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Governing “Ungoverned Spaces” in the Foliage of Conspiracy: Toward (Re)ordering Terrorism, from Boko Haram Insurgency, Fulani Militancy to Banditry in Northern Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the dominant narrative of ill-governed or ungoverned territories in the northern region of Nigeria where informality and socioeconomic deficit fashioned the mannerism of everyday life. Reconnoitering ungoverned territories, positing that radical jihadist and non-jihadist movements and criminal-armed groups are ideologically driven by localism and informal networks, particularly in the areas unkempt by the state. The paper interrogates to what extent ungoverned spaces embolden the recruitment of criminal and terrorist groups in northern Nigeria. It explains the complex security paradoxes confronting the Nigerian state, it analyses the Boko Haram insurgency, Fulani militancy and banditry within the context of ungoverned spaces that continuously breed terrorist organizations, and criminal networks, that pose an enormous risk to human security. It adopts a qualitative approach and spatial network analysis using Geographical Information System (GIS). The paper argues that the primordial negligence of ungoverned areas with limited state surveillance or unharmonized state presence, controlled by informal networks and hybrid arrangements creates an enabling environment for warlordism, religious fanaticism and tribal self-defense forces. It further demonstrates that governance failure in these regions stimulates illegal movement of arms and ammunition, the raw material for bombs, illegal drugs and foreign machines, and becomes abodes for Boko Haram jihadist and non-Boko Haram armed groups. The paper concludes that ungoverned spaces could be morphed into a production site for Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) by the terrorists in the near future, thus, until the Nigerian state pays attention to the territories under-governed or poorly governed, it will become difficult to win the war against terrorism, Fulani militancy and banditry through military response. Therefore, good governance that transcends ethnic chauvinism remains a veritable weapon in conquering multilayered security quagmires facing the giant of Africa.

KEYWORDS

Ungoverned Spaces; Boko Haram Insurgency; banditry; Fulani Militancy; security; Nigeria

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Introduction

In recent times, the Nigerian state has embroiled in manifold security challenges, prominent among them is the Boko Haram jihadist revolt, Fulani militancy and the ongoing campaign of terror by the rural bandits. Consequently, occasioning: the displacement of more than two million populace, forced migration and a prolonged humanitarian crisis that advances security risks.¹

Predominantly, the Boko Haram Islamist group is a terrorist organization, ideologically created to fight Western education, modern science and Western culture.² The conflict between Nigerian security forces and the Boko Haram has deepened the current state of underdevelopment and regional inequalities especially in the area of education between the North and South. The most vulnerable demographic population includes children, women and youths. The mechanism used by the Boko Haram to achieve their lethal operations includes abduction, suicide bombings, sexual violence against womenfolk and recruitment of young men.

Despite the recent pronouncement that the Boko Haram has been decimated by the Nigerian government, the insurgents are still operating within the North East.³ In March 2015, the group aerated its allegiance to ISIS, and it was absorbed into a transnational terrorist cartel, (re)christened ISIS-West Africa (ISWA). Such a proclamation of international dimension of terrorism

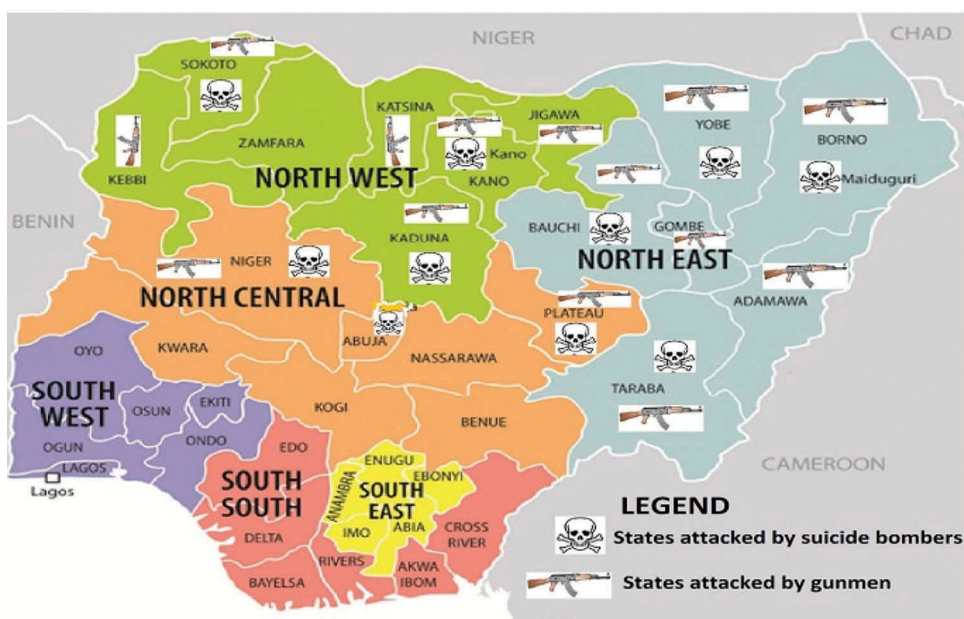


Figure 1. Map showing Nigeria's international borders as well as locations of the Boko Haram attacks. Source: Onuoha, F. (2013) Porous Borders and Boko Haram's Arms Smuggling Operations in Nigeria, Al Jazeera Center for Studies, September 8, 2013

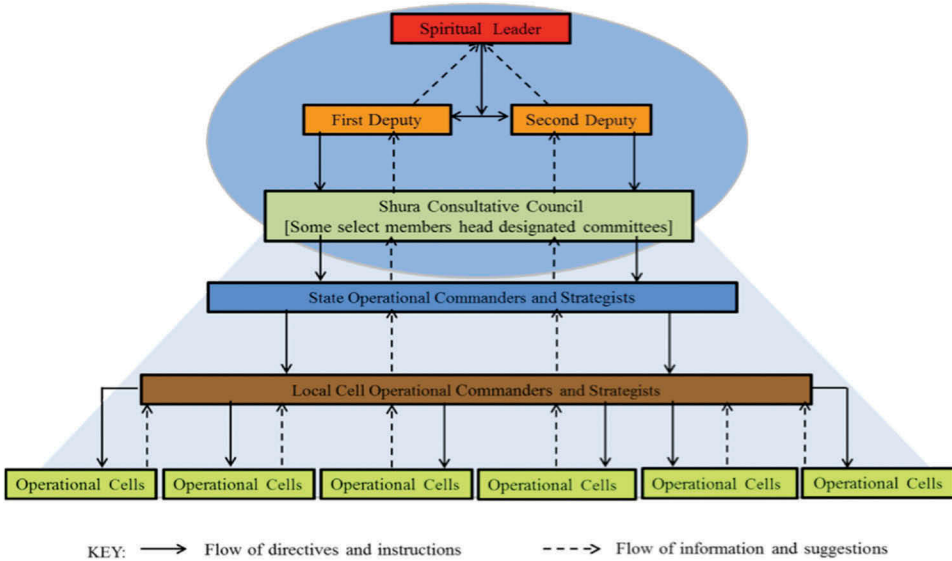


Figure 2. Leadership structure of the Boko Haram. Source: Bokohara Terrorism Group Project (2015) Leadership and Organizational Structure

was echoed during a presentation from President Muhammadu Buhari at the 73rd United Nations General Assembly Session, where he stated that:

The terrorist insurgencies we face are in part fueled by local factors and dynamics, but now increasingly by the international Jihadi movement.⁴

Drawing from the Palermo Convention, an offense is transnational if:

- It is committed in more than one State.
- It is committed in one State but has a substantial part of its preparation, planning, direction or control takes place in another State.
- It is committed in one State but is involved in an organized group that engages in activities in more than one State.
- It is committed in one State but has substantial affects in another State.⁵

Transnational terrorists may see ungoverned parts of Africa as safe havens, or as providing them with opportunities to attack Western targets on the continent. Somalia and the Sahara were previously identified as areas formerly used by terrorists.

Associated with control over territories is the question of border control. It is an unfortunate reality that a line on a map might not always correspond with a border that's being effectively monitored to prevent the movement of unwanted individuals. The reality is that a number of countries do not have the resources (human and technological) to prevent acts of terrorism being committed within its borders.⁶ Since 2018, insecurity in the North has gone

beyond a national narrative with an increasing level of kidnapping of women, foreigners and humanitarian workers by the Boko Haram and the Islamic State in West Africa (ISWA). The kidnapping has often taken place in the North East – Yobe, Adamawa, Gombe and Borno states and North Central – Kaduna, Bauchi, Niger and Kano as well as around the borderlands such as Chad and Niger borders.

The Boko Haram operations transcends religion or political sentiments as they were against the erstwhile philosophical explanation, acquiesced by some political scholars and analysts, having a religious identity.⁷ Others have considered its recent dimensions as the compass of terrorism, a universal credence that no one is secure within the global space.⁸

As Boko Haram could not be surmounted in the North-East, the clashes between the Fulani militias and the farmers emanated which became another problem for the politicians of the country. Fundamentally, the Fulani belligerence against the agrarian population began in the Middle-Belt/North-Central areas, leading to thousands of deaths of innocent Nigerians. The mode of operation of Fulani militias revolves around kidnapping, attacks on villages, destruction of farmlands and the abduction of women. The decades of primordial conflict between the herders and farmers was reinvigorated in 2018 and continues to abate the security thralldom experienced in the northern region. According to Human Rights Watch, more than 1,600 innocent Nigerians were killed and more than 300,000 were equally displaced.⁹ Although there were lesser reprisal attacks against the Fulani settlements by the farmers, however, it is believed that some terrorist groups were secretively active in this conflict to fuel insecurity in the country. The incessant attacks on the civilian populace by the Fulanis forced the implementation of a law against open grazing in some states such as Benue, in the North-Central region.

To add to Nigeria states battle with the manifold security conundrum, there has emerged a new group known as bandits that have emerged in the Middle-Belt/North-Central region. They operate under the disguise of kidnapping and cattle rustling, majorly carrying out their deadly attacks on villages in states such as Zamfara, Kaduna, Kastina and Sokoto. In different parts of the North-West, from Birnin-Gwari in Kaduna to Tsafe in Zamfara, *“bandits are offered as the trope for an intolerable carnage, and the inexplicable haplessness”*.¹⁰ The Boko Haram has changed the North-East to a theater of war, states like Sokoto, Zamfara, Kaduna and Kastina have become a rendezvous for bandits, marauders, kidnappers and a host of hoodlums. It has been argued that the contemporary security challenges were the results of corruption that has been strewed in the minds of Nigerian state managers. This is also coupled with an economic situation which is dragging the teeming youth population into criminal carnage. Nigeria as a nation-state has transmogrified into:

A prisoner to new inertia and old momentum, it is overwhelmed by cooperative underdevelopment by the various geo-political zones and it is afflicted by massive corruption.¹¹

The unceasing social injustice and inequitable distribution of commonwealth has fanned the vexation of insecurity across the geopolitical zones. The few richer populaces are getting richer while the ever-increasing assemblage of the poorer fragments are becoming tremendously booming in dearth.

Unfortunately, the era of globalization in which the whole world has become a borderless ecological habitation also exacerbates the state of disorder. The young adult populace has access to internet and is able to observe the governance topography in other countries of the world. They acknowledged the social injustice in their home country where the government rebuffs the wellness of individuals.

While the Boko Haram insurgents are still fighting over the control of the North-east and the killings by sundry armed militia and herdsmen are yet to abate in North-central, scores of bandits are now gradually taking over the North-West, thus putting the entire northern region at risk.¹²

Lives of Nigerians are now at the mercy of the criminal syndicates who often provide options to their victims, to either provide ransoms or be killed. Insecurity is becoming horrendous, and it has taking polygonal dimensions, leaving individuals with a perpetual encumbrance. Thus, this paper seeks to interrogate the changing facade of insecurity, it wishes to provide contextual and theoretical explanations regarding ungoverned spaces, and explain why northern Nigeria has become an epicenter for breeding terrorist consortia and organized criminal networks.

Violent Extremism and the Crisis of Ungoverned Spaces

Worldwide, operational responses and state policies toward combating violent extremism are shrouded in theoretical explanations, rather than considering empirical indications that energize an individual's motivations and structural dynamics that promote violent extremism.¹³ Several arguments regarding why some regions become attractive to Islamic terrorist groups are explained within the context of socioeconomic development, political disenfranchisement, poverty and social marginalization.¹⁴ Other scholars have argued that there is no connection between socioeconomic status and terrorism, some of their explanations were developed using numerous case studies in which people from high socioeconomic backgrounds were found engaging in terrorist acts.¹⁵ However, regions like Africa have begun to acknowledge other country-based factors that make people vulnerable to terrorism. The motivational factors in Western or civilized societies differ from developing nations, especially in Africa. In this context, when considering intriguing factors that have pushed

individual citizens to participate in terrorism, both external and internal factors have been considered.

In Africa, internal factors are perceived within the milieu of poverty, ethno-religious persecution, deprivation, political marginalization and socio-economic injustices that pervade the region, while external factors such as globalization and foreign policies that are beyond national or continental control also need to be taken into consideration.

In a research project that was sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) aimed at tracing the root causes of extremism in Africa, where more than 350 apprehended extremists were interviewed from Nigeria, Uganda, Somalia, Niger, Cameroon and Kenya they all claimed that they were not influenced by religious doctrines. They were rather enthused by the long experience of deprivation, they claimed that they were not subject to a governments positive contribution to help their state of poverty nor did they experience a basic provision from the state, with respect to secular education or health. These youths considered themselves to be victims of a failed state; their abodes became an enabling environment for terrorist exploitation and recruitment. The study also found that 78% of the extremists had no trust in political office holders, police or the military institutions. The research further found that:

The ideology behind violent extremism is delivered with a flexible marketing strategy, where extremist groups tailor their message for potential recruits. For the unemployed or the poor, they offer paid jobs; for marginalized ethnic and religious minorities, they offer recourse through violence; and for the middle class, they offer an adventure, a sense of purpose, and an escape from mundanity. The ideology mutates to exploit its intended recruit's vulnerabilities.¹⁶

Taylor provides the following dynamic explanation of ungoverned territories:

A place where the state or central government is unable or unwilling to extend control, effectively govern, or influence the local population, and where a provincial, local, tribal, or autonomous government does not fully or effectively govern, due to inadequate governance capacity, insufficient political will, gaps in legitimacy, the presence of conflict, or restrictive norms of behavior. Ungoverned areas should be assumed to include under-governed, ill-governed, contested, and exploitable areas.¹⁷

The existing ungoverned environment was driven by incessant conflict in a state such as Somalia and northern Nigeria which in turn makes such spaces more prone to terrorist recruitment. Although ungoverned spaces were hypothetically not an ungoverned environment, but were being controlled in a different manner than formal states. These were areas where there was a fractional government presence or were poorly governed by the existing formal authorities which posed security risks to the state.¹⁸ Terrorism, criminal activities, drug trafficking and the likes are the byproducts of

ungoverned spaces.¹⁹ According to the RAND report, examples of ungoverned spaces with possibilities of accommodating terrorist organizations were drawn from eight regions, including the East African Corridor, West Africa, the Sulawesi–Mindanao Arc, the Colombia–Venezuela Border, the Guatemala–Chiapas Border, the Pakistan–Afghanistan Border, the North Caucasus and the Arabian Peninsula. In this study, RAND examined ungoverned spaces through two magnitudes: conduciveness to terrorism and ungovernability.²⁰

Ungoverned territories can be failed or failing states; poorly controlled land or maritime borders or airspace; or areas within otherwise viable states where the central government's authority does not extend. Dwelling within this explanation, the phenomenon is linked to insecurity. The territories are vulnerable to global terrorism and criminal networks. Another description of the ungoverned spaces phenomenon is the one provided by the US Department of Defense, it is defined as an environment not effectively governed, under-governed or ill-governed by the state or central government as a result of conflict or violence or inadequate governance capacity. Moreover, there are some factors that make ungoverned spaces a haven for breeding terrorists, these include geographical remoteness; illegal businesses such as piracy, illegal drugs and human trafficking; and unofficial banking among others. Such an environment provides a fertile terrain for bandits, criminals and terrorist networks.²¹

Additionally, Clunan provided a more inclusive clarification on the phenomenon. She argued that ungoverned spaces transcend state failure or government absence in an area. It may connote:

- A primordial existence of ethnic and tribal hierarchies, with their embedded customs and laws
- Land populated by traditional nomadic tribes
- Presence of informal economies
- Criminals
- Religious authorities

In this context, governance revolves outside of the established state authority.²² The replacement of formal governance structures with informal edifices has an impact on the functionality of the social environment which is controlled by the local populace. The existence of illegitimate governance therefore promotes a new form of local security and protection for the people. Such an environment necessitates the emergence and control of non-state local-armed men, in this regard, their claim generates a long-term structure and territorial command within the area.

This necessitates the existence of dual actors, namely state and non-state within the same territory. For instance, non-state actors may provide local

security such as a vigilante group and waste disposal, concomitantly; the state can make provision for banking services, electricity and water. Some of the attributes of ungoverned territories include the lack of penetration by the formal institutions, the absence of a law enforcement agency, health-care facilities and welfare institutions. The absence of these fundamental state institutions to dictate the rules and regulations of everyday life therefore encourage the citizens to look for succor especially from the tribal leaders, warlords and informal networks for judicial remedies and protection. The lack of state presence also manifests in low adherence to the state laws. In such an environment, illegal activities such as unlawful exploration of natural resources and smuggling could attract little or no attention by the state security agency to apprehend the perpetrators.

Furthermore, it should also be noted that ungoverned spaces are the byproduct of political decisions that were made by the state managers intending to manage such an environment through informal networks. Some of the indicators that makes ungoverned territories more prone to extremists revolves around

- The lack of physical infrastructure, linking the region with the hub of the state
- Social and cultural resistance prevalence of informal economy and corruption
- Existence of organized armed groups, criminal networks that are linked with terrorist organizations
- Access to arms and ammunition through porous borders
- Interaction with external/foreign actors

The pervasiveness of such informalities allowed the general populace to sustain without the attendance of a state authority.²³ Consequently, making the state:

Incapable of projecting power and asserting authority within their own borders, leaving their territories – governmentally empty.²⁴

In sub-Sahara Africa, including Nigeria, ungoverned spaces are mainly the remotest peripheral areas bordered by different countries with little or no state presence. It is believed that the more secluded they are the more they are vulnerable to extremism and radicalization.²⁵ Habitually, some of the terrorist groups operating within the African landscape such as al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram and Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) have often carried out their operations without the popular support of the larger population. Rather, they propagate their extremist ideology within ungoverned territories.²⁶

Additionally, African nations are quite susceptible to violent extremists, owing to the fragile institutions, mismanagement of religious and ethnic diversity and persistent ungoverned spaces that have created an idyllic ambiance for breeding violent extremists.²⁷ Extremist groups have employed the vulnerability of the local population and enfeebled community institutions to exploit and recruit teeming populations of youths who are already frustrated by the formal governance systems. For instance, Al-Shabaab in Somalia utilized the traditional clan institution to promote its extremist agenda within the communities. They also employing religious institutions as a riding board for radical preaching and recruitment, while the Boko Haram used the existing marginalization and deprivation in northern Nigeria to advance its stronghold. In such an environment, religious leaders were highly respected, they were considered as custodians of the law in the local communities.²⁸

The 9/11 commission report states that some of the extremist groups bolted to ungoverned spaces especially those areas with weak government presence, rugged terrain, low population density, that were along borders that were prone to informal interaction with the outside world which provided them often with the opportunity of receiving supplies.²⁹ Therefore:

Declaring a space ungoverned is actually a normative judgment on the type of governance, or the way in which a space is governed.³⁰

The above analysis corresponds to the current picture in Africa where extremist groups and criminal syndicates have taken advantage of ungoverned spaces to recruit adult youths to foster their agenda and expand their powerbases. While African state governments have given little or no attention to such environments where terrorists are able to be recruited and are able to achieve their goals, it is therefore difficult to win the war on terror via a military response in Africa.

The nexus between ungoverned spaces and insecurity

To what extent can ungoverned spaces become a threat to national and international security? And why is insecurity posed by terrorism and banditry able to occur in well-governed spaces?

Once a state goes beyond the established “Western sovereign frontier,” if it is considered weak, ineffective, collapsed or failed, the instability is conventionally considered as a threat to global security.³¹ As Patrick argues, while the weakness of the state may provide an enabling environment for corruption and criminality, this does not necessarily mean that it will happen. He further argues that some middle-income countries such as China, Saudi Arabia, Mexico, Russia and South Africa may not be regarded as failed states, yet they have sheltered some of the most dangerous criminal networks, traffickers, fundamentalists and threatening communicable diseases in the world.³²

It is important to note that “different ungoverned spaces” exemplify “different threats”.³³ Some of the terrorist acts that have been carried out in Western society have been incontrovertibly coordinated within a well-governed political environment. However, a poorly governed environment facilitates terrorist operations that target well-protected citizens in urban spaces. The sort of ungoverned spaces cannot be over-generalized, regional and state differences should be taken into consideration when examining the connection between ungoverned spaces and insecurity. Thus, the theoretical baseline of ungoverned spaces cannot be used to explain some of the terrorist attacks in the Global North.

However, in Nigeria, there is a strong connection between ungoverned spaces and insecurity. As it was rightly noted that ungoverned spaces are areas where the state institutions cannot exercise their full authority.³⁴ Evidence of such is the Sambisa Forest that served as a sanctuary for the Boko Haram terrorist group. The size of the forest can be compared to the geographical landscape of Lagos state in South Western Nigeria or the geographical size of Belgium. Moreover, it equally serves as a poorly managed border³⁵ between Nigeria, Chad Republic and Cameroon.

The forest gained its global recognition when the Boko Haram abducted the Chibok Schoolgirls, who were later taken to the forest. Sambisa forest provides a safe haven for the Boko Haram for their operational, logistical, technical and organizational base and destination for the insurgents’ prisoners of war. It is also considered as a training ground for recruitment of new members, radicalization, executions, a detention place for the abductees, it has bomb-making factories, illegal mining, arms trafficking as well as a prayer-ground for the terrorists. It has been a battleground for counter-insurgency between the Boko Haram and the Nigerian military. Despite the self-acclaimed successes by the federal government that the forest has been reclaimed from the Boko Haram, a larger part of the forest is still under the territorial command of the insurgents.³⁶ The space has:

... remained quite inaccessible to the Nigerian security operatives whose reluctance to storm the space has been identified as a product of their inefficiency, sub-standard weaponry, and conspiracy

The Boko Haram has continued to exploit the ungovernability of the forest to carry out their daily operational mobility. Moreover, some of the bandits’ operations are also linked to ungoverned spaces. For instance, the activities of bandits are carried out in unguarded forests, such as Kinyanbana, Fagore and Kamuku forests in northern Nigeria. It has been argued that one of the sources of financing terrorism is linked to cattle rustling which is often perpetrated by the bandits.³⁷

A similar explanation was also found in Iraq where poorly governed spaces triggered insecurity. In Iraq, the Hamrin mountain range, that spreads along

Salah al-Din, Diyala and Kirkuk provinces were captured by the Islamic State (IS) to promote its recalcitrant attacks. The lack of governance in this area allowed the IS to carry out their lethal operations at night, especially when all security forces had returned to their bases. Furthermore, the IS was able to finance its operation through robberies, kidnappings for ransom, extortions and carjackings.³⁸

The present-day Federation of Northern Syria Rojava, Mali and Somaliland have demonstrated how ungoverned spaces are able to pose as an enormous threat to international security.³⁹ Fundamentally, it should be noted that ungoverned spaces are not only situated in rural areas, they are also found in urban environments. There are numerous factors that encourage criminal or terrorist organizations to dwell in ungoverned spaces, these include the inability of the government to penetrate the area; absence of government authorities; lack of physical infrastructure; and inability of the government to exercise a monopoly of force.⁴⁰ Therefore, ungoverned spaces:

... brings with its train powerful overtones of threat, instability, and insecurity, as well as the sense that an ungoverned space is something the affected territory and international state system should avoid at virtually any cost.⁴¹ Many governments perceive ungoverned territories as a security threat because the borders of weak or failing states can produce spillover effects, with turmoil spreading like an ink-blot. As state capacities are challenged, withdrawn, or ejected, porosity created by these conditions tends to promulgate further turmoil and ungovernability.⁴²

From insurgency to organized crime: nigeria's complex security threats Boko Haram

The word Boko Haram is derived from the Hausa language, meaning that Western education is a sin or forbidden. It is a radical Islamic group, formally christened as "*Jama'atu Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda Awati wal Jihad*". Its formation is able to be traced back to Mohammed Yusuf in 2002 in Maiduguri, Borno State, in the North-East of Nigeria. Yusuf imparted extreme Islamic philosophies in the group that was incongruent to Western education in the region. Western education was branded as being against the Islamic religion doctrines. Initially, the Boko Haram saw Nigeria as a country that was managed by unbelievers and they ensured that the government institutions were served as a primary target, despite the country having been governed by a Muslim president.⁴³ The group propagated the idea of creating an Islamic state in which the mode of governance and legal principles would be entrenched in Sharia law, they intended to replace the modern system of governance that promoted corruption, social inequality and deprivation. The group considered all of these points as amoral and against the fundamental pillar of Islamic doctrines.

In July 2009, the group became violent in their engagement against the government of the country and participated in a deadly revolt against the

public institutions, places of worship, security outlets and the civilian population. This event led to the apprehension of its leader, Mohammed Yusuf, who was later killed by the police while in custody. The extra-judicial killing of Mohammed Yusuf and some of the key members triggered the anger of his followers, resulting in the killing of security agents and civilians. Following that, the Boko Haram became more violent and extremely destructive, killing a number of people and displacing a huge number of local populace in the North. The Boko Haram dynamically employed numerous strategies such as kidnappings, suicide bombings, roadside shootings, bomb explosions and assassination on their victims.⁴⁴

It is difficult to identify the bona fide members of the Boko Haram terrorist organization. However, it is believed that its members include unemployed youths, Chadian and Nigerien migrants residing in Yobe and Borno states, students from tertiary institutions, to mention a few. At the commencement of the Boko Haram uprising, the most targeted groups were predominantly security officials and the Christian population, between 2012 and 2014, more than 4,099 Christians were killed, the sect was responsible for the kidnapping of Chibok Government Girls Secondary School in which more than 70% were Christians.⁴⁵ It has been argued that the Boko Haram pledged allegiance with international terrorist groups. Evidence from the document retrieved from Osama bin Laden's residence revealed that \$3 million was reimbursed in order to nurture the agenda of Salafi groups. The document further claimed that Mohammed Yusuf, founder of the Boko Haram was one of the beneficiaries of such funds. It also claimed that Mohammed Yusuf had been interacting with the top-ranking leaders of the al-Qaeda terrorist organization, including, Musab al-Zarqawi, the former leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq and Osama bin Laden. More than 30 members of Boko Haram were reported to be trained in Afghanistan by al-Qaeda commanders as well as in Somalia.⁴⁶

In 2015, Abubakar Shekau pledged his allegiance to IS, rechristening his group as the Islamic State in West Africa (ISWA). Following this event, in August 2016, ISIS made an announcement concerning the change of the Boko Haram leadership; Abu Musab al-Barnawi was handpicked to replace Abubakar Shekau as a new frontrunner of ISWA. This development led to fragmentation within the group.⁴⁷ Under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau, the target population included Muslims, Christians and crowded places such as Mosques, Motor Parks, Churches and Markets in the North. However, ISWA under the leadership of Abu Musab al-Barnawi decided to avoid the Muslim population and directed its attacks on military formations.

In 2015, the factional leader of the Boko Haram, Abubakar Shekau, maintained a separate fraction of the Boko Haram that subscribed to his ideology.⁴⁸ Regarding the disintegration of the group, in a recent audio released by ISWA, it was established that some of the groups' leaders, including Abu Musab al-Barnawi,

and a number of top leaders were surreptitiously decamped from the Boko Haram following dissatisfaction with Shekau's leadership.⁴⁹ This was seen as a result of desperation for power, the unselective killing of the Muslim population, and brutality toward his followers.

Following the expulsion of Shekau, which was declared by the Islamic State (IS), the battle for leadership became intense especially between Abu Musab al-Barnawi's and Mamman Nur. The IS agreed to nominate al-Barnawi which was vigorously opposed by Nur, who considered himself more capable of being able to steer the organization's leadership. One of the factors accentuated by Nur was al-Barnawi's young age and his lack of knowledge and understanding about Islamic doctrine. Despite Nur's resistance, al-Barnawi was appointed as the supreme leader of ISWA. Following the forfeiture of Nur's leadership bid, anti-group behavior become one of the instruments used to distract al-Barnawi's leadership. This included personal negotiations with the Nigerian government without the permission of al-Barnawi's led ISWA group. Nur released the kidnapped Dapchi girls and conspired to sabotage the leadership of al-Barnawi's ISWA group by spreading rumors to destroy the group which was considered outrageous and antithetical by the IS. This event provided an opportunity to label Nur as "*Shaykh al-Murjifin*" and "*Shaykh al-Munafiqin*" meaning that "*the chief of hypocrites*" or "*the chief of rumor spreaders*". When the atrocities of Nur were revealed to ISWA, he was apprehended, and he later attempted to decamp and make himself available to the Nigerian government, but he was obstructed to do so. At this juncture, all these offenses were punishable under Sharia law, which amounted to death. However, he was not reprimanded, this could have been as a result of Nur's position as one of the founding fathers of the Boko Haram. Later, the ISWA with the direction of IS, reached a decision to execute Nur, due to his efforts to sabotage the ideology of the group. The decision to carry out Nur's execution was directed by al-Baghdadi. His killing was justified as it violated the basic tenets of Islamic doctrine being a rumor purveyor (*murjifin*). Fundamentally, the importance of ideology needs to be recognized here, as Nur acted in his own personal capacity to overturn the guiding principles of the ISWA. Moreover, ISWA was recognized as one of the integral parts of the IS, taking certain directions from the IS as was evident in the execution of Nur. Nevertheless, the execution of Nur remained a problem for the Nigerian government in negotiating with the Boko Haram to stop its deadly operation in northern Nigeria, as Nur agreed to negotiate with the state to end all activities relating to terrorism in northern Nigeria, this could have been justification for his execution by the ISWA.⁵⁰ Although:

There are likely several Boko Haram factions, but they come together in a confederation for major attacks, such as the kidnapping in Chibok, and also coordinate their public relations strategy.⁵¹

Yet, the activities of the Boko Haram were continually directed toward the civilian population in mostly rural communities and military stations. Although the

Nigerian government pronounced its decimation, in January 2020, the Boko Haram launched an attack on the national electricity grid which was able to throw the area of Maiduguri into total darkness.⁵² In a recent shocking video released by the Boko Haram, the threatening activities of the Islamic fundamentalist were also revealed, they claimed the responsibility for beheading Adamawa chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), who was kidnapped on January 2, 2020, during the Boko Haram attack on Michika County, an area in Adamawa state.⁵³ These recent activities of the insurgent group have demonstrated that the Boko Haram has not been defeated.

Leadership structure of Boko Haram

The Boko Haram institutes an amorphous and decentralized leadership arrangement. The group used a complex hierarchical formation for its organization. At the uppermost level of the organization was the supreme leader, who was responsible for setting organizational goals, and had the final say in the organization. Before the split of the organization, Abubakar Shekau was considered as the leader of the group. However, the recent change in the leadership structure automatically positioned the group into a twofold leadership formation led by Abubakar Shekau and al-Barnawi. Following the supreme leaders were hierarchical compartments and layers that support the leadership of the organization. The compartments constitute various sections such as “sympathetic Islamists in the northern Nigeria”, security forces and minor institutions.

The second fundamental division of power below the supreme leaders includes the decision-making unit constituting of 30 members, which is known as the Shura Council. The complexity of the Boko Haram structure makes it difficult to know the actual group size. Under the organization’s hierarchical form, each department dwells under the control of the Shura Council.⁵⁴ Each department operates based on the regimental responsibilities allocated to them. Some of the departments are obliged to provide support for the families of the late suicide bombers, taking care of their medical care. Others are compartmentalized to coordinate the organization’s mission, publicity and source for funds and managing its finances. Since the organization is well cataloged, the group has a reliable operational security under the coordination of the Shura Council. The various cells and departments maintain confidentiality and were independent within the leadership structure, while the meeting scheduling is unpredictable and occasionally considered. The mode of communication in the organization is through courier messages; this is to maintain secrecy and confidentiality within the organization.⁵⁵

Non-Boko Haram and emerging terror groups

There were other occurrences of a non-Boko Haram insurgency that pervaded the Middle-Belt/North-Central region, comprising of Benue, Plateau,

Kaduna, Nassarawa and Kogi states and recently in the North-West, the Zamfara State. There were incidences of killings, kidnappings, cattle-rustling, raping, abduction of women, destruction of farmlands and villages, by Fulani militias and bandits, currently spreading toward the South-Western Nigeria such as Ekiti, Osun, Oyo states. The incidences were considered to be non-Boko Haram as they had no connection with the members of the Boko Haram sect. Nevertheless, the emergence of such conflicts appeared to have occurred between the farmers and the Fulani herdsmen whose grazing activities often disrupt the farmland. The attacks on the civilian population and killing of innocent Nigerians by these groups was portrayed as conflict that was triggered by environmental degradation, migration, climate change and competition over economic resources.

The Middle-Belt/North-Central region was divided between indigenous communities that were densely populated by Christians and Hausa-Fulani Muslim migrants. However, public discourse on the conflicts was circumscribed as being the contestation for economic resources, the press did not mention the religious disposition of the area. It could also have been portrayed as attacks on these communities amounted to a declaration of war against the Christian population. This conflict could also be viewed as an attempt by Hausa-Fulani Muslim communities to expand their horizons and domination pushing their boundaries Southward. This perspective shifts away from the migration and climate change perspective to Islamic hegemonic tendency through Darul Islam which was sustained during the colonial period (1903–1960) and the post-military regime (1999–2014), which made the Christian population of Middle-Belt/North-Central areas more vulnerable to incessant killings.⁵⁶

The spread of conflict into Middle-Belt/Southern states is aggravating already fragile relations among the country's major regional, ethnic and religious groups. The South's majority Christian communities resent the influx of predominantly Muslim herders, portrayed in some narratives as an "Islamisation force" or terrorism.⁵⁷ The recent report has revealed that "Jihadist groups have recruited heavily from Fulani pastoralists", and this "has raised tensions with members of other ethnic groups who felt they are targeted by the jihadists"⁵⁸

Thus, the non-Boko Haram conflict can be partly argued as being transcended from the issue of pastoralist-farmers conflicts. It has also been claimed from the perspective of the Hausa-Fulani Muslims as an expansion to propagate Darul Islam to surmount the Middle-Belt/North-Central region.

The next sections examine the resurgence of Fulani militancy and banditry in the Middle-Belt/North-Central region. [Figure 3](#) shows the states mostly affected by non-Boko Haram insurgency – Fulani militancy and the banditry in the North.



Figure 3. Map showing the geography of non-Boko Haram attacks. Source: International Crisis Group (2017) *Herders against Farmers: Nigeria's Expanding Deadly Conflict*, International Crisis Group

Fulani herdsmen and the rise of pastoral militancy

Originally, the Fulani were a nomadic ethnic group, claimed to be the largest population in the Sahel, with a population of more than 20 million. The Fulani domicile is spread over seven countries in West Africa. They are known to travel far distances to find grazing land and water for their herds. In Nigeria, the Fulani are primarily domicile in the North, but the drought, climate change and persistent insecurity instigated by the Boko Haram in the North have driven them toward the Middle-Belt and Southern Nigeria which has in turn instigated confrontation problems with the indigenous Christian farming communities. The movement of Fulani herdsmen toward the South has been considered to be responsible for the conflict between the herders and farmers whose plantations are being destroyed by the herds while grazing on the farmland of their host. Over the years, conflicts between farmers and herdsmen have increased exponentially.⁵⁹

The Fulani militants have been known to possess deadly weapons such as AK47 assault rifles, machetes, knives and machine guns to attack villages and farming populations dominated by Christians.

The conflict in Libya and Mali has increased the proliferation of small and large arms into the country because Nigeria's porous borders are uncontrollable. Some people are exchanging stolen crude oil for arms and these are being easily shipped through our sea ports.⁶⁰

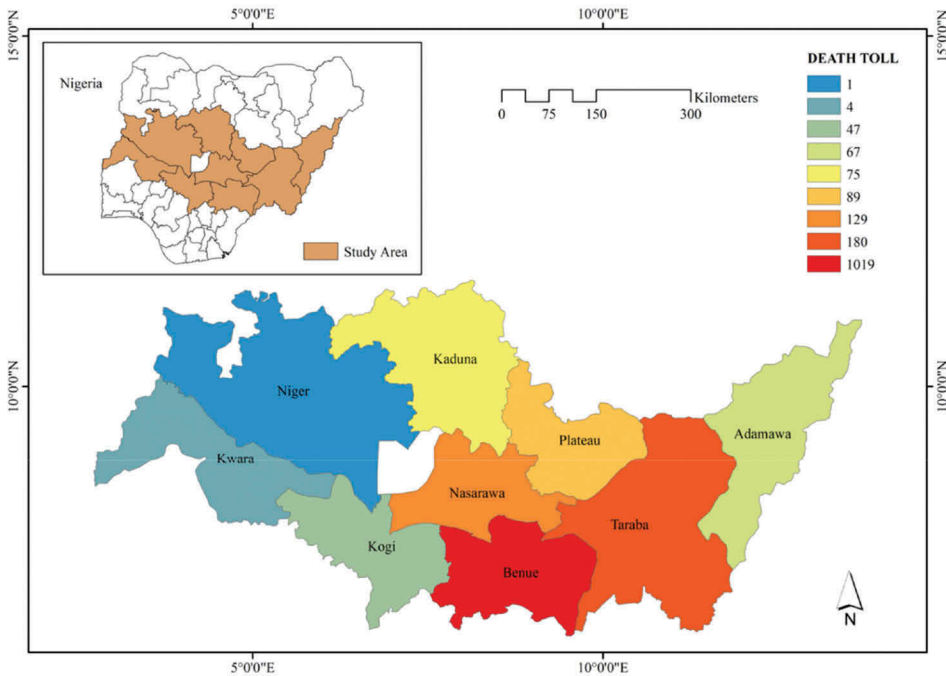


Figure 4. The geography of pastoralists' militancy (2013–2018) using GIS application. Source: By Author

Unlike the Boko Haram operation, Fulani militias have majorly carried out their deadly operations in the Middle-Belt/North-Central, including Benue, Taraba, Plateau, Nassarawa, Kaduna and Zamfara. The cruelest attack perpetrated by Fulani militias was the one carried out in April 2014 when they sporadically opened fire on villagers during a meeting in Galadima village in Zamfara, results in killing of more than 200 people. In a similar incident, the Fulani militias also ransacked the three farming communities of Tiv, Eggon, and Jukun and claimed more than 712 innocent lives of Nigerians.⁶¹ In 2014 alone, the Fulani herdsmen were responsible for the killing of more than 1,229 people, in July 2016, more than 500 were killed by the same group while more than 73 innocent Nigerian citizens were buried in Benue State as a result of Fulani herdsmen attacks.

The crises have often been attributed to Fulani herdsmen intentionally deviating from traditional grazing routes that were provided by the government into farmlands, which has resulted in the destruction of crops and agricultural produce. Attempts by the farmers to avert such occurrences has often resulted in deadly resistance and confrontation. Due to this, the international observers, such as the United States, have considered the Fulani herdsmen the most deadly group after the Boko Haram Islamist fundamentalist.⁶² On many occasions, the farmers have been conquered,

killed and dispossessed of their villages and farmlands. Recurrently, the herdsmen have also been alleged of employing such opportunities to rape the local women, steal belongings and raze the villages' ablaze.⁶³ Some of the attacks are carried out in the middle of the night, early in the morning or during the day.⁶⁴

However, considering the case of the Fulani-Farmers conflict from another perspective, it has been argued that the Fulanis made an enormous contribution to the economic growth in terms of providing dairy products,⁶⁵ and despite such a contribution, they are often marginalized in terms of economic redistribution, and the government welfare policies initiative such as hospitals, provision of grazing land, animal cares and schools for the nomadic population in the country. Moreover, in an attempt to resolve the marginalization of the Fulanis, the Grazing Reserve Law was enacted in 1965. In achieving this, grazing lands were allocated, and it was officially passed into the law in 1965. However, some of the lands allocated for grazing routes were annexed by the farmers, this was due to a lack of enforcement by the government. Additionally, the Fulani herders also suffered humiliation from local vigilante groups as well as monetary extortion by the local community leaders. The Fulani herders were requested to make a payment before they were allowed to graze within a particular area. The amount paid was usually misinterpreted by the herders, they interpreted the payment as meaning that they were able to graze within the crops, having no knowledge of disparity between grassland and farmland.⁶⁶

And because cows, being what they are, do not differentiate grass from crops, the farmers' cultivated crops become feed for them. Any attempt by the farmers to safeguard their farmlands is usually visited with overwhelming terror.⁶⁷

Moreover, some of the reported killings were reprisal attacks against the agrarian population who were responsible for killing herders. Unfortunately, the killings of herders are usually underreported, this was due to a lack of education to approach the media, and pastoralists are also domicile in the remotest part of the state where there is a lack of access which poses a challenge for journalists' investigation.⁶⁸

Rancor between the Fulani and the ethnic groups may also have a religious connotation as some of the villages and communities that were attacked had a predominantly Christian population while the Fulani are a Muslim nomadic group from Northern Nigeria. This provides another perspective in terms of a religious dimension to the conflict regarding economic resources which were initially claimed by the Nigerian state. Since the commencement of the conflict, more than 300,000 people have been displaced; displacement of a teeming farming population due to the Fulani militias has resulted in a shortage of food and an astronomical increase in the price of food. The resurgence of such conflicts has heightened the existing security conundrums

and it deters the security forces from counter-terrorism operations in the North-East.

Four main factors have worsened the conflict, namely:

- (1) The Boko Haram insurgency that drives Fulani herdsmen from the North toward the South
- (2) Implementation of an anti-open grazing bill that restricts herders to have free movement in the state like Benue
- (3) An untimely response of the government to address the issues
- (4) The inability of the incumbent regime to penalize the offenders

Additionally, the challenge of rural bandits who are responsible for cow rustling in the Northern region fueled the current affliction of Fulani militancy. The rural bandits operated in major forests such as Falgore forest in Kano, Dansadau forest in Zamfara, Davin Rugu forest widening through Katsina, Kaduna and Zamfara states and Kamuku forest in Kaduna. Cattle rustling has been claimed to be one of the primary sources for funding terrorism in the North-East.⁶⁹

In this context, it can be demonstrated that the conflicts between the farmers and Fulani herdsmen are situated within the existing complex security challenges that have threatened the North and the conundrum of climate change that is driving the herders from the far north toward the Middle-Belt zone. However, beyond such credence, it is acknowledged that there was sensitivity and cognizance of Christian dominated communities in the Middle-Belt/North-Central regions regarding the Islamization agenda that has clouded the political atmosphere and also exacerbates the conflict between the opposing groups. It is therefore necessary to pinpoint the prevailing challenges of ethnic distrust that has straggled the political trajectory which also drives the current security dilemmas confronting the giant of Africa. [Figure 5](#) shows the number of deaths in the most affected states.

Rural banditry and the emergence of new security challenge

Recently, rural bandits have emerged in the North-West region of Zamfara, Sokoto, Taraba and Middle-Belt/North-Central regions of Kaduna, Nassarawa and Katsina. Banditry is the latest security challenge in these regions. To ascertain the root cause of the banditry in the country, requires an understanding of its historical trajectory and social arena within which they operate. There is a strong link between governance failure and banditry. The origin and operation of such a group has a similarity to a recalcitrant group that surfaced immediately after independence before the Biafra civil war. Finding the origin of banditry in Nigeria, Stephen Ellis mentions a historical occurrence of such a problem, he argues that:

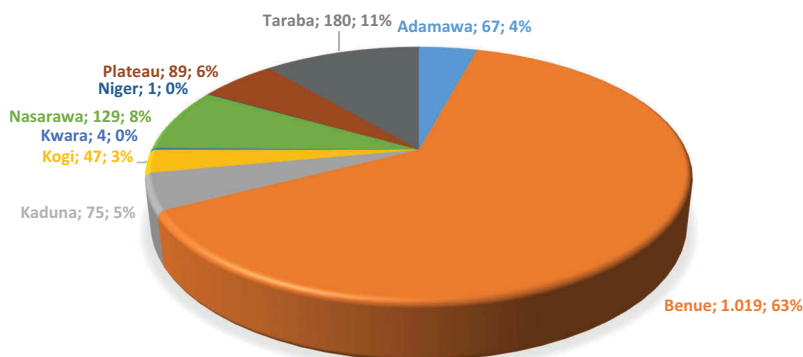


Figure 5. Number of deaths per state between 2013 and 2018. Source: By Author

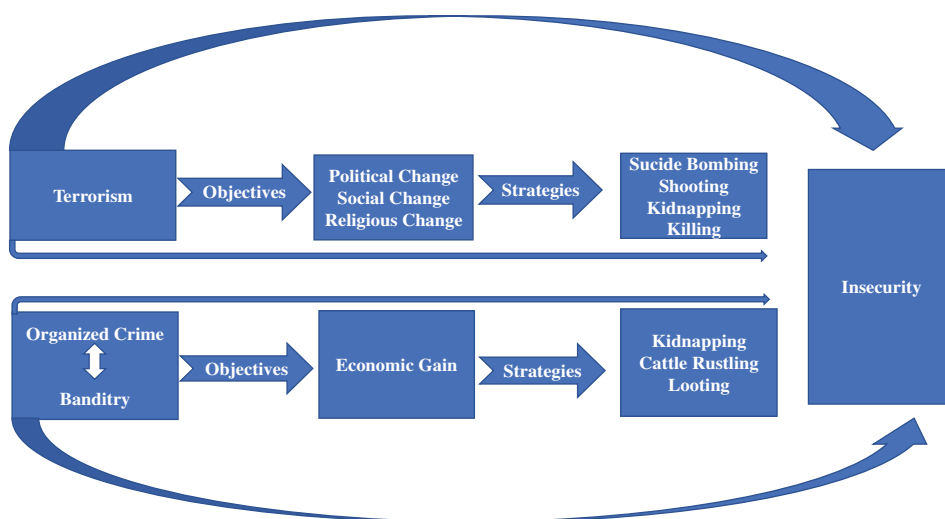


Figure 6. Differences between terrorism and banditry in the Nigerian context. Source: By Author

Shortly before the civil war, when government broke down in some parts of the Western Region and there was a blurred line between political violence, crime, and organized insurgency.⁷⁰

Rural bandits often operate in the middle of the night when the villagers are asleep, resulting in the ransacking of some of the villages in Plateau, Benue, Kaduna, Taraba and Zamfara. Erroneously, such attacks are usually tagged with Fulani militancy during public discourse. However, there is evidence of Fulani herdsmen, who have lost their herds to bad weather, diseases or to violence such as the Boko Haram invasion, have engaged in cattle rustling in the Northern Nigeria.

There are two types of cattle rustling:

Cattle rustling perpetrated by opposing ethnic groups. This form of cattle rustling often involved a large number of people from an ethnic cleavage, aimed at compensating the ethnic members whose animals have

been stolen, this is done in order to buildup their livestock. This form is commonly found in the Horn of Africa, predominantly in countries such as Kenya, Uganda and Somalia.

The second form is **cattle rustling by thieves or criminal networks**. This involves stealing cows by criminal gangs who then sells the cows after the operation. In such an environment, there needs to be cartels that are readily available to buy the cows.⁷¹ This is mostly prevalent in states such as Kaduna, Zamfara, Kastina, Niger, Plateau, Benue and Nassarawa. Cattle rustling is being perpetrated by rural-armed bandits, mostly domicile in forest or rural communities, partnered with vibrant negotiators in urban markets.

Thus, the recent incidence of banditry has been considered to have transformed from Fulani militancy to a newest practice of criminal activities that also accommodates robbery and kidnapping in the country.⁷² Bandits are evolving criminal syndicates, responsible for the carting away of herds and killing of herders. It has been associated with a model of primitive accumulation of looting, cattle rustling, raping and kidnapping. Rural banditry is a contemporary thievery, driven by economic needs of informal criminal networks or as a reprisal against the destruction of farmlands. Rural banditry is connected with the Fulani/farmers conflicts, which is a problem of inter-group relations and ethno-religious politics in the country.⁷³

Apart from highway robberies, the bandits are cattle rustlers. According to Miyiyeti Allah Cattle Breeders' Association, an umbrella association for all of the Fulanis herders in Nigeria, it is claimed that more than 7,000 cattle have been stolen between the year 2013 and 2014 in Kaduna state alone.⁷⁴

Distinction between terrorism and banditry cases

Several scholars have made attempts to distinguish terrorism from organized crime. It should be noted that banditry is a form of organized crime.⁷⁵ Criminologists have argued that the distinction between the act of terror and organized crime dwell within the objectives of the groups. According to Berdal, the terrorist act was formed with the aim of reforming or transforming society as it is evident in the case of the Boko Haram in Nigeria.⁷⁶ Terrorism is fundamentally driven by an ideological belief for regime change, while banditry is generally considered as an organized crime with a focus often economical in nature. It is argued that terrorist activities require funding from domestic or international domains.⁷⁷

Failed states are often vulnerable to banditry, as experienced in Afghanistan and African countries like Somalia, Liberia and Sierra Leone where local warlords collaborated to loot gold, diamonds, tropical timber and exotic species of animals which provides a valid argument for the economic justification of banditry activities.⁷⁸ Banditry is a type of organized crime which engages in kidnapping for ransom purposes, looting of villages for

economic gain like in various states in Nigeria. In banditry operations, the existence of a clandestine organization with the ultimate aim of gaining illegal profits through the use of threat is often the case.⁷⁹ The formation of secret network cells within the organization makes it difficult for law enforcement agencies to cognize the organizational amalgam.⁸⁰ Several acts of terrorism in Africa have been associated with ideological beliefs. For instance, the Boko Haram aimed at changing the system of government to an Islamic republic by declaring Western education as forbidden, al-Shabaab which is also a jihadi insurgent group that operated in Somalia, and are currently spreading their wings into Kenya. The group collaborated with the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) that invaded Mogadishu and inaugurated themselves as administrators in Somalia in 2006.⁸¹ Thus, it can be argued that the objective of a terrorist organization is centered on political change within the state they operate.

Terrorists often make their objectives known to the public, they also claim responsibility for any attack carried out by their members like in various destructive operations of the Boko Haram and ISIS. Bandits usually make their goals more secretive, and do not declare responsibility for their operations.⁸² This argument can be validated using various cases of kidnapping carried out by the bandits in Nigeria. On no occasion have bandits declared responsibility for kidnapping or cattle rustling in the country. However, there is a similarity between the two groups, terrorists and bandits, both groups often demand a ransom. On many occasions, the government has paid a ransom to terrorist organization to free the kidnapped citizens or government officials, while the primary target of bandits is also situated in collecting ransom from their victims.

According to Dutton, he argues that despite that many countries have denied paying ransoms to the terrorist organizations whenever their citizens are captured or kidnapped by the terrorist, it has been confirmed that European countries have paid more than 100 million dollars to al-Qaeda and its affiliates between 2008 and 2014.⁸³ A similar report was also made at United Nation Security Council (UNSC), in its analytical report, titled “22nd Report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team”, related to Resolution 2368 (2017) concerning “Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant – ISIL – (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities” which claimed that ransom was one of the sources of funding for the Boko Haram activities.⁸⁴

Therefore, it can be argued that the act of terrorism can be differentiated from banditry. First, the motivation behind terrorism is shaped by ideological inspiration while banditry focuses on economic drives. Second, the terrorist objective is confined within the context of socio-political change while bandit activities are apolitical. Moreover, the actions of both groups have detrimental implications for security, lives and properties within the political space they operate.

State response and the cacophony of multi-level policing

During the political era of the late President Umaru Yar'Adua, the Presidency summoned the national security agencies to curtail the Boko Haram fundamentalists. The Nigerian police and other security agencies were mobilized to combat the Boko Haram insurgency in Kano, Borno, Yobe and Bauchi states. In July 2009, the escalation of riots in Borno state necessitated a synergetic approach that provided an opportunity for the creation of a Joint Task Operation (JTF), comprising of the military, para-military and police, that was code-named Operation Flush. On July 28, 2009, the Joint Task Force operation led to the arrest of the Boko Haram leader, Mohammed Yusuf, who later died in police custody. The Nigerian police were alleged of the extra-judicial killing of the Boko Haram leader. This event reinforced the escalation of the Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria.⁸⁵ Following the death of President Umaru Yar'Adua, Goodluck Jonathan who took the mantle of leadership, responded to the Boko Haram with both carrot and stick approaches.

Notably, Nigerians were divided along the two lines, it created a diaphragm between those who supported dialogue and the advocates of the use of force.⁸⁶ The carrot mechanism was an attempt to engage with the Boko Haram in dialogue. During the political era of President Goodluck Jonathan in April 2013, the government inaugurated a 26 member amnesty Committee on Dialogue and Peaceful Resolution of Security Challenges in the North, this committee was headed by Kabiru Tanimu, the Minister for Special Duties. The membership also constituted human rights activists, religious leaders, and government officials. The committee was saddled with the responsibility of dialogue with the Boko Haram during a period of 3 months. One of the conditions was to convince the Boko Haram to lay down their arms in exchange for amnesty and social inclusion. Conversely to the intended aims, the Boko Haram leader, Shekau, rejected the amnesty offered by the government.⁸⁷ Following the rejection using the soft approach by the insurgents, the Nigerian military then adopted an alternative approach, which was the use of force to engage with the group. A Joint Multinational Task Force (JMTF) was also created to reinforce the national security efforts, JMTF constituted of countries such as Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria, it was empowered to combat the Boko Haram terrorism on a transnational scale.

After the expiration of President Goodluck Jonathan political administration, President Muhammadu Buhari adopted a local mechanism in tackling insecurity in northern Nigeria. The era witnessed the creation and inclusion of a Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in the fight against terrorism, the group was made up of vigilante youth groups who volunteered themselves to support military operations in the region. The civilian JTF was comprised

of indigenous people, who were male and female, employed and unemployed, skilled and unskilled.⁸⁸ It is believed that this group had local knowledge of the locations of the Boko Haram terrorist group.⁸⁹ The success recorded while integrating with the group led to its full enlistment in the Nigerian Army.

In responding to the pastoral militancy especially in the North-Central, the federal government came up with the establishment of “Ruga” which means settlement in Fulani’s lexicon, however, the name was also interpreted as being a grazing area for the pastoralists. The policy aimed at providing settlements for the Fulanis in all of the 36 states in Nigeria. It was argued that:

the Federal Government is planning this in order to curb open grazing of animals that continue to pose security threats to farmers and herders.⁸⁹

However, the policy witnessed criticism and rebuff especially from the people in the North-Central and Southern part of the country.⁹⁰ The Ruga policy was considered as a government agenda to strategically allocate peoples’ ancestral lands to the Fulanis. Moreover, in order to avoid the spillover effects of insecurity that were pervading in northern Nigeria, the South-West states, comprising of Lagos, Ogun, Osun, Ondo, Oyo and Ekiti states, dominated by the Yorubas, launched a new regional indigenous security platform codenamed “Operation Amotekun,” Christened as leopard, were institutionalized to combat Fulani militancy and banditry that was spreading southward. The formalization of the new security institution was launched on January 9, 2020, and its has prompted a loggerhead between the federal government and the 6 South-Western states. The Nigerian national government opposed the creation of such an outfit, declaring it as unconstitutional, while the governors and general citizenry in the six states have challenged such resistance. The argument for the creation of the regional security outfit was rightly put forward that:

The police are more likely to be effective in areas where they are well known and trusted by the local communities who in turn are willing to share information about known criminals and criminal activities, thereby foiling those crimes before they are even carried out. “It is a given perception that when people have a role in their own security, they are going to help to defeat the criminal in their tracks and that the more they are involved, the more likely they would perceive the police as their friends. In the envisage new order, states and local governments shouldn’t be reduced to peripheral players in policing and security matters. When local police structures are closest to the grassroots, emergency response will be more effective than the current unwieldy chain of command that renders local government chairmen ineffective when their people are under attacks⁹¹

Against the criticism of the federal government, the 6 state governors emphasized and pointed out that their constitutional responsibility under

section 14 (2) of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria that stipulates the primacy of welfare of its citizenry.⁹² It can therefore be argued that the current centralized security architecture in Nigeria also contributes to the persistent insecurity in the country. In this regard, the adoption of a community policing system wishes to provide an enabling environment for effective coordination and citizens' participation in security matters.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the Nigerian complex security challenges, which have emanated from the Boko Haram insurgency, Fulani militancy and rural armed banditry in Northern Nigeria. Until recently, ungoverned spaces that were not considered significantly important, transformed themselves into breeding grounds for violent extremists and criminal gangs' operative domain. Ungoverned spaces present a new dimension in understanding the Boko Haram insurgency and emerging armed militias in the northern region. Instability and security threats arising from ungoverned spaces remain unobserved by the state. Currently, radical Islamists mostly operate in the secluded part of the region.

To find sanctuary, terrorist organizations have fled to some of the least governed, most lawless places that combine rugged terrain, weak government, room to hide or receive supplies, and low population density with a town or city near enough to allow necessary interaction with the outside world.⁹³

Lack of governance in these areas has been discussed in this paper as a contributing factor for the rising security threat. The Islamic terrorists employed the existing predatory governance system to propagate their ideology and territorial expansion. The emergence of the Boko Haram, Fulani militancy and banditry are considered to be an offshoot of unsettled governance collapse that has failed to apprehend the long overdue socioeconomic gap between the elites and the vulnerable poor. This has provided a normative platform to recruit adult youths for extremist activities such as suicide bombing and other activities to achieve their aims.

As state capacities are challenged, withdrawn, or ejected, porosity created by these conditions tends to promulgate further turmoil and ungovernability.⁹⁴

Although government intervention through regional, bilateral and multi-lateral approaches looked promising to mitigate terrorism and other security challenges in the country, however, addressing the primary cause of instability by establishing a functional state institution in the remote environments, as well as reinforcing the institution by empowering the vulnerable local dwellers who are currently governed by informal institutions remains fundamental in safeguarding human security in the country. The existing

ungoverned spaces provide narrative for local vulnerability for breeding terrorist groups and criminal networks in Northern Nigeria.

Of particular concern are the porous borders which were constructed by colonial state demarcating territories between British and French colonial states established in 1889, constituting 4,745 sq.km. Nigeria shares borders with countries like Chad (87 km) in the North-East, Niger (1,497 km) in the North, Cameroon (1,690 km) in the East, and the Republic of Benin (773 km) in the West. The country also shares maritime borders with countries such as Sao Tome and Principe and Equatorial Guinea. These artificial borderlands created by colonial institution remain obscured. The border areas include rugged and mountainous terrain, marshlands and a large surface of lagoon which are all areas that are difficult to monitor by the custom and immigration officials. These “borderless-borders” are therefore used by the Boko Haram Jihadists and criminal syndicates to smuggle sophisticated arms, ammunition and illicit drugs.⁹⁵

It is estimated that out of the 1,978 overall entry points across the country, 84 are legally approved while 1,894 remain illegal entry points that exist across the borderlands.⁹⁶ At these illegal entry points linking some neighboring African nations, there are substantial numbers of footpaths that crisscross each other. For instance, in Damaturu/Maiduguri axis alone, more than 250 footpaths are directly linked to the Chad Republic, Cameroon and Niger that are also linked with Libya, Sudan and Mali. These illegal routes remain anonymous to the governments, they serve as itineraries to conveyance raw materials used in bomb making, illicit human trafficking, arms and ammunition into the country.⁹⁷

The challenge of porous borders has also triggered a proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) especially from the Sahel, evidence of this is the manifestation of armed Fulani herdsmen who carried AK47 under the disguise of protecting their herds from cattle rustlers. Thus, failure to monitor these poorly governed territories may eventually transform themselves into production sites for Weapon of Mass Destruction (WMD), create overwhelming security chaos, flaw policy choices and ultimately cause a state collapse.

So far, the government has employed military mechanisms to combat various security challenges that have pervaded the region, however, this contrivance has not absolutely quenched the ever-growing security debacles. Considering the military approach in combating terrorism in the North, it appears that the mechanism has not been able to mitigate the challenge of insecurity. The military warfare against the extremists has even aggravated the development challenges. Without resolving governance problems pervading the country, no amount of force or military intervention is capable of resolving the security dilemmas embroiling Nigeria. Therefore, this paper suggests that good governance that transcends individual interest or ethnic romanticism is a veritable weapon to triumph over the manifold security challenges within the Nigerian state.

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Appendix Timeline of Fulani Herdsmen Massacres in Nigeria 2013-2018

Date	Location of the Attack	State	Number of casualties
February 2013	Inoli, Ologba, olegeje, olegogboche, olegede, Adana, Inminy and Abugbe communities	Benue	Many
April 23 2013	Mbasenge community in Guma LGA	Benue	10
May 7, 2013	Agatu	Benue	47 mourners gunned down in Agatu while burying two policemen killed in Nassarawa
May 14, 2013	Ekwo-Okpanchenyi, Agatu LGA	Benue	40 people
July 5, 2013	Nzorov, Guma LGA	Benue	20 people
July 31 2013	2 villages in Agatu LGA	Benue	8 people
November 7, 2013	Ikpele & Okpopolo communities	Benue	7 people
Nov 9, 2013	Agatu LGA	Benue	36 locals killed
Nov 20, 2013	Guma LGA	Benue	22 people
Jan 20 2014	Agatu LGA	Benue	5 soldiers and 7 civilians
Jan 20, 2014	Adeke village	Benue	3 people
20-21 Feb 2014	Gwer West LGA	Benue	35 people
Feb 24, 2014	Tiv community along Naka road, Makurdi	Benue	8 people
March 6, 2014	Kwande, Katsina/Ala and Logo LGAs	Benue	30 killed
March 12, 2014	Ukpam village of Mbabaai in Guma LGA	Benue	28 killed
March 10, 2014	Former Governor Suswam's convoy attacked by herdsmen at Umenger	Benue	None

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(Continued).

Date	Location of the Attack	State	Number of casualties
March 12, 2014	Suswam's village in Logo LGA	Benue	22 people killed
March 23, 2014	Gbajimba, Guma LGA	Benue	25 killed
March 25, 2014	Agena village	Benue	7 killed
March 29, 2014	4 villages in Agatu LGA	Benue	19 people killed, 15 others abducted.
March 29, 2014	Suspected use of chemical weapons on Shengev community in Gwer West LGA leaving	Benue	15 people dead
March 30, 2014	Agatu LGA	Benue	19 locals killed and 15 abducted
April 10, 2014	4 villages in Ukemberaga/Tswarev ward of Logo LGA	Benue	6 killed
April 15, 2014	Obagaji, Headquarters of Agatu LGA	Benue	12 youths killed
September 10, 2014	five villages in Ogbadibo LGA	Benue	Many killed
January 27, 2015	Abugbe, Okoklo, Ogwule & Ocholoyan in Agatu LGA	Benue	17 persons killed
January 30, 2015	5 villages in Logo LGA	Benue	9 persons
March 15, 2015	Egba village in Agatu LGA	Benue	over 90 locals
April 27, 2015	3 villages in Mbadwem, Guma LGA	Benue	28 persons killed
May 11, 2015	Ikyoawen community in Turan Kwande LGA	Benue	5 person killed
May 24, 2015	villages & refugee camps at Ukura, Gafa, Per and Tse-Gusa, Logo LGA	Benue	100 killed
July 7, 2015	Imande Bebeshi in Kwande LGA	Benue	1 killed
November 5, 2015	Buruku LGA	Benue	12 persons killed
Feb 8, 2016	Tor-Anyiin and Tor-Ataan in Buruku LGA	Benue	10 killed
Feb 21–24, 2016	Agatu LGA	Benue	Over 500 killed
March 9, 2016	Ngorukgan, Tse Chia, Deghkia and Nhumbe in Logo LGA	Benue	8 residents
March 11, 2016	Attack on Convoy of Senator David Mark in Agatu LGA	Benue	None
March 13, 2016	Tarka LGA	Benue	6 people
February 29, 2016	Edugbeho Agatu LGA	Benue	11 killed
March 10, 2016	Obagaji Agatu	Benue	2 killed
March 5, 2016	Agatu	Benue	Security forces prevented killings
January 24, 2017	Ipiga village in Ohimini Local Government Area	Benue	15 persons killed
March 2, 2017	Mbahimin community, Gwer East Local Government Area	Benue	10 persons
March 11, 2017	Tiv community, Mkgovur village in Buruku local government area	Benue	7 people
May 8, 2017	Tse-Akaa village, Ugondo Mbamar District of Logo Local Government Area	Benue	3 killed

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(Continued).

Date	Location of the Attack	State	Number of casualties
May 13, 2017	Three communities of Logo Local Government Area	Benue	13 killed
December 31, 2017 and January 2, 2018	Gaambe-Tiev, Ayilamo and Turan all in Logo LGA as well as Umenger, Tse-Akor and Tomatar near Tse-Abi in Nongov District of Guma LGA	Benue	More than 73 people killed
January 1, 2018	Awe LGA	Nasarawa	2 Killed
January 1, 2018	Keana LGA	Nasarawa	25 Killed
January 3, 2018	Markurdi	Benue	3 killed
January 4, 2018	Wukari	Taraba	6 killed
January 4, 2018	Gassol LGA,	Taraba	1 killed
January 5, 2018	Lau LGA	Taraba	4 killed
January 5, 2018	Tse Akombo, Tse Vii and Tse Agule villages	Benue	15 killed
January 6, 2018	Lau LGA	Taraba	55 killed
January 8, 2018	Sardauna LGA	Taraba	3 killed
January 8, 2018	Logo LGA	Benue	2 killed
January 13, 2018	Birnin Gwari LGA	Kaduna	10 killed
January 13, 2018	Makurdi LGA	Benue	1 killed
January 14, 2018	Bassa LGA	Plateau	1 killed
January 14, 2018	Ibi LGA	Taraba	1 killed
January 16, 2018	Madagali LGA	Adamawa	5 killed
January 16, 2018	Guma, Logo and Okpokwu LGAs	Benue	5 killed
January 18, 2018	Madagali LGA	Adamawa	11 killed
January 21, 2018	Barkin Ladi LGA	Plateau	1 killed
January 21, 2018	Juman LGA	Adamawa	6 killed
January 23, 2018	Ardo Kola	Adamawa	9 killed
January 24, 2018	Kaiama	Kwara	4 killed
January 25, 2018	Bassa LGA	Plateau	15 killed
January 26, 2018	Bassa LGA,	Plateau	3 killed
January 26, 2018	Ukum	Benue	2 killed
January 29, 2018	Guma	Benue	1 killed
January 31, 2018	Jema'a LGA	Kaduna	1 killed
January 31, 2018	Birnin Gwari	Kaduna	9 killed
February 1, 2018	Gassol	Taraba	4 killed
February 2, 2018	Song	Adamawa	10 killed
February 5, 2018	Guma	Benue	2 killed
February 6, 2018	Obi	Nasarawa	8 killed
February 8, 2018	Shellen	Adamawa	6 killed
February 10, 2018	Bassa	Plateau	3 killed
February 11, 2018	Jema'a	Kaduna	4 killed
February 12, 2018	Guma	Benue	2 killed
February 26, 2018	Kajuru	Kaduna	12 killed
February 27, 2018	Demsa	Adamawa	20 killed
March 1, 2018	Saradauna	Taraba	15 killed

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Date	Location of the Attack	State	Number of casualties
March 4, 2018	Saradauna	Taraba	20 killed
March 5, 2018	Okpokwu	Benue	25 killed
March 7, 2018	Takum	Taraba	2 killed
March 8, 2018	Bassa	Plateau	11 killed
March 9, 2018	Bokkos	Plateau	11 killed
March 12, 2018	Bassa	Plateau	26 killed
March 13, 2018	Guma	Benue	1 killed
March 14, 2018	Daima/Omala	Kogi	32 killed
March 14, 2018	Bassa	Plateau	6 killed
March 15, 2018	Takum	Taraba	5 killed
March 19, 2018	Omala	Kogi	10 killed
March 20, 2018	Birnin Gwari	Kaduna	11 killed
March 22, 2018	Jos South	Plateau	3 killed
March 24, 2018	Makurdi	Benue	5 killed
March 30, 2018	Jema'a	Kaduna	6 killed
April 4, 2018	Chikun	Kaduna	6 killed
April 4, 2018	Takum	Taraba	4 killed
April 4, 2018	Gwer West	Benue	10 killed
April 5, 2018	Dobga	Taraba	5 killed
April 5, 2018	Gwer West	Benue	30 killed
April 7, 2018	Bali	Taraba	4 killed
April 7, 2018	Agatu	Benue	2 killed
April 8, 2018	Birkin Ladi	Plateau	5 killed
April 8, 2018	Obi	Nasarawa	5 killed
April 8, 2018	Keana	Nasarawa	4 killed
April 9, 2018	Guma	Benue	1 killed
April 10, 2018	— — — —	Benue	10 killed
April 10, 2018	Wukari	Taraba	51 killed
April 12, 2018	Makurdi	Benue	2 killed
April 12, 2018	Birnin Gwari	Kaduna	2 murdered
April 13, 2018	Bassa	Kogi	5 killed
April 14, 2018	Logo	Benue	4 killed
April 14, 2018	Obi	Nasarawa	78 killed
April 17, 2018	Logo	Benue	1 killed
April 18, 2018	Bassa	Plateau	4 killed
April 19, 2018	Kutigi	Niger	1 killed
April 19, 2018	Gwer West	Benue	1 killed
April 20, 2018	Guma	Benue	31 killed
April 24, 2018	Saint Ignatius Catholic Church in Mbalom	Benue	2 priests and 17 parishioners
April 25, 2018	Gwer East	Benue	19 killed
April 25, 2018	Guma	Benue	38 killed
April 25, 2018	Awe	Nasarawa	7 killed
April 28, 2018	Birnin Gwari	Kaduna	14 killed
April 29, 2018	Gwer West	Benue	5 killed

Source: Compiled by Author