

## Global Challenge of Manual Suapicion: Boko Haram Uprising in Nigeria

**Abdi O. Shuriye**

Bello K. Adeyemi

Faculty of Engineering International Islamic University Malaysia

Gombak, KL, Malaysia

**Shittu Huud**

Department of Religion and Philosophy

University of Jos, Plateau State

Nigeria.

### Abstract

*The emergence of Boko Haram uprising in 2002 in the Northern part of Nigeria has continued to pose serious threats to Nigeria's national security. Religious sensitivity and a long time economic marginalisation of the north favor the growth of the insurgence in the region. Going by the weak approach form of the government, the recurrent violence may continue for some time. This paper provides an insight of the historical background of the group. It examines the causes and factors that enhance the group to flourish only in the Northern part of the country. The paper further outlines the origins and evolution of Boko Haram from its inception to the present. It criticises the reports of other authors as being biased and evaluates the impacts of the insurgence.*

### 1. Introduction

The northern segment of Nigeria has been suffering from unfortunate (history of) communal conflicts and ethno-religious violence. Most of these uprisings arise due to religious differences, tensions between blocs of Muslim and Christian inhabitants. For example, in Plateau state, in Nigeria's "middle belt," there have been many outbreaks of bloody violence between different communities for several decades. There have also been riots in the urban centers of Kaduna and Kano, and district of Bauchi (Walker, 2012 and Adesoji, 2010). Though, this could not be true because the aboriginals have repeatedly announced that the crises in Plateau have nothing to do with religion. People (indigenes and settlers as they address) opined that crisis could escalate in reaction to the increasing attacks blamed on the Boko Haram, which does not connect them. They noted, although Nigeria's sectarian violence is different from Boko Haram's attacks, it usually falls along religious fault lines. Both Muslims and Christians in Jos are quick to point out that when they clash, it's not usually about religion or ethnicity. Some locals say the fight began over land and political rights. Others say poverty is at the heart of the conflict. Politicians are blamed for exacerbating the situation by playing people against each other. After years of escalation and retaliation the two communities are now terrified of one another.

Recounting the history, the global point reported: it all started over disputes between farmers and nomadic cattle herders who need fields to graze their animals, according to humanitarian worker Aliyu Dawobe Ladduga. The farmers involved in the conflict are generally Christians who are from the Berom, Anaguta and Afizere ethnic groups. The herdsmen are Muslim Fulanis, said Ladduga, who himself comes from a family of Fulani cattle herders. This incident is of recent.

Furthermore, at a clinic in Jos, near a checkpoint erected between a Christian and Muslim neighborhood, Salma Musa, a mother of three, says ideological differences are not behind the conflict. In many parts of Nigeria, and in the past in Jos, Christians and Muslims lived peacefully together, intermarrying and sharing customs. In 2012 and 2013 several marriages were contracted between the Muslims (settlers) and Christians (natives). So, where is the problem of religion (HuudShittu, a resident in the heart of Jos and an eye witness at the start of the crises in September 2001)? In the last three decades, northern Nigeria has experienced the growing of deadly Islamic sects in the cities of northern Nigeria. The Maitatsine uprisings of 1980 in Kano, 1982 in Kaduna and Bulumkutu, 1984 in Yola and 1985 in Bauchi, marked the beginning of ferocious conflict and crises in Nigeria secular state of independent Nigeria. The insurgence was the first attempt at imposing a religious ideology which heretically claimed Muhammad was not the messenger of Allah.

A brutal military attack was launched to wipe out leaving the group scattered and was fully eliminated over the course of a decade (Adesoji, 2010). A misrepresentation is noted in this report. In the history of Islamic sect, none has disclaimed Muhammad as the messenger of Allah. Even the declaration of Ahmadis who claimed prophethood of Ghulam Ahmad and continuation of revelation did not reject Muhammad; other sects in Islam have not been brutal to them (Koya 1997; Ishaq 1979).

Yet, the rise of Islamic militancy with the outbreak of the Boko Haram group since July 2009 marked another new phase in the recurring pattern of violent ethno-religious uprisings in northern Nigeria. The emergence of the Islamic militant group poses growing threats to the regional stability till date (Ostebo, 2012). The appeal of Boko Haram Islamic sect stems from the beliefs that northern politics has been seized by a group of corrupt, false Muslims. It wants to wage a war against them and the Federal Republic of Nigeria generally in order to create a “pure” Islamic state ruled by Sharia law (Peter, 2012 and Walker, 2012). Given the heterogeneous nature of Nigeria society, the forceful attempt by Islamic fundamentalists to impose a religious ideology on a constitutionally recognized secular society would be a difficult task to achieve (Adesoji, 2012). This author has explained his discrimination in his report and has not comprehended bone of contentions between the so called Boko Haram. More so, the evolution of Boko Haram is far from the conception of the recent authors (Raji, 2012).

The long existence of this insurgent group boils down to a weakness in the institutions of politics and the security services of Nigeria government that has created a political situation where such threats to stability are not dealt with until the violence finally erupts. Such weakness of security institutions clearly show in their only violent approach of dealing with any such threat. Boko Haram was created under these circumstances and has claimed thousands of life in the past three years. Since 2009 the group has been driven by a desire for vengeance against politicians, police, and Islamic authorities for their role in a brutal suppression of the group that year (Micha, 2012 and Walaker, 2012).

In August 2011, the group attempted to attract world’s attention in the claim to bomb the United Nations compound in Abuja, killing twenty-three people (Micha, 2012). Under this circumstance, there are speculations that Boko Haram has reached out to find allies in other foreign Islamic fighters like AQIM (Al-Qaida in the Maghreb) based on its sophisticated capability to produce improvised explosive devices and enlist suicide bombers to deliver them. However, there remains no enough evidence to conclude the group’s intentions are to attack Western interests inside or outside Nigeria (Balogun, 2012). Aside from the continued loss of lives and property and the growing fear among Nigerians, there is a need for a careful consideration and documentation of the phenomenon that the Boko Haram uprising represents (Adesoji, 2010). At present, the spate of attacks on northern Christian by the group could escalate religious crisis studied from the various reprisal attacks and this may have very serious implications on the unity of the country if extreme caution is not taken to avoid growing rift between north and south (Peter, 2011). It is this type of insinuation that fans ember of violence in various places, which therefore attribute to religious affairs.

## ***2. The Nature and Origin of Boko Haram***

Boko Haram is an incoherent grouping of smaller factions that share similar agendas, which are not clear. Boko Haram remains largely Nigerian in nature but share a sense of ethnicity and religion. Boko Haram is underdeveloped and metamorphosing quickly by connecting to brethren across borders. The pertinent question to ask is whether this is a jihad as claimed by the group or a rebellion (Peter, 2012). The author has painted blatant lies on the concept of jihad; jihad is an exercise or effort of educating others and establishing peace. He has affirmed, in the next paragraph, the fact that original name is not what they were known.

What is true is that the name “Boko Haram” has not been given by the group itself but derive from the view of its basic beliefs. However, Boko Haram officially referred to themselves as Jama’atulAhl as-Sunnahlidaawawal Jihad [The Group of the People of the Sunnah for Preaching and Jihad]. Boko Haram is formed from a combination of the Hausa word *boko* meaning “book” and the Arabic word *haram* which is something forbidden, ungodly or sinful. Literally, Boko haram means “book is sinful” and that Western education is sinful, ungodly and should therefore be forbidden. The group vehemently opposed to Western education, Western culture and modern science. However, the group has strong passion for the propagation of and strict adherence to Islam and sought to impose Sharia across the northern state of Nigeria (Bumah and Adelakun 2009)

In another context, “Boko Haram,” was a name given to the group by dismissive neighbors who had rejected the idea of the sect. It was as if they were saying “those people who go on and on about Western education being a sin.” Boko Haram, as a group, clearly does not outrightly reject the modern world as the sect were found with the use of fruits of Western education such as mobile phones, video cameras, DVDs, YouTube, chemical explosives, automatic weapons, and cars. Boko Haram is, however, against those in northern Nigeria known as “*yanboko*.” translated as “child of the book.” Yan boko refers to the elite people who have had their heads turned away from Allah by easy money and corrupting Western values. To be yanboko is to be spiritually and morally corrupt, lacking in religious piety, and guilty of criminally enriching oneself rather than dedicating oneself to the Muslim community (Walker, 2012)

However, a statement allegedly released in August 2009 by the acting leader of Boko Haram, MallamSanniUmaru, has upheld the fact that Boko Haram does not in any way mean 'Western Education is a sin' as popularly broadcast by media. He claimed Boko Haram actually means 'Western Civilisation' is forbidden; “the difference is that while the first gives the impression that we are opposed to formal education coming from the West...which is not true, the second affirms our belief in the supremacy of Islamic culture (not Education), for culture is broader, it includes education but not determined by Western Education”. The sect frowns at Medias' description of it as the Boko Haram and instead prefers to be addressed as the Jama'atuAhliSunnahLidda'awatiwal Jihad, meaning a "People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad"(Adesoji, 2010)

The majority members of the sect came from its poorest groups even though membership also extends to some former former university lecturers, students, bankers, a former commissioner and other officers of Borno State, drug addicts, vagabonds, and generally lawless people. The main goal among all members was their desire to propagate Islamic law and abandon secular rulings. (Michael and Bwala 2009)

The group has created havoc across the north of the country and in the capital, Abuja. Its violent attacks on government offices, the United Nations, and churches threaten to destabilize the country. A range of conflicting narratives has grown up around Boko Haram, and the group's origins, motivations, and future plans remain a matter of debate. Until date, Boko Haram has not been classified in the same global jihadist bracket as Algeria's al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, or Somalia's al Shabab. Despite its successful attack on the UN building in Abuja in August 2011, Boko Haram is not bent on attacking Western interests. There have been no further attacks on international interests since that time (Walker, 2012)

Over the years, there are many barriers to understanding the group as many possible sources of information are unreliable and dependable information in general is hard to come by in Nigeria.

The Nigerian police are often led by corrupt or incompetent officers who rarely provide useful information to the public. Boko Haram too does not have an incentive to give reliable or accurate information to confirm the activities carried out by the group. Boko Haram has denied shootings and bombings that fit its pattern of activity. There are some attacks ascribed to Boko Haram that could easily be the work of armed robbers operating under the mask of the group. Political rivals could also be using of Boko Haram as a cover to settle scores and carry out assassinations. In one example, a failed bombing in March 2012 of a church in Bauchi was said by the police to have been plotted by a rival Christian organization. Had the bombing gone to plan, it is easy to see how the attack would have been blamed on Boko Haram (Walker, 2012).

Despite this uncertainty, there is no denial that a violent group made up of followers and a sympathizer of Mohammed Yusuf, calling itself Jama'atuAhliSunnahLidda'AwatiWal Jihad, does not exist. A source has followed the group in Maiduguri since 2007 revealed that the core group has evolved into a cell-like organization, run by a thirty-member Shura Council who work in unison but scattered all over the country using mobile phones to communicate. Each member of the council is responsible for a cell, and each cell is focused on a different task or geographical area. Someone on the lowest level of the cell might not know another member of similar rank in the organization. This source says that most of the group's actions are agreed at the council level but that leader and successor of Muhammad Yusuf, Abubakar Shekau, also takes decisions without referring them to the council (Walker 2012, Joseph 2012)

### 3. Ideology and Agenda of Boko Haram

Boko Haram is a very incoherent movement, often referred to as a “sect” that is clearly operating through a number of factions that do not communicate with each other or indeed share the same agendas. (5). The common denominator among all members was their desire to overthrow the secular government and to establish Islamic Sharia law in the northern part of Nigeria. The oratory prowess of the sect’s founder, Muhammad Yusuf, arguably contributed to their mobilization and participation (Michael and Bwala 2009). Actually, the philosophy of the sect is rooted in the practice of orthodox Islam which abhors Western education and working in the civil service. This explains why the sect is popularly known as the Boko Haram.

In interviews before his death, Mohammed Yusuf said the purpose of the organization was to withdraw from a society that had become corrupt and beyond help. His group would then set up a new society whose sole purpose was to be close to Allah. From that purpose prosperity and success would naturally flow, and his righteous group would eventually take over mainstream society. Where “Western” society had gone wrong, Yusuf said, was in deviating from the principles of Sharia. For this vision in mind, Yusuf advocated that in the face of leadership by Muslims who did not behave in a benevolent way and used their leadership to oppress, it was acceptable to Allah for individuals to withdraw from that corrupt system and fight to establish justice based on Sharia laws (Walker, 2012). Yusuf also made plain Boko Haram’s intentions in an interview with Nigeria’s *Daily Trust* newspaper, “Democracy and the current system of education must change, otherwise this war that has yet to start will continue for a long time (Micha, 2012)

According to Peter (2012), it is important to note that Boko Haram can be described as fanatical sects whose beliefs are not held by the majority of Nigerian Muslims. In their denunciation of Western civilization, both also came to reject the legitimacy of the secular Nigerian state, invariably described as *dagut* (“evil”) and unworthy of allegiance and ended up waging war against it in an effort to replace it with a pristine Islamic practice (Peter, 2011 and Joseph 2012). Although the sects name has changed over the years (Since then, the sect has metamorphosed under various names like the Muhajirun, Yusufiyyah, Nigerian Taliban, Boko Haram and Jama’atu Ahlissunna hlidda’awati wal Jihad), its ideological mission is quite clear, namely to impose strict Islamic Sharia law in the country. Members of the sect are motivated by the conviction that the Nigerian state is filled with social vices and corruption, thus „the best thing for a devout Muslim to do was to “migrate” from the morally bankrupt society to a secluded place and establish an ideal Islamic society devoid of political corruption and moral deprivation ( Peter, 2012).

### 4. History of Boko Haram Uprising

Boko Haram is a controversial Nigerian militant Islamist group that seeks the imposition of *Shariah* laws in 12 northern states of Nigeria (see Fig. 1). Its official name in Arabic is *Jama’ atu AhlisSunna Ladda’ a watiwal–Jihad*, which means “People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet’s Teachings and Jihad”. It was reported that the resident came up with the name because of its strong opposition to Western education, which the sect sees as corrupting Muslim leaders and followers alike (Newswatch, 2011. August 1, p. 20). This is an erroneous report; it has started during the colonial period when Islamic law school, otherwise known as Shari’ah legal school at Kano, was headed by a non-Muslim, a white Christian man. Muslims of Kano revolted and claimed that how possible would an illiterate about Islamic law be heading the institution?

The origin of Boko Haram has been traced to Yobe and Borno, two of northern Nigeria’s twelve Muslim-majority state (Micha, 2012). Like northern Nigeria’s other states, Yobe and Borno are already administered in accordance with some form of Islamic law. (4)The group emerged in 2002 under the leadership of Mohammed Yusuf (Newswatch, 2011; August 1, p. 20). The group was established by Mohammed Yusuf to embark on ideological path, distinct from mainstream Islamists and Salafis in Nigeria. Yusuf was actively involved in the enforcement of the *Shari’ah* laws introduced in northern Nigeria in the early 2000s. Muhammad Yusuf was not born when the concept of Boko Haram was unveiled itself. He had no say about it and never spoken of damnation to western education because he had western education. However, the introduction of Islamic law (Shari’ah) in the 12 northern Nigerian states was considered insufficient by Yusuf and his followers, who argued that the country’s ruling class as a whole was marred by corruption and even Muslim northern leaders were irredeemably tainted by “Western-style” ambitions.

Their envisaged “pure” Shari’ah state would ostensibly be both more transparent and just than the existing order. As a result, the group began their campaign in Maiduguri, in the same year by setting up a religious complex, which included a mosque and an Islamic school. The places were said to have attracted many poor Muslim families from across Nigeria and other neighboring countries were said to have enrolled their children at the school. The group was said to live in its own world and adopted Arabic as its official language of communication (Joseph, 2012)

In the late December 2003, the group declared it was embarking on migration from Maiduguri to a village called Kanama in Yobe state to set up a separate community with the aim of returning to a life under “true” Islamic law, that evolve more perfect society away from the corrupt establishment. Following a community dispute regarding fishing rights in a local pond, a conflict ensued in which the group members overpowered a squad of officers and took their weapons. This confrontation however ended in a shootout in which about group’s seventy members was killed by the army (Newswatch, 2011; August 1, p. 20). This represented the first armed attacks the group launched against security forces and public (Peter, 2011)

The activities of the group became known internationally following riots that lasted from 25 July to 30 July 2009 and spread across the four states of Bauchi, Kano, Yobe and Borno, the latter of which saw the most extensive rioting perhaps because it was the leader of the movement’s base. The immediate cause of the riot was the raiding of the sect’s hideout at the DutsenTanshi area of Bauchi on 26 July 2009 by a joint security team, during which nine of its members were arrested and led to reprisal attacks by the sect members on police formations eventually in the other three states (Bakare et al, 2009).

On July 30, 2009, a gang on security officers stormed Boko Haram’s mosque compound in Maiduguri which finally led to a violence in which Uztaz Muhammad Yusuf was captured at his father-in-law’s house and later shot dead while in police custody (Adedeji, 2009). Approximately 800 people died in the violence and numerous public buildings, including government offices, police stations, schools, mosques, and churches, were destroyed. It is estimated that approximately 500 Boko Haram militants were killed while the police reported losing twenty-eight men. At this time, score of its leaders as well as several prominent financial backers such as AlhajiBujiFoi, a former commissioner for religious affairs in Borno State, were killed (Micha, 2012) Boko Haram’s leadership structure since Yusuf’s death remains unclear, yet the group has demonstrated both the will and capacity to escalate its insurgent activities (Ostebo, 2012).

The surviving top members of the organization, including Abubakar Shekau, who later assumed the leadership of Boko Haram, fled to Niger and Chad for regrouping and mobilization (Micha, 2012). In January 2010, AQIM head, Abdelmalek Droukdel, stated in an interview with aljazeera that his group would offer Boko Haram with weapons, training, and other support in order to defend Muslims in Nigeria. Droukdel and the AQIM *shurahad* already offered Shekau assistance in rebuilding Boko Haram (Peter, 2001). Shortly afterwards, late Mohammed Yusuf’s deputy, Abubakar bin Muhammad Shekau, appeared in a video and threatened for vengeance. (Adesoji, 2010)

In September 7, 2010, Boko Haram fighters successfully launched an attack on a federal prison in Bauchi State and freed more than 100 of their fellow members who had been awaiting trial since the previous year’s uprising and then scattered leaflets warning of further violence. On Christmas Eve 2010, the group claimed responsibility for setting off a string of seven improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in Christian communities in Jos, Plateau State and left 80 dead and many wounded (Micha et al., 2012).

On June 16, 2011, Boko Haram launched the first suicide attack using a vehicle-borne IED in an operation targeted the Inspector General of the Nigerian Police Force, whose convoy the terrorist followed into the police headquarters compound in the federal capital of Abuja. The explosion resulted in killing two bystanders (Fig. 2). In fact, the incident showed that Boko Haram had demonstrated that it was now capable of carrying out attacks far from its usual areas of operation. Shortly thereafter, the group further gained worldwide attention following the suicide bombing of the United Nations’ Nigerian headquarters in Abuja in August 26, 2011 which left Twenty-five people dead and at least 80 were wounded (Peter, 2011&2012)

From November 4, 2011 to January 20, 2012, the group was reported to launch a coordinated complex attack; “assault on Damaturu, capital of Yobe State, which involved suicide attacks on various police stations followed by the massacre in the Christian quarter of the city of 150 people; the Christmas morning bombing outside the Catholic church in Madalla, near Abuja, which killed at least 32 as they exited Mass, and 4 other explosions elsewhere; attacks in Kano, Nigeria’s second-largest metropolis and the Muslim North’s economic, political, and cultural hub, which left more than 185 people dead” (Peter, 2012). In fact, the attacks in Damaturu and Madalla were consistent with the prior notice that the group has issued demanding Christians to leave northern Nigeria (Peter, 2012). More recently, there have been deadly assaults using bomb and gun attacks on the offices of *This Day* newspaper in Abuja and Kaduna, the Catholic chapel in Bayero University Kano, and a cattle market in Yobe. The incident claimed a lot of lives (Mazrui & Emeritus, 2012).

As of now, with increased intensity of bombings in the north, there was strategic mass movement of individuals from the most affected northern states. The movements were of a strange as both southerners and Northerners simultaneously moved from Boko Haram strong holds (Okpaga et al 2012)

### **5. Causes and Impact of Boko Haram Insurgency**

From the forgoing, the basic agenda Boko-Haram movement in Nigeria has been analyzed. But the major cause of what is now seen as ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria has to do with the accusations and allegations of neglect, oppression, domination, exploitation, victimization, discrimination, marginalization nepotism and religious intolerance (Aleyomi, 2012).

On the first premise, the failure of the Nigerian leaders to establish good governance may have hampered national integration which has led to mass poverty and unemployment. This has resulted into communal, ethnic, religious and class conflicts that have now characterized the entire Nigerian nation. Poverty and unemployment have therefore served recipe’ for the emergence of Boko Haram insurgence because this has left the hopeless poor people to be used as mercenary fighters. What this means theoretically is that poverty and unemployment increase the number of people who are prepared to kill or be killed (suicide bombers) for a given course at token benefit. This explains why all the Boko Haram operations involving suicide bombing have a large turnout of under-aged, unemployed and illiterate people (including the under-aged) as fighters by the master minds and sponsors .for a miserable price (Bagaji et al ,2012)

More so, the weakness of entire Nigeria’s security system is another reason for the escalation of Boko Haram violence. The introduction of politics to the security issue has not been helpful but serves as a threat to survival, peace and security of the country. Despite billions of naira (20% of annual budget) being expended in the name of security votes by both the federal and some state governments in the North to deal with the Boko Haram and other related threats, Police and military officers are mostly finding it difficult to withstand the assault by the radical group (Danjibo, 2009). In fact, there are reported cases where both soldiers and the Police chose to run for their lives or removing their uniforms to disguise as civilians during Boko Haram operations instead of protecting the innocent people where such attacks have recorded high casualties on the part of the security officers. Bumah and Adalakan (2009) have observed that the country’s security forces do not have the type of sophisticated weapons and mind what the Boko Haram members possess. However, the blame on the security agents but the leaders who have failed to address institutional rot in the security system of Nigeria which has become less powerful due to the greed and corruption that has eaten deep in the system ((Aleyomi, 2012)). There is possibility to continue in the Boko Haram insurgency which if not urgently addressed might cause disunity and national disintegration.

### **6. Conclusion**

By and large, there is no denying the fact that Boko Haram’s insurgency has remained a scourge in Nigeria’s national security and development. The spate of suicide bombings targeting soft places represent a major advance in Boko Haram capabilities and have continued to undermine Nigeria collective entity. The Boko Haram terrorism in northern Nigeria is casting a pessimistic outlook on the future and fate of the country, but the terror group’s activities should not be perceived as a reflection of the Islamic faith. Boko Haram continues to disturb the nation and fuelling pessimism, and any interpretation of the terror group as a religious expression is a misconception of the crisis. Projecting religious face of Boko Haram and ignoring political manipulation by political elite is a genre of injustice and discrimination. This brings the discourse to conclusion.

What is apparent at present is that the Federal government of Nigeria lacks the ability to provide workable security strategies to address the challenges. Therefore, all efforts must be put in place in ensuring maximum protection of the citizens' lives and properties. It is important to mention that Boko Haram in its metamorphosis offers little direct to international communities and most of the operations are still restricted to the national level and must be confronted with utmost care in order to avoid undue international influence and anarchy.

Situation in Nigeria is where lawful (Halal) and unlawful (Haram) has no dividing line. Thus, methods of checking oppression are employed by different scholars at different time. And the methods differ for each era and time. However, Boko haram subscribed to Islam without subscribing to time and changes. However, in Nigeria even the life of citizen is not protected. So Nigerians are pushed to wall, only the poor are taxed while rich are not. Everybody knows that things are not right in Nigeria. Knowing that some factors such as lack of development on the leaders; misrule and misrepresentation as well as emotional responses emanated from mutual suspicion have made religion a handy tool for the manipulation of the people by the ruling elite strengthen tumults everywhere. Economic imbalances, unequal distribution of resources, unemployment and moral decadence in the society are other burning factors for violence.

Now, methods of checking these excess varies from group to group. When others prefer to die than to live in the condition, others subscribed to other methods. This is the beginning of Boko Haram, everybody can become a book haram if not because of Islamic Movement in Nigeria; anybody who has no meaning to live in Nigeria can become Boko Haram. So when people do not have meaning in their lives, they become criminals. Therefore, Boko Haram is a result of bad governance where people do not have meaning in their lives except frustration.

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