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[The question of the rising threat of the Boko Haram group in Nigeria]

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**Topic:** The question of the rising threat of the Boko Haram group in Nigeria

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**Position:** Chair

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## Introduction

The Boko Haram conflict in Nigeria is an extensive and complicated issue that has acquired worldwide attention as a result of the severe impacts on the country and the consequences it has had on its citizens. The establishment of Boko Haram was the result of various social, political, economic, and religious factors. The conflict revolves around the group's pursuit of an Islamic state in Nigeria and its use of violence, including terrorist attacks, and mass killings. Likewise, the consequences of this conflict also include severe humanitarian crises, huge displacements, alteration of communities, and regional security disturbance. It is crucial to understand the roots, dynamics, and implications of the Boko Haram dispute in order to develop effective plans to tackle its underlying issues and foster peace and stability in Nigeria.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Boko Haram:

A militant Islamic extremist group based in Nigeria that seeks to establish an Islamic state in the country. The exact meaning of Boko Haram is "Western education is forbidden".

### Insurgency:

An organized uprising that uses violent and nonviolent means to overthrow an existing government or to seize control over part of its territory. The Boko Haram insurgency is a long-term conflict involving violent attacks on civilians, government officials, and military personnel.

### Terrorism:

The illegal use of violence and aggression to achieve political goals, usually against civilians and by a non-state actor.

### Radicalization:

The process by which an individual or group adopts extreme beliefs, values, and actions that are deviating from mainstream society.

### Jihad:

A religiously inspired effort or struggle towards a spiritual, personal, political, or military goal. Boko Haram has claimed to be engaging in jihad against the Nigerian government.

### Sharia:

Islamic law that is based on the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. Boko Haram seeks to impose Sharia law in Nigeria.

### Human Rights:

The basic rights and freedoms to which all humans are entitled, including the right to life, liberty, and security. The Boko Haram conflict has resulted in numerous human rights abuses, including killings, kidnappings, and forced displacement.

### Counter-terrorism:

The measures that are taken by a government or security agency to prevent and/or respond to acts of terrorism.

### Salafism:

A school of thought in Islam that believes that the most authentic version of Islam took place during the early generations of Muslims, who were closest both in time and proximity to the Prophet Muhammad.

## Background Information:

Boko Haram, officially known as Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad (JAS), was founded in 2002 by Muhammed Yusuf in Northern Nigeria. Yusuf was a scholar of Salafism who advocated for the restoration of authentic Islam, primarily pointing to Western expansion as the primary factor behind the present disconnection from the religion. At first, the group carried out small-scale attacks against the military, police, and religious leaders critical of their ideology. Later

on, the conflict escalated in 2009 due to a violent confrontation with law enforcement, which resulted in the death of Yusuf and a huge impact on the group. However, under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau, Boko Haram reorganized and was able to reemerge in 2010.

Throughout the early 2010s, Boko Haram expanded its territory and influence by utilizing terrorist and guerrilla warfare tactics. The group increasingly put its attention on civilians and applied sophisticated combat strategies and propaganda. Specifically, the years 2014 and 2015 were the deadliest, with thousands of deaths at the hands of Boko Haram. In 2014, it surpassed the Islamic State, a multinational militant Islamist terrorist group, as the deadliest terror group globally. The following year, Boko Haram promised loyalty to the Islamic State and became known as the Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP).

Starting in 2015, as a response to its previous terrorist acts, Boko Haram faced a stronger military response, and international and regional support increased. As a result, the group lost significant territory, fighters, and resources, mainly limited to northeastern Borno. Due to this, by the end of 2015, Nigeria's President declared a "technical" defeat of Boko Haram. However, the group remained adjustable and resilient, focusing its efforts on near countries such as Cameroon, Chad, and Niger.

While Boko Haram has been considerably weakened since its peak, it remains a persistent security threat, with the conflict extending beyond Nigeria's borders. The ongoing struggle to address the group's activities requires continued international and regional cooperation, effective military responses, and comprehensive strategies to counter radicalization and address underlying socio-economic injustices.

## **Major Countries and Organizations Involved.**

### **Nigeria:**

Boko Haram is a central issue for Nigeria, as it has been the epicenter of the violence and has suffered devastating consequences. The extremist group has carried out numerous attacks, leading to widespread instability and a significant threat to national security. Similarly, Nigeria has been heavily impacted by the conflict, causing extreme loss of human lives, displacement and refugees, humanitarian crises, social divisions, ethnic tensions, human rights abuses, and educational disruption. As a result of this, the Nigerian government has been actively combating

Boko Haram, deploying its armed forces and collaborating with regional partners to counter the insurgency. Nigeria seeks assistance from the international community to enhance its military capabilities, intelligence sharing, and capacity-building efforts to counter the threat posed by Boko Haram. Nonetheless, Nigeria has experienced many struggles throughout all these years of combat that they have yet to improve. Firstly, donors have struggled to work through and with the Nigerian government, whose conflict response has been troubled by weak coordination and corruption. Also, there has been a significant weakness in regional cooperation, presenting another significant limitation. Finally, coordination efforts remain largely driven by external factors, resulting in a slow pace of implementation.

### United States of America:

The United States has been actively involved in addressing the Boko Haram conflict in West Africa. Recognizing the threat the group poses, the U.S. has provided substantial support to affected countries, including Nigeria and Cameroon. This assistance includes military aid, intelligence sharing, capacity building, and training to enhance the counterterrorism capabilities of regional forces combating Boko Haram. Also, the United States has actively supported the establishment and operations of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), which is a regional military alliance including troops from Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Benin. Through its support, the United States has facilitated regional coordination and cooperation, enabling joint operations against Boko Haram. In other words, the United States has supported initiatives aimed at promoting regional cooperation, sharing best practices, and addressing the underlying causes of the conflict. Through diplomatic engagement, funding, and technical assistance, the U.S. has played a significant role in the international response to the Boko Haram insurgency, seeking to enhance regional stability and protect civilian populations. Specifically, the United States is the single largest donor for the humanitarian response in Nigeria, having provided nearly \$505 million in Fiscal Years 2020 and 2021.

### Cameroon:

Cameroon, located in Central Africa, is one of the most affected countries by the Boko Haram conflict. Boko Haram's activities have spread from Nigeria into Cameroon's Far North Region, leading to frequent attacks, kidnappings, and displacement of thousands. Boko Haram presents a

significant security threat in Cameroon, as it targets civilians, security forces, and infrastructures. Similarly, the Boko Haram violence in Cameroon has led to a major humanitarian crisis, forcing over 322,000 people from their homes since 2014. The Cameroonian government actively engages in counterterrorism operations, collaborating with regional and international partners. However, the Cameroonian military faced challenges with limited resources and an overstretched army due to other internal conflicts. This situation halts their ability to effectively protect civilians and provide adequate security. The presence of Boko Haram has also prevented humanitarian efforts, making it difficult to deliver aid without military escorts due to increased insecurity.

### African Union (AU):

The AU is an African regional Intergovernmental Organization (IGO). The IGO has taken an active role in the other states' attempts to combat the group. The IGO has strongly condemned Boko Haram and its actions, as well as backed up the MNJTF by donating military equipment.

## Timeline of Events

| Date | Description of event  |
|------|---|
| 2002 | <b>Boko Haram Emergence.</b><br><br>In 2002, Mohammad Yusuf formed Boko Haram as a Sunni Islamist sect to oppose Western education and establish an Islamic state in Nigeria.   |
| 2009 | <b>Violent Confrontation of July 26, 2009.</b><br><br>Boko Haram launched a series of attacks on police stations and government buildings in Bauchi, Maiduguri, and other cities. Nigerian security forces responded with a strike, resulting in the death of Boko Haram's founder, Mohammed Yusuf. In other words, Boko Haram was forced underground in 2009 after Nigerian police forces killed over seven hundred members. |

**2010**

### **Increased Attacks**

Their attacks were small-scale until the autumn of 2010 when fighters freed 700 inmates from a prison in Bauchi and attacked a mosque in Maiduguri, frequented by Muslims opposing the insurgent group's ideology of violence. On December 31, the Abuja Bombings took place, which consisted of the Boko Haram carrying out coordinated bombings on multiple targets in Abuja, including a military barracks, killing dozens of people.

**2011**

### **A growing insurgency against Western influence**

The group's terror campaign escalates. Attacks are intensified on government officials, religious leaders, police officers, and students. A series of bombs exploded in several towns across Nigeria. The boldest assaults target the UN regional headquarters in Abuja, a beer garden in the northeast city of Maiduguri, and several churches near the Niger border during Christmas services, killing dozens.

**2012**

### **Strategic attacks cross border with Cameroon**

Boko Haram makes its first entry towards the border with Cameroon. In response, the Cameroonian government strengthened the security of its border with Nigeria. Boko Haram suicide bombers attack newspaper offices in the religiously mixed northern city of Kaduna. In other parts of the country, they detonate explosives in numerous churches, a bakery, and police headquarters. Their tactics change from shootouts and raids to mass-casualty attacks and operations targeting infrastructure.

**2013**

### **State of Emergency**

Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan declared a state of emergency in the northeast, giving the military additional powers of arrest, in order to fight the insurgents. Similarly, through this period of one year, Nigeria was involved in an increased military presence, enhanced security measures, and the deployment of additional resources to combat Boko Haram's activities in the affected areas.



**2014**

**Chibok Schoolgirls Kidnapping and UN Sanctions.**

Still, Boko Haram carried out coordinated attacks in several parts of the country. The fighting spills into Cameroon. Repeated reports of bombings and gun raids come from various towns. The militants attacked a theological college in Buni Yadi, slitting students' throats and burning others alive. Moreover, in April, the group received global attention after militants abducted more than 250 school girls in the small town of Chibok. Consequently, the event sparked international attention and created the "Bring Back Our Girls" campaign. Also, later on in 2014, the UN imposed sanctions on Boko Haram. Specifically, the United Nations (UN) designated Boko Haram as an Al-Qaeda affiliate and approved sanctions against the group.

**2015**

**Declaration on the elimination of violence against women.**

In early January, Boko Haram committed what is known as their "deadliest massacre" to date in the northeastern town of Baga. They control all three international borders of the Borno state. Chad and the African Union responded by sending troops to Nigeria, and a major new offensive by the Nigerian army in early March reclaimed significant territory. Boko Haram pledges allegiance to ISIS but continues to lose territory it controlled in Nigeria's northeast.

**2016**

**Boko Haram Decline.**

Between 2015 and 2016, Boko Haram's power declined as the Nigerian military launched a more aggressive offensive and regional forces collaborated through the MNJTF. This led to restricted movements, disrupted supply lines, and weakened operational capabilities. International support and internal divisions within Boko Haram also contributed to their decline.

**2021**

**Continuous Attacks.**

On June 17, Boko Haram launched a major assault on the town of Marte, Borno State, forcing Nigerian troops to withdraw temporarily. Subsequently, on August 24, Boko Haram abducted several aid workers, including staff from the UN and other humanitarian organizations, in Borno State.

**2023**

**Ongoing Efforts and Regional Cooperation**

Efforts to combat Boko Haram and address the root causes of the conflict continue, with increased regional cooperation, intelligence sharing, and coordinated military operations. The focus remains on protecting civilians, promoting human rights, and fostering stability and development in the affected areas.

## Relevant UN Treaties and Resolutions

### ***Resolution 2349 (Peace and Security in Africa – Lake Chad Basin):***

UN Security Council Resolution 2349, composed on March 31, 2017, declares the threats posed by Boko Haram and other terrorist groups in the Lake Chad Basin region. The resolution accentuates the need for an all-round approach to counter the threat, by several means such as incorporating military, humanitarian, and development efforts. Also, it calls for increased regional cooperation, intelligence sharing, and coordination among affected countries in order to truly put an end to the group. Additionally, Resolution 2349 highlights the need to protect civilian populations in their territories. It encourages countries in the region to prioritize human rights, and emphasizes the importance of addressing the underlying factors contributing to the conflict, regarding poverty, lack of access to education, etc.

### ***Resolution 2178 (threats to international peace and security caused by foreign terrorist fighters):***

Adopted on September 24, 2014, UN Security Council Resolution 2178 displays a deep concern over the threat presented by foreign terrorist fighters, including those associated with Boko Haram. The resolution urges member states to prevent the recruitment, organization, and travel of individuals to join terrorist organizations. Furthermore, it calls upon countries to raise border security measures and share information in order to prevent the movement of foreign terrorist fighters.

### ***Resolution 2250 (youth, peace, and security):***

UN Security Council Resolution 2250, passed on December 9, 2015, acknowledges the critical role of young people in preventing and settling conflicts, including countering violent extremism. In other words, the resolution emphasizes that the underlying factors that contribute to radicalization should be addressed by creating opportunities for youth engagement, education, employment, and civic involvement.

### ***UN Security Council Resolution 2532 (2020):***

Written on July 1, 2020, UN Security Council Resolution 2532 acknowledges the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on current conflicts, including the Boko Haram conflict. The resolution requests for a higher international cooperation, including a global ceasefire, to ease the delivery of humanitarian aid and to focus efforts on battling the pandemic. It expresses the importance of respecting international humanitarian law and ensuring the protection of civilians in conflict-affected areas.

### **Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue:**

In previous years, there have been various attempts to find a solution to bring this conflict to an end. The Nigerian government initiated an amnesty program in 2013 to encourage Boko Haram members to surrender their weapons in exchange for rehabilitation and reintegration. While some militants took advantage of the program, the majority of Boko Haram members rejected it. The program faced criticism for its limited reach and inability to address the root causes of the conflict. Also, in 2016, Operation Safe Corridor aimed to facilitate the rehabilitation and reintegration of regretful Boko Haram members. The program provided training, counseling, and religious education to former fighters. However, some people are worried about how people are chosen and whether they might start doing violent things again after being released. A third example is the integration of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF); a community-based self-defense group formed in Nigeria to support the military's efforts against Boko Haram. Comprising local volunteers, the CJTF has played a significant role in providing intelligence, assisting with security operations, and protecting communities. While the CJTF has been helpful in some instances, there have been concerns about human rights abuses and the group's integration into formal security structures.

## Possible Solutions:

- **Regional Cooperation and Intelligence Sharing:**

One possible solution to address the Boko Haram conflict is to prioritize regional cooperation and intelligence sharing among the countries affected by the insurgency. Establishing and enhancing mechanisms for cooperation, such as the (MNJTF), which includes Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon, and Benin, can be useful in coordinating efforts and sharing resources. By furthering information sharing and joint operational planning, countries can enhance their capacity to counter Boko Haram's activities effectively. Furthermore, collaborating with regional and international organizations such as the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, and the UN can provide assistance, expertise, and resources to further respond to terrorist attacks.

- **Military and Security Measures:**

Another critical solution is to focus on strengthening the military and security structure and organization in affected countries. Keeping this in mind, this would involve increasing the capacity, training, and equipping of security forces to effectively combat Boko Haram and protect civilians. By investing in the development and professionalization of security forces, countries can enhance their ability to conduct attack operations and gather intelligence. Additionally, coordinated military operations, joint patrols, and border control measures among affected countries can disrupt Boko Haram's activities, interfere with their movement across borders, and prevent the illegal flow of weapons and fighters.

- **Socio-economic Development and Reintegration:**

Thirdly, addressing the root causes of the Boko Haram conflict requires a varied approach that includes socio-economic development. In other words, by investing in education, job creation, and infrastructure projects in affected regions we can help improve poverty, unemployment, and marginalization, which extremist groups often exploit. Providing support and resources for the

rehabilitation and reintegration of former Boko Haram fighters and individuals influenced by the conflict is crucial for sustainable peace building.

- **Humanitarian Assistance and Protection:**

Finally, the Boko Haram conflict has resulted in a severe humanitarian crisis, with millions of people displaced and in need of assistance. Providing humanitarian aid, including food, shelter, healthcare, and protection, is critical to addressing the immediate needs of affected populations. This includes ensuring the safe return and reintegration of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees, as well as the protection of vulnerable groups, such as women and children. Similarly, collaborating with humanitarian organizations, both local and international, to deliver aid effectively and efficiently is essential in aiding human suffering and facilitating the path toward peace and stability.

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