

Migration and the geopolitics of Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria

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Abstract

Terrorism is increasingly becoming a major threat to global peace and security given the changing geopolitical terrain on which it is enacted. This has given rise to new metageographies of geopolitics characterised by intricate operational networks used by terrorists to achieve their goals. Closely linked to the growing problem of terrorism is globalisation, which has altered our understanding of the geopolitical behaviour of states in the international system. Although it has not removed state boundaries, globalisation has also opened states up for flows and exchanges. Terrorist groups are part of these flows and they have been able to exploit this new geopolitical situation through the recruitment of migrants and the development of terrorist networks across state boundaries. Boko Haram in Nigeria is a typical example of a terrorist group that has evolved into a sophisticated terrorist sect with illegal migrant recruits and transnational networks through the changing geopolitics brought on by globalisation. This article therefore explores the metageography of Boko Haram in Nigeria and how this is aided by migration and social networking occasioned by globalisation. It does so by examining the various structures of the sect, and the nature of its networks. By using the mutual or collective interest theory, the article attempts an explanation of how Boko Haram operates as a group with linkages to diverse transnational terrorist groups bound by a common group interest; anti-Westernisation and global Islamisation. It concludes that Boko Haram has developed a decentralised but sophisticated transnational network which makes it even more difficult for the Nigerian government to deal with its spread.

1. Introduction

Studies have shown that one of the biggest threats to global peace and security is terrorism (Flint 2011; Moten 2010; Pettiford and Harding 2003). Contested as the concept and practice of terrorism is and whether perpetuated against the state or by the state,¹⁾ the evolving geopolitical terrain on which it is enacted is changing the geopolitical character of terrorism in ways that also perpetuates it. These changing

geopolitical processes have given rise to new metageographies of geopolitics characterised by intricate operational networks used by terrorists to achieve their goals (Onapajo and Uzodike 2012). Closely linked to the intractable nature of terrorism is globalisation, which has altered our understanding of the geopolitical behaviour of states in the international system. Although it has not removed state boundaries, globalisation has also opened states up for flows and exchanges. Members of terrorist groups are part of these flows and they have been able to exploit this new geopolitical situation through the recruitment of migrants and the development of terrorist networks across state boundaries. This appears to be the case of the *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad* (People of the Tradition of the Prophet for Preaching and Striving) known popularly as Boko Haram in Nigeria. Boko Haram is a typical example of a terrorist group that has evolved into a sophisticated terrorist sect with illegal migrant recruits and transnational networks through the changing geopolitics brought on by globalisation. According to the United Nations (UN) Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Jeffrey Feltman, the sect, which remains a serious threat with several thousand fighters at its disposal, is affiliated to the Islamic State Organisation (ISIS) and attempting to spread its influence and commit terrorist acts beyond Nigeria (Inyang 2017).

There is a plethora of studies on the origin, causes, nature, dimensions, national and transnational implications of Boko Haram's existence in Nigeria (Shuaibu and Salleh 2015; Bintube 2013; Onuoha 2013; Pham 2012; Onapajo and Uzodike 2012; Onanajo *et al* 2012). However, not many have looked specifically at how migration impacts on the geopolitical character of Boko Haram terrorism and how this impairs the Nigerian government in its efforts to defeat the sect. The closest has been Onapajo *et al* (2012) which analysed the transnational dimensions of Boko Haram and argued quite correctly that its targets and agenda transcend the borders of Nigerian territory, demonstrating that there are indeed international links to the group's activities. Their paper also discussed how the terrorist activities of Boko Haram have been exported beyond the shores of Nigeria and thus "generating increased concerns on the part of other countries, particularly in the West, and the manner of international responses to it" (Onapajo *et al* 2012: 338).

This article, therefore, seeks to explore the metageography of Boko Haram in Nigeria and how this is aided by migration patterns occasioned by globalisation. It does so by examining the various structures of the sect, and the nature of its networks. By using the mutual interest theory also known as collective interest theory, the study explains how Boko Haram operates as a group with linkages to diverse transnational terrorist groups bound by a common group interest; anti-Westernisation and global Islamisation. It concludes that Boko Haram has developed a decentralised but sophisticated transnational network which makes it even

more difficult for the Nigerian government to deal with its spread.

2. Conceptual overview of migration and terrorism

Migration has always taken place, even before territorial lines or borders were clearly defined. It is a global and natural phenomenon, which is as old as human existence on earth. For instance, early men and women were nomadic and had to move around in search of better livelihoods. Since then, human movement from areas of social and economic distress to those with better prospects has continued unabated. Migration is defined as the permanent change in place of residence of an individual (Weeks 2015), and as the permanent movement of people over a substantial period of time (Shaw 1975). On a slightly different note, migration has also been defined as “the detachment from the organisation of activities at one place and the movement of the total round of activities to another” (Goldsheider 1971: 64). The definition of migration is quite contentious because of the issues of spatial distance of these movements and the duration of the stay (Kok 1999). The question is how much distance must be covered by the migrant and how long must he stay, before his movement is identified as migration, and not travelling or mobility? However, for the purpose of this article, migration is defined as the permanent or semi-permanent spatial change in the place of residence of an individual over an extended period of time. Migration can be within a country (internal) or go beyond the borders of a country (international). This article is concerned with international migration.

The invention of the state saw the establishment of territorial boundaries and demarcations. These borders did not discourage international migration, rather, immigration policies were implemented to regularise migratory movements. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) states that about 3.3 per cent of the world’s populations are international migrants, which amounts to about 244 million people (see <http://www.unfpa.org/migration>). Their movements take the form of labour migration, refugee migration and permanent migration (Kok *et al* 2006: 5). Labour migration involves the movement of people from their country of origin to another country in search of job opportunities, which leads to the transfer of human capital to the host country. Refugee migration is the movement of people to another country to seek asylum due to push factors; and permanent migration, though similar to labour migration, is distinct from it in that the migrants are highly-skilled professionals whose movements could lead to brain drain from the sending country and brain gain by the host country (Kok *et al* 2006: 5-8). Another classification of migration is legal and illegal migration. Illegal immigration is a process that involves the movement of migrants across state boundaries without legal status, thereby contravening the immigration legislation of the host country (Willen 2007:

2). Legal migration, on the other hand, is the movement of people to a country other than their country of origin, with official documentation and within the stipulated migration legislation of the host country (McDonald 2000: xiv).

Clearly, migration is a complex phenomenon and it also influences the socio-economic and political composition of host countries some of which are wary of immigrants due to the social difference that comes with migration (Isike 2015). Moreover, migration has also impacted on the political atmosphere of most host communities. For instance, Dominiczak and Whitehead (2016) noted that the European Union's (EU) border agency acknowledged that the increased migration into Europe is as a result of the Arab Spring which resulted in an influx of terrorists into the continent. Simply put, the huge inflow of refugees from Middle Eastern and African countries into Europe has not only resulted in competition between refugees and host members for economic resources and space for survival, but also threatens the security of the receiving countries in Europe. This was one of the rationales for Brexit, which refers to the United Kingdom's (UK) decision to exit from the EU. Brexit was driven by opposition to unrestricted movements across European borders, one of the principles of the EU which a majority of the people of the UK saw as a threat to the security of the state (Katwala and Sommerville 2016). This phenomenon, which sees migration as a threat to the security of the state because it facilitates terrorism, has led to the implementation of stringent migration legislations in various countries in the world. How does Nigeria fare in this regard? This article is concerned specifically with the relationship between terrorism and migration in Nigeria.

Before delving into the issues of terrorism in Nigeria, it is also imperative to conceptualise the term terrorism. There exist diverse and contradictory definitions of terrorism which makes it a contested concept especially as the definition of terrorism "depends entirely on the subjective outlook of the definer" (Ganor 2002: 287). It is subjective because of the popular paradox that one man's terrorist may be another man's freedom fighter. Another controversy surrounding the definition of terrorism is the legitimacy or illegitimacy of violence. Flint (2011: 162) explains that defining terrorism implies disapproval of the form of violence perpetrated as being illegal, inappropriate and improper; he argues that this invariably means that there is an accepted, proper and appropriate form of violence such as those perpetrated by the state. However, irrespective of the diverse definitions, there are basically two core principles in terrorism. Firstly, terrorism, irrespective of the terrorist sect's ideological principles, is an unlawful politically-motivated act directed at the government in order to impose political change. The second principle is that terrorism aims to instigate fear in the minds of the target population through violence. The Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) definition captures these two

points. The FBI sees terrorism as an “unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives” (Hunsicker 2006: 13). In explicit terms, a terrorist group is an anti-government sect, which employs violence as a means to propagate fear and disrupt the government.

Terrorism as it is in the present day has evolved through different stages which Rapoport (2004) referred to as the four waves of terrorism. The first wave of terrorism, which occurred in the 1980s, was aimed at ensuring revolutionary change and was initiated by anarchists (Mannik 2009). During the second wave, terrorist acts were used against colonialist and imperialist regimes (Flint 2011: 168). A typical example of this is the violent actions of freedom fighters in the liberation struggle against the apartheid regime in South Africa. The third wave of terrorism was in opposition to the state, and aimed at winning control of the state. The final wave, which is known as the religious wave of terrorism, is “a cosmic war” that transcends the state (Flint 2011: 171). In this case the state is the enemy, and needs to be destroyed. This is the wave of terrorism that is widespread in the 21st century, including in Nigeria where Boko Haram is known to have declared a cosmic war against the Nigerian state.

3. Metageography of terrorism and migration

Metageography refers to the new 21st century spatial structures of the world that go beyond territorial demarcations. According to Flint (2011: 158) it is the “spatial structure through which people order their knowledge of the world”. Globalisation has compressed the world into a ‘global village’. The resultant increased knowledge of the world, enables some people to form networks and move easily around this global village, thereby creating a new metageography. In this way, it has been argued that “globalisation has resulted in a new geopolitics, a new metageography that has undermined the power and sovereignty of states...” (Flint 2011: 160). Simply put, globalisation also implies the increasing permeability of borders through which transnational ties have evolved; however, it does not necessarily mean the end of state sovereignty. It is a well-known fact that globalisation has influenced movement, across borders, not just of goods and services, but also of people. Consequently, a major effect of globalisation is the change of actors and activities in the international system, which has been described as an era of globalisation characterised by “global, political and social connections that shape our world” (Flint 2011: 158). This has led to an increased number of actors in the international system, including not only state actors but also non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and social movements. In addition, terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda and ISIS are non-state actors that influence the international system. Like their counterparts, state ac-

tors, these new non-state actors seek to advance their influence.

Another effect of globalisation is deterritorialisation. This is most palpable when globalisation is viewed as a process which entails “widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life” (Held *et al* 1999: 2). This interconnectedness enables migration which leads to deterritorialisation. Deterritorialisation in this case implies “a social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede...” (Oduwole 2012: 88). This does not necessarily imply that the territorial boundaries of states have lost their relevance, but rather that there is an evolution of belonging and citizenship that transcends the traditional national space. Vieten (2006: 268) explains that “deterritorialization underlines the dislocating effect of the loss of a geographical tie”. In this case, people are able to migrate to territories beyond their country of origin. The implication of this deterritorialisation is “the growth of supraterritorial relations between people” (Oduwole 2012: 88). Simply put, deterritorialisation brought on by globalisation has not only influenced migration but the formation of migrants’ networks. Terrorist groups have been able to transfer their operations beyond territorial borders as a result of migrants’ networks. Weeks (2015) uses network theory to explain that one of the enabling factors of migration is the networks that are created among migrants within sending and receiving countries.

The network theory of migration argues that the existence of social relationships and ties between migrants in sending countries and non-migrants in host communities influences migration. In other words, these relationships help “connect migrants, former migrants, and non-migrants in origin and destination through ties of kinship, friendship, and shared community of origin” (Massey *et al* 1993: 449). This school of thought argues that migration is perpetuated by social networks (Levitt 2001: 8). There are various definitions of social networks. For instance, Radcliffe-Brown (1940) defines a network as a web of relations built around an individual. Mitchell (1973: 2) also sees it as “the actual set of links of all kinds amongst a set of individuals”. Nelson (1988: 40) adds that networks are “sets of ties linking several actors”. Actors with social networks are known as nodes, and the relations or ties are described as linkages or flows (Martinmo and Spoto 2006: 53). However, migrants’ social networks are different from other forms of networks. Levitt (2001: 8) defines migrants’ social networks as “the sets of cross-border interpersonal ties connecting migrants, return migrants, and non-migrants through kinship, friendship, and attachment to a shared place of origin, and according to him, “once a network is in place, it becomes more likely that additional migration will occur” (Levitt 2001: 8). The difference between migrants’ social networks and other social networks is that other social networks are social relation-

ships or connections that exist between one individual and another, or on a broader scale, among groups of individuals across various platforms. Migrants' networks are known to exist beyond states' territorial boundaries and are transnational in nature. This transnational nature of migrants' social networks invariably leads to further migration. This is why Kapur and McHale (2005: 125) describe this continuous process as chain migration; a reactive movement in response to social relationships formed between immigrants and prospective migrants, due to resource sharing between them (Macdonald and Macdonald 1964: 83).

Terrorist groups are known to make use of migrants' networks to expand their operations. Flint (2011: 26) underscores the importance of networks for when he argues that "political power is not just a matter of controlling territory, it is also a matter of controlling movement, or being able to construct networks to one's own advantage across political boundaries". Globalisation has not only expanded the flow of goods and services, but has also given terrorism a transnational character. Terrorist groups that operate across borders are known to make use of social networks especially for the easy flow of weapons and people. The movement of people as a result of globalisation has resulted not only in the transfer of skills and resources, but also the transfer of terrorism. In this regard, one of the most important tools is illegal immigration, which terrorist networks use to spread terror by human trafficking (Arslan 2016: 3). Indeed the clandestine nature of terrorism enables the use of illegal migration and the covert networks that go with it to carry out terrorist operations. This does not preclude terrorist groups from making use of legal migration. For example, most of the terrorist attacks carried out in the United States (US) were by legal migrants (see Stoltzfoos 2015). Irrespective of the type of migration, the networks they spew has enabled the operation of terrorism. How do networks enable the operation of terrorism? Before answering this question, it is pertinent to describe the value and benefits that migrants accrue from belonging to a social network through the lens of mutual or collective interest theory.

It is evident that social networks possess a form of capital which can be employed not only to foster further migration, but also to accrue benefits among the various nodes. In fact, Elrick (2009: 14) explains that "social network theory assumes that networks operate through the creation and use of social capital". Social capital cannot be excluded from social networks because, like other forms of capital, it is a tool to accrue benefits. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 19) define social capital as the "sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition". There are a plethora of studies, which show how migrants through networks were able to accrue economic and social benefits (See Isike 2015; Golding 1992; Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993).

There are various dimensions of social network theory that explain how social capital within the various migrants' networks enables further migration due to the advantages migrants and non-migrants accrue as a result of their ties. These dimensions include the theory of social exchange or dependency, the theory of mutual or collective interest and the theory of self-interest (Katz *et al* 2004: 312). This article shall concern itself with the theory of mutual or collective interest.

The mutual or collective interest theory argues that the motivation to form networks is not driven by individual interests but by collective interests. It states that "individuals will create ties and coalesce into groups not because it maximises the self-interest of any individual within the group or even the exchange value between individuals in the group. Instead, the motivation to forge ties and form a group is to maximise their collective ability to leverage resources and mobilise for collective action in their environment" (Katz *et al* 2004: 315). It is the maximisation of these collective resources that is employed as leverage in attaining benefits for those within the network; these benefits are termed public goods. Duyne (2004: 3) adds that these public goods "relate to a tangible good, or to immaterial benefits, but they all have in common that if the goal is achieved, everybody benefits from it, regardless of whether he or she contributed to its provision". This theory seeks to explain the reason behind the formation of group networks rather than individual ties. It also posits that for collective interest to attain public good, there must be cooperation among the groups within the network. Duyne (2004) further reiterates that one of the major stimulants for developing a mutual or collective interest is cooperation among nodes within the network. This cooperation among members of the network gives them power and influence. Terrorist groups are known to possess this collective power that enables them to carry out their operations. Mutual interest theory explains why terrorist groups form networks: the collective interests of the network groups enable them to maximise their potential and carry out their clandestine operations. In order to better understand the nature of terrorism and its transnational character it is important to link the ideas of terrorist and migrants networks to metageographies of terrorism.

The new metageographies, as explained, have influenced how terrorist groups operate. Flint (2011: 173) explains the metageographies of terrorism by analysing how they operate through transnational networks. He further adds that the operations are possible due to the linkages of different nodes within their transnational networks. Although Hopkins (2010: 13) argues that providing accurate data on the terrorist networks is difficult because of insufficient data due to the covert nature of their operations, Flint provides a breakdown of the network structure of terrorist groups which gives a good understanding of how they operate. First, at the top of the hierarchy of the network are the core nodes which overall are responsible

for terrorist operations (Flint 2011: 173). These are core nodes because they provide leadership and direction in the terrorist operation. The next are the junction nodes which are the most important in the terrorist network because of their transnational position. The junction nodes connect other nodes within and outside the zone of operation. They “coordinate the logistics of the network. To maintain such contacts requires a relatively stable presence in border zones and cities” (Flint 2011: 173). At the bottom of the chain of command is the peripheral node. They conduct attacks and gather information for the terrorist groups (Kenney 2005: 76). The networks thus enable terrorists to perform their functions.

4. Overview of terrorism in Nigeria

Nigeria has a history of religious and ethnic violence which border on terrorism such as, for example, the Biafra war of 1967-1970, the Maitatsine riots between 1980 and 1983, and the rise of Niger-Delta militants since 1999 amongst others. Although it can be argued that these conflicts are not necessarily acts of terrorism, and thus making it easy to conclude that terrorism in Nigeria is a fairly new phenomenon (see Uwaegbute 2014: 2), this article posits this is not the case. We contend that terrorism is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria as the present organised form of terrorism evolved from a history of unsophisticated and unorganised terrorist acts which were committed to score political benefits. Omale (2013) chronicles some examples of these terrorist acts, which include among others the murder of Dele Giwa by a letter bomb in October 1986; the hijacking of a Nigeria Airways aeroplane by the Movement for the Advancement of Democracy in October 1993; the bombing of Ilorin Stadium in August 1994; and the bomb attack in the late 1990s on the car of Dr Omoshola, the then Chief Security Officer of the Federal Aviation Authority of Nigeria. Indeed as Ford (2014) avers, terrorism “is not a new arrival on the scene. It has been a growing force in Nigeria for over a decade and has deep roots in the country’s social development going back even further. Its rise is not an accident and signals the emergence of a dangerous, militant religious movement that threatens Nigeria’s survival as a nation-state”. Clearly, even before the emergence of Boko Haram in 2009, all the warning signs were there that Nigeria could be a breeding ground for terrorist sects. It was the failure of the government to deal with an environment that was enabling of terrorism, which led to the emergence of Boko Haram in the country (Onuoha 2013). Some notable examples of the sect’s terrorist activities in Nigeria include the assassination of Borno state politicians in 2011; bombing attacks on the UNs’ office building in Abuja on 26 August 2011 which killed 18 people including diplomats; the 2011 Christmas day bombing in Madalla town in Niger State, which left 42 Christian worshippers dead; the 20 January 2012 multiple bombings and shootings in Kano State, which

had over 200 casualties; and the 8 April 2012 Easter day bombing which killed 38 people in Kaduna State. Others include the 2014 prison-break in Giwa Barracks; the kidnapping of 276 Chibok schoolgirls in 2014; and the killings of 2 000 Baga residents (Thurston 2016; Onapajo and Uzodike 2012). Overall, the negative effects of Boko Haram terrorism on Nigeria have been damning. For instance, a dataset created by the US' Council for Foreign Relations via its Nigerian Security Tracker (NST) reported that Boko Haram-related violence caused 22 712 deaths from May 2011 to August 2015. Relatedly, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimated that about one million people had been displaced in Nigeria as a result of the Boko Haram violence (IOM 2015). At the international level, Ogunnubi *et al* (2016) highlighted the negative impacts of Boko Haram terrorism on Nigeria's status as a regional power. They argued that the inability of the Nigerian government to put an end to Boko Haram insurgency has informed perceptions that the state lacks the capacity for regional leadership and this dents Nigeria's credibility and legitimacy to assert its influence at sub-regional and regional levels in Africa (Ogunnubi *et al* 2016: 16).

A new dimension to terrorism in Nigeria is the rampaging Fulani herdsmen whose murderous activities against farming communities have become a national security concern. The conflict between Fulani herders and farmers in Nigeria is a perennial land crisis in the North-Eastern and the North-Central geopolitical areas, which dates back over 50 years. However, the conflict has now spread across the country with brutal mass killings increasingly occurring in the Southern regions of Nigeria. According to Human Rights Watch (2013), violence between Fulani herders and local communities killed 3 000 people between 2010 and 2013 alone. However, since 2015, the Fulani herders have gone outside their traditional conflict spots in the North-East and North-Central regions and engaged in wanton killing of people in farming and non-farming communities across the South-West, South-East and South-South geopolitical zones of Nigeria, which has introduced a religious element to the crisis. For example, apart from Adamawa, Benue, Plateau and Kaduna states in the North,²⁾ heavily armed Fulani herders have engaged in mass killings of people in Ekiti, Enugu, Delta and Ondo states in the largely Christian South totalling over 2 000 between May 2015 and January 2017³⁾ with over 1 000 others including women and children critically injured. The most prominent of these wanton killings is the Southern Kaduna⁴⁾ massacres in December 2016, which claimed over 800 lives, over 500 injured and dozens of churches and houses burnt. This religious slant to the Fulani herders' terror involving migrants⁵⁾ possibly from outside the borders of Nigeria lends credence to speculations that the herdsmen are a new form of Boko Haram terror on Nigeria. The coordinated manner of the herders' attacks and their sophisticated weaponry suggest support and organ-

isation that is beyond the scope of ordinary herders who just want land for cattle grazing. Also, a critical concern here, that ties in to the objective of this paper, is the acknowledgement by the Nigerian Police and other top governing structures in Nigeria that the Fulani herders are migrants. There has not been anything to refute concerns that these herders could be Boko Haram recruits from neighbouring countries where the sect also have presence and network linkages.

Although it is not the purpose of this paper to x-ray the origins of Boko Haram as a terrorist sect in Nigeria, it does acknowledge that there are differing and sometimes contradictory views on its origins and causal factors. For example, Adesoji (2010) traced the origin of the sect to the Maitatsine group of the 1980s. There are also those who narrow the causal factors to socio-economic issues and the failure of the Nigerian state to curb the sect in its early formative stage (Thurston 2016; Onuoha 2013). A most instructive study in this regard is that of Onapajo and Uzodike (2012), which used the levels of analysis framework to explain Boko Haram terrorism at three major levels: individual, state and international. According to them, Boko Haram terrorism has its roots in the ideology and motivations of its founder and members, the failures and deficiencies of the Nigerian state, and the modern trend of religious terrorism in the international system (Onapajo and Uzodike 2012: 24). Impliedly, depending on the level of analysis employed, there can be multiple understandings of the origin, nature and causal factors of Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria. However, as earlier noted, what is still missing in the literature is the role of migration in fanning the embers of Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria and how this affects the geopolitical character of the conflict with implications for the ability of the Nigerian state to curb it.

5. Metageography of Boko Haram

Boko Haram has built international networks beyond Nigerian territory which presents its own challenges for the Nigerian government in terms of responding. Boko Haram is known to have linkages in Mali, Sahel and Somalia. For instance, in Mali, Boko Haram has linkages with the *Jihad* in West Africa and the Movement for Unity. According to Zenn (2013), Ansaru, which is a sub-sect of Boko Haram was created to foster international linkages with other terrorist groups and also to carry out operations internationally. Boko Haram operates like any terrorist network and this is due to the new geography of politics that gives it a transnational character. For example, African leaders such as Presidents Biya of Cameroon and Debi of Chad agree that the terrorist organisation has gone beyond being a national threat to becoming a regional threat.

Another feature of Boko Haram's transnational network is the establishment of bases within and beyond Nigerian states. Its logistic network facilitates trans-border

operations and Boko Haram uses the border area to regroup after attack in Nigeria, and to prepare for the next attack (Zenn 2013). For example, Boko Haram is known to have training camps not only in Bornu state in Nigeria, but also in Mujao in Mali, Zinder and Diffa in Niger (Zenn 2013). The terrorist sect is also known to have networks beyond African shores. For example, the attack on the UN Headquarters in 2011 was linked to the Al-Qaeda terrorist organisation (Karmon 2014). Relatedly, much of Boko Haram's funding is generated from outside Nigeria and Africa. Al-Muntada Trust Fund in Britain and Saudi Arabia's Islamic World Society are known to fund the terrorist sect (Weber 2014). Also, a large number of Boko Haram members are not citizens of Nigeria but migrants from neighbouring countries such as Niger, Chad and Cameroon, which share borders with Nigeria (Karmon 2014). Through its linkages, the sect has exploited the porous borders of Nigeria for purposes of resource exchange. It has been argued that "the border is the first line of defence against terrorism and the last line of a nation's territorial integrity" (Onuoha 2013: 30). Going by this analogy, it is clear that Nigeria's chance of winning the fight against Boko Haram is slim as its borders are porous largely as a result of poor government management, insufficient and inefficient border control staff and out-dated weapons (Onuoha 2013).

Although the menace of Boko Haram is a result of poor governance, government corruption, poverty and inequality in Nigeria, the sect has been able to sustain and expand itself by developing sophisticated social networks facilitated by migration. Migration networks between Nigeria and neighbouring states such as Cameroon, Chad, Mali and Niger has actually aided the activities and survival of Boko Haram in Nigeria. The underlying factors that foster these networks include ethno-linguistic relations between northern Nigeria and these states, the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons which facilitates easy movement into Nigeria, Nigeria's porous borders and the poor socio-economic conditions of these neighbouring states which make Nigeria attractive. These factors give life to the Push and Pull Factor theory of migration which is commonly used to explain the movement people across geographical spaces.

Another important aspect of Boko Haram's operations, which shapes the geopolitical character of the sect's insurgency in Nigeria is its cooperation with other transnational terrorist groups. These include Al Qaeda and Al Shabab which not only underscore the transnational geopolitical character of Boko Haram, but also highlight the danger of treating the sect as a Nigerian problem. The US government, after initially treating the sect's threat with levity, eventually admitted that "Boko Haram has the intent and may be developing the capability to coordinate on a rhetorical and operational level with Al-Qaeda in the lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Somalian Al Shabaab" (Karmon 2014). Operationally, the Boko

Haram sect is not only transnational, but has also decentralised into three nodes; the core, junction and peripheral. Due to the covert nature of terrorist operations, it is nearly impossible to identify all the key actors in each node. However, the core nodes of Boko Haram consist of the leader Mohammed Yusuf alongside a few other militant and ideological Boko Haram leaders. Although the core nodes of terrorist groups form linkages for exchange of resources and information, they have minimal covert contact. These leaders are responsible for expanding the terrorist sects internationally through creating networks with other terrorist groups beyond the continent (Zenn 2013). The core leaders are the brain of the terrorist sect; however, they are not the life line; the next stratum; the junction nodes, are the life line. The junction nodes of Boko Haram comprise of those who engage in black market trading and kidnapping, as well as international benefactors, which include Al-Qaeda (McCoy 2014). Although the junction nodes are not the core leaders of the sect, they deal with the daily operation and financing of their activities. These nodes are known to operate in Niger, Chad and Cameroon where most of the planning, recruitment and operations of Boko Haram are carried out (Zenn 2014). The third are the peripheral nodes which carry out the directives of the other two nodes; grounds men or women. They are known to engage mostly in kidnapping, hijacking, and bombing. Boko Haram is known to use abducted children as part of those in the peripheral node who perpetuate these violent acts. It is a well-known fact that these peripheral nodes are taken to neighbouring countries like Somalia and Mali, where they are trained (Karmon 2014).

As mentioned earlier, Boko Haram is evolving into a sophisticated terrorist sect as a result of a metageography that enables it to operate beyond the shores of Nigeria. It is the transnational network of Boko Haram that makes scholars such as Zenn (2014) to argue that even if the main base of Boko Haram is demolished in Borno, this would not stop the operation of the sect because it has organised networks that exist outside Nigeria's physical boundaries. The Boko Haram network consists of ties with other terrorist groups that share a similar ideology which is based on the principles of anti-Westernisation and the Islamisation of the nation-states they occupy. This is consistent with the argument put forward by the mutual or collective interest theory. The common group interest shared by Boko Haram and the various terrorist sects pulls them together in order to engage in this cosmic war, thereby resulting in resource flows and exchanges. In sum, the operation of Boko Haram is characterised by a decentralisation of powers and responsibilities in an organisation made up of diverse networks beyond state boundaries which all share a similar ideology in the fight against Westernised states. These geopolitical processes are facilitated by the free movement of people across the sub-region and into Nigeria and they have created a metageography of geopolitics which require

serious scrutiny and understanding by the Nigerian government before undertaking a response that will be effective.

6. Conclusion

Globalisation has led to the development of new metageographies of geopolitical conflicts which are facilitated by migration and the development of networks beyond territorial borders. Although this has not made the state as an actor in the international system irrelevant, it has constrained it in many ways in terms of dealing with threats that get imported through migration. For example, globalisation has led to the emergence of new non-state actors who impact on the geopolitical character of conflict between states. It has also encouraged resource flows and exchanges which have led to economic development on one hand and also facilitated the export of terrorism across borders on the other hand. Terrorists have been able to use migration to develop networks with citizens and other sympathetic migrants in target countries. Terrorist groups have also been able to develop sophisticated networks beyond state boundaries and have leveraged on social networks which use the inherent social capital that benefits the nodes within the networks.

Using the collective interest theory, this article shows how terrorist groups such as Boko Haram form linkages with others to maximise their mutual interest. For example, Boko Haram has international linkages with other terrorist groups such as AQIM and Al Shabab, and networks extending to Mali, Sahel, and Somalia as well as funding connections in the UK and Saudi Arabia. These connections are buoyed by collective group interests of anti-Westernisation and the ultimate Islamisation of nation-states. This fluid, hierarchical but decentralised structure of networks and linkages facilitated by migration and globalisation makes Boko Haram more elusive and difficult for the Nigerian government alone to deal with. Apart from enmeshing relevant immigration policies and tightening border control, the Nigerian government needs to cooperate more with its neighbours and the international community including the US in the area of intelligence-sharing to track movement and networks of the sect and its operations.

Endnotes

1. Pettiford and Harding (2003) for example, make a useful and clear distinction between terrorism perpetuated by states and those perpetuated by non-state actors such as terrorist groups and individuals.
2. All of them have large Christian populations.
3. See a news report by Ibrahim (2016) which chronicled killings and burning of houses and churches in farming and non-farming communities by Fulani herdsman between June 2015 and May 2016. The report documented 525 casualties during the period for it was

alleged that the assailants attacked their victims for refusing to allow the herdsmen use their farmlands for grazing their cattle.

4. Southern Kaduna is Christian dominated
5. In February 2016, the Inspector General of Police (IGP), told the nation that most violent Fulani herdsmen are not Nigerians but either from Mali or Chad (*Guardian*, 15/02/16). This is also the official position of the Northern Governors Forum (NGF) whose chairman, Governor Kashim Shettima of Bornu state said in January 2017 that herdsmen are from Senegal and Mali (*Vanguard*, 26/01/17).

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