# Boko Haram Terrorist Group

Over a long period, Nigeria has had an unfortunate history of ethnoreligious violence and communal conflicts. Viewed from an outside perspective, it is evident that the conflicts and the violence revolve around religious differences between the Christian and the Muslim inhabitants. Even with these, politics and the control over the government, patronage plays a crucial role in these conflicts. Also known as the Jama'atu Ahl as-Da'awati Wal-Jihad, the Boko Haram is an Islamic extremist group based in Northern Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon (Walker, 2012). The group's main objective is to overthrow the Nigerian government and replace it with an Islamic law regime. The group led by Abubakar shekau alleged its loyalty to other terrorist groups such as the al-Qaida and the ISIL. Since its insurgence, the group ranked among the most vicious terrorist group has displaced more than 2 million citizens from their homes and killed almost 20000 Christians. Founded in 2002 the Boko Haram have increased their radicalization processes which have led to an increase in Islamic-Christianity violence (Walker, 2012).

It's unexpected resurgence, however, was in 2009 after their leader was executed. The prison break in 2010 was followed by sophisticated attacks against soft targets such as simple Christianity groups. In 2012, however, the government declared a state of emergency following several suicide bombings on the United Nations building and several police buildings in 2011. In 2013, the group was responsible for the death of almost 5000 Nigerians and the displacement of almost 250000 people who fled into the neighboring countries. In 2014, the terrorist group gained control over territories of almost 50000 square kilometers in Borno their home state (Onuoha, 2012).

## History

The groups known year of origin was in 2002 after Mohammed Yusuf emerged as the leader in Maiduguri, the capital of northern Borno. During this period, the leader established a religious school and complex that attracted poor Muslim families from across Nigeria and the neighboring countries. The complex had a political goal aimed at creating an Islamic state in northern Nigeria. However, this changed when the complex become a recruiting ground for unemployed youths who were converted to Islamic jihadists. The Nigerian security forces on the other hand date the origin of Boko Haram back to 1995 after Abubakar lawan established a Hijra sect at Maduigiri University. According to the security forces, Mohammed Yusuf converted this school to a recruiting ground after Abubakar moved to Saudi Arabia to study further (Onuoha, 2012).

The philosophy of Boko Haram is related to the practice of orthodox Islam which opposes the influences of western education and civilization. In a statement released in 2009, their acting leader Mallam Sanni umaru denied the designation of Boko Haram as a movement against western education defining it as a group against Western civilization. In his statement, he attempted to show that their beliefs and actions revolve around the notion of the supremacy of the Islamic culture. There are also factors linking the group to the end of the British rule and occupation. During this period, many politicians and academics revolted the civilization from the British.

## Ideology of the Boko Haram

Founded as a Sunni Islamic sect and influenced by Wahhabi movement, the Boko Haram advocates for a strong form of sharia law in the northern states in Nigeria. The fighters in the group follow several jihadists' doctrines such as the Salafi doctrine. Even with these, Boko Haram has severally denounced groups other terrorist groups such as the Sufi, izala, and the Shiite terming them as infidels. Boko harams main objective is establishing an Islamic state in Nigeria through opposing the western civilization that has tainted the Nigerian government (Onuoha, 2012). The group also opposes the concentration of wealth only to the elite, small political groups and the Christians in the south of Nigeria. This belief on the distribution of wealth has greatly contributed to the war against the Christians. Boko Haram views the Nigerian government as a government run by corrupt and greedy politicians. In this, they believe that through overthrowing the government and cleansing the northern regions against "Christianity" they would restore Northern Nigeria to a peaceful state free of corruption.

The group members still receive inspirations from Sheik Ja'afar Adamu who they split from the group in 2004. Adamu's teachings revolved around Mohamed Marwa, a self-proclaimed prophet who condemned all other readings except those of the Quran. In an interview in 2009, Yusuf described the group to have firm beliefs against Western civilization but not western education. In this interview, Yusuf rejected the theory of evolution arguing that the earth is not a sphere (Walker, 2012).

## Targeting of the Boko Haram

Ever since its establishment, Boko Haram has held onto strong beliefs that the corrupt and false Muslims have seized the politics in northern Nigeria. The group targets the federal government in Nigeria with the aim of creating a pure Islamic state free of Christianity and corruption ruled by sharia laws. Since the execution of their leader in 2009, the group has had the desire for vengeance against the police, Islamic authorities and the politicians for their roles in suppression of Boko Haram ways. The retaliation of the group against the politicians, police and Islamic authorities was evident in their attacks on United Nations and police buildings in 2011. Even with these, however, the group's targets have changed with the changes in leadership over the years (Walker, 2012).

The groups still continue to target the soft civilian targets especially Christians and widen its war against the government and corrupt authorities. A conflict that has existed over the years targeting civilians is the conflict in Plateau state. Boko Haram believes that the region requires ethnic cleansing against the Fulani and the Hausa people. Boko Haram is linked to the numerous suicide bombings in churches in the plateau state. Since its beginning, the group has targeted Christians in the northern region and the nearing regions. The integration of the United States and the United Kingdom governments escalated the war as it was in favor of the south. This support increased the rift between the northern and the southern people.

## Tactics and capability

As a well-organized group with leaders and hierarchical structure, the group employ several targets for radicalization and financing. For radicalization, the group uses teachings against the government and other religious groups through portraying Islam as the only religious groups. Through targeting the unemployed and poor youths, it is easier for the radicalizations to occur. After its establishment, the group received funding from corrupt politicians to discrete their political opponents (Onuoha, 2012). The group also received donations from donors who supported the goal of imposing the Islamic laws in Nigeria. In recent times, the Boko Haram has broadened its channels through receiving funds from foreign donors.

In 2012, some arrested Boko Haram officials revealed that the group received funds from other terrorist groups in the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia. To cloak its source of funding, Boko Haram uses the Halawa money transfer model. This model is based on a global network of agents and an honor system that makes money transfer difficult to track. Locally, the group is responsible for kidnappings

Robbery and extortions across Nigeria. An example is the 2013 kidnappings in which the Boko Haram kidnapped seven French tourists and released them in exchange for 3.15 million dollars. The group also has policies that revolve around the ransom for the kidnapped wealthy Nigerians. The equipment gathered during military attacks keep the Boko Haram well supplied with weapons. The group also extorts the local governments through receiving monthly payments from the local leaders (Walker, 2012).

## Analysis of attacks

The attacks by Boko Haram began in 2010 after the death of their leader in 2009. Having regrouped under a new leader, Boko Haram in 2010 broke out 105 members out of Bauchi prison who later launched attacks in several parts of Nigeria. Under the new leader, the group's operational capabilities improved and became strategic. In 2011, the group launched several IED attacks on soft targets and also bombed police headquarters in Abuja. In May 2011, the group carried out attacks on Abuja, Bauchi, and Zaria hours before the inauguration of Goodluck Jonathan. Later in August, the group bombed the United States Embassy killing 11 UN workers and 12 Nigerian employees.

In 2012, the group attacked police buildings killings 189 police officers and a TV reporter. The attacks comprised of suicide bombers, IED bombs and car bombs which were later enforced by uniformed gunmen. The group increased its popularity across the globe with the interventions from several human rights organizations reduce the attacks. Later in 2012, the group burned down 12 public schools forcing almost 10000 students out of education. During this period, the group made announcements giving three-day evacuation to the southerners in the north. Following this was the chibok kidnapping in which the group kidnapped 276 schoolgirls in 2014. In 2015, the group also conducted a massacre on Baga killing more than 2000 individuals.

Statements targeted at the government and the Christians residing in the north the leaders have followed most of the attacks by the groups. Over the years, the group has released press statements denying their linkages with other terrorist groups. Even after the allegations by the head if Nigerian defense headquarters that the group had surrendered the group conducted several attacks refuting the claims that they had surrendered. (Walker, 2012)

The United States alert on the terrorist group rose after the attack on the UN headquarters in 2011 in which 23 individuals were killed. The attack marked a significant shift in targeting and the goals of the Boko Haram. In a video that emerged after the attacks on the headquarters, the perpetrators described the UN as and "all global evil." The perpetrators also stated that the bombings were intended to send a message to the president of the United States and other infidels. During this period allegations on collaborations between the Boko Haram, the al-Qaida and the al-Shabaab rose (Onuoha, 2012). This attacks and collaboration allegations increased the concerns from the United States over the sect's capability and intent to strike Western targets in Africa and US homeland.

## Analysis of the Policies to Combat the Boko Haram

With the increasing threats from foreign terrorist groups the United States department of homeland security policies to help prevent attacks in both the United States and the foreign lands. With its involvement in Nigeria, the threats to the United States citizens in Nigeria and the threats Boko Haram may pose to the United States homeland, the US government through the DHS has policies to prevent any attacks from the Boko Haram. The US policies discussed in this paper include the policy on intelligence-led policing and The foreign intelligence surveillance act

## Intelligence-led policing

Over the years since the 9/11, the leading police associations in the US and UK have advocated for counterterrorism agencies and law enforcements agencies to adapt the intelligence-led policing (ILP) model. A model that engages the whole community in an attempt to fight crime and terrorism, through some intelligence techniques revolving around information collection, problem-solving and the improvement of other already existing models in police departments. The adoption of these policies in many countries results from the developments in the law enforcements that help deal with many issues in the society such as counterterrorism. The model is constructed from the analysis, assessment and the management of risks. This policy guides that intelligence officers are the guide to the operations (McGarrel, Freilich, & Chermak, 2007).

Calls for ILP began in the 1990s as the crime levels within the societies kept increasing. However, the policies of ILP gained momentum after the 9/11 attacks on the United States. Even with the fact that the police builds on old paradigms for example community policing, it originated as a focus on the crime of community policing with intelligence agencies and police focusing more and employing surveillance systems and informants to help combat recidivist offenders. An important concept of the policy is its focus on solving and reducing crimes and threats to the United States homeland.

ILP can play a crucial role in reducing the threats associated with Boko Haram in Nigeria. Since the attack on the United States embassy in Abuja, the law enforcement and intelligent agencies have been on alert to respond to any threat that may result from the group. Intelligence officers using the policy have recently focused on investigating terrorist associated groups and individuals in the terrorism lists. Using the intelligence gathered using the policy, the United State law enforcement agencies are able to identify associated terrorist groups such and the Boko Haram and allow for intervention before any attack happens (McGarrel, Freilich, & Chermak, 2007)

Evidently, from the numerous attacks conducted by the Boko Haram, its attack on the US embassy, and its links with the al-Qaida and the ISIL, the group possess a threat to the United States homeland. Even as an extremist group, Boko Haram has still engaged itself with activities related to terrorism. The group is often linked with many crimes ranging from violent hate crimes and acts of domestic terrorism. Posing an international terrorist threat the United States using this policy can detect and prevent any attacks conducted by the Boko Haram (McGarrel, Freilich, & Chermak, 2007). Also from the fact that there are linkages between the United States and Nigeria, it is important for the United States to engage activities that may pose a threat to this linkage. Among these threats is the Boko Haram which threatens the Nigerian normal government functioning and the Nigerian economy.

The ILP approach has successfully been used in the past as a method to counterterrorism. For example, in 2003, the al-Qaida conducted a series of suicide bombings in Istanbul. The targets of these attacks were the United States and Israeli citizens. During the attacks, 68 individuals were injured and more than 700 injured. That approach even with the fact that it did not play a role in stopping the attack was used in the investigations and the arrests that followed the attacks. The investigation showed that the bombers involved in the attack had received training in Afghanistan. This played a crucial role in identifying the networks the attackers used to travel and how they had assembled the weapons used in the attack. The investigation resulted in 300 arrests; among these 48 were identified as hardcore committed terrorists (McGarrel, Freilich, & Chermak, 2007).

Later the agencies confiscated items that included 150 pounds of pentaerythritol-M, 800 pounds of tetramine, 150 pounds of other ingredients used in making explosives. Additional confiscated items also included 22 hand radios and several AK 47 rifles, and passports and driver licenses. However, even with these, the investigations also noted that a number of individuals within the community had information about the attacks but did not reveal the information.

Evidently, the approach can play a crucial role in gathering information relating to specific terrorist groups including the Boko Haram. However, the approach has a weakness of how effective it is towards the sharing of information. As evident in the Istanbul bombings, if the individuals had shared the gathered information, the attack could have been stopped before it happened. This weakness calls for intermediate intervention by the affected stakeholders so as to eliminate the gap and enhance the gathering of intelligence and information relating to specific terrorist groups (McGarrel, Freilich, & Chermak, 2007)

## The foreign intelligence surveillance act

The FISA is an act that prescribes the procedures for electronic and physical surveillance and also the collection of foreign information on suspected espionage or terrorism. This act provides several guidelines to follow in order to conduct intelligence information gathering towards any terrorist acts. It also provided the guidelines towards the gathering of information on a certain group the government views as a threat to the country and its citizens. Created by the foreign intelligence surveillance court, the FISA helps oversee the requests for surveillance on specific systems by the intelligence agencies. The act just like the ILP approach was officially amended after the 9/11 attacks on the United States (McAdams, 2007).

Under the FISA, the federal agencies have to obtain court approval before sharing the information gained during the investigation phases with criminal investigators. Under the law, the chief justice appoints seven judges of the district courts to hear the cases and requests presented by the government. Following its official amendment in 2001, primarily focusing on terrorism and terrorist groups posing a threat to the United States homeland, other acts have been amended under the Act (McAdams, 2007). The protect America act of 2007 is the most important act in respond to foreign terrorism. The act was amended to help oversee the surveillance of suspected terrorists and terrorist groups located overseas. Under this act, the communications between the suspected individuals or groups may be wiretapped without the permission from the FISA court. The act plays a crucial role in counterterrorism through providing procedures aimed at certifying the legalities of the acquisition programs

The FISA plays a crucial role in counterterrorism as it helps gather the necessary information on terrorist groups. As a threat to the United States homeland, the act would play a crucial role in gathering the required information about Boko Haram. Analysis of the attacks Boko Haram shows a coordinated group with a hierarchy of command that poses a threat to not only Nigeria but also other foreign countries such as the United States. Among the most investigates terrorism groups in the al-Qaeda and the ISIL all which the Boko Haram has claimed loyalty to. This linkage should pose a threat to all countries that help combat the al-Qaeda and ISIL. This linkage also poses a threat to the United States that is frequently treated by these terrorist groups (McAdams, 2007).

In the face of these preceding terrorism, the United States have enhanced its activities using FISA aimed at investigating the activities of the numerous terrorist groups that pose a threat to the United States. With the claims released by the Boko Haram after the US embassy bombing in Abuja, it is a responsibility of the federal government to conduct investigations to protect the group from conducting other acts of terrorism towards the United States or even in the United States (McAdams, 2007). With these, it is, therefore, important for the government to use the policies provided by the Act to conduct surveillance on the suspected members of Boko Haram and the group itself to identify and prevent planned attacks.

## References

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