



The War on Terror and Nigeria-US Relations, 2009-2015

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Abstract

This article attempts to understand the role of Nigeria and the United States in the war against terrorism in Nigeria. In doing this, it takes a critical look at the internal dynamics of the Islamic religion extremism in northern Nigeria as it engender terrorism and how the complacency of the Nigerian government has shaped the activities of the Boko Haram insurgency. It equally examines Nigeria as well as the United States responses to challenges of Boko Haram and how accusation of human rights abuse, corruption and counter reaction impacted negatively on the relations between the two countries. The paper as well looks into the rebuilding process in the relations between Nigeria and the United States as a result of change of leadership at the helms of affair of the two countries and the resultant positive outcome in the fight against Boko Haram insurgency.

Keywords: Nigeria, United States, Boko Haram, terrorism, Islamic extremism.

1. Introduction

The Nigeria-United States joint war on terrorism in Nigeria could best be understood and appreciated if set against the circumstances surrounding the efforts and activities of the United States on counter terrorism in Africa. United States has for years been actively involved in the counter terrorism war in the Horn of Africa which is considered the base of global terrorism even before the September 11, 2001 attack on World Trade Centre and the Twin Towers building. In 1989, the seizure of power by the National Islamic Front in Sudan with the desire to build an Islamic State, thus, home to radical Islamic groups world-over invariably provided a convenient abode for terrorists which included Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda. The National Islamic Front developed close ties with radical Islamist groups and terrorist organizations, including Osama bin Laden and the origins of his Al-Qaeda organization. Sudan openly harbored Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda from 1991 to 1996 (Prendergast & Roessler, 2004). It equally acted as a conduit for the operations of these groups in the horn of Africa. Hence, war against terrorism started in the 1990s in Sudan when an Egyptian terrorist organization with the complicity of elements in Sudan tried to assassinate Hosni Mubarak, the then president of Egypt as he arrived at Addis Ababa for an Organisation of African Unity summit. The attack is said to have been coordinated by Osama Bin Laden while in Sudan. Besides, in 1993, eighteen American military personnel were killed in Mogadishu, Somalia in an attack attributed to Islamic terrorists. In 1998, American embassies in Da res Salam, Tanzania and Nairobi, Kenya were blown up by Al-Qaeda with over 200 people dead and more than 4000 injured (Menkhaus, 2004). Meanwhile, the US policy towards Sudan in counter-terrorism from 1989 to 1995 before the attack could be described as that of diplomatic engagement, including use of a presidential special envoy. However, from 1995 to 1999, partly catalyzed by Hosni Mubarak assassination attempt and other evidence revealing Sudanese sponsorship of terror, United States' policy became that of increased pressure, containment and isolation after the NIF regime refused to change its behavior and

began more direct targets at the United States interests. This eventually engendered retaliatory measure with the United States bombing a chemical plant in Sudan believed to be producing chemical weapons for the Al-Qaeda elements. Apart from this, the United States became preoccupied in searching, capturing and killing of those believed to be behind the attacks who were taking refuge in Somalia (Ken Menkhaus, 2004). Moreover, the March 11, 2004 Madrid train bombing, also known in Spain as 11-M, were linked to Al-Qaeda inspired terrorist cells in North African nations of Algeria and Morocco, though direct evidence of Al-Qaeda was not established (2004 Madrid train bombings, n.d.).

From 1999, after the Sudanese government made some changes in policy, the United States took some steps toward increased engagement with the Sudan government, including the appointment of special envoy for peace process. After the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, and the opening of a counter-terrorism base in Djibouti, the United States increased its engagement with Khartoum regime. In May 2003, a U.S. military aircraft landed in Sudan for the first time in 10 years. U.S. secretary of State Colin Powell met with Sudanese Foreign Minister Mustafa Osman Ismail in May to discuss cooperation on the war on terrorism. It was made clear that Sudan needs to shut down operations of extremist groups, including Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad. This was a step Sudan needed to take in order for it to be removed from the State Sponsors of Terrorism List. The government of Sudan has a long history of harbouring terrorist organizations and radical Islamic groups. It is the only sub-African government on the United States State Sponsors of Terrorism List and the only one that officially provided support and safe haven for terrorist organizations. Sudanese government has for years used its territory to provide safe haven, training bases to numerous terrorist organizations like Al-Qaeda, Egyptian Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Abu Nidal and Gama'at al Islamiyya. Operatives not only moved freely but established offices, businesses and logistical bases for operation (Prendergast & Roessler, 2004).

Additionally, Somalia is seen as a potential terrorist safe haven due to the fact that it was a collapsed state where terrorists could operate

taking cognizance of the activity of the largest radical Islamist group, al Ittihad al Islamiya. Although, Somalia has not been the site of significant terrorist activity; however, it has played a role in Islamist terrorism, serving primarily as a short-term transit point for movement of people and material into Kenya, which has been a site of terrorist attacks. Some of Somalia's remittance companies have also been misused by Al-Qaeda for wiring large sums of funds outside the reach of law enforcement monitoring. And since late 2002, evidence abounds of at least a couple of cases that foreign terrorists such as Yemeni national Suleiman Abdulla had not only moved freely between Kenya and Somalia but have resided in Mogadishu for extended periods before being detected (Menkhaus, 2004). With this, the resultant impact of the September 11, 2001 was the establishment of air and naval surveillance of Somalia by the United States and its allies to monitor the country for possible terrorist activities. The United States military presence in Djibouti gives it the capacity for rapid deployment against terrorist targets in Somalia, an action that hinders terrorist activity there. The United States equally provided close military support and training for Ethiopia and Kenya's border patrols, with the objective of hindering terrorist from using Somalia as a point of transit into those countries. The assets of Somali company al Barakaat were frozen as part of US efforts to shut down Al-Qaeda's financial capabilities.

Meanwhile, as a result of the September 11, 2001 attacks against the United States, the Horns of Africa came under intense surveillance as a strategic focal point in the war against terrorism (Menkhaus, 2004). The United States policy in Africa with regards to terrorism became intensified. This is due to the fact that Africa, like other continents, is now prone to terrorist threats and equally susceptible to the growth of radical Islamic movements and globally linked movements employing terrorism. Hence, the United States' concentration on the Horn of Africa can be viewed from the prism that the area could serve as an avenue for the infiltration of terrorists. Taking cognizance of this, Robert Rotberg (2005) opined thus:

The greater Horn of Africa thrusts itself toward Yemen and hence the heart of Arabia and the Persian /Arab Gulf. For geostrategic reasons, especially in the era of terror, Yemen

belongs naturally to this greater Horn of African region....So the greater Horn of Africa and Yemen region is bound together by its recent history as a sometime target, by its geographical proximity to the homeland of Osama bin Laden.... (pp. 1–2)

With this realization, by 2002, the Horn of Africa came under the United States' most militarized region in Africa in counter terrorism war with between 1,200 to 18,000 troops stationed in Djibouti under the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa. The Force is saddled with the allied joint patrol of the Red Sea coastal area coupled with military training programmes as well as intelligence gathering on possible terrorist infiltration throughout the Horn of Africa (Lyman, 2009, p. 278).

Also, in 2003, the then American president, George Bush announced a \$100 million programme to improve the intelligence, border control and police capability of the states in the region in order to enhance regional coordination that would identify and block the movement of personnel, arms, money and other forms of support coming from the Middle East into the Horn for onward movement to East Africa along the coast. In fact, in the entire African continent, nowhere else has the United States been so actively, directly and heavily involved in the war against terrorism (Lyman 2009, p. 279).

Although the Muslim dominated northern Nigeria has always been critical of the United States policies in the Middle East, which has grown since the invasion of Iraq, the United States did not classify Nigeria as a terrorist state. Even when Osama bin Ladin once named Nigeria as a prime target for his Islamic revolution, there was little evidence that Al-Qaeda per se had penetrated much in Nigeria. However, from 1999, the domestic terrorism became an issue. This is due to the fact that the institutionalized democratic rule and the political leaders' inability to provide good governance heightened the magnitude of criminalities, such as kidnapping, ethnic militancy, religious fanaticism and so on. In view of this, the CIA reported Nigeria as becoming a breeding ground for terrorism. As such, the United States government urged her citizens to restrict their movement to Nigeria thereby placing Nigeria as a potential terrorist target. Instead of taking a

pro-active measures, the political and Nigerians debunked the report as counter-productive and capable of straining Nigerian-United State relations.

2. Theoretical Framework.

There are multitudes of situations capable of provoking terrorism. However, this paper adopts Frustration-Aggression framework which some theorists in attempt to explain aggression points to the difference between what people feel they want or deserve to what they actually get, that is the “want-get-ratio” (Feierabend, Feierabend & Nesvold, 1969) and difference between “expected need satisfaction” and “actual need satisfaction” (Davies. 1962, p. 6). Where attainment is short of expectation, the tendency is there for the people to confront those they hold responsible for frustrating their ambitions. Giving credence to this, Ted Robert Gurr’s relative deprivation thesis asserts that the greater the discrepancy, however marginal, between what is sought and what seem attainable, the greater will be the chances that anger and violence will result (Gurr 1970, p. 24). The main thrust of frustration-aggression is that aggression is not just undertaken as a natural reaction or instinct as theorist and biological theorists assume, but an outcome of frustration. Hence, in a situation where an individual is denied a legitimate desire, either directly or indirectly consequence upon the structural nature of the society, the implication of disappointment may lead to expressing his anger through violence that will be directed against those held responsible or those directly or indirectly related to them.

3. Historical antecedent of the emergence of Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria.

Religious uprising between the dominant Muslims and the Christian minorities with its concomitant destruction of lives and properties has been a recurrent decimal that pervaded northern Nigeria. According to Raymond Hickey (1984, pp. 251–256), to those who really grasp the complexity of this religious phenomenon, it had its origin in the conservative practice of Islam as a dominant religion in the area; and this is not unconnected with Dan Fodio’s jihad of the nineteenth century directed at purifying and reforming Muslim society. The success of the

jihad gave birth to the establishment of federation of Islamic states with the emirs and their native administration holding sway in Northern Nigeria. This system was carried into post independent Nigeria and the secular nature of the Nigerian constitution which allows freedom of religion seen as a threat, thus, leading to the rejection of the constitution by extremists *Izala* movement and the Muslim Students Society who advocated for the establishment of an Islamic state. In short, a loose coalition of conservative Muslim forces emerged, though, with a division between the traditional conservative establishment represented by the emirs and their councils and the more fanatical groups which came into being and subscribed to violence as a way of achieving the desired Islamic State. The latter fanatical group was led by Alhaji Muhammadu Maroua, also known as *Maitatsine* – meaning ‘he who curses others’ in Hausa language. He incited the December 1980 *Izala* uprising in Kano which led to his death and some of his followers’ as a result of the combined intervention of the Nigerian Army and Air Force. A similar uprising by *Maitatsine* disciples sprang up in Maiduguri in October 1982 resulting in the death of hundreds of the disciples (Hickey, 1984). The Maiduguri uprising appears to be in tandem with the contagion theory of terrorism. Contagion theory asserts that high levels of terrorism in one country often are associated with increased incidents of terrorism in neighboring states in the region, whether by the same organization, by ‘second-generation’ groups, by foreign sympathizers and coalition partners, or simply by imitators (Crenshaw, 1983, p. 15; Midlarsky, Crenshaw & Yoshida, 1980).

Islam, in northern Nigeria, has experienced increase in the numbers of fanatical and radical Islamic sects which most times have resorted to the use of violence in an effort to entrench their own Islamic beliefs. These fanatics have provoked several violent incidents and their rise has been linked to the increase and aiding of religious extremist by politicians for ulterior motives.

Hence, in 2002, the terrorist group referred to as Boko Haram was founded in Maiduguri by Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf. The sect claimed to be an offshoot of *Maitatsine* with the objective of imposing reform on corrupt Muslim elites who have adopted western bad values and to entrench Shari’a states in Nigeria. The sect set up a congregation in

Kanamma, Yobe State, referred to as Afghanistan in local parlance. Perhaps, when preaching seems not to be forthcoming in achieving the sect objective, violence became imperative. Hence, in 2009, Boko Haram uprising resulted in a conflict between the militant Islamist sect and the Nigerian security forces. Meanwhile, according to press reports, the Nigerian authorities were accused of handling the activities of the sect with levity despite several information and warnings (Associated Press, 2009).

Prior to the Boko Haram uprising, the Nigerian government had been reluctant to take decisive action against the group. Since 1995, Nigerian officials have been aware of the group's existence under various names but the government did not crack down on the group or its leaders. Nigerian authorities arrested Yusuf on Nov. 13, 2008, after an attack by his followers on a police station in Maiduguri; seventeen of his followers died in the attack. Yusuf and the Boko Haram leader of Kano state, who was also detained, were set free despite being initially handed over to the inspector-general of police for prosecution. The detention of the Kano sect leader alongside with Yusuf gives credence to the affinity between *Maitatsine* and Boko Haram. Police also detained Yusuf's deputy twice in 2009, but he was freed by the authorities. The uprising began on 26 July when Boko Haram launched an attack on a police station in Bauchi State, triggering a wave of militant violence that spread to three other northern states, Kano, Yobe and Borno. Nigerian authorities retaliated five days later by storming the group's sprawling Maiduguri headquarters, killing at least 100 people in the attack, half of them inside the sect's mosque.

Besides, on Friday, August 26, 2011, the UN building in Abuja was attacked by suicide bombers (Murray & Nossiter, 2011). Boko Haram claimed responsibility for the attack in a telephone call to the BBC's Hausa language broadcast service in northern Nigeria. This signaled a significant leap in the scope of Boko Haram's focus, which hitherto had aimed exclusively at domestic targets as part of an ill-defined aim to establish strict Islamic law in the country's north. Earlier that month, the commander of the US Africa Command, General Carter Ham, said he had several sources of information showing that Boko Haram had contacts with Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, which operates in

north-west Africa. He said it also had ties with al-Shabab in Somalia. There have been other independent reports of Nigerians fighting alongside al-Shabab. Together, these reports indicate where Boko Haram gets expertise needed to carry out its wave of attacks. What began as a radical group in northern Nigeria is now part of a much wider Islamist movement. Henry Wilkinson, the head analyst at the London office of Janussian Risk Advisory, a consulting group, said that if Boko Haram was in fact responsible, then the scale and method of the attack suggested that it had adopted the tactics of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, the group that took responsibility for a similar attack on United Nations offices in Algeria four years earlier. "It pretty much confirms that Boko Haram has moved into the Al-Qaeda orbit," he said. "This all points to a clear trend that Boko Haram is evolving and expanding its targets" (Murray & Nossiter, 2011).

With the failed attempt by Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, a young Nigerian to bomb an Airbus 330 carrying 278 passengers and 11 crew members from Amsterdam to Detroit on 25 December, 2009 (O'Connor Schmitt, 2009) coupled with the tactics, strategies and mode of operations adopted by the Boko haram terrorists which is akin and having a professional touch in line with terrorist ideologies and practices worldwide, Boko Haram and a splinter group, Ansaru, were named to the federal roster of terrorist groups after U.S. officials determined that they had received training and some financing from the Al-Qaeda affiliate in North Africa. The designations "demonstrate our strong support for Nigeria's fight against terrorism and its efforts to address security challenges in the north," Lisa Monaco, President Obama's counter-terrorism advisor, said in a statement. The listing makes it a federal crime to knowingly provide support to the groups. It also blocks them from the U.S. financial system and enables banks to freeze their U.S. assets. The State Department previously had named three of Boko Haram's leaders to its global terrorism sanctions list ("US declares Boko Haram as terror group," 2013).

According to Los Angeles Times, U.S. officials acknowledged that Boko Haram "remains primarily a Nigerian organization" but said the groups pose a sufficient enough threat to the United States that the terrorist designations were warranted. "There is a very large American

population in Nigeria and a lot of U.S. investment in Nigeria," said an official who briefed reporters on condition he not be identified. "Threats to Nigeria automatically impact the U.S. economy and American citizen interests." Meanwhile, the United States strategies against global terrorism since the attack on world trade centre and the pentagon has been that of direct confrontation. However, under Obama administration, the strategy against terrorism was that of non-confrontation. In view of this, the USAID research on Boko haram averred that it was merely an expression of grievance against non-performance of the Nigerian government; hence, its fight should not engender direct confrontation from the United States government, but rather a coordinated strategy involving both the state and the local governments, especially in the north (Peacock, 2012).

Similarly, in a letter addressed to the former US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, some scholars who claimed broad expertise on African politics urged that Boko Haram should not be designated as Foreign Terrorist Organisation. Though they claimed to have been aware of the horrific violence perpetrated by Boko Haram, yet it said that a Foreign Terrorist Organisation designation would internationalise Boko Haram's standing and enhanced its status among radical organizations elsewhere. Besides, designating Boko Haram as Foreign Terrorist Organisation would potentially shift the organisation's posture towards the United States and would also undermine Nigerian government's ability to address the problem through law enforcement and thereby improve rule of law. Additionally, it would give disproportionate attention to counter-terrorism in United States bilateral relations, and increase the risk that the United States become linked, whether in reality or perception to the abuses by the security services. Designating Boko Haram as Foreign Terrorist Organisation would effectively endorse excessive use of force at a time when the rule of law in Nigeria hangs in the balance. The scholars adduced the existence of evidence that abuses by Nigeria's security services facilitated radical recruitment which was made clear in 2009 following the extrajudicial murder of Mohammed Yusuf. The incident was immediately followed by Boko Haram's radicalization, splintering and increased propensity for large-scale violence. The scholars inferred that understanding and properly

addressing the issue of Boko Haram would require a diplomatic, developmental and demilitarized framework (LeVan, 2012).

On the other hand, Patrick Meehan, the chairman Subcommittee on Cyber security, Infrastructure Protection, and Security Technologies, and Peter King, the chairman Subcommittee on Counter Terrorism and Intelligence Committee on Homeland Security did not subscribe to the call for diplomatic framework in handling Boko Haram issue. Rather, cognizance was taken of the spontaneity of Boko Haram evolvement which posed an emerging threat to U.S. interests and the U.S. homeland. Besides, the committee's finding asserts that Boko Haram's evolution in targeting and tactics closely tracks that of other Al-Qaeda affiliates that had targeted the U.S. homeland, most notably Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan. Hence, the United States should not underestimate Boko Haram's intent and capability to attack the U.S. homeland as was done with other terrorist groups, most notably Al-Qaeda in the Arabia in the Arabian Peninsula and Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan. These underestimations had near-deadly impacts on Christmas Day 2009 over Detroit and in May 2010 in Times Square. In view of this and coupled with Boko Haram attack on the United Nations headquarters in Abuja, the committee recommended that the Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton should conduct an investigation into whether Boko Haram should be designated a Foreign Terrorist Organisation, in accordance with Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act, as amended. The committee added that Foreign Terrorist Organisation designation would be required to provide U.S. intelligence and law enforcement communities the tools necessary to ensure Boko Haram did not attack U.S. interests and the U.S. homeland (Meehan & Speier, 2011).

In the same vein, the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security headed by Michael McCaul, in their findings as per Boko Haram Growing Threat to the U.S. Homeland asserted that Boko Haram had evolved into an Al-Qaeda ally through their connections with Al-Qaeda in the lands of the Islamic Maghreb and Al Shabaab. Besides, the committee said that the designation of three Boko Haram members as Specially Designated Global Terrorists was not enough to prevent persons within U.S jurisdiction from aiding Boko Haram. As a

result, a Foreign Terrorist Organisation Designation was necessary. Hence, in its recommendation, the committee said the Secretary of States must recognize Boko Haram and their splinter group Ansaru as Foreign Terrorist Organisations so that it would provide Federal agencies with the tools they needed to assist Nigeria and others in defeating Boko Haram and would provide clear guidance on how the United States views the threat the group poses. It further warned against underestimating Boko Haram's intent and capability to attack U.S. homeland. Thus, the U.S. Intelligence Community risks a repeat of the mistakes made with Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan and Al-Qaeda in the Arabia Peninsula in failing to recognize the threat the groups posed until after each attempted to attack U.S. Homeland. Boko Haram and its splinter group Ansaru had proved themselves as increasingly sophisticated and equally ruthless killers. Boko Haram, Ansaru and Al-Qaeda are unified by an ideology that justifies horrific violence and views the United States as an enemy and a target. It further recommended the need for United States assistance to Nigeria and other allies in meeting their security needs taking cognizance of the limited resources to combat the threat (Homeland Security Report, 2013).

4. Nigerian Government efforts in combating Boko Haram activities.

Here, this study looked at the government effort at combating the Boko Haram insurgency and how it shaped the Boko Haram activities and exploits. Rational actor model remains one of the dominant approaches in decision making process which employs the state as the primary unit of analysis as well as a unitary actor making rational decisions based on preference ranking and value maximization. Preference ranking implies how important the issue is while value maximization implies utilizing more advantage of the achievement already made. Hence, the assumption is that state is unified and rational and would take a rational and best decision. However, the government attitude towards Boko Haram activities under President Goodluck Jonathan was bereft of rationality and value maximization in making quick decision to nib the insurgency at the bud. The issue of Boko Haram under Goodluck Jonathan was seen as a Northern Nigeria problem and the handiwork of his political opponents. But if the Boko

Haram had bombed his home country Otuoke, would he not have taken a decisive action? In the words of Johnson Agbinya, a small flame at a time might not mean much to a clueless bystander but when each new flame adds to existing flame, a house owner would not just douse the flames but also seek to eliminate the source of the flame. A small flame not put out early often gains traction and becomes an inferno. Boko Haram insurgency was a seemingly small flame left to grow by the Jonathan government and has grown to become an inferno that seeks to consume the North and the rest of the country (Abginya, 2015).

It was not until much havocs had been done with the Boko Haram maximizing their exploits by that a palliative measures were considered such as the declaration of state of emergency in Yobe, Adamawa and Borno, government attempt to release certain Boko Haram prisoners and talk of potential amnesty (Homeland Security Report, 2013).

A whooping sum of over 2 billion Dollars was budgeted for the war against Boko Haram, but unfortunately, it was not used for the purpose it was allocated. Rather, the money was shared among the PDP politicians for Goodluck Jonathan presidential re-election bid. It is an indication that African leaders would do anything to remain in power, which further gives credence to Meredith Matins assertion that African Leaders spent three-quarters of their term strategizing how to remain in power. More worrisome is that the National Security Adviser to Goodluck Jonathan, Sambo Dasuki who presided over the sharing of the money is a retired Colonel in the Nigerian Army who was expected to know the implication of going into war front ill equipped. Besides, he is of northern Nigeria stock. They sent soldiers to the war front but they were neither well trained, well-armed nor adequately taken care of to fight back and when they complained or abandoned their posts in great number they were court marshalled and sentenced to death. This is the highest degree of callousness not only to the soldiers and their families but the northeast communities being ravaged by the Boko Haram. When secondary school girls were abducted at Chibok, the government of Goodluck Jonathan dilly-dallied and no rescue attempt was made. However, with the assumption of Muhammadu Buhari as the president of Nigeria, there has been relative reduction in the activities of the Boko Haram in the Northeast Nigeria. The Nigerian Military Command

Centre was relocated to Maiduguri immediately he assumed office in May 2015 and this in no small measure contributed to the success in the fight against insurgency in the North Eastern part of the country. Besides, by December 2015, the well-motivated Nigerian military has regained Nigerian territories hitherto under the control of Boko Haram. Most of the towns, villages and Local Government Councils taken over by the Boko Haram have been recovered while some of the Chibok girls abducted have been released. Additionally, Nigeria has provided more than \$100million to the Multi-National Joint Task Force in N’Djamena, the capital of Chad which is headed by Nigerian Military general which has recorded a remarkable success (RemmyAlex, 2016).

5. United States Efforts in Combating Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria.

As stated earlier, the United States counterterrorism was focused on the Horn of Africa, especially Somalia, Sudan. Although, there had been cases of religious extremism in northern Nigeria, Nigeria had never been seen as a breeding place for terrorists. Hence, the Obama administration towards terrorism was that of non-confrontation and in a research instituted by the USAID, Boko Haram insurgency was seen as a mere expression of grievance against the incompetence of Nigerian government which should not attract direct confrontation. Rather, the United States/Nigeria Bi-national Commission was instituted with concentration on good governance, promoting regional cooperation and development, energy reform and investment and food security and agriculture. The second United States effort at curtailing Boko Haram in Nigeria was the improvement of local partner’s capability in Nigeria in terms of training and finding means on how to reduce the flow of funds to Boko Haram. Additionally, the United States government besides the proscription of the Boko Haram leader, Abubakar Shekau and his cohorts, in June 2012, announced the placement of \$7million bounty for anyone who had clue that could lead to his arrest.

However, the assumption that Boko Haram Insurgency as a mere expression of grievance changed with the attacks on UN Headquarters in Abuja and the subsequent threats statements by the Boko Haram Spokeperson on attacking the American Homestead. This threat was

reminiscent of the one made by Al-Qaeda in the Arabia in the Arabian Peninsula and Tehrik-i- Taliban Pakistan which America handled with levity and it resulted in the May 2010 in Times Square . Besides Mutallab’s case was another example of American Homestead vulnerability to attack. Hence, America cannot be too complacent with Boko and Mutallab’s attempt, taking cue from the mistake of Al-Qaeda in Maghreb threat which almost proved fatal. Thus, this culminated into proactive measures leading to setting up of Us House of Representatives Committees and Subcommittees with both recommending and suggesting the designation of Boko Haram as Foreign Terrorist Organisation.

6. Nigeria-United States Relations.

Taking cognizance of the damages terrorism had done to the United States and Nigeria, it is expected that since every society is vulnerable to attack, there should be a synergy between Nigeria and United States in fighting a common enemy. More so, with Mutallab’s attempt at bombing Detroit bound plane that has placed Nigeria on the list of terrorist countries, it is expected that in the Nigeria–United States efforts at waging war on terror, United States should not hesitate to make available the necessary assistance and weapons for Nigeria in its counter-terrorism efforts. Then, the question is why would the United States disallow Brazil and Israel from selling to Nigeria US-made Cobra combat helicopter in fighting a common enemy? This becomes imperative especially how this refusal affected the relations between the two countries. For instance, President Barack Obama supported Nigeria’s neighbouring nations with \$35 million worth of military and defense support services to Chad, Niger and Mali channeled through France in order to shore up the security of the three French speaking nations that share boundaries with Nigeria, while Nigeria at the centre of intensified Boko Haram onslaught was left out. In response to this, Nigeria suspended military training with the U.S. after Washington repeatedly blocked its effort to buy arms to fight the insurgents in 2014. “At the request of the Nigerian government, the United States will discontinue its training of a Nigerian Army battalion,” the U.S. government said in a statement through its embassy in Abuja (Obaji, 2015).

United States' action was premised on lack of trust in Nigeria's military, human rights violations, corruption, and losing weapons to the enemy. The situation was such that the Nigerian Ambassador to the United States, Ade Adefuye openly criticised United States refusal to sell arms and equipment to Nigeria. On the other hand, the United States argued that it had supported Nigeria within the ambit of its law, claiming that its law forbids sales of arm to nations with abysmal human rights records. While retorting to this, Ambassador Joe Keshi, a former Nigerian Consul General to the United States, asserted that records showed that United States carried out major arms shipments, running into several billions of dollars, to countries with abysmal human rights records, including brutal suppression of democratic dissents (Keshi 2014). According to him, a number of countries in the Middle East, Latin America and Africa are beneficiaries of American military support. Besides, he said even if human rights violations were stretched, it was not America, whose military and security agencies have had their own share of abysmal records in almost all their operations outside the U.S., that should openly criticize the Nigerian military the way it did.

Albeit, the human rights issue might just be one of the problems. Defense analysts were of the view that U.S. might refuse to sell arms to Nigeria for the fear of sophisticated military hardware ending up in the hands of Islamist insurgents which could further pose threat to United States security. More so, Boko Haram militants had on several occasions seized arms from fleeing Nigerian soldiers. However, the United States argument of corruption on the part of Goodluck Jonathan administration was obvious. For instance, the allegation by American officials, Sarah Sewall, the Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy and Human Rights during a hearing of the House Foreign Affairs Committee that despite Nigeria's \$5.8 billion security budget, corruption prevented supplies as basic as bullets and transport vehicles from reaching the front lines of struggle against Boko Haram (Keshi, 2014). This claim became evident with the revelation by Goodluck Jonathan successor's President Muhammadu Buhari of money meant for the purpose being diverted and shared to PDP stalwarts by the National Security Adviser, retired Colonel Sambo

Dasuki in the Goodluck Jonathan presidential re-election bid. Nevertheless, the accusation of human rights violation in the fight against Boko Haram insurgents going by United States antecedent in dealing with terrorists could be likened to a biblical statement of someone with a log in his eyes trying to remove the speck in another person's eyes.

Another indicting accusation, which United States blockade of sale of US-made Cobra combat helicopter appeared to give credence to, was the US embassy in Nigeria as a forward operating base for wide and far-reaching acts of subversion against Nigeria. According to the report, US embassy subversive activities in Nigeria fit into the long-term US government's well-camouflaged policy of containment against Nigeria, the ultimate goal of eliminating Nigeria as a potential strategic rival to US in African continent. The setting up of Africa Crises Response Initiative under Bush Jr. administration viewed as a counterweight to instigate mistrust in Nigeria dominated ECOMOG in order to contain Nigeria growing influence. This was due to the fact that Nigeria without support from the United Nations or the West led the first ever African intervention force on peacekeeping mission to Liberia while simultaneously engaging Sierra-Leone in peace combat majorly with Nigerian troops (Mavengira, 2015). The act was viewed as affront and anti-American posture.

The estimation by the National Intelligence Council of the United States Government was that Nigeria would disintegrate by the year 2015 as a result of general election which was thought would end in intractable crises, thus weaken Nigeria (Mavengira, 2015). Unfortunately, since this expectation failed, perhaps, the Boko Haram insurgency might be able to fulfil that expectation. If not why would the insurgency thrive and the United States rather than assist Nigeria to nib the insurgency at the bud preferred to support three Francophone countries that share border with Nigeria so as to preclude a spill-over of the insurgency to those countries?

As a matter of fact, whatever the rationale behind United States attitude towards Nigeria, it was obvious that the United States did not

provide sufficient support for the fight against Boko Haram and this in no small measure negatively impacted the relations between Nigeria and the United States during Obama administration. Rebuilding the frosty relationship is imperative in order to dispel the insinuations about United States action towards Nigeria in the fight against insurgency. This appears to be ongoing with the Muhammadu Buhari at the helm of affair, and this has translated into mutual relationship between the two countries with the restoration of both economic and security relations. The resultant consequence of this is the decision of President Donald Trump's plan to sell attack planes to Nigeria, which was hitherto suspended by Barack Obama administration. The approval of the United States government to sell high-tech attack aircraft to fight against Boko Haram was said to be part of the issues discussed by President Muhammadu Buhari with President Donald Trump in his maiden phone call, an indication of the relations between Nigeria and United States being rebuilt.

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