



Forum: African Union (AU)

Issue: The situation in Nigeria concerning the Boko Haram

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Introduction

The Boko Haram, also known as the Islamic State in West Africa (ISWA) is a militant organisation based in Nigeria. They have been affiliated with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in the past and are most known for the kidnapping of around three hundred schoolgirls in 2014, who have been partially released by now. The goal of this organisation is to purify the Islam in Nigeria; however, it has spread out to the countries of Chad, Niger and (northern) Cameroon. The goal remains the same: purification of the Islam.

As yet stated, the group is an Islamic one. This means they support Sharia law, and the values that come with it. The reason they were able to grow in Nigeria can be found in the systems of law the country holds. It has a federal government with minimal influence. This means every state can make its own legislature quite freely, and as a result four entirely different systems of law can be found in different states: The Common Law, the English Law, the Customary Law and the Sharia Law. The latter was, logically, the basis ISWA grew on. Furthermore, this division of legislature created lots of room for them to operate in.

In 2015, the Nigerian military claimed to have neutralised all the bases of the Boko Haram, nonetheless they are still active today. The core of this issue is the cooperation required to find a (peaceful) solution, and in this research report we will give you the tools to do so. We will further investigate the uprising, ideology and position of the Boko Haram, together with all the other information we would like to see reflected in the resolutions.

Definition of Key Terms

Sharia law

The traditional Islamic law, derived from the religious precepts of Islam, particularly the Quran and the Hadith. Islamic law or the Sharia is therefore the expression of Allah's own command for Muslim society.

Legislature

A deliberative assembly with the authority to make laws for a political entity such as a country or city. Legislatures form important parts of most governments; in the separation of powers model, they are often contrasted with the executive and judicial branches of government.

ISWA

The International Solid Waste Association is a non-governmental, independent and non-profit association by statutes and follows the mission statement to promote and develop professional waste management worldwide as a contribution to sustainable development.



General Overview

Introduction

The Boko Haram, or the Islamic State in West Africa (ISWA) had been operating since the year of 2002 and have been known in the past as the “Group of the People of Sunnah for Preaching and Jihad”. Their headquarters are based in north-eastern Nigeria, but they also operate in Chad, Niger and northern Cameroon. The group was founded by Mohammed Yusuf in 2002 and has been led ever since 2009 by Abubakar Shekau.

Around 2009 the pure nonviolent character of the militants changed into that of a more radical nature, leading to the execution of their leader. Their actions grew more violent afterwards, using suicide bombings, a prison break and the kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls in 2014. In this research report we will further investigate their ideology, uprising and current position in the African field.



The uprising

As yet stated, Mohammed Yusuf started the Boko Haram in 2002. The first years were marked by a nonviolent approach, also to the ‘purification of Nigeria’. He educated and took cover for the children of poor Muslim families throughout the region. The new members of the sect were called jihadis. In the fight against – police – corruption he also attracted lots of more politically engaged young people. At first it is said that he used the resources of the Izala Society to recruit new jihadis, before he split off into his own group later. In their first years they continued to act peaceful, though they did speak out against the government.

The government itself did get warnings on the increasingly militant character of the ISWA, from more than fifty Muslim leaders. However, they did not choose to act upon it and waited. Yusuf was also allowed, under protest from the Council of Ulama, to broadcast his speeches on national television. This escalated to a point where the organisation had become too militant to ignore and an investigation was executed into them, called operation Flush. After the findings of this investigation, nine important members were arrested in 2008. This was also followed up by a true military force, with whom more than 700 people were killed, mostly Boko Haram. When the police arrested Yusuf he was seen as a heroic martyr, which only led to more escalation. His successor Abubakar Shekau started a campaign of true violence.

In 2010 they performed a major prison break in Bauchi, where more than a hundred of ISWA members were freed. Later on, there have been multiple IED attacks, to the police but also to a UN headquarters where thirteen people were killed. The relatively new form of attacks in Nigeria, suicide attacks, caused lots of deaths in the years that followed. All these actions were performed steadily multiple times a week on Western or governmental targets. An expert on the topic, Stephen Davis, blames the Nigerian politicians for this. He proclaims they have not tackled the issue to worsen the position of their opponents in elections.



The years that followed

In the year of 2012 a state of emergency was declared in Nigeria by the government. There had been 115 attacks by the Boko Haram in 2011 alone, which killed 550 people. In the first three weeks of 2012 more than 250 people had been killed, the state of emergency as a result. This granted the government extra options to fight them. The basis for this were investigations by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, which described the atrocious conditions in the region. Boko Haram often escaped the military by fleeing into other countries such as Cameroon. By the end of 2013 a total of 650.000 citizens had fled the country of Nigeria. This displacement continued to worsen.

April 2014 was the time Boko Haram really became known throughout the world, by kidnapping 276 schoolgirls from Chibok. The international community immediately tried to undertake action and appointed a negotiator, while raising attention in ways like Michelle



Obama did by creating the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls. The girls scarcely returned throughout the years, however around 70 of them were released in 2016. After these happenings the ISWA continued to expand into for example Cameroon. In 2015 they attacked a military base in Nigeria, where the army had to flee. That really pissed the government off, and it made a West-African offensive. Nigeria,

Cameroon, Niger and Chad all started killing Boko Haram members after being provoked themselves. The pinnacle was around March 2015, when they took 600 citizens of a local town in fleeing for the military. Months after the elections, in September, the military announced that all the camps of ISWA had been released. Their attacks, however, remained somewhat consistently.

Their ideology

Although the group follows the Sharia law, its members are quite divided and not always followers of the Salafi doctrine. Until the year of 2009 they had peaceful Khawaarij Islamic beliefs, and only after that year did they qualify as a truly Jihadist organisation. Over all they tend towards Wahibbism, a very strict form of Islam that regards other forms as inferior. They are very opposed to Western interference in their region, for two reasons. The first is their Christianity, and the second the corruption they have caused in their states that follow the Sharia law. This consequents attacks on all sorts of places linked to the West or to institution such as their government. They have been linked to ISIL for a short period of time, but right now they work alone. The same goes for Al Qaeda, which broke up with them when their leader Yusuf proved unreliable from their point of view.



The current situation

Most countries have acknowledged the Boko Haram as a terrorist organisation around 2013, which says a lot about their relationship with it. The USA took off as one of the first countries to take this step and has been a vast supporter of the African forces fighting it. African coalition forces had been formed around that time, having 3.500 soldiers of Benin, Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Nigeria. Under the lead of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) they hope to discuss a broader force in the future. Furthermore Colombia, the UK, France and China have helped these forces in their fight the last years. Just days ago, there was another killing of 44 soldiers.

But where does that leave us now? There has been claimed that all the Boko Haram bases are defeated, but that seems somewhat unlikely as the killings continue. The joint task force of African States remains in place, though the eventual expansion of it still remains vague. States supporting ISIL often do support ISWA too, despite it having renounced the pledge to ISIL, it being based on similar ideologies. Deep down the governmental state system of Nigeria supports the group too. All these forces fight and have fought for quite some years now. It seems unlikely that it will be achieved soon, but until then they are all fighting for the eternal goal: for peace.

Major Parties Involved

Africa

Boko Haram is a top-tier threat to Africa's most populous country. An insurgency led by the Islamist group has claimed tens of thousands of lives and displaced millions more in recent years. At times, the violence has spilled over Nigeria's borders into other countries in the Lake Chad Basin. Some experts say Boko Haram's brutal campaign, which has included attacks on schools, the burning of villages, and hundreds of abductions, is a response to longstanding religious tensions, political corruption, and widening economic disparity in Nigeria. The government's heavy-handed police and counterterrorism tactics are also fuel for the group's flame, analysts say. Many analysts believe that Boko Haram emerged as a consequence of deep religious and ethnic cleavages that have long troubled Nigeria. The British, during their nearly half century of rule, merged various territories and peoples that had little in common other than geographic proximity. Nigeria comprises nearly 350 ethnic groups, including the Hausa and Fulani (29 percent), the Yoruba (21 percent), the Igbo (18 percent), the Ijaw (10 percent), and the Kanuri (4 percent). At the same time, the country is roughly split between the Muslim-dominated north and Christian-dominated south. The two largest religious groups have, for decades, generally abided by an informal power-rotation agreement for the presidency, but political friction remains a significant factor in ongoing unrest.



Niger

For the last two years, Niger has been at war with Boko Haram. The conflict has disturbed this poor country's development. Notwithstanding direct support from Chadian troops since 2015 and improved collaboration with the Nigerian army, Nigerian forces have been unable to put a stop to attacks by insurgents, some of whom have links to the Islamic State (IS). Nigerian authorities initially responded to the Boko Haram threat by keeping the movement under surveillance. They believed that it was primarily a Nigerian problem. This attitude changed in 2014 when the danger became more importunate. Boko Haram's territorial expansion toward the Niger border was accompanied by a new push to recruit hundreds of young Nigeriens. The war effort has since proved to be a strain on the national budget and the judicial system and lit tensions between the government and the military hierarchy.

Chad

Since early 2015, attacks in Chad by the Nigerian jihadist group Boko Haram have killed hundreds, displaced more than 100,000 and damaged the local economy of the Lake Chad basin. Violence excelled in 2015 with suicide bombings in the capital and the Lake region and had since dropped. Chad's military engagements and its role in the fight against terrorism (around Lake Chad and elsewhere in the area) have brought significant diplomatic gains. To counter the continuing threat while reacting to the immediate and longer-term needs of the people, Chadian authorities need to build on the moderately successful regional security cooperation, start to move away from their highly militarized response to include a more significant civilian component, elaborate a more coherent economic development plan and deal more effectively with former Boko Haram members.

Cameroon

As fighting between government forces and the Boko Haram insurgents in Cameroon's Far North decreases, a lasting peace depends on how the government deals with former members of the jihadist movement, its former prisoners and vigilante groups set up to fight it. The intensity of the conflict against Boko Haram in Cameroon's Far North has diminished, though the movement still poses a threat and the humanitarian situation remains precarious. Long-term stability hinges on how the government resolves two principal security challenges: first, dealing with former combatants and other Boko Haram members; and, secondly, determining the future of community self-defense, or vigilante, groups.



Timeline of Events

2002 - The group, which may have existed since the late 1990s, organizes under the Muslim cleric Mohammed Yusuf. It is centered in Maiduguri, the capital of the northeastern state of Borno.

December 2003 - The first known attack by Boko Haram includes roughly 200 militants, who attack multiple police stations in the state of Yobe, near the Niger border.

July 2010 - Boko Haram releases a video statement in which Yusuf's deputy who allegedly died the previous year, Shekau, claims to be the leader of the group.

September 7, 2010 - In the state of Bauchi, 50 Boko Haram militants attack a prison, killing five people and releasing more than 700 inmates.

August 26, 2011 - Boko Haram attacks the United Nations compound in Abuja. A car bomb kills 23 people and injures more than 75 others.

January 20, 2012 - More than 200 people are killed when Boko Haram launches coordinated attacks targeting police, military, a prison and other targets in the city of Kano in Kano State.

September 17, 2013 - Boko Haram gunmen dress in military uniforms and stage a fake checkpoint near Benisheik in Borno, burning vehicles and executing travelers, leaving at least 143 people dead.

April 14, 2014 - Boko Haram militants kidnap approximately 276 teenage girls from a boarding school in Chibok in Borno. Officials there say some of the girls were able to escape. The kidnapping sparks global outrage and a #BringBackOurGirls campaign on social media.

May 21, 2014 - The White House announces that the United States has sent 80 troops to Chad to help search for the kidnapped schoolgirls.

May 22, 2014 - The UN Security Council adds Boko Haram to its sanctions list.

October 16, 2014 - The Nigerian government announces it has reached a ceasefire agreement with the Islamist terror group that includes the promised release of more than 200 kidnapped schoolgirls.

November 1, 2014 - In a video, the group's leader denies the Nigerian government's claim of a ceasefire.



April 25-26, 2015 - The decomposed corpses of at least 400 men, women and children are found in shallow, mass graves and on the streets of Damasak in northeastern Nigeria. Due to a joint Nigerian-Chadian military operation, the town has recently been freed of Boko Haram, which seized the town in November.

August 14, 2016 - Boko Haram releases a video of some of the girls kidnapped in April 2014 and demands the release of Boko Haram fighters in exchange for the girls.

May 6, 2017 - Eighty-two Chibok schoolgirls are released after negotiations between Boko Haram and the Nigerian government.

February 19, 2018 - A faction of Boko Haram raids the Government Girls Science and Technical College in the northeast Nigerian town of Dapchi, kidnapping 110 students of the college.

May 7, 2018 - The Nigerian army says it has rescued more than 1,000 Boko Haram captives -- mainly women and children, as well as some young men who had been forced to become Boko Haram fighters -- in Borno state. The operation, which was conducted in conjunction with Cameroonian and Nigerian troops of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), rescued the hostages from Malamkari, Amchaka, Walasa and Gora villages of the Bama Local Government Area.

Previous attempts to solve the issue

Educate, to end terrorism

Although we may rid ourselves of the persons involved, the ideology will live on and potentially become even stronger through increased resentment. Increasing education in these areas is the only way to smother the fire of extremism, which begins with imprudent and ignorant perceptions and teachings. In the case of the Nigerian girls, there most likely is room for more effort on the part of the Nigerian government and, hopefully, we will begin to see stronger action taken by their newly-elected government. However, it will never be this simple in countries where militant groups like Boko Haram are deep-rooted in all aspects of society and prey on communities through their fear. These poor abducted girls were not the first, nor are they the last. As Amnesty International stated, over 2,000 women and children have been abducted. Additionally, geographical difficulties cannot go unnoticed. Dangerous territories and illegal border smuggling are real factors to consider. Thus, although it is disappointing to not see progress, it is not surprising, considering the harsh gang mentality prevalent in the communities through the coercion of Boko Haram.



Change in governance had an impact

When the incident happened a year ago, Nigeria was in the last year of governance under the former president. With a general election looming in a matter of months, the superpowers of the world didn't want to waste their efforts and resources by supporting this West African nation, for they themselves didn't know who would ascend to power after the elections. With a new government at the helm now, and due to the plain fact that the new government has just come into power, there may be a greater possibility that we will now see some action from superpowers. Of course, not with the intention of helping the victims, but with their eyes on some solid returns in the form of oil, which Nigeria is rich in, along with other natural resources. Whatsoever be the interests of those superpowers who can still assist in recovering these kidnapped young women, let us be hopeful of at least some action now from these mighty ones, to bring the girls home. After all, better late than never.

Government negotiated with Boko Haram:

On March 25, Nigeria's Information Minister Lai Mohammed announced that the government is negotiating with Boko Haram about a possible ceasefire and ultimately a permanent end to the conflict. He said the talks have been underway for "some time," though his was the first public reference to them. If true, such talks provide a glimmer of hope for an end to the ongoing carnage in northeast Nigeria, but important questions still remain.

Possible solutions

Improve military deployments and other security arrangements: The army, police and other security agencies need to deploy more personnel in the north east. While all agencies are overstretched, the government could allocate personnel more efficiently. In particular, the army should review its engagements countrywide, pull out personnel and resources from what are in essence police operations, and concentrate its forces in the north east. The police should recall many of the 150,000 police officials guarding politicians and, in some cases, private individuals, and reassign them to the north east, too. Security agencies should redeploy forces to the smaller towns that are often more vulnerable to insurgent attacks than state capitals. Where possible, they should include female operatives in security units deployed to schools, to promote diverse teams able to build trust with communities and assist victims of crime, including those who may have suffered from sexual and gender-based violence. State education authorities should review security arrangements and procedures at all schools in the region, especially at girls' boarding schools.



Probe the abductions, publish findings and follow recommendations: The government should investigate the security lapses that enabled the abductions, security agencies' subsequent blame game, and the information mismanagement by federal and state officials. The committee convened by the national security adviser is unlikely to be up to the task. President Buhari should constitute an independent, non-partisan committee, not subordinate to any top security official, to investigate and publish findings. The government should pledge to implement this committee's recommendations. The committee should include women and others with specific knowledge and understanding of gender-sensitive aspects of the Boko Haram insurgency. The government also should publish the findings of the 2014 Ibrahim Sabo committee, which investigated the Chibok girls' abduction.

Recommit to the Safe Schools Initiative: The federal government should probe the inadequate implementation of the initiative over the past three years. The federal finance ministry, along with relevant state-level agencies, should identify the 500 schools that reportedly received funding under the initiative and account for the funds provided. All levels of government should help advance the scheme, notably by transferring students – particularly girls – in high-risk environments to safer schools until the security situation improves. State and local education authorities should ensure that schools introduce other measures envisaged in the initiative, including safety guidelines, incident response plans and early-warning procedures linking school administrators, community residents and local security agencies.

Sustain military operations while pursuing talks about a cessation of hostilities: The only long-term way of protecting schools and towns across the north east is by ending the insurgency. The Nigerian government's 25 March admission that it is attempting to negotiate a ceasefire with the Barnawi faction of Boko Haram marks a welcome shift from its insistence upon crushing the insurgents militarily.

Maintain international support: Abuja still needs help, not only in recovering the remaining Dapchi girl, the 112 Chibok schoolgirls, and an unknown number of others still held in insurgents' enclaves or bases, but also in its wider efforts against Boko Haram. In addition to much-needed humanitarian aid, international partners should continue assisting the government, especially by sharing intelligence and building security forces' capacity for civilian protection. They also should encourage the Nigerian government to pursue all options for ending the conflict, including dialogue. They should promote the improved delivery of public services and help foster the economic opportunity in the north east that will be essential to any lasting peace.



Useful documents

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/boko-haram>

<https://news.un.org/en/tags/boko-haram>

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