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Terrorism and Insurgency in Africa

Edited by

James J. Hentz and Hussein Solomon



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**Edited by James J. Hentz and
Hussein Solomon**

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2017
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
and by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Hentz, James J., editor. | Solomon, Hussein, editor.

Title: Understanding Boko Haram : terrorism and insurgency in Africa / edited by James J. Hentz and Hussein Solomon.

Description: New York : Routledge, 2017. | Series: Contemporary terrorism studies | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016048326 | ISBN 9781138696228 (hardback) | ISBN 9781315525051 (ebook)

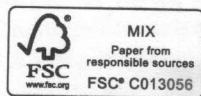
Subjects: LCSH: Boko Haram. | Terrorist organizations--Nigeria. | Insurgency--Nigeria.

Classification: LCC HV6433.N62 B685 2017 | DDC 363.32509669--dc23
LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2016048326>

ISBN: 978-1-138-69622-8 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-315-52505-1 (ebk)

Typeset in Times New Roman
by Wearset Ltd, Boldon, Tyne and Wear



Printed and bound in Great Britain by
TJ International Ltd, Padstow, Cornwall

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Preface
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PART II	
The Nigerian state and Boko Haram	85
5 Boko Haram and the widening of cleavages in Nigeria	87
AZEEZ OLANIYAN AND LUCKY E. ASUELIME	
6 Identity, deprivation, terror: why Boko Haram rebels	109
DANIEL E. AGBIBOA	
7 The elusive quest for peace: Boko Haram and the hollowness of Nigeria's counter-insurgency strategy and weak security architecture	129
OLABANJI AKINOLA	
8 Mopping the wet floor beneath a leaking roof: fighting terror while overlooking radicalization	145
IBABA SAMUEL IBABA AND ANTHONY C. OKOYE	
PART III	
Responses	171
9 Portents of a fractured Boko Haram for Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy and tactics	173
GBEMISOLA ABDUL-JELIL ANIMASAWUN	
10 Effective counter-terrorism against Boko Haram: empirical assessments of coercion, delegitimization, incentivization and denial strategies in Nigeria (2009–2014)	188
JOHN A. STEVENSON, AMY PATE AND ELVIS ASIAMAH	
11 The Western response	218
VIRGINIA COMOLLI	
12 Responding to Boko Haram: interrogating the effectiveness of state and regional intervention approaches	237
KWESI ANING, MUSTAPHA ABDALLAH AND FESTUS KOFI AUBYN	
Conclusion	255
13 Nigeria and a war across states in Northwest Africa	257
JAMES J. HENTZ	
<i>Index</i>	273

Illustrat

Figures

- 10.1 Scatterp
- 10.2 Boko H
- 10.3 Boko H

Map

- 3.1 Territor

9 Portents of a fractured Boko Haram for Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy and tactics

Gbemisola Abdul-Jelil Animasawun

What should be expected is that new social movements will develop that are essentially anti-elite in nature and draw their support from people, especially men, on the margins. In different contexts and circumstances they may have their roots in political ideologies, religious beliefs, ethnic, nationalist or cultural identities, or a complex combination of several of these ... the most common feature is an opposition to existing centres of power..., anti-elite action will be a core feature of the next thirty years – not so much a clash of civilisations, more an age of insurgencies.¹

Within one year, the coming of our president has changed the game. Look at what was happening before whereby three states, the whole northeastern region, was under the terrorists. Now we may have maybe two local *governments*.

(Dan-Ali, Nigeria's minister of defense, on March 30, 2016, speaking to Voice of America)²

Introduction

The conflict–insecurity nexus in Nigeria's Fourth Republic (inaugurated on May 29, 1999) exists in two main contexts. The first is the intergroup conflicts which are often communal, ethno-political, religious and ethno-religious. The second context involves insurgencies of ethno-linguistic groups fiercely engaging the Nigerian state, and these are found in each geopolitical zone of the country. Nigeria, described as a post-traumatic state in the early days of the Fourth Republic owing to state-sponsored terrorism by the regime of military dictator Sanni Abacha,³ is now a partially terrorized space due to the emergence of Islamist terrorism in the North-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. It has also spilled over into neighboring states.

In the resultant destruction wrought, the *Jama'at ahl al-Sunna li al-da'wa wa al-jihad*, or "People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad" – better known as Boko Haram – has elbowed to the back other insurgencies from the south to north central Nigeria. It has become the most lethal threat not only to national and human security in Nigeria, but also a threat to sub-regional security in the border zone across Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, Benin and Chad. On June 18, 2011, it made a bold statement by bombing the UN office

and Nigeria's national police headquarters in Abuja, Nigeria's federal capital. On November 11, 2013, Boko Haram was designated as a foreign terrorist organization by the United States, and two years later the group pledged allegiance to the Islamic State in Syria (ISIS). In March 2015, it renamed itself as the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP). Presently, based on statistical evidence of deaths, Boko Haram is the most lethal Islamist terrorist organization in the world, recording 2,608 deaths as of October 2, 2016,⁴ and over 10,000 people since it emerged. As of January 2015, Boko Haram had occupied villages in Borno and Yobe, occupying territories in total as large as Belgium.⁵

The response from Nigeria and the multinational task force, launched in February 2015 and comprising Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Benin, has recorded gains in what has become a major sub-regional counter-terrorism initiative. The initiative is paying off, reclaiming most of the villages that were hitherto controlled by Boko Haram. However, the battle rages on and there is a gap between the official narratives of success and the actual realities in Nigeria's terrorized space: the northeast geopolitical zone.

As a result of authorities tightening security around government buildings, there has been an upsurge in the frequency of attacks on soft targets especially public mass gatherings, such as the camps of the internally displaced people (IDP) and mosques. There has been an increase in the use of female suicide bombers in Nigeria. This is a clear indication that, even if it is fractured, Boko Haram is lashing out after suffering losses of territories and human capital.⁶ So, instead of seeing Nigeria's ongoing war against Boko Haram as ending, it should be seen as entering another phase in which more conventional warfare strategies are jettisoned in favor of asymmetric warfare. Despite a split which gave birth to Ansaru and its pledged allegiance to ISIS, and uncertainties about the life or death of its leader Abubakar Shekau, the successor of Mohammad Yusuf, it is premature to assume that Boko Haram has been defeated. In the past, Boko Haram has demonstrated a deep bench, replacing one senior commander by another within minutes of the announcement of his death.

Cognizant of the global war on Islamist terrorism since 2001 and the instances of setbacks and comebacks by Boko Haram, this chapter presents the tactics and strategies that have sustained Boko Haram from 2003 to 2009 and 2009 to 2016 and how the state has responded. Describing the fracturing of Boko Haram as a "technical defeat" might be short-sighted. The fracturing of the group and its asymmetric warfare indicate, rather, a new phase, marked by its readiness to employ suicide bombers. Boko Haram's shifting strategy should be factored into Nigeria's "war on terror." The strategy should be aimed at winning the war and the peace undergirded by the words of Obafemi Awolowo, spoken during the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970): "... it is equally important and crucial, if not more so, to win the peace ... if we lost the peace, we would have fought in vain, and our sacrifices would have been colossal and criminal waste."⁷

This chapter challenges the assertion of Boko Haram's technical defeat. It argues that rethinking Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy and tactics should combine instruments of hard and soft counter-terrorism. This responds to the

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question that frames this study: what does the current fracturing portend for Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy, and how can it be situated within a larger strategy of Nigeria's "war on terror"? In preparing this chapter, primary data was generated through interviews with respondents, comprising security agents, relevant government agents and journalists. Secondary data was sourced from newspapers and Internet sources.

Islamism in Northern Nigeria: between the State of Islam and the Islamic State

With a population estimated at 175 million, Nigeria is Africa's largest country and by 2050 it is estimated by the UN that it will have more people than the United States.⁸ Housing over 250 (sub)ethnic nationalities and over 400 distinct ethno-linguistic groups, about half of Nigeria's population practice Islam; the Christians constitute about 40 percent, and the rest of the population professes diverse forms of traditional religions.⁹ Specifically, "... only about 35–40 percent of the Muslim population is concentrated in the northwest of the country, whereas 55–60 percent of Nigeria's Muslims is clustered in enclaves throughout the rest of the country."¹⁰ The northeast of Nigeria, which is the epicenter of Boko Haram's insurgency, is also largely made up of Muslims with sprinkles of Christians constituting the religious minorities. To date, northern Nigeria remains a crucible of both Salafism and interfaith conflict.¹¹

Nigeria's northeast and west constitute the country's core north, and it is predominantly Muslim, dating back to the jihad of Uthman dan Fodio of 1804, which was predicated on the need to purify Islam and to establish a state governed according to the sharia. Since then, there has emerged a dialectical struggle within Islam in the region over the pursuit, preservation, (re-)invention, means and negotiability of an Islamic State and polity governed by sharia. Since the proclamation of the full implementation of sharia at the beginning of the Fourth Republic in 1999 by the then governor of Zamfara State, Senator Sanni Ahmed Yerima, being for or against the sharia was seen as separating proper or improper Muslims. Sharia was the basis of seeking, retaining and losing political legitimacy in the northern zone, as well as justifying and validating political power.

Gradually, in the words of Tarek Fattah, there emerged proponents of an "Islamic State" and the "State of Islam."¹² The "Islamic State" is a polity and state governed by the sharia. On the other hand, the "State of Islam" is a situation and setting where the personal life of the Muslim is governed by strict adherence to Islam.

We need, however, to be careful about creating a false dichotomy between those promoting the "State of Islam" – Sufis (as inherently peaceful) – and those promoting an "Islamic State" – Salafis (via violent expansionists). Quintan Wiktorowicz¹³ cites examples of groups and individuals sharing both religious sentiments, who have been violent and, on the other hand, who have resisted violence. That is, it is possible to promote an "Islamic State" peacefully (even as it is often associated with violence) or to promote the "State of Islam" violently

(even as it is more likely to be associated with a peaceful movement). As well, pursuing an "Islamic State" is one way of promoting the "State of Islam." Events since dan Fodio's nineteenth-century jihad attest to the shifting nature of the adherents of both. For instance, dan Fodio was a Sufi whose jihad falls within the framework of violent Salafism because he waged a war to establish an "Islamic State" to enhance the "State of Islam."

Northern Nigeria houses these two tendencies, and the intra-faith rivalry between the two often spirals into violent clashes that generate insecurity in the North and sometimes around the country. The two leading and most influential Salafi groups in northern Nigeria are the *Jamaatul Tajdid Islam* (JTI, "Movement for the Revival of Islam") in Borno State and *Jama'atu Izalatul Bid'awal kamatu Sunna* (Izala, "Movement for the Removal of Innovation and Re-establishment of Sunni Islam"), which was established in 1978. Izala, founded by al-Shaykh Abubakar Mahmud Gumi (1922–1992), has a centralized, top-down leadership with its own security men who wear military-like uniforms. They perform police functions, such as guarding mosques and controlling the traffic, especially on Fridays, serving as guards and escorts for officials of Izala, and saluting them publicly as the military does at public functions. The formation of Izala in the mid-1970s was in reaction to the backlash from the Sufis.¹⁴ Northern Nigeria also has huge members of the Qadiriya and Tijaniyah sects and many other reformist Islamic organizations; some, like the Ibrahim al-Zakzaki Shi'ite group – the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) – get embroiled in violent confrontations against one another and sometimes against state security personnel.

The presence of groups that believe that Islam must regulate public and private life qualifies northern Nigeria as a fertile zone for Salafism.¹⁵ Yet, according to Wiktorowicz, the Salafi purists still prefer a non-violent mode of propagating Islam, strive for purification, and are not necessarily averse to education. They largely see politics as the corrupting influence on Islam.¹⁶

On the other hand, the Salafi politicians, as distinct from Salafi purists, seek the enthronement of sharia as the only means of ensuring social justice and implementing divine legislation in an ideal Islamic State. This is their path for promoting the "State of Islam." Still in the quest for "Islamic State," the Salafi jihadists want the violent abolition of the current system or any system that is not based on the sharia. All Salafis desire the establishment of an "Islamic State," but not all promote violence to do so.

In Nigeria, this broadness could explain the initial relationship between the likes of Ahmed Datti of the Supreme Council for Sharia'a in Nigeria and Mohammad Yusuf. In northern Nigeria, reformist groups come together or splinter, based on their level of commitment to the role of sharia and on their views of how to pursue the establishment of an Islamic state. Based on these differences, the Maitatsine uprising of the 1980s and Boko Haram are similar in their use of a violent jihad, and in how they defined enemies, apostasy and activism.¹⁷ Both groups have a history of estrangement at different times from the Salafis in northern Nigeria, even as they shared the aspiration for an "Islamic State," first in northern Nigeria and subsequently throughout the country.

The Maitatsine stood in opposition to all constituted authorities. The Muslim elites were seen as ostentatious, hypocritical and corrupt and hence un-Islamic. The Maitatsine was cut short by the military in a battle that claimed over 5,000 lives in 1980.¹⁸

Given their use of violence and opposition to the state and elites, Boko Haram and Maitatsine share certain similarities. Their common enemies of the mainstream religious class, state security personnel and elites are similar, while they differ in their aspirations. The Maitatsine did not have state-building aspirations; Boko Haram does. Also, Boko Haram makes no distinction between hard and soft targets, while the Maitatsine focused mainly on hard targets.

Unlike other reformist groups in northern Nigeria that have remained committed to theological purity (either as Sufis or Salafis), using non-violent means for promoting sharia, the violent acquisition of territories for self-governance based on their own understanding of the sharia shows that Boko Haram is more political than theological. The main objective of this group is an "Islamic State." It promotes a violent jihad to attain it.

While a plethora of literature exists on the causal factors and evolution of Boko Haram, its strategy, tactics and implications for Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategy have not received commensurate attention. We turn to that next.

Boko Haram's tactics and state responses 2003–2009

After severing its relationship with the mainstream Salafi establishment of northern Nigeria in 2002–2003 owing to doctrinal and operational differences, Boko Haram led by Mohammad Yusuf left no one in doubt of its mission to create an Islamic State in northern Nigeria. The group also defined its enemy as the Nigerian state security personnel, the mainstream Islamic clerics and the political class: it was overtly political. Subsequently, especially under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau, the group went after soft targets and those alleged to be reporting their members to the police. They killed those they considered traitors to Islam in the presence of their family members, to serve as deterrence to other people in the community who might be thinking of supplying information about them to security personnel.

During the period of 2003–2009, Boko Haram carried out small-scale attacks and raids on police stations and individuals. The group punished those who criticized or condemned it for committing what they considered "Haram." In the group of those doing "Haram" were many traditional rulers, Islamic notables, and clerics, like Sheikh Jafar, who preached against the terrorist group. Through this, Boko Haram arrogated to itself the right to determine what was acceptable in the religious sphere,¹⁹ as part of its discursive strategy to shape the character and contents of both secular and religious spheres. By successfully redefining blasphemy²⁰ to suit its own agenda, and killing many clerics who spoke against its ways, many Muslim clerics were fearful of criticizing Boko Haram. This meant that opinions and preachment different from its own were not heard in the public and religious sectors.

After monopolizing the religious sphere, Boko Haram continued its aggressive preaching, laced with anti-elite and anti-government narratives to further alienate the people from a Nigerian state that, in any case, had never been positively present in their lives. Political Islam in this context became a platform for mobilization of other grievances, notably the sense of economic and political marginalization felt by the Hausa-Fulani and Kanuri peoples residing in northern Nigeria. This gave substance to its condemnation of the government and Western education and increased the rank of sympathizers and prospective recruits into the group.

Boko Haram carried out assaults on the police, prisons and, in rare instances, military formations. For instance, in September 2004, while still operating like a "stationary (insurgent) militia,"²¹ the group attacked police stations and it took the intervention of troops to halt the attack. Another deadly attack was carried out in the wake of the killing of Sheikh Jafaar in April 2007 in Kano State, during which the group attacked a mobile police detachment and 13 policemen were killed. Days later, the group also attacked an office of the Federal Road Safety Commission in the city of Kano, killing two people.

The Department of State Services and the police picked up, interrogated and even prosecuted a number of people suspected to have links with al-Qaeda²² across the country. In an apparent reaction, the Federation of Ahlus-Sunnah Organizations in Nigeria issued a statement, decrying what it described as "a massive clampdown on Muslims,"²³ while calling on the security agencies to ensure sensitivity to the country's local Muslim community.

From 2003 to 2009, Boko Haram identified the people as its target of persuasion and the Nigerian state security personnel and its symbols as targets of attacks. It monopolized the religious and public sectors through assassinations of Islamic clerics and notables, so that its anti-state and anti-Western narratives and preaching could idealize an Islamic State governed by the sharia as an alternative to the Nigerian state. It also carried out hit-and-run attacks on police and (para)military formations as a form of attrition, to make a show of its symbolic power, strength, resolve and aspiration.

Boko Haram's tactics and state responses 2009–2016

After the coordinated attacks on police and public buildings in Bauchi, Borno, Kano and Yobe States on the night of July 26, 2009, by Boko Haram, the then president Musa Yar'adua decided that the menace had to be confronted frontally: "... Indeed the soldiers deployed to tackle the Boko Haram ... fulfilled the president's mandate ... they captured ... Yusuf, alive with ... no more than a minor injury on his arm."²⁴

The attacks of July 26 on security formations, which informed the directive of President Yar'adua, were a reprisal for a previous clash that occurred on Biu-Maduguri Road on June 10, 2009, between the police team of Operation Flush in Maiduguri and members of the extremist group over the refusal of the latter's members to comply with state transport laws that stipulated wearing helmets

while riding motorcycles. Members of Boko Haram, who were in a burial procession, were stopped by the security men and an altercation degenerated into confrontations that claimed the lives of 17 members of the insurgent group. Around this time, other members got wind of intelligence that the governor of Borno State, Senator Ali Modu Sherif, who by then was estranged from the group and its leadership, had given an instruction for the killing of Yusuf and Alhaji Buji Foi. Before handing him over to the police, the soldiers, led by Colonel Ben Ahanoto, allowed snapshots of Yusuf to be taken with mobile phone cameras. Yusuf and Alhaji Foi died in police custody.

Unlike the Maitatsine, Boko Haram had a structure and a succession plan in place, which produced Abubakar Shekau as the new leader. He took a different approach toward the pursuit of an Islamic State and had an added mission to avenge the death of the previous leader. The group took to using improvised explosive devices. Shekau enforced stricter discipline by beheading deserters and actively pursued a transnational and global agenda. The Boko Haram under Shekau made no distinction between soft and hard targets, and increased and broadened its coordinated attacks from the core north to the north-central regions, including Abuja, the federal capital.²⁵

In 2012, the group struck in all but 3 (Katsina, Kwara and Nasarawa) of the 19 states in the northeast, northwest and north-central of Nigeria, while increasing its criminality referred to as *Aikin Allah*²⁶ ("work of Allah"). In 2013, the group combined the tactics of a guerrilla and terrorist group. That year, it attacked and killed 65 students in a hostel in Yobe State and carried out other attacks and killings of civilians. In 2014, Boko Haram began seizing towns, including the second largest town in Borno State, Bama,²⁷ in its bid to establish a Caliphate. As well as pledging alliance to the Islamic State, Boko Haram at times struck up relationships with similar groups such as al-Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM).

In 2014, it abducted over 200 schoolgirls in Chibok community and captured the town of Baga, important to the fishing business in Nigeria, Chad and Niger Republic. The abduction of the girls internationalized Nigeria's "war on terror," as the United States deployed a small team of military advisers to join the search for the abducted girls. Shekau claimed he was inspired by the reform of Usman dan Fodio. John Paden views this as a strategy aimed at expanding the appeal of the group to Muslims outside the northeast zone, especially across Borno, which was not part of dan Fodio's Sokoto Caliphate.²⁸ The two-pronged attack on both hard and soft targets continued from 2013 to 2015 and compelled President Jonathan's government to postpone the general election by six weeks, from February 14 and 28 to March 28 and April 11, 2015. Against the backdrop of its growing strength in 2014, Governor Shettima of Borno expressed fear that "Boko Haram are better armed and motivated than our own troops."²⁹

During 2009–2015, Boko Haram increased attacks in intensity and geographically. It concluded an alliance with ISIS and established a nascent Caliphate. Its performance during this period was bolstered by its motivation, will and superior arms (including those left by fleeing Nigerian fighters).

The federal government's response to Boko Haram was aimed at defeating the insurgents, helping victims and reclaiming the captured territories. At one point, the government considered amnesty and negotiations, as it had with the Niger Delta insurgents in the south. The idea was a mismatch, given the ideology and aspiration of Boko Haram.

The group claimed responsibility for the killing of photojournalist Zakari Isa of the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) Maiduguri on October 22, 2011.³⁰ In 2012, it attacked newspaper houses. By the fall of 2014, nine emirs had left the northeast out of fear of Boko Haram.³¹ It was attempting to control the story, as well as territory.

In 2012, the security agencies made a major breakthrough by arresting Kabiru Sokoto, a leading member of the terrorist group, who then escaped and was later recaptured. In August 2013, the JTF comprising police and military personnel, was replaced with a specialized military unit, the 7th Infantry Division, led by Major-General Obidan Etnan. In addition, all three army brigades in the northeast were brought under the new Armored Division. Internal squabbles militating against the success of these actions and initiatives arose in 2014. These included rifts between the officers and the enlisted personnel – from the perspective of the former, these were over allegations of cowardice, mutiny, and indiscipline; from that of the latter, there were accusations of corruption of officers and of selling intelligence and equipment to Boko Haram.³²

Perhaps alarmed by the failure of the Nigerian forces to defeat Boko Haram, President Jonathan replaced all security chiefs in 2014. National Security Adviser Sambo Dasuki announced Nigeria's first counter-terrorism policy while in New York.³³ This did not weaken Boko Haram as it acquired more towns and villages while intensifying the indiscriminate attacks. On March 29, 2015, former President Jonathan made a formal presentation in Nigeria of the National Counter Terrorism Strategy (NACTEST) and elaborated on its components.³⁴ During the event, the NSA explained that the strategy aims to "guide, organize and harmonize the nation's security policies and efforts."³⁵ This was imperative because, until then, Boko Haram defied strategies adopted by the government.

The NACTEST is a two-year plan meant to run from 2014 to 2016. It is built on forestalling terrorism by preventing people from joining Boko Haram or supporting them; securing affected areas by strengthening the capacity to protect against terror attacks; identifying and pre-empting attacks through detection and early warning; ensuring proper processing of intelligence and investigation; promoting preparedness or readiness to mitigate the impact of terrorists attacks by building resilience in affected communities; and by having a framework for the mobilization of coordinated cross-governmental efforts.

The dynamics of an asymmetric war: Jonathan, Buhari, Yusuf and Shekau

Despite being able to come up with a counter-terrorism policy, albeit in the twilight of his administration, indecisiveness, corruption and the inability to manage

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his religious identity counted against Jonathan. It took a number of personal visits to Nigeria's terrorized spaces, amid the mounting fears of losing elections, for him to fully appreciate the need for a change of strategy. In fairness to the Jonathan administration, he was also quite aware that some politicians, including members of his own party and senior security officials, were working for Boko Haram, or at the very least sharing information with the terrorist group for material gain. This made conducting a successful counter-terrorism campaign difficult. So while prevaricating on the most effective strategy, Shekau's group gained ground under Jonathan. Pervasive corruption on the part of the top military brass affected the soldiers' will and motivation to fight, which is crucial in fighting an asymmetric war. As a man who rode to and stayed in power on the scorecard of being a Pentecostal president, the largely Muslim-dominated northeast and the majority of Nigeria's Muslim population found it difficult to give Jonathan the benefit of the doubt for his (in)actions in confronting the Shekau-led Boko Haram. He lost the support of the civilian populace just as the fighting forces became increasingly weakened and demoralized, which enabled Shekau to capture territories where a semblance of an "Islamic State" was established.

Since coming to office in May 2015, President Buhari has overhauled the counter-insurgency strategy, relocating the operation's command and control center to Maiduguri, prosecuting many former security chiefs (chief among whom is the former NSA Sambo Dasuki), and vowing to discipline security forces responsible for human rights violations. This latter point is quite important, since the human rights abuses committed by Nigerian armed forces, together with the fact that they were drawn from people who did not share the same ethnic identity as those residing in the northeast, radicalized some residents into joining Boko Haram. They viewed the security forces deployed in their region as an army of occupation. However, he is yet to come up with any document on counter-insurgency, giving the impression that the NACTEST is still in use.

Buhari is a man perceived as possessing the virtues of *mutumin kirki* ("good man") and *maitoron Allah* ("God-fearing") by a significant percentage of the Muslim electorate across Nigeria. Unlike his predecessor, he continues to take far-reaching actions which have an impact on Nigeria's "war on terror." As *mai-gaskiya* ("trustworthy"), Buhari has been probing the spending of all monies allocated by his predecessor to the "war on terror." This has boosted the morale of the soldiers as monies that would probably have been misappropriated are now actually spent on the war. Being a Muslim himself assures Buhari of the near-unalloyed support of the Muslim population in the northeast.

Therefore, in his administration's ongoing "war on terror," Buhari enjoys the full support of constituencies and relationships that Jonathan mismanaged, such as the military and the Muslim community. Paradoxically, Shekau's Boko Haram made progress toward establishing an "Islamic State" under a Christian president, while there is less of a chance of doing so under a Muslim president. It should, nonetheless, be acknowledged that, despite promises of a robust counter-insurgency campaign against Boko Haram militants, it took Buhari

several months after his election to choose a cabinet, including those members who would be in charge of the all-important security cluster.

Winning the battle, the war and the peace: meshing hard and soft counter-terrorism³⁶

The short-lived "jihadist Emirate"³⁷ declared on August 3, 2014, was ended by the belated counter-offensive of former president Jonathan during the twilight of his administration in February 2015. However, the battle must not be misconstrued as the war, and winning the war must not be seen as winning the peace. The potential for winning the battle is re-inforced by the recapture of towns like Bama, Gwoza and Mubi. By March 2015, most of the training camps, operated by the insurgents around Sambisa Forest since 2010, were liberated. This was achieved barely a month after the renewed offensive by the federal government. There is still no peace.

This, however, is the most auspicious time to articulate a coherent counter-terrorism strategy. In doing so, the current weakening of Boko Haram constitutes the battle, while the country must come up with a comprehensive plan for winning the war and the peace. It must be borne in mind that "[t]here are no quick fixes to the Boko Haram insurgency any more than there are to militant jihadism in other countries."³⁸

The decimation of Boko Haram should not be seen as the eradication of (Islamist) terrorism. The arrests of suspects linked to Boko Haram outside the northeast and northwest are indicators that the members of the group are melting into society and could regenerate or continue to fight elsewhere. This is why the counter-terrorism strategy and tactics should be undergirded by hard (through physical security, policing and military pro-activeness) and soft (development-oriented) counter-terrorism.

The aim should be to change the widely held perception of Nigerians that "the state is not failed or failing, it is simply missing."³⁹ Therefore, it must deny extremists space, audience and resources. Of utmost importance should be the eradication of corruption, given recent revelations of the embezzlement and misappropriation of funds meant to prosecute the "war on terror" by key actors in the security sector, who served in the administration of former president Jonathan.

Hard counter-terrorism measures

The porous nature of borders shared by Nigeria and its immediate neighbors has been consistently exploited by Boko Haram. Therefore, cognizant of the transnational dimension of Islamist terrorism, securing the borders should be paramount in rethinking a follow up strategy to the NACTEST. With the relative success of the MJTF, ensuring that the exit plans are designed to secure current gains cannot be overemphasized. As the international community, especially the United States, has reiterated its pledge to offer more support to Nigeria, the support should include both training and hardware support to Nigerian security

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personnel. Importantly, in the realization that Boko Haram has shifted to asymmetric warfare, while the Nigerian armed forces have been trained for conventional warfare, Buhari has charged his armed forces to adapt more guerrilla tactics, while at the same time ensuring that the quality of intelligence of the armed forces increases and that they get to the right places in the shortest possible time.

Soft counter-terrorism measures

In preventing the regeneration and/or reoccurrence of another strand of violent Islamism, it is important for the political and religious elites of northern Nigeria to rethink the pursuit of an Islamic state, due to its susceptibility to being exploited by unscrupulous and misguided actors like Mohammad Yusuf. Sermons on the need for every Muslim to support the quest for the establishment of an "Islamic State" are often used as bait in attracting (un)suspecting minds for radicalization. The argument is that only an "Islamic State" can ensure that the "State of Islam" is achieved. This makes a state that is governed by the sharia, which in itself is problematic, unrealistic and unsustainable, given the complexities of today's world.

As argued by Abdullahi Ahmed An-Naim,⁴⁰ Islam and state must be institutionally separated, to ensure that people desire sharia or practice Islam based solely on conviction rather than through state coercion. This will go a long way in denying extremists any ground on which to hang their narratives and prevent the seeding of (violent) religious extremism. The government, religious and political elites must work in concert to deny violent extremism local legitimacy. Working with the Muslim religious establishment to prevent Boko Haram from hijacking the Islamic faith is imperative. At the same time, recognizing the relative economic impoverishment of the Muslim north vis-à-vis the Christian south needs to be fixed. Despite the falling prices of oil, the Nigerian government, working with international partners like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, should invest more to assist with economic development and poverty alleviation in the north, thereby undercutting one of Boko Haram's attractions.

Conclusion

Whether in peace or in war, governing Nigeria is very difficult. The daunting challenge of defeating Boko Haram attests to this. Developing a counter-terrorism strategy and tactics must look beyond the terrorist group. Therefore, no efforts should be spared in building on the current progress being made in defeating Boko Haram. State-society relations in Nigeria must be accorded importance, and the Nigerian government and institutions at all levels must reconcile itself with the needs and aspirations of the people.

The governance of the security sector in Nigeria must be mindful of the complex and contentious religious, ethnic, economic, social and political fault

lines in order to retain the confidence of all its citizens. Fighting and preventing corruption within its ranks must be done in a way that forecloses any ground for those who might allege witch-hunting or persecution on the grounds of their ethnic, religious or political identities.

Designing a counter-terrorism strategy without being cognizant of the influence, control and power of the *Ulama* ("possessors of religious knowledge") is bound to fail because they enjoy higher levels of legitimacy and authority among the vast majority of people in northern Nigeria. It is important for the government to ensure the religious neutrality of the state, while consciously ensuring a cordial relationship with the *Ulama*. This will give all, irrespective of religious preferences, a sense of belonging to the state and will affirm the distinction between an "Islamic State" and the "State of Islam."

Notes

- 1 Paul Rogers, "Nigeria: The Generic Context of the Boko Haram Violence," *Oxford Research Group*, Monthly Global Security Briefing, April 30, 2012, 1–12.
- 2 Jola Sotubo, accessed August 19, 2016, <http://pulse.ng/local/boko-haram-terrorists-still-control-2-local-governments-in-nigeria-minister-says-id4865280.html>. See also (accessed August 19, 2016) <http://pulse.ng/local/boko-haram-sect-still-controls-half-of-borno-senator-says-id4661653.html>.
- 3 Isaac Olawale Albert, "Opata Commission and the Intra-Ogoni Reconciliation Process," in *Nigeria's Struggle For Democracy And Good Governance: A Festschrift For Oyeleye Oyediran*, Adigun Agbaje, AAB, Larry Diamond and Ebere Onwudiwe, eds. (Ibadan: University Press, 2004), 349–374.
- 4 Alexander Smith, "ISIS Owns Headlines but Nigeria's Boko Haram Kills More Than Ever," *NBC News*, accessed May 10, 2016, www.nbcnews.com/storyline/2015-year-in-review/isis-owns-headlines-nigeria-s-boko-haram-kills-more-ever-n480986.
- 5 David Blair, "Boko Haram Is Now a Mini-Islamic State with Its Own Territory," *Telegraph*, accessed March 4, 2016, www.telegraph.co.uk/news.
- 6 Andrew Watkins, "Losing Territory and Lashing Out: The Islamic State and International Terror," *CTC Sentinel* 9 no. 3 (2016): 24–29.
- 7 Wale Adebanwi, "The Quintessential Awo," in *Awo: On the Trail of a Titan – Essays in Celebration of the Obafemi Awolowo Centennial*, David O. Oke, Olatunji Dare, Adebayo Williams and Femi Akinola, eds. (Lagos: Obafemi Awolowo Foundation, 2009), 33–56.
- 8 Richard Joseph, "Growth, Security and Democracy in Africa," *Journal of Democracy* 25, no. 4 (2014): 61–75.
- 9 Edmond Keller, *Identity, Citizenship and Political Conflict in Africa* (Indiana: University Press, 2013).
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 J.D.Y. Peel, *Christianity, Islam and Orisa Religion: Three Traditions in Comparison and Interaction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016).
- 12 Tarek Fattah, *Chasing a Mirage: The Tragic Illusion of an Islamic State* (Mississauga, Ontario: Wiley, 2008).
- 13 Quintan Wiktorowicz, "The Salafi Movement in Jordan," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 32, no. 2 (2000): 219–240.
- 14 Information provided by a respondent during interview on May 20, 2016 in Abuja.
- 15 Pointers to the fertility can be seen in the spontaneity that greets actions by Islamists, such as the wild jubilation in Zamfara state in the wake of 9/11, riots in the wake of the cartoon controversy in Denmark and many other similar instances across the region.

- 16 Wiktorowicz, "The Salafi Movement."
- 17 Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29 (2006): 207–239.
- 18 John Campbell, *Nigeria: Dancing on the Brink* (Ibadan: Book-Craft, 2010).
- 19 Ebenezer Obadare, "White-Collar Fundamentalism: Interrogating Youth Religiosity on Nigerian University Campuses," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 45, no. 4 (2007): 517–537.
- 20 Ebenezer Obadare, "Blasphemy and Social Criticism in the Nigerian Public Sphere: Between Isioma Daniel and Nasir el-Rufai," in *Public Intellectuals, the Public Sphere and the Public Spirit*, Wale Adebani, ed., (Ibadan: University Press, 2014), 99–118. "Blasphemy ... is any act that is deemed to be offensive to a personality, principle or cause held as sacred by a religious group." *Ibid.*, 101.
- 21 Morten Bøås and Kevin C. Dunn, "Introduction," in *African Guerrillas Raging Against the Machine*, Morten Bøås and Kevin Dunn, eds. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007), 1–8.
- 22 Joseph, "Growth, Security and Democracy," 57–58.
- 23 Sunday Aborishade, "Al-Qaeda: Islamic Groups Warn Okiro against Arrest of Innocent Muslims," *Punch* (Lagos) May, 21, 2008.
- 24 Olusegun Adeniyi, *Power, Politics and Death: A Front-Row Account of Nigeria under the Late President Yar'adua*. (Lagos: Kachifo, 2011), 113.
- 25 Scott Menner and Erin Miller, "FTO Designation: Boko Haram and Ansaru." START Background Report (2013), accessed March 15, 2016, www.start.umd.edu/sites/default/files/files/publications/br/STARTBackgroundReport_BokoHaram_Nov2013.pdf.
- 26 This included robbing banks, individuals, traders, kidnapping for ransom and payments made by rich men so as to avoid being kidnapped or killed.
- 27 Queen Hajju, the wife of the emir of Bama Umar Ibn Kyari El-Kanemi, and one of the two children with whom she was abducted during this period were rescued and brought to his palace on July 25, 2016, by the general officer commanding Zone 7 of the Nigerian army.
- 28 See Chapter 3 in this volume.
- 29 Shettima, governor of Borno, in an interview granted to several news reporters after a meeting with then president Goodluck Jonathan.
- 30 Ibrahim Ishaya, "Boko-Haram Kills Again," *Newswatch*, July 28, 2011, 8. Boko Haram claimed,

We killed him because he was spying on us for Nigerian security authorities. The killing was carefully planned and executed. We have ample evidence ... that he was giving vital information to security agencies on our mode of operation that led to the arrest of many of our members. We killed him not because he was a journalist but for his personal misconduct.
- 31 John Paden, "Religion and Conflict in Nigeria: Countdown to the 2015 Elections," Special report, (Washington, DC: United States Institute for Peace), 1–16 www.usip.org.
- 32 Interviews with security personnel and journalists in Kaduna, Gombe and Abuja at different times in June, July and August 2016.
- 33 It was at an event titled "Policy Dialogue: Nigeria's Soft Approach to Countering Violent Extremism," organized by the Permanent Mission of Nigeria on October 13, 2014, held at the Economic and Social Council Chamber in New York City.
- 34 Talatu Usman, "Jonathan Unveils New Security Strategy," *Premium Times*, accessed on March 17, 2016, www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/176310-jonathan-unveils-new-nigeria-security-strategy.html.
- 35 *Ibid.*
- 36 The concept of soft counter-terrorism flows from Joseph Nye's concept of soft power and winning hearts and minds approach. Originally recommended for use at the onset

- of terrorism. See Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).
- 37 Andrea Brigaglia, "The Volatility of Salafi Political Theology, the War on Terror and the Genesis of Boko Haram," *Palermo, Diritto e questioni pubbliche* 15, no. 2 (2015): 175–201.
- 38 Joseph, "Growth, Security and Democracy," 71.
- 39 Ibid., 70.
- 40 Abdullahi Ahmed An-Naim, "Sharia and Positive Legislation: Is an Islamic State Possible or Viable?" in *Year Book of Islamic and Middle Eastern Law*, Eugene Cotran and Chibli Mallat, eds. (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 1998–1999).

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