

Committee/Council: Political Committee

Issue: The Question of Boko Haram

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Introduction

It is a fact, that in the 21st century and especially after the 9/11 attacks the public awareness regarding terrorist acts and organizations has significantly increased. However the groups that are now in the centre of attention (e.g. Al-Qaida) existed many years before the famous attacks. In the 2010's the brutal appearance of "new", mainly, Islamic organizations like the Islamic State shocked the public. Boko Haram came into the focus of the international community with its infamous kidnapping of 300 schoolgirls in Nigeria. It is a group that existed long before these attacks, and therefore falls into the first category. Its long lifespan is a clear indication of the inability of states, to fight and tackle such terrorist groups effectively. On the contrary, ever since its creation, Boko Haram has constantly grown and expanded. As a matter of fact between the creation (2003) and the outburst (2009) of Boko Haram, Nigerian president Jonathan was criticized for being abusive against the terrorists' human rights

This study guide will give you the chance to get some information mainly concerning the history of the group and possible ways of how to deal with the problem. In any case it should be the trigger for your research and not your whole preparation.

Definition of Key-Terms

Jihad

A holy war waged on behalf of Islam as a religious duty; *also*: a personal struggle in devotion to Islam especially involving spiritual discipline

Sunni

Also called Sunnite. A member of one of the two great religious divisions of Islam, regarding the first four caliphs as legitimate successors of Muhammad and stressing the importance of Sunna as a basis for law.

Sharia

The fundamental religious concept of Islam, namely its law, systematized during the 2nd and 3rd centuries of the Muslim era (8th–9th centuries CE).

Total and unqualified submission to the will of Allah (God) is the fundamental tenet of Islam: Islamic law is therefore the expression of Allah's command for a Muslim society and, in application, constitutes a system of duties that are incumbent upon a Muslim by virtue of his religious belief. Known as the Shari'ah (literally, "the path leading to the watering place"), the law constitutes a divinely ordained path of conduct that guides Muslims toward a practical expression of religious conviction in this world and the goal of divine favor in the world to come. (<http://www.britannica.com/topic/Shariah>)

Islamism

A fundamentalist Islamic revivalist movement generally characterized by moral conservatism and the literal interpretation of the Koran and the attempt to implement Islamic values in all aspects of life

Al Shabaab

The exact translation of the name is "Movement of Striving Youth". Al Shabaab is an Islamic terrorist group based in Somalia. Al-Shabaab has been accused of actively supporting Boko Haram and having links with other similar groups.



Boko Haram's logo – it has now been replaced by the same Black Standard flag ISIS is using

(<https://reclaimourrepublic.wordpress.com/2014/05/18/video-state-depart-just-not-accurate-to-characterize-boko-haram-as-muslim-dem-sen-they-are-not-islamic/>)

Background Information

Creation

Boko Haram (Arabic and Hausa for: "Western Education is Forbidden") or as the official name is Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad, ("People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad") is a terrorist organization created in 2003, when extreme Islamists, strongly opposed to the western character of Nigeria gathered in the region of Kannama in the northeast of the country. This was followed by brutal clash with the local authorities. The leader at the time was Mohammed Yusuf, a man with a strict fundamentalist interpretation of the Koran, often described as a charismatic leader. Many claim that Osama Bin Laden had invested more than 3 million dollars in the region, aiming in a Muslim revolution. Until 2009 the group engaged in some minor attacks which in no way gave any expectations for what would follow.

2009 attacks and Change of Leadership

In July 2009 a task force under the name Operation Flush II attacked Yusuf and his followers wounding and killing around 20 of them. This led to a massive turmoil of the organization, which generated a reaction including assaults in public buildings and the death of hundreds of civilians. The local authorities captured Yusuf and other members. The leader died in police custody. Since then the Nigerian government has been using a certain law, which allows them to execute terrorist organization members without a trial, and many suspect that this was the case regarding Mohammed Yusuf's death.

After a whole year of no action, ex second in command Abubakar Shekau took the leadership, and announced it with a video. Later that month he announced his support and loyalty to Al-Qaida, with a second video and after some minor attacks in the summer of 2010, Boko Haram violently went back to action with a massive prison break in September of that year. In the attack 800 prisoners escaped including an estimate of 200 suspects as Boko Haram members, and 4 people died.

2009- today

After the prison break Boko Haram started launching the attacks, which it is infamous for. They mainly used IEDs (Improvised Explosive Device) and in the beginning targeted easy objectives. The first attack against western influence took place on 26 August 2011 against UN buildings in Abuja. Many similar attacks followed, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of innocent people. In 2013, they started attacking institutions of western education. The highlight of those was the abduction of 276 teenage girls from a school in Chibok in April 2014. Within that time the group had also launched numerous attacks against Christian churches with the most brutal being those of the Christmas Day of 2011.



Towns to be under Boko Haram attack or control

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-29110663>

In March 2015, Boko Haram's leader Abubakr Shekau, claimed that the upcoming elections would not be held, more specifically he said: *"This election will not be held even if we are dead. Even if we are not alive Allah will never allow you to do it."* In fact they managed to delay the elections for one week. Of course many of the Nigerian people were terrified by the group and did not vote.

Objectives

As a typical Sunni extremist organization Boko Haram aims at forcing territories to live under strict Sharia law, and their regional goal is to reestablish the Sokoto caliphate which included parts of Nigeria, Niger and Cameroon and lasted from 1804 to 1904 until it was abolished by the British. According to many experts Boko Haram is motivated by the poor socioeconomic situation of the northern parts of Nigeria. Their ultimate goal though is global and is to turn Nigeria and as many territories possible into an Islamic State. At the moment 12 Nigerian states in the northeast live under these circumstances. Also, a demand of theirs is the release of the captured and imprisoned members of the group, which was brutally expressed by the massive prison break in 2009.



Territories under Sharia Law

(<http://osbcng.org/2014/11/05/boko-haram-assures-residents-of-improved-security-under-its-authority/>)

Recruiting

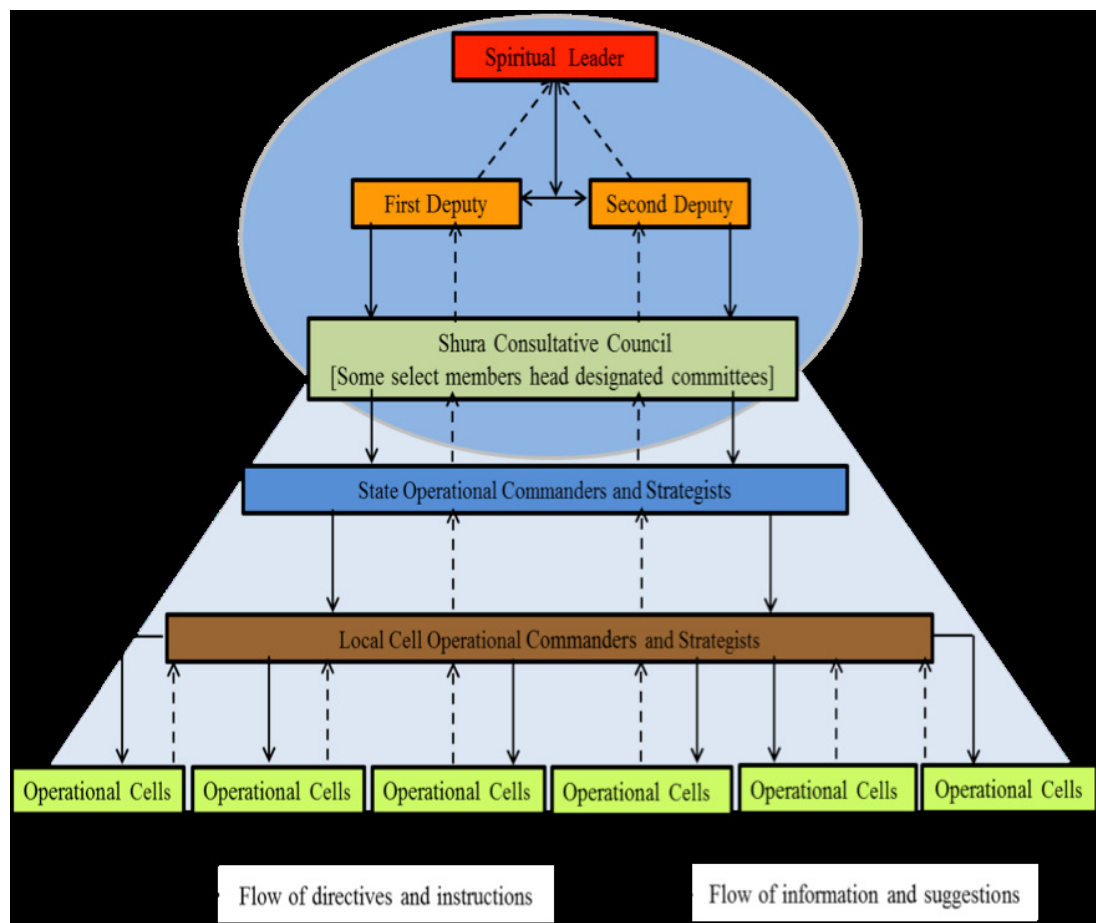
In 2002 charismatic cleric and first Boko Haram leader Mohammed Yusuf, set up a religious school in Maiduguri. Many residents of the area, due to their poor economic situation, rejected the expensive western education and chose Yusuf's school. However after the school kidnapping and the sudden increase of kidnappings of teenage boys, this became the main source of soldiers for the group. Those acts were conducted in Nigerian territory. Outside Nigeria and most of all in Cameroon Boko Haram used non-forcible recruitment of men. In both

cases after the recruitment the men or boys were trained in camps of the group (or even sent to be trained with Al-shaabab or other groups that Boko Haram cooperates with). After the basic training the new members of the group are used for small-scale attacks in order to acquire experience. After the three stage recruitment (kidnappings, training and small scale attacks) the new soldiers can be used by the group for severe attacks.

Structure and Strength

As most of the groups of its kind Boko Haram has a pyramid like structure, on top of which is the leader Abubakar Shekau. Underneath him and his deputies, the Shura consultative council is an organ that links the leadership with the operation cells. The operation cells run the everyday attacks without much involvement of the important members.

As regards to local support, the group only has the support of 2% of the Nigerian population while 83% strongly oppose their actions. Before the kidnapping of the schoolgirls the popularity of the group was a lot higher, reaching 10%.



Due to the lack of communication between the leadership and the members it is almost impossible to figure out the strength of the group. The attempts that have been made vary from some hundred to a few thousand members.

Financing and International Links

The main sources of the group's financing come from illegal activities such as, kidnappings and robberies. Some politicians of the country have been accused of directly financing the group, however, there is not enough evidence to prove it, and the possibility of such collaboration is considered highly unlikely.

Considerable amounts of money come from other organizations such as Al-Qaida, an organization that receives mainly military support from Boko Haram. In detail the relations to other terrorist organizations are the following:

Al-Qaida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQLIM, or AQIM)

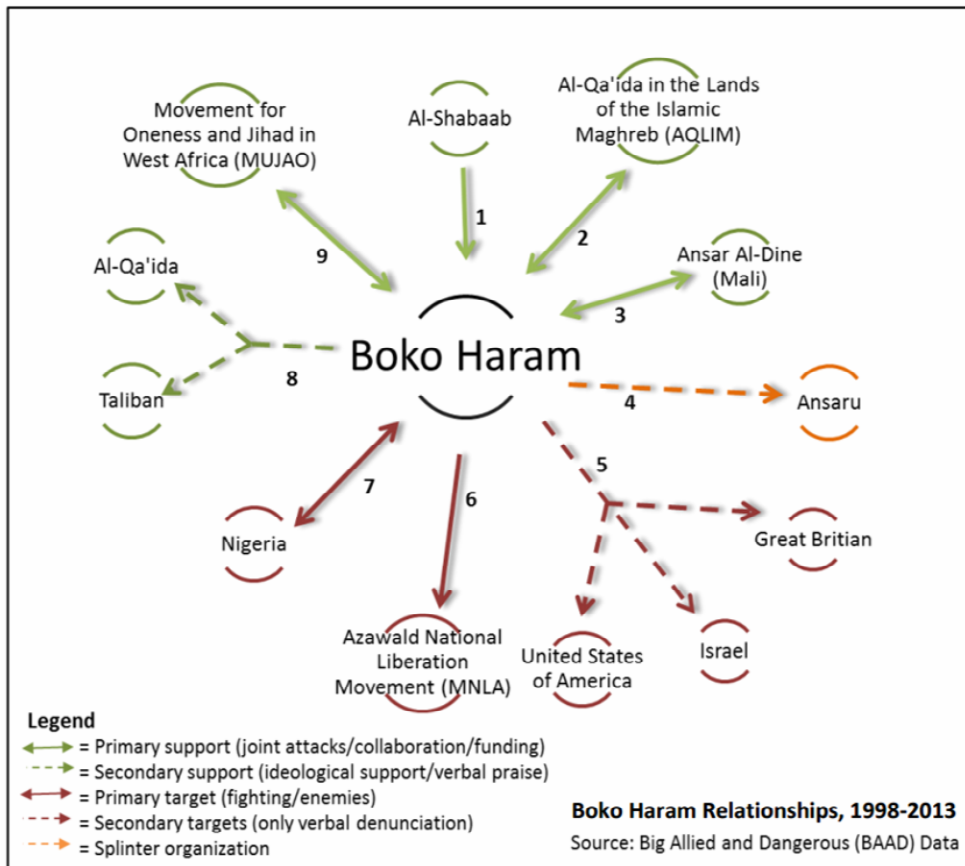
Al-Qaida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQLIM, or AQIM) has worked extensively with Boko Haram, including training individuals who are now members of Boko Haram, as early as the mid-2000s, in the training camps that AQLIM uses. Although the exact beginning and extent of the relationship is unknown, in 2010 AQLIM released statements offering training, supplies, and militants to support Boko Haram. Since 2011, AQLIM has provided Boko Haram with financing, including reportedly facilitating donation lines from organizations in Great Britain and Saudi Arabia, training and weapons. The two organizations conduct joint operations in Mali and the magnitude of AQLIM's influence on Boko Haram becomes evident in their increasingly sophisticated and coordinated attacks.

Al-Shabaab

Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab mainly cooperated before the attack on the UN headquarters in Abuja, with many members of the group being trained by the Somali extremists.

Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)

After Boko Haram announced allegiance to the Islamic State ISIS spokesman said: "We announce to you the good news of the expansion of the caliphate to west Africa because the caliph ... has accepted the allegiance of our brothers of the Sunni group for preaching and the jihad," and he urged Muslims from all over the world to join the fight in West Africa



Boko Haram's relations to other organizations and countries

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Nigeria

Being the state that has mainly suffered by the organization has tried many times to fight it with no success. Nigerian authorities have brutally clashed with the terrorists with the most significant clash being in July 2009. Nigeria has received harsh criticism concerning the way that it dealt and keeps dealing with the issue. Chadian army spokesman Col. Azem Bermandoa, when asked on Nigeria's approach, said that, if the Nigerians fought like Chadians, the Boko Haram issue would be solved in two weeks. Many political analysts though express the opinion that the criticism is unproductive. The example that they mainly use is that the Nigerian authorities were accused at first with being too aggressive and oppressing human rights. President Jonathan made his approach later and now is being accused of being too mild.



Chad

Being Nigeria's neighbor in the North East it is the most affected country after Nigeria. Unlike their southwest neighbors the Chadian authorities have played a critical and leading role against Boko Haram, claiming to have killed hundreds of Boko Haram militants, especially after the latter approached the area of lake Chad, natural border between the two countries. Furthermore, Chad was been one of the harsher critics of president Jonathan's mild policy.

Cameroon

Another northeast neighbor that faces problems familiar to the ones of Chad, definitely in a smaller extent started taking action recently, when the local authorities claimed to have imprisoned around a thousand possible members of Boko Haram.

USA

The US has not been significantly involved in the region. Boko Haram and Ansaru were designated as Foreign Terrorist Organizations by the state department in November 13, 2013.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
2003	Formation of Boko Haram

2009	Boko Haram launches military operations
July 2009	Boko Haram troops set several public buildings in Maiduguri on fire, killing hundreds of people
July 2009	After a successful police-military cooperation the headquarters of the organization were attacked resulting in the death and capturing of many members including the leader Mohammed Yusuf, and the complete destruction of the headquarters
September 2010	In a massive prison break orchestrated by Boko Haram more than 700 prisoners are freed including 105 members of the organization
December 2010	With new leader Abubakar Shekau Boko Haram organizes and performs a bombing attack in the city Jos.
June 2011	Police headquarters and UN buildings are bombed causing the death of twenty four people
November 2011	The motorcade of the Borno state governor, Kashim Shettima, comes under bomb attack in Maiduguri as he returns from a trip abroad. About 150 die in coordinated bombing and shooting attacks on police facilities in Damaturu and Potiskum in Yobe state.
December 2011	On Christmas day four Christian churches are attacked by Boko Haram resulting in the death 50 people
January 2012	More than 200 people are killed by Boko Haram attacks mainly targeting police stations

April 2013	Boko Haram forces fight against multinational ones in the city of Baga, leaving more than 200 people dead
May 2013	Nigeria's Ministry of Defense announces that armed conflicts have begun against Boko Haram
June 2013	Boko Haram becomes enlisted as a terrorist organization by the Nigerian Ministry of Defense

September 2013	Boko Haram troops kill 143 people at a fake checkpoint in Borno
April 2014	Boko Haram troops kidnap 276 teenage girls from a boarding school in Borno
May 2014	Boko Haram militants attack three villages in Borno, but face the strong resistance of the villagers. More than 200 Boko Haram members died
May 2014	The White House announces that the US has contributed with 80 troops to the search of the kidnapped schoolgirls
May 2014	The UNSC adds Boko Haram to the sanctions list
June 2014	More than 400 people are killed in the Boko Haram attacks in Borno
March 2015	Boko Haram announces loyalty to ISIS

June 2015	Boko Haram kills more than 100 civilians in attacks within the region of Borno and the territory of Chad
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Relevant UN Treaties, Resolutions and Events

The issue of Boko Haram has seriously troubled the UN officials. However it hasn't been subject of a complete resolution. The Security Council has agreed to impose sanctions on certain individuals mainly because of the links of Boko Haram to Al-Qaida.

The UNHRC (United Nations Human Rights Council) has taken action in the issue, though it has been focused on the big immigrant flow to Niger and other neighboring states.

However there are resolutions concerning the general idea of counterterrorism, which can apply in the Boko Haram case as well, some of them are:

A/RES/68/178: Adopted by the GA on 18 December 2013, on the issue of Protecting Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism

http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/68/178

A/RES/66/282: Adopted by the GA on The UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy Review

http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/66/282

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

As mentioned before the handling of the issue by the Nigerian government has been poor, as it was judged to be too mild. The bloc of neighboring countries, led by Chad has been a huge step forward, but many argue that it is too late.

The international community is not much involved in the issue and has been negatively criticizing the government.

Possible Solutions

The possible solutions for such an issue are limited and very similar to solutions that have been suggested concerning other terrorist problems (ex. ISIS), there are two main paths to be followed:

- a) The issue will be dealt with from the inside (by the Nigerian authorities), with some minor help from the neighbors that are already in danger
- b) The UN, the international community in general or countries with much power will lead a big operation that will have as a goal the complete destruction of Boko Haram. That plan can also be divided into two major categories:
 - i) Intervention mainly consisting of drone strikes and other types of bombing
 - ii) Intervention including ground troops, open war with Boko Haram

The first option is what Nigeria unsuccessfully had been trying to do before the Chadian intervention and the formation of the Bloc. As an alternative it will keep the whole region from massive uproars and conflicts and the international community will not intervene. However it poses a high risk of the situation getting out of control and since this has already happened, such a choice is considered highly unlikely.

It is a fact though, that Nigerian authorities with the help of Chad and Cameroon mainly and secondly help from Niger and other African countries have managed to damage the group. Chad is a major player, as it demands immediate action.

The second option is the one that is mainly followed in such cases, a western bloc usually led by the US takes charge of the situation and fights the group. The big question however is how? Ground troops have been proven to be very insufficient and rarely achieve to destruct the group in such cases. Moreover in that case there could be implications with the local government, which will have a war taking place on its grounds. While drone strikes can cause much collateral damage, they are the only means that can avoid heated conflict and at the same time kill members and damage buildings occupied by the terrorists.

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