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A REIGN OF TERROR: THE MODUS OPERANDI OF BOKO HARAM

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ABSTRACT

For over half a decade the Nigerian people, especially in the North East, havebeen devastated by insurgencyled by a group called Boko Haram; they killed, destroyed and maimed. The government has waged war against this movement and the war is still ongoing. Various ultimatums have been given to the military to finally defeat the group, each time the military have always failed. Any plan to succeed against Boko Haram must require a good intelligence on the Modus Operandi of Boko Haram that is what this paper offers.This paper gathered information from victims and captured persons, who have first-hand contact and information on Boko Haram. They were selected from IDP camps and host communities in Adamawa state. Structured interview was conducted for forty respondents. Results revealed that Boko Haram recruitment strategies ensure continuity and viability of the group. They look for and abducted persons with needed technical skills and offer them life for their skills, which is an offer very few can refuse. Women, girls and children are vital to the movement; they ensure continuity and future of the movement. Religion in the hands of Boko Haram is a profitable tool that appeals to sentiments and justifies their actions in the eyes of those who believe in their cause. Boko Haram ability to survive in the forest is ensured by their looting strategy, through which they get basic survival needs: food, clothing, money, household property, among others. The paper recommends that families must be tasked with their traditional role of socialization of members into conformists and provision of basic needs and psychosocial support. Government is encouraged to provide basic socio – economics needs to ensure that young persons have a future to look forward to. Religious leaders are tasked with teaching their religious dogmas without sentiments and politicisation of religion.

KEY WORDS:

A Reign Of Terror, Modus Operandi, Boko Haram.

Introduction

The group popularly known as Boko Haram (*Western Education is Forbidden)* was proclaimed the deadliest terror group in the world, in 2014 (Buchanan, 2015, Pisa & Hume, 2015). The official name by which Boko Haram recognises itself is Jama'atu Ahlis-Sunnah Lidda'awati Wal Jihad (JAS), which if translated into

English means People Committed to the Prophet for Propagation and Jihad'

(Alozieuwa, 2014), but among the public they are popularly known as Boko Haram. They are opposed to anything associated with Western education, they believe that the West, Europe and America are indoctrinating their people and adulterating the Islamic religion. Therefore, they wish to cleanse themselves of anything Western, which includes western education, democratic governance, white collar jobs, among others (Lister, 2014). This argument was presented in a special report by the United States Institute of Peace 2014, where it argued that *Boko Haram's ideology is premised on an extreme Islamic teaching that rejects most Western ideas and institutions as Un-Islamic. This rejection earned the group its popular name: Boko Haram literally means Western education is forbidden* (***Onuoha,*** 2014). The rejection of anything Western has remained the driving force and objective for the group's reign of terror and has continued to guide its targets for attacks.

The group has proven to be one of the deadliest and at some point, the deadliest terrorist group in the world (Pisa and Hume, 2015, Buchanan, 2015, Pricopi, 2016). The Nigerian government has adopted several strategies and means and has gotten international support in its fight against the group. But the group has persisted, recently, they braved an attack at Borno state capital (Maiduguri). Despite all effort to clamp them down, why have they persisted? To answer this question, this paper will consider the modus operandi of Boko Haram. A couple of studies have been carried out on the modus operandi of Boko Haram, the focus has been methods of attack (Awodola & Ayuba, 2015), their sponsorship and links (Adesoji, 2010), targets and types of weapon used (Pricopi, 2016), methods of instilling fear; brutal killings and abductions (Lister, 2014), how they take advantage of poverty and economic challenges of members of society to lure them into the group (Thisday, 2016; Mercy Corps, 2016), use of loans and monetary promises to lure youths and young girls into the group (Joel, 2016). Various studies have revealed various operational methods of Boko Haram. This paper differs in its approach by looking at another dimension of the modus operandi of Boko Haram, that is, the methods by which it perpetuates itself, or hopes to perpetuate itself for quite a long time. If Boko Haram's method of perpetuation is not understood, its defeat is not yet insight. The critical question of this paper is despite the killing of hundreds of Boko Haram members, the destruction of their hideouts, the dislodging of the sect from their strongholds and the liberation of captured communities, why is Boko Haram still having members and carrying out attacks, including an attack on Maiduguri the capital city of Borno state? How come they still have members capable of carrying out attacks?

Theoretical framework

Just like defining terrorism has remained a challenge in the Social Sciences and among social and political researchers, creating a grand theory that can explain the varying acts and organization of terrorist acts has remained rather elusive. A

number of theories have been developed, *Ozdamar (2008) and Crenshaw (1995), identified five theories of terrorism; Instrumental, organizational, political communication, economic, and psychological theories of terrorism. In this paper the R.K. Merton Anomic Theory and Organizational Theory will be used to explain Boko Haram activities.*

R. K. Merton Anomic Theory and Organizational Approach to Terrorism

Lizardo (2008) opined, there has been problem defining terrorism and understanding it because most theorists and scholars trying to define terrorism and are only organization centred. Lizardo argued for actor centred approach looked at the actor in the terrorist organization, through the use of Anomic Theory and then the paper will return to organizational approach to understand the overall strategies for survival and continuity of the terrorist group, which the actor centred approach may not be able to explain.

Merton (1968) tried to outline the relationship between culture, social structure and anomie. He saw culture as an organized set of *normative values that guides* behaviour, for which every member of society is expected to strive to achieve. He then saw social structure as the organized social relationships amongst members of society, which invariably guides and determines behaviour. Anomie he then saw as *when there is an acute disjunction between the cultural norms and goals and the socially structured capacities of members of the group to act in accord with them* (Merton, 1968:216). His argument is that society sets goals which members need to achieve to be seen as successful or compliant with societal norms. Society also sets rules or guidelines or proper ways of achieving these goals. These values and norms guides social relationships in the society and because people are found at different strata of the social structure, members of society are not equally suited to achieving these goals. Anomie or lawlessness or violence or terrorism will occur when a member of society is not social – structurally placed in a position where s/he can achieve societal set goals following societal states norms or ways of achieving these goals. When this happens, the person feels relatively deprived. Merton then states that in this situation, there are four causes of action open to such an individual whose position in the social structure makes it difficult to achieve societal goals through the laid down social norms. First the person can create his /her own means of achieving the goal (Merton called this Innovation); it could be stealing, kidnapping, cheating, prostitution, illegal drug dealings, and so forth. Second the person abandons the goals and continue to follow the norms and may never become successful in the eyes of society (Merton called them Ritualists), third the person abandons both the goals and the norms, they don't care, they become drunkards, drug addicts, vagabonds, and so forth. Fourth the person may decide to abandon both societal goal and means of achieving it and then create his/her own goals and means of achieving it, which may be antagonistic to that of society and may even threaten the survival of existing social structure.

The organizational approach view terrorist groups as organizations seeking for survival. Their aim is survival; they will do everything necessary to survive (Ozdamar, 2008; Crenshaw, 1988; Rapoports, 1977). The proponents of this theory see terrorism as a result of an organization's struggle for survival, usually in a competitive environment (Crenshaw 1988). The leaders of the terrorist group struggle to survive in the face the threatening and domination of the state within which they exist. The state they see as a threat to their survival and goal, therefore they whatever possible to defeat the state or at least scare it into submitting to its demands and letting it exist. To maintain their membership, Ozdamar (2008) argued that they offer incentives to their followers and changing such incentives to continue to attract their loyalty. Olson (1988) noted that these incentives can be tangible goods or even public goods.

From Anomic Theory it is clear that Boko Haram terrorist has taken the fourth option. They wish to create an Islamic state where they will rule, this is not part of any Nigerian societal goal. Nigerian societal goal wants you to go to school get a job and earn money, or go into business make money and live well or go into politics, win position, become a leader and live well. The Boko Haram terrorist has seen little chances of achieving these goals through the laid down means. Therefore, they create their own goal; to create an Islamic state and their own means; Jihad or terrorism.

While Merton's theory explains the individual reason for creating or joining terrorist organization, the organizational approach explains the group behaviour of Boko Haram. Having created a new goal and means, as group they seek to ensure that they achieve their goals. They try to ensure that they survive and persist. They seek for survival and continuity, they find ways of perpetuating themselves and ensuring that they achieve their aim or at least do not fail. As group, who have found a means of achieving their set goals, they must strategize to remain on cause.

First, they are an organized group with political motivation, Mohammed Yusuf stated: *ruling by other than what God revealed is equivalent to polytheism* (Thurston, 2016: 12). They therefore reject any leadership that is not Islamic; they want to rule through the Islamic tenets. Ruling perhaps is their driving force. Thurston (2016) further argued that *Boko Haram was bent on challenging the Nigerian state and local politicians for control of North-Eastern Nigeria.*

Second,Boko Haram is known for violence, (Precicopi, 2016; Mercy Corps, 2016; Awodola and Ayuba, 2015; Akpomera and Omoyibo, 2013; Lister, 2014), they kill, they maim, they burn, they destroy, they behead, they kidnap and the list goes on. According to Ocholi (2014:12) *their mother is carnage and their father is cruelty.*

Third, they wage their war (Jihad) against the Nigerian peoples and government (Idris, 2014; Yusha'u, 2014; Akpomera and Omoyibo, 2013; Nwanaju, 2015; Awodola and Ayuba, 2015). Ocholi (2014) pointed out that *they have declared war on Nigeria and its people……yet they shall fail and the good people of Nigeria shall triumph* (Ocholi, 2014: 12). The leader of Boko Haram Abu *Shekau* declared:

> *Our war is with the government that is fighting Islam; with the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) that are killing Muslims….and those who help them in fighting us even if they are Muslims. Anyone who is instrumental to the arrest of our members is assured that their own is coming (Amnesty International, 2012: 10).*

The former leader Mohammed Yusuf stated:

> *We call the Muslim community to correct its creed and its behaviours and its morals…and to give children a correct Islamic education, then to undertake jihad in the way of Allah*, Thurston (2016: 12).

Fourth, the aim of their war is to subdue or subsume Nigerian peoples and government into a new state called the Islamic Caliphate, where they will rule through Islamic tenets (Nwanaju 2015; Akpomera and Omoyibo, 2013; Omipidan, 2009; Thurston, 2016). It is clear then that Boko Haram meets up with the various characteristics of a terrorist group, this paper can then authoritatively refer Boko Haram with the designation of a terrorist group.

Boko Haram Targets for Recruitment

According to (Onuoha, 2014:3), Boko Haram draws its members mainly from disaffected youth, unemployed high school and university graduates, and destitute children, mostly from but not limited to northern Nigeria. Awodola and Ayuba (2015) argued that poverty has been named by many as one of the factors that has contributed to the rise and flourishing of Boko Haram. Whoever Boko Haram recruits, through whichever means, certain factors have made it possible; poverty, illiteracy, extremist religious teachings, unemployment, brazen display of corruption and ill-gotten wealth by politicians, among others (Harper, 2014; Akpomera and Omoyibo, 2013; *Onuoha, 2014).*

Harper (2014) argued that youths are mostly recruited and they are prone because many are unemployed and even lack the literacy required to make them employable. He also noted that low literacy among youths make it possible for them to be manipulated, for them to be given misleading teachings. Several scholars noted that young people are the main targets for recruitment. According to Akpomera and Omoyibo (2013), youths influenced by extremist Islamic

teachings through the members of the Boko Haram sect have provided Boko Haram with the needed foot soldiers. They believed these youths are spurred by the desire for religious piety and promises offered to them through extremist teachings. Onuoha (2014) argued that youths are easily swayed by itinerant preachers into accepting extremist teachings. Arguing in a similar dimension, Akpomera and Omoyibo (2013) noted that Boko Haram got a good chunk of its foot soldiers from the Almajir population; these are young people, sent away from homes to Islamic clerics who also let them roam the streets to fend for themselves and only returns for Islamic teachings.

Awodola and Ayuba (2015) noted that there is a growing use of young girls by the Boko Haram. Young girls are now targets of recruitment and have become asset in the carrying of suicide bombings. They argued that the use of girls may have been tactic informed by the fact that people are not likely to suspect a young girl, she can therefore easily move through people and even across security operatives without anyone suspecting. This argument was supported by Turkish Weekly (2014) where it argued that the major reason terrorists use females in suicide missions is because women are less suspicious.

Boko Haram Method of Attacks

Nwanaju (2015) listed several kinds of attacks carried out by Boko Haram in different parts of North – Eastern Nigeria. The methods of attacks include the use of bombs, whether suicide and a placed bomb in the cities. Boko Haram attack major cities like Maiduguri, Bauchi, Yobe, etc, using bombs, perhaps because they lack the firearms and manpower required for a direct attack on these cities. In communities and villages Nwanaju (2015) noted that they attacked directly with firearms killing and destroying property along their path. Onuoha (2012) noted that the strategies of Boko Haram has evolved from its earlier poorly planned and open confrontations with state security forces to increasing use of improvised explosive devices, targeted assassinations, ambushes, drive-by shootings, suicide bombings and kidnappings. Similarly, Lister (2014) posited that the Boko Haram modus operandi includes brutal and indiscriminate killings, bombing of worship places, suicide attacks, ransacking of villages, mutilation of victims and mass abduction of children, girls, and women. Awodola and Ayuba (2015: 251) argued that:

> *the current modus operandi of the Boko Haram includes kidnappings for ransom and human trafficking, a phenomenon that is increasingly becoming a thriving criminal business with annual net returns in billions of US dollars across the world. The Boko Haram has also perfected its armed robbery operations. Up till now, there is no known record of any failed Boko Haram bank robbery operation. Thus, in the process, they cart away huge sums of money that increases their financial fortunes.*

Boko Haram has evolved strategies for recruiting members, growing members, getting finances and acquiring food for sustenance. Except these strategies are discovered and severed the war against Boko Haram will not be over soon.

Religion, a weapon in the hands of Boko Haram

The activities of Boko Haram may be political motivated, but its driving force is religion. As Awodola and Ayuba (2015) put it *at inception, the movement's motivation was easily traced to religious ideology that favoured fundamentalism*. As Akpomera and Omoyibo (2013: 99) puts it *certain basic attributes of terrorism include the fact that it is driven by motives or objectives, which in the long-run are political despite the fact that the perpetrators may be guided by religious beliefs.* The motive of Boko Haram activities is political but it is masked in religion, that which is saleable to illiterate unemployed youths who eventually gets recruited as foot soldiers. An explicit political reason will not sell. The perpetrators of terrorism therefore mask their motives in religion; Nigerians are easily swayed when it has to do with their religion or ethnic affiliation.

In the work of Nwanaju (2015) he argued that Boko Haram aim is to force it religious tenets on every Nigerian, or at least those in the North-East, where it operates. Nigeria is a state with freedom of worship, where everyone has the right to worship whatever God or thing. The move by Boko Haram to cleanse the North-East of infidels or none believers in Islamic religion, has not only created the conflict we face today but has thrown the Islamic religion in a bad light, and for which many Muslim clerics and well-meaning Nigerians are battling to redeem. Religion and religious issues remain very volatile in any society. Religion has claimed the task offering peace, salvation and a better society. Like Akinnola noted *in the long term, we can hope that religion will change the nature of man and reduce conflict. But history is not encouraging in this respect. The bloodiest warsin history have been religious wars, (*Akinnola, 2014:63-64).Religion has served Boko Haram well, as a tool through which they got sympathy and followers people gullible enough to accept their misguided teachings because of the shallow level of understanding of Islamic religious tenets and their general low level of literacy in the circular knowledge. Religion helped them raise an army with which they have waged war against the Nigerian people and government.

Methodology

The data presented in this study were obtained through structured interviews from forty (40) Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Adamawa state. The respondents were selected from four different locations, which included two host communities in Girei local government in Adamawa State and two IDP camps in Fuforeand Yola-North Local Government areas in Adamawa state. From each location ten (10) respondents were selected and interviewed. Most of these

respondents are persons who may have been captured by Boko Haram and taken but later were freed through military intervention or persons who were detained by Boko Haram in their communities and were forced to live with Boko Haram or even work for them.

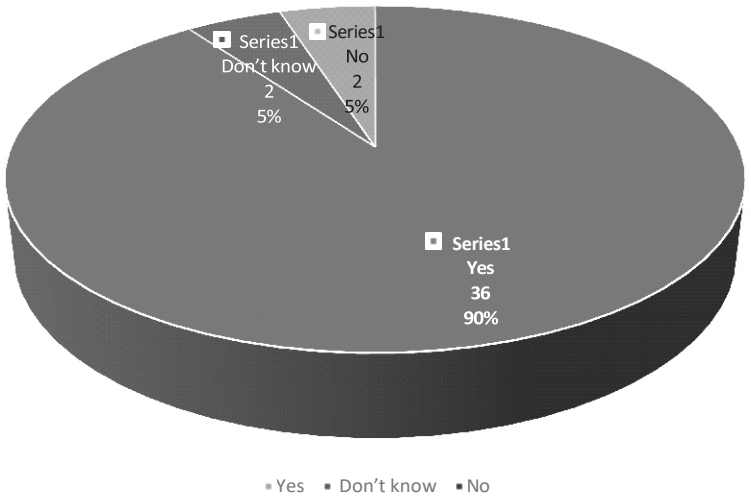
RESULTS

Table 1: Methods Boko Haram adopted for recruitment

Method of recruitment	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Use force	13	32.5%
Preaching	13	32.5%
Offering money	10	25.0%
Don't know	4	10.0%
Total	**40**	**100%**

The result shows three main methods Boko Haram uses for recruiting persons into their ranks; first, unwilling persons are coerced into join through force or threat of killing them if they refuse. Second, they sugar coat their activities with religion thereby justifying their actions with religion and luring people into joining by making them believe they are carrying out religious activity. Third, they offer money to people to show concern to their financial plight, thereby endearing them to such people.

Figure 1: Whether people accepted to join Boko Haram because it came in the name of religion



This result (90%) shows us the influence religion has in influencing people who accepted to join Boko Haram. Most people who joined Boko Haram had done that in sympathy to their religion. Boko Haram plays on low understanding of religious injunctions and thereby making people believe that in joining Boko Haram they are fulfilling religious obligations.

Table 2: Kind of persons Boko Haram targets for recruitment in a community

Kind of person	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Smokers and society outcasts	8	20
Unemployed and jobless people	8	20
Almajiri children	8	20
Religious People	7	17.5
People of certain professions	6	15
Don't know	2	5
Other	1	2.5
Total	**40**	**100%**

The information obtained from the respondents, as presented in table 2, indicated that most of the respondents opined that when Boko Haram gets into a community they seek to get into their ranks, smokers and society outcasts, unemployed persons, Almajiri boys, committed and radical thinking religious people and people with desirable skills. These are the kind of persons often seen joining Boko Haram.

Table 3: Kind of persons Boko Haram takes by force in a community

Kind of person	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Females	13	35
Men that can fight for them	13	32.5
Professionals	12	30
Don't know	1	2.5
Total	**40**	**100**

The respondents listed females (women and girls), able men and persons with professional skills as the kind of persons Boko Haram would force to join them, whether they are willing or not. These kinds of people are viewed as valuable by the group.

Table 4: Kind of professions Boko Haram seeks to recruit people from in a community Kind of profession

	Frequency	*Percentage (%)*
Mechanic	11	27.5
Health Worker	10	25
Driver	10	25
Person with military training	8	20
Don't know	1	2.5
Total	*40*	*100%*

The respondents listed mechanic, health workers, drivers and persons with military or arms training as people that Boko Haram seeks to recruit in a community. These various professions, are needful for the survival of the group, they therefore, seek to continuously get more people with these skills.

Table 5: Items Boko Haram usually loot in a community

Response	**Frequency**	*Percentage (%)*
Vehicles and Motor bike	11	27.5
Food	10	25
Household Property	10	25
Money	9	22.5
Total	**40**	*100%*

Responses revealed that when Boko Haram invades a community, they loot vehicles and motor bikes, food, household property and money. These items are needful items for their survival and continuity in their reign of terror.

Conclusion

Boko Haram as a group has survived for more than half a decade now, the war by the government to shutdown their operations, is still ongoing. If we must win this war against Boko Haram as a nation, we must understand how they operate, how they perpetuate themselves and how the repopulate themselves. Understanding these factors can bring us near to having specific targets, which will then make it possible to weaken the movement and shut it down. This paper has revealed that Boko Haram targets young persons, girls and women for recruitment, these persons ensure their perpetuation and future, the young person's bear arms, girls ensure the possibility of replenishing their ranks with new members. Persons with desired professional handwork and skill are speared if they accept to work with Boko Haram, therefore they can get technicians, drivers, health workers, and various other kinds of skilled persons. Women and girls are crucial to the Boko Haram movement; they ensure house chores are taken care of, the men are satisfied and procreation (which will ensure that the movement has a future) is possible. The Boko Haram appeals to sentiments through justifying their deeds with religious creeds, by this way many erroneously believe and fill up their ranks, ensuring a flow of foot soldiers. To ultimately survive daily living, Boko Haram loots vulnerable communities for food, clothing, vehicles, money, and household items and so on. With these they are able to survive in the Sambisa forest; their dreaded hideouts.

Recommendations

i) The family must be tasked with its traditional responsibility of socialising young people into conformists in the society. Through religious and moral teachings. Every young person that has joined Boko Haram came from a family, Mohammed Yusuf and his successor Shekau both came from families. This paper recommends that conscious effort must be made to let families know that they owe society the duty of socializing their members into the right norms.

ii) The family must also be tasked with their traditional responsibility of providing for their members basic socio – economic needs; shelter, food, healthcare and basic education. A young person deprived of such needs is vulnerable to person who will offer an alternative with the wrong motive like Boko Haram.

iii) The government should make better its effort to provide better life for its citizens. This would reduce rate of disgruntled youths that could easily fall prey to anti – society movements like Boko Haram.

iv) Government should extend amnesty to persons willing to leave Boko Haram and be reintegrated into the society. Because there are those who were forced to join or be killed because they have certain skills Boko Haram needed. Such persons if given the opportunity would come out.

v) Persons with certain skills should not be allowed to remain in vulnerable

communities as they may be abducted and serve the furtherance of the Boko Haram mayhem.

Vi) Government must task religious leaders to teach their religious dogmas without sentiments or politicisation of religion. They should seek the spiritual and not mundane. They should teach the sanctity of life and tolerance.

vii) The government should create a forum that should always bring religious leaders of different religions together to foster peace and unity.

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