



Executive summary

One of the critical challenges of the post-colonial state in Africa is its inability to shed its colonial character and to evolve along lines which are consistent with local realities. This situation is compounded by the artificiality of the post-colonial state with the fluidity of the inherited colonial boundaries. The policy brief seeks to examine the reasons behind the recent Boko Haram armed insurgency in Northern Cameroon and strategies the government could utilise to

stop the massive recruitment of youths into its ranks. The bestiality in which Boko Haram has carried out most of its acts especially against ordinary people and government institutions in northern Cameroon has begged for a more thorough approach in the manner in which the insurrection can be stopped. With more than 40 Cameroon soldiers dead since April 2014, the fight against Boko Haram is perhaps Cameroon's deadliest since independence in 1960.

The policy brief concludes with some policy recommendations for the Cameroon government on strategies to address the phenomenon.

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Introduction

Boko Haram, which literally translated in Hausa language as 'western education is forbidden' became a major political (armed) force in north eastern Nigeria in the late 1990s with the advent of democracy. Defined initially as the Lamido's 'strong men' Boko Haram has transformed into a powerful well-armed fighting machine today. According to Aghedo & Osumah (2012:857), armed violence with a distinct Islamic favour is not uncommon in the northern part of Nigeria.

post-1960 political elites fail to manage and integrate the powerful emirs in northern Nigeria into mainstream political system of the newly independent states. This failure stemmed from the fact that the post-colonial political elites do not want to destabilise the powerful Islamic system which the emirs have put in place. In essence, post-independence northern Nigeria and Cameroon had two distinct state systems; the mainstream secular state and the caliphates controlled by the emirs.

The fundamental questions to ask are: why is it that young

groups such as the Boko Haram have found fertile grounds to recruit its adherents? Agbiboa & Maiangwa (2014:70a) contend that one of the reasons why Boko Haram has found the northern part of Cameroon a fertile ground is as a result of the gullibility of the local elites and the absence of consultation and local voices within the developmental discourse in northern Cameroon. However, Maiangwa & Agbiboa (2014: 51b) note that though the Boko Haram group have made it clear that they are Salafist and Jihadist, their brutal destruction of Muslim properties and the killings of Muslims has put the groups intentions into question. Conversely, Conway (2014:49) opines that the presence of Boko Haram in northern Cameroon is part of a specific transnational expansion strategy or simply the militant group's exploitation of porous borders. According to Nkwi (2014:20) the porosity of the international borders which Boko Haram abuses necessitate a fundamental methodological approach in which the activities of the militant group can be checked.

Manifestations of Boko Haram activities in northern Cameroon.

Cameroon became a major player in the fight against Boko Haram as a result of its



Usman Dan Fodio, the father of Islam in West Africa conquered the northern part of Nigeria at the beginning of the 1800s. His activities were only checked by colonialism which prevented the spread of Islam in other parts of Nigeria. The

people in northern Cameroon are joining the Boko Haram group in their large numbers? Is it as a result of the absent of their voices in the direction in which the country is taking? Or it as a result of failed economic policies that militia

cultural, historical and geographical proximity to Nigeria, northern Nigeria to be precise. Initially, Cameroon had not consider the group a threat to its national security based on the assumption that it has only use the Cameroon government as a financial tool, as Cameroon usually pays ransom for kidnapped expatriates working in the northern part of Cameroon. It is assumed that Cameroon paid more than \$10 million for the release of the Moulin-Fournier family that was kidnapped in northern Cameroon in December 2012 and released some four months after. Soon after the release of the French family, 10 Chinese construction workers were kidnapped in Maroua Cameroon. The government is also accused to have paid millions in ransom. More recently, the compound of the Deputy Prime Minister, Amadou Ali was attacked and his wife and many other members of his family were kidnapped. Though more than 15 people were killed in the attack, Cameroon is understood to have paid a heavy ransom for the release of the wife of the Deputy Prime Minister. Despite this high profile kidnapping, the border towns of Amchide, Fotokol, Mankambara, Banki, Djokana, Dingding, Dombam and Damang have been emptied of its population as Boko Haram tries to establish a foothold in Cameroon. It is

estimated that more than Cameroon 600 civilians and 40 soldiers have been killed so far. Boko Haram militants killed are difficult to determine as it is assumed they usually retreat with their wounded and death combatants.

Conceptualising asymmetric armed conflict in the Central African sub-region

In order to better understand the current conflict situation in northern Cameroon, the proposal challenges the dominant realist perception of the state as having the monopoly of violence. Non-state actors in the security arena have proved over the years as being capable of fundamentally undermining the foundation of the state's machinery. Uzodike & Maiangwa (2012:96) maintain that the failure of the post-colonial African states to maintain peace and security can be attributed to the neo-patrimonial and patronage-based client network compounded by the fact that the post-colonial state was never properly institutionalised because it was never emancipated from society. As a result the proposal will be based on the state failure theory as propagated by Rotberg (2002). He traces the root of state failure to three fundamental causes; economic dislocation, political instability and loss of legitimacy. He further holds that in a failing state structure,

the economic is characterised by deteriorated standards of living, a lack of public goods and services, corruption, rent seeking and a pervasive economic stagnation (Rotberg, 2002:86).

It should equally be noted that armed violence with a distinct Islamic favour is not uncommon in the northern part of Nigeria and Cameroon. Usman Dan Fodio, the father of Islam in West Africa conquered the northern part of Nigeria at the beginning of the 1800s through conquer and violence. This early colonial political system failed to transformed and in post-independence northern Cameroon and Nigeria two distinct state systems co-existed; the mainstream state and the caliphates controlled by the emirs. However, the conceptual framework of the brief will be based on the neo-patrimonial model represented by the emir's dangorou.

The emirs' dangorou, otherwise known as the army of the emirs, have been used by some political elites to intimidate and win political battles. With the advent of democracy in 1999, the dangorou became a common feature in the political battles in northern Nigeria. The dangorou where used to fight political battles and in many cases dangerous were the king makers in Northern Nigeria

and to a lesser extent Northern Cameroon. Over the years and since 2009, the leaders of dangorou began to play important roles in the activities of Boko Haram and in most cases transforming the dangorous into battalions of Boko Haram. Boko Haram could therefore be conceptualise as a conduit between political exigencies and the complexity of the role Islam has played and will continue to play in northern Nigeria and Cameroon. The socio-political system in Northern Cameroon has remained the same since the pre-colonial times and, in our view, it is this lack of structural transformation that has led to the current security situation in Northern Cameroon.

A critical review of current African continental frameworks to combat terrorism and armed conflicts does not regard the structural nature of African social realities as a problem. Many such frameworks look at addressing the symptoms instead of putting in place measures to prevent repetition. Of critical importance in Africa and in the northern part of Cameroon in particular, the structural transformation of African societies is yet to happen. Culture and religion are still the dominant denominator in determining the direction in which the society should follow. These important vectors in

Cameroon society are yet still very much clued up to the teachings of Boko Haram. Thus, whatever Boko Haram demands the Lamidos are willing to freely surrenders.

The success of the Boko Haram recruitment strategy can equally be blamed on the absence of the state in all spheres of life of the people in this part of Cameroon. The level of education in this part of Cameroon is the lowest and the absence of basic necessities such as hospitals and pipe borne water have left the young people in the region with no option but to join Boko Haram which has promised to give them a minimum level of comfort. The fact that Boko Haram also offer monthly salaries of 250,000XAF is a major boost for group and this has attracted a lot of young people to join the group. Most senior civil in Cameroon do not earn that amount of money, thus joining Boko Haram has been a draw card for unemployed youths in the region.

On the whole, religion and the lack of democratic reforms in Cameroon are some of the major weapons the Boko Haram group is using to recruit it followers in northern Cameroon. Boko Haram leaders have indicated that their fight against the government of Cameroon and that of Nigeria is a religious one as the people that

incarnate these countries are referred to as infidels and according to the Koran they need to be killed. This form of preaching has galvanise the youths in this part of Cameroon who thought by joining Boko Haram, they are actually fighting a jihad which is a duty of every Muslim. On the absence of democratic reforms in Cameroon, Boko Haram has frequently referred to the treatment in which northerners are subjected too in Yaounde. The massive killings of Muslims during the attempted coup d'état in 1984 by a group of northern officers is usually mention and that by joining Boko Haram, northerners will be able to avenge those killed in 1984.

Policy Recommendations

In a nutshell, these have been some of the strategies which Boko Haram has used to recruit young people to fight the government and people of Cameroon in the recent past. Since Paul Biya declared last May in Paris that Cameroon has declared a war against Boko Haram, more than 40 Cameroonian soldiers have been killed in combat with the group. This is by far the largest number of Cameroonian troops killed in post-independence Cameroon. What should the government of Cameroon do in order to systematically outplay Boko Haram in the field in terms of recruitment strategies? The following are some policy

recommendations which the government can follow:

- The government of Cameroon should first come up with a strategy to unmask Boko Haram so that there should be a channel of communication should the need arises. If Boko Haram has been unmask, a forthright and sincere discussion should be undertaken in order to understand their aims and objectives and strategies should be put in place on how such demands can be met.



- The government of Cameroon should, as a matter of policy, engage on a drive to transform the socio-cultural landscape of the people of northern Cameroon. There should be a drive to integrate all the people in the region into main stream Cameroon society. Religious leaders, traditional authorities should be called upon to play a more active role in the administration of the people through regional governors who are not natives of the region. This will enable the governors to strategically be unbiased in resolving potential problematic situations in the region.
- The government of Cameroon should embark on a more proactive approach in promoting education in the northern

part of Cameroon. This can be done through creating more schools and sending well trained and culturally minded teachers in the region. This will make the graduates from these schools employable.

- The government of Cameroon should also declare the northern part of Cameroon a special administrative zone as it has done with the Bakassi peninsular. This will enable enough funds to be channelled to the area for development.
- Religious and traditional leaders should be encouraged to support the government's policy on terrorism and armed militia in Cameroon. They should also support the recently adopted law on terrorism which carry death as a

punishment for anyone convicted of carrying out acts of terrorism against the government and people of Cameroon.

- As a reward, the government should put religious leaders on a monthly salary, same as their traditional counterparts so as to dissuade them from being vulnerable to the little money which Boko Haram offers them.
- The resolution of the Boko Haram crisis should be undertaken within the wider context of a sub-regional approach to resolving armed conflict. Effective policy formulation and implementation strategies would have to be negotiated in order for peace and security to reign. The current proposal argues that for peace and security to

effectively reign, local voices and conversations and inter-community dialogue should be prioritise.

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