Full Length Research

A Review of Studies on Boko Haram Insurgency: Positions and Counter-Positions

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For upwards of seven years now Nigeria has been under the pressure of Boko Haram insurgency. In turn, this has elicited attention across the international community, especially the scholarly world. In a bid to proffer solution, research lights have been beamed on the group which has resulted in a myriad of academic papers, research findings and more. Yet, in spite of vigorous intellectual efforts to reach the roots of this hydra-headed problem, the end to the fight against Boko Haram insurgency does not appear to be in sight. This raises the curiosity as to the effectuality of the studies so far carried out on Boko Haram and to what degree those studies have helped in understanding the situation. Thus, in manner most akin to a review and in a five-part piece, we look at the various schools of thought that have emanated from intellectual works on Boko Haram. We came to the conclusion that much as robust studies have been made about the sect, there is yet more to be done.

Keyword: Insurgency, Terrorism, fundamentalism

INTRODUCTION

During recent years the phenomenon of Boko Haram Insurgency has dominated policy debates among academics and policy makers interested in Nigerian and African politics (Mantzikos, 2013). Thus, Boko Haram group and its activities have occasioned series of studies and elicited barrage of intellectual writings almost to an inundating level. The group has been studied with varying focal points as well as various approaches; resulting rather in contestation than consensus. As observed by Adibe (2013), "though Boko Haram has dominated the security discourse in Nigeria since 2010, nearly everything about the sect still remains contested: from the meaning of its name to the reasons for its emergence and radicalization, and whether it is now affiliated to foreign terrorist groups such as Al Shabaab in Somalia and Al Qaeda in the Islamic Magreb. It is also contestable whether the group is actually responsible for all the numerous terrorist atrocities attributed to it".

In view of the multitude of scholars and their different intellectual researches on the group, it is now expedient to evaluate studies of the group with a view to ascertaining the degree of light they have brought on the group and whether or not their claims can be held to be categorical as working tools for analysis and projection. In this piece, our study is compartmentalized into five parts, each part addressing different area of scholarly emphasis. Also, for reason of ease and convenience we attempt to distil the thoughts in each area into a body of

school. The first part looks at efforts by scholars to establish the origin of the group. The interest here is to determine the level of consonance among scholars in relation to the sources of the Boko Haram group and how this affects the general understanding of the group. Two, we look at scholars' postulations concerning the relationship between terrorism and socio-economic structure with a view to understanding whether or not the Nigerian society is indeed accountable, if not blameable, for the eruption of violence such as characterises the operations of the Boko Haram group. In the third part, we consider the views of scholars in the area of radicalism, extremism and fundamentalism. This part focuses on the line of thought that, contrary to the view of the socio-economic theorists, terrorism is not necessarily an outcome of social malaise neither is it automatically a response to it. Part four examines a totally different shade of thinking, which we labelled "Apologist". The thinking of this class of scholars seems to be that Boko Haram group has only been a victim of subjective reasoning rather than objective reasoning. According to them, the course of justice could not be served without seeing the world from the terrorist's perspective. In other words, we would think and act in exact manners should we try to understand the views of the enemy camp. The last part, by way conclusion, draws on the various and variant arguments canvassed by the different schools of thought.

THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL SCHOOL

This school of thought on Boko Haram insurgency emphasises historical backgrounds of the group. We can almost be certain that their conviction in dissipating energies on studying the origins of the group is that doing so would enhance better understanding of the group's whys and wherefores. Unfortunately for the epistemological school, they are not exactly in agreement on how Boko Haram started. Just as there are contestations over the name of the sect or the meaning of Boko Haram, there are also controversies over the origin of the group (Adibe, 2013). Mohamed (2014) for instance, at pains to trace the origin of the group, but unable to so do, resorted to periodising the origin of the group into phases. In his view, Three distinct and yet overlapping phases can be discerned in the evolution of Boko Haram. The first phase is what he describes as the Kanama phase (2003-05), when a militant jihadist group waged war on the Nigerian state but was repelled with casualties on both sides. This group was led by Muhammad Ali, a Nigerian who was radicalised by jihadi literature in Saudi Arabia and was believed to have fought alongside the *mujahideen* in Afghanistan. The second phase began with the collapse of the Kanama uprising and ended with the suppression of Boko Haram proper in July 2009. This period, which has been dubbed the *dawah* phase, was devoted to intensive proselytisation, recruitment, indoctrination, and radicalisation of its members. This phase involved extensive criticism of the extant secular system; debates with opposing *ulama* (clerics) on the propriety or otherwise of Western education, Westernisation, democracy, and secularism; and unceasing criticism of the corruption and bad governance under Governor Ali Modu Sheriff of Borno State, 2003-2011, as well as the conspicuous consumption and opulence of the Western-educated elite in the midst of poverty. The third phase is said to have begun with the 2009 suppression of the movement and the killing of its leadership in gory and barbaric form by Nigerian security agencies.

Boko Haram went underground; re-organised, and resurfaced in 2010 with a vengeance. They not only targeted their perceived opponents, but indiscriminately attacked security officials, politicians associated with the ruling All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) government in Borno State, and resorted to bombing high profile targets in Abuja such as the Nigerian Police Headquarters as well as UN offices, in June and August 2011 respectively. As the military crackdown intensified, they became desperate and more militant, thereby resorting to more desperate measures, which they had despised in the past, such as burning of school buildings, attacking telecommunications base stations, killing and kidnapping of foreigners, slaughtering as opposed to shooting of opponents, and killing of health officials at routine vaccination clinics, as well as random shooting of pupils and teachers at schools. Appealing as this account seems, it does not accord totally with other accounts of the origins of the Boko Haram group.

Pérouse de Montclos (2014) abortively attempted to trace the origin of Boko Haram and captioned a portion of his work as "origin", but all he could do is hazard a guess as to the origin of the group. First, he started by alluding to the fact that "the movement remains mysterious, with little evidence to substantiate different allegations about its true agenda", a rather demonstration of frustration than expression of knowledge. In an attempt to do justice to the part marked out for the origin of the group, he, in a manner demonstrative of doubt, says "it was founded around 2002 by Mohammed Yusuf, a radical preacher based in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state". Okpaga et al (2012) having marked a portion of their work as "Boko Haram: History, modes of operation and litany of attacks" failed to establish the origin of the group. Rather, they chose to refer to how the name 'Boko Haram' came about without establishing any agenda as might have been contrived by the founder. According to them, "the group's official name is Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal Jihad, meaning 'People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad. It earned its nickname from the teachings of its founder

Mohammed Yussuf in the early 2000s, in the restive north eastern city of Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State". In any case, the belief that Boko Haram was founded in the 2000s has been challenged by Ishioma Madike (2011) who contends that the sect was actually started in 1995 as Sahaba and was initially led by one Lawan Abubakar.

No wonder, therefore, that some of the epistemological scholars conclude that the group's origin cannot be pinned to a particular date or event. On the other hand, some of those scholars appear to be water-tight sure of the origin of Boko Haram. The danger in the disagreement in the verdict of a class of scholars, such as the epistemological scholars of Boko Haram, is enormous. If their aim is to bring to light factors that sparked up an event, with a view to provide some guide as to how a reoccurrence of such event might be averted, and they do not seem to agree on the roots of the event or when it was indeed sparked, their aim is therefore defeated by their very disagreement.

The difficulty among scholars to reach a concrete consensus on the epistemology of Boko Haram insurgency as a phenomenon indicates a hollow in the studies of the group and its activities. It goes to say that although much has been done, but more has to be done. Studies on the group are yet to be sufficient.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE SCHOOL

Other than the epistemological school, from the torrent of scholarly works on Boko Haram and the scholars thereof, as well as their delineation into groups, it is also now possible to talk of the socio-economy scholars of Boko Haram. These scholars employ theories of sociology cum economy to explain the whys and wherefores of the Boko Haram group. According to them, Boko Haram can best be understood within the framework of internal configuration of the society and the interplay between conflicting interests. Lucky & Ojochenem (2015) mince no words on their conviction that Boko Haram crisis can best be explained within such paradigm when they say "our central argument here is that the high level of socio-economic inequality in Nigeria can meaningfully explain the emergence and persistence of the Boko Haram terrorism in the country".

This school dwells on the social conflict theory which looks at the internal configuration of a society to explain the occurrences therein. The socio-economic perspective of the theory, which blames social conditions and principally economic factors for internal violence, is anchored on the human needs theory of social conflicts. Its central thesis is that all humans have basic needs which they seek to fulfil and failure caused by other individuals or groups to meet these needs could lead to conflict (Rosati et al, 1990 cited in Faleti, p. 51). The

theory is similar to the frustration-aggression theory of violence, which posits that aggression is always a consequence of frustration (Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff Jr, 1990: 266). According to the theory, relative deprivation is a perceived disparity between value expectation and value capabilities and that the lack of a need satisfaction, defined as a gap between aspirations and achievement generally – relies on the psychological state of frustration and aggressive attitudes emanating from it (Midlarsky, 1975:29).

The socio-economic perspective of the social conflict theory sees the Boko Haram crisis in Nigeria essentially within the purview of socio-economic configuration of the Nigerian society and attempts to de-emphasise or, if possible, debunk any opinion that Boko Haram is particularly a Muslim or Northern crisis. According to Johnnie Carson, US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, who was calling for political reforms, "religion is not driving extremist violence in Nigeria"; instead, he blamed "the underlying political and social economic problems in the north". Young militants in Maiduguri or Kano have good reasons to hate the representatives of the state. Their rebellion is born out of poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment; it is a response to corruption and social neglect. Given the shocking disparities in wealth, analysts in the West have argued that government, in order to stop the violence, has to address the root causes of the crisis. It has to reach out to those it has alienated and offer them employment, better education, and other services to raise the standard of living (*Daily Trust*, 6 April 2012: 29).

As argued by Eme & Jide (2012), Nigerians are hungry for progress and an improvement in their lives, but northern Nigerians feel this need most acutely. Life in Nigeria for many is tough, but across the North, life is grim. A UN study shows that poverty in the 12 most northern states is nearly twice that of the rest of the country. The health indicators reflect this. Children in the far north are almost four times as likely to be malnourished. Child mortality is over 200 deaths per 1000 live births, leading to lower life expectancy. Educational standards are just as bad. Literacy in the far north is 35 percent as opposed to 77 percent in the rest of the country. Seventy-seven percent of women in the far north have no formal education, compared to only 17 percent in the rest of the country. In northern Nigeria, primary school attendance is only 41 percent, while youth unemployment is extremely high. All of this contributes to joblessness and a deepening cycle of poverty (Carson, 2012:2). The statistics are disturbing, but they are not the whole story. Poverty in northern Nigeria is increasing. Despite a decade in which the Nigerian economy expanded at a spectacular seven percent per year, the Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics estimates that extreme poverty is 10 percent higher than in 2004. It is even worse in the North. Income inequality is growing

rapidly. These trends are worrying for economic, political, and security reasons (Carson, 2012:4). Public opinion polls and news reports suggest that there is a strong sentiment throughout the country, but especially in the North, that government is not on the side of the people; and that their poverty is a result of government neglect, corruption, and abuse. This is the type of popular narrative that is ripe for an insurgent group to hijack for its own purpose (Campbell and Bunche, 2011:4).

The Boko Haram challenge seems to reflect the deeper economic crisis bedevilling the Nigerian state. Adibe (2012) captures the depth of the challenge when he argues that: the Nigerian state, contrary to the media hype, is regarded as the enemy, not just by Boko Haram, but by several Nigerians and groups, each attacking it with as much ferocity as Boko Haram's bombs, using whatever means they have at their disposal: politicians entrusted to protect our common patrimony steal the country blind, law enforcement officers see or hear no evil at a slight inducement, government workers drag their feet and refuse to give their best while revelling in moonlighting, organized labour inducing university lecturers in public institutions to go on indefinite strikes on a whim while journalists accept 'brown envelops' to turn truth on its head or become uncritical champions of a selected anti-Nigerian state identity. What all these groups have in common with Boko Haram is that they believe that the premise on which they act is justifiable and that the Nigerian state is unfair to them, if not an outright enemy. It is certainly in support of this view that Pérouse de Montclos (2014), speaking about Boko Haram, concludes that the movement grew out of socio-economic flux that came with a process of democratic transition, coupled with the consequences of decades of mismanagement resulting from military rule and corruption.

The socioeconomic theory is in some ways akin to the poverty theory. In reference to Boko Haram, Shuaibu et al (2015) hold that the Poverty Theory can be used to explain one of the major causes of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. According to Liolio (2013), the successful recruitment of the people into the group depends on the nature of the economic and poverty level in the area. Mostly, insurgents gain members by claiming their struggle is for the people and that they will provide basic necessities for the general population if supported. The insurgent may succeed if such society is bedevilled by poverty, illiteracy, ineptitude, corruption, discrimination to modernization and globalization, which creates artificial poverty for many underdeveloped countries; such countries would become recruitment target of the terrorists. Liolio further argues that it is significant to know that the root causes of the insurgency often relates to a long cloudy set of problems culminating into uncontrolled grievances and exploding violence. Such problems are socio-economic and political, that is why insurgencies are more rampant in underdeveloped countries or countries engulfed by corrupt regime, ethnicity, social prejudices, religions and disparities in the distribution of resources or even lack of it.

In the words of Olojo (2013) "one significant factor that has stimulated the drive towards violent extremism, recruitment and support for Boko Haram are economic deprivation. Several scholars believed that poverty and longstanding economic disparities in the northeast part of the country made the youth join the sect". Similarly, Adesoji (2010) stresses that, in Nigeria the marginalization and imbalance distribution or implementation of the resources made some radicalised scholars to preach against the government and democratic setting, which later gave birth to the present Boko Haram insurgency. The Poverty Theory further explains that domestically the politicization of religious traditions and the radicalization of religious communities are especially likely in times of economic decay, social disintegration or state collapse. Hopeless people below the poverty line; people who are marginalized or physically threatened turn to their religions in search for an alternative political order that satisfies their need for welfare, recognition, and security.

As with the epistemological school, there is danger in the socio-economy camp. The danger sources from their presuppositions that the Boko Haram group is a terrorist group and terrorism is a product of unbearable socio-economic circumstances. Some persons have argued, if we align ourselves to the social conflict theory and its economic perspective, we are forced to accept that Boko Haram sect seeks socio-economic reconstruction, which means that, after all, it is a popular movement and by extension Boko Haram is a vanguard of freedom for the oppressed, the voice of the voiceless and champion of a popular cause (Malasowe, 2016)

In fact, some intellectuals reject the socio-economic premonitions about poverty and terrorism. As argued by (Piazza 2011:340), the nexus between terrorism and socio-economic variables such as inequality, poverty, social or political exclusion, and low education inter alia has been shown to be rather complicated and inconclusive both from the perspective of the individual and the collective. If anything, there has been a divided opinion over the relationship between the two as some empirical findings based on various contexts seem to negate the view that poverty causes terrorism. For instance, studies based on cross-national data analysis has not compellingly shown that underdeveloped countries by virtue of their dismal socio-economic standings, measured by macro-economic indicators, are necessarily more likely to produce terrorists than their middle or high-income counterparts (see Asuelime & Ojochenemi, 2015:34, Abadie 2006; Piazza 2006; Dreher and Gassebner 2008). In fact, according to Krueger (2007) the view that there is a link between socio-

economic condition and terrorism is entirely based "on faith" rather than on "scientific evidence", as some empirical findings suggest that no relationship exists between poverty, education, and terrorism.

THE SCHOOL OF RADICALISM, EXTREMISM AND RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM

Intellectuals on this pedestal are of the view that the reasoning in the socio-economic theory should be subjected to test in juxtaposition with the Extremist and its associated Radicalist and Religious Fundamentalist Theories. This brings us to another school in the study of the Boko Haram group, the Fundamentalism, Radicalism and Extremism School. Scholars in this camp prefer to see the Boko Haram crisis as belief-laden and it might be foolhardy to study the group and their activities outside what they believe and how these beliefs influence their mental processes. The fundamentalist scholars, although agree with the socio-economy theorists to the extent that internal configurations have the capacity to engender violence, they insist that religious fundamentalism is not necessarily a fight for economic vibrancy. Thus, government may embark on a futile journey by developing economic policies with a view to winning a war against terrorism that is fuelled by religious fundamentalism, radicalism and extremism. As argued by Harnischfeger (2014), "interpreting the rebellion as a protest against deteriorating living conditions is at odds with the statements of Boko Haram leaders, who insist on the religious motives of their insurrection: this is a war between Muslims and non-Muslims. This is not a tribal war, nor is it a war for financial gains; it is solely a religious war". In fact, Harnischfeger blames commentators in Europe and North America who, writing for a secular readership, have sought to make this war comprehensible by identifying poverty and social injustice as the real causes of the rebellion. However, it does not lead to a deeper understanding of Boko Haram (and Muslim resistance to it) when analysts leave aside that the rebels, when responding to the Nigerian crisis, seek a *religious* solution to it: The group's preaching, available on cassettes across the region, concerned almost exclusively detailed points of religious doctrine and what actions can and cannot be permitted within Islam. While this did include debates on the relations between democracy and Islam, it would be incorrect to think that Yusuf (the founder of Boko Haram) was a social reformer or was overly concerned with corruption. His concern was a pure interpretation of Islamic texts. (Crisis Group, *Northern Nigeria*, 38)

It is necessary at this juncture to attempt some conceptual clarification on these three terms. They may appear interchangeable, but they require some elucidation. According to Orav (2015), radicalism is

defined as 'the phenomenon of people embracing opinions, views and ideas which could lead to terrorism'. A 2008 report by the European Commission's Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation suggests that radicalisation can be considered as socialisation to extremism, which may lead to terrorism. It follows that preventing radicalisation is an important element in counter-terrorist measures, to reduce the threat of radicalised individuals engaging in terrorist activity. In social sciences, the term 'radicalisation' or 'radicalism' is not defined uniformly (with the latter used to mark legitimate opposition to mainstream political orientation with the intention to bring about reform). Moreover, in political discourse it is often used interchangeably with notions such as 'extremism'. Although these phenomena can be said to share the same objective – challenging the existing order – the objectives may be different. One interpretation is that while radicalism seeks to modify the existing political and social structure, it need not be violent; hence the adjective 'violent' is often added. 'Extremism' is associated with active adoption of an ideology, intending to deliberately apply violence to remove a state's structure and its elite (George Joffe, 2012). Another approach defines radicalism as a quest for sweeping change, while limiting extremism to the pursuit of concrete and localised political ideologies (Daniela Pisoiu, 2012). The political aspect is also emphasised by Peter Neumann (2010) who defines radicalisation as 'the process (or processes) whereby individuals or groups come to approve of and (ultimately) participate in the use of violence for political aims'.

Ideology forms an inseparable part of the radicalisation process. Nevertheless, it is suggested that ideology is not, alone, decisive but has to be complemented by other factors – political and social environment, and a psychological need for identity. Using religion as a useful narrative, a cognitive framework is built on religious fundamentalism and other ideologies to create solidarity and increase loyalty to the cause (Daniela Pisoiu, 2012). Religious fundamentalism, often at the heart of radicalisation, can be defined as a belief in an absolute religious truth which is challenged by the forces of evil and which must be followed today in the same way as in the past. It can be seen to rely on three attitudes: one, believers should go back to absolute and unchangeable rules established in the past; two, these rules allow for only one interpretation to be held among believers and three, religious rules should prevail over secular ones. Fundamentalism may be understood in terms of whatever it is 'against'. Often it is used as a pejorative description for anyone who is regarded as having a closed mind with regard to a particular issue (Ruud Koopmans, 2014). It has been suggested that, given the pressing need to be able to identify, predict, locate and so counter any potential terrorising extremism born of certain expressions of religion, then the task of analysing the

phenomenon of religious fundamentalism so as to construct a heuristic paradigm capable of providing a measure of predictability would seem both obvious and urgent. Douglas Pratt (2006) holds the view that 'religious fundamentalism' denotes a worldview-type that can be found across different religions in the world of today. Specifically, the term denotes a paradigm that paves the way for a shift in mentality from the relative harmlessness of an otherwise quaint, ultra-conservative religious belief system to a religiously motivated and fanatically followed engagement in aggressively impositional, even terrorising, activity. Understanding the structure, logic, and implementation of this paradigm is of vital importance in the endeavour to create any meaningful counter terrorist capability able to address religiously motivated and sourced terrorism. The St. Luke's News and Reviews Sunday School, 29 October 2000 identifies beliefs and actions of extreme religious fundamentalism to include:

1.   Beliefs are based on divine and revealed texts, which are considered perfect and cannot be questioned.
2.   Beliefs are elaborate and detailed, constructed by selectively interpreting divine texts.
3.   Beliefs are often at variance with common sense, reason, logic, and science.
4.   The group includes a single living individual with special privileged relationship to God, unlike anyone else's relationship or status.
5.   Members must adhere strictly to all details of doctrine.
6.   Members reject all other religions and belief systems, including ones similar to their own.
7.   Members are intolerant of anyone outside the group, with different beliefs.
8.   Extreme and hateful actions are justified by the group's beliefs.
9.   Members are smug, self-satisfied, self-righteous, and egotistical, about their beliefs and their group.

With that elucidation in mind, the fundamentalist school argues that, premised on syllogistic reasoning, the verdict reached on Boko Haram crisis on the scale of the economic perspective of social conflict theory is certainly sound in view of available facts: one, Nigeria falls within the category of failed states. Two, failed states are fertile grounds for breeding terror. Therefore, terrorism in Nigeria is as a result of its failed nature. Sound as that verdict might be, it has to be tested under the weight of prevailing facts. The approach is to employ the imaginary scale of judgement which decision is based on facts presented. On this scale are placed two contending theories in relation to Boko Haram crisis in Nigeria as we considered earlier. One, the social conflict theory, is to the effect that failure of state necessarily occasions

terror. The other, religious fundamentalist theory, maintains that it is possible for terror to rage in a society where the state fulfils its obligations, especially if the terror is linked to religious convictions.

As canvassed by adherents to the social conflict theory and its frustration/aggression corollary, terrorism is one of the strategies employed by disgruntled groups for social re-engineering. Considering the fact that poverty is more evident in the northern part of Nigeria, there are suggestions that the activities of Boko Haram are expressions of northern peoples' frustration. It is a fight against a corrupt government. This leads to a conclusion that if the Nigerian state embarks on a massive education and infrastructural development in the north terrorism will be a thing of the past. Such conclusion needs to be criticized within the framework of the mode of operations of Boko Haram. It raises questions of legitimacy, whether the northern people indeed feel represented by Boko Haram. It remains to be answered what sense it makes if the people for whom their nefarious activities are fomented are not in support of the killings. Put differently, do the northerners see Boko Haram as fighting for them? Do you exterminate a people in order to save them? Available facts are to the effect that more northerners have lost their lives and properties than any part of the country due to Boko Haram insurgency. In a single sweep, about two hundred and fifty students were abducted from their school in Chibok on the 15th April, 2014 and their whereabouts is yet unknown, causing the severest trauma in the same region they are claimed to be fighting for. The point under labour is that, yes, failure on the part of the state may occasion terrorism, the Boko Haram insurgency goes beyond a cry for social reconstruction if not absolutely away from it.

Therefore, in the opinion of the fundamentalist scholars, it is safer and accords more with reason and intellect to see Boko Haram as an idea fuelled by religious fundamentalism. As observed by Gupta (2005:16 cited in Asuelime and David, 2015:23), a mushrooming literature showing a weak link between socio-political and economic structural factors, such as poverty, lack of economic opportunity, and terrorism, casts doubts on the efficacy of the root causes thesis. In fact, some jettisoned the root causes perspective as "misleading as an explanation for terrorism or prescription for dealing with it" (Jervis 2002, p. 41). An interview with 250 members in most Palestine militia groups observes that "none of them were uneducated, desperately poor, simple-minded, or depressed. Many were middle class and, unless they were fugitive, held paying jobs; thus suggesting a weak or no correlation between terrorism and root causes such as socio-economic conditions" (Hassan 2001, p. 37). Similarly, studies have shown that "none of the 19 perpetrators of 9/11 attacks suffered from poverty, lack of education or lack of exposure to the privileged lifestyle of the Western world" (Gupta 2005, p. 19).

THE APOLOGIST SCHOOL

Away from the epistemological school, the socio-economic school and the fundamentalist school is a totally detached school, the apologist school of thought on the studies of Boko Haram. This school tries to condemn the failure of scholars to reckon with 'just war theory' in the analysis of Boko Haram insurgency. The Just War tradition has two phases: the just *ad bellum and jus in bello*. The former designates the conditions under which resorting to war is justifiable while the latter focuses on the methods by which such war should be conducted.

For instance, Asuelime (2015:22), while acknowledging the efforts of researchers in beaming research light on Boko Haram, expresses some concern with the fact that "the question of a just war in this particular situation has been ignored so far in the literature". This school of thought tends to argue that almost all researches on Boko Haram approach the issue with a presumption that the group is a terrorist formation, thereby seeking to espouse conditions that give impetus to terrorism and how it can or should be countered. The approach, therefore, has rather been majorly accusatory than descriptive- a case of the good guys and the bad guys and, of course, Boko Haram group is condemned as the bad guy without fair hearing. The argument goes further that it is dangerous, if not erroneous, to conclude that a group is terroristic and proceed to analyse that group on the basis of presupposition. If upon a deeper thought it is unravelled that that presupposition is wrong, everything subsequently held thereupon becomes null and void. Therefore, Boko Haram apologists would rather dwell on conceptualizing terrorism with a view to determining whether or not the group is indeed a terrorist group. Put differently, the apologist school of thought sees labelling Boko Haram as a terrorist group and studying it within that frame as verdict before plea. Their emphasis is on the concept of terrorism. According to them, terrorism is subjective. It depends on who is doing the defining. In fact, the apologist school has identified two major problems with the studies on terrorism vis-à-vis Boko Haram insurgency. One is the subjectivity of the definition of terrorism and two, studies on terrorism have dwelled principally on tactics (which is considered too gruesome to be anything meaningful) without regard for the motive behind the activities.

The apologists argue that view from method of execution, terrorism might be totally condemned and this has been the preoccupation of most writers, to condemn Boko Haram activities for their gruesome tactics. But if seen from the perspective of its motives, Boko Haram / terrorism may as well earn some justification.

As argued by Primoratz (2004) cited in Asuelime & Ojochenemi (2015), "one person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter" hence raising the question: how are we to morally assess terrorism? On the one hand, many scholars seem to acquiesce that terrorism is *prima facie* morally repugnant, irrespective of the agent or the victim as well as the "how" of its execution (see Coady 1985; Primoratz 1990; Coady 2004a; Jollimore 2007). Primoratz argues further that "in general, but especially in the present worldwide terrorism alert, the moral prohibition of terrorism ought to be understood and endorsed as absolute." Similarly, Schimid (2004:379) is of the view, while the above cliché "undoubtedly reflects a political praxis, its moral relativism is highly unsatisfactory from an ethical and intellectual point of view".

The view that "terrorism is prima facie wrong" (Coady 2004:83) is quite often based on the traditional Just War theory under the *jus in bello*, which underscores the principle of discrimination between military and civilian targets and refraining from harming innocent civilians, is useful in this regard (Primoratz 2004:25). Essentially terrorism is herein seen as violence against civilian, non-combatants, and the innocents. It is instructive to note that attaining unanimity on the notion of non-combatants is polemical as there are as many definitions thereof as there are definers (Burgoon 2006:178). Besides using the same notion of non-combatants or innocent as reference frame, one may also ask: are innocent or non-combatants not killed in war? Meanwhile, to answer this, Schmid (2004b:204) differentiated between collateral but unintentional damage to civilians and intentional attacks on civilians, referring to war and most contemporary terrorism, respectively, while inferring that terrorism is a counter value, rather than a counter-force tactic, since civilians not involved in combat are the prime target. According to Kraemer (2004),

Nonetheless, there is also the view that terrorism under grave reason might be justifiable. Different aspects of terrorism are underscored in justifying the phenomenon. For instance, non-consequentialist ethicists prioritize the motive rather than the goal in their moral assessment of terrorism. Considered as a sole weapon available to the political powerless, terrorism, from the perspective of the insurgent groups, may not only be seen as a necessary but also a justifiable means of expressing—if not addressing their grievances against the perception of inequality and oppression.

It is instructive to note that such perception may not solely be among the terrorists but also even among the populace. To be sure, a survey conducted in Jordan, Morocco, Pakistan, and Turkey by Krueger (2007:24–25) to determine their view regarding the justifiability of terrorist attacks against America and other Westerners in Iraq, reveals that a high percentage, particularly of those with a higher level of education in these countries strongly justified terrorism. It must be underscored that the West, and in particular, the U.S., is widely believed to have been unjust to the Muslim world (Moten 2010). Accordingly, terrorists might not only justify their action

against these enemies as a form of vengeance but also due to the shared justification among the populace, which themselves might not necessarily be terrorists. Based on this view, the need to understand the terrorist perception of the enemy is essential to understanding the justification they offer for their acts. This justification tends quite often to be on non-religious ground; hence, its religious façade is a mere decoy. Nonetheless, the stage theory developed by Mark Juergensmeyer (cited in Schmid 2004b: 212) also shows the need to look at the world through the eyes of terrorists acting on religious impetus in order to understand their sensed justification. In the words of Schmid (2004b:212)

For the terrorist, especially those with religious motivation, the world is bifurcated into the forces of evil and forces of good, which are responsible for the problems and solutions respectively. The terrorist believes himself to be working towards enthroning the good force in society, believed to be dominated by forces of the evil in secularism. The "us" verses "them" dichotomy strongly propels the terrorists to believe that "perpetrating acts of terrorism is one of several ways to symbolically express power over oppressive forces and regain some nobility in the perpetrator's personal life". With such premonitions, the dastardly acts of destroying the perceived "oppressive force" are not only seen as noble but necessary towards the promotion of the good force.

To this end, discrimination of the innocents and civilians is only a matter of secondary concern for the terrorists. Hence, the *jus in belum* restraint becomes unimportant, since in as much as the terrorists are averse to the killing of the innocent, it is not possible, given its clandestine nature. Moreover, the very perception of the notion of "innocent" or "civilian" by the terrorist is hardly in tandem with the meaning of the same term under the Just War theory. To be sure, believing themselves to be fighting against an "unjust" system, namely the secular government, the terrorist would hardly consider the killing of the so-called innocent/civilian/non-combatant as unjustifiable in addressing their grievance considering that the latter sustain the "unjust" system. For instance, since the entire Nigerians elect their government, what seems to matter to terrorists such as the Boko Haram is vengeance against the entire nation, in which case they do not have to differentiate between military or civilian. As far as Boko Haram is concerned Nigerians are all targets.

It is not difficult to reckon that Nigerian people pay taxes to their government, they elect their president, their government engage the armed to to massacre Boko Haram members. The government they elected endorses all measures against the group and this proves that the entire Nigerians are responsible for the atrocities perpetrated against Boko Haram. By implication "many acts of violence which we consider 'immoral' as a means to achieving an end, are, in the view of the religious or

ideologically motivated terrorist, justified by the absolute end for which the terrorist purports to fight" (Schmid 2004b). This same logic can be said to apply to the perception of the Nigerian government by the Boko Haram. Further complicating this issue is the fact that discrimination of non-combatants and civilians according to Just war canon is hardly attainable, even under a conventional war situation by the military. Hence, Schmid (2004b) argues that "to the extent that some wars have become more terroristic—targeting predominantly civilians than military opponents—the moral difference between the conduct of soldiers and terrorists has grown smaller".

In addressing the problem of terrorism, going by the Just War theory, it is easy to condemn terrorism as evil from the perspective of the "condemner", but it is a different story altogether from the perspective of the "condemned". The latter, based on the belief that they are fighting against what they deem as an unjust system, as in the case of Boko Haram, do not considered their actions evil. Thus, the apologists argue, an important "initial steps of fighting terrorism is arguably to comprehend the terrorist point of view towards the world, humanity, and their justification of their violent methods" (Ozsoy 2007:56). Accordingly, it is unreasonable to expect to solve the Boko Haram problem through military and political precautions, because military sanctions will be retaliated against with more severe violence and triggers a vicious cycle (Ozsoy 2007:56).

CONCLUSION

It appears that the more intellectual searchlight is beamed on the Boko Haram group, the more elusive its understanding gets. As summarised by Adibe (2013), just as there are contestations over the reasons for the radicalization of the group, there is also no unanimity on how the emergence of the sect could be explained. Several thesis and theories have been proffered. For some, Boko Haram is a symptom that Nigerian state has become either a failed or failing state. Others blame it on poverty and poor governance, yet some locate its emergence in a frustration-aggression hypothesis.

As we could see from the foregoing, no school has provided a foolproof diagnosis of the Boko Haram crisis and we are left to hazard guesses on the solution to the problems. It appears, therefore, that in attempts to proffer solutions through scholarly endeavours, scholars have only succeeded in advancing their statuses as they can now be regarded as Boko Haram scholars whereas Nigeria continues to groan under the weight of the group's activities. They have not been able to fulfil that purpose of enquiry which enables or allow for prediction of possible future event as it pertains to the sect.

Thus, apart from the problems associated with the

various theories and scholars, there are other problems. It is mathematically accurate to conclude from the above contestations that intelligence on the Boko Haram group is still insufficient. In trying to proffer answer to why Nigeria is not winning the anti-Boko Haram war, Onapajo (2013) states very aptly that "the insufficiency of intelligence on Boko Haram and others alike marks a critical point to start with. Clearly, the Nigerian government is still struggling to acquire adequate knowledge of its own enemies". What is available in the literature is rather more awareness. The question begs for answer whether or not awareness can take the place of knowledge. It is only knowledge based on factual truth that can stimulate the kind of thesis necessary for prediction of future event. To this end, there is still a wide gap to be filled in the search for the whys and wherefores of the Boko Haram insurgency. Method of data collection and the data themselves are principally secondary in character. There is need to source for primary data, interface and interact with the sect members. Unfortunately, however, government manner of dealing with the suspected members have been most unfavourable for research purposes. Many actors whose views and opinions are relevant as primary data have been extra-judicially killed by the military.

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