allegedly speaking out against its tactics or for cooperating with authorities to identify group members (Maruma, 2012). The attacks of Christians in the northern states have been widely condemned such that the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights argued that the

attacks may constitute crimes against humanity if judged to be deliberate acts leading to population “cleansing” based on religion or ethnicity (HRW, 2012). However, apart from the attack by Boko Haram, Human Rights watch argued that security agencies are also culpable of committing crimes against humanity, including murder (HRW, 2012). Moreover, the local population in the militarised areas has also accused the security forces of excessive use of force on innocent civilian (Ero, 2011; Onuorah et al., 2012).

Indeed, it is ironical that as the country approaches a century of nationhood, instead of celebrating the birth of a nation and a shared destiny, there are latent fears that the ill-conceived amalgamation of Northern and Southern Protectorate by the British in 1914 which became the Nigerian state may manifest in the break-up of the country in the not so distant future (Walker, 2012). Some analysts have projected that Nigeria will break up in 2015, a year after the centenary date, given the present turbulent period of Boko Haram insurgency in the North, deepening ethnic mistrust, widespread poverty, and vestiges of political bitterness. (Oluphunda, 2012).

It has been argued that if the Boko Haram sect succeeded in their quest to impose strict Sharia law in the country, then Nigeria could become another Somalia where the Al-Shabab jihadists control a large portion of the country (Odiegwu, 2012). The spate of bombings targeting churches has been perceived as an attempt to provoke violent reactions which may spiral into an all-out war that may dismember the country. This has become a possibility as the government has failed to halt the insurgents from causing instability in the country. If the government could not demonstrate the capacity to arrest the terrorism in the North, it may find it difficult to stop violent reprisal across the country.

Indeed, the prediction by the US National Intelligence Council and other think tanks that Nigeria may break up in the nearest future is a metaphor of the tragedy of a country living on a borrowed time. The US State Department in 2012 listed three Boko Haram members including Abubakar Shekau, Abubakar Adam Kamar, and Khalid al-Barnawi as “Specially Designated Global Terrorists” (Luka and Salem, 2010). Moreover, HRW (2012) indicated that the US reportedly pressed Nigeria to enact the counter-terrorism law that President Jonathan signed in 2011. However, the legislation contains provisions that could contravene international human rights and due process standards. The US and the Nigerian government have both stated that there were indications that Boko Haram was likely sharing funds and training in the use of

explosive materials with al Shabaab and Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) (French, 2012).

As with many other international terrorist organisations, Boko Haram needs to be understood in both its Nigerian and international context. Links with al-Qaeda and North African groups may not only have enhanced the sophistication of Boko Haram's operations, they have infused an international political agenda to its fundamentalist goals. It, however, seems that the group's ultimate goal would appear to be to delegitimize the Nigerian secular state through the imposition of an Islamic state driven by Sharia Law (Soriwei and Adebayo, 2012). However, given the inability of the government to effectively manage the insurgency, there is little doubt that the security challenges will definitely lead to a reshaping of the trajectory of the democratization process in Nigeria. Indeed, the ineffectiveness of the government in addressing the security challenges has grave implications for the positive trajectory of democratic consolidation such that Nigeria's serious internal instability may be fatally aggravated. Subsequent sections will analyse the genesis of the Boko Haram phenomenon and the government management strategies. The implications of the insurgency on the democratisation process will also be highlighted with conclusions toward tackling the daunting security challenges.

BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY AND GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

The Boko Haram is an Hausa language name which is generally translated as "Western education is sacrilege" (Christopher, 2011). However, the formal name of the Islamic militant is *Jama'atu Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda'Awati Wal Jihad* meaning "People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad". Boko Haram, a jihadist militant organization based in the northeast of Nigeria was founded in 2002 by Mohammed Yusuf who established small camps and schools in the remoter regions of Borno and Yobe states where many poor families from across Nigeria and from neighboring countries enrolled their children (Farouk, 2012). Boko Haram was initially founded as an indigenous Salafist group, but turned itself into a Salafist Jihadist group in 2009 with the aim of establishing sharia law in the country (Ostien and Sati Fwatshak, 2007; Cook, 2011). Boko Haram perception is that sharia can never be implemented properly under a secular state, therefore, they insisted on establishing an Islamic regime. Sharia

is a religious legal, civic, and social code in Islam based on the Quran, sayings of the Prophet Mohammed, and judgments of Islamic scholars (ICG, 2010; *The BBC News*, 2009).

The group conducted its operations more or less peacefully during the first seven years of its existence until 2009 when the Nigerian government launched an investigation into its activities following reports that its members were arming themselves (*The Guardian*, 2009, Cook, 2011). It was reported that before the group took up arms, the government repeatedly ignored warnings about the increasingly militant character of the organization (*The Guardian*, 2009). The Boko Haram Islamic militant agitation is the opposition not to Western education in itself but Western civilisation in general (ICG, 2010; *The Vanguard*, 2009). As the International Crisis Group (2010) pointed out, to the Boko Haram, western culture is considered anti-islamic.

The members of the group have also carried out assassinations on people who criticised it, including Muslim clerics (Farouk, 2012). The shootings and attacks on political figures including Alhaji Ado Bayero of Kano and the Emir of Fika and prominent clerics seem to be in accord with Boko Haram's purificationist agenda with regard to Islam (*The BBC News*, 2009). Many prominent northern Muslims such as Governments, Emirs and Sultan of Sokoto and Muslims have criticized the group violent tactics and renounced their religious agitation as anti-Islamic with the argument that Islam is known to be a religion of peace and does not accept violence and crime (Jimoh, 2011; Oladeji and Agba, 2011).

According to the Economist, the group became known internationally following sectarian violence in Nigeria in July 2009, which left over 1000 people dead (The Economist, 2011). Since its founding in 2002, the jihadists have been responsible for between 3,000 to 10,000 deaths ((Maruma, 2011; Musikilu and Schmitt, 2011; Umar, 2011, Haruna Umar, 2012). It would seem that the Boko Haram insurgents capitalised on the corrupt tendencies of the elite and politicians to mobilise and offer ethnic motivation to the northern Muslims who saw the sect as a social movement protesting the "corruption" of the secular state and campaigning militantly for an Islamic state. Like other political and armed movements that have sprung up in this country, Boko Haram is just a symptom of the crumbling Nigerian state and a clear sign of the country's basic underlying dysfunction.

However, it has been argued that given the content of Yusuf Islamic doctrine and preaching, including its debates on Islam and democracy, it is doubtful that the group is overly concerned about corruption and that their leader, Yusuf may be proclaimed a social reformer

(ICG, 2010; Olugbode, 2011). As the group's violent tactic increases, many of the local population perception about the group was altered. Apart from rejecting its violent tactics, some then saw Yusuf as merely having exploited the dire economic conditions and popular religious sentiments to build a personality cult (Pierce, 2006; Smith, 2008).

Moreover, Boko Haram's transition into the use of suicide attacks also suggests that the group might have connections to other major Salafi-jihadi organizations (Soriwei and Adetayo, 2012). The point was made that other than al-Shabab in Somalia and to some extent al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, no other African radical Muslim group has used suicide attacks. Indeed, there were reports that al-Shabab had trained at least one of the attackers against the UN building (*The BBC News*, 2011). While the attack on the police headquarters can be seen as a continuation of Boko Haram's fixation upon the Nigerian police and army, the United Nations attack is much more in line with other globalist takfiri organizations, and is strongly reminiscent of the suicide attack in Baghdad against the United Nations in August 2003, which was one of the opening blows of the Iraqi insurgency (Cook, 2011).

It has been argued that Boko Haram may have exploited political disaffection in the north with the final results of the 2011 presidential elections (Bavier, 2012). Bavier (2012) stated that some political and religious leaders in the north believed the movement is divided into three factions as the group has now expanded beyond its original religious composition to include not only Islamic militants, but criminal elements and disgruntled politicians as well. In fact, the decision of certain northern state governors and legislatures to impose Sharia in their states validated the intense radicalisation of Islam in their societies (Ostien and Fwatshak, 2007). The mass of uneducated and unemployed youth in the north that was responsible for the April 2011 post-election violence, which ravaged some fourteen northern states and claimed about 1,000 lives, was mostly recruits or potential recruits of the group (Ero, 2011; Gabriel, 2011).

It has been argued that the group's success in Maiduguri, which is considered the hotbed of the Boko Haram crisis, would not have been possible if they were not offered some modicum of local support, either willingly or through intimidation (Ajani, 2011). At least two of the Nigerian senators in the National Assembly have been linked to Boko Haram. One of these senators is currently facing trial after being accused of supporting the Boko Haram insurgents (Ero, 2011). The indictment of a second senator from Borno State as having links with Boko

Haram is a confirmation of the wildly believed theory that the PDP in Borno State is the engine room behind Boko Haram (Ero, 2011).

The apparent split in the Boko Haram itself appears to lend credibility to the claim of a political agenda. The leadership of one faction, believed to be the original group, has expressed its willingness to negotiate with the government to end the crisis on the condition that there is justice for the alleged killer of their leader Mohammed Yusuf and the strict observance of Sharia law by those states that had adopted it (Ikuomola and Idegu, 2011). On the other hand, a rival faction, believed to be the infiltrators with a political agenda, have taken a more uncompromising stand while stating their opposition to the government which they considered illegitimate and unacceptable except the one described by Islam which is considered the only way Muslims can be liberated. (Ikuomola and Idegu, 2011; Fabiyi, 2012; Odebode et al., 2013)).

Boko Haram's direct confrontation with the Nigerian police and military culminated in the Nigerian military assault upon Muhammad Yusuf's compound, associated mosques, and his death while in police custody (*The BBC News*, 2009). Hundreds of members of the group were killed with him, and it seemed that one of the lessons learned by Boko Haram for its second phase was to avoid having an obvious base (Cook, 2011). The group re-emerged in January 2011 after the killing of Yusuf, and since then, its violence has escalated in terms of both frequency and intensity (Christopher, 2011).

These attacks have followed a largely consistent pattern of violence, which further suggests a degree of coordination or organizational control. In January 2012, a former deputy to the slain Yusuf, Abubakar Shekau, who was initially believed to have died during the violence in 2009 resurfaced and announced that he has taken over the control of the group (Jacinto, 2012). In 2013, the Nigeria's security forces again declared that the Boko Haram leader, Shekau might have died as a result of gun wounds sustained in a battle with them. This has, however generated controversies with the Nigerian government uncertain about the alleged death of the Boko Haram leader who later resurfaced through a recorded video shown on the electronic media with a message that Boko Haram would be ending democracy in Nigeria as soon as practicable.

Therefore, the security agencies alleged that it was launching an investigation to ascertain if the Boko Haram leader had died or not. The implication is that the security agencies seemed not to be effective in the strategies pursued in tackling the Boko Haram insurgency if it could

declared the Boko Haram leader dead, only to later claim that they were launching an investigation to ascertain Shekau's death after he resurfaced in a video.

In terms of funding, it was observed that while the organisation initially relied on donations from members, its links with Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, AQIM, opened it up to more funding from groups in Saudi Arabia, Latin American drug cartel and the UK as well as the Al Muntada Trust Fund and the Islamic World Society (*Nigerian Tribune*, 2012). A strategy that would have enabled the security forces to cripple the activities of the group is to block their sources of funding. Yet, it would seem that Nigerian officials have not been able to trace much of the funding that Boko Haram has received (*Nigerian Tribune*, 2012). It was also alleged that prominent politicians in the north have donated generously to the group. Indeed, the spokesman of Boko Haram claimed that both Kano and Borno state governors had paid them monthly (*The BBC News*, 2012).

Indeed, three attempts at dialogue between the Boko Haram sect and the government made so far have collapsed and it seems that the latest offer of dialogue would prove abortive. This assertion is not far-fetched taking into cognisance the fact that countries that have been contending with terrorism, for example Saudi Arabia, have found that one cannot negotiate with terrorists motivated by an extreme religious ideology without disbanding the state (Ero, 2011). However, the Federal Government, conscious of the spill-over effect on neighbouring countries has committed a huge amount of money, totalling \$35m and also initiated a manhunt for the leaders of the Boko Haram Islamic sect believed to be hiding in the desert and mountains of northern Mali (Stroehlein, 2012). Prior to the Mali mission, Nigeria's security force since 2009 has initiated a massive crackdown known as "Operation Flush" on the group. The government has increased its military presence in the capital and other northern states, but the clamp down has only fuelled further tensions. The high-handedness of the military has elicited massive protests from human rights groups over the unlawful killing of innocent civilians in these operations (Ikuomola, 2012).

The government has claimed its management of the insurgency is based on the adoption of humane approach (Ikuomola and Idegu, 2012). The government also claimed that it has adopted the back room channels to reach the Boko Haram sect through dialogue with leaders of political thoughts in the affected northern states with the sole objective of understanding what exactly the grievances of these persons are. Another level of intervention by the government

involved the economic and social level of intervention. In this regard, efforts are focused on moves to redirect the energies of the youths through the agricultural sector to transform lives, create wealth, and create a value chain which will create jobs and engage young people more effectively. Also, the government has been providing wider opportunities for many of the youths in the affected parts of the country to be able to go to school by initiating the You Win programme, and several other pro-people initiatives and policies (Ikuomola, 2012). The government also set up a special fact-finding committee, which includes the ministers of defence and labour, and the national security adviser, to negotiate with Boko Haram in Borno State (Stroehlein, 2012). However, it is doubtful that the government will implement the report of the committee.

However, in June, 2013, the government declared a state of emergency in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa that involved massive deployment of security forces in northeastern Nigeria. The Nigerian government also proscribed the Boko Haram sect and authorized the gazetting of an order declaring their activities illegal and acts of terrorism. In spite of the government action, Boko Haram violent atrocities including killings and kidnappings have not diminished. The government proscription of the sect has been praised and condemned at the same time with some alleging that it was wrong and confusing for the President to set up a committee to seek dialogue with Boko Haram members only to turn round to disband the group that it claims to be dialoguing with. Moreover, the United States government, after a prolonged public debate on Boko Haram, has now decided to designate the group as foreign terrorist organisations.

Amnesty International, in a recent report titled "Nigeria: Trapped in the Circle of Violence" condemned the Nigerian security agencies over their response to acts of terrorism masterminded by Boko Haram. While acknowledging the atrocious acts of the dreaded sect, the report decried the serious human rights violations perpetrated by Nigerian security operatives in response to these acts of terrorism, including enforced disappearance, torture, extra-judicial executions, torching of homes and detention without trials (*The Guardian*, 2012). However, the Nigerian military dismissed the report of the Amnesty International which it considered biased and unsubstantiated (*The Guardian*, 2012).

Alluding to the complicity of the government, Human Rights Watch (2012) pointed out that despite allegations of widespread security force abuses, the Nigerian authorities have rarely held anyone accountable, thereby denying the victims of and further solidifying the culture of

impunity for violence in Nigeria except in some rare cases. For example, following widespread condemnation by human rights groups of the extrajudicial killing of Mohammed Yusuf and dozens of his followers in 2009, the Nigerian government, eventually filed criminal charges against five police officers: four senior police officers and a sergeant by federal prosecutors two years later (Njadvara, 2010; Ogundele, 2011; HRW, 2012). Moreover, other than the five soldiers on trial for the July 2009 abuses in Maiduguri, there were no criminal prosecutions of soldiers for abuses in connection with operations against Boko Haram (Joseph and Akowe, 2011).

The Federal government, however, through the statement by the Attorney General of the Federation (AGF) and Minister of Justice, has indicted the security forces. The Attorney general stated that there was palpable evidence that the escalation in the spate of attacks by the Boko Haram group on Police and security installations is a probable reaction to the extra-judicial execution of the leader of the sect, Mohammad Yusuf, while in Police custody in 2009 (Odiegwu, 2012). Indeed, the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria cannot be brought to an end through the use of force alone because while the security forces have important roles to play in the polity, and in tackling Boko Haram, the social, economic and judicial issues must be addressed in the quest for lasting solutions to the violence in the country.

Therefore, urgent steps need to be taken to rescue the country from the precipice. Nigeria needs to take a cue from countries such as Saudi Arabia, US, UK, Israel and other countries, whose awareness of dire insecurity threat posed by terrorism have an all-out strategy that includes direct military action, espionage and financial intelligence-gathering to locate and track the sources of funds and financiers of terrorists (Soriwei and Adetayo, 2012). In the case of Nigeria, the intelligence side of the war, which has served the West, Saudi Arabia and Israel so well, is still weak in Nigeria. Yet, one need to take cognisance of the fact that the external support given to the Boko Haram sect by Western countries including the UK which has been named one of its source of funding is an indication of the complexity of the Boko Haram phenomenon and the enormous challenges confronting Nigeria in the quest to effectively stem the tide of Boko Haram insurgency. Nevertheless, the need for the SSS, police and military to imbibe the wisdom of intelligence-led operations, especially in the light of a complicit international community, faction of the elite, hostile locals and a weak government cannot be overemphasised.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FORWARD TRAJECTORY OF NIGERIA'S DEMOCRATISATION PROCESS

The 2011 election in Nigeria, the third consecutive election since the beginning of the fourth republic has been adjudged by the international community as the first-ever credible, transparent, free and fair general election in Nigeria (Agbambu and Ajayi, 2011). After three flawed elections, the first was the 1999, that heralded the Fourth Republic, 2003 and 2007, which were the most discredited, the success of the 2011 polls was critical for Nigeria's fledgling democracy and overall political health. The Independence Electoral Commission (INEC) was lauded by both the domestic and international observers for improved logistics and a smooth voting process. According to the U.S. ambassador to Nigeria, the election provided a historic opportunity for Nigeria to consolidate its democracy and further expand its voice on the world stage (Alechenu, 2011). The ECOWAS observation mission stated that the presidential poll was fair and transparent (Azikien and Ndiribe, 2011). However, while local observers also lauded the elections as a marked improvement to previous elections in Nigeria, they pointed out that the 2011 elections were far from free and fair (*The Guardian*, 2011).

For the EU Election Observation Mission to Nigeria, the 2011 general elections marked an important step towards strengthening democratic elections in Nigeria, but challenges remain. Although, there were reported incidents of electoral frauds, particularly in the South-South and the South-East during the presidential elections, the polls were, on balance, the most credible to date (ICG, 2011; Olaleye, 2011; Lartey, 2011). Indeed, the 2011 elections in Nigeria was a boost to the Nigeria's democratisation process. Yet, the challenges that arose from the elections which were acclaimed by the local and international observers seemed to have started manifesting sooner than later. Therefore, the 2015 election is very crucial for the sustainability of the Nigeria's democratisation process bearing in mind the prevailing insecurity in the polity. This spate of suicide killings by the Boko Haram group are direct attacks on the core values of democratic governance, namely the rule of law, the protection and dignity of human beings, mutual respect between people of different faiths and cultures and peaceful resolution of conflict (Odiegwu, 2012).

Indeed, the violent activities of Boko Haram, which reached a peak after the 2011 elections constitute a serious setback for Nigerian fledgling democracy and political stability. The International Crisis Group (ICG, 2011) highlighted the violence that erupted in some

Northern states following the announcement of the presidential results and which took many Nigerians including the security and intelligence communities' unawares. The violence ravaged fourteen Northern states and was reportedly most serious in Adamawa, Kano, Kaduna, Nasarawa, Bauchi and parts of Niger states. Also many people were internally displaced in the post election violence, for instance, the Nigerian Red Cross estimated that about 74,000 people were displaced (Gabriel, 2011; HRW, 2011). With over 1,000 people killed, including an unspecified number of NYSC members particularly the females were raped or otherwise molested and assaulted and properties worth millions of Naira were destroyed, making the elections one of the bloodiest ever (Ajani, 2011; HRW, 2011). International Crisis Group (2011) noted that the electoral violence were perpetrated mainly by uneducated, poor and possibly intoxicated young thugs whose ranks may have been swelled by some emerging Islamic fundamentalists and other young people angry that government had done little to help them. Also, some Nigerians blamed the defeated Presidential candidate of the Congress for Progressive change (CPC) Buhari, for making utterances that incited the northern youth and for not calling the rioters to order as soon as the violence broke out (Alofetokun, 2011).

However, ICG (2011) has argued that sectarian violence is a convenient platform and camouflage for struggles over such issues as citizenship, group and individual rights and communal distribution of public resources. Therefore the violence is unlikely to have been driven only by a "religious agenda" that merely "took advantage of a 'political situation'", as suggested by many Nigerians including Christians leaders. Rather, Gambrell (2011) argued that ethnicity and religion appear to have been intertwined with socio-economic malaise and grievances about marginalisation. The perception by some analysts that the violence is a result of the dislike for the southerner President has also been disproved by ICG (2011) when it argued that Jonathan's victory may have furthered a sense of alienation in the North that unscrupulous and disgruntled elites may have exploit for political ends, given the fact that Jonathan failed to win a single state in the far north. Yet, Jonathan fared significantly better in the North than Buhari in the South.

In this light, Alofetokun (2011) identified several other factors which he considered relevant to the rioting. The first is that some protesters believed that because Buhari won in their immediate vicinities, he had become president as they equated victory in their own states to a Nigeria-wide victory. The second is that many believed he lost either because the votes had been

tampered with in favour of his opponent and/or Northern leaders counted upon to deliver a Northern presidency had sold out. Lastly, it was also likely that some of the violence was premeditated; the public face of entrenched political, economic and religious interests in the North unhappy about perceived loss of power and its consequences. This assertion is buttressed by the statement of one of the chieftains of the ruling party who attributed the problem to the fact that many of the politicians from the North have given the electorate the impression that it is the turn of the North to rule Nigeria (Gabriel, 2011).

Since the North has ruled Nigeria for over three decades since independence, the assertion that “the idea of born-to-rule still exists in the North cannot be ignored (Gabriel, 2011). In accordance with the apparently now discarded PDP zoning system, after the term of President Obasanjo (South-West) ended in 2007, power reverted back to the North through Yar’Adua’s election. Following his death, some Northern politicians argued that another Northerner should receive the next full term rather than the ‘accidental’ Southern incumbent (ICG, 2011). This situation was made more complicated by the massive rigging of the 2003 and 2007 elections in which Buhari, the CPC and their supporters became frustrated by the results of previous flawed elections. Therefore, Buhari and his party had proclaimed that should the 2011 election, his third, be unfavourable, the youth would suffer for the next 40 years, unless they stood up to defend their votes (Ajani (2011). Perhaps, if the government had fully addressed the electoral challenges that arose from the previous elections and fully implemented the Uwais electoral reform report, it would have gone a long way to checkmate the subsequent security challenges.

Indeed, there were high expectations among Nigerians, who saw Jonathan’s victory as heralding a new era for the Nigerian state. International Crisis Group (2011) stated that the President was also aware of the daunting task ahead as he reiterated his zeal to move the country towards the attainment of the much desired development. He acknowledged, in his inauguration speech, that the fact that a citizen from a minority ethnic group could galvanise national support, on an unprecedented scale and win the people’s mandate as president, which would have been impossible a decade before should be a great motivation for his government not to let the people down. However, the President seems to have lost the confidence of the people who shunned ethnic and religious prejudice to vote him into office as a result of his inability to tackle the enormous security challenge.

The recent attack by the Boko Haram sect was seen as an indication of the growing discontent of the North to the ascendancy of a southern and Christian as the President of Nigeria (Ogbonnaya, 2012). The situation is further complicated by the incumbent President rumoured quest for a second term in office. Indeed, the polity is getting more hostile with various accusations and counter accusations between Northern politicians and the President's camp. The Northerners alleged that Jonathan has promised to stay for only one term and return power back to the North while the President refuted the allegation. If the 2011 election that ushered in the southerner President, Jonathan could largely contribute to the emergence of such deadly violence and insurgency, one wonders what would happen to the Nigerian state when he decides to contest the next election. The dwindling goodwill of the President among the people arising from the insecurity and weak governance would make it difficult for him to garner the massive support of the people. The alternative would be to rig the election. But would the northerners allow such to happen or accept another flawed election that will bring in a southerner? Indeed, the signs are ominous and the projection by many analysts that Nigerian would cease to be a state in the foreseeable future is not far-fetched.

The fourth republic which began in 1999 is the longest period of democratic rule witnessed in Nigeria's political history. However, the government seeming lack of determination, political will and weakness to contain violent activities of the Boko Haram Islamic militancy constitute a dire threat to the positive trajectory of the democratic process and typified the absence of the rule of law and weak institutions of governance in Nigeria (ICG, 2010). The accusation of human right abuses leveled against the security forces is a compromise on the rule of law and human rights which undermine the core values of democratic governance. The institutions of government are collapsing as democracy in Nigeria has only ushered in election, not responsibility and accountability. Rather, corruption, mismanagement and rampant human rights abuses permeate the institutions of the state.

It is therefore, crucial for the government to address these core issues which are germane to a democratic response to the threat of terrorism, namely the protection of individuals and communities; the stabilization of existing conflicts and discontents; the countering of harmful and extremist ideologies; the deployment of adequate response to the economic and social insecurities that contribute to the growth of terrorism so that Nigeria's national instability and

democratic challenges will not be fatally aggravated. Indeed, with the 2015 election near the corner, it is imperative for the government to urgently address the insecurity in the polity.

CONCLUSION

The spate of attacks by the Boko Haram sect has made the international community to regard Nigeria as a terrorist nation that must be avoided by both tourists and foreign investors. The insecurity continues to spiral without showing any sign of abating because of the government inability to tackle the violent extremism. The insecurity has undermined the development, stability and unity of the country. The Nigeria's democratisation process which recorded a major improvement arising from the widely lauded 2011 election is threatened.

Moreover, the accusation of human rights abuse levelled by the local people against the security forces deployed to contain the Boko Haram violence is a violation of the rule of law and democratic tenets. The security agencies should be checked to prevent further human rights abuses and those found culpable should be sanctioned. The media also have a role to play in giving an objective and peace-promoting reportage that will serve to unite rather than aggravate the division in the society.

The Government focus on the use of military might, while applying less of dialogue in solving the Boko Haram insurgency is equally flawed. Rather, the government need to summon the political will towards greater engagement with communities that are vulnerable to extremist violence by addressing the underlying political and socioeconomic problems in the North and Nigeria as a whole. A lasting solution lies in genuine efforts to eliminate or at least drastically reduce poverty, illiteracy and unemployment. Issues such as the virtually collapsed northern economy, effective mechanisms for peaceful co-existence and integration, youth and women empowerment, ethnicity and indigene/settler syndrome, the almajiri syndrome and integration of Islamic and Western education systems, rebuilding of the infrastructures destroyed in the violence as well as the entrenchment of democratic values should be urgently addressed.

The issue of corruption has been widely identified as the bane of development in Nigeria. Government need to be accountable and curb the rampant mismanagement of the oil wealth. Corruption, sectionalism and bigotry are identified as the bane of national unity in Nigeria. Therefore, building of strong institutions is the only viable way to fight corruption and the political class must not interfere with the functions of such anti-graft institutions.

Although, Nigeria may have broken, somewhat, the cycle of flawed and bad elections, the existing challenges need to be tackled in order to launch the country on the path of permanent and sustainable electoral change. Nigeria has the resources and capacity to entrench a culture of credible elections, as well as tackle the insecurity in the polity to guarantee a sustainable democracy which is attainable if the government can summon the political will to lead that effort. Indeed, crucial reforms should be done with a more holistic, less piecemeal approach, with the full involvement of the Nigerian people, who have been at the receiving end of the security challenges.

REFERENCES

- Abimbola, O. (2011). "Boko Haram: A Dirty Underbelly", *The Nation*, Thursday 19th July, 2011.
- Agbambu, C. and Ajayi, A. (2011). "US Rates Nigeria's Elections High, Says Country Made History with April Polls ..." *Vanguard*, 18 April, 2011.
- Ajani, J. (2011). "The Jonathan Presidency: Crisis that rocked the North: Why violence escalated", *Vanguard*, 24 April 2011.
- Akowe, T. (2011). "The North Still Backward in Education". *The Nation*. 25th August, 2011.
- Alechenu, John (2011) "Elections: Nigeria has Taken Important Step – Commonwealth", *Punch*, 12 April 2011.
- Alofetokun, A. (2011). "Babangida Aliyu lambasts Buhari", *Daily Sun*, 29 April 2011.
- Aluko MA (2003). Postcolonial Manipulations of Ethnic Diversity in Nigeria. *Identity, Culture and Politics: An Afro-Asian Dialogue*. 4(1): 33 – 84.
- Azikien, E. and Ndiribe, O. (2011). "How Infighting Bungled Elections", *Vanguard*, 4 April 2011.
- Babatunde, A.O (2011). "Governance, Electoral Violence and Nigeria's National Security"; In, Albert, I.O. N.L, Danjibo, O.O, Isola, and S.A, Faleti (eds.) *Democratic Election and Nigeria's National Security*. Ibadan: John Archers. Pp 112-136. (Nigeria).
- Bavier, J. (2012). "Nigeria: Boko Haram 101". *Pulitzercenter.org*. 15 January 2012.
- Christopher, B. (2011). "Terrorism in Nigeria: the Rise of Boko Haram". *The Whitehead Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations*. 23 September 2011. The World Policy Institute.
- Cook, D. (2011). "The Rise of Boko Haram in Nigeria". *Combating Terrorism Centre*.
- Ero, C, (2011). Bombing in Abuja: On Nigeria's Boko Haram. *The African Peacebuilding Agenda*.
- Gabriel, C. (2011). "Post-presidential election violence: North/South rally against mayhem", *Vanguard*, 23 April 2011.
- Fabiyi, O. (2012). I don't know Any Boko Haram Member –Buhari. *The Punch* November 8, 2012.
- Farouk, C. (2012). "Who are Nigeria's Boko Haram Islamists?". *BBC News*. 11 January, 2012.
- French, L. (2012). "African Extremist Groups Linking Up: U.S. general," *Reuters*, June 25, 2012.
- Gabriel, C. (2011). "Post-Presidential Election Violence: North/South Rally against Mayhem", *Vanguard*, 23 April 2011.

- Gambrell, J. (2011). "Opposition Protests Nigerian Elections in North", *Nigeriaworld.com*, 18 April
- Haruna, U and Bashir, A (24 June 2012). "Boko Haram Prison Break: Radical Sect Frees 40 In Nigeria". *The Huffington Post*. 24 June, 2012.
- Human Rights Watch (HRW, 2007). *Criminal Politics: Violence, "Godfathers" and Corruption in Nigeria*. vol. 19, no. 16(A), October 2007.
- Human Rights Watch (2011). "*Nigeria: Post-Election Violence killed 800, Promptly Prosecute Offenders, Address Underlying Causes*". Human Rights Watch, 16 May 2011.
- Human Rights Watch HRW (2012). *Spiraling Violence: Boko Haram Attacks and Security Force Abuses in Nigeria*. Human Rights Watch. October 2012
- Jacinto, L. (2012). "The Boko Haram Terror Chief Who Came Back from the Dead". *France 24*. 13 January 2012.
- Ikuomola, V. (2012a). Clinton: US, Nigeria to join Forces against Boko Haram. *The Nation*, 10 August 2012.
- Ikuomola, V. (2012b). How we're talking to Boko Haram, by Presidency. *The Nation*, 10 August.
- Ikuomola, V. and Idegu, Y.A. (2012). Negotiate with Terror Groups, North's Governors tell Panel. *The Nation*, 2012.
- International Crisis Group ICG (2007). *Failed Elections, Failing State?* Crisis Group Africa Report No.126, 30 May 2007.
- International Crisis Group ICG (2010). *Northern Nigeria: Background to Conflict* Crisis Group Africa Report No.168, 20 December 2010.
- International Crisis Group ICG(2011). *Lessons From Nigeria's 2011 Elections*. Policy Briefing. September, 2011.
- Jimmoh, A. (2011). "Boko Haram not Representing Islam –Gov Aliyu". *Sunday Trust*. 13 June.
- Joseph, A. and Tony Akowe, T. (2011). "Boko Haram: Five soldiers for trial over killings," *The Nation*, July 28, 2011.
- Lartey, O. (2011). "Even Before the Votes were Cast or Tabulated, Buhari Alleges Rigging of Election". *Punch*, 17 April 2011.
- Luka and Salem, 2010. "Terror Watch – U.S. Gives Conditions to Delist Nation". *The Vanguard* February 11, 2010.
- Mahmudat, M.O. (2010). Intra-Class Struggle in Nigeria. *Journal Of Public Administration And Policy Research*. Vol. 2(7) pp. 88-95.
- Majuk, S.E. (2012). *Islamic Radicalism and Poverty in the Northern Nigeria: Historical Perspectives*. Calabar, Nigeria.
- Maruma, N, (2011). "Three Bomb Blasts Rock Borno", *Vanguard*, 26 April 2011.
- Musikilu, M. and Schmitt, E. (2011). "Nigeria Arrests 2 in Blast That Killed 26 in Church". *The New York Times*. 26 December 2011
- Nigerian Tribune. (2012). "Boko Haram Funding: Nigeria may Face International Sanction". *Nigerian Tribune*. 21 May 2012.
- Njadvara M. (2010) "Nigeria: 17 Police Officers Detained over Shooting". *AP*, March 1, 2010.

- Njadvara, M. (2012). Boko Haram: Borno Elders, Gov Shettima Feud over JTF. *The Guardian*, 14 October 2012.
- Odebode, N., Alechenu, J and Fabiyi, O. (2013). Boko Haram Leaders Disagree over Ceasefire. *The Punch*, January 31, 2013.
- Odiegwu, M. (2012). Jonathan, FG not Negotiating with Boko Haram – Aide. *The Punch* December 7, 2012.
- Ogbonnaya, O. (2012). Boko Haram is Battle for 2015, says Chukwumerije *The Nation*. 29 September 2011
- Ogundele, K. (2011). “Five Police Chiefs get Bail over Boko Haram Leader’s Murder,” *The Nation*, July 20, 2011,
- Oladeji, B. and Agba, G. (2011). "Smoke Out Boko Haram Sponsors, Jonathan Orders Security Chiefs". *All Africa*, 30 December 2011.
- Olaleye, O. (2011). “CPC to Contest Presidential Poll Results in 11 States”, *This Day*, 24 April 2011.
- Olugbode, M. (2011). "Nigeria: We Are Responsible for Borno Killings, Says Boko Haram". *AllAfrica.com*, 2 February 2011.
- Olupohunda, B. (2012). Will Nigeria break up in 2015? *The Punch*, November 8, 2012.
- Onuorah, M, Nzeh, E., Abiodun Fagbemi, A., and Njadvara M. (2012). Boko Haram Crisis Claims 3,000. *The Guardian*, 05 November 2012.
- Ostien, P. and Fwatshak, S. (2007) “Historical Background”, in Philip Ostien (ed.), *Sharia Implementation in Northern Nigeria 1999-2006: A Sourcebook*. Ibadan.
- Pierce, S. (2006). “Looking like a State: Colonialism and the Discourse of Anticorruption in Northern Nigeria”, *Comparative Studies in History and Society*. p. 902.
- Smith, D. (2008). *A Culture of Corruption: Everyday Deception and Popular Discontent in Nigeria* Princeton.
- Soriwei, F and Adetayo, O. (2012). Force Alone can’t Stop Boko Haram – US Commander. *The Punch*, December 12, 2012.
- Stroehlein, A. (2012). On the trail of Boko Haram. *The Independent*, 12 Mar 2012.
- The BBC News (2009). "Nigeria's 'Taliban' enigma". United Kingdom: *BBC News*. 28 July 2009.
- The BBC News (2011). "Nigeria Policemen in Court Trial for Boko Haram Killing". United Kingdom: *BBC News*. 13 July 2011.
- The BBC News (2012a). "Nigerias Boko Haram Bombed Kaduna Churches". United Kingdom: *BBC News*.
- The BBC News (2012b). "Nigeria: Boko Haram claims Kaduna Army Suicide Attack". United Kingdom: *BBC News*. 8 February 2012.
- The BBC News (2012c). Boko Haram: Nigerian Military 'Kills Top Militant', United Kingdom: *BBC News*, 2012.
- The Economist (2011). "Terrorism in Nigeria: A Dangerous New Level". *The Economist*. 3 September 2011.

- The Guardian. (2009). "Nigeria Accused of Ignoring Sect Warnings before Wave Of Killings". London: *The Guardian*, 2 August 2009.
- The Guardian (2011). Reuben Abati, "Election 2011: Nigeria's finest moment?", *The Guardian*, 29 April 2011.
- The Guardian (2012). Boko Haram gives Terms for Talks with Government. *The Guardian*, 01 November 2012.
- The Punch, (2013). Boko Haram Declares Cease-Fire. *The Punch*, January 29, 2013.
- The Vanguard (2009). "Nigeria: Boko Haram Resurrects, Declares Total Jihad", *Vanguard*, 14 August 2009.
- Umar, S. (2011). *The Discourses of Salafi Radicalism and Salafi Counter-radicalism in Nigeria : A Case-study of Boko Haram*. Northwestern University. p. 12.
- Walker, A. (2012) What Is Boko Haram? United States Institute of Peace. United States: Washington, DC 20037. Special Report 308 June 2012.