



# Combating Violent Extremism and Insurgency in Nigeria:

## A Case Study of the Boko Haram Scourge

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### **Author Background**

Oluwatosin Babalola was selected as a Center for Global and International Studies (CGIS)-FMSO Research Fellow during the Fall 2013 semester at the University of Kansas. Originally from Nigeria, he recently completed a Master's Degree in Global and International Studies at the University of Kansas.

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## ***Introduction by Ray Finch, FMSO***

In this paper, CGIS-FMSO Research Fellow, Oluwatosin Babalola, examines the contextual factors that are indispensable in explaining the causes of violence in Nigeria. He attempts to unravel the dominant factors driving the violent extremism and insurgency in Nigeria. This study provides background and a deeper understanding of the dominant insurgent group-the Boko Haram sect-and the effects of violence and insurgency on the unity of the Nigerian State. His research also suggests possible local solutions to curb the menace of violent extremism and insurgency in Nigeria.



# **Combating Violent Extremism and Insurgency in Nigeria:**

## **A Case Study of the Boko Haram Scourge**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The most recent extremist group in Nigeria, Boko Haram, continues to grow, committing various extremist acts, such as sporadic suicide bombings and killing of innocent citizens and foreigners within the country. The current history of Nigeria is a combustible mix of violent extremism and thriving homegrown insurgencies. Rather than internally tackling the challenge, the Nigerian government perpetually seeks international interventions to assist with the rising crisis. The fabric of Nigeria's unity appears to be ripped by violent extremism and homegrown insurgency. The missing link here is a clear focus on tackling the prevailing domestic factors that persistently fan the flames of extremism and insurgency in Nigeria.

This paper examines the contextual factors that are indispensable in explaining the causes of violence in Nigeria and unravels the dominant factor driving violent extremism and insurgency in Nigeria. Specifically, it also provides a better understanding of the dominant insurgent group- the Boko Haram sect- and the effects of violence and insurgency on the oneness of the Nigerian State. It also suggests possible solutions, which include traditional conflict resolution approaches to curb the menace of violent extremism and insurgency in Nigeria.

## INTRODUCTION

Despite the Nigerian government escalating military actions against the Boko Haram sect in Northern Nigeria, violent extremism and insurgency show no lasting sign of decline within the country. The most recent extremist group, Boko Haram, continues to expand and commit violent acts, such as sporadic suicide bombings and killing of innocent citizens and foreigners within the country.

The current history of Nigeria is a combustible mix of violent extremism, and thriving home-grown insurgencies. Rather than internally tackling the challenge, the Nigerian government perpetually seeks international interventions to assist with the rising crisis. To merit the attention of the international community, the government often restricts its analysis to the state level and the dangers and threats extremist groups pose to the country and its allies. For example, Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan at the 2013 World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, noted, “if violent extremism is not contained in Nigeria, definitely it will spill into other countries in West Africa.... This is one of the reasons we have to move fast” (Maylie, 2013, p. 1). “Moving fast,” in the words of President Jonathan, largely ignores a well defined means of ending the crisis in Africa’s most populous country.

The spate of brutal killings and the numerous threats by violent extremist groups, particularly the Boko Haram sect, have called into question lasting peace and safety within the country for Nigerians and foreigners. Many Nigerians are now forced to live in fear, as they are subjected to unprecedented levels of chaos and havoc, which include indiscriminate bombings and killings such as the country never witnessed before, even during the 1967-1970 civil war. Hill (2012) attributed the Boko Haram scourge to Nigeria’s state failure. Violent extremism and homegrown insurgency appear to be ripping the fabric of Nigeria’s unity. Insurgent groups have made several daring attempts to impose forcefully religious ideology, such as the practice of Sharia law on Nigeria’s secular state. Despite the deployment of troops into the northern states of Nigeria to tackle rising insurgency there, the Boko Haram sect seems more resilient than ever, simply because the Nigerian government appears incapable of curbing the menace affecting the lives of its citizens.

Among notable Nigerians who have shown concern over the indiscriminate bombings and killings in Northern Nigeria by Boko Haram is Nobel-winning author Wole Soyinka. Soyinka struck a pessimistic note in 2010 by admitting that he did not rule out Nigeria breaking up, as that is what can happen to a failed state, one that has lost control over the majority of its territory (Howden, 2010). According to the Fund for Peace (2012), Nigeria is referred to as a failed state due to corruption and criminal activities occurring in the country, as well as the inability of the government to provide public services to its citizens. Nigeria's weak central government is closely bound to the existence and activities of insurgent groups, such as Boko Haram, that have defied all governmental approaches to ending violence and mayhem in Nigeria. It is clear that the Nigerian government is deficient in exercising authority over parts of Nigeria, particularly in the northern and central regions, where Boko Haram carries out its nefarious activities with impunity.

Insurgent groups, particularly Boko Haram, threaten the very existence of Nigerian unity and have aided in creating the vicious cycle of fear, thereby exposing the Federal government's failure to exercise control. Despite the Nigerian government's declaration of a state of emergency in the three most affected northern states, namely Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe, violence has continued with no sign of abating there.

In recent times the Nigerian government has deployed over 8,000 soldiers to combat insurgents in these affected states, but the absence of a specific Military Code of Justice to clearly identify intended targets and protect civilians has further increased the number of casualties in Northern Nigeria. For example, the Nigerian Army conducted a single deadly military intervention that caused wanton destruction of civilian lives and property in Baga, Borno State, in northeastern Nigeria on Sunday, April 21, 2013. The soldiers were searching for suspects believed to be members of Boko Haram and killed over 200 civilians in one day (Akande, 2013).

It is evident that the Nigerian government lacks a clear program for dealing with the challenge of violent extremism and insurgency. The missing link here is a clear focus on tackling the prevailing domestic factors that persistently fan the flames of extremism and insurgency in Nigeria.

Scholars have linked a number of factors, including endemic poverty, widespread corruption, weak state structure, social frustration, and mismanagement of resource endowment, as contributing to the scale of violent extremism and insurgency in Nigeria. This paper examines the contextual factors that are salient in explaining the causes of violence in Nigeria. Hill (2012) argued that Nigeria is a failed state because its writ of government does not extend to all areas within its boundary, and the federal government does not promote sustainable legal institutions. Other scholars have linked rising insurgent groups and extremism in the country to socio-economic conditions, such as extreme poverty in the affected region of northern Nigeria, endemic corruption, mismanagement of the country's oil wealth, and weak political institutions. Whetho and Uzodike (2011) suggested that social frustration and aggression have triggered violent extremism and insurgency in Nigeria, especially in the northern part of the country.

The purpose of this study is fourfold. First is to determine the leading factor that most fans the flames of violent extremism and insurgency in Nigeria. Second is to compare peace in other regions of Nigeria with the affected northern region of Nigeria. Third is to understand insurgent groups better, particularly Boko Haram, and the effects of violence and insurgency on the unity of the Nigerian State. Last, the study recommends possible means of combating violent extremism in Nigeria.

What is violent extremism and insurgency? The Resilient Communities of Australia (2013), the Australian government's community-based initiative on fighting violent extremism, defined violent extremism as "the beliefs and actions of people who support or use violence to achieve ideological, religious or political goals" (para. 1). All forms of violent extremism include terrorism, communal violence, and other forms of politically motivated violence. Also, the U.S. Counter-Insurgency Initiative (2009) has defined insurgency as:

the organized use of subversion and violence to seize, nullify, or challenge political control of a region. Insurgents seek to subvert or displace the government and completely or partially control the resources and population of a given territory. They do so through the use of force (including guerrilla warfare, terrorism, and coercion/intimidation), propaganda, subversion, and political mobilization.

Insurgents fight government forces only to the extent needed to achieve their political aims: their main effort is not to kill counterinsurgents, but rather to establish a competitive system of control over the population, making it impossible for the government to administer its territory and people. Insurgent activity, therefore, is designed to weaken government control and legitimacy while increasing insurgent control and influence. (6)

According to Price and Morris (2011), “social scientists and policy makers alike repeatedly have underestimated the power of ideologies and deeply felt convictions as primary motivations behind numerous forms of violent extremism” (p. 21). In order to understand what truly drives militants into violent extremist groups, one needs to identify their motivations. Violent extremist groups are moved by self-interest, narrow grievances, the search for power or wealth, or the desire to advance a political agenda, as this certainly spurs them into violence (Price & Morris, 2011). In many cases, what brings violent extremists together is their shared dedication to a particular vision of how society ought to be organized, and/or their strong questioning of the foundations upon which their societies are presently organized. Price and Morris (2011) explained that

this is true of many Salafi Jihadist groups today, just as it was true—in radically different contexts and on the basis of entirely different world views—of the left wing radical groups of the 1970s in West Germany (the Red Army Faction or Baader-Meinhoff Gang), Italy (the Red Brigades), and Japan (the Japanese Red Army). (23)

As such, Boko Haram of Northern Nigeria is equally held by its belief in the imposition and practice of Sharia law in Nigeria.

In addition, firmly held religious or political beliefs play a critical role and need to be part of the analysis. For example, committed extremists or “true believers” tend to persist in the face of overwhelming odds. Though they are forward-looking in their plans, they strongly pursue inordinate objectives that may not be achieved during their lifetime. In other words, “their propensity to continue to fight—despite their realization that they will not experience the future political/

social outcome □ is greatly enhanced by adherence to transcendental values that trump self-interest, realpolitik, or cost benefit calculations” (Price & Morris, 2011, p. 23).

What is the moral justification for violence? Price and Morris (2011) argued that values and beliefs also matter to the extent that they can provide moral justifications for violence. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism (2009) states,

The perceived presence of a compelling moral imperative often is required for individuals to convince themselves that it is acceptable—indeed, as they view it, necessary □ to resort to cruelty towards others. It is not enough merely to focus on the presumed pressures or incentives created by the social, economic, and political environment in which violent extremists operate if one is to account for moral justification for violence. It is pertinent to take longstanding and recently forged norms and worldviews into consideration as well. (12)

According to the USAID, “violent extremists often are driven, in part, by culture based and culture specific perceptions of what is fair and unfair, just and unjust” (USAID, 2009, p. 12). Violent extremists’ motivations are usually derived from their belief that some basic social contract between the state and its citizens has been breached, justifying the use of violence. Perceptions of whether or not “underlying conditions justify the resort to violence often are far more decisive than those conditions themselves, and these perceptions do not develop in a vacuum; instead, they are strongly influenced by the prevailing cultural and ideological setting in which they emerge” (Price & Morris, 2011, p. 24).

In recent years social scientists have provided useful concepts to simplify and analyze extremists. For example, some academics suggested individuals driven to violent extremism do so because of mere ideological fervor or zeal (USAID, 2009). It is imperative to note that religion or ideology usually conceals other struggles that are motivated by power or resource control. “Scholars justifiably have highlighted the role of grievances, greed, contextual socioeconomic and political factors, and group dynamics in driving many manifestations of violent extremism” (Price & Morris, 2011). At the same time, however, one also must recognize that for Boko

Haram the rage against the government embodies an order rooted in Sharia law, moral relativism, and punishment of other people who are deemed un-Islamic.

Furthermore, the roles of religious beliefs in explaining violent extremism cannot be understated. Though religious beliefs have been identified to be the root cause of violence in some societies, there are other causes of discontent that are unrelated to them. Juergensmeyer (2008) argued that there is an additional layer of complexity which religion can add to even conflicts that are primarily about competition over territory, power and/or resources. In such contexts, religion may not be the root cause of discontent; instead, it initially may be primarily a way through which grievances are expressed and individuals mobilized” (p. 13).

### **Historical Development of Violence in Nigeria**

Many scholars have examined the political history of Nigeria to explain the present predicament of the nation. This section first addresses how violence and extremism evolved with Nigeria’s history. Sir Frederick Lugard’s forceful amalgamation of Northern and Southern Protectorates of Nigeria on January 1, 1914, is generally regarded as the birthdate of the Nigerian state: “What existed in the period before the establishment of colonial rule was a motley of diverse groups whose histories and interactions, interlaced as they were by external influences had nevertheless crystallized in three clearly discernible regional formations by the end of the 19th century (Osaghae, 1998, p. 2).”<sup>1</sup>

According to Toyin Falola (2009), a renowned professor of African history at the University of Texas at Austin, “colonization was achieved in Nigeria either by the use of war or by surrender because of the threat of war, and the imposition of colonial rule by the British government created conditions for violence in Nigeria from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the early 1950’s” (p. 1). British economic and political interests created the violent confrontations that led to the colonization of Nigeria. The purpose of their conquest was to inaugurate imperial control. The Royal Niger Company (1879-1900), a mercantile company chartered by the British government, had indicated that “colonial domination would be accompanied by exploitation and violence, including the excessive use of power and violence to pursue narrow economic objec-

tives and transfer of wealth outside of Nigeria” (Falola, 2009, p. 6). According to Hill (2012), “Colonial rule did so much to perpetuate and extend divisions between a bewildering array of ethnic groups in Nigeria” (p. 1). The advancement of commercial interests began as early as the mid-nineteenth century, when the British sent troops and gunboats to the lower Niger for conquest. Later on, economic interests broadened into larger interests of imperialism, which had to be established by force.

Falola explained that British violence occurred in two stages. The first stage used force to conquer or the threat of force to obtain voluntary surrender. “Force” here involved terrorizing kings and their subjects. These wars marked the end of independent and autonomous indigenous nations and groups. In the second stage, the British colonized the people through territorial governance. This involved the physical presence of police and the army. The British government regarded the use of force as legitimate and interpreted military success as a justification for imposing political authority. The British considered their need to impose imperial rule as a sufficient justification for the use of violence.

Before they launched their attacks on the Nigerians the British government had surveyed the landscape of the country and gathered useful information about people and places. They attacked Ijebu-Ode in May 1892 and later invaded Ibadan in southwestern Nigeria in 1895 (Johnson, 1921). In 1898 they established the West African Frontier Force (WAFF), with headquarters in Lokoja. Their goal was to conquer and control the peoples and nations located in the region. On Jan 1, 1900, Frederick Lugard hoisted the British flag at Lokoja, declaring a British Protectorate with himself as the first colonial officer to head the new colonial government.

Lugard was ruthless in the conquest of what became Northern Nigeria and was fanatical in pursuit of the principles of indirect rule. Despite the violent resistance of the indigenous peoples, he was able to use the more powerful British forces to overpower and subdue the areas (Falola, 2012). His views on the establishment of dominant colonial power were emphatic. Historians described Lugard as a trained soldier who wasted no time in moving against many emirates in northern Nigeria. He believed that, for his small wars to succeed, he had to ignore the Colonial

Office in London, which he adjudged as timid, too concerned with public opinion in Britain, and too sensitive to the larger international politics of Europe. Lugard used force against the emirates of Kano, Sokoto, and Katsina between 1902 and 1903 (Falola, 2009).

Lugard replaced the traditional kings with his own, usually rivals of old. He strongly held that civilization of Africans would come only through violence and authoritarianism. Without force and violence, slavery and alcoholism and other vices would not disappear. In Lugard's views, the government should not be slow in taking punitive measures when necessary (Osaghae, 1998). While violence created Northern Nigeria, the politics of indirect rule consolidated the colonial administration. Lugard was astute in his definition of indirect rule. He placed the Fulani emirs in power, using their established indigenous political institutions to govern. Though he neither respected them nor found them worthy political leaders, this system saved money and avoided organized rebellions against alien rule. As long as the emirs established a chain of authority between him and their subjects, with him as the leader, they were doing their job (Osaghae, 1998). He used the emirs as powerful authorities to collect taxes and run other important errands for the colonial administration. As Lugard extended his ideas of indirect rule to the south, he began a process that altered the basis of traditional power and generated conflicts and riots in a number of areas (Falola, 2009).

Many Nigerian groups understood the aims of British imperialism and resisted through wars and other means. The majority of the traditional rulers knew that British conquest would bring about a loss of power for them. Though the invading British troops had superior firepower and technology, this did not prevent various indigenous pressure groups from using locally made guns, rifles, and flintlocks to fight for their freedom and independence. Ad-hoc Nigerian armies sprang up from numerous tribes and lands and used spears, bows and arrows, and machetes against the more tyrannous and formidable British invaders with powerful Maxim and Gatling guns. The very essence of Nigerians' war of resistance against the British troops decisively shaped some of the actions of the British who followed in later years (Falola, 2009). Nigerians had to fight when the colonial invaders began to take actions. Falola contended that "to dismiss the wars of resistance fought by Nigerians is to fall into a big trap: that of the failure to understand the complex roles of violence in Anglo-Nigerian relations" (Falola, 2009, p. 15).

Thus, Nigeria became a British colonial creation through a piecemeal and combined process of trade, monopoly, military superiority, “divide and rule,” and outright conquest. The various groups were brought together under the aegis of colonial authority (Osaghae, 1998).

The forceful amalgamation of both southern and northern Nigeria had far-reaching implications for the Nigerian state and nation building. British acquisition of territories in Nigeria had three different strands, which roughly approximated to the regional formations of the Western Eastern and Northern protectorates. According to Osaghae (1998), the question of how to structure and administer the colony and protectorates of the future Nigeria led to the setting up of northern and southern provinces. The Niger Delta protectorate became the Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria in 1906, which existed alongside the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria until the amalgamation of the two territories in 1914. With amalgamation

came the partial abolition of customs frontiers existing between the two countries, the unification of the railway system, adoption of a standard currency, universalization and systematization of taxation, a unified judicial system and integrated bureaucracy, extension of indirect rule to the south, the abolition of separate northern and southern regiments, and the adoption of a uniform time of 71/20 meridian and single weekly gazette. (Ngou, 1989, p. 9)

In spite of these changes, Northern and Southern Nigeria continued to develop along different lines, with British administrators employing different administrative methods in each. Osaghae (1998) explained that “most parts of the North were shielded from Western influences, especially education and Christian missionary activities, in accordance with a pact Lugard was said to have signed with the emirs, [and] they were allowed free reign in the South” (p. 33). This gave a head start to southern groups not only in education but also in political development. The gap between Northern and Southern Nigeria was huge, because most of the schools in the country during the colonial era were established by Christian missions. North-south dichotomy was not the only structural flaw of colonial rule that had grave consequences for post-independence Nigeria. Regionalism, tribalism, ethnic divide, and the geographic concentration of the country’s economic development in the south all contributed to the uneven nature of progress between Nigeria’s

northern and southern states (Osaghe, 1998).

The British diarchy of a relatively weak central authority and greater autonomy in Nigeria contributed to the colonial legacy of weak central institutions and relatively strong regional and local ethnic authorities. This not only hindered nationalism and unification of the country, but also planted the seeds of regional discord and even violent extremism. The divide-and-rule nature of the colonial period did not allow institution building at the central level. Thus, tribalism and ethnic conflict could not be resolved through legal and institutional means. Instead, regional disputes were resolved through traditional (peaceful) mediation or violence.

Since the colonial era, the limited central capacity to regulate and mediate political power and territorial control institutionally has meant that violence has remained integral to modern Nigeria. The British wars of conquests were, for the Nigerians, wars of resistance. This struggle continued until October 1, 1960, when Nigeria gained independence from the British government. Thus, “violence serves political purposes in Nigeria: to dominate, to resist domination, to create conditions for negotiation, and to target people and objects that symbolize oppression” (Falola, 2009, p. 9). Colonization led to the intentional establishment of a weak state institution, as the British administration focused on economic exploitation at the expense of nation-building in Nigeria. The divide and rule policy of British led to the intentional creation of a weak central authority there.

Upon Nigeria’s independence on October 1, 1960, the British deliberately handed a disempowered Nigerian state over to a weak central government, composed of clearly distinguishable ethnic groups, in order to ensure further exploitation of a beleaguered country. The post-independence civil war in Nigeria between 1967-1970 was illustrative of the weak institutions left behind by the colonial masters that could not coherently sustain the unity of the ethnically diverse Nigerian state. Good enough, the Nigerian state was able to survive the bloody civil war, which was the first test of Nigeria’s unity, yet successive administrations in Nigeria largely ignored thorough reforms of these weak state institutions left behind by the British. Given the role of violence and insurgency in Nigeria’s history, it is unsurprising that extremist groups such as Boko Haram have appropriated these actions to overthrow the existing government.

## EXTREMIST GROUPS AND EXPRESSED GOALS

Boko Haram was born out of the regional violence and tension between Northern Nigeria and the central authority, and the weak central capacity to mediate conflict in this region. Thus, it is important to examine the development and stated goals of the group. Over the past decade Boko Haram has persistently challenged and threatened the fragile unity of Nigeria. Boko Haram, loosely translated from the local Hausa language, means “Western education is forbidden.” Its followers are influenced by the Koranic phrase that says, “anyone who is not governed by what Allah has revealed is among the transgressors,” (Chothia, 2012, para. 1). Boko Haram promotes a version of Islam that makes it “haram” or forbidden for Muslims to take part in political or social activity associated with Western society. Several forbidden activities include voting in elections, wearing shirts and trousers, or receiving secular education (Chothia, 2012).

Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf, a charismatic Muslim cleric, founded Boko Haram in 2002 in Maiduguri, the capital city of the Borno state in northeastern Nigeria. The sect’s philosophy is rooted in the practice of orthodox Islam, and the group’s official name in Arabic, *Jama’atu Ahlissunah lidda’awati wal Jihad*, translates to “people committed to the propagation of the Prophet’s teachings and Jihad” (Chothia, 2012, para. 4). Boko Haram, along with a splinter group called Ansaru, has a mission to overthrow the Nigerian state and impose strict Islamic Sharia Law throughout the entire country. Its mission is to “sanitize the Nigerian system, which is spellbound by western education and ideals” (Onuoha, 2012, 136).

Boko Haram members are motivated by the conviction that the Nigerian state is filled with social depravities, and, 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” (Akanji, 2009, p. 55). As is common with nearly all insurgent groups, Boko Haram’s expressed goals are to overthrow the Nigerian government, incite religious tensions by acts of terror (i.e., suicide bombings), and eventually declare an Islamic state in Nigeria.

## **Group Structure**

Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf, the erstwhile leader of the Boko Haram, did not complete his secondary school education, but later received Koranic education in Chad and Niger, where he became radicalized and famous for his radical views on Islamic issues expressed on local television stations (Onuoha, 2012). The Koranic schools later became a recruiting ground for Jihadists, who would take up arms and fight for the emancipation of an Islamic state. Before his death in 2009 Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf had established a structure whereby each state had its own Amir (commander or leader) and local government area (synonymous with a county in the United States). The Amirs administer the local governments and report to their supreme leader. Below the local government are the remaining followers. Boko Haram organized itself according to various roles, such as soldiers and police, among others (Dawah Coordination Council of Nigeria, 2009). Thus, the political vacuum that exists due to little or no impact of a central authority necessitates the structural leadership that Boko Haram provides in Northern Nigeria (Onuoha, 2012).

## **Group Membership, Support and Resources**

The Boko Haram group draws its members mainly from unemployed and disaffected youths and former Almajiris (street children), mostly in Northern Nigeria.<sup>2</sup> These disaffected youths are apparently on the streets of major cities in Northern Nigeria, usually homeless and begging for alms from motorists and passersby in major cities. In addition, it is a popular practice whereby children from poor homes are sent to live and study under renowned Islamic teachers in cities in Northern Nigeria, such as Kaduna, Kano, Maiduguri, and Zaria, among others (Onuoha, 2010). Boko Haram offers means of livelihood to the almajiris and later offers them membership. These poor almajiris are exploited by the rich elite who are also members and sponsors of the Boko Haram sect.

Contrary to wide speculation about Boko Haram being faceless, the group has known membership and the support of some notable Nigerians including Alhaji Buji Fai, an ex-commissioner in Borno State; Kadiru Atiku, a former university lecturer; and Bunu Wakil, a Borno-based contractor (Onuoha, 2012). Boko Haram is alleged to have over 280,000 members across the 19 states of Northern Nigeria, Niger Republic, Chad, and Sudan (Oyegbile & Lawal, 2009).

It is important to note that, while most members of the Boko Haram sect are poor, some of their supporters and members are not. Boko Haram gets most of its funding from the contributions and donations of their affluent members. Members have to pay a daily levy of 100 naira (equivalent of US \$0.60) to their leader. This provides the basic source of funding for the group, in addition to donations from politicians, government officials, and other individuals or organizations within Nigeria. The sect is also alleged to be receiving funds from outside Nigeria. According to Ndukong (2012), Boko Haram confirmed that Al-Muntada Trust Fund, with headquarters in the United Kingdom, had extended financial assistance to the sect. The Nigerian State Security Service uncovered in their investigations that the Islamic World Society with headquarters in Saudi Arabia and some prominent local businessmen within Nigeria have provided funding to Boko Haram.

Alhaji Bunu Wakil, a contractor and an indigene of Borno state, was alleged to be the main financier of Boko Haram (Idris, 2011a). In January 2011 the Nigerian police celebrated what it described as a “landmark” achievement when security operatives arrested him and 91 other persons for sponsoring terror against the state (Mararna, 2011). In 2007 Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf and Mohammed Bello Damagun, the latter a Muslim cleric who supposedly belonged to the “Nigerian Taliban,” were tried for terrorism-related offences. Damagun was arraigned in a federal high court in Abuja on three charges: (a) belonging to the Nigerian Taliban, (b) receiving a total of US \$300,000 from al-Qaeda to recruit and train Nigerians in Mauritania for terrorism, and (c) aiding terrorists in Nigeria (Onuoha, 2011). Yusuf was later arraigned on five charges, including receiving money from al-Qaeda operatives in Pakistan to recruit terrorists who would attack residences of foreigners, especially Americans living in Nigeria (Onuoha, 2010a; Suleiman, 2007). Although Yusuf was arrested in 2008, he and other members of the sect were discharged and later found their way back into the Nigerian society.

## **Escalating Acts of Extremism in Nigeria**

The escalating level of violence in Nigeria fits the description of a failed state, and the central authority's lack of control to quell the wave of bombings and indiscriminate killings by Boko Haram strongly confirms the underlying hypotheses of a failed state. Boko Haram first took up arms against the Nigerian state security forces on December 24, 2003, as police stations and public buildings in the towns of Giam and Kanamma in the state of Yobe were attacked (Onuoha, 2012). The members occupied the two buildings for several days, hoisting the flag of the Afghanistan's Taliban movement over the camps. As a result, a joint operation of soldiers and police dislodged the group after killing eighteen and arresting dozens of its members (Suleiman, 2007). The nature of Boko Haram's violence became more worrisome in 2004, when students, especially in tertiary institutions in Borno and Yobe states, such as the University of Maiduguri, withdrew from school, tore up their certificates, and joined the group for Koranic lessons and preaching (Lawal, 2009).

In July 2009 Boko Haram carried out a spate of attacks on police stations and other government buildings in Maiduguri. After the incidents Nigerian security forces eventually seized the group's headquarters, capturing its fighters and leader, Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf, who was brutally murdered in what appeared to have been an extrajudicial killing. In the aftermath of the incidents, though the state television service and security forces declared Boko Haram finished, its fighters regrouped under a new leader, Abubakar Shekau, in 2010 and attacked a prison in Bauchi State, freeing hundreds of the group's supporters.

Boko Haram's trademark has been the use of gunmen on motorbikes, killing police, politicians, Muslim and Christian clerics, and anyone who criticizes their actions (BBC News, 2012). See Table 1 for a timeline of Boko Haram's alleged attacks and killings.

**Table 1***Timeline of Alleged Attacks and Killings by the Boko Haram Group (continued)*

Date		Targets	Description
1 January 2011	Maiduguri (Borno State)	Victory Christ Church	Suspected members of Boko Haram attacked the church at Gawo Mai Lamba Area of Borno state
4 January 2011	Yola (Adamawa State)	Prison break at Jimeta	At least 10 prison officials narrowly escaped being lynched by members of the sect and over 14 inmates were freed. Members of the sect were recently transferred from Maiduguri Prisons to Jimeta Prison
May 29 2011	Abuja	President Goodluck's inauguration day Abuja	Three bombs tore through a beer garden in a military barracks in the northern city of Bauchi, killing 13 and wounding 33. Boko Haram claimed responsibility.
16 June 2011	Abuja	Police Headquarters Abuja	A suicide attacker believed to be member of the sect drove a car loaded with improvised explosive devices in to the Police headquarters in Abuja.
20 June, 2011	Kankara Katsina	Bank in Kankara Katsina	Seven people, including five policemen, killed in gun and bomb attacks on a police station and a bank in Kankara, Katsina State.
27 June 2011	Maiduguri (Borno State)	Maiduguri (Borno State)	Gun and bomb attacks on a beer garden in Maiduguri left at least 25 dead and dozens injure
25 August 2011	Adamawa	Adamawa State	Gun and bomb attacks on two police stations and two banks in Gombi, Adamawa State, killed at least 16 people, including seven policemen.
26 August 2011	Abuja	United Nations Office in Abuja	At least 23 people were killed in the United Nations Office in the Nigerian capital
12 September 2011	Misau Bauchi State	Misau Bauchi State	Seven men, including four policemen, were killed in bomb and shooting attacks on a police station and a bank in Misau, Bauchi State.
4 November 2011	Maiduguri (Borno State)	Maiduguri (Borno State)	The motorcade of Borno State governor Kashim Shettima came under bomb attacks in Maiduguri on its way from the airport to the governor's residence as he returned from a trip to Abuja.

4 December 2011	Azare Bauchi	Bauchi	A soldier, a policeman and a civilian were killed in bomb and gun attacks on police buildings and two banks in Azare, Bauchi State. Boko Haram opened fire at a wedding in Maiduguri, killing the groom and a guest.
7 December 2011	Kaduna City	Kaduna City	An explosion linked to Boko Haram killed eight in the Oriyapata district of Kaduna city
13 December 2011	Maiduguri (Borno State)	Maiduguri (Borno State)	Bomb attack on a military checkpoint and the resulting shooting by soldiers in Maiduguri left 10 dead and 30 injured.
22 December 2011	Potiskum (Yobe State)	Potiskum (Yobe State)	Parts of Maiduguri bombed, killing 20. Four policemen and a civilian were killed in gun and bomb attacks on a police building in Potiskum, Yobe State. About 100 were killed following multiple bomb and shooting attacks in ensuing gun battles with troops in the Pompomari outskirts of Damaturu.
25 December 2011	Madalla, Niger State	St Theresa's Catholic Church Madalla	39 People were killed in bomb were killed in the apparent suicide car bombing on Christmas day in St Theresa's Catholic Church.
20 January 2012	Kano State	Police Station, Immigration Offices	Kano set ablaze with multiple bombings and shootings, which claimed over 128 lives. The bombings targeted eight police stations and immigration offices, including a regional police headquarters and the state police headquarters.
23 January 2012	Kano State	Kano State	Kano city again came under a fresh attack as Boko Haram bombed a police outpost at Sheka along Zoo road, close to the Shagari quarters.
February 2012	Jos, Plateau State	Church of Christ in Jos	Bombers forced their way into the headquarters of the Church of Christ in Nigeria in Jos and detonated explosives within the church premises, killing eight and injuring 35 people
07 July 13, 2013	Yobe	Schools in Yobe state	42 people, mostly students, killed in an attack on a secondary school in restive Yobe state.

Source: Author's Compilation

The group has also carried out several bombing attacks in different parts of Northern Nigeria, showing that it is establishing a presence across the region and fueling tension between Muslims and Christians. These attacks included (a) the military barracks attack on 2010 New Year's Eve in the northeastern city of Damaturu; (b) the 2011 Christmas Day bombings on the outskirts of Abuja; (c) the May 2011 bombing during President Goodluck Jonathan's inauguration, and (d) the August 2011 bombing of UN headquarters in Abuja, which was also Boko Haram's first attack against a Western target and its only transnational attack.

In 2012 the Ansaru sect, a Boko Haram splinter group, claimed responsibility for the kidnapping of foreigners in Northern Nigeria. In January 2013 the Ansaru ambushed a military convoy bound for Mali, and later abducted seven foreign nationals in Bauchi, Nigeria, on February 16, 2013 (Stratfor, 2013). On January 20, 2013, in the city of Kano, Boko Haram launched one of the nation's deadliest assaults, leaving one 185 people dead.

Boko Haram's tactics can be broken down into the major categories of suicide bombings (typically using vehicle-borne explosives) and motorcycle ambushes. Religious worship centers, police stations, military barracks, religious leaders, and political institutions are all targets for Boko Haram.

There have been wide variations and divisions in the literature over Boko Haram's agitations and desires. Much of its indiscriminate killings of innocent Nigerians, including children, raise questions about any sincere purpose. There are also political motivations since Boko Haram is using terror as one of its tactics to achieve religious and political goals in Nigeria, particularly the imposition and practice of Sharia law in Nigeria. The changing dynamics of its tactics are fueling speculation that it is not one group, but several. Both the breadth and speed of its transformation speak of an organization moving in multiple directions simultaneously. Indeed, it appears so dynamic that it is hard to imagine all these changes being instigated and directed by a small group of clearly defined leaders. It seems far more likely that it is a confederacy made up of broadly likeminded factions, each with its own fighters, leaders, agendas, and capabilities.

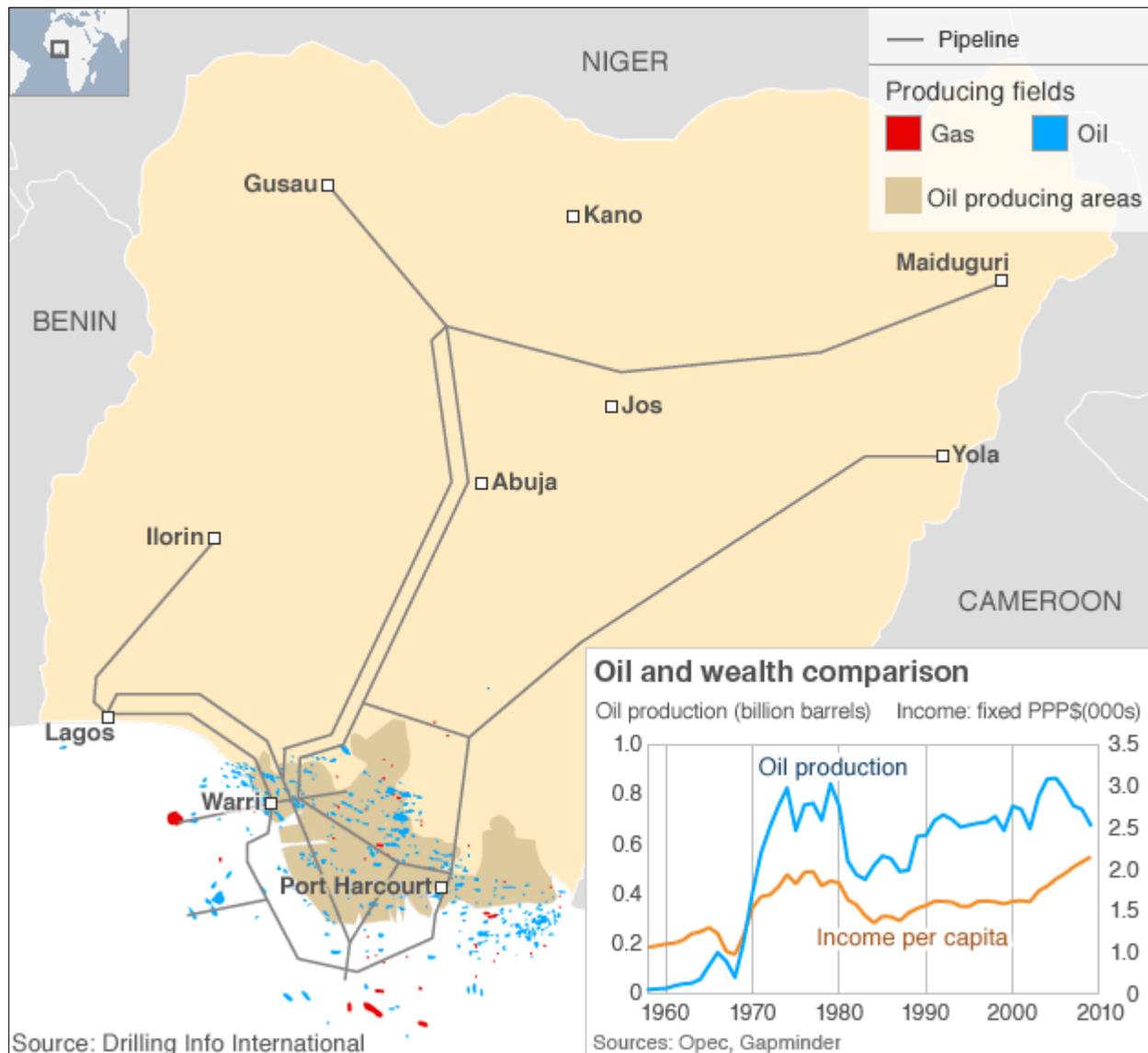
## RESEARCH FINDINGS

A number of factors promoting violence have been identified, including the colonial legacy (weak central state), widespread corruption, ethnic tensions, endemic poverty, social frustration, oil, and unemployment. However the evidence supports the weak, or failed state, hypothesis.

### Oil

Oil contributes more than 80% of Nigeria's budgetary revenue and provides 95% of the country's foreign exchange (2013 CIA fact sheet). Figure 1 shows oil in Nigeria.

**Figure 1:** Nigeria: A Nation Divided - Oil



As seen in Figure 1, Nigeria's oil production in 2010 rose above 800,000,000 barrels (Source: OPEC). The booming oil price provides the Nigerian government with over 95% of its export earnings.

Oil contributes to Nigeria's failure as a state in four major ways. First, its extraction and production undermine the quality of the living standards of Nigerians, particularly members of the oil-producing communities such as the Niger Delta region and those living closest to the oil wells. Oil mining and gas flaring continue to deplete the ecosystem in this region due to lack of compliance with environmental standards. Cancer rates are higher in this area than the national rates, and respiratory ailments are plaguing the residents. There are regulations in place to protect the people, but no entity enforces them. Laws, guidelines, and standards put in place over 40 years ago are implemented and interpreted loosely, or completely ignored, which contributes to the extensive pollution that is not cleared up as required. Second, oil has helped to fuel the many insurgencies that are present in modern-day Nigeria. According to Hill (2012), "one of the main reasons the movement for the emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) took up arms was to win justice for the country's residents" (p. 66). The Nigerian government cared less for the well being of Niger-Delta communities where crude oil is explored, which has resulted into aims taken against the government by members of these communities. Third, the oil sector has incapacitated much of the rest of Nigeria's economy, resulting in endemic poverty in many parts of the country. Every other sector in Nigeria depends on oil and its accompanying revenue in order to function appropriately. Prior to the discovery of oil in Nigeria, agriculture was the mainstay of the economy. The overdependence on oil in Nigeria has resulted in the steady collapse of other economic sectors such as education and manufacturing. The discovery of oil changed the outlook of the economy and commercial developments, which has brought untold hardships on many Nigerians. Fourth, oil proceeds are being used to sponsor insurgent groups, and much of the high level corruption that is taking place in the country occurs in the oil sector.

The government has failed the Niger Delta region, and this failure continues to infuriate the oil-producing communities (The Economist London, 2006). There are armed groups in the Niger Delta that are interested in fighting for a fair distribution of the oil profits the government

receives and the transfer of ownership of the oil rights from the federal government to the citizens of the Niger Delta (Hill, 2012). The Constitution states that the natural resources of the nation shall be used for all citizens of Nigeria. Citizens, especially the armed groups in the Niger Delta, want a share of the revenue from the sale of oil and are disenchanted with the conditions in which they live. Measurable and significant standards must be enforced to address the impoverished environmental conditions, otherwise kidnappings, secessionist movements, and the destruction of pipelines and burning of oil wells will continue (The Guardian, 2010).

### **Oil and Widespread Corruption**

Oil revenue is the root of much of the corruption in the country because it is the main source of the country's exported goods and foreign earnings. The economy is considered a rentier state, partly because much of the revenue comes from rents paid through licenses and royalties from multiple international petroleum corporations. Rents collected are primarily by the central government (Falola & Heaton, 2008, p. 183-184). The federal government does not depend on its citizens for revenue streams; therefore, the citizens' views, voices, and demands are ignored. This high concentration of wealth and economic power is in the hands of only a few citizens, who abuse the democratic system. Some use it to influence votes and intimidate voters in the name of rigging elections (Hill, 2012). Figure 1 depicts the oil- and gas-producing areas in Nigeria. Oil is produced in the southeast, and some militant groups there want to keep a greater share of the wealth that comes from under their feet. Nigeria's ability to wage any serious antigraft war has been significantly diluted, since the proceeds of oil (oil money) make up the significant portion of the ill-gotten wealth of senior public figures in the country.

As has frequently been debated in pivotal studies of the resource-curse theory, Nigeria appears to be a prime example of the curse that natural resources can bring (Auty 1993; Collier & Hoeffler 2001; Le Billon 2001; Sachs & Warner 2001). It is sad enough that over 50 years of substantial oil production have not resulted in any meaningful sustainable socio-economic development in Nigeria, which has an extreme poverty rate.

However, the research findings did not confirm the underlying hypothesis that regions with greater resource extraction, such as oil, experience higher levels of violent extremism and insurgency. On the contrary, there is relative peace in the oil-producing region of southern Nigeria. The erstwhile insurgent group, Movement for the emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), in the oil-producing region of the Niger Delta shunned hostilities against the government and embraced the peace with the amnesty program offered on August 6, 2009, according to the Guardian on August 6, 2009 (Rice, 2009). Though, management of oil wealth and visible deprivation of social and human capital in northern Nigeria is provoking to many Nigerians, this is dissimilar to the resource-curse theory which attributes the occurrence of violent conflicts to endowment of natural resources alone. Though oil remains essential to Nigeria's economy and stability, there is no substantial influence of oil on the present occurrence of violent extremism and insurgencies in Northern Nigeria. This is dissimilar to the resource-curse theory, which links the occurrence of violent conflicts to natural resources. The mismanagement of oil wealth and visible deprivation of social and human capital in Northern Nigeria is provoking to many Nigerians. This is dissimilar to the resource-curse theory, which attributes the occurrence of violent conflicts to endowment of natural resources.

### **Poverty and Social Frustration**

High rates of poverty directly promote violence in Northern Nigeria. As a result, many impoverished, disenfranchised, and young devout Muslims are becoming increasingly skeptical about a system that has brought them little benefits while well serving the interests of the established political elite (Isaacs, 2003). The absence of sustainable independent institutions to perform checks and balances of the elites in government has prolonged the socio-economic and political development of the country. Such independent institutions would be responsible for monitoring public and governmental decisions that affect the citizens. Weakened institutions with no democratic philosophy have contributed to poor governance (Migdal, 1988).

According to Senator Ita Enang, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Business and Rules in Nigeria, “eighty-three percent of Nigerian oil blocks are owned by Northerners” (Thisday Newspaper, Mar 7, 2013, para. 2). He urged the National Assembly to revoke and reallocate the nation’s oil blocks for equitable distribution of wealth in the country. However, even though the northerners own much of the oil blocks in Nigeria, the lives of the majority of northerners have not improved.

Despite the billions of dollars oil revenue earned by the Nigerian government, 50% of Nigerians lack access to power supply. Mismanagement of Nigeria’s oil wealth has resulted in inadequate social infrastructure and visible deprivation of social and human capital in the country (Hill, 2012).

According to Table 2, the living standards for the majority of Nigerians have slightly changed since 1970. Life in Nigeria is not easy for many of its citizens, especially those in the North. Today approximately 100 million citizens are living on less than one dollar a day (Campbell & Bunche, 2011). The poverty level has been consistently increasing, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*Nigeria’s Population in Poverty*

Year	Living in Poverty	Population in Poverty	Total Population
1980	25%	17.1 million	68.4 million
1985	44 %	34.7 million	78.4 million
1992	38%	39.2 million	95.7 million
1996	72%	67.1 million	106.7 million
2004	91%	68.7 million	132.6 million
2010	72%	112.47 million	156.05 million
Source: Nigeria’s National Bureau of Statistics (2012)			

Table 2 shows that in 1980, 25% of the total population of Nigerians lived in poverty. As of 2010, the percentage of Nigerians living in poverty has risen to 72% of the total population. Although poverty is generally pervasive in most developing countries, evidence in the research shows it is not the leading cause of violent extremism and insurgency in Nigeria.

## **Colonial Legacy**

Most of the problems facing Nigeria can be traced to the country's colonial heritage. Nigeria is a deeply divided country, largely stemming from the many ethnic groups that inhabit the country. This has halted the advancement of development across the country. In precolonial times, there were various opportunities for intermingling through commercial contact using waterways and caravan trade routes, through intermarriages, and through wars of conquest. The diverse setting resulted in inconsistent colonial rule that further hampered attempts to develop Nigeria comprehensively. Bello (1962) stated, "in spite of Nigeria's common colonial experience, the record also emphasized the local differences in administrative practices going right back to the early years of this century. Up to May 1906, the British authorities had totally different administrative structures to the east, west, and north of the Niger." Europeans commonly used the divide-and-conquer principles, which led the way to constant shifting of relationships between rulers and collaborators.

Nigeria today is drastically divided along ethnic lines due to the colonial influences and greed for power. Before the British rule Nigeria was more stable than it is today. Leadership from a strong centralized force was needed in the country to keep it united with all of the ethnic divisions among the many ethnic groups. This leadership emerged when the military became sufficiently powerful to keep the country together, which led to other larger problems (Osaghae, 1998).

## **Weak State Structure**

The term "weak state" describes states whose governments have weakened to an extent that they are unable to provide basic public goods, such as security, health care, and legitimate institutions for their people (Wyler, 2007). The Nigerian government's inability to perform these basic functions within its borders qualifies it as a weak state. Weak states can threaten the progress and stability of other countries, as the decisions a weak state makes can have inadvertent international consequences as well. Migdal (1988) provided the following characteristics of a weak state:

## Low levels of legitimacy

- Low capacity of independent analyses of its own development problems along with designing adequate strategies
- Low capabilities to collect taxes and spend government revenue in planned manner
- Administrative capacity insufficient to implement decisions taken along with policies adopted by the government
- Limited influence on the pattern of societal development within the country

Nigeria exhibits severe weaknesses that make the country vulnerable to war and economic deprivation. The ability of a weak state such as Nigeria makes it difficult for the country to effectively deal with the consequences of natural disasters. Unfortunately, other nations view Nigeria as a crumbling and fading enterprise that has been doing so for over three decades. The government is limited, and very few public goods and services, including security and legal protection, are provided to its citizens.

The research evidence shows the state-failure theory does confirm the underlying hypotheses that regions where the central government does not have the capacity to police the region effectively and provide public services will experience higher levels of violent extremism. The central authority in Nigeria still lacks measures to combat and curtail the menace of violent extremism and insurgency. Though the Nigerian state appears to be one piece, its people, particularly the northerners, are not at peace. Nigeria's future may be hanging in the balance with the increasing tide of violence and insurgency in its northern region.

### **Media Effect on Boko Haram Crisis in Northern Nigeria**

Both local and international media agree that Boko Haram's methods have become increasingly sophisticated and audacious over the years, they differ significantly on the group's affiliation with foreign terrorists such as al-Qaeda. After Boko Haram's August 26, 2011 bombing of United Nations Office in Abuja, which killed dozens of people, Martin Plaut, an African analyst for the BBC News, reported that, "the commander of the US Africa Command, General Carter

Ham, said he had several sources of information that Boko Haram had contacts with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, which operates in north-west Africa” (BBC News, August 26, 2011, p. 2). Most international media argued that the expertise involved in the waves of attacks carried out by Boko Haram further suggests its affiliation with larger terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda.

On the other hand, local media reports in Nigeria debunked Boko Haram’s affiliation with al-Qaeda and described it as a “local terror group.” Rather, they argue that the Nigerian government has a vested interest in affiliating Boko Haram with larger terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda in order to attract the sympathy of the international community. Adibe (2012a) argued that “linking Boko Haram to al-Qaeda will blunt criticisms against Nigeria government’s inability to contain the group- after all if the USA and European countries, with all their resources and capabilities have not been able to effectively contain al-Qaeda, why will anyone see it as a sign of weakness that the government has not been able to defeat an organization and its sponsors?” The local media portray Boko Haram as an Islamic militia that has taken up arms against the government in pursuit of an Islamic state and other religiously motivated objectives. According to the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, “Boko Haram had become primary perpetrator of religiously-related and gross freedom violations in Nigeria” (Vanguard Newspapers, August 21, 2013, para. 2). Boko Haram attacks churches, people perceived to be Christians, Muslim critics and every other person deemed un-Islamic. The media in Nigeria portray it as a homegrown insurgent group that exploits the weakness and pervasive failure of the Nigerian government to exercise control over its territory.

Furthermore, some local media in Nigeria have linked endemic poverty and hopelessness in northern Nigeria to intrastate violence caused by Boko Haram. The lack of economic opportunities and inequalities are also responsible for the surge in violent extremism in northern Nigeria. According to the former U.S. President Bill Clinton, Nigeria’s challenge of terrorism in the north is being fuelled by extreme poverty that increases by the day (Ekott, 2013). However, the international media have a different perspective on the cause of the violence in Nigeria. Jean Herskovits, a professor of history at the State University of New York at Purchase, argued that the main problem in Nigeria is not Boko Haram, but the Nigerian government’s insensitivity to the

people. She contends that “since Nigeria’s return to civil rule in 1999, many politicians have used ethnic and regional differences, and most disastrously, religion for their own purposes” (Herskovits, 2012). Nigerians are indeed desperate for a responsive government that will guarantee security and welfare of the people. It is a widely held belief that many youths in northern Nigeria are outraged over the regions neglect and endemic poverty.

The international media firmly believe that Boko Haram enjoys the backing of some officials within President’s Jonathan’s government and security agencies. According to Jonathan, “of the Boko Haram sympathizers, some of them are in the executive arm of government, some of them are in the parliamentary/ legislative arm of the government, while some of them are even in the judiciary, armed forces, the police and other security agencies” (BBC News, January 8, 2012, para. 6). Similarly, the local media affirms Boko Haram enjoys the support of many influential Nigerians, including Alhaji Buji Fai, an ex-commissioner in Borno State, who was murdered after his arrest in 2009; Kadiru Atiku, a former university lecturer; and Bunu Wakil, a Borno-based contractor, all of whom are all known to be members of the sect (Onuoha, 2012). Much of the support given to the group by Nigerians is motivated by religion, which attracts the sympathy of local men, women and children in northern Nigeria. Other speculated sponsors include influential northern religious leaders and politicians (Sani, 2011).

Both the local and international media agree that Boko Haram is more audacious and sophisticated in its acts of terror against the Nigerian state and is using more sophisticated military tactics and ammunitions. The increasing spate of killings and bombings in some parts of northern Nigeria is illustrative of the inability of the Nigerian government to exercise control within its territory. In the absence of capable and strong institutions, such as robust armed forces and committed religious and political leaders, Boko Haram exploits the weakness of the Nigerian state and enjoys the loyalty of disaffected youth in northern Nigeria. “They exploit the porosity of Nigerian borders and lackluster security apparatus in the country to smuggle arms and sophisticated ammunition to destabilize the state” (Onapajo & Uzodike 2012).

Since 2009 Boko Haram has attacked several churches, mosques, police stations, prisons and other government establishments across northern Nigeria, killing over 3,000 people in more than 700 attacks. It has also attacked, kidnapped, and killed foreigners for huge ransoms within the country. With scores of changing tactics and strategies, Boko Haram appears resilient, even as the Nigerian government reacts with brute use of military force and countless arrests of its members.

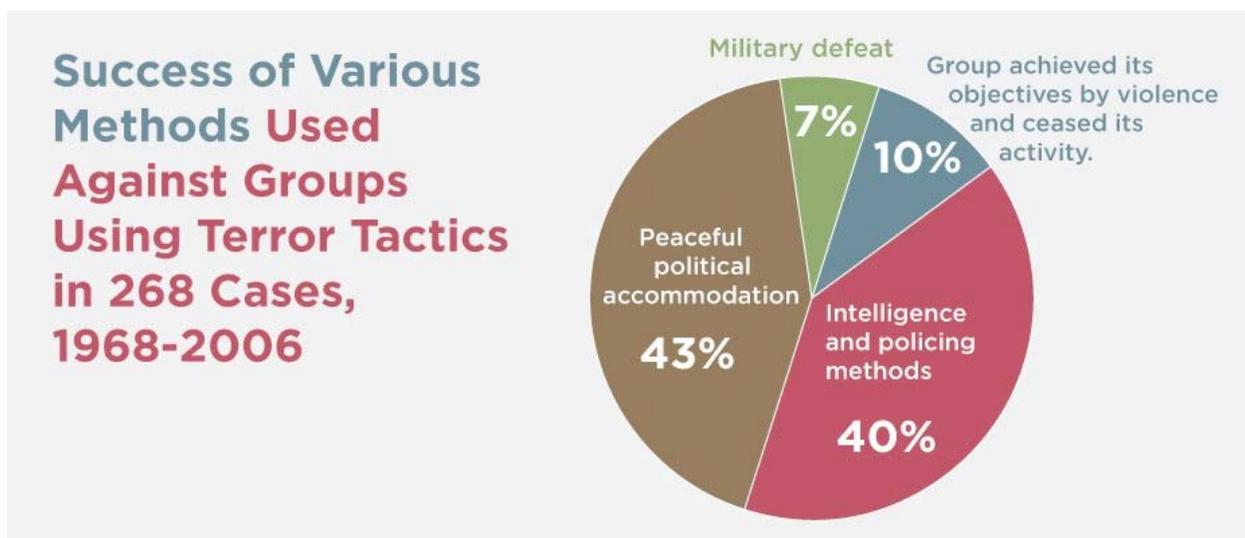
The media appears divided on the methods, changing tactics of terror, and the leading factors that promote violence in Nigeria. Before now, foreign media believed there was a Northern Muslim versus Southern Christian dichotomy causing violence. However, local media in Nigeria has shown through reports of subsequent and incidental occurrences that this model is a deceptive one in grappling with Boko Haram menace. The Nigerian government has to become responsive to the needs of the citizens and reform its weak institutions to help overcome the challenges of extremism and insurgency in the country. The unity of Nigeria must be preserved, as it is a reputable and strategic ally of the foreign policy interests of the United States of America in Africa.

## CONCLUSION

This section evaluates some measures already taken by the Nigerian government in tackling the Boko Haram crisis in Nigeria. It also suggests possible solutions that will help curb the menace of violent extremism and insurgency in Nigeria. In the past the Nigerian government has resolved to use brute military force against insurgent groups and deployed over 8000 troops into affected parts of northern Nigeria, but with no clearly defined Military Code of Justice for the operation. An example of an unclear military objective executed by the Nigerian Army is the mindless invasion of and killings in the Baga community in Borno state on Sunday, April 21, 2013. The Nigerian soldiers in a single operation killed over 200 civilians suspected to members of Boko Haram in the aftermath of an attack. With countless arrests and killings of innocent civilians who are suspected members and sponsors of the Boko Haram group, tensions continue to escalate with no sign of abating in troubled parts of northern Nigeria.

According to a Rand report that systematically examined and compared 268 groups using terror tactics from 1968 to 2006, several approaches have been shown to be much more effective than mere reliance on military responses at eliminating future attacks, including criminal justice responses and other attempts to address the well-being concerns of both combatants and the broader populace that might support them. The study revealed that 40% of the 268 groups were

**Figure 2:** Methods Used Against Terror Tactics 1968-2006. Source: Rand Report 2008



eliminated through intelligence and policing methods; 43% ended their violence as a result of peaceful political accommodation; 10 % ceased their violent activity because they had achieved their objectives (“victory”) by violence; and only 7% were defeated militarily (see Figure 2). The Nigerian government has also considered the option of dialogue with the members of Boko Haram, but this opportunity has not been successfully pursued.

Military responses have often resulted in a more violent response and terrorism against the civilians caught between the two opposing forces. In addition, wars often create the conditions for additional violent conflicts over the new resources and new political alignments created by an initial invasion or occupation. The civil wars and criminal violence that erupted in both Iraq and Afghanistan are examples of this phenomenon.

In the Nigerian case of combating extremism, military necessity cannot be underestimated to quell terrorism, given the escalating incidence of terror attacks in the country. However, over-reliance on the use of force on the government’s part appears to be a shortcut to sustainable peace and security in the affected region. General Carter Ham, Commander of the United States African Command (AFRICOM), has cautioned African governments not to rely solely on the use of excessive military force to fight the war against terror in Africa. He said that “though there is perhaps some necessity for some military action, the solution lies in the non-military solution and activities that would address the underlying causes of the dissatisfactions which include good governance” (Onuorah, Guardian Newspaper, February 1, 2013). Ultimately, the continuous use of military force seems preferable in dousing the tension of extremism in Nigeria, but protracted military effort is not going to eradicate the long-term problem, as this is capable of leading Nigeria to yet another civil war. It has been proven that violent extremism and insurgents thrive in an environment charged with hopelessness. The Nigerian government needs to be more responsive to the socioeconomic well-being of the people, and further engage systematic means of mediating disputes without recourse to the protracted use of armed insurrection.

The Nigeria government needs to carry out structural reforms that will further strengthen the nation’s weak institutions. The nation’s armed forces need to be developed to higher capacity

such that can protect and defend the sovereignty of the country. The nation's armed forces need to pay more respect to the citizen's right to live and adopt a clear military objective which provides adequate protection for the civilians. Furthermore, the Nigerian government needs to adopt traditional approaches to conflict resolution, which is more cost effective to the government than the use of brute of force. The government can take advantage of the culturally rich traditional approach to peace making and nation-building to end the crisis.

Lastly Nigerians need to rise above the challenges of ethnic polarization and embrace the strength in the country's diversity. They need to accept the responsibility of breaking away from the shackles of ethnic differences, which has held the country spellbound for so many years. There is an urgent need for the government to become more proactive in all features of conflict management and guarantee the well-being of all Nigerians, regardless of ethnicity.

## END NOTES

1. As a matter of fact, there was no political entity called “Nigeria.” Flora Shaw, who later married Lord Frederick Lugard in June 1902, was the first to propose the name “Nigeria” in an essay published in *The Times* on January 8, 1897 (Hill, 2012, p. 128). Lugard later served as High Commissioner of the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria from its creation in January 1, 1900 until November 1906. He was later Governor-General of the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria from January 1, 1914 to August 8, 1919 (Falola, 2009, p. 30).
2. The term “Almajiri refers to someone who leaves his home in search of knowledge in Islamic religion”(Purefoy, 2010, para. 15).

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