

## Boko Haram and the Conspiracy Theory in Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

The continued resilience of Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism in Nigeria under the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari contrasts heavily with the belief among many Nigerians that his emergence would bring an end to the Boko Haram hostilities in the country. This belief had been anchored on the conspiracy theory that the Boko Haram sect was being sponsored by some prominent northern politicians to undermine the government of President Goodluck Jonathan and make the country “ungovernable” for him. The paper interrogates this prevailing conspiracy theory and the continued Boko Haram attacks, which had remained a potent threat to many Nigerian communities especially in the northern parts of the country with particular reference to the north eastern states. The paper made use of secondary sources for the study obtaining data from both published and unpublished works on insurgency and terrorism at local and global levels. The paper found that the continued attacks by the Boko Haram terrorists against the Nigerian state and people even under President Muhammadu Buhari’s government had invalidated and jettisoned the prevalent conspiracy theory. Finally, the paper concluded with far-reaching recommendations on how to bring an end to the heinous activities of the Boko Haram sect on the Nigerian soil and allow people in the affected areas return to their homes to resume normal lives.

**Keywords:** Boko Haram, Conspiracy, Theory, Resilience, Insurgency, Terrorism

### INTRODUCTION

Terrorism is today one of the world’s biggest torments afflicting many countries. Nigeria has been trapped in the quagmire of Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism since 2009 (Goulding, 2017). Boko Haram is an extremist Islamic sect in Nigeria driven by the desire to create an Islamic state based on Sharia

law in the country. The group had remained relatively docile in the north eastern state of Borno and un-noticed by the larger Nigerian population as well as the international community until July, 2009 (Haruna, 2015). By this date, the group clashed with the Nigerian security forces and some of its prominent members including the leader, Muhammad Yusuf, were killed. This incident radicalized the sect following which it organized series of deadly attacks that expanded its theatre of operation from the north-eastern part of Nigeria to other parts of the country, especially in the north.

Boko Haram had serious grudges against northern elites created by the British colonial administration in the defunct Northern Region, whom the sect believed have had their heads turned from Allah by easy money and corrupting western values. They dreamed of a new society whose sole purpose was to be close to Allah and take over the main stream of the Nigerian society with the adoption of sharia, an Islamic legal system and culture, in preference to the secular nature of the Nigerian society based on western values (Haruna, 2015). The group had tapped into the disaffection and social injustice among the people and promoting the idea that an Islamic state would terminate inequality and corruption in governance in Nigeria. Boko Haram terrorism and general militancy in the country had therefore, stemmed from the failure of the state to live up to its responsibility. The incidence of this failure had manifested in the prevalent mass poverty and deprivation; unemployment; poor governance and the general state of insecurity across the country.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics' Report (2012) cited in Odo (2013); Soludo (2010) in Ahmed (2011); and El-Rufai (2013), the poverty spread in Nigeria is unevenly distributed. Reports on Nigeria's poverty profile showed that 70% of the people living in the north eastern Nigeria lived on less than \$1(USD) a day compared to 50% and 59% in the south - western and south eastern parts of the country respectively. The picture is not much better in other areas of human development index such as education, health, employment, and infrastructural development. Boko Haram had thus, exploited the country's conditions of extreme poverty and under-development especially, in the northern parts of the country for its campaign of violence against constituted authorities and innocent civilian population.

In the pursuit of such agenda, Idris (2011) noted, the group declared as follows:

“We will never accept any system of government apart from the one stipulated by Islam because that is the only

way that the Muslims can be liberated. We do not believe in any system of government, be it traditional or orthodox except the Islamic system and that is why we will keep on fighting against democracy, capitalism, socialism and whatever. We will not allow the Nigerian constitution to replace Islamic teachings. We will not respect the Nigerian government because it is illegal. We will continue to fight the military and the police because they are not protecting Islam. We do not believe in the Nigerian judicial system and we will fight any one who assists the government in perpetrating illegalities.”

The context of Boko Haram, therefore, borders on social injustice and the belief that the western values had corrupting influence on governance in Nigeria. This informed the desire of the group to implement sharia anchored on the establishment of an Islamic state within the sovereign state of Nigeria. Boko Haram insurgents have killed more than 15,000 people in Nigeria since 2009 and left more than 1.5 million homeless with millions of poor rural dwellers made refugees in their own country (Yusuf, *et al*, 2015). The government’s response to the threat posed by the Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism has been principally military-based operations. The over reliance on military force in dealing with the problem had in most cases become counter-productive and continued to fuel the spread of the insurgency and terrorism.

This is probably because the social and economic conditions of the people being exploited by the Boko Haram sect had largely been left untouched as all attention have been on subduing the group through military force. Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism had emerged at a time when there were many national issues in Nigeria that drew public anger and fed the group. These include the alarming corruption in government; mass poverty; high rate of unemployment; ethnic conflicts in plateau state and elsewhere; intolerable level of mass illiteracy in the north; the jettisoning of the People’s Democratic Party (PDP)’s zoning arrangement to the detriment of the northern politicians; serious infrastructural deficits particularly in the north as well as corruption of Islamic religious establishments; amongst others (Haruna, 2015).

Indeed, northern Nigeria has some of the worst human development index in the country. Mass illiteracy, youth unemployment, maternal mortality, extreme poverty, and dearth of social and economic infrastructures have

tremendously affected the quality of life in the region. It was thus, largely the widespread public anger in the north at these issues that provided the enabling environment for the emergence and continued resilience of Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism in the country rather than any conspiracy theory. The so-called conspiracy theory has not been able to offer acceptable explanation for the emergence, let alone the resilience of Boko Haram hostilities in Nigeria. The government of President Muhammadu Buhari should therefore, dutifully rise up to the challenge of Boko Haram by addressing the socio- economic and political inadequacies of the country especially, northern Nigeria that have provided the fertile ground for the growth and sustenance of religious extremism in the north and the country at large.

### **Boko Haram and the Conspiracy Theory**

Boko Haram terrorist attacks on the Nigerian state and people have not only persisted under President Muhammadu Buhari but escalated. This is in spite of the massive military build up to engage the insurgents in a conventional war that involved the deployment of regular combatant soldiers and heavy military hardware. Under the Buhari government, the soldiers battling the Boko Haram terrorists are better motivated and equipped. The continued resilience of the Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism is therefore, a paradox that calls for a serious re-thinking of some of the earlier perceptions about the group. In the first place, the unabated attacks of the sect on the Nigerian state and people under the Buhari regime negates some of the conspiracy theories that had for long helped to undermine the arousing of overwhelming public anger of the generality of Nigerians and concerted action against the sect. For instance, among the popular conspiracy theories prevalent in the country was that Boko Haram was being sponsored by some northern Nigerian politicians to make the country ungovernable for the immediate past President, Goodluck Jonathan, on grounds of his Christian faith as well as his minority ethnic origin (Ijaw) in the south - south geo-political zone of the country (Adibe,2015).

Under this conspiracy theory, many had believed that if Muhammadu Buhari won the 2015 presidential election in the country, his victory would automatically bring an end to the Boko Haram's violent and atrocious operations across the country. Part of the reason for such an assumption was that Buhari's presidency would have satisfied the aborted northern ambition to

produce the president of Nigeria in 2011 in order to complete late President Umaru Musa Yar'adua (a northerner)'s unfinished term. This ambition was aborted following the victory of former President Goodluck Jonathan in the 2011 general elections. The conspiracy theory holds that with the defeat of the northern candidate, Muhammadu Buhari, in the 2011 presidential election, some prominent northern politicians conspired to undermine the administration of former President Jonathan and to make the country "ungovernable" for him through their sponsorship of Boko Haram (Adibe, 2015).

Another aspect of the conspiracy theory, according to Adibe (2016), was that the "change" mantra of the All Progressives Congress (APC) under President Muhammadu Buhari would eliminate most of the local grievances into which the Boko Haram sect had tapped; hence the sect would have died a natural death under Buhari's administration. However, the Boko Haram attacks and atrocities against the Nigerian state and people had continued unabated under the leadership of Muhammadu Buhari. The logical inference here is that if the theory holds water, Muhammadu Buhari's victory at the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria and his subsequent sworn-in as President of the country on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May, 2015 would have reduced the heinous attacks of the Boko Haram sect to the barest minimum if not terminate them entirely. Unfortunately, the attacks of the group had continued with regularity thereby rejecting this version of the conspiracy theory of Boko Haram in Nigeria.

According to Mohammed Haruna cited in Odo (2013), it was believed that northern politicians and leaders of thought were sponsoring Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism in pursuance of an agenda aimed at promoting northern domination and the supremacy of the Islamic religion in the affairs of the Nigerian state. Implied in this version of the conspiracy theory is that Boko Haram was meant to undermine the government of the former President Goodluck Jonathan. However, the fallacy of this conspiracy theory lies in the fact that the emergence of Boko Haram insurgency on the Nigerian scene predated the Jonathan presidency by at least nine good years. During most of those years, the sect was more or less non-violent and became violent from 2009 after clashing with the Nigerian security forces.

The conspiracy theory is further rejected by the argument that Boko Haram creed was widely regarded as heretic by the mainstream religious and political leaders in the north (Haruna, 2015). Against this backdrop, Haruna

(2015) further argued that it was rather absurd for anyone to think that such group could be the choice for advancing the religious or political intent of the north. It is also argued that the attacks of Boko Haram on prominent northern traditional rulers like the Shehu of Borno; the Emir of Kano, Alhaji Ado Bayero, as well as some Muslim clerics clearly showed that even if anyone in the north had ever sponsored Boko Haram, the group had out-grown them (Haruna, 2013) in Odo (2015).

Another version of the conspiracy theory maintained that the poor handling of the military operations against Boko Haram under the former President Goodluck Jonathan was fraught with suspicion. It was argued that the authorities did not want to end the Boko Haram insurgency because ending it would make it difficult, if not impossible, to rig the 2015 general elections in the north in favor of the incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan (Adibe, 2016). This is because the north had been widely regarded as hostile to Jonathan's stay in office as President and therefore, unlikely to give him their votes en-mass. Another prevailing conspiracy theory trying to explain Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism in Nigeria is that the group was being sponsored by the former President Jonathan supposedly to de-populate northern Nigeria ahead of the 2015 general elections, when he was to stand for re-election for a second term in office (Adibe, 2016).

The import of this version of the conspiracy theory lies in the structural imbalance of the Nigerian federation in which the north accounts for some 79% of the total land mass and 53% of the population of the country, which according to Elaigwu, *et al.*, (2001) had given southern Nigeria cause to fear northern political domination. Similarly, the north equally fears the South's tyranny of skills (by reason of its head start in western education), which it (southern Nigeria) had exploited to dominate the economy and bureaucracy in the country. The north holds the political power while the south holds the economic power with each suspecting the other of trying to use its lever to neutralize the other's advantage. In a polarized and low trust society like Nigeria, political power has a special salience because it is often seen as the most veritable means of material accumulation, a potent tool for redressing perceived past injustice and the key instrument for dispensing punishment and reward as appropriate.

There is also an aspect of the conspiracy theory, which argued that the former President Goodluck Jonathan was sponsoring Boko Haram in order to

give the Islamic religion a bad name so that he could use religion as a mobilizing tool for his re-election for a second term in office, come 2015 (Adibe,2016). The significance of the religious aspect of the conspiracy theory can be seen in the sharp polarization of the country on religious divide lines as Christians and Muslims. However, it is clear that these conspiracy theories located in ethnicity; regionalism; and religion could not explain Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism in Nigeria. Boko Haram had continued to unleash mayhem on the Nigerian state and people, despite the exit of former President Goodluck Jonathan from power. This rejects any conspiracy theory that suggests that Jonathan was sponsoring the group or deliberately failed to prosecute the war against the sect decisively because it was a Muslim or northern Nigerian problem. Similarly, there would have been cessation of hostilities by Boko Haram following the victory of the northern presidential candidate and a Muslim in the 2015 general elections in Nigeria supposing the sect was being sponsored by northern Muslim politicians as alleged, to undermine the administration of Goodluck Jonathan by making the country un-governable through the instrumentality of Boko Haram.

The dangerous accusations and insinuations embedded in the conspiracy theory, which were anchored on ethnicity, religion and regionalism, are entirely baseless. There is nothing concrete on the ground so far, save the usual wolf cry of politicians, to suggest that any of the versions of the conspiracy theory has been proved positive. The conspiracy theory had over the years worked against any spirited and patriotic effort to arouse public anger in Nigeria against Boko Haram. As Adibe (2015) noted:

“The conspiracy theories were so strongly believed that it made many Nigerians indirectly complicit in the murderous activities of Boko Haram.”

This kind of mind-set informed the reaction of some northern elders and politicians who saw the declaration of a state of emergency against Boko Haram in May, 2013 as a declaration against northern Nigeria by the former President Goodluck Jonathan, a southerner and a Christian.

In a similar vein, when the Chibok girls were abducted, the initial reaction of the Jonathan administration was to cast aspersion on the abduction report. This was followed by an allegation of a grand design by some northern politicians to undermine the Jonathan government. The belief in the conspiracy

theory prevented the Jonathan government from quick action to locate and secure the girls. According to Obasanjo in Odo (2015), Jonathan delayed taking action for 48 hours. This allowed the Boko Haram terrorists ample time to strategize on what to do with the school girls. The conspiracy theories from the both sides of the divide or fault lines in Nigeria, have been invalidated and rejected by the continued heinous offensives of the Boko Haram sect even long after the emergence and exit of Muhammadu Buhari and Goodluck Jonathan as Presidents of the country respectively.

### **THE CHALLENGES OF BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY**

The resilience of Boko Haram attacks in the face of Nigeria's military onslaught resulting in massive loss of men and equipment by the group clearly suggests that there had been a gross underestimation of their numerical strength, level of motivation of its members, organizational efficacy and their fighting spirit. Furthermore, Boko Haram intelligent gathering skill is far superior to what is obtainable within the Nigerian army. As Lt. General T.Y. Danjuma (Rtd) cited in Adibe (2016) observed, Boko Haram's ability to gather intelligence was 100% better than that of the Nigerian military. Similarly, in 2014, Governor Kashim Shettima of Borno state claimed that Boko Haram fighters were better armed and more motivated than the Nigerian army fighting them. As Adibe (2016) noted, it is a gross misrepresentation to see Boko Haram as a rag-tag snipers and poor uneducated miscreants that are no more than few hundreds. The gross underestimation and misrepresentation of the sect have to a large extent accounted for the protraction of the war against the group. However, the truth is that complete defeat or elimination of terrorism anywhere in the world is utopia but reducing it to the barest minimum is a possibility and that should be the goal of the Nigerian government. Reducing Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism to the barest minimum demands a political solution rather than mere demonstration of military might. A purely military solution to Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism is unlikely to succeed.

While this observation does not necessarily down play the significance and indeed, the indispensability of military operations, it simply seeks to draw attention to the complexity of the Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism, which calls for a holistic approach to the challenge posed by the sect, rather than excessively focusing on conventional combat strategies. For instance, borrowing



a leaf from the American experience, it is observed that following the terrorist attack on the USA on September 1, 2001, President George W. Bush declared a war on terrorism, stressing that the war would not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated. However, many years after, America is still battling with global terrorism and intermittent sporadic terrorist attacks on the American soil. This is because it is wrong to construe terrorists as some enemies positioned on the other side of a conventional war. Terrorism is merely a tactic often employed by a weaker side in asymmetric war. Terrorists use terror to shock and intimidate opponents in order to compensate for their relative weakness in numbers and armory.

Boko Haram is a product of pervasive discontentment over poor leadership that was unresponsive to people's lack of basic needs of life. It is also a violent reaction to widening socio-economic gap in Nigeria, which had been created by mass unemployment; poverty and hunger including weak institutions of governance. The sect is therefore, symptomatic of a hopeless and alienated group fed with heavy doses of frustration, thus, delinking from the Nigerian state and regarding the state as enemy. This exerts on the Nigerian government the pressure for a more creative means of engaging alienated groups across the country. Boko Haram had succeeded in tapping into the popular disaffection of a large segment of the Nigerian society to secure their converts and foot soldiers. Past Nigerian leaders are to blame for the emergence of Boko Haram because they failed to manage the diversity in the Nigerian society. The leaders failed Nigerians because they were not able to prevent marginalization in the society; prevent injustice; reduce unemployment; reduce poverty and above all, failed to embrace the culture of democracy and good governance.

President Muhammadu Buhari, on assumption of office as the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, announced a three-month timeline within which to defeat Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism. Giving a timeline of three months to defeat Boko Haram shows a clear underestimation and misunderstanding of terrorism and terrorist networks. According to Ambassador William Polk cited in Uduka (2015), military force is only about 5% of the formula to defeating terrorism. Also, Odo (2013) argued that relying on military might alone cannot and will never defeat the Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism in Nigeria.

The ideology of Boko Haram is devilish and has no place in a civilized society. It is founded on the ideology of total rejection of the authority of the Nigerian state. The ideology of Boko Haram also teaches that politics, democracy and western education are exploitative and colonial imposition intended to degrade Muslim society, tradition and values; and aimed at converting Muslims to Christianity. It is therefore, permissive to them to kill everyone who rejects their own interpretation of the Quran and Islam. This is the fundamental belief of the group, which had expanded to create a nexus with the Syrian-based ISIS ideology (Uduka, 2015).

### **THE WAY FORWARD**

The battle against Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria as in other countries suffering from the menace of terrorism must necessarily shift from field combats to include checkmating the sources of funding for terror organizations. This means that the remedy for eradicating completely the scourge of Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria and terrorism elsewhere in the world lies in the total clampdown on the sponsors or those who grow and sustain terror organizations with funding. Money, weapon, food supply and other logistics are central to the operations of terror groups around the globe, Nigeria inclusive. They constitute the strength of terrorist groups. Thus, once these sources of strength are successfully blocked, terrorists would have become too weak to operate and the phenomenon would naturally fizzle out. However, the thought of quelling terrorism in Nigeria would remain a mere wishful thinking and mirage if the sponsors are not identified and compelled to face lawful punishments for their roles as accomplices in the heinous crimes against humanity through the instrumentality of insurgency and terrorism.

There must also be conscious and persistent work towards peace as a plausible means to defeat violence and war on a permanent basis. This is underscored by the fact that brute force often creates a deadly cycle of mistrust capable of harming the very population the government owes the duty to guarantee their security of life and property. There is no doubt that Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism must be dealt with militarily but that should not translate into complete dependence on a military solution. The government should therefore; address the root causes of Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism, which border on pervasive poverty and the general underdevelopment of social and economic infrastructures of northern Nigeria.

The terrorists had exploited these dehumanizing conditions of living among the people to recruit their foot soldiers as well as the public psyche, which has sustained their violent struggle.

The government must jettison the so-called conspiracy theory, which is baseless and has been invalidated by the concrete facts on the ground. The various versions of the conspiracy theory have failed to satisfactorily explain the resilience of Boko Haram's murderous attacks on the Nigerian government and people. In addition, government must down play political, religious and ethnic differences among Nigerians and work towards the unity of the country in order to arouse the collective public anger of the people against the Boko Haram sect.

Nigerians have suffered a great deal from Boko Haram terror attacks; and in view of their sheer expectation and confidence in President Muhammadu Buhari's administration to end the attacks and wanton destruction of lives and property for good, the President cannot afford to allow the terror war to drag on for too long, let alone fail to win the war. Government must therefore, employ all available and accessible modern means of intelligence gathering against the group such as aerial and ground reconnaissance technology, phone hacking, internet and other technology based means of communication interception including espionage. Boko Haram has remained a national humiliation and Nigerians await President Buhari's leadership to meet the challenge.

The Boko Haram insurgency is rooted in poverty, youth unemployment, inequality and social exclusion. Religion is only being used as a convenient pretext for it. There is no quick fix or a silver bullet to end the conflict. It requires a painstaking mix of the use of force, intelligence gathering, diplomacy and dialogue (Oyesumi, 2014). It is also about winning hearts and minds of the people in the region of Boko Haram's theater of operations. Government at all levels should be seen to be resettling those displaced by the conflict and at the same time addressing the underlying causes with a view to finding a long term solution. The government must go beyond the military approach to address the root causes of the problem.

Boko Haram has certainly some economic undertones beneath the religious façade which many tend to opportunistically feast upon and over sensationalize. This underscores the need for the government of Nigeria to combine military assaults with socio-economic programmes in its efforts at

finding a lasting peace to the north-east region of the country, which has been the epicenter of Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism. Poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, population growth, etc have a very strong influence on the emergence and sustenance of domestic terrorism across the world, especially in the third world countries and with particular preference to Boko Haram in Nigeria. Hence, while military response could cure the symptoms of the problem in the short-run, the long term solution lies in socio- economic and political programmes that address issues of poverty, youth unemployment, education, injustice, as well as imbibing the culture of democracy and good governance.

The Buhari administration in Nigeria must restore the people's confidence in government; upholds the rule of law and re-establish security. The administration must bring back into governance the fast receding virtues of accountability, integrity and justice. The north must be returned to meaningful economic activity. The Buhari government must do everything possible to reactivate the textile industries in Kaduna and Kano, which had hitherto been the life wire of northern economy. The government must also take decisive steps to tackle the menace of desertification in the north. Except concerted efforts are made to reverse aridity in the north, its relentless encroachment will continue to eat up the region's arable land thereby rendering the huge northern population homeless and without veritable source of livelihood. Similarly, the government must also equip schools with qualified teachers and modern learning equipment to ensure qualitative education. The high level of illiteracy in the north had been exploited by the Boko Haram sect to secure converts. As Najakku (2015) rightly observed:

“As long as our youths remain illiterate, they shall remain available for Boko Haram recruitment and other evil plans.”

The Buhari administration must satisfy the yearnings of Nigerians for good governance. It must improve the lives of the people and curb impunity. The Buhari government must do something and quickly too on the evils of poverty, unemployment, and general inequality in the Nigerian society. Besides winning the Boko Haram battle militarily, there are millions of people displaced by the insurgency who are yearning for re-settlement and reconstruction of their homes and communities. This must be urgently tackled before it sows the seeds of another Boko Haram. The government should

therefore, make their resettlement a national priority to re-build their destroyed homes, schools, hospitals and means of livelihood. To this end, the paper suggests the setting up a Marshal plan for the reconstruction of the Boko Haram devastated north-east. As a prelude to the reconstruction, the government should set up a powerful presidential committee that must be all encompassing. The committee should be saddled with the responsibility of making proper assessment of all liberated communities, taking stock of the massive destructions of residential houses, primary health-care centers, palaces and other facilities that are necessary for community rehabilitation and mobilization for sustainable development.

Also, challenging is the re-building of peace and social cohesion as well as the economic base of the rural communities. The return and re-integration of the displaced people, the restoration of lives of the affected communities and peace building efforts to foster reconciliation and counter the appeals of Boko Haram sect while respecting the human rights of individuals and communities are very crucial and challenging tasks that must be tackled. Terrorism does not respect territorial boundaries. Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism has cross-border problem, hence its solution must be cross border oriented, which requires the co-operation of the neighboring countries of Chad, Niger and Cameroon. These countries must collaborate with Nigeria to present a common front and deal with the security challenges posed by the Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism. Above all, the Nigerian government must be committed to peace, security, respect for human rights, rule of law, social justice, democracy and good governance as the anti-dote to insurgence and terrorism rather than acting on a baseless and unfounded conspiracy theory.

## CONCLUSION

The paper has shown that the so-called conspiracy theory has not been supported by any concrete facts on the ground to explain to satisfaction the resilience of Boko Haram serial violent attacks on the Nigerian people and government. The theory should be rejected and jettisoned in its entirety as mere falsehood and mischievous propaganda to douse public anger and concerted efforts against the Boko Haram terrorist group. The position canvassed in the paper therefore, is that the Nigerian government should adopt a holistic approach towards the menace of Boko Haram terrorism through a sustained military action against the group while concurrently pursuing the political

strategy, which should include building a robust diplomatic relations with neighboring countries aimed at cutting-off the group's supply lines as well as refusing them safe havens. In addition, the country and northern Nigeria in particular must as a matter of urgency address the enormous social and economic challenges facing the region such as mass illiteracy, youth unemployment, extreme poverty, infrastructural deficits, and social injustice, among others. The northern region must be salvaged from the woes bedeviling it to pave way for the eventual elimination of the menace of Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism on the Nigerian soil.

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