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# Coat of Many Colors: Dissecting the Explicit and Implicit Causes of Boko Haram Cataclysm in the North Eastern Nigeria

Abstract

**Purpose:** The purpose of this research is to anatomize the different contentious issues that surrounded the outbreak of Boko Haram in Nigeria. Just like any other terrorist organizations, the causes of Boko Haram conflict are shrouded in obscurities. The metamorphoses of Boko Haram movement over the years have added different colorations to the Boko Haram conundrum in the North Eastern Nigeria. The study intends to examine both the implicit and explicit factors fueling Boko Haram movement in the region beyond common narrative.

**Design/ methodology/ approach:** The study adopts secondary and primary methods of data generations through bibliographical and utility of purposive research techniques. Five selected key informants that were germane to the study were interviewed to validate the secondary data that were generated. The data generated were analyzed using interpretive and thematic analyses.

**Findings:**  The study reveals some exceptional findings. The findings of the study are predicated on implicit and explicit factors that are boosting the movement. The findings in this study reveal that Boko Haram has metamorphosed on five different occasions after the gestation period with different factors responsible for the metamorphoses. Beyond poverty and religion which are known as explicit factors, the study unearths some implicit international factors that have taken Boko Haram movement to its pinnacle (1) American role in Lybia which eventually culminated into proliferations of small arms and light weapons in West Africa coupled with Nigerian porous border play a big role in Boko Haram movement in Nigeria (2) There is also a strong nexus between global warming and Boko Haram, movement in the North Eastern Nigeria. The BAY states which are the epicenters of Boko Haram are arid zones with serious climate variations that always threaten the survival of crops and animals on yearly basis.

# **Introduction**

The causes of terrorism all over the world have generated provocative and contentious debates in the extant literature of conflict studies. The concept of terrorism is highly contested while the causes are shrouded in obscurities. These scenarios have made all the frameworks in tackling terrorism to suffer serious setbacks in the contemporary world. Though, the contested nature of terrorism and its obscurities are attributable to a deliberate attempt by the stakeholders to indulge the perpetrations of state sponsorship of terrorism.

However, the devastating attack choreographed by the Al-Qaeda against the sovereignty of the US on September 11, 2001, was a watershed in the studies of terrorism. Scholars and politicians had made scholarly attempts to diagnose the causes of terrorism as well as factors that incite terror. The United States of America under the leadership of the president George W.Bush (2002) attributed the causes of terrorism to the high level of economic disparities and underdevelopment that characterized the international economic relations (Krieger and Meieriek, 2011, p.1). As plausible as this assertion might be, it is quiet simplistic and naive for two major reasons (1) The then president of the United States of America indicted and attributed the causes of terrorism to developing countries without putting into consideration that logistic arrangements that led to the September 11, attacks took place in developed countries (2) The controversial circumstances that surrounded the international politics of Cold War and the hegemonic power that characterized the birth of unipolar world was ignored by the President George Bush. The replica of this situation transpired in Nigeria when Boko Haram radicalization started in 2009.Successive governments in Nigeria had also situated the interpretation of Boko Haram crisis in the context of George W.Bush’s designation of terrorism by ignoring other implicit factors. However, Boko Haram movements in Nigeria have different coloration ranging from religion to poverty, climate change, Nigerian porous border as well as the dynamic of the Post Cold War politics

As observed by Onuoha (2010, p.1), unlike the past religious crises in the country, which was mainly between the two dominant religions in Nigeria, the Boko Haram crisis consisted of a clash between an extremist sect and Nigerian secular state in an episode that seemed like the Maitatsine revolts of the 1980. However, the uniqueness of the Boko Haram incident is evident in the controversies it generated. Several factors were responsible for the outbreak of Boko Haram in the North East beyond the template of religion. Boko Haram has metamorphosed over the years making it extremely difficult to diagnose the major causes. The first phase of metamorphosis took place in 2003 when Boko Haram launched devastating attacks against security personnel in the town of Geidam in Yobe state, during this period Boko Haram caught little attention of Nigerians. The second phase was the aftermath of 2009 uprising which eventually led to the extermination of Mohammed Yusuf through jungle justice. Also, the aftermath of 2011 General Elections was another important epochal event in the annals of Boko Haram crisis in Nigeria. Majority of northerners were not comfortable with the outcome of the elections. In an attempt to express their dissatisfactions and disillusionments about the outcome of the elections, Boko Haram was strategically considered as a major platform to frustrate the government of the President Goodluck Jonathan who came from the minority group in the South-South. This situation dovetailed into the development of political framework by the Goodluck Jonathan led Federal Government.

It was then observed and suggested that Boko Haram was a manifestation of the lack of federal character principle and inequality in resource distributions in the country which was against the interest of the region. A significant step was taken by the government in this regard. The administration of President Goodluck Jonathan set up 17-member committee on Dialogue and Peaceful Resolution of Security Challenges in the North in April 2013 for identifying and constructively engaging key leaders of Boko Haram and developing a workable framework for amnesty and disarmament of members of the group but unfortunately this framework did not see the light of the day because of the conspiracy from the north against the government of Goodluck Jonathan .The current trend in the activities of Boko Haram was marked with the decentralization of Boko Haram as well as the declaration of its allegiance to Islamic State in Syria and Iraq and subsequently renamed itself as Islamic State in West African Province.

# **Contending Perspectives on Boko Haram Crisis**

Different attempts to conceptualize Boko Haram have generated arguments in the academic and public policy domains. Boko Haram has always been a victim of definitional dilemma, even in Nigeria’s policy and political cycles; the definition of Boko Haram remains controversial and fluid. For many, Boko Haram is simply an Islamic sect that believes politics in Northern Nigeria has been seized by a group of corrupt, false Muslims and was determined to create a pure Islamic state ruled by Sharia law (Omotola, 2014, p.89).Several other studies label Boko Haram simply as a radical Islamic group indulging in sectarian rebellion (Cited in Omotola, 2014, p.89).

However, Boko Haram is a movement for the propagation and consolidation of an Islamic theocratic state through a tainted means without any Quranic reference. According to John Campell, a former US ambassador to Nigeria and Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations expresses this sentiment when he observes that Boko Haram connotes several things at once. “As he argues, Boko Haram is a movement of grassroots anger among northern people at the continuing depravation and poverty in the north (Cited Omotola, 2014, p.90). However, Boko Haram is a core group of Mohammed Yusuf’s followers who have reconvened around Abubakar Shekau and who are exacting revenge against the state. Also, there is another aspect to the group that is often ignored. The group could also be seen as a kind of personality cult, an Islamic millenarianist sect, inspired by a heretical but charismatic preacher.

Also, prominence is often accorded to the greed-grievance explanations, underscoring the politico-economic softness of the state and attendant deprivations, including rising poverty, unemployment and excruciating corruption. This is what Salaam (2012,p.12) calls risk factors in the absence of protective factors, which make vulnerable young people turn into religious radicals or fanatics when seeking answers to the inadequacies in the polity and society at large (Cited in Omotola,2014). According to Samson (2013, p.15), the perfect antidote to Boko Haram is to embark on significant governance and political reforms, geared at reversing the historic social and economic imbalance in northern Nigeria. In a similar vein, Rafiu Mustapha admitted the difficulty, if not impossibility of having appropriate definition of Boko Haram (Cited in Omotola, 2014, p.91).Throughout the existence of Boko Haram, it has constantly morphed and changed its nature as it has gone through various incarnations. This evolution has made it difficult for observers to pin the organization down and define it. However, Boko Haram today is a product of evolutionary trend. The precise origin of Boko Haram is shrouded in obscurity. Majority of local and foreign media traced its origin to 2002 (Onuoha, 2013, p.16).

Since the inception of Boko Haram, it has metamorphosed in different ways both in terms of leadership and tactics. According to Taiwan and Olugbode (2009, p.14), Boko Haram was established by Abubakar Lawal in 1995 as *Ahulsunna wal’jama’ah hijra* sect at the University of Maiduguri, Borno State. It flourished as nonviolent organization until Mohammed Yusuf assumed the mantle of leadership in 2002 shortly after Abubakar Lawal left to pursue further education in Saudi Arabia. It will be recalled that Boko Haram’s first violent confrontation against Nigerian state security forces took place on 24 December 2003 when the group launched attack against the police stations and public buildings in the towns of Geiam and Kanamma in Yobe State (Onuoha, 2010, p.9). The members of Boko Haram occupied the two buildings for a number of days, hoisting the flag of Afghanistan’s Taliban movement over the camps. This called for the attention of the police and soldiers to dislodge them which eventually led to the killing of 18 members of Boko Haram while majority of its members were arrested (Onuoha, 2010).

On 31 December 2003, Boko Haram left the village and dispersed into other northern states after inscribing the word “Taliban” on a captured vehicle. In 2004 it established a base called Afghanistan in Kanamma village in northern Yobe State (See Onuoha, 2010, p.11). From 2004, the activities of the sect became more worrisome when majority of students withdrew from different schools to promote the activities of Boko Haram. Also, some of them went to the extent of tearing their certificates after serious brainwashing. On 21 September, 2004, members of Boko Haram attacked Bama and Gwoza police stations in Borno State, killing several police men and stealing arms and ammunition (Onuoha, 2010, p.12). Also, Boko Haram was so desperate to the extent of setting the Gwoza police station ablaze.

Consequently, a few weeks’ later police launched a counterattack on the sect during which 24 members were killed and 22 assault rifles and large quantities of ammunition were recovered (See Onuoha, 2010, p.56). Boko Haram became a popular movement under the leadership of Mohammed Yusuf. Initially, it was a peaceful movement until 2003, 2004, and2009 respectively. The 2009 face-off between Boko Haram members and Nigeria’s security agencies marked the beginning of intensified radical approach of Boko Haram. The 2009 crisis led to the extra judicial killing of their leader which eventually threw caution to the winds by making Boko Haram to become more radical and brutal in their attacks.

The radicalism of Boko Haram started after 2009 uprising, under the new leadership of Abubakar Shekau. Also, Boko Haram was known as Islamic movement at its inception under Mohammed Yusuf, but Abubakar Shekau made it to become one of the sophisticated terrorist groups in the world by pledging allegiance to some international terrorist groups in the world. It is unfortunate today that Boko Haram has been misrepresented by different scholars and this has grossly affected the state response in this regard. The same interpretations given to Boko Haram under the previous leaders have not been altered in their literature. There was an iota of Islamism in Boko Haram movement during the leadership of Mohamed Yusuf but the trends of Boko Haram under the current leadership has no indication of fighting religious course because Boko Haram members have attacked both Christians and Muslims. The number of mosques destroyed by Boko Haram cannot be fathomed in recent time. Also, it is perplexing that Boko Haram has attacked different emirs in the North, the representatives of one of the most formidable institutions of Islam and Sharia in Nigeria (Omotola, 2014).

Thus, Boko Haram terrorist group under the current leadership represents high profile violence after the end of Civil war in Nigeria (1967-1970). It has engaged in a violent campaign against the Nigerian state since 2009, following a violent suppression of the group by the Nigerian military (Mohammed, 2016).

Since 2010, Boko Haram has progressively transformed itself from a local terrorist group to an international threat. In 2013, Boko Haram was designated as an international terrorist group by the United States of America Department of State coupled with the addition of Boko Haram to the existing list of Security Council Al-Qaida’s Sanction Committee on individuals and entities subject to the targeted financial sanctions and the arms embargo set out in paragraph 1 of the Security Council resolution 2083(2012).This was adopted under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations (United Nations Press Release,2014)

Also, the funding network of Boko Haram has been discussed in the literature of Boko Haram, but not in a meticulous way. To discuss the sources of funding of any terrorist group in the world is always a difficult enterprise. According to Onuoha (2010), there was levy of 100 naira per day to their leaders at the inception. The question of where Boko Haram members raised the 100 naira was not fully discussed. Also, the sect was also alleged to be receiving funds from outside Nigeria. “For example Mohammed Damagun was arraigned in a Federal High Court in Abuja on three charges, namely belonging to the Nigerian Taliban, receiving a total of US$ 300,000 from Al Qaeda to recruit and train Nigerians in Mauritania for terrorism and aiding terrorists in Nigeria” (See Onuoha, 2010).There is no doubt on the issue of foreign collaborators aiding Boko Haram in Nigeria, considering the trends of their operations. There have always been countries providing financial supports for terrorist groups in the world. Recently, Iran tops the list of countries that are providing financial assistance to terrorist groups. It is unfortunate today that Nigeria is a victim of poverty and international vacuum after the Cold war.

According to Huntington, terrorism all over the world was a product of vacuum created by the Cold War. He identified different clashes of civilizations, and Islam is a major factor in his classifications (Cited in Omar and Albert, 2003, p.12). Islam was considered as a world religion, which sets out to challenge the hegemonic power of the US. (See Omar and Albert, 2003).Nevertheless, it is easily understood to consider Boko Haram as a terrorist group, enjoying financial aids from external bodies once it was assumed that Boko Haram was a product of poverty as well as a factor in filling the international vacuum.

However, Stern (2010) contends that terrorist groups all over the world have the means of making money to finance their campaigns. He identifies criminal acts such robbery, hostage taking and drug trafficking. Terrorist groups also engage in legitimate businesses such as construction, taking contracts from the government and swapping deals that will be accomplished with certain amount of money with the host government as demonstrated in Nigeria recently before the release of 21 Chibok girls abducted in 2014 in Chibok Local Government of Borno State (Zalman, 2016,p.10)

Conversely, since Boko Haram launched its terror campaign, 2.3 million people have been displaced which represents 6% of total IDPs population in the world as at 2015 (Mohammed, 2016, p.1). Boko Haram has also killed over 25,000 people since 2009 (IOM,2015,p.10).Also, an estimated 600 teachers were killed and several school children were murdered in cold blood at FGC Buni Yadi in Yobe State (Mohammed,2016,p.1).Similarly, health facilities were been damaged and destroyed in all conflict areas. About 431,842 housing units were completely destroyed. Most of the destruction, about 95% occurred in Born State (FGN, 2015, p.3). Boko Haram deliberately targeted public buildings, schools, health facilities and other public infrastructure for destruction. The damage to infrastructure across the six North East states of Adamawa, Borno, Yobe, Bauchi, Gombe and Taraba is US$9.2 billion (FGN, 2015, p.2). Borno, the worst hit state, suffered the greatest damage worth US$6.9 billion, followed by Yobe (US$1.2 billion) and Adamawa State (US$828 million) (FNG, 2015, p.42). Basically, the activities of Boko Haram came to public knowledge in a controversial manner after the extra judicial killing of its leader. The Boko Haram sect at the inception has a distinctive ideology; the method of propagation of the implementation of Sharia by the group is not in conformity with the approach favored by the majority Sunni Muslim group.

# **Theoretical Approaches to Boko Haram Crisis in the North Eastern Nigeria**

Scholars have divulged different theoretical propositions with dearth theoretical generalization to illuminate the causes of Boko Haram conundrum in the North East. Beyond the common narrative, this work adopts state failure and frustration aggression theories as theoretical approaches to explaining the grievances that propelled Boko Haram members to resort to terrorism.

Starting with state failure, it is definite that nation states exist to provide basic amenities as well as ensure the standard of living that will provide greater happiness for the greater number of people base on the utilitarian philosophy. It is the responsibility of states to be attentive to the legitimate concerns and demands of their citizens (Rotberg 2002, p.2). The success or failure of a state depends primarily on the living condition of the people in the country. Experiences have revealed that majority of states fail to provide basic amenities, security of life and property, heath care facilities, infrastructure, employment opportunities and legal framework for law and order. Though, Nigeria as a state has not failed but all the symptoms of failed state and its indicators are signposted in the country. Once the state is unable to perform its primary responsibilities, it will definitely lose its legitimacy in the eyes of citizens (Rotberg, 2002; p.1). In this kind of situation, some people will naturally transfer their allegiances to more responsive authority groups while some people will put their grievances on the riot gears and go further by becoming terrorists (Benjamin, *etal* 2013). Rotberg (2003) went further to present the comprehensive and graphic description of a failed state as a “polity that is no longer able or willing to perform the fundamental task of nation state in the modern polity”.

As observed by Rotberg, nation states fail because they are convulsed by internal violence and can no longer provide greater happiness for the greater number of inhabitants (Rotberg, 2003). The rise and fall of nation state is a new phenomenon in the modern time, the idea of failed state featured predominantly in the international system after the end of the Cold War. Basically, nation states constitute the building blocks of legitimate order while the violence and weaknesses of most African states, Asian, Oceanic and Latin American states threaten the very foundations of the system.

There are a number of pre-conditions for strong, weak and failed states to emerge. States succeed or fail across all or some of these conditions. But their rating varies in accordance to their performances and levels of their effective delivery of the most crucial goods and services. As Rotberg puts it:

Strong states may be distinguished from weak ones, and weak states from failed or collapsed states. Strong states unquestionably control their territories and deliver a full range and a high quality of political goods to their citizens. They perform well according to indicator like GDP per capita, the UNDP Human Development Index, Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index, and Freedom of the World Report. Strong states offer high levels of security architecture from political and criminal violence, ensure political freedom and civil liberties, and create environments conducive to the growth of economic opportunity. Weak states include a broad continuum of states that are inherently weak because of geographical, physical, or fundamental economic constraints; weak states are basically strong but temporarily or ‘situationally’ weak because of internal antagonisms, management flaws, greed, despotism, or external attacks, and a mixture of the two. Weak states typically harbor ethnic, religious and linguistic tensions. In a failed state, government troop battle armed revolts led by one or more rivals. The official authorities in a failed state face two or more insurgencies, varieties of civil unrest, different degrees of communal discontent and a plethora of dissent directed at the state and at groups within the state. It is not absolute intensity of violence that identifies a failed state. Rather, it is the enduring character of that violence, as in Angola, Burundi, Sudan and Nigeria. In a failed state there is no modicum of order (Rotberg, 2003, p.5).

The above factors identified by Rotberg as the necessary pre-conditions for strong states to emerge in the international system do not find expression in Nigeria. The symptoms of failed states are evident in Nigeria. No wonder, different scholars especially ( Rotberg 2003, Piazza, 2008) predominantly focused on Africa in their theoretical postulations. However, scholars note that there are also many states in the international system that have some of the features mentioned by Rotberg and are therefore at risk of complete state failure, but have not quite crossed the threshold (Piazza,2008;p. 12). Scholars refer to these states as "weak states" (Rotberg 2002), "quasi-states" (Lambach 2004).

Similarly, addressing the problems of failed or weak states will definitely yield humanitarian and security dividends for the international system (Piazza, 2008,p.1). United States policymakers regard failed and failing states such as Afghanistan, Somalia and Nigeria to be the festering incubators of terrorism, and lament that for too long United States foreign policy has ignored the threat that these types of states pose to international order and national security. “Post September 11th national security documents explicitly describe failed states as safe havens for terrorists” (US Department of State, 2010, p.15). The question of how to tackle the problem of state failure has become a big challenge of the 21st century.

The Failed State Index (FSI) compiled annually by the Fund for Peace and Foreign Policy Magazine, ranks nations of the world from most failed to least likely failed (Benjamin, *etal*: 2012, p.43). In line with Failed States Index, Nigeria has appeared consistently on the lists of failing states. Nigeria was recently ranked as number fourteenth on the list which makes it close to other countries that have experienced total collapse in recent time (Foreign Policy, 2011, p.12). Undoubtedly, this was as a result of incessant crises of various magnitudes in Nigeria: corruption, electoral violence, infrastructure squalor, institutional problem, political instability, among others, which have propelled the intensity of violence and terrorism in the country. As Benjamin etal, observes: “there has been a general discontent in the country from an army of unhappy, despondent, impoverished, or aggrieved citizens, some of whom are clearly and increasingly choosing a terrorist path” (Benjamin *etal,* 2012, p.43).

However, the outbreak of Boko Haram’s bomb attacks in some parts of the country is symbolic of the sustained and holistic failures of successive governments in Nigeria. Boko Haram has taken the opportunity of these failures by recruiting the affected youths to pursue their puritanical ideology. Boko Haram exploits the porosity of Nigerian borders to smuggle arms and sophisticated ammunition to destabilize the state (Onapajo and Uzodike, 2012, p.9).

The symptoms of failed state in Nigeria have snowballed into aggressive behaviors among Nigerian youths most especially in the North East. In Nigerian context, the study observes that aggressiveness is a fall out of frustration owing to imprudent leadership in the country. However, this study develops Frustration- aggression Theory as a pair to the Failed State Theory. The Frustration-aggression Theory has provided the dominant paradigm for the psychological study of aggression during the more than three decades since it was first formulated by Dollard and his co-workers (Dollard etal, 1931, p.2). As originally proposed, the theory holds that "the occurrence of aggression always presupposes the existence of frustration and, contrariwise, that the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression" (Dollard et al. 1939:1). Frustration was thus seen as both a necessary and sufficient condition for the occurrence of aggression and verse versa.

However, the views of aggression that it involves seem to have become widely adopted and accepted; they have become commonplace. This popular success may have various sources. First the principal hypothesis is uncomplicated and easy to grasp. The theory is generally well structured and clearly articulated, a fact that again, facilitates comprehension. Second, the theory does not involve overly abstract concepts or elaborate procedures. It is very appealing to common sense, which seems to build on its acceptability. Finally, as Selg, (1971, p.5) observed, “the theory tends to provide a justification for behaving aggressively: 'Being frustrated made me do it.” Like the aggression amnesty provided by instinct notions. At times, however, the term 'frustration' is used to refer not only to the process of blocking a person's attainment of a re-inforcer, but also to the reaction to such blocking.

There are possible ingredients of frustration and aggression before the occurrence of violence, frustration precipitated by factors such as unemployment, elite corruption and severe poverty. In Nigeria, criminality and terrorism cannot be totally divulged from the frustration aggression of some people in the country, most especially, the youths in the North East who could not constructively handle their discontent and frustration against the government. The expression of frustration and aggression provide ample explanation of Boko Haram crisis in the North East. This was evident during the reinforcement of Sharia law and its subjective|  
implementation in twelve northern states. This development led to the widespread disillusionment and feeling of misgiving on government policies coupled with the massive spread of poverty in the northern part of the country.

**Dissecting the Implicit and Explicit Causes of Boko Haram Cataclysm in the North Eastern Nigeria**

The eruption of Boko Haram was greeted with controversial views on what could have been responsible for the unabated crisis. Prior to this period the sect had been established on the platform of religion, with the intention of using religion as a defense to correct the abnormalities in the Nigerian political terrain, most especially the accumulated poverty, occasioned by bad governance over the years bearing in mind the full implementation of Sharia law. It is a common doctrine among many supposedly Islamic fundamentalist groups and some moderate Muslims in Nigeria to demand for full implementation of Sharia law. Also, since the attainment of independence in 1960, the controversial debates over the full implementation of Sharia in Nigeria have produced a number of changes and continuities (Olabanji, 2015, p.12). Similarly, the political transformation from military autocracy and absolutism to civilian governance in 1999 gave room for local politicians, mainly in the northern Nigeria, basically to campaign for votes with the manifestos that Sharia law would be fully implemented after the elections.

However, as observed by Adesoji and Onuoha (2017, p.11), the electioneering campaign during this period really garnered support for the local politicians because of these electoral promises. In January 2000, Zamfara in the northwest Nigeria was the first state to fulfill this campaign promise. Zamfara state gave effect to the full implementation of Sharia penal code. In a similar vein, eleven states also followed the same direction with Zamfara state by introducing Sharia law. However, it was discovered that the introduction of Sharia law in the north was greeted with much euphoria in some parts and crises in the major parts. The crisis that followed the implementation of Sharia law was orchestrated by two major factors: (1) There was early assurance that Sharia law would not be applied to non-Muslims unless they consented but the reverse was the case when it was implemented (2) The enforcement of Sharia law was majorly directed against the poor and vulnerable people in the North while the elite enjoyed unwritten immunity from enforcement latitude.

More so, in the midst of disillusionment and misgivings that trailed the implementation of Sharia law, it continued in twelve states in the north and this controversy has made some analysts to contend that the introduction of Sharia law in 2000, was more political than religious and this lacuna sent signals to Boko Haram as a means to perpetrating all manner of evils in the name of religion. However, Boko Haram played a big role in shaping the objective implementation of full Sharia law in Borno State in the early 2000s. Boko Haram’s involvement in the implementation of Sharia law snowballed into local politics before it detached its association with the government of the Borno State in the late 2000s.

Meanwhile, the precise date of Boko Haram is shrouded in controversy especially if one relies on media accounts (Onuoha, 2011, p. 12).This study observes that the exact date of Boko Haram’s establishment is shrouded in obscurity but many observers trace the origin to early 2000s when Mohammed Yusuf became the leader. Also, at the inception of Boko Haram, it appeared as a religious organization until 2009 when it assumed a notorious dimension after the extra judicial killing of its leader. Albeit, some of the key informants are of the opinion that the radicalization of Boko Haram goes beyond the jungle justice exercised on its leaders simply because the new leader of Boko Haram, Shekau, had always been radical prior to the 2009 crisis (Omotola, Onuoha 2017).

Also, the electioneering campaign in Borno State in 2003 played a major role in the understanding of causes of Boko Haram. It is also on record that , in the build-up to the 2003 general elections, the Boko Haram support enjoyed by Ali Modu Sheriff, who was then a gubernatorial aspirant was widely believed to have enhanced his victory at the 2003 election which eventually made him the executive governor of Borno State between 2003 and 2011 following his reelection for a second term of four years in 2007.He was the governor till 2011.However, Boko Haram did not support Sheriff who was desperate to win the gubernatorial election without some agreements and promises between the two parties. It was that agreement that conditioned him to appoint Alhaji Foi as Commissioner for Religious affairs, while Mohammed Yusuf was made a member of the Borno State Sharia Board. However, the strained relationship between the two parties explains the violent character of Boko Haram in some quarters. Similarly, some people are of the opinion that Mohammed Yusuf fell out with his local political allies because of the manner the Sharia law was implemented in the state. Adesoji (2015) observes that, partisan politics and political patronage play a major role in the sustenance of Boko Haram in the North East.

Obviously, the link between former Governor Sheriff and Boko Haram most especially, during his electioneering campaign is not debatable. The political underpinning that supported the rise of the group is impregnability in the light of its involvement in the politics of parts of Yobe, and especially Borno State in the 2000s to the extent that Sheriff sponsored some Boko Haram members to hajj at the inception of his administration. Also, the interpretations and representation of Boko Haram as a protest against the government of the then President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, owing to his Christian and Southern backgrounds, often overlook these local political links. The late General Owoye Azazi, made a public declaration during a public lecture at the South- South Economic Summit in April, 2012.According to Azazi, Boko Haram’s uprising was as a result of the quest by northern political elites to rule Nigeria by all means (Gabriel, 2014, p.11).The declaration by Azazi is a pointer to the fact that the altering of the zoning formula of the People’s Democratic Party by former President Jonathan, represents a major cause of Boko Haram.

Thus, as plausible as this assertion by Azazi might be, it is quite simplistic and ingenuous for a plethora of reasons (1)The emergence of Boko Haram in the early 2000s predated the ascension of President Jonathan as the President of Federal Republic of Nigeria in 2010.Also,it was former President Yar’Adua, a northerner and Muslim, who first ordered a military crackdown on Boko Haram in 2009, following the intensity of violence occasioned by Boko Haram, and having fallen out with its local political allies. (2) Boko Haram is committed to killing Muslims as it is committed to killing Christians as well. The attack against political leaders and emirs in the North, places its activities and ideologies beyond the template of religion, because of the preference and respect accorded to the institution among Nigerian Muslims. Hence, the discussion of Boko Haram as simply a North-South/Muslim-Christian political division misrepresents the current situation to some extent. Although, the assertion of General Awoye Azazi cannot be regarded as a castoff for a major reason, in 2014, the activities of Boko Haram reached its pinnacle because of political wrapping and coloration in the core north coupled with the retrieval of political confidence on the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan by the northern elites.

In addendum to the above analysis, this study also finds out that poverty is another major cause of Boko Haram. It represents a key explanatory factor in the emergence of Boko Haram. Nigeria is a rich country with poor inhabitants because of leadership failure. Albeit, poverty is a universal phenomenon but the peculiarity of poverty in Northern Nigeria is not debatable. Despite being a major oil exporter, many Nigerians remain poor most especially people in the North West and the North East of Nigeria. Similarly, Nigeria has consistently been ranked low in human development rankings of the United Nations Annual Human Development Reports which provide ample evidence of the state of poverty in the country. For example, the 2014 reports rank Nigeria 152 out of 187 countries covered, followed by Cameroun and Madagascar. (UNDP Report 2014, p.10).

In similar vein, National Bureau of Statistics estimated the national poverty profile to be 61.9 percent nationally, and north-eastern Nigeria, the epic center of Boko Haram rates higher than 70 percent as at 2010 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2010, p.1).Illiteracy rate is higher in the north, life expectancy and per capital income are equally low when compared with their counterparts in the southern parts of Nigeria. The level of unemployment in the country is frightening. In 2011, two years after the first major violent confrontation by Boko Haram, the unemployment situation among the youth in Nigeria was 37.7 percent while the northern states were the highest when compared to their southern counterparts (National Bureau of Statistics, 2011, p.1).

**Table 1: Unemployment Rates in Nigeria, By Region as at End of 2011**

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| --- | --- |
| Region | Unemployment |
| North East | 31.9 |
| North Central | 22.8 |
| North West | 28.8 |
| South East | 19.6 |
| South South | 24.7 |
| South West | 11.3 |
| Nigeria | 23.9 |

Source: NBS Annual Abstract of Statistics, 2011, p.12

Consequently, because of galloping poverty in the North, Boko Haram was able to gather momentum in terms of membership and recruitment. The incidence of mass poverty and deprivation among the many people in the northern Nigeria coupled with the high level of corruption among the religious and political classes gave Boko Haram an advantageous chance to continually recruit members into its fold (Cited in Olabanji, 2015, p.17). Also, the existence of unemployment and chronic poverty serve as an impetus for Boko Haram to flourish in the North East and, there is no doubt that economic problems have worsened in Nigeria for more than a decade, and this constitutes a factor in the outbreak of Boko Haram. Also, Maitatsine movement flourished in the 1980s because of economic woes, high prices, scarcity, retrenchment and unemployment. In 1980, the absolute poverty in the country was 29 percent and today it is estimated around 62 percent. This economic predicament driving Boko Haram is totally undeniable. Two selected key informants also corroborated the assertion on the rising profile of poverty in Nigeria.

**Respondent A1**buttressed the point further that the rising profile of poverty in Nigeria served as an inspiration for all manners of violence. It has assumed a notorious dimension in the country most especially in the Northern parts of Nigeria. The North East region, as comprising Borno, Adamawa, Yobe, among others, has been ravaged by the Boko Haram terrorist group since 2009 because of the prevalence of poverty in the region (Fieldwork, 2016)

**Respondent A2** affirmed that the recruitment trend by Boko Haram was decorated by the prevalence of poverty in the region and porosity of Nigerian border. The membership of Boko Haram has increased to 5000 based on available statistics from the global security review. Its membership keeps on increasing because of the increasing poverty in the region and the porosity of Nigerian border, which the group uses as the basis for recruitment (Fieldwork, 2017)

Also, the problem of climate change which has grossly affected the agricultural produce in the North and the countries in the Lake Chad Basin is another perspective towards understanding Boko Haram crisis in Nigeria. The three North Eastern states in Nigeria which are original constituencies of Boko Haram (Borno, Adamawa and Yobe) are arid zones with serious climate variations that always threaten the survival of crops and animals on yearly basis. The porosity of Nigerian border is another factor; some migrants from neighboring countries like Chad and Niger, always come to these cities in search of casual jobs and Islamic studies most especially during the dry season. Worse still, the failure of government to support irrigation in rural areas has only worsened the trend of migration in the North East. The North East Arid Zone Development Programme (NEAZDP) that was introduced in the late 1980 to help rural development in the North Eastern Nigeria has dramatically suffered from paucity of funds because of negligence on the part of government. In corroborating the above analysis, another respondent identified Nigerian porous as a blistering factor fueling Boko Haram conundrum in the North East.

**Respondent A3** identified Nigerian porous border and the climate change as a critical issue in Nigeria, coupled with the prevalent of poverty in the region as the underlying causes of Boko Haram crisis. Majority of Youths in the neighboring countries lost their jobs because of climate change that affected agricultural productivities in these countries and eventually considered membership of Boko Haram as their last option. Today, Boko Haram has crops of foreign fighters from neighboring countries fighting its cause (Fieldwork, 2017).

**POOR**

**SOCIO-**

**ECONOMIC**

**DEVELOPMENT**

**LACK OF**

**ECONOMIC**

**OPPORTUNITIES &**

**UNEMPLOYMENT**

**LOW LEVELS**

**OF**

**EDUCATION**

**OVER**

**RELIANCE**

**ON**

**FEDERAL**

**FUNDS**

**UNFAVORABLE**

**INVESTMENT**

**CLIMATE AGAINST**

**ENTREPRENEURIAL**

**CULTURE**

**INADEQUATE**

**FUNDING FOR**

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**CORRUPTION**

**& LIMITED**

**STATE AND**

**LGA FUND**

**PROTRACTED**

**LACK OF**

**DEVELOPMENT**

**PROGRAMS**

**RELIGIOUS /**

**CULTURAL**

**EXTREMISM**

**HIGH**

**MIGRATION**

**OF SKILLED**

**WORKERS**

**INSECURITY**

**AND**

**TERRORISM**

**POVERTY**

Figure 1: The Root Causes Of Crisis and Drivers of Conflict in the North East

Source: Department of Economic Intelligence, 2015, p.16

Again, religion has become a scapegoat and the most unfortunate concept in analyzing the ethno-political and economic crises in contemporary Nigeria. The evolving Nation of Nigeria has many historical and political contradictions. However, there is a general consensus in the literature that violence, whether religious or political in the Nigerian polity, is a means of identifying deficiencies in heterogonous society as a symptom of inequality, marginalization, exploitation, internal colonialism and the misuse of majoritarian democracy and national government in a prejudicial manner. As a result, some political anarchists or demons hide under the foregoing to fuel the various conflagrations as a means of expressing their grievances. Essentially, several indices of crises in Nigeria show the mixture of ethnicity and political grievances to interpret such disagreements as the genie of religious violence. However, religion is often a transparent tactics, designed to conceal political and economic goals in Nigeria.

In addition, there are other international dimensions to Boko Haram crisis in Nigeria. The America role during the Iranian revolution in 1980 has today made Iran a top sponsor of terrorism on the global scale which Boko Haram has supposedly benefited. Subsequently, the international politics of Cold War coupled with the unethical behavior by the United States of America during the Afghanistan Civil war where US was providing covert aid for the Afghanistan Resistance Fighters who called themselves mujahedeen or fighters for the faith which US has today renamed as the Islamic Extremists because of the 9/11 attacks. It seems that no one during that time, stoop edge to consider the possible repercussion that the training and equipping of zealous Islamic fighters could have today (Brzezinski, 1983). The replica of similar scenario also played out in Libya crisis by the United States of America. All these developments played an important role in Boko Haram movement in Nigeria. Boko Haram journey towards radicalization and brutality began with the international conspiracy by its foreign counterparts in 2013.

# **Concluding reflections**

Contrary to the general arguments in the literature, this study has examined the Boko Haram crisis from different perspectives. The study has revealed some peculiar findings. There are implicit and explicit causes of the Boko Haram crisis in the North East as well as other factors that were boosting the movement. The findings in this study reveal that Boko Haram has metamorphosed on five different occasions after the gestation period with different factors responsible for the metamorphoses. The first stage of the metamorphosis took place in 2003, when Boko Haram first took arms against the state security forces and, subsequently launched devastating attacks against Nigeria Police Force. The group attacked Police stations and public buildings in the towns of Geiam and Kanamma in Yobe state. The second stage was the aftermath of the 2009 uprising, which led to the killing of Mohammed Yusuf. The third stage was the aftermath of 2011 General Elections, the fourth stage was in 2013 when Boko Haram declared its allegiance to the Islamic State in Levant and declared itself as Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWP); while the last stage was the period that witnessed the arms embargo imposed on the Nigerian state because of the flagrant abuse of fundamental human rights by some Nigerian security personnel. Nonetheless, the lingering poverty and the youth unemployment are fundamental to the activities of Boko Haram.

Albeit, poverty is a universal enigma, but the pervasiveness of poverty in the north eastern part of Nigeria is not debatable, compared to the other regions in Nigeria. Also, the nature of poverty in the north was a product of accumulated factors as government cannot be blamed for everything. The people of the north are majorly polygamists, who often believe in fulfilling social and cultural obligations without putting economic realities into serious considerations. There is no state in other regions that can compete favorably with the states in the North West and North East in term of poverty profile based on the socio-economic indicators. Indeed, poverty is boldly written everywhere in the country, but that of the North East is galloping. Inevitably, there exist a strong connection between poverty and terrorism. Poverty precipitated frustration and made the army of youths in the region to engage in social misconducts.

The bond between these two enigmas has undoubtedly validated the assertion that the poorest states are giant experiments in the genesis of terrorism. The spate of insecurity in Nigeria signaled the pervasiveness of poverty, and it is no longer news that the North West and North East top the list of the poorest regions in Nigeria. The introduction of Political Sharia law was also articulated in the study. The concept of Political Sharia law was adopted in the study because of the way and manner the law was implemented. It was the subjective implementation of Sharia law that angered Boko Haram at the gestation period. In a similar vein, the study uses some international events to explain Boko Haram crisis, factors such as the Libyan crisis, Iran’s revolution and the politics of the Cold War. It is against this backdrop that the study recommends the following:

(1)It is not enough for the state governments in the north to introduce Sharia law, rather, it is equally important to ensure the objective implementation of the law. Apart from the Islamic aspect of the Sharia Law, it also discourages corruption both at micro and macro levels and, once corruption is dealt with in the region, there will be a good atmosphere for economic development that will discourage all manners of social misconducts in the region.

(2) For Nigeria to win the war against Boko Haram, poverty must be dealt with, through comprehensive empowerment programme and proper orientation in the region. It is unfortunate that a rich country like Nigeria is populating poor inhabitants. Nevertheless, it is worthy of note that the government cannot be fully blamed for the chronic poverty in the region because of the lack of family planning awareness. Nigeria should learn from China on how to control its population (GDP Per capital Income). Also, the National Orientation Agency of Nigeria must engage in comprehensive orientation and enlightenment programme in the core north on the expected number of children per family as well as the importance of education. Again, the enlistment of the youths into the ranks and file of the Boko Haram is not unconnected with the prevalence of poverty in the country. A country with abundant human and material resources has no business to populate poor citizens. The government must adopt serious measures to tackle poverty in all its ramifications. Further, what appeared to be a subtle reference to the endemic corruption that envelops both public and private sectors in the country, again the recent phenomenon of Dasuki Gate, is enough for everybody to assume that corruption is a great fertilizer to terrorism. Nigeria which is a major oil supplier to the US and earns billions of Dollars from its oil industry, must not adopt a “divide the pie” approach in addressing poverty. Also, government must establish a framework to empower people at various levels, most especially the teaming youths who are on the brink of unemployment.

There is need for the government to prevent the phenomenon of terrorism instead of tackling the symptoms because the cost of rehabilitating what Boko Haram has damaged is unimaginable. Again, the Government must combine anti-terrorism approach with strategic counter terrorism because it will be called that since the US declared total war on terror, the global system has been witnessing terrorist attacks of various magnitudes. There is also need to orientate military and other security personnel on peacemaking and how to respect the principle of fundamental human rights.

(3) Boko Haram should not be interpreted in the context of religion, because there is no religion that condones violence. It can only be interpreted as such at the gestation period. It must be noted that associating Boko Haram with Islam will continue to intensify the problem and it is high time for governments to know that Boko Haram is not a religious fundamentalist, but a terrorist group, most especially under the current leader. The metamorphoses and decentralization of Boko Haram must not be treated with kid gloves.

(4)The porosity of the Nigerian borders should be addressed. The recent regional collaboration in the Lake Chad Basin should be upgraded while the problem of climate change in the region should be prioritized by the concerned states, national and international bodies.

(5)It is unfortunate that when Boko Haram crisis broke out, there was no viable legal framework against terrorism in the country. The legal framework that has been established must be strengthened to prosecute terrorism. Recently, Buhari’s government suggested the idea of creating special court that will be prosecuting terrorists in Nigeria and this development will go a long way in the war against terrorism. The current TPA of 2011 is not enough to prosecute Boko Haram terrorists. In a similar vein, the rebuilding of the North East should be done with sincerity of purpose to avoid a possible second phase of Boko Haram in the nearest future; and the recent establishment of the North East Development Commission should be given a presidential monitoring to avoid corruption. The Nigerian government should learn from the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) that has been bedeviled by corruption over the years.

(6)The idea of negotiating with the Boko Haram should not be treated with care-free attitude. Negotiations had worked in some circumstances, as in the cases of the Irish Republican Army in Northern Ireland and the Basque group Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) in Spain. In addition, Nigeria should increase her military strategies in the war against Boko Haram. Negotiation and effective military strategies should be done concurrently.

(7)There should be equal representations in the federal and state appointments to avoid marginalization that is capable of promoting violence in Nigeria. It is evident that the different ethnic groups in the country always adopt violence as a means to negotiate and settle scores with government. When the former president Jonathan was in power, the crisis of Boko Haram was intensified and there was peace in the south, now that a northerner is the head of the Nigerian state, there is serious problem in the south ranging from the Niger Delta militancy and the IPOB’s quest for balkanization. The politics of ethnic jingoism should be discouraged from the nation’s electioneering processes, because there are two major factors that determine Nigerian elections; ethnicity and religion. There should be a viable legal framework that will discourage people from campaigning along the ethnic and religious lines.

(8)The study also recommends environmental scanning, whereby the Nigerian government should engage in careful monitoring of internal and external environments for detecting early signs of opportunities and threats that may influence its current and future plans in line with the international standards.

(9) American hegemonic power should be liberalized as to accommodate some warring countries. Also; the international efforts on climate change should be prioritized most especially “Paris Climate Accord” while the countries in the Lake Chad Basin should have a regional framework against climate change to avoid unnecessary migrations that are aiding Boko Haram movement in the region

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