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## Halting the Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria: Emerging Success Story and New Threats

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### **Abstract:**

*The Nigerian government has, at various times, promised the domestic and international publics that the menace of insurgency in the country will soon be a thing of the past. The country has been the scene of widespread violence, criminality and outright insurgency, such as Boko Haram in the North East. It is a truism that the country's internal security has been significantly undermined by violent activities of armed non-state actors and the Boko Haram insurgency has, no doubt, re-shaped and redefined the classification of Nigeria in many peoples' minds all over the world. It has, in the last six years, remained a serious threat to the Nigerian State. This essay interrogates the counter-insurgency operation of the Nigerian security forces in response to this threat. It also examines the emerging strategies and political will of the government in combating the insurgency particularly within the context of a new political leadership in the country. It discusses the nature of new threats being posed by other groups as the war against the Islamic sect begins to record some success.*

**Keywords:** Boko haram, insurgency, threats, success story

### **1. Introduction**

The emergence of the modern sovereign State was a milestone in the history of human civilization. However, there were also opposing trends which resisted and threatened it. One of these, perhaps its worst form, is insurgency which has continued to exist since the beginning of civilization. It has, however, considerably evolved and taken different forms (Javed, 2010:1). Insurrection, which has been one of the oldest forms of war, along with insurgency, has continued to exist in different forms throughout history. Revolts and insurrections in recent years have taken the shape of terrorism in many cases where attempts are made to terrify a citizen or a State to gain psychological advantage for the pursuit of specific goals.

Global and regional forces – be they political, economic, or social – impact on the context of the armed struggles in multiple, and often unpredictable, ways. In some cases, local causes of conflicts become interconnected, intertwined, and layered to produce a constantly shifting landscape. Very rarely does a conflict zone remain stagnant, as change and mutation is the rule, not the exception. Nowhere is that more evident than in contemporary Africa, where new forms of insurgencies are emerging and existing guerrilla groups evolving and mutating (Morten Bøås et al, 2014). In West Africa, there is concern about the rise of terrorism and its adverse effects on peace, security, and development in the sub-region. The frequency and lethal nature of attacks in some West African countries in recent years are an indication of the increasing sophistication of terrorist groups in the sub-region (FATF, 2013:3).

In Nigeria, the government has come under strong criticisms for its lackluster performance in containing the Boko Haram insurgency that has been ravaging the country in the last six years. A report by the BBC and King's College, London reveals that the insurgency has made Nigeria the second deadliest country in the world, just behind Iraq, while the Boko Haram sect is ranked second in the world in killing the largest number of people (See <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-30080914>). The seemingly intractable nature of the Boko Haram outrage, according to Mavengira (2015), has prompted a lot of questions from Nigerians: What really is this Boko Haram thing and what are their grievances, if any? Why have they chosen to remain faceless in spite of the devastating effects of their activities on the psyche of the nation, and all entreaties from Nigerian authorities to come forward for negotiations? Why are they able to perpetrate their attacks with relative ease and why has there not been a single clue at the scenes of their heinous acts to lead to them? This essay seeks answers to some of these posers and examines the emerging strategies and political will of the government in combating the insurgency particularly within the context of a new political leadership in the country.

### **2. Background to Internal Insurgency in Nigeria**

Nigeria faces serious and significant security challenges. Persisting state failure and institutional decay have simultaneously been brought into the limelight by the explosion of insecurity across the country. The soldiers' retreat into their barracks in May 1999 signaled an expansion of criminality within urban areas, along highways and in the borderlands (Bach, 2004:3). Before now, the most serious security challenge, however, has been the intensification of the insurgency in the Niger Delta, an area viewed as increasingly lawless and unsafe, particularly for foreign nationals and Nigerians associated with the oil industry, government officials and security

forces. (Commonwealth Observer Group, 2007:12-13). Now, the scale and intensity of terrorist attacks that have rocked the country since the turn of the decade have been unprecedented even by the country's own tragic post-independence standards (Solomon, 2012). Nigeria presents the picture of a country in which divisionist tendencies abound and in which tensions and violence permeate state-society relations. The absence of a comprehensive constitutional resolution of these matters has led to a strategy of 'keeping the lid' on the smouldering cauldron, often through the forceful suppression of dissent. Frequently, violence breeds further violence, leading to an escalating cycle of disorder (Mustapha, 2013:22). For Adigbuo (2014:29), Nigeria is a country where it is difficult to distinguish between politically motivated terrorism on the one hand, and armed criminality on the other. According to him, there is an inseparable bond between terrorism and criminality.

The country also presents an interesting but paradoxical case study in the comity of nations such that a few years back, it was almost classified as a failed state and prognosticated for possible disintegration, only that the "country has been held together primarily by the ability and willingness of different parts of Nigeria's elite to agree deals on the distribution of power and resources" (House of Commons Library, 2015:3). Kinnan, C et al (2011:3) once entertained this fear of state failure:

Nigeria with its vast oil wealth, already large and growing population, religious and cultural diversity, history of weak governance, endemic corruption, poor health care and education systems, failing human service and industrial infrastructure, rising criminality, importance in West Africa and African security, and potential to disproportionately impact the global economy is a clear example of a nation at risk of failure with an ensuing major impact on the rest of the world

The spate of violence and insurgencies occasioned by discontents in Nigeria provides detailed evidence of contemporary insecurity in the country (*Kwaja, 2013*). The country's internal security challenges have roots in its history, geopolitical structure, ethno-religious composition, and slow socio-economic development (Udounwa, 2013:4). Nigeria's borders, a colonial inheritance, contain at least 250 ethnic and linguistic groups (some put the number closer to 400), with rough parity among Muslims and Christians (Lewis, 2006:91). Also, social inequalities have a negative impact on the cohesion and stability of the country as they nourish the tensions between regions and ethnic groups (Toni and Elisa, 2014:5).

Nigeria has witnessed brutal confrontation and massive assault from terrorist groups which are undoubtedly the most blood-thirsty and destructive, both in term of demonic brutality, mindless savagery and flagrant disobedience to the principles of peace and stability of the country (Babatunde, et al, 2014:59). Notwithstanding the complexity of the problems facing the country, it is clear that the tough approach by the government against the radical Boko Haram – starting with the summary execution of the group's leaders in July 2009 – sent the wrong message to groups that subsequently became more and more radicalized (ISS, 2013).

The insurgents sought to conquer territory and until recently, had literally gained control of a significant number of municipalities in north-eastern Nigeria. Sacred places like churches, mosques and schools were targets of violent attacks. Even army formations and police stations were highly vulnerable. In the recent past, fortresses like the Presidential Villa and the National Assembly had to adopt desperate measures to stave off imminent attacks from the dreaded *Boko Haram* Sect. Official documents released by the National Emergency Management Agency indicate that over three million Nigerians have been displaced either through insurgency or natural disasters. The import of this would be appreciated if one considers the fact that this category of Nigerians is more than the population of Sao Tome and Principe, Djibouti, Comoros, Cape Verde, Seychelles and Malta put together (Omilusi, 2015).

Other armed groups have increased their use of violent tactics over the past year in the form of kidnappings, battles with security forces, and clashes with one another. Such groups are demonstrating increasingly sophisticated tactics and weaponry, raising concerns about future violence (Fisher-Thompson, 2007 cited in Hazen and Horner, 2007:18). Indeed, Nigeria's internal security has been significantly undermined by violent activities of armed non-state actors, largely made up of radicalized youth groups as foot soldiers (CLEEN Foundation, 2014:2). These ethnic militias have contributed to the cycle of violence over the years. They have a political element to them and are often seen as self-defense by particular ethno-religious communities. The fact is these many ethnic militias and separatist groups in Nigeria are proof that there are many grievances and injustices in the system (Firsing, 2012).

According to Agbu (2004), the specific emergence of the phenomenon of ethnic militias as a specific challenge to the Nigerian nation-state project cannot be divorced from the opening up of the political space for the exercise of rights and for electoral activities. Although conflict and violence might have deepened since the transition to civil rule, this is not simply because democracy is intrinsically conflict prone, but more because it frees hitherto suppressed voices, identities and discontents (Abdu, 2013:131). But this is worrisome because internal security crisis is inherent with tendencies that threaten national unity and cohesion, discourages investment and retards development. Though the amnesty programme of the Federal Government has stemmed the pace of insecurity in the Niger Delta, cases of oil bunkering by hoodlums have intensified while other parts of the country are engulfed in one security challenge or the other.

Yet by failing to take effective measures to stem the tide of violence, the Nigerian authorities have fostered a climate of impunity. They are creating conditions conducive to an escalation of violence (Amnesty International, 2011:6). As can be daily witnessed, such violence has reached a deadly level that glaringly reveals the incapacitation and helplessness of the Nigerian government particularly with the bombing activities of the Boko Haram Sect. Tragically, sometime in 2011, the then President, (Goodluck Jonathan), lamented that the dreaded Islamic sect, Boko Haram, had infiltrated his government- the executive, legislative and judiciary arms of government as well as the police and armed forces. The paradox of Nigeria's security is that instead of the State being the framework of lawful order and the highest source of governing authority, it now constitutes the greatest threat to itself.

### 3. Threats to Sovereignty and Domestic Security Response

Nigeria, according to Thurston (2012), faces five major national security threats. First, the Boko Haram uprising in northern Nigeria, which has undermined the rule of law, particularly in the northeastern states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa, and has exacerbated

Muslim-Christian tensions at the national level. Second, localized cycles of Muslim-Christian violence in the Middle Belt, especially in Kaduna and Plateau states, which periodically overwhelm the capacities of local authorities to restore order. Third, electoral violence at the local, state and national levels, which subverts the integrity of electoral processes and usually claims hundreds of lives. Fourth, militant groups, criminals and pirates in the oil-rich states of the Niger Delta and offshore zones, which target the government, private companies and ordinary citizens, in addition to stealing oil and destroying infrastructure. Finally, strains on resources and environmental devastation, which sap Nigeria's capacity to feed and care for its citizens.

All these security challenges undoubtedly pose some threats to the social, economic and political stability of not only Nigeria, but also of the African continent, especially the West African sub-region, where more than half the population comes from Nigeria. While several factors could have contributed to Nigeria's security situation today, there is no doubt that poor governance and lack of effective leadership at all levels of governance are central in attempting to explain the problem (Adambazau, 2014). Indeed, what the current trend of violence is imprinting on the psyche of Nigerians is that the government security apparatus is incapable of guaranteeing the safety and security of its people. This would, therefore, impact on the general human security of the people as the situation promotes fear, while at the same time limiting the peoples' ability to develop economically (Okolo, 2009).

The Boko Haram insurgency has constituted a major challenge to stakeholders of the Nigeria's National Security Agencies such as the Police, State Security Service, the military and other security operatives as the core and traditional agents of national security in Nigeria. These agents are devoid of a viable counter-terrorism policy as all their reactive security attempts are basically inadequate in ensuring a sustainable management or resolution of a value-based insurrection (Ngele and Ukandu, 2012). Indeed, as argued by Agbibo and Maiangwa (2014:84), the growing frustration of the Nigerian government with the deteriorating security situation in northern Nigeria has become increasingly evident in its 'flipflop' approach from dialogue about granting amnesty to Boko Haram members to the deployment of military troops and the proclamation of war against Boko Haram in less than a month. This is aptly captured by Siollun (2015):

The government's strategy so far has appeared to be schizophrenic at times, vacillating between vowing to "crush" Boko Haram, pleading with them to negotiate, and offering them an amnesty. The government's approach has been of saying the right things but at the wrong time, or of doing the right things but in the wrong way. Military force and negotiations are part of the solution, not all of it. And an amnesty should be the end of the conflict resolution process, not the start of it.

The Nigerian authorities have been heavily criticized both at home and abroad for their ineffective response to the crisis. There have been claims by Amnesty International and others that the authorities had advance-warning about the attack on Chibok but failed to act. Attacks on schools have become a staple of Boko Haram. For example, in July 2013, 46 schoolboys were killed in an attack in the same part of Nigeria. The police which are the primary institution responsible for internal security in Nigeria have been overwhelmed by the rising wave of insurgency largely because they lack requisite training and expertise in counter-insurgency operations (Francis et al. cited in Odomovo, 2014:49).

Equally problematic is that the military's force structure and mission are misaligned with the country's security challenges. The Nigerian Army is a conventional army in mindset, focused on an external enemy and serving on AU and UN peacekeeping missions. Due to the inability of the police and other segments of the Nigerian security sector to subdue Boko Haram, however, the military has been forced into a domestic security role for which it is ill-equipped and untrained. The Army's at times heavy-handed responses to Boko Haram attacks have resulted in numerous civilian casualties and have left much of the northern Nigerian population fearful of the military (ACSS, 2015:18). It should be noted that the introduction of guerrilla tactics of hit-and-run and bombings caught Nigeria Armed Forces off guard because it was something outside the bracket of their training and imagination. This gave the enemy an advantage and chance to execute their heinous acts of terror on their targeted victims with impunity (Vanguard, November 25, 2012).

The apparently poor state of the Nigerian army is a big topic of debate in Nigeria. Many believe that the military lacks counter-terrorism expertise and has lost significant capability over the past decade as civilian governments have reduced spending on defence. The military's strength is now only 144,000. In its editorial, *The Guardian* (November 12, 2014) observes that:

Historically, the country's armed forces have a reputation for gallantry and patriotic exertions. What is happening today therefore is heart-rending and a poor reflection of the past image and character of the men and women constitutionally charged with safeguarding the country's territorial integrity from internal and external aggression. But despite current setback, the country has the resources and wherewithal to fight the Boko Haram insurgents. What is required is the political dexterity and strategy to prosecute the war. In this regard, the leadership must stand up to its billing

Much like the communities in the region, Nigeria's armed forces operating in the northeast are ensnared in a worsening crisis, and knowledge of this, coupled with reports of lack of resources and malfunctioning equipment, are likely contributors to low morale, desertions and more recently, mutinies. It has been suggested that the deployed forces operate with less than \$100 million a year, which pales against the \$2 billion central allocation to the armed forces, the highest proportion of the national budget since the Biafra war (the military regimes of the 1980s and 1990s were not as generous). While there have been reports of non- or late payments to deployed troops, senior Abuja-based officers and contractors have also reportedly been making substantial financial gains from Nigeria's new war on terrorism (Pérouse de Montclos, 2014). Ilevbare (2014) posits that the Nigerian military still has a lot to prove that it is capable of putting down the insurrection:

The military's symmetric approach to an asymmetric counterterrorism battle in states under emergency has failed. The spate of almost daily attacks on hapless civilians underscores this point. These mindless killings from highly networked, richly financed groups waging insurgent war often from within civilian population use both traditional and modern weapons

The introduction of politics to the security issue has not been helpful but serves as a threat to survival, peace and security of the country. Despite billions of naira (20% of annual budget) being expended in the name of security votes by both the federal and some

state governments in the North to deal with the Boko Haram and other related threats, Police and military officers are mostly finding it difficult to withstand the assault by the radical group (Danjibo, 2009 cited in Shuriye et al, 2013:110). There are also incidents where the security forces have been perceived to take sides in the violence between groups and cases of detained individuals being killed for revenge or other reasons. The security forces are often unable to identify those behind riots and other violent incidents, and speculation concerning political involvement, bribery and corruption is common (Adesoji, 2010 cited in Persson, 2014:19).

On the ground, Nigeria's military has been under increasing pressure to end the insurgency. However, front-line troops have frequently complained of a lack of adequate weapons and equipment, an issue that has only added to the military's already low morale. The logistics of the insurgents poses a serious question. Some reports indicate that the insurgents have helicopters delivering food and materials to them (The Guardian, Nov 12, 2014). Residents living in towns raided by the Islamist militants have corroborated reports of the Nigerian military being ill equipped, reporting that the insurgents are often armed with rocket-propelled grenades and anti-aircraft weapons mounted on trucks, and in some cases, armoured personnel carriers. In contrast, Nigerian soldiers have at times reported lacking ammunition and being sent out to the bush to fight without basic communication equipment. (<http://www.msrisk.com/nigeria/boko-harams-threat-northeast-nigeria-addressing-five-year-crisis>).

Furthermore, there were a lot of incidents that happened while soldiers are fighting the group that exposed the weaknesses of Nigerian security for tackling the menace of the group. For instance, on 14 May 2014, some of the battlefield soldiers fighting the group in Maiduguri attempted a mutiny by firing off their commanding officer. The soldiers had complained that the insurgents outgun them as a result of more sophisticated weapons used by the sect members. This problem shows endemic corruption within the Nigerian security system, where billions of Naira was allocated to defence ministry for the fight against terrorism, but the outcome has not yielded any achievement. In a related issue, a group of soldiers fighting the group in Maiduguri had refused to go to the battlefield until modern weapons are provided to them (Shuaibu, et al 2015:259). Meanwhile, as affirmed by Femi Falana (2014):

The genuine demand of the members of the armed forces for equipment and payment of salaries and operational allowances is considered treasonable by the military authorities. Twelve out of the soldiers who took part in the protest against the General Officer Commanding have been tried for mutiny and sentenced to death. Scores of others are currently undergoing trial for mutiny before courts-martial. The concerned wives of soldiers who decried the deployment of their husbands on suicidal missions have been threatened with ejection from military barracks by the Chief of Army Staff.

Waddington (2014) observes that Nigeria's military performance against Boko Haram is difficult to gauge because of a long-standing trend towards falsification of after-action reports by military spokesmen, and limited press access to military operations. What is clear is that the current approach to combating Boko Haram is not working. As a counter-terrorism force, the Nigerian military has shown itself to be heavy handed – often engaging in retributive raids while failing to effectively leverage intelligence to proactively combat future terrorist attacks. As a counter-insurgency force, the Nigerian military has a long record of human rights offences, including illegal detentions, torture, and extra-judicial executions. Such acts have failed to stop Boko Haram, and may have rallied increased support for the group.

#### 4. The Emerging Success Story

It seems the countdown for the end of this dreaded Boko Haram sect has begun. On April 7, 2015, defence and foreign affairs ministers from member countries of the Economic Community for Central African States (ECCAS) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) met in the capital of Equatorial Guinea, Malabo, to lay the groundwork for a common strategy by both communities to efficiently fight the terrorist sect and ensure follow-ups for its total eradication.

Before then, as earlier noted, the radical Islamic fighters had taken over large swaths of territory in three northeastern states, killing thousands, conscripting many young men, kidnapping and raping young women and girls (Hammer, 2015). However, early in 2015, the combined efforts of hired mercenaries and a regional force led by Chad had substantially weakened the threat of Boko Haram. In other words, shortly before the March 2015 elections, the fight against Boko Haram gathered space and momentum, focusing on defeating the sect (Global Initiative Analysis, 2015). The campaign has been bolstered by the supply of new equipment including minesweepers and armoured personnel carriers, according to the government spokesman, Mike Omeri (The Financial Times, 2015). And now, fighter jets and helicopters have been smoking out the militants from their fortified bunkers deep inside Sambisa forests, supporting the advance of ground force. Months of operations have clobbered the militants and retaken much territory, but small-scale attacks and suicide bombings remain a nightmare for the country.

In an apparent display of retreat, on 13 September 2015, the army said scores of members of the insurgent group had surrendered their arms. A similar claim was made on 22 September when news came of 10 terrorists surrendering to troops at Kawuri village in Borno State. Two days later, on 24 September, the military issued a statement saying another batch of 135 Boko Haram members had surrendered with their weapons in Borno (Ghosh, 2015).

In the war zone, self-defense civilian groups patrol markets with homemade weapons, looking out for suicide bombers — but also for strangers buying large amounts of food, indicating they could be Boko Haram members or suppliers (Faul, 2015). Like some other world powers of recent, France has pledged military assistance to the Multinational Joint Task Force- consisting of 8,700 troops from Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Benin – with intelligence and equipment so as to help defeat the terrorists (*International Business Times*, September 15, 2015). For the Nigerian army, the counter-insurgency operation may have been a herculean task as noted by Siollun (2015):

The terrain does not favour the army either. The combined size of the three states in north-eastern Nigeria worst affected by Boko Haram – Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa States – is roughly equal to that of Tunisia, or five times that of Switzerland. Trying to hunt

down militants dressed in civilian attire, blended in with millions of civilians in villages, towns, cities, markets, and forests in an area that size with only a few helicopters and aeroplanes is no easy feat.

In his speech on August 13, President Muhammadu Buhari charged the military service chiefs with the defeat of Boko Haram in three months. In July he fired the previous service chiefs appointed by former President Goodluck Jonathan (Campbell, 2015). The new president is a former army general who has vowed to pursue a military campaign against Boko Haram more vigorously than his lackluster predecessor. President Buhari has already taken some measures, including moving the campaign's nerve center to Borno State, where Boko Haram is strongest and coordinating Nigeria's efforts more closely with those of its neighbors -Niger, Chad and Cameroon (Nossiter, 2015). For many, the growing corruption under Jonathan administration had reached unprecedented level and Buhari's image of honesty and strictness readily appealed- despite his previous poor human rights record (Global Initiative Analysis, 2015).

Perhaps in response to reinvigorated government pressure, Boko Haram appears to have shifted tactics. It has been making greater use of suicide bombers rather than wholesale attacks by a large number of operatives, which were typical at the beginning of the year (Campbell, 2015). In spite of their lethality, Boko Haram still seems to be comparatively weak by other measures: the group has not successfully captured territory since May 2015 when it asserted control over the medium-sized town of Marte. Improvised explosive devices and bomb attacks, while not the preserve of the weak, enable actors that lack the ability or will to seize territory from the government to discredit the government's monopoly on violence and intimidate or demoralise the citizenry (ACLED, August, 2015:7).

However, the conflict is entering a phase where it needs to be fought not just with bombs and guns, but also by addressing the consequences of the insurgency. Those raped or rendered refugees or orphans by Boko Haram need rehabilitation and support. The rescued hostages, including children fathered by insurgents, may not be accepted back in their communities (Siollun, 2015). The strategies adopted by the government should be divided into long-term measures aimed at neutralizing the groups and short- to medium-term measures aimed at containing them and their terrorism (Adibe, 2014). Analysis of militant Islamist attacks in Nigeria and Mali underlines how state responses need to focus less on security and more on addressing local, political, economic and social issues such as intra-regional inequality and contested land rights (IDS, 2015).

## 5. New Threats

Even as the country struggles to fight against Boko Haram insurgents in the northeast, a dangerous but almost forgotten conflict on the other side of the country is resurfacing. Before the rise of Boko Haram, the conflict in the southern Niger Delta region had long been considered the most potent threat to Nigeria's security (Oputu, 2015). For the time being, the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) remains officially inactive, bound by a truce established in 2009. That truce actually saw MEND leaders exchanging their weapons for various 'pensions' and access to government business deals.

Some of the ex-militant leaders had, before the March/April 2015 elections, threatened to remobilize their militia groups if Jonathan was not re-elected. For the former warlords, carrying out this threat might be unrealistic-considering their drastically changed financial status, having been economically empowered by former President Goodluck Jonathan through multi-billion-naira pipeline contract in anticipation of their political support before and after the elections. Oputu (2015) opines that despite their threats, "many of these old militants have enriched themselves through the amnesty payments, and are unlikely to risk their comfortable lifestyles to become fugitives again". Yet, such threats should not be ignored as other abandoned and impoverished foot soldiers might see any instigation or perceived marginalization as an opportunity to go back to the creeks for anticipated financial gain- in whatever way it comes.

Another development, that seems to constitute a threat, emanates from some elites in Borno State who are bent on sabotaging the campaign against the Boko Haram insurgency. As noted by Persson (2014:20), politicians have been known to sponsor violent groups, and clashes between groups associated with or supporting different parties or individuals are not uncommon. There have even been suspicions of political involvement with, and support of, Boko Haram. Only recently, the Army spokesman, Colonel Sani Usman, had alerted the country that: "The Nigerian army wishes to inform the public and send a very strong final warning to some prominent individuals and political groups, who hail from Borno State in particular and North East generally, on plans to undermine and scuttle the fight against terrorism and insurgency in this country. It has come to our knowledge that they are employing all means to see that our operation does not succeed for them to continue to enjoy certain benefits" (The Nation, 2015). Usman further explains that these individuals and their cohorts are determined to reverse the gains made and scuttle the army's efforts of achieving the Presidential directive to defeat Boko Haram terrorists within three months. This actually lends credence to the widespread insinuation that the lingering insurgency may have been sustained with the support of some powerful individuals in the country.

## 6. Conclusion

To effectively counter a security threat such as terrorism and insurgency, a combination of multidisciplinary, multi-agency and multilateral tools are required. This presupposes that the tools employed by the countering outfit must be 'proactive', 'superior', 'consistent', and to a larger extent, 'transformative' (Adewumi, 2014:3). While many fighters have been killed and weapons seized, some analysts say it is too early to write off Boko Haram. As observed by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC News, May 4, 2015), Northern Nigeria has a history of spawning militant Islamist groups, but Boko Haram has outlived them and has proved to be far more lethal and resilient. Even as I conclude this essay today, September 25, 2015, the Islamist Boko Haram militants, operating out of Nigeria, raided a village across the border in southern Niger and massacred at least 15 civilians (*Reuters*, September 25, 2015). Coincidentally too, no fewer than 200 members of the Islamist militant group gave themselves up to the Nigerian Army on the same day (*Daily Independent*, September 25, 2015) after the capture of Banki, where the insurgents had used to launch cross-border attacks.

Suffice it to say that as the counter-insurgency operation rages on to rout out the Boko Haram elements, it is not unlikely that more attacks and casualties would be recorded and surely documented by the media and other interested researchers.

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