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***Boko Haram* Terrorism in Nigeria: The Paradox and Challenges  
of Big Brother Foreign Policy**

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**Abstract**

*Nigeria currently faces security and developmental dilemma with the crucible of terrorism largely enveloped in the foreign policy perspective with neighbours. In collaboration with elements of the Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb, Boko Haram Islamic terrorist attacks have claimed over 3,000 lives including foreigners, prompting the Nigerian government to effect the deportation of 4,000 foreign nationals from Niger, Chad and Cameroun, the immediate neighbours on the north-east axis, who are giving soft-landing to the radical Islamic sect utilising terrorism as modus operandi in pursuit of its political and religious beliefs. The paradox of Nigeria's Big Brother foreign policy towards her neighbours, in the past five decades, has entrenched religious fanaticism, criminality especially arms smuggling and borderless irregular migration in the northern parts of the country, exposing the beleaguered country to the whims of terrorists and comatose economy.*

**Key Words:** Terrorism, *Boko Haram* sect, Foreign Policy, Arms, Borderlands, Security

### Introduction

The crude oil-rich Nigerian nation is threatened by the Islamic terrorist group, *Boko Haram*, a situation that has claimed over 3,000 lives, led to the declaration of state of emergency in five northern states, and the sack of the Defence Minister, Police Chief and National Security Adviser (Olalekan, 2012). The Nigerian government has identified the foot soldiers of terrorism that has engulfed the northern parts of the country as many foreign nationals from neighbouring politically-unstable countries of Chad, Niger Republic and Cameroun that accommodate radical and fundamentalist Islamic groups (Luka, 2011). Religious terrorism has assumed international outlook, taking on the command of the Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM), with the brutal torture and killing of a British, Italian and German hostages in 2012 following failed rescue operation by Nigerian and British security forces (Rogers, 2012). Since 2011, the crescendo of terrorism has heightened with the private home of Vice-President Namadi Sambo in Zaria, Kaduna State, firebombed and policemen killed, as well as Sokoto, the seat of the Sultan, the head of Nigerian muslim faithfuls, rocked with several bombs, destroying police buildings (Tony and Kolade, 2012). The erstwhile unpopular national phenomenon of suicide bombing have suddenly become dominant in the country, with several attacks on the elected political leaders and traditional rulers in the North – Eastern region of Nigeria; the nation's capital, Abuja; the commercial city of Kano in North-western axis and formerly serene Plateau State in North – Central region. The international community grieved as suicide bombing rocked the United Nations Office Complex in Abuja, with fatalities on August 26, 2011; the national headquarters of the Nigeria Police Force on June 16, 2011; and St. Theresa's Catholic Church, Madalla, Niger State, on Christmas Day killing innocent worshippers (Olalekan, 2012). These are aside from the spate of bombings of several other churches, public infrastructures and civilian gatherings in Kano, Kaduna, Okene, and other local government councils in the northern parts of the country.

Since 2009, *Boko Haram* has crept into the front- burner of security, political and religious concerns in Nigeria. According to the United States Department's Global Report on Terrorism (2011), Nigeria ranked 2nd with 593 deaths in 2011 from terrorist killings on the African continent, second to only the failed state of Somalia. On the global level, Nigeria was placed 5<sup>th</sup> in

the ranking of casualties. Africa recorded 978 attacks in 2011, an 11.5 per cent increase from 2010, largely because of the more aggressive attack tempo of the Nigerian – based terrorist group, *Boko Haram*, which conducted 136 attacks in 2011, and 31 attacks in 2010, on largely police stations and churches (Olukorede, 2012). Besides, over 510 Christians from the Christian Igbo ethnic stock in Nigeria were allegedly killed largely from suicide and gun attacks on churches since the violence focused on religious houses (Umeagbalasi, 2012).

Nigeria is not a stranger to Islamic radicalism, having experienced the activities of the extremist Maitatsine sect movement that became violent in the early 1980s during the regime of the first democratically-elected civilian government of Alhaji Shehu Shagari. The *Yan Tatsine* (followers of Maitatsine) was actually a quasi-muslim fringe group that preached Islamic doctrines that were contrary to the teachings of the orthodox Islamic and societal leadership. Muhammadu Marwa Maitatsine, the leader of the sect, was a muslim scholar from Marwa town in Northern Cameroun who migrated to Kano in Nigeria (Danjibo, 2010). The ideology of the Maitatsine sect was appealing to the poverty – stricken youths who sought an opportunity to confront the conservative traditional Islamic rulership and State governments. The directive by the federal government to the Police Force to crush the movement, which had large followership of the unemployed youths, led to clashes with the police in Kano which claimed 4,177 lives in a space of 10 days in May 1980 (Anthony, 2009). This huge loss of lives and property was the most severe since the Nigerian Civil War that spanned 1967 to 1970. This religious crisis, which later took a denominational dimension in Zaria with the muslims directing their attacks on Christians and their property, later spread to Maiduguri, Yola, Bauchi and Gombe, in the north-eastern parts of Nigeria. The leader of the sect was killed in the uprising (Emmanuel, 2009).

The *Boko Haram* Islamic extremism had been a localized sect in Borno State, in the north-eastern zone of Nigeria since 2001 when its leader, 32-year old Mohammed Yusuf, started propagating radical views that were antagonistic and derogatory of orthodox Islamic practices, formal education and modern public institutions. The two key words of the movement translate thus: “*Boko*” in Hausa language means western or foreign, while “*Haram*” is an Arabic derivative meaning forbidden, which surmises its key ideology and philosophy that western education is a sin (Wikipedia, 2012). Mohammed Yusuf, a secondary school drop-out who traveled to Chad and Niger

Republic to study Qur'an, returned in 2001 to first establish a sectarian group named Yusufiyya, which has attracted over 280,000 members spread across Nigeria, Chad and Niger Republic, with the ideology to establish an Islamic State in Nigeria and drastically limit the influence of Western education and modernization on the policies of government and activities of the people ruled by Sharia legal codes (Danjibo, 2010). The Borno state government had attempted to contain the radical activities of the sect, with no success as even a Commissioner in the State Executive Council resigned his appointment to join the sect in 2008, and the situation grew worse thus:

even students especially in tertiary institutions in Borno and Yobe States like the University of Maiduguri; Ramat Polytechnic, Maiduguri; Federal Polytechnic, Damaturu; and several others who constitute their members withdrew from schools, tore their certificates and joined the group for Qur'anic lessons and preaching" (Tell, 2009, 34).

The year 2009 was a watershed for *Boko Haram*, with violence erupting in July leading with destruction of the mosque headquarters of the sect leader by the Nigerian military. Yusuf was captured by the soldiers, handed over to the state police officers, but extra-judicially killed in police captivity. The consequent violent revolt by the *Boko Haram* sect members, now directed by the new leader, Abubakar Mohammed Shekau, led to over 3,500 people being internally displaced, 264 children orphaned, 392 women widowed, 28 policemen killed, several police stations razed, over 700 inmates, forcefully released, especially the sect members, from the Bauchi Prisons and 109 killed in bomb explosions near the Mogadishu Barracks in Abuja (Onuoha, 2011).

The magnitude of the violence unleashed on the Nigerian nation has been greeted by clumsy security response from the federal government, lack of political will to tackle the sources of arms and collaborators as well as confused policy on how to seriously address this insecurity cankerworm creating fear in the citizenry and stalling development. The initial mediation option in September 2011 that involved former President Olusegun Obasanjo with the family of the slain former leader of the *Boko Haram* collapsed like pack of cards, as the family leader was brutally murdered by assailants few hours after the departure of the former President (Luka, 2011). The United States of America also responded in June 2012 by designating three key leaders of the *Boko Haram* Islamist cell – Abubakar Shekau, Abubakar Adam Kamar and Khalid al-Barnawi – as international terrorists and offered

Nigerian technical and intelligence assistance (Dele, 2012). Curiously, the Nigerian Government has appealed to the United States of America not to designate the radical Islamist sect, *Boko Haram*, as Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO) or International Terrorist Organisation (ITO) on the argument that it could scare away foreign investors from Nigeria, innocent Nigerians would suffer strict visa restrictions and embarrassing treatment at international airports across the European Union, with the cumulative negative effects on the Nigerian economy (Yusuf, 2012).

### **Conceptual Framework**

The concept of terrorism has elicited different emotions and reasoning from different people, as one man's terrorist could be another man's freedom fighter (O'Sullivan, 2001). Wardlaw (1982, 3) views terrorism as the use, or threat, of violence by an individual or a group, whether acting in opposition to established authority, when such action is designed to create extreme anxiety or fear including effects in a target group larger than immediate victims with the purpose of coercing that group into acceding to the political or religious demands of the perpetrators. The critical elements here are violent activities intended to create an atmosphere of fear in order to further an interest. The United Nations General Assembly Resolution 51/210 (1999) referred to terrorist activities as criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons, or particular persons for political purposes are in any circumstances unjustifiable, whatever the considerations of a political, philosophical, racial, ethnic, or religious or other nature that may be invoked to justify them.

The search for value-free understanding of terrorism has made the UN viewpoint to face opposition from Islamic nations under the aegis of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), which in 2002, adopted an agreement in which the Islamic nations adopted the position that the concept of terrorism should indicate a dichotomy between violent activities to create fear, and legitimate struggle against foreign occupation, especially taking into consideration the armed struggle of the Palestinian people in the exercise of their inalienable right to establish their independent home state (Associated Press, 2002).

The United States of America Department of State (Title 22 of the United States Code, Section 2656f(d)) describes terrorism as premeditated, political motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatants targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, and usually intended to influence an audience.

This closely aligns with the views of (Nacos, 2006) that terrorism is political violence or the threat of violence by groups or individuals who deliberately target civilians or noncombatants in order to influence the behaviour and actions of targeted publics and governments. According to (Okeke, 2005), terrorism should be seen from the essence that it is could be a coercive or premeditated act or threat of violence or the use of violence with the aim of instilling fear in the target such as to alter its behaviour in the way desired by the perpetrators. (Stohl 1990, 83) puts forward a three-step process in explaining terrorism which involve the “act or threat of violence, the emotional reaction to such an act or threat, the social (and economic) effects resultant from the acts and reaction,” and terrorists more interested in the audience reaction than the victims of the violence, in the calculated attempts to achieve their objectives.

Certain basic attributes of terrorism include the fact that it is driven by motives or objectives, which in the long-run are political despite the fact that the perpetrators may be guided by religious beliefs, even though the lines between politics and religion may be thin at the initial stages; the targets are largely civilians or non-combattants or members of certain religious or ethnic groups; actors are predominantly non-state actors but sometimes supported by state actors with interests to protect; and methodology is critically the use of violence such as shootings, suicide bombings, kidnappings and hostage taking in order to spread fear (Okeke, 2005; Nacos, 2006). It is important to add that the terrorist activities usually occur largely in an environment of relative peace and less in conflict situations, while the principal objective is to influence the political leadership to respond to the demands of the perpetrators under the cloud of fear in the psyche of the public (Onuoha, 2011).

Every politically independent nation is an actor in the global scene, and deploys certain variables of power and influence in order to achieve interests beneficial to its citizenry, development and prestige of the country. (Ofoegbu 1985) notes that international actors, especially states, are motivated by values, desires and considerations which are articulated, defined and ranked to project their goals and objectives of foreign policy. These course of actions by state actors are usually ranked into core interests that non-negotiable like national security, internationally-accepted boundaries, sovereignty of the nation and survival of the state. However, there are other high-priced or medium priced negotiable interests such as economic issues, social and

cultural relations and sports that are treated with less fierce deployment of power in order to accommodate the interests of other actors.

Every foreign policy attracts costs and sometimes dividends. While the costs of foreign policy refers to the human, material and financial sacrifice made in implementing the strategies and actions adopted in pursuing the foreign policy, including the administrative costs of sustaining the machinery for the practice of such policy thrusts, the dividends of foreign policy encapsulates the definable achievements or positive values earned by the state actors from the pursuit of a policy in the international system (Adeniji, 2005).

For the Nigerian nation, the threat of the terrorist activities of *Boko Haram* has brought to the front-burner issues of core interests of national security in her foreign policy with her immediate neighbours. The Nigerian government is now in a dilemma over the costs and dividends of the prevailing foreign policy thrust of Big Brother or, in effect, good neighbourliness (Ate, 2011) in her foreign relations with her immediate neighbours for several decades now. The Big Brother foreign policy had its foundation in the initial thrust of having Africa as the focal point of Nigeria's foreign policy, and was driven by the perception of Nigeria being the Big Brother to several African nations less endowed with economic resources and manpower development, and those threatened by environmental and political instability. This paper intends to critically put in perspective the harsh realities of the costs and dividends of Nigeria's Big Brother foreign policy with her immediate neighbours in relation to *Boko Haram* sect, assisted by Islamic armed extremist foot soldiers, from the Maghreb through neighbouring countries of Chad, Niger Republic and Cameroun.

### **Nigeria's borderlands akin to US – Mexico scenario**

Nigeria's land borders with Niger and Cameroun are expansive covering a distance of 1,497 kilometres and 1,690 kilometres respectively, while that of Chad cover 87 kilometres. The four countries also share boundaries in the Lake Chad Basin. Nigeria is Anglophone in her political heritage and practices, while the other immediate neighbours are Francophone. (UNDP, 2011) reports that Cameroun, which gained political independence in January 1960, has a human development index of 0.459 and ranks 156 out of the 187 countries surveyed, while Chad, which also became independent in August 1960, and has an amalgam of about 200 ethnic groups, posted a human development index of 0.328 and ranks 183 out of the 187 countries in the world. Niger Republic, a multi-ethnic country that gained independence in

August 1960, is regarded as second poorest country in the world with a human development index of 0.295 and ranks 186 out of 187 countries surveyed.

The three critical immediate neighbours of Nigeria have a predominantly itinerant Fulani Islamic population that share common borders with Nigeria's eight states in the northern region, namely Sokoto, Katsina, Jigawa, Yobe, Borno, Adamawa, Taraba and Gombe. The cross - border activities are defined in certain push and pull variables. According to (Alli, 2011), the push factors consisting of the domestic conditions in Chad, Niger and Cameroun include the severe socio-economic dislocation that stalls sustainable development, perennial drought, famine, political instability, social and ethnic conflicts and near collapse of state control of resources and institutions, as well as the survival pressures on immediate and extended family members. The pull factors to Nigeria are critically socio-economic prospects, food security, religious and cultural affinity with Nigerians and political freedom.

The Nigerian relationship with her critical immediate neighbours on the North-East region could be likened to the United States – Mexican border situation in various ramifications that had to do with socio-economics and security challenges. The United States – Mexico borderlands, which have gained notoriety for its security challenges to the United States, present certain similarity to the Nigeria – Chad, Niger and Cameroun borderlands in terms of perception, function and security challenges. This situation is driven by the combination of factors which include asymmetry in the size and resilience of the economies, the huge differences in resource endowments and differing levels of socio-economic and infrastructural developments; observable incongruity in economic and monetary policies and systems; differences in the quality of the population and exposure to Western education; as well as differing official language structure and colonial heritage.

It is also imperative to identify further variables like the differences in legal tradition and practices, as indicated in the Anglo-Saxon Common Law system in English-speaking countries and Latino/Civil Law practices in French and Spanish speaking countries on the borderlands; the high influence of the official culture of anglophony versus francophony on the political elite which has encouraged the contrasting grundnorm of the countries, with Nigeria adopting federalism and the other countries preferring centralism. A



key element has been the sustenance of political stability in the United States compared with Mexico, just like in Nigeria, in relative sense, compared with the perennial political cum ethnic conflicts in Chad, Niger and Cameroun. It has been argued that in the United States – Mexico borderlands, and to some reasonable extent the Nigeria – Niger and Chad borderlands, the asymmetry in the economies, environmental challenges, and tradition of divergent political policies have created and sustained illegal cross-border activities, crime as a dominant part of the border economy and irregular migration by citizenry (Asiwaju, 2011).

### **Nigeria's Dynamics of Terrorism and Foreign Policy Drawbacks**

Nigeria's three critical immediate neighbours, especially Niger and Chad, boast of over 300 dedicated Qur'anic schools with radical slant of the Islamic Salafist ideology that encourages the philosophy of the *Al-Qaeda* in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), which has given roots to the Boko Haram sect in Nigeria (Salifu, 2012). Nigeria's immediate neighbours radical Islamic population, buoyed by the fluid migration of armed guerrilla fighters that escaped from Libya southwards in the heat of the crisis in Libya have been identified as fertile ground for increased terrorist activities in Nigeria. Literally speaking, Nigeria is sprawling with illegal small and light weapons in large quantity, and the Nigerian government and security forces are alarmed. (The Royal Military College of Science 1993, 83) defines small arms as "man portable and shoulder controlled weapon of up to 12.7 millimeter (0.5inches) caliber; such weapons generally have a flat trajectory and an effective operational range of zero to 800 metres although this varies considerably, certain weapon type could provide neutralizing fire up to 1800 metres," while (Lodgard and Fung, 2003) highlights that the key elements were that the weapons were man-portable or transported by light vehicles, and these weapons were easy to maintain, could function without much logistical backup and required light training for use. The Nigerian Army, which has been drawn largely into national security assignments since the upsurge in terrorist attacks by Boko Haram sect adherents, issued a report on the status of small and light weapons in Nigeria thus:

Out of approximately 500 million illicit weapons in circulation worldwide in 2004, it was estimated that about 100 million are in sub-Saharan Africa, with eight to 10 million concentrated in the West African sub-region. Regrettably, more than half of these Small Arms and Light

Weapons are in the hands of non-state actors and criminal groups. Nigeria is both producer and consumer of SALW in the West African sub-region. Although it is difficult to determine the exact quantity of illegal SALW circulating within or penetrating into Nigeria, it is estimated that over 70 per cent of eight to 10 million illegal weapons in West Africa are in Nigeria. This is manifested in level of human casualties and material damage recorded in the aftermath of their use in the country.” (Friday, 2012, 5)

The insecurity situation has worsened in 2012 with the Nigerian government admitting that its security forces intercepted over 200 rocket launchers and rocket propelled grenades from terrorist gangs at the Nigeria borders with Chad and Niger Republic before June 2012. The new weapons which are explosive projectile arms deployed to attack targets from long ranges are expected to replace the Improvised Explosive Devices currently being used by the Islamic *Boko Haram* insurgents in Nigeria, and it is believed by Nigeria’s security agencies that Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, with the collaboration of terrorists in Iran, Yemen and Syria, that were supplying the weapons to the terrorists in Nigeria (Toyosi, 2012).

The influx of small arms and light weapons from the Maghreb into northern Nigeria is complemented by the ease with which religious extremists from same region of the African continent enter the country from Niger, Chad and Cameroun, thus swelling the population of religious fundamentalism in Nigeria. The Nigeria Immigration Service has openly admitted that Nigeria operated, for many years, a near borderless official foreign policy with her immediate and critical neighbours, especially in the North-East region of the country, until the advent of the religious violence that became serious in 2011. Apart from not implementing a policy of proper demarcation of Nigeria’s international borders with Niger, Chad and Cameroun in the past four decades, the structure of Nigeria’s borders creates huge challenge for the Nigerian security forces. In the wake of the rising crescendo of terrorist attacks by *Boko Haram* and influx of religious extremists into the country from Niger, Chad and Cameroun, the Nigeria Immigration Service officially stated thus:

The problem is basically the fact that the structure of our borders makes effective policing absolutely difficult. We are talking about over 4000 kilometres land borders and

over 800 kilometres borders with the ocean. In some places, these border areas are mountainous; in some places, they are in the jungle. In some places, you have settlements along the borders. There are countless illegal routes into the country. Nobody can tell the number of such unapproved routes. The border posts are not sufficient. But you cannot increase the border posts without increasing the personnel level. Our officers sacrifice a lot under very difficult conditions. The operational facilities in terms of border barrack, communication facilities and patrol vehicles are insufficient. The problem is with the illegal unofficial routes” (Allwell, 2012, 17).

The reality of this situation has been that the Nigerian lacks adequate trained manpower and technical capacity to properly monitor and police the numerous illegal entry points through which religious extremists and criminals cross into the country. In 1999, the Yobe State Government raised alarm that over 5,000 Chadians and Nigeriens invaded the border settlements and crossed into Nigerian towns (This Day, 1999). In the wake of the terrorist attacks on public institutions, churches and foreigners, the Nigerian government in 2012 deported 4,000 illegal immigrants from Chad and Niger (Peter, 2012).

Nigeria operates the foreign policy of collaborative border patrols with Chad, Niger and Cameroun encapsulated in the Lake Chad Basin Commission agreement amongst the four countries, and other Bilateral Boundary Commissions with each country. These bilateral agreements have rarely been effective because they are driven by incongruous national interests of the various countries and environmental challenges that plague some parties. Nigeria has always pursued the Big Brother foreign policy with the poorer countries in the sub-region, especially Niger, Chad, Cameroun, Benin Republic, Togo, and Guinea-Bissau. This foreign policy, driven by the natural resources endowments in Nigeria made the federal government to put in place weak immigration policies and accommodation of aliens. This also informed the lackadaisical attitude of the Nigerian authorities in properly demarcating the international boundaries for several decades.

Besides, this foreign policy is affected by the structure of boundaries of African countries created during colonial times which deeply exhibit artificiality, but foisted on the locals by the British, French and German

officials. The underlying challenge has been the failed attempt to partition monolithic socio-cultural and ethnic groups into new and distinct separate political entities called countries. Today, the Hausas, Fulanis and Kanuris are dominant in the northern parts of Nigeria and in neighbouring Chad, Niger and Cameroun. The four countries have had common historical ties, with ethnic and religious contiguity, that have made foreign relations more definitive and the borders porous. For instance, University of Sussex Global Migration Origin Database (2007) highlight the ethnic mix between Nigeria and her Northern neighbours, stating that 750,000 Tuaregs from Niger Republic reportedly migrated to Kano City in Nigeria between 1945 and 1955. Niger's second biggest city, Zinder, was part of the old Bornu Empire in Nigeria with the Beriberi tribe, a subset of the Kanuris that dominate the violence-prone Borno state in Nigeria. Besides, Maradi, another urban settlement in Niger, was previously part of Katsina town in Nigeria, and accepts the Nigerian currency because of the dominant Hausa and Fulani tribes there (Olawale and Hassan, 2011). This ethnic and religious affinity have made the borders not to be properly demarcated officially, as the people on the borderlands of the countries have lived together for centuries dating back to pre-colonial era, shared cultural values, inter-married, engaged in commercial activities in same market places, and worshipped in the same mosques over the years. Therefore, criminality under the guise of religious beliefs could be active in either sides of the borderlands and the adherents protected by the locals.

It is in the national interests of Niger and Chad to encourage their poor citizens migrate to countries where their welfare could be upgraded and food security guaranteed. Besides, the chain of political instability that have persistently gripped these poorer countries have radical religious undertones. The roots of armed incursion into Nigeria could be linked to the political insurgency that engulfed Chad and Niger in the past few years (Bobbo, 2011). In addition, these poor countries do not have the resources to effectively police their borders with Nigeria in view of its magnitude and structure. None of the countries have deployed surveillance equipment to monitor the borders, especially the activities of religious fundamentalists.

The Nigerian government has enlisted the support of the United States of America (USA) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for technical assistance, in terms of surveillance equipment, high-tech intelligence gathering and capacity building to improve on the patrolling of the borders. However, this cannot stop the influx of small arms

and light weapons as well as the fluidity of cross-border movements in that North-East region unless the local traditional and religious elite on the borderlands key into the Nigerian government's idea of national security and appreciate the hazards of the *Boko Haram* terrorist activities on the Nigerian people.

The Nigerian government's good neighbourliness foreign policy towards the immediate neighbours in the north-eastern parts of the country had seriously encouraged irregular migration of nationals from Niger, Chad and Cameroun seeking improved socio-economic welfare into Nigeria. This, in effect, has swelled the population of Muslim street children or *Almajiris*, who attend only Qur'anic schools and have grown into adolescents or young adults in Nigeria. The Islamic religious practice is that, faced with serious poverty and many adolescents to feed, the Muslim parents usually release their children and wards to Muslim clerics who in turn distribute them to different *Imams* or *sheikhs* who run Qur'anic elementary schools in squalid environments to fend for them and train. Although the parents are made to believe that their children should leave home to seek good Islamic knowledge under renowned Islamic teachers spread across towns in northern Nigeria, these children live under harsh housing conditions, with little or no food, and roam the streets begging and being vulnerable to criminal activities (West Africa Insight, 2010; Onuoha, 2011).

Nigeria has a population of 9.5million *Almajiris* as at 2010 with the northern parts of Nigeria hosting majority of them thus: North - West zone (4.9million); North - East zone (2.6million); North - Central zone (1.1million); South - West zone (8,700); South - South and South - East zones (22,327) (Yushau, 2010). The large army of youngsters, under the direct influence of extremist Islamic sects who provide them minimal comfort and inspire them on jihadist tendencies in pursuit of religious purity, portends serious danger to the Nigerian society. The youngsters, bereft of formal education and deprived of exposure to religious tolerance, quickly see adherents of other religious faiths as either enemies or inferior, and public institutions as obstacles to the furtherance of their religious expansion. *Boko Haram* Islamic sect is reported to have drawn a large population of its adherents from the *Almajiris*, who were largely populated by foreign muslim nationals in the northern parts of Nigeria.

It is imperative to highlight the fact that Nigeria's foreign policy perspective has worsened the unemployment situation in the country, throwing up

vulnerable youngsters who could be lured to express their puritan religious beliefs and frustrations with the public institutions using the instrument of terrorism. The cultural and religious integration of the immigrants with the local population in the northern parts of the country has swelled the population of the unemployed in the country. With the human development index of 0.459 that ranks her as 156 out of 187 countries (UNDP, 2011), Nigeria's unemployment situation is appalling, and a threat to national security. The Nigerian government released a report that indicated that 69 per cent of citizens live in relative poverty. The unemployment situation increased from 19.7 per cent in 2009 to 21.1 per cent in 2010, and 23.9 per cent in 2011. The unemployment growth rate between 2006 and 2011 was put at double digit average of 14.6 per cent (National Bureau of Statistics, 2011).

The poverty scenario in Nigeria has also revealed the preponderance towards the larger population in the northern parts of the country. The North-East region, the operational base of the *Boko Haram* Islamic sect, is adjudged the poorest in the country. The National Bureau of Statistics report (2007) on the percentage prevalence of poverty in Nigeria by geographical regions showed that the northern region had an average poverty level of 70.1 per cent, while the southern region had 34.9 per cent. The breakdown was as follows: North – East zone (72.2); North – West zone (71.2); North – Central zone (67.0); South – East zone (26.7); South – West zone (43.0) and South – South zone (35.1). The implication is that a sizeable number of young Nigerians are either jobless or underemployed in a country that showcases the economic contradiction in which the privileged few living in affluence, laden with corrupt tendencies and ineffective public infrastructures. In such conditions, religious extremism offers an attraction to ventilate their frustrations, and terrorism a medium of expression to fanatics in the illusionary tendency to create an ideal political environment to pursue issues of faith and welfare. Boko Haram extremist sect leaders, who initially limited their philosophy and demands to purely religious issues of creating an Islamic society in northern Nigeria where Sharia legal codes would replace the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, have become political actors with demands that the incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan should either resign his appointment as a Christian or be converted to Islam to continue in office (Olalekan, 2012).

## **Conclusion**

The national security threats posed by the Islamic extremist religious group, *Boko Haram*, which has strewn the northern parts of Nigeria with terrorist attacks on the innocent citizens including European foreign nationals, security agents and public institutions, must have caught the Federal Government of Nigeria off-guard. The Government which clashed with Islamic extremists in 1980 has refused to learn from the usual trend of Islamic extremism occasioning violence on citizens and institutions, in this manner: It is usually imported from the critical immediate northern neighbours of Nigeria with small arms and light weapons supplied from the political cum religious conflicts in those countries; exploiting the weak foreign policy perspective towards those countries as indicated in poor border controls and immigration activities; as well as taking advantage of the bureaucratic lethargy of civilian governments in national security issues. Nigeria's last experience of serious religious violence with the *Maitatsine* riots in the northern parts of the country during the regime of the first elected civilian administration in Nigeria in 1980 followed the same pattern with current *Boko Haram* terrorist attacks that started in 2009.

Nigeria needs to review its foreign policy perspective towards the three critical northern neighbours – Niger, Chad and Cameroun – in order to prioritize national security as key elements in relations with these countries. Nigeria must take seriously the issue of inflow of small arms and light weapons from outside the country by enlisting the active collaboration of these critical neighbouring countries in intelligence gathering and pro-active security actions. It is suggested that Nigeria offers certain economic incentives to these poorer countries and tie such economic aid to their visible evidence clamp down on criminals and religious warlords exporting arms and light weapons into Nigeria. It is not enough to sign bilateral agreements without the political will and economic incentives to implement them.

A foreign policy re-engineering that emphasizes national security would definitely affect the structure and operations of the present border control and management by the Nigerian government, to ensure that the land borders are effectively demarcated, policed and the corrupt tendencies of immigration officials curbed by anti-graft agencies. The government would need the assistance of the traditional and local elite support on the borderlands for intelligence gathering and vigilante operations. The wake-up call is for the

government to demonstrate the political will and honesty to develop effective community policing at the borderlands and check irregular immigration.

However, foreign policy content must take into consideration the internal variables that would drive the external relations with other state actors. Nigeria's official tendency towards national security and intelligence lethargy as well as socio-economic indicators that breed frustration are alarming. *Boko Haram* extremist Islamic ideology and activities in the North-eastern region started eight years before the violent conflagration, yet government looked the other way. The large population of the *Almajiris* in the country who are veritable tools in the hands of radical Islamic clerics portend greater danger to the religious peace and socio-economic development of the northern region of Nigeria. The states' and local governments must speedily provide them with welfare packages and strong lures of a bright future with free formal education, in order to reduce their vulnerability as pawns in the weird ideology of Islamic Puritanism and become tools in the hands of violence – friendly clerics with political ambitions.

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