

The Boko Haram Insurgency in Northeastern Nigeria Revisited: Historicising the 2009 Uprising in Maiduguri

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Abstract

Northeastern Nigeria recorded the outbreak of two Boko Haram uprisings since 2009: the first was a six-day insurrection that broke out in Maiduguri in 2009, while the second is a prolonged insurgency which began in July 2010 and is ongoing. The article focuses on the former and seeks to reconstruct the causes and processes that led to the outbreak of the uprising in Maiduguri in July 2009. By historicising the trajectory of events through a multidisciplinary approach that relies on multiple sources, we established that the 2009 uprising was the outcome of various internal and external factors. The grievance-based mobilisation drive of Boko Haram rattled the Nigerian state, which increased its repression of the militants. The sect reacted to the repression with a violent uprising in July 2009, which was defeated after six days of bloody confrontation. After ten months of relative peace, Boko Haram launched a second uprising which is ongoing. The article concludes that although Boko Haram is severely weakened, military force alone cannot suffice for its final defeat. For the restoration of lasting peace, it is recommended that the root causes of the insurgency should be addressed, supplemented by boosting the morale of soldiers, strengthening the multinational alliance against Boko Haram, and rehabilitating militants who surrender, among others.

Keywords: Boko Haram, Defeat, Insurgency, Northeast and Outbreak.

Introduction

Outbreak of religious violence has been a common occurrence in Nigeria, witnessed on a regular basis for over three decades. For example, the country recorded the Maitatsine religious uprisings in Kano (1980), Kaduna (1982), Bulumkuttu (1982), Jimeta (1984) and Gombe (1985) that led to the death of over 6,000 members of the sect. There were also several Christian-Muslim violent conflicts that broke out in Kafanchan, Kaduna, Zaria, Funtua, Daura and Kankia in 1987. Similar clashes were recorded in different parts of Bauchi State in 1991, 1995, 2006, 2007 and 2008. Other incidences of religious violence were experienced at Kaduna in 1988; Kano and Katsina in 1991; Zangon Kataf in 1992; and Jos in 1994. An offshoot of the Maitatsine sect known as the Kala Kato was responsible for the outbreak of violence in Bauchi in December 2009. These and other incidences of religious violence recorded in different parts of the country have so far produced a large number of casualties. Between 2006 and 2014, about 14, 006 violent religious and non-religious incidences were known to have occurred in Nigeria, responsible for the death of 60,858 people (Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP) 2014). Apart from the loss of a huge number of lives, and injury to an even larger number of persons, a substantial amount of property whose value cannot be easily quantified was also destroyed.

However, the Boko Haram uprising that broke out in 2009 was a new kind of religious violence, dissimilar in nature to any of the previous ones. In terms of scale, organisation and the relative permanence of its insurrectionary violence, it is significantly different from previous religious disturbances. As a result, this article seeks to reconstruct the nature, causes and outbreak of the uprising in 2009 for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. This important task shall be undertaken as part of one's contribution to the growing literature on radical Islam and conflict studies in Nigeria. Our task derives from a concern that many extant studies on Boko Haram are security studies that overlook the social and historical processes that gave rise to the movement. The present article hopes to shift attention back to this neglected dimension by providing a detailed account of the causes and chronology of events during the five-day uprising. Our purpose is to provide a *historical* outline of the events in ways that would be of interest to scholars who are more concerned about understanding the Boko Haram uprising *as a process*. In doing so, our boundary and scope shall be limited to the outbreak and defeat of the uprising in Maiduguri in July 2009. For want of space and time, our examination would not go beyond this core area of the Boko Haram uprising.

Causes

The dramatic upsurge in militancy among Muslims worldwide in recent years is attributed to hatred of the USA and western civilization (Banks, 2005), militant indoctrination in Koranic schools (Winters, 1987), desperation of the religious clergy, security lapses, colonialism and postcolonial imperial hegemony (Howard, 1995/1996), and mass poverty co-existing with extraordinary corruption by the ruling elites (Lubeck, 1985). Most of these factors are valid, depending on location and circumstances of different societies. In the case of Nigeria, the outbreak of the 2009 Boko Haram uprising was caused by a combination of internal and external factors. The most fundamental internal factor was an economic crisis that began many years earlier. For nearly a decade before 2009, the manufacturing sector of the Nigerian economy suffered a steady decline. Between 2000 and 2008, about 820 manufacturing firms closed their operations due to harsh conditions facing the industrial sector. The most graphic example was the collapse of the textile sector where over 500, 000 workers were employed in over 200 Mills in the 1980's, declining to 20 Mills employing 20,000 workers in the mid 1990's and plunging further to less than a dozen mills employing 2000 workers by 2009 (Sabiu, 2017).

Although the external reserve of Nigeria rose from \$17 billion in 2004 to \$53 billion by December 2008 (Central Bank of Nigeria, 2009), such increase did not translate into improved economic productivity, increased employment or higher standard of living for the people. Despite having a per capita income of more than \$2,700 and an annual GDP of seven percent, Nigeria has a population that is one of the poorest in the world, seventy percent of which live on less than \$1.25 a day, placing the country among the twenty poorest in the world. Hence, among 177 countries with poor economies in the world, Nigeria was ranked 153rd on the human development index in 2008 (Shaibu & Salleh, 2015). The national poverty rate, which increased from 17.1 million in 1980 to 112.4 million in 2010, is more prevalent in Northern Nigeria (75%) than in the south (25%), providing a basis for the claim that "Nigerian poverty has a northern face" (Tar & Shettima, 2014; Ray, 2016). In the Boko Haram affected region of the northeast, about 65% of the population are absolutely poor, living on less than a dollar per day, as against 55% in the South-South (Adenrele, 2012). This combined with corruption and bad governance to pull down the standard of living of the lower classes even further (Central Bank of Nigeria, 2009).

The country's large and growing youth population, which is roughly half of the country's population is under the age of nineteen, a vast majority of whom have limited opportunities for securing a better future. While the national average unemployment rate grew from 13.1% in 2000 to 19.7% in 2009, the actual rate in states affected by the Boko Haram uprising was significantly higher. By March 2009, Borno, Bauchi, Yobe, Katsina, Kano, Adamawa and Taraba States, affected by the uprising in various ways, were among the eleven states with the highest unemployment rates nationwide (National Bureau of Statistics, 2010). The living condition of the urban poor was made worse by an environmental dimension in which recurrent droughts and a consequent rural-urban migration created an urban population that made a bad situation even worse, especially in the city of Maiduguri (Monguno & Umara, 2014; ONSA, 2015). Therefore, it is not a coincidence that the regions of the country where militant Islam has taken roots are also the poorest.

Surely, the connection between poverty and religious violence is often indirect and complicated because "poverty does not always lead to terrorism" (Okemi, 2013), which also applies to the Boko Haram uprising. This is because there are other parts of the Muslim dominated Northern Nigeria and West Africa with comparable levels of poverty and economic backwardness that did not give rise to radical Islamic movements (Meagher, 2014). Nonetheless, poverty and unemployment were among the fundamental factors that facilitated recruitment and mobilisation of support for the uprising. This was made possible by the presence of a large and growing army of impoverished, unhappy, despondent, aggrieved and generally discontented people in the conflict zone, many of whom were ready to find solace in violent acts (Maiangwa *et al*, 2012). The success of the mobilisation drive of Boko Haram that attracted a significant number of sympathizers lay in its effective articulation of the prevailing social condition, promising to reduce economic hardship and vowing to improve the living standards of the poor (Malarchy, 2013). The message resonated among a large audience because Nigeria, like other countries afflicted by insurgencies, is beset by a myriad of social and economic problems, and a dysfunctional state that lacks legitimacy and public trust (Jones, 2012).

With regard to external factors, an unjust global economic system created by the policies of western controlled financial and trading institutions, worsened the dehumanising conditions of abject poverty in many underdeveloped countries, facilitating the emergence of radical religious groups (Ousmane, 2004). This was accentuated by the military and political dimension of the global hegemonic power structure, appropriately termed as the *seven sins of American foreign policy*, the most prominent of which are unilateralism, big power arrogance and precipitate military action (Johnson and Caruson, 2003). Under President George Bush Jnr, American militarism and hegemony was displayed with a religious zeal and messianic calling (Chomsky, 2005). The post 9/11 invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, and military interventions in other parts of the Muslim world by the Bush administration led to a steep spiral in authoritarianism, corruption and repression, increased regional instability and popular resentment of Washington, fueling the quest for Islamist revival (Keenan, 2006).

The hostility of radical elements in the Muslim world against the USA is also to a large extent a reaction to American support for Israel at the expense of Arab and Palestinian rights, which has become the Muslim geo-political grievance *par excellence*. The policies of the US and other western governments toward the Arab-Israeli conflict, the two Gulf Wars and the Middle East in general, are considered by many Muslims to be unduly favourable to Israel (Salaam, 2013). This

aggravated the pre-existing sense of injustice and animosity, accelerating the emergence of radical Islam in large parts of the Muslim world. Consequently, Islamist groups bent on challenging American and western global hegemony found fertile ground for recruitment in many parts of the Muslim world. In Nigeria, such external factors combined with internal causes to amplify the grievances of the lower classes who sought a way out through “revolutionary violence” (Tijjani, 2007). Those were some of the conditions which prepared the ground for the emergence of the Boko Haram movement in Northern Nigeria.

Emergence

There are writers who claim that Muhammad Yusuf was the founder of the Islamist group that metamorphosed into Boko Haram (Blanquat, 2012; Opeloye, 2012). On the contrary, he was merely a member who became the leader of the sect at a later stage. The movement first came into existence with the name “Shabab” (Muslim Youths) under the leadership of Abubakar Lawan in 1995. Shortly after its emergence, Lawan travelled to the University of Medina for study, bequeathing leadership of the group to Mohammed Ali (Olajide, 2009). The pioneer members of the movement were part of a group of Muslim youths who worshipped at a Mosque located along Damboa road in Maiduguri. The owner of the Mosque is Mohammed Indimi, a well-known millionaire businessman. Growth of the membership of the nascent group and its transformation into a militant Salafist movement was facilitated by a group of Muslim students in the University of Maiduguri under the leadership of Aminu Tashen Ilimi. They were prominent members of a Salafi student circle in the University who abandoned their studies because of their belief in its sinful character, linked up with Muhammad Yusuf and constituted the core of the new Shabab movement (Thurston, 2015). After joining and radicalising members of the new movement, the group is alleged to have even prevented Muhammad Yusuf from preaching in the Mosque in disdain for his liberal views around the year 2000 (Olojo, 2013).

About seventy members who were critical of Muhammad Yusuf for being too soft broke away from the larger group in 2002, declaring Maiduguri and the Muslim establishment based in the city to be corrupt and irredeemable. They embarked on a *hijra* (withdrawal), along the lines of the Prophet Muhammad, and requested for a land from Governor Bukar Abba Ibrahim of Yobe State. The Governor permitted them to settle in Dapchi, headquarters of Borsari Local Government, where they made a living from fishing and irrigation near a dam. Here, they lived in a secluded setting with its Muslim values, welfare system and morality police, administering their affairs in what amounted to “a state within a state” (Indepth Analysis, 2014). When mediation by the police over fishing disagreement between them and a pre-existing community failed, the group relocated northward to a site near Kanamma in Yunusari Local Government Area, not far from the Niger-Nigeria boarder (Murtada, 2013). Here again, the youth group established a Muslim community based on strict Islamic Law, which became known as Afghanistan. The leaders of the group in this location were Abubakar Shekau, Mohammed Ali and Aminu Tashen Ilimi, all of whom espoused a radical anti-state ideology, calling upon other Muslims to join the group and return to a life under “true” Islamic Law. Muhammad Yusuf was not resident in Kanamma at this time, and it is unclear if the group was inspired by his teachings or paid allegiance to him in this early period.

Like in Dapchi, Shabab members came into dispute with the pre-existing inhabitants, over which the police frequently intervened, arresting and questioning some of its members due to repeated complaints about their truculent behavior. On 24th December 2003, confrontation between the group and the police ensued and the clashes that followed is described thus:

The group, then called the Nigerian Taliban, attacked Kanamma, looted the police arsenal and burned down the station and some government buildings. A smaller faction then proceeded to Dapchi, where it attacked the police station and carted away additional arms; Babangida town, where it burned down the local government secretariat and a government lodge; and Damaturu, where it stormed a police station, took guns and killed an officer. It was stopped on its way to Maiduguri by a police check point, and fighting left two police and three sect members dead (International Crisis Group, 2014: 10).

In Geidam and Kanamma, the attackers occupied two buildings for several days and hoisted the flag of the Afghan Taliban. They were dislodged only after a joint operation of the army and police killed eighteen of the assailants and arrested dozens of others (Abdulrahman, 2014). Apart from attacking the police in order to exact revenge for previous attacks, it might be that a major goal of its offensive at the time was to obtain weapons (Cook, 2011), which strengthened the offensive capabilities of the group.

Between January and September 2004, Shabab members extended their attacks to Bama and Damboa in the east. On 7th January 2004, some members of the group armed with AK47 rifles were apprehended while trying to attack a police station in Damboa, during which seven of them were killed while three others were arrested. On 23rd September, the sect attacked police stations in Bama and Gwoza, killing four policemen including an Assistant Police Commissioner, and snatching arms and ammunition (Onuoha, 2013) before fleeing into the Mandara Mountains, where they were pursued by Nigerian helicopter gunships. After two days of fighting, twenty-seven members were killed, five were arrested and handed over to the Nigeria Police by the Cameroonian authorities, while several others who escaped went underground. On 10th October 2004, the militants attacked a convoy of sixty policemen in Kala Balge, taking twelve as hostages, killing some and possibly convincing a few to join them (Maiangwa *et al*, 2012). Continuous attacks by the group eventually led to a siege of its Mosque near Kanamma by the army which lasted into the New Year. The siege ended in a shootout in which many members, including Mohammed Ali, were killed. The few survivors returned to Maiduguri, where they re-united with others from the youth group that originated at the Indimi Mosque.

While the attacks by Shabab members were taking place, Muhammad Yusuf was in Mecca, having travelled there since 2003 either, for pilgrimage or, for treatment in the Kingdom's hospital (Murtada, 2013), and refused to return because he was declared wanted by the Nigerian security agencies. The Deputy Governor of Borno State, Adamu Dibal, has provided clues on how Muhammad Yusuf returned to the country. Dibal declared to the press in the first week of August 2009 that he first met Muhammad Yusuf in Saudi Arabia after he was declared wanted for attacks against the police. Yusuf was leading a group on pilgrimage at the time and came to Dibal soliciting for help and protection, assuring the Deputy Governor that he was not a violent man, had nothing to do with the attacks against the police and wanted to return to his family. Dibal felt that Yusuf "might be useful to the intelligence agencies" and revealed that, "through my contacts with the security agencies he was allowed back" (Punch, 3/08/2009). On return, Muhammad Yusuf took over leadership of the two-reunited youth groups under circumstances that are unclear (Mohammed, 2010; Ray, 2016). From then onwards, the group referred to itself as *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad* (Sunni Group for Preaching and Jihad). However, the inhabitants of Maiduguri refer to it as "Boko Haram" (Western education is forbidden), coined out of the

trenchant opposition of the sect to western education. Of all the terms used in referring to the Islamist group since 1995, the term “Boko Haram” stuck firmer, stamped indelibly on popular consciousness through intense popularisation by the media.

After taking over leadership, Yusuf changed the name and doctrine of the movement, and hence, significantly shaped its future. The radical transformation of the group was also facilitated by the returnee survivors from Kanamma, who became “the hawks in the movement”, easily blending with Muhammad Yusuf, who was also earlier infused with a radical jihadist doctrine by Mohammed Ali (Mohammed, 2014). Subsequently, Yusuf became a disciple of Sheikh Jafar Mahmoud Adam, who became Imam at the Indimi Mosque. Eventually, Yusuf grew in stature as many young devout Muslims in the Mosque were attracted to his fiery attacks against the state and moral decay in society, portraying him as a champion of the commoners. His effective sermons and charismatic leadership led to the expansion of the group, which in turn made him popular, powerful and influential. When that occurred, Muhammad Yusuf was regarded as heir apparent to Sheikh Jafar Adam, destined to succeed him as leader in the Mosque. However, this was not to be because of his incendiary remarks, disdain for western education and persistent calls for an armed uprising, which led to his expulsion by the Mosque Committee. Thereafter, Yusuf and his growing followers relocated to the Musa Daggash Mosque in Gamboru Quarter, where he was also eventually expelled (Adeniyi, 2011). Consequently, Yusuf established the group’s Mosque, named *Markaz Ibn Taymiyyah*, where he succeeded in building the sect into “a state within a state,” with a cabinet, religious police and a large farm (Oftedal, 2013).

Between 2004 and 2008, Boko Haram entered into truce with the state. In keeping with the assurances he gave the Deputy Governor and others who facilitated his return from Mecca, Muhammad Yusuf mellowed down, temporarily distanced himself from violence and devised ways of improving his adverse relationship with the state. He tactically declared at the time that “an Islamic system of government should be established in Nigeria, and if possible, all over the world, but through dialogue” (Human Right Watch, 2012). Hence, the Nigerian state became temporarily assured, apparently tolerating the activities of the group. Yusuf went on tour of Northern Nigeria and delivered sermons on return to a strict Muslim way of life, recruiting a large number of followers in Borno, Bauchi, Yobe, Gombe and Adamawa States, and to a limited extent in Kano, Katsina, Sokoto, Jigawa and Kebbi States. Such recruits were largely made up of disaffected youths falling within the 17-30 age bracket, jobless school graduates, the unemployed and impoverished elements in society. The charismatic Muhammad Yusuf framed their alienation in religious terms, presenting Islam as the only encompassing solution with promises of empowerment (Ostebo, 2012). Furthermore, Yusuf created a Muslim social welfare program that took care of orphans, widows, the socially vulnerable, and handed out money and material items for loyalty and good works (Liolio, 2013). Not surprisingly, a large number of people joined the movement, raising its membership base to around 5,000 members (Monguno & Umara, 2014).

Tension

From the beginning of 2008 onwards, the relationship between Boko Haram and the Nigerian state was gradually becoming tense. This eventually led to the arrest of Muhammad Yusuf in Maiduguri on 13th November 2008, interrogated on 17th November, and subsequently handed over to the police in Abuja for prosecution. He was charged before a Chief Magistrate Court on 17th January 2009 on the allegation of planning to attack the Police, State Security Service and other agencies of state (Fabiyyi, 2009; Sheme, 2009). When Yusuf was released on bail on 20th January, he resumed preaching and threatened reprisals for his maltreatment. Within the same month, Boko

Haram established a presence in Bauchi town with bases near Federal Low-Cost Housing Estate and the Fadama Mada Hills. By this period, the tense relationship between the group and the Nigerian state was showing signs of further deterioration. In spite of the truce with the state between 2004 and 2008, Boko Haram was also stockpiling arms and ammunition in anticipation of an imminent clash with the security agencies (Malarchy, 2013).

Security concerns about the activities of the sect started long before the outbreak of the 2009 uprising. For example, at a meeting of the Borno State Security Forum held on 6th November and 2nd December 2008, the threat posed by the group was extensively discussed. The outcome was that both Yusuf and Abubakar Shekau should be ordered to stop preaching. Another source of concern was Abubakar Kilakum, a migrant from nearby Niger Republic, who was also one of the leaders of the group. Kilakum was resident at Damasak in Northern Borno, where his preaching always centered on abuse of government and incitement against the authorities. The meeting agreed on his deportation and requested the State Security Service and the Nigerian Immigration Service to deport him back to his country on 23rd August 2008 (Eribake, 2009). There is no indication, however, that the request was implemented. At the second meeting of the Forum held on 2nd December, security officials decided to draw the attention of higher authorities that in spite of the ban on illegal gatherings in any part of the state, followers of Muhammad Yusuf were illegally re-grouping for one reason or the other. This was communicated to the Borno State Governor on 21st January 2009, requesting him “as a matter of urgency to control such illegal gatherings as it will lead to a serious breach of law and order”. Subsequently, Muhammad Yusuf was “arrested by security agencies at six different times and arraigned before the Federal High Court, Abuja”. However, “on each occasion he was granted bail” (Higazi, 2013).

The pace of the deteriorating security situation was hastened by another unrelated development. Boko Haram came into conflict with members of the *Ja'amat Izalat al Bidi'a Wa Iqamat as Sunna* (Community for the eradication of un-Islamic innovations and the establishment of the Sunna) over the ownership of a Mosque in Monguno in December 2008. Ownership of the Mosque became a subject of dispute when a split between the two groups surfaced. A major cause for the split was the inability of the *Izala* to dissuade Muhammad Yusuf from his violent doctrinal convictions, which degenerated into a series of physical confrontations. In one recorded incident, 67 Boko Haram members that included Abubakar Shekau, who were on their way to Monguno to reclaim a mosque from the *Izala*, were arrested and locked up in the Maiduguri prison at the apparent instigation of their rivals (Mohammed, 2014). As a result, Boko Haram accused the state and the *Izala* of connivance in persecuting its members.

By 17th July 2009, over a dozen security reports on the dangers posed by Boko Haram have been written and forwarded to the State Governor. Many of the reports were also forwarded to the National Security Adviser, Chief of Defense Staff and the Inspector General of Police in Abuja but no action seems to have been taken (Anonymous, 2009). The Chief Imam of Maiduguri Central Mosque, Ibrahim Ahmed, informed *Agence Presse* that over fifty Muslim clerics contacted the Nigerian police, local authorities and security agents to take measures against the violent sect but nothing was done (Oladimeji & Olusegun, 2012). This was corroborated by Colonel Ben Ahanotu, Commander of Operation Flush, who stated that he recommended action to be taken against the group several times but received no orders (Tonga *et al*, 2009). This was the result of either gross negligence on the part of officials concerned or, a deliberate attempt at the highest quarters in Abuja to shield Boko Haram. The latter motive seems plausible because the State Security Service

officially informed the Nigerian Senate in Abuja that it sent several reports on the activities of the sect to higher authorities since 2006 but little was done (Liolio, 2013). Consequently, outbreak of the Boko Haram uprising seemed only a matter of time.

Catalyst for the Uprising

A minor incident with the police in Maiduguri became a catalyst for the outbreak of the uprising. On 11th June 2009, hostilities broke out when members of the group were on a funeral procession to bury four members who died in a motor accident. The procession rushed to the rescue of a fellow member being maltreated by a security patrol team enforcing a tightened regulation on the use of crash helmet by motorcycle riders. When an argument ensued, some members in the procession tried to dispossess the police of their guns, one of whom was reported to have fired at the police. The police fired back and injured seventeen individuals, who were rushed to the University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital, where treatment was denied until after a few scuffles (Maiangwa et al, 2012; Winter, 2012; Anonymous, 2012; Walker, 2012; Forest, 2012). Although none of the injured died, the police denied access to the wounded in the hospital, which the sect members regarded as unacceptable. Muhammad Yusuf became exasperated and gave a sermon in the form of an *Open Letter to the Federal Government of Nigeria* on the next day. He addressed the letter to “the fake President of Nigeria”, complaining about the attack and a perceived pattern of anti-Muslim violence in Northern Nigeria that goes back to 1987. While denying the account of the security agencies that they acted in self-defense, Yusuf narrated his version of what transpired on the fateful day thus: some fellow Muslims were proceeding from Ibn Taymiyyah Center to the Gwange Cemetery to bury four deceased brothers when they encountered some Nigerian soldiers and mobile policemen of the Operation Flush under the command of Ali Modu Sheriff, Governor of Borno State. They opened fire on the fellow Muslims. Right now 18 brothers are receiving treatment in the hospital. One of them was shot in the back and has to be operated upon to remove two bullets, one was shot between his thigh and abdomen, one was shot in his head with the bullet barely missing his eyes and he narrowly escaped death, one has his two legs totally shattered, one has the bone in his thigh broken and the bullet is still inside his body, one has his hand broken.....They did nothing wrong, did not insult anyone, and did not commit any offense. It is simply the injustice that is the main goal of the government of Borno state that created Operation Flush in order to create obstacles for our brothers or for our preaching, and to humiliate ordinary people. That is the purpose of creating the Operation Flush security patrols (Anonymous 2012: 129).

Apart from highlighting the numerous arrests, interrogations, detentions, and restrictions of his movements in the hands of the security agencies, Yusuf declared the non-Muslim elements in the security agencies as “drunk, crazy, and arrogant infidels who are totally dedicated to killing and humiliating Muslims”, stressing that the “time for patient endurance has passed and the time for action has arrived” (Anonymous, 2012). He concluded the sermon by issuing a 40-day ultimatum to the government.

The demand for investigation, justice and apology from the state for the perceived unjustifiable use of force was never met, and Muhammad Yusuf commenced preparations for war. For some inexplicable reasons, the state security agencies were also looking for a fight because they: serially mismanaged the crisis from the outset, and in the process pushed the movement to the extreme end of the spectrum. First was the setting up of the joint military operations, code named Operation Flush II, which tried to draw Boko Haram out for a fight by harassing members going to or returning from *dawah*, as they called their preaching activities. Restriction of movement of

motorcycles at night and the attempt to enforce the use of crash helmets were all aimed at achieving this. The mandatory use of motorcycle crash helmets by motorcycle riders, although a national policy was not enforced in other places with the same zeal. In fact, the enforcement policy stopped once the movement was crushed in July 2009 (Mohammed, 2014).

Not surprisingly, tension escalated within a short time and on 21st July, the police raided and seized bomb making materials from the house of a Boko Haram member in Biu, a hundred and eighty kilometers south of Maiduguri. Within that week, Muhammad Yusuf pronounced a member of the sect, who died through an accidental explosion while making a bomb, a martyr (Human Right Watch, 2012). From that moment, the deteriorating relationship between the movement and the Nigerian state reached a point of no return. It was obvious that outbreak of armed confrontation between the two sides seemed inevitable. What was needed was a catalyst, which was provided by the repressive Nigerian police.

Outbreak of the Uprising

Two weeks before the outbreak of the July uprising, Boko Haram members in Bauchi evacuated their families to Maiduguri, and on the eve of the attack, forty members of the group were arrested while on their way from Maiduguri to participate in the planned assault against the police in Bauchi. The Nigeria Police Force anticipated the attacks and started planning how to cordon their armory at Fadama Mada Hills. On Saturday, 25th July 2009 the police, with the possible collaboration of the State Security Service, made the first move by arresting nine members on the allegation of plotting to attack a police station (Abdulrahman, 2014). The arrest infuriated other members of the sect who resolved to free their colleagues at all cost. Consequently, around 4:00 am on Sunday, 26th July 2009, over a hundred members of Boko Haram attacked the Dutsen Tanshi Police Station, killing several people and injuring forty-two others (Awotedeji, 2009). A few hours later, the police cordoned the armory to prevent the attackers from having access. The insurgents fought back but could not break through the cordon, losing many men in the process. As a result, they had no choice but to concentrate their attacks on security facilities along the airport road in the late hours of Sunday. During the fighting, over two hundred persons were killed, and hundreds were taken as prisoners. Many others fled into nearby hills while security personnel destroyed their two enclaves, placing them under twenty-four hours' surveillance (Garba *et al*, 2009).

What distinguished this outbreak from previous religious insurrections in Nigeria was its nature, scale, organisation and relative sophistication. The Boko Haram insurgents went out for an all-out war, threatening to bomb all government facilities in Bauchi. Even as the clashes were subsiding, Muhammad Yusuf declared that he was "ready to fight to die" in order to avenge the killing of his followers. The threat was actualised because the incident in Bauchi became a catalyst for other members of Boko Haram to launch reprisal attacks against the police in Borno, Yobe, Kano, Katsina, Adamawa and other states in Northern Nigeria. In Kano State, members of the movement attacked a police station in Wudil on Monday, 27th July at around 3:30 am, resulting in the death of two police officers which included CSP Sagir Idris. The assailants made away with two AK47 rifles but lost two members in the attack, while four others that were wounded were captured by the police (Gusau *et al*, 2009). While the clashes were taking place, the Kano State Governor ordered the demolition of a Mosque and house of the leader of the group, Mallam Salisu Al-Amin Wudil; and in the days that followed, about thirty-three members of the group were arrested by the security agencies (Abubakar, 2019).



Fig. 1: States Affected By The 2009 Boko Haram Uprising In Nigeria

Source: Bulus Wolga Yuwomgi, Cartographer, Department of Geography, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria.

In Yobe State, revenge attacks against the police and government targets broke out in Potiskum, which had a large concentration of members of Boko Haram. Around 2:00 am on Monday, 27th July, about fifty youths using heavy rainfall as cover, attacked and burned down the Divisional Police Headquarters and buildings housing the Federal Road Safety Corps, National Population Commission, Cavalry Baptist Church and other public institutions. The police managed to identify a hideout of the group on the outskirts of the town which it raided, killing at least forty-three people on 29th July (Human Right Watch, 2012). When the violence subsided, four people that included two policemen lay dead, while six other policemen were wounded (Mohammed, 2010). In faraway

Katsina State, a policeman was wounded when the Divisional Police Office in Danja was raided. However, the police successfully repelled a group of young men who stormed the station with a can of petrol in order to set it on fire (Mohammed, 2010). In Yola, headquarters of Adamawa State, violence was averted when seventeen Boko Haram members were arrested on 27th July (Sahara Reporters, 2009).

However, the deadliest of the attacks took place in Maiduguri, which began around 6:00 pm on Sunday, 26th July. By 12:30 am of the next day, members of Boko Haram have descended upon Churches and police stations, attacking them ferociously with their faces covered. They ambushed the state police headquarters which resulted in a shootout lasting three hours. In addition, they attacked the barracks of the Mobile Police College, National Directorate of Employment, Makera Police Station and several Churches (Amin, 2009). On the first day of violence, about fifty civilians, twenty-two suspected insurgents, two police officers and one prison official were killed, nine others retreated, while nine homes and police stations were set ablaze. Among the dead was Superintendent of Police, Abdulaziz Usman Faruk, son of retired Commissioner of Police, Usman Faruk, who was Governor of the defunct North-Western State (Gusau *et al*, 2009). While the exchange of fire lasted, Boko Haram members were able to hoist flags in areas they captured, mounted check points, posted patrol teams and fired warning shots into the air throughout the night (Mohammed, 2010; Forest, 2012).

On Wednesday, 29th July, military personnel under the command of Major General Saleh Maina, General Officer Commanding 3rd Armored Division, moved into the Boko Haram enclave in Goni Damgari quarters. The Force consisted of six light armored tanks backed by hundreds of armed soldiers, mobile policemen and regular police officers (Mohammed, 2010). Mortar attacks were launched against the Mosque of the sect, breaching the wall and killing around a hundred adherents (Murtada, 2013). Fierce fighting followed around the area, leading to the arrest of Muhammad Yusuf, who was taken to Giwa Military Barrack for interrogation. However, members of the group refused to give up, waging ferocious battle even after the capture of their leader, which continued throughout the night for a fifth straight day. The insurgents seemed to have received re-enforcements from their brethren in neighboring Adamawa State, where members of the group abandoned their Mosque in Mubi and arrived Maiduguri. Additional re-enforcements were also received by them from Kaduna and Jos (Nnochin, 2009). Many of the insurgents were killed during the fighting while some of those arrested by the police, including those injured and disabled were executed point blank (Murtada, 2013).

Nonetheless, Boko Haram fighters stormed the New Prison along Sir Kashim Ibrahim Road on Thursday 30th July, shot three security guards on duty, abducted three and injured seventeen, smashed all doors and windows, set the prison on fire and freed three hundred and fifty-one inmates. In another part of town, the police rescued one hundred and eighty women and children allegedly abducted in Bauchi by the insurgents (Gorman, 2009). The last day of the uprising was a very violent day in which about two hundred bodies were picked up by security personnel along the streets (Mbaya & Friday, 2009). About one hundred and eighty-two people were treated in two hospitals for gunshot wounds, machete cuts, knife wounds and beatings, while a total of three thousand five hundred people were displaced, seeking shelter in military barracks by Friday morning. Throughout Friday, soldiers and policemen in armored personnel carriers patrolled Maiduguri, conducting house to house searches for members of the group (Akhaine *et al*, 2009).

Defeat of the Uprising

The defeat of the insurgents was inevitable because they lacked mass public support, while the fire power of the army and police was superior in all the states affected by the uprising. Hundreds of people who lost their lives during the uprising were given mass burial on Sunday, 2nd August. The total number of the dead in Borno, Bauchi, Yobe, Kano and Katsina States was estimated at between 780 people (UK Home Office, 2015), 800 (Olajide, 2009) and over 1000 (Shaibu & Salleh, 2015). This figure also included thirty senior police officers and three Pastors who were killed in Maiduguri, while twenty Churches were set ablaze (Akhaine *et al*, 2009). In addition, over 4000 people were displaced from their homes in Maiduguri alone by the fourth day of the fighting (Our Correspondents, 2009), while the amount of property damage is estimated at N1.5 billion (Anonymous, 2012). By the middle of October 2009, over a thousand suspected members of Boko Haram were in prison custody (Adedeji, 2009).

Apart from states directly affected in northeastern Nigeria, other parts of the country that narrowly escaped outbreak of the uprising included Kaduna State, where the timely closure of a base of the group in Rigasa averted violence. In Plateau State, where the Islamists established a base, the police swiftly arrested eighteen of the members within Jos, including leaders of the sect in various parts of the town. In Taraba State, adherents of Boko Haram in Sunkani almost struck if not because of the stop and search policy of the security agencies which led to the interception of some people later discovered to be insurgents (Tonga *et al*, 2009). In Sokoto State, the authorities demolished a Mosque in Gagi, where members of Boko Haram congregated on 5th August in order to forestall outbreak of violence. Most members of the group fled but about five were apprehended and paraded before newsmen by the police (Azgaku, 2015). Additional intelligence reports suggested that Lagos and Abuja may come under attack, leading to the adoption of tight security measures around the Presidential Villa, National Assembly Complex, Federal Secretariat, Eagle Square and other sensitive locations in Abuja. Even in faraway Cross River State, rumors of an imminent Boko Haram attacks caused panic in Calabar (Gusau, 2009). Nonetheless, by the end of August 2009, the Boko Haram uprising had been effectively defeated.

There are scholars who uphold the view that Boko Haram was a “fringe group” that was not “fully committed to violence prior to 2009” but was “goaded into confrontation” by the Nigerian state (Mohammed, 2014; Johnson, 2011). Such conclusion is debatable given the rejection of the legitimacy of the state by Muhammad Yusuf, mobilisation of his followers through virulent sermons, and the acquisition of weapons in preparation for war against the state (American Foreign Policy Council, 2013; Olajide, 2009). However, it is equally untrue to assert or imply that the group was prepared or militarily strong enough to confront the Nigerian state on an equal footing on the battlefield. The fact that they were crushed after five days of fighting, and their leader captured and executed, shows that their firepower did not match that of the army and the police. Unlike the military that was using armored cars and other heavy weapons, Boko Haram fighters were equipped with knives, clubs, machetes, cocktails and light weapons. At best, they possessed a few dozen AK47 rifles and never used rocket propelled grenades, heavy machine guns, improvised explosive devices or vehicle mounted anti-aircraft guns which they came to possess from 2011 onwards (Field Notes, Maiduguri, 17/08/2009). However, their ferocity and determination during the encounter was legendary and succeeded in confining a large part of the frightened population of the city in their houses for several days.

Conclusion

The account rendered in the present article shows that a combination of internal and external factors was responsible for the outbreak of the 2009 Boko Haram uprising. Among these were a deepening economic crisis, unemployment, corruption, poverty, income inequality, social alienation and an unjust global system constructed and controlled by the USA and its western allies. The hegemonic position of western powers globally not only accentuates economic backwardness and inequality within Third World countries but is perceived to have enthroned and sustained the domination of Muslims by non-Muslims worldwide, especially in the Middle East. Although this external factor, along with the inspiration Boko Haram derived from al Qaeda were important, internal factors were more decisive in the outbreak of the uprising. It would be difficult to imagine the outbreak of the insurrection at the time it did without the critical role played by internal factors. The trend of events before, and during the uprising, showed that Boko Haram was a homegrown movement that came into existence in the early 1990's and underwent rapid expansion between 2002 and 2008. By the beginning of 2009, it became a large and well-organised movement preparing to wage jihad in order to seize control of state power for the purpose of establishing Sharia rule throughout Nigeria. This, in its view, would end corruption and bad governance, purify society, rejuvenate Islam and earn divine salvation to all adherents who partook in the jihad. However, before the sect could be fully prepared, it came into sudden confrontation with the Nigerian state. The balance of forces between the two sides was unequal and the heavily armed police and army easily overrun the vastly outnumbered Boko Haram fighters in a matter of days. The response of the security agencies during the encounter was heavy handed, characterised by extreme brutality and extra judicial killings of dozens of insurgents that included Muhammad Yusuf and other leaders of the movement. However, the defeat of the sect was temporary because the surviving members of the group went underground and re-emerged a few months later as a better organised guerilla force. Since July 2010, they have launched a second and more deadly uprising which is still ongoing. This, however, lies outside the scope of the present article.

Recommendations

The Boko Haram insurgency has been ongoing for more than a decade, unleashing unprecedented violence that has resulted in widespread death and destruction. Although the insurgency has been weakened in recent years, it has not yet been finally defeated. Consequently, a thorough implementation of the measures outlined below is urgently needed to restore lasting peace in the conflict zone and the nation at large.

- i. The most important step that needs to be taken is addressing the root causes of the insurgency and the underlying socio-economic grievances that attracted the youth and gave birth to the insurgency. The major pillar of this intervention is economic reconstruction geared towards growing the Nigerian economy, providing jobs, reducing poverty and ensuring social justice for all citizens. This should be accompanied by the revival of dilapidated public infrastructure so that Nigerians can have access to affordable healthcare, education, electricity, water supply and other necessities of life. These will vastly improve individual and communal living conditions, enhance social security, keep religious militancy at bay and stabilise the nation politically.
- ii. In addition, concerted efforts should be made to provide good governance through accountability, rule of law and adherence to due process, among others. Perhaps, the

- most important measure for instituting good governance is combatting systemic corruption that has eaten deep into the fabric of the Nigerian nation. This should be accompanied by judicial and police reforms in order to improve the administration of justice and restore the confidence of the general public on state institutions.
- iii. Furthermore, the dissemination of the radical Salafist ideology of hate, death and destruction should be contained through mass religious re-education in consultation with clerics and the Muslim communities. Rather than teach mere religious literacy, a newly designed policy should aim to instill religious tolerance by teaching about the sanctity of human life, the peaceful nature of the religion of Islam, protection of property, lineage and intellect, and the good examples set by the Prophet Mohammad, who championed harmonious co-existence between Muslims, Jews and Christians.
 - iv. With regards to the ongoing military operations against Boko Haram, the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) alliance with Niger, Chad, and Cameroon should be retained and strengthened because it is essential for the military defeat of the insurgency. Without the MNJTF, Boko Haram militants will sneak across the porous boarder of the region and launch sporadic attacks for years with impunity. Likewise, the Nigerian government should provide the desired equipment, training and funding to Nigerian soldiers fighting the insurgents, vital for ending years of bloodshed. The low morale among soldiers needs to be boosted by prompt payment of salaries and allowances, timely promotions, rewarding acts of bravery, humane treatment of the families of fallen soldiers, and other welfare measures.
 - v. Finally, it is equally important for the Nigerian government to provide avenues for armed insurgents who want to surrender to do so without fear of retribution. Those who surrendered should be disarmed and rehabilitated through re-education, re-training and economic empowerment so that they can be re-integrated into society to lead a peaceful and productive life.

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