Boko Haram in 2020

Vera Bohm, ICT

Instructor: Dr. Liram-Koblentz-Stenzler

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I. Introduction

This paper is written in the context of my internship with the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT), Herzliya. It seeks to provide an overview and updated picture of Boko Haram, mostly focusing on their activities in the last five years. With regards to Boko Haram's split with ISWAP in 2016, this paper concentrates on the original faction remaining under the command of Shekau. However, the differentiation between the different Boko Haram factions in research, news articles and data sets is not always clear-cut, which might have led to a certain amount of "contamination" of the material this paper is based on.

II. Boko Haram

1. Overview and Background

Boko Haram is an Islamist terrorist group operating in Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin. The group's official name is "Jama"atu Ahlissunnah lidda"awati wal Jihad" [People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad]; "Boko Haram" is a popular alias, which roughly translates to "western education is forbidden", making a reference to the group's strong opposition to western culture, upon which the western educational system is based (Onapajo & Uzodike, 2012; Onuoha F., 2012). The exact year and circumstances of the emergence of Boko Haram remain contested. Starting as an Islamic sect, the group operated mostly as a low-profile religious movement until the year 2002, when Mohammad Yusuf emerged as its leader (Iyekekpolo, 2016).

Yusuf is considered the founder of Boko Haram as we know it. He was born on January 29, 1970 in Girgir village in Yobe State, Nigeria. After dropping out of secondary school, he received Quranic education under Sheik Jafar Mohammed in Kano. Yusuf developed a radical belief system which entailed a strong resentment towards the west, western civilization, culture and the secular education system. In this context, he saw the secular Nigerian state as an illegitimate entity and part of the rotten western system. Clashes with the authorities and the security forces' subsequent crackdown on Boko Haram in July 2009 led to Yusuf's arrest and summarily execution (Onapajo & Uzodike, 2012; Onuoha, 2010). Yusuf's death prompted Abubakar Shekau to emerge as the new spiritual leader and commander-in-chief

of Boko Haram. 2009 thus marked a turning point in the group's trajectory. (Iyekekpolo, 2016)

The reasons for the emergence of Boko Haram and the environment which set the stage for the establishment of the group and its violent activities are widely discussed with different authors providing a variety of explanations. Olabanji Akionola sees the interaction of Islamic fundamentalism, politics and poverty as contributing factors for the emerge of Boko Haram (2015). Onapajo and Uzodike analyze the insurgency movement on three levels: individual, state and international (2012); Iyekekpolo finds the main culprit in political opportunity (2016); Agbiboa applies the Relative Deprivation Theory on the phenomenon of Boko Haram's emergence (2013). Whatever their relative importance may be, all these factors provided – among others – a fertile ground for the emergence and persistence of Boko Haram.

The group's protracted violent activities have led to an extended humanitarian crisis in North-East Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin, which has left more than 7.1 million people in need of humanitarian assistance; the internal displacement of over 2 million people; and almost 40'000 fatalities (Amao, 2020; Campbell, Nigeria Security Tracker, 2020; ACAPS, 2019/2020; UNHCR, 2019; UN OCHA, n.d.).

Boko Haram has gone during various stages and existed in different forms and versions since their emergence. The most visible development, however, is the metamorphosis from a religious insurgency movement opposing the government and western culture into a full-fledged Salafi-jihadi terrorist group.

2. Ideology

Boko Haram under the leadership of Yusuf was as a fundamentalist religious Muslim movement in opposition of the Nigerian democratic state. Yusuf's ideology was led by a deep contempt for western values, culture, democracy and western education – hence the name "Boko Haram". Seeing the Nigerian state as illegitimate, members of the movement clashed with security forces, but violence against civilians or a violent jihadi orientation was not a feature of Boko Haram at that stage. (Akinola, 2015; Zenn, Barkindo, & A Heras, 2013)

With Shekau emerging as Boko Haram's leader in 2010 after Yusuf's death, the group's course shifted sharply, and they turned into a Jihadi-Salafist terror group with the main goal of establishing a puritanical Islamic state, a caliphate, under sharia law in Nigeria

– the singular legitimate form of government –, replacing the current democratic government. The group professes a very puritanical and literal reading of the Quran and an exclusivist worldview, strictly rejecting all other forms of Islam, and – naturally – any other religion. Jihad has become the group's *raison d'être*, as Shekau formulated Boko Haram's ideology as follows: "the only acceptable political prescription of Boko Haram for the reformation of northern Nigeria is jihad and anything short of jihad will be rejected by the group" (Kassim, 2015, p. 193). In one of his videos, Shekau calls upon all Muslim to take up arms and wage jihad for the liberation of the universe: "I call on all my brethren, wherever you are: May God make this video reach you. I have given you the permission to rise and take up arms and start killing these vagabonds. Kill them, kill them and kill them. Today our religion is nothing but killings, killings and killings! Kill and slaughter, but don't eat them. Abstain from killing their elderly, women, the insane, and anyone who repents. Anybody who rebels against Allah, kill him. By Allah, I will kill you. Killing is my job. Let's kill them all; we'd rather leave this world. Let the whole world perish! May Allah curse you!" (Kassim, 2015, p. 193; Thurston, 2016)

The most striking feature of Shekau's and Boko Haram's ideology is the extremely narrow definition of who is a true Muslim and the resulting violence against civilians, regardless of whether they're Christian or Muslim. According to Shekau, all Muslims which hold a more moderate or mainstream view on Islam, those who work for the government and generally every person who doesn't support Boko Haram's radical ideology, or belongs to a group other than Boko Haram, are not true Muslims and thus to be classified as infidels or *kafir*. While the killing of Muslims by Muslims is generally prohibited, by declaring a Muslim *kafir* they become 'legitimate' targets of the jihad waged by Boko Haram. This approach to the concept of *kafir* has led to the indiscriminate killing of thousands of Muslim civilians by the group. Shekau's narrow criteria to define who is a true believer and thus belongs to the *Ahl-al Sunnar*, and the resulting indiscriminate killing of Muslim civilians has created schisms and caused the factionalization of Boko Haram. In 2012, Ansaru broke away from Boko Haram as a splinter group, accusing Shekau of excessive *takfirism* – the act of excommunication, declaring a Muslim an infidel. The same issue is raised by ISWAP since their split in 2016. ISWAP has a more moderate view regarding who is *kafir* and its attacks

focus on military forces and security personnel, but not ordinary Muslim civilians. (Thurston, 2016; Zenn & Pieri, 2017; Amao, 2020)

3. Geographic Region of Operations

Boko Haram was founded in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state in North-East Nigeria. During the first years, Boko Haram's activities focused mainly on Borno state and later expanded into Yobe and Adamawa. Two massive attacks on the national police headquarters and the UN headquarters in Abuja in 2011 marked a further expansion of the group's reach (Walker, 2012).

In 2012, Boko Haram expanded their operations and attacks for the first time outside of Nigeria into neighboring Cameroon and Chad. Even before this expansion, Cameroon had served as an important sanctuary, logistical hub and recruitment ground for Boko Haram (Mahmood & Ani, 2018). Military offensives of the Nigerian army against Boko Haram and the resulting pressure on the group in 2016 and 2019 caused them to further expand their activities outside of Nigeria into the neighboring countries (ACLED, 2019).

In 2013, Boko Haram went into the offensive and started capturing territories in northeastern Nigeria. Only one year later the group held large territories in northern Nigeria covering an area comparable to the size of Belgium. Besides Gwoza, Bama, Marte and Ngala in Borno state, the four local governments of Michika, Madagali, Mubi North and Mubi South of Adamawa state were under control of Boko Haram (Omenma, Abada, & Omenma, 2020). Similar to the IS in Syria and Iraq, Boko Haram raised the black Jihadist flag in the captured territories and violently enforced the implementation of sharia in the territories they conquered. On August 24, 2014, Boko Haram's leader Shekau declared northern Nigeria a 'caliphate', with the city of Gwoza as its capital. With more than 7000 inflicted fatalities, 2014 marked the most violent year in Boko Haram's existence, making Nigeria the country second most affected by terrorism. Shortly after declaring the caliphate, on March 7, 2015, Shekau pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and Boko Haram subsequently merged with the IS. (Pham, 2016; Zenn, 2020)

In a concerted crackdown on Boko Haram starting in 2015, the Multinational Taskforce MNJTF – comprised of mainly military units from Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon and Niger – reclaimed most of the territories previously controlled by Boko Haram. By July 2016, the group had lost 80% of their territories and was forced to retreat. Today, Boko Haram

executes attacks mostly from their strongholds in south and central Borno state, in and around the Sambisa forest – the group's safe heaven, where their headquarters and training bases are located. Additional areas under the Boko Haram's control include the border with Cameroon and important roads close to the Sambisa forest. (Tochukwu Omenma, Abada, & Onyinyechi Omenma, 2020) The strategic importance of the Sambisa Forest to the group is summed up by Okoli as follows: "The Sambisa forest hosts the organisational, operational, logistical and technical infrastructure of Boko Haram, including its command, armoury, training, detention and execution camps, landmines, artisanal bomb-making factories, prayer grounds, military and civilian supplies, loots, and livestock" (2019). Boko Haram uses the control of these areas to collect taxes and takes advantage of the porous borders to move around south and central Borno State, southern Niger, western Chad and northern Cameroon (Tochukwu Omenma, Abada, & Onyinyechi Omenma, 2020). In December 2016, President Buhari stated that Boko Haram has been ousted from their stronghold in the Sambisa Forest by the Nigerian Army and that "the terrorists are on the run and no longer have a place to hide" (BBC News, 2016). This statement was made exactly one year after Buhari had claimed that Boko Haram had been "technically defeated" (BBC News, 2015). However, attacks by Boko Haram on military and civilian targets continue until today, inflicting terror and mayhem on the population in North-Nigeria and parts of Chad, Cameroon and Niger.

Since the beginning of 2020, Boko Haram has conducted several attacks on the road to Kano connecting Maiduguri to the rest of the state and country, leaving Borno state increasingly isolated. The Maiduguri-Kano highway is the last out of six highways to Maiduguri remaining functional, with the rest of them abandoned due to the threat of Boko Haram ambushes and violence. It is heavily guarded by security forces which until today successfully have resisted Boko Haram's attacks on the road. If Boko Haram's attempts to destroy the At Benishek bridge along this highway are successful, the only way to Maiduguri will be by air. Whether this is an attempt by the group to return to the effective control and governing of territory remains to be seen. (Campbell, 2020; Haruna, 2020)

4. Organizational Structure

Boko Haram operates in a decentralized structure with cells acting with considerable autonomy. Units tend to have little reciprocal knowledge about each other' activities.

(Weeraratne, 2017) Additionally, the group experiences a lot of infighting and factionalizing, with relationships between leaders fluctuating heavily due to ideological and personal differences (TRADOC G-2 ACE Threats Integration, 2015). Shekau functions as the spiritual leader and commander-in-chief of Boko Haram and is complemented by a Shura Council of about 30 members. Together, they head and oversee the organization and are the highest decision-making body of the group. They have the final say in decisions regarding strategic plans, choice of targets, weapons and resources and propaganda ideas (Okereke, 2014). The members of the Shura Council are dispersed and stationed in the main cities and locations with Boko Haram presence. For security reasons, they mostly communicate via mobile phone and seldomly meet in person, which complicates the decision-making process and makes it prone to misunderstandings. Various departments under the Shura Council concentrate on operational missions such as suicide bombing, kidnappings, recruitment, etc. A propaganda department functions as the PR section of the group. This rather minimal structure allows for a high level of operational flexibility (Antwi-Boateng, 2017; Weeraratne, 2017; Anugwom, 2020).

It should be stated here that varying and even contradicting information regarding the organizational structure and internal characteristics of Boko Haram are circulating, which makes assessing the structural and organizational situation of the group rather difficult. One school argues that Boko Haram is a centralized organization, unified under the leadership of Shekau. Others argue that the organization operates in independent cells, as stated above. The secretive nature of Boko Haram makes the establishment of confirmed facts difficult and the groups internal structure remains unclear. Newest algorithmic research based on movement patterns of Boko Haram cells conducted by Prieto Curiel, Walther and O'Clery confirms that Boko Haram is indeed a highly fragmented terrorist organization, consisting of 50-60 cells operating relatively independently while being formally ruled by Shekau (2020). However, Zenn (2019) argues that, while organized in various operational clusters, Boko Haram operates not in a decentralized manner, but along clear departmental structures and decision making lines, with all clusters reporting to Shekau.

Shekau – The Persona

Shekau has long been forced into a clandestine existence, due to efforts of the Nigerian military to take him down. The United States Government labeled Shekau as a

"Specially Designated Terrorist" in 2012 (Bureau of Counterterrorism, 2012) and placed a USD 7 mio. bounty on his capture. His appearances are limited to video messages, which he uses to spread the message of jihad and his ideology, mocking the government and publicizing operational successes of Boko Haram.

The persona of Shekau is subject to a lot of speculations and myths. While little is known about his whereabouts and life, his name instills fear in many, and his messages and acts of terror have reached millions. Latest since the Chibok incidence, Shekau has achieved international fame and the media and governments listen to his every word. Shekau has instrumentalized the unknowingness about him of the media and of his opponents to masterfully create and reinforce a mystical image of immortality and invincibility.

Despite little factual knowledge about Shekau, the media and his opponents often portray him as a 'brutal psychopath', 'bloodthirsty lunatic' and Boko Haram in general as a group of 'deranged criminals', led by a 'mad-man'. This overly simplistic view of Shekau and Boko Haram has led to and underestimation of his and the group's capacities and subsequently to an improper response to the threat posed by them. (Barkindo, 2018) Shekau is the most prevalent or even the single representative face of Boko Haram. While he is supplemented in his work by other leaders in the Shura Council, his name and persona have symbolic value for the organization. Within the group, he occupies the position of both the imam and the commander in chief. Taking a closer view on Shekau, Barkindo (2018) finds that by labelling him simply as a crazy rabble-rouser, his role as a charismatic leader, imam and commander in chief is not done justice, as these labels ignore the fact that it was Shekau who transformed Boko Haram from a small, low-profile religious group into the 'world's deadliest terrorist group' (Pisa & Hume, 2015). Shekau poses a paradox in being a well-versed theologist and a brutal gangster at the same time (Karlsson, 2016). On the one hand, he shows a striking penchant to violence, as manifested both in his actions and in statements such as the one of his Youtube video of January 2012: "I enjoy killing anyone that God commands me to kill, the way I enjoy killing chicken and rams" (Okereke, 2014, p. 20); or: "You don't know my madness. Today, you will see my madness. By Allah, I will slaughter you. If I don't slaughter you, I will not feel contented. By Allah, I will slaughter … Brothers! Wherever you are, may Allah make this cassette to reach you; I have given you the permission to rise, take arms, and start killing them even if you are three. Kill! Kill!! Kill!!! Today, our

religion is nothing but killing" (Barkindo, 2018, p. 64). On the other hand, as a charismatic leader and respected Islamic scholar he has been able to reach many with his message of jihad and has led Boko Haram to power during the last decade.

Barkindo (2018) compares Shekau to a CEO of a terrorist organization, thus portraying him not as a madman but as a skilled leader with various managerial qualities. In this CEO role, Shekau has a) established a central philosophy for the struggle and a *raison d'être* for the group, based on exclusivist Salafi-jihadi ideology and with an extremely stringent take on *takfirism*; b) formed strategic alliances and disregarded internal factionalism (e.g. with Ansaru) or external rivalry whenever it served the interests of Boko Haram; and c) he delegates authority to separate commanders who remain anonymous, leaving the spotlight for himself. Shekau uses his command of several languages to enhance the effect of his message on specific audiences. He uses his native language Kanuri to specifically address the local Lake Chad audiences; his knowledge of Arabic enhances his Muslim credibility and his status as a scholar; speaking Hausa and Fulani, he reaches the largest population group in Nigeria (30%); and to mock the western world, he uses French and English. His ability to reach people in their native language gives Shekau an important advantage as it makes it easier for his audience to identify with his message. Furthermore, by reinterpretation of the Salafi-jihadi ideology, Shekau has framed his philosophy in the Kanuri socio-cultural context, which unites the lake Chad population through language and religion. Through strategic use of the common historical narrative, Shekau created a story which integrates the cultural heritage of the region and takes into account the political grievances and socio-economic hardships of the local population. This has facilitated the recruitment of new members to Boko Haram over the years. (Barkindo, 2018)

Ansaru and Boko Haram

In 2012, Ansaru (*Ansar al- Muslimin fi Bilad al-Sudan*), a group under Mamman Nur, broke away from Boko Haram due to fundamental differences regarding the killing of Muslim civilians. Ansaru proclaimed its formation after a deadly attack by Boko Haram on Kano a week earlier, which left 200 civilians dead. Ansaru operated with the backing of and close ties to AQIM. However, Ansaru's existence was short lived, as the group went dormant after the French intervention in Mali caused the severance of Ansaru's network ties with AQIM in 2013. Ansaru re-integrated with Boko Haram before the latter's alliance with the IS in March

2015. This re-integration brought about a substantial transfer of knowledge to Boko Haram, especially regarding kidnappings and suicide bombings, acquired by Ansaru trough training by AQIM (Zenn, 2019; Zenn, 2020; Zenn & Pieri, 2017).

ISWAP and Boko Haram

When Shekau pledged Boko Haram's allegiance to the IS in 2015, the IS in a first step endorsed Boko Haram as its official affiliate group in Western Africa. But in August 2016 already, Shekau was replaced as the leader of the group when the IS instead appointed Abu Musabal-Barnawi, a former lieutenant of Shekau. Shekau did not accept this decision and the group subsequently split into two sections. The 'original' group continued its activities under the command of Shekau (ACLED, 2019). The new splinter group is known under the name *Wilayat Gharb Ifriqiyyah* (Islamic State West Africa Province ISWAP) and operates with official backing of the IS. (Campbell, 2019; Zenn & Pieri, 2017)

One main discrepancy between these two factions is their diverging view regarding the targeting of fellow Muslims. Shekau's narrow definition of who is a 'real' Muslim and thus part of the pure *ahl al-Sunna* has led to a broad application of the status 'apostate' and the subsequent killing of many ordinary Muslim civilians, much to the contempt of some of his followers (Campbell, 2019). Since the split in 2016, Boko Haram continues their strategy of non-discrimination between civilians and government officials or security personnel, while ISWAP targets mainly government entities and security forces. Additionally, ISWAP has put in some efforts into developing ties with local communities and even provides minimal social services by providing Islamic education, minimal medical services and a certain level of protection. ISWAP thus shows a 'hearts and minds'-approach towards the local population, very much in contrast with Boko Haram's brutality towards them (Zenn, 2019; Bureau of Counterterrorism, 2019; Amao, 2020).

5. Recruitment

Reasons to Join Boko Haram

Boko Haram members have often been pictured as "uneducated, school drop-outs, jobless youth, political thugs and students from low socio-economic backgrounds" (Aghedo & Osumah, 2012, p. 861). During the first years of Boko Haram, however, the group could boast a number of highly educated businessmen and politicians among their members and supporters. But when the Boko Haram went underground in 2009 and became more brutal

and their violence increasingly indiscriminatory after the killing of Yusuf, the support of such prominent and wealthy figures waned quickly.

Much has been written about the reasons and motivations for predominantly young men to voluntarily join jihadi groups such as Boko Haram. The issue of radicalization is an important factor in the recruitment process to such groups and has been discussed extensively by scholars as well. However, going into the theoretical aspects of the radicalization process and its underlying reasons would go beyond the scope of this paper.

The socio-economic and political environment of northern Nigeria provides a fertile ground for the recruitment of young people to the ranks of Boko Haram. High levels of youth unemployment, extreme poverty, lasting government corruption, lack of education and a sense of religious and ethnic exclusion provide important reasons for frustration and a sense of hopelessness in the (young) population. Boko Haram exploits exactly such factors when convincing potential recruits to join their fight for the greater good. (Zenn, Barkindo, & A Heras, 2013; Botha & Abdile, 2019; Omenma, Hendricks, & Ajaebili, 2020; Onuoha F. C., 2014)

Religion plays a key role in the recruitment and radicalization process of Boko Haram members. This can either be manifested for example in the recruits' wish to become a more devout Muslim or the promise of paradise for martyrs. Furthermore, there is a general sense of economic and political marginalization of the Muslim population in the north, as compared to the Christian south of Nigeria. In combination with the harshness of everyday life, the religious call of Boko Haram can be attractive for young individuals without perspective. Boko Haram furthermore uses 'propaganda by the deed' as an instrument to persuade people to join; through public executions and beheadings of apostates, the group instills fear in those watching and sometimes gives them the choice of either joining or suffering the same fate of being killed. (Botha & Abdile, 2019; Omenma, Hendricks, & Ajaebili, 2020)

Another important reason to join Boko Haram cited by Botha and Abdile (2019), is the sense of belonging and identity the group provides. Especially for young people who experienced a difficult upbringing within a weak family structure, this sense of belonging can be a reason to join a group such as Boko Haram. Revenge for state repression and the excessive use of force, abuse and brutality by the Nigerian Armed Forces provides another motivation to join the group. This can be seen in the drastic escalation of Boko Haram's

violence after the killing of Yusuf and hundreds of suspected Boko Haram members in 2009. (Botha & Abdile, 2019; Onuoha F. C., 2014)

Besides attracting recruits through their religious message and by providing a sense of belonging and identity, Boko Haram also offers financial incentives to their members. This can be in form of a monthly salary, free Islamic education or informal jobs. The group is reported to specifically pay women for their services as weapons carriers, as they tend to experience less scrutiny by security forces and can hide weapons under their traditional clothes. (Omenma, Hendricks, & Ajaebili, 2020)

The Almajiri

A notable feature of the social sphere in (northern) Nigeria are the *Almajirai*. *Almajiri*, in its broad interpretation, describes the children of the streets, the millions of children begging in the street of north Nigeria's cities. The more narrow meaning of the term refers to "young boys who attend traditional Muslim schools under the tutelage of a *malam* – a teacher and Islamic scholar" (Hansen, 2016, p. 83). Coming from rural areas, these boys are sent by their parents into the custody of an Islamic teacher in a city at a young age, sometimes as early as four years old. Some parents act this way for spiritual reasons, hoping that their kid might gain credit from Allah by receiving Quranic education. But in many cases the reason is poverty: parents who cannot provide for their own children hope that Allah will take better care of them when their child studies under a *malam*. Studying in a traditional Quranic school under a *malam* includes the memorization of the Quran, but also begging for food and money in the streets. Many students are financially exploited by their *malams*, who expropriate them partly or fully of the money they collect in the streets. Estimates count more than 8.5 million Almajirai in northern Nigeria, which presents a vast recruiting pool for Boko Haram. (Hansen, 2016)

Some scholarly literature suggests that the class of *Almajirai* provides a steady stream of recruits to Boko Haram. Their socially and economically extremely dire situation makes these young boys particularly vulnerable to the offerings of Boko Haram. Boko Haram in turn successfully capitalizes on the vulnerability of this desperate and poor social class, who finds itself at the bottom of the social hierarchy, in their efforts to recruit new foot soldiers. But while many *Almajirai* might find their way into the ranks of Boko Haram, the direct connection and correlation between them is debated. Some scholars find a direct connection

between Quranic schools and Boko Haram (Akinola, 2015), while others blame 'economic deprivation' in general for their accession to the group (Hansen, 2016); and – in a different approach – Hoechner finds in her research that *Almajirai* are subject to popular accusations regarding Boko Haram membership and a stigma of violence, and that they are often used as convenient scapegoats without any means to defend themselves against such claims; Hoechner refutes the claim that *Almajirai* are particularly prone to become Boko Haram members with the argument that no empirical evidence to the claim that Quranic schools provide the "cannon fodder" for Boko Haram can be found. (Hoechner, 2014)

Ethnicity and Tribes within Boko Haram

Nigeria is composed of more than 250 ethnic groups, speaking over 500 different languages. Northern Nigeria is populated mainly by Hausa and Fulani ethnic groups, which are also fairly represented in Boko Haram. The Kanuri, the ethnicity Shekau belongs to, are the predominant ethnic group in Borno state and represent with ca. 80% the majority of Boko Haram's membership. Furthermore, the Kanuri form the main ethnic group in neighboring Chad, Cameroon in Niger; Boko Haram has found a fertile recruiting base in the Kanuri population in Cameroon. Shekau has been accused of favoritism towards his own ethnic group by selecting mainly non-Kanuri's for suicide missions, causing resentment by other ethical groups in Boko Haram. This tribal alienation was manifested in that many of the members who split from Boko Haram with Ansaru in 2012 reportedly belonged to the Hausa and Fulani ethnicity. (Zenn, Barkindo, & A Heras, 2013; Agbiboa D. E., 2014; Zenn, 2014)

Recruitment: Where and How

As opposed to the online recruitment methods prevalent in the IS, Boko Haram recruits the majority of their members in the traditional way (Omenma, Hendricks, & Ajaebili, 2020). The main recruiting grounds are religious institutions, mosques and religious schools. Mosques are an ideal location to identify potential members and also provide a platform for imams to spread the ideology of Boko Haram and jihad. Another important area for recruitment is the immediate social circle of potential candidates. Especially in the case of female recruits, the concept of 'sisterhoods' stands out, where young women are connected to the principles of Salafi jihadism. And lastly, recruitment of new members also happens within families. Members who were recruited by relatives tend to show enhanced levels of

loyalty to Boko Haram thanks to close familiar ties within the group. (Botha & Abdile, 2019; Omenma, Hendricks, & Ajaebili, 2020)

Popular Support and Forced Conscription

With time, Boko Haram has lost a lot of popular support – and with it the support of their recruitment base – due to the short-sighted strategy of Shekau to indiscriminately target the civil population, from which the group derived their members. The toll the brutal activities and crimes of Boko Haram have taken on the local population over the years resulted in increasing alienation and suspicion towards the group. It thus has become more and more difficult to recruit people voluntarily to join the ranks of Boko Haram and the group increasingly relies on violent recruitment and forced conscription. (Omenma, Hendricks, & Ajaebili, 2020; Mahmood & Ani, 2018)

Forced conscription often happens by abduction of individuals. As described in the section 'Modus Operandi', Boko Haram uses male and female individuals alike for their operations. The Chibok kidnapping brought international attention to this phenomenon, but Boko Haram had started abduction of young girls already in 2013, in the beginning as bargaining chips for prisoners' exchanges and later to take part in terrorist activities. By today, thousands of girls have been kidnapped by the group, even with the majority of incidents going unreported. Similarly, Boko Haram also abducts thousands of teenage boys and has them 're-educated' in Quranic schools to make them ready to fight the jihad. These untrained boys are often used for intelligence gathering or to overwhelm security forces in a first attack-wave on villages or military posts. (Zenn, 2014; Weeraratne, 2017; Omenma, Hendricks, & Ajaebili, 2020)

Exact numbers regarding the manpower of Boko Haram are hard to come by and estimates can be found anywhere between around 9'000 members according to the CIA (BBC News, 2016) and 50'000 (Zenn, 2014) members.

6. Funding

Investigating the financial streams of a regional terror organization such as Boko Haram is a complicated enterprise, as most funding activities take place outside of the official financial system. Boko Haram so far has been highly successful in spoiling the efforts of the Nigerian government to disrupt or cut off the group's financing streams and has managed to raise tens of millions of US dollars since their emergence in 2002. Boko Haram's funding

structure and instruments have changed and evolved over time, adapting to the environment the group is operating in. (Rock, 2016)

Under the leadership of Yusuf, Boko Haram relied, among other sources, on a membership fee of 100 Naira (0.80 USD) a day for the basic financial sustenance of the group. This tool of funding was abandoned by Shekau around 2012. Furthermore, the group used to cultivate a system of microfinancing for small businesses as an additional source of funding. In this system, the profits generated by businesses which were opened via a microloan issued by Boko Haram would be channeled back into the organization. Microfinancing seemed to be a re-emerging trend in 2016. Before Boko Haram became an underground organization, it could also count on donations of wealthy members and government officials. (Onuoha F. C., 2010; Rock, 2016; Zenn, 2014; Comolli, 2015)

Over the years, Boko Haram has diversified their sources of income and has come to rely on multiple streams of funding.

Kidnapping for Ransom

Kidnapping for ransom has played an important role in the funding of Boko Haram. In a string of abductions, the group has collected ransoms amounting to millions of US dollars. In February 2013, Boko Haram abducted a French family in Cameroon and received ca. USD 3.14 million ransom payment for the release of the family. In 2014, the group abducted a French priest (in coordination with Ansaru) and released him weeks later in exchange for a multi-million dollar payment and the release of a Boko Haram-affiliated weapons trafficker (Zenn, 2014). Kidnapping of high-profile Nigerians proved profitable as well, with an estimated USD 1 million per abducted person paid for ransom. A notable example of a high-profile kidnapping is the abduction of Dr Alli Shettima Monguno, who served as Petroleum Minister and head of OPEC and was released after four days after payment of several million naira. When Boko Haram abducted the wife of Cameroon's deputy prime minister and a local leader with his family, the government paid USD 600'000 for their release and that of ten Chinese engineers who had been kidnapped in a different instance. Furthermore, the abduction of local elders and Nigerian businessmen, which separately might not result in the payment of millions per victim, together still amount to a substantial stream of income for Boko Haram. (Rock, 2016; Comolli, 2015) Kidnappings of hundreds or even thousands ordinary citizens without any special monetary means result in

ransom payments in the range of USD 10'000 to USD 20'000 per victim and also add to the income of the group. (Pham, 2016)

Bank Robberies

Bank robberies have been another pillar of Boko Harams funding. Between 2010 to 2013, Boko Haram carried out hundreds of bank robberies, mostly in the states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa. This enterprise resulted in an influx of estimated 987 million naira (USD 6 million). The 'collected' funds were distributed between among the robbers, the widows of killed jihadists, the poor and charity, and the Boko Haram leadership. After President Jonathan declared a state of emergency over northern Nigeria in 2013, bank robberies became less frequent, but they remain an important source of income for the Boko Haram. (Comolli, 2015)

Extortion and Looting

Extortion and looting present another source of income for Boko Haram. The group extorts businessmen, politicians and regular citizens by threatening to harm the victim or members of its family if they don't pay a specific amount. Another type of extortion is money demanded from business owners and politicians in exchange for protection under the threat of violence and attacks if the money is not paid. For example, the governors of Bauchi state and Kano state are reported to regularly have paid protection fees to Boko Haram so that their states would be spared from attacks by the group. (Attah, 2019; Comolli, 2015; Rock, 2016)

Boko Haram makes use of village raids to loot resources from the population, besides the killing of people and destruction of infrastructure. Among other things, the group steals livestock and food from villages. Whether Boko Haram uses these resources for themselves or sells them for profit remains unclear. The inability of the Nigerian army to protect its citizens makes them easy prey for Boko Haram. These looting tours put an economic strain on a population which is already suffering from a humanitarian crisis. (Mahmood & Ani, 2018)

Cattle Rustling

Cattle rustling has become a major source of income for Boko Haram. Cattle rustling is a form of rural organized crime, where cattle is stolen under the use of violence or the threat thereof. The stolen cattle or products like meat and animal skin is sold for profit,

usually on a local market which is geographically distant from the place the cattle were stolen from. Cattle rustling is estimated to result in millions of US dollars of profit. Boko Haram has been involved in this enterprise since 2013, with an upward trend being noticed in the last years. The increasing scope of the problem has led to the temporary closing of cattle markets in Borno state in March 2016. Estimates state that so far 169'000 cows and 63'000 rams, goats and sheep have fallen victim to cattle rustling by Boko Haram. (Rock, 2016; Mahmood & Ani, 2018)

Illicit Trafficking

Boko Haram reportedly is engaged in other forms of criminal activities, such as drugs, human and weapons trafficking. Whether Boko Haram does the trafficking for their own use or in order to generate revenue is not clear at this point. (Mahmood & Ani, 2018)

External Funding

Boko Haram has received substantial financial contributions from external organizations in several instances. In 2002, Osama Bin Laden transferred USD 3 million to Nigeria for distribution among various groups. Boko Haram reportedly received a substantial share of this amount. (Attah, 2019; Rock, 2016) Further payments by Al Qaida and AQIM took place according to the U.S. Treasury Department. Nigerian intelligence state the donation of USD 250'000 from AQIM in 2011 as a primary instalment to Boko Haram. However, financial support from AQIM has declined to unsubstantial amounts over the years. The groups' alignment with the IS in 2015 does not seem to have materialized in major financial support to Boko Haram in the period until the split of ISWAP in 2016. (Rock, 2016; Zenn, Barkindo, & A Heras, 2013)

7. Use of Social Media

Like other terror groups, Boko Haram makes use of the new possibilities offered by social media. However, while the IS has achieved fame for its highly professional media content, Boko Haram's videos are mostly crude and unsophisticated. Furthermore, Boko Haram hardly uses social media as a tool to engage with and recruit new members, but mostly to propagate their message and to publicize and celebrate attacks and operational successes. Social media is also instrumentalized for the organization of attacks and

communication between Boko Haram members, for example through the encrypted 'Telegram' service. (Akwen, Moorthy, & Daud, 2020; RAND , 2018)

The propaganda of Boko Haram does not aim primarily at generating support for the movement but is intended to instill fear in the population and the armed forces and to discredit the government of Nigeria. The first goal is achieved by demonstrating the strength and brutality of Boko Haram for example through the display of the groups' arsenal of sophisticated weaponry in videos; by portraying the group as a professional military; by publicizing on-going or recent attacks and operational victories; and by showing images of the beheading of hostages and of attacks on villages. Through their propaganda, Boko Haram paints a picture that their victory is inevitable and that the group is superior to the Nigerian armed forces. The second aim of Boko Haram's propaganda is to discredit the government and to demonstrate that it is untruthful and weak. When the group abducted the Chibok girls, the government of President Jonathan first denied the abduction and people close to President Jonathan labeled it as a 'fabricated story' and 'fake news'. Shekau then published a video showing the captured girls and successfully used the opportunity to proof the untruthfulness of the Nigerian government. A similar story happened when Boko Haram downed a Nigerian air force jet and the government denied the incident until Boko Haram published a video showing the wreckage of the airplane and the captured pilot. Boko Haram capitalizes on the fact that the government and its security forces are not able to protect the Nigerian citizens from Boko Haram and uses this fact in their propaganda by portraying the government as weak and the Nigerian soldiers as cowards and incompetents. (RAND , 2018; Ogbondah & Agbese, 2018)

The role of the persona of Boko Haram's leader Shekau in the propaganda of Boko Haram deserves some attention. Shekau's video messages form an integral part of Boko Haram's propaganda efforts. In his extensive speeches Shekau threatens further attacks, explains his ideology, including his opposition to the government, democracy and the west and justifies Boko Haram's atrocities with his radical interpretation of Islam. He also uses these appearances to showcase the sophisticated equipment and weaponry in the hands of Boko Haram. By means of propaganda videos (many of them are available on Youtube), Shekau over the years has created an image and reputation of his persona to be invincible and unpredictable. The government of Nigeria several times claimed the death of Shekau.

But each time, Shekau gave a comeback on video, proving once more to the Nigerian people that their government is lying to them and reinforcing his image of invincibility (Ogbondah & Agbese, 2018).

8. Modus Operandi

Since the beginning of their activities, Boko Haram engaged in asymmetric warfare and guerilla tactics to reach their goals. During the first years, attacks focused mostly on violence against government institutions, military installations and violent confrontations with security forces and the police. During this time, machine guns were the main weapons used by Boko Haram (Pricopi, 2016). Over the years, the groups' tactics evolved and became more lethal, and the modes of attacks more sophisticated, involving modern weaponry and equipment. Under Shekau's leadership, Boko Haram launched jihad in Nigeria and by the year 2016, the group was designated the world's deadliest terrorist group based on to the number of people killed by them (Zenn, 2017).

Target selection of Boko Haram evolved in three phases. The first phase, mainly under Yusuf, involved mostly the targeting of military installations and the security body, as stated above. In a second phase, when Shekau took over in 2010, the group started focusing on specific targeting of educational institutions, political figures, traditional leaders and Christian communities. During the last years, however, Boko Haram's violence became increasingly indiscriminatory, shifting from specific targeting towards broad attacks on civilians in a general campaign of terror against the Nigerian population and unbelievers (Weeraratne, 2017).

Raids on Towns and Villages

One tactic which Boko Haram uses prevalently until today is raiding towns and villages, not only in Nigeria but also in neighboring Cameroon, Chad and Niger. Raids can take place both during day and night and differ vastly in their extent. Some raids are conducted by a handful of Boko Haram fighters, equipped with guns. In other cases, hundreds of them attack a village or town, supported by tanks, RPGs and anti-aircraft missiles and killing hundreds of people within a few hours. In some raids, specifically identified individuals are assassinated. In other cases, Boko Haram indiscriminately kills or abducts people from villages, looting and robbing their houses and damaging or destroying critical infrastructure of these communities. Sometimes people are given the choice between joining the group or

being killed on the spot. Thousands of civilians have been killed in such raids or forced to flee their homes. (Amnesty International, 2015; Pricopi, 2016). During 2014-2015, these attacks happened on a daily basis – but until today, the newspapers are filled with reports of such incidents.

Raids on Military and Security Compounds

In a similar manner to raids on towns and villages, Boko Haram attacks military and security bases. The effect of such raids is twofold: firstly, killing soldiers and security personnel or causing them to flee demoralizes and weakens the military and security apparatus; secondly, the weapons and gear Boko Haram seizes in such raids make up part of the substantial arms portfolio and equipment of the group.

Abductions

With the 2014 kidnapping of the Chibok girls, Boko Haram gained global attention and achieved dubious fame. However, this incident was only one in a systemic campaign of abductions since 2013. Initially, abductions were a measure to take revenge for the detainment of wives and children of Boko Haram militants by security forces. Mass-detentions of (female) family members of Boko Haram fighters are a common government measure in the fight against the group, which turned out to have a strong impact on Boko Haram's strategy and response. The capturing of often Christian women and girls in retaliation, which later would be used as bargaining chips for the release of detained Boko Haram women, evolved into a vicious circle of reciprocal abductions (Zenn & Pearson, 2014).

But the leadership of Boko Haram soon came to recognize the multiple purposes kidnappings could be used for, and abductions for ransom became a reliable source of income for the group. To that end, foreigners, often businessmen, are targeted in kidnappings under demand of the payment of large sums for ransom. But not only foreigners fall victim to that tactic, also Nigerian families are pressed for ransom, although smaller amounts, in order to release captured relatives. Additionally, kidnappings are used as bargaining leverage or as tool for the forced recruitment of new members. Kidnapped girls are sold as sex slaves, forced into marriage with fighters or used in terrorist attacks, for example as suicide bombers. By today, abductions have become an integral part of the groups' strategy (Weeraratne, 2017). The number of abducted persons is unclear, but likely to be in the thousands. (Campbell, 2020)

Suicide Bombings

In 2011, Boko Haram added suicide bombings as a new tactic to their violent repertoire and by 2020 has committed hundreds of suicide attacks in Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger and Chad – with Nigeria's north-east region bearing the lion's share of attacks and casualties. The suicide bombings target civilians, security forces, political and religious institutions (Global Terrorism Database, n.d.). 2015 marked a peak with 114 suicide attacks, amounting in 1989 fatalities (Campbell & Harwood, 2018). Before 2011, suicide attacks were absent in West Africa and Nigeria. AQIM and Al Shahab provided critical knowledge and training to Boko Haram operatives – Zenn finds evidence for this in the fact that Boko Haram did not go through a trial and error phase in the beginning, but immediately was proficient in carrying out suicide attacks, thanks to proper instruction and training (Zenn, 2017). Different authors state for example that Mamman Nur, the mastermind behind the first two suicide bombings of Boko Haram, the 2011 attacks on Nigerian Federal Police headquarters and the United Nations headquarters, has been trained by AQIM and Al Shahab. The reasons for Boko Haram's adoption of suicide bombings as a main instrument in attacks can, *inter alia*, be found in the simple fact that suicide bombings tend to do the job: suicide bombings are effective in spreading terror among the targeted population; historical examples also show that such attacks are an efficient tool to influence government decisions and policies. Besides effectiveness, suicide bombings are cost-efficient and therefore an ideal tool in asymmetric warfare for an organization with limited financial means facing a government security apparatus (Warner & Matfess, 2017).

Research of Warner and Matfess (2017) describes one notable feature of Boko Haram's attacks: their tendency to launch linked attacks by sending bombers in pairs or in groups to their targeting destinations. This seems to be the case more often with female suicide bombers. The motivations for this tactic are not all clear. By pairing bombers, the destructive effect of the attacks might be enhanced; another logic is that the commitment of one bomber to detonate will serve to strengthen the others' commitment to the attack; a third reason could be the higher death toll achieved by detonation of the second bomb in the crowd gathering around the victims of the first detonation.

Despite the prominent use of suicide bombings, Boko Haram is not particularly effective in affecting mass casualties. Boko Haram's suicide bombers relatively often fail to

detonate their bombs due to a variety of reasons such as a technical failure of the bomb, voluntary surrender of the attacker to the police or arrest by security forces. However, when they detonate, they tend to kill and injure fewer people than it is the case in other terrorist groups. The group has a comparatively low 'success rate' with 8.1 people killed per attack, or due to often linked attacks, 4.5 killings per bomber, compared with a substantially higher average of 11 in other groups (Moghadam cited in Warner & Matfess, 2017). In the same vein, the number of people injured per attack is relatively low in comparison with the global average. The most efficient suicide bombers of Boko Haram are children and teenagers with an average of 9.4 killings per attack. The percentage of fatalities caused by Boko Haram by suicide bombers was overall relatively low with 21.5% by June 2017, according to the Council on Foreign Relations. (Warner & Matfess, 2017)

In the big picture, Boko Haram's attacks do not reflect the group's ideological emphasis of opposition to western education and Christianity. Much on the contrary, the biggest bulk of attacks go against civilian targets such as markets, bus stops and camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs), without consideration of the victims' religious affiliation. Additionally, only a small portion of suicide attacks target educational institutions. Roughly 20% of the targets were religious institutions, with Islamic institutions being targeted more often than Christian institutions. This surprising fact might be based on the group's narrow concept who is a 'true Muslim', rendering everyone else an apostate and therefore a legitimate target. Governmental institutions, often military and police stations or checkpoints, make for 21.1% of all suicide attacks. (Warner & Matfess, 2017)

The targets of suicide bombings changed over time. During the 2011 and 2012, Boko Haram indeed focused on governmental institutions and Christian institutions in Borno as targets for suicide bombings, much according to the group's ideology; during this first phase, suicide bombers were exclusively male. In 2014, the group for the first time attacked an educational institution by means of a suicide bomber and the targeting of markets and other locations frequented by civilians became more prevalent. Civilians targets were attacked mostly by female and children suicide bombers. The group expanded their targets from Borno state into broader (northern) Nigeria and in the following the years also into Chad, Cameroon and Niger. The year 2015 marked the first suicide attack on an IDP camp.

Use of Women and Children as Suicide Bombers

On June 8, 2014, Boko Haram deployed their first female suicide bomber, when a girl blew herself and a soldier up in Bauchi State (Nnam, Arua, & Otu, 2018). In a disturbing trend of equality, the number of female suicide bombers has grown over the years, as hundreds of women and girls have been instrumentalized as smart weapons, outstripping the use of women or suicide attacks by any other terrorist organization by far. By 2017, more than half of Boko Haram's suicide attacks were executed by women and female children (Warner & Matfess, 2017). Children as young as seven years old are instrumentalized as suicide bombers, some detonating the IEDs themselves, while in other cases this is done remotely, possibly without the kids' prior knowledge (Akanji, 2015). Kidnappings and abductions provide a steady stream of new female and minor candidates for suicide bombings. Most women and children are coerced into taking part in these attacks by extreme indoctrination, use of drugs or brainwashing (Campbell, 2020).

While other terrorist groups, such as the Tamil Tigers or the Chechen rebels, have used women as suicide bombers in the past, the prevalence of their instrumentalization as suicide bombers by Boko Haram is unprecedented (Nnam, Arua, & Otu, 2018). By February 2018, 469 female suicide bombers have been deployed in 240 (attempted) attacks, killing more than 1'200 people in Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon (Pearson & Zenn, 2018). Several strategic advantages can be found in the use of female and children suicide bombers: first, the use of women and children in suicide attacks has an enhanced propaganda effect and amplifies fear, ensuring broader attention by the media thanks to a greater 'shock value'; second, women and children tend to be less scrutinized by security forces, due to an unwillingness on part of the mostly male security personnel to search them based on cultural sensitivities to harm a women's honor by searching their body; children often escape scrutiny as a result of a general assumption of innocence towards children. Women and children therefore have easier access to their target locations. Additionally, traditional women's costumes, such as the hijab, facilitate the concealment of bombs. In some cases, women have disguised themselves as pregnant in order to hide explosives; third, by using female suicide bombers, male lines of leadership do not get disrupted; fourth, resorting to female suicide bombers can also be a measure of desperation amidst a shortage of male recruits in militant organizations; and finally, female suicide bombers can have the effect of shaming males into fighting. (Nnam, Arua, & Otu, 2018)

It can be argued that Boko Haram uses female suicide bombers solely for tactically opportunistic reasons, as they don't capitalize on their martyrdom as a religious deed and don't elevate them to societies' role models. Their names are rarely published by the press and they do not achieve the status of celebrated 'poster girls'. By coercing and forcing women and children to execute suicide attacks, the glorified narrative of voluntary martyrdom loses its meaning. (Pearson & Zenn, 2018)

Warner and Matfess (2017) have found that female and children suicide bombers are predominantly used to attack civilian targets, such as bus stations, markets, or going after the most vulnerable by targeting camps for IDPs. Male suicide bombers on the other hand focus on Christian and governmental institutions (Pearson & Zenn, 2018). The feminization of terror by Boko Haram thus represents a twofold threat to female civilians by targeting them in public places and additionally putting them at risk to be unwillingly deployed as bombers. (Warner & Matfess, 2017; Nnam, Arua, & Otu, 2018)

9. Significant Events and Attacks

Over the years, Boko Haram has conducted hundreds of attacks, killing thousands of people. The below list of major events and attacks provides a rough overview over their main activities since 2009.

July 2009	Yusuf and ca. 1000 Boko Haram members are killed in clashes with the police
September 2010	Boko Haram re-emerges under Shekau; frees members from Bauchi prison
June 2011	First suicide bombing in attack on police headquarters in Abuja
August 2011	Suicide bomb attack on the UN headquarters in Abuja gives the conflict an international dimension; 23 people killed
December 2011	Christmas Day attack on Saint Theresa church in Madalla kills 42
January 2012	Emergence of Ansaru offshoot
May 2013	Declaration of state of emergency over Northern Nigeria (Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states); establishment of CJTF
November 2013	US designates Boko Haram as Foreign Terrorist Organization FTO
April 2014	Chibok abduction brings global attention to Boko Haram
from Mid 2014	Territorial expansion and control by Boko Haram; start of humanitarian crisis
June 2014	First female suicide bomber is deployed
August 2014	Shekau declares caliphate in Northern Nigeria

February 2015	Start of military offensive against Boko Haram; first attacks in Niger and Chad
January 2015	Attacks on Baga and Dorno Baga (Borno state) result in ca. 2000 killed people
March 2015	Shekau pledges allegiance to the IS
August 2016	Split Boko Haram and ISWAP

(Sources: Mapping Militant Organizations, 2018; Bureau of Counterterrorism, 2020; ISS Institute for Security Studies; Agbiboa D. E., 2014)

Attacks in 2020

As of July 27th, 2020, Boko Haram has carried out 28 attacks against civilians since the beginning of the year. 23 attacks happened in Nigeria, two in Niger, two in Cameroon and one in Chad. 204 civilians were killed in these attacks. Two attacks were suicide bombings, of which one tandem attack killed 10 people; in the second attack, the bomber only killed herself (data: Campbell, 2020). Most people were killed in village raids by Boko Haram and in some road ambushes. The deadliest assault this year took place on June 9th, when 81 civilians, including women and children, were killed in a raid on a village in Gubio, Borno state. Seven people were abducted and about 1200 cattle and camels were stolen (Reuters, 2020; Musa, 2020). Another grave attack was conducted by Boko Haram on February 10th on the village Auno, Borno state, when the group killed 30 civilians and abducted women and children (The Punch, 2020; Reuters, 2020).

III. COUNTER TERRORISM STRATEGIES

1. Overview

The response to Boko Haram by Nigeria and the other affected states has not brought about the end of the terrorist organization, although this claim has been made on several occasions by various officials. Despite efforts towards that end by various different actors on different levels over the course of the last decade, Boko Haram is still operational and wreaking havoc in the Lake Chad Basin.

2. National Counter Offensives

On the national level, the Nigerian Armed Forces (in cooperation with other Nigerian security forces such as the police, state security, etc.) have mounted several counter

offensives to contain and fight the threat emanating from Boko Haram. While the army has been successful in re-capturing most of the territories once held by the terror group, Boko Haram is still successfully operating from their stronghold in the Sambisa forest and no comprehensive defeat of the group has been achieved (Mahmood & Ani, 2018). Additionally, grave human rights abuses by the Nigerian military towards civilians and (suspected) Boko Haram members have destroyed the trust of the population towards the military; Amnesty International (2015) reports war crimes such as extrajudicial execution of more than 1'200 people, deaths in custody of at least 7'000 people, mass arbitrary arrests and unlawful detention of at least 20'000 people, plus many enforced disappearances and torture. Besides having the counter-productive effect of further radicalizing Boko Haram, these war crimes brought about a situation where civilians choose not to cooperate with the security forces and abstain from informing them about Boko Haram activities, as they fear both, the security forces and Boko Haram, equally (Banini, 2019).

Patronage politics and deep reaching corruption in the Nigerian defense sector have substantially impaired the ability of the army to battle Boko Haram. Resulting military failures and high casualty numbers have affected the forces' morale and led to desertions and soldiers simply dropping their weapons and fleeing when under attack, as they are underequipped, outnumbered and undertrained and thus unable to successfully confront Boko Haram. Soldiers report frequent failure of equipment and inadequate body armor and they complain that they are underfed, overstretched and sometimes not paid for weeks. While the Nigerian defense budget has grown substantially over the years, little of the allocated money has translated into a bettering of the security situation, due to diversion of security money into the pockets of generals instead of adequate investment in equipment and training of troops (Banini, 2019; Bappah, 2016; Amao, 2020).

Besides large-scale military offensives, Nigeria has with some success implemented various measures in order to contain Boko Haram's activities. Among them are roadblocks and checkpoints, cordon and search operations, raids on suspected hideouts and the installation of civil self-defense militias (Civilian Joint Task Force, CJTF), who complement the military activities. The cooperation with CJTF vigilante groups has increased the efficiency of military activities, thanks to their deep knowledge of the geography and environment of the area in which they live, their familiarity with the local realities and their personal interest in

the local security and motivation to defeat Boko Haram (Samah, 2019; Omenma & Hendricks, 2018).

3. Multinational Joint Task Force MNJTF

While starting as a local problem in Nigeria, Boko Haram is today operating in four countries around Lake Chad and has evolved into a regional, collective security threat faced by Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon. The current version of the MNJTF was established in 2014-2015 in order to pool resources to address this common threat through regional cooperation between the affected states. The 11'000 troops of the MNJTF operate parallel to the national armies of these countries. The main mandate of the MNJTF is the securing of the borders between the participating countries, thereby preventing cross-borders attacks and cutting supply and escape routes; the task of battling Boko Harm inside the countries is left to the respective state's security forces (Albert, 2017). The International Crisis Group has discussed the efficiency of the MNJTF in an extensive report (2020) and found that, while reporting some successes, the effects of the MNJTF's operations are often short-lived, as Boko Haram (and its factions) are extremely adaptable and able to regroup quickly to mount new attacks shortly after operations of the MNJTF. The report also sees problems in the reluctance of the national armies to cede command to the MNJTF and their unwillingness to cooperate; poor coordination; and shortage of funding. The respective goals of the countries involved are often not congruent: while Nigeria is battling a full-blown insurgency in wide parts of the country, Cameroon was mostly affected only in its border-area and Chad has concentrated on securing its supply routes and fought periodic skirmishes on the lake. This situation leads to differing priorities and objectives, thus complicating coherent action and cooperation in the region (International Crisis Group, 2020). With ongoing border conflicts between the participating countries (Nigeria-Cameroon and Nigeria-Chad), there is also a substantial lack of trust, which impedes on successful military cooperation between the countries. On the practical level, the language barrier between English and France exacerbates the above-mentioned problems. (Albert, 2017)

IV. CONCLUSION

After more than a decade of violence against civilians, Boko Haram's terrorist activities have caused a severe humanitarian crisis in the Lake Chad Basin. Their demise has

been claimed on several occasion by various people, yet the group continues to mount attacks in Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroon. The reasons for the inability to put an end to Boko Haram's activities cannot be found exclusively in the groups capacity to quickly adapt and re-group after setbacks or in their resilience in the face of throwbacks: other factors such as high levels of corruption in the political and security bodies of Nigeria, grave socio-economic grievances of the population in northern Nigeria and the poor behavior of security forces are all elements which play into the hands of Boko Haram. In order to present a sustainable solution, the problem thus needs to be addressed not only on a military level, but more comprehensively in the sphere of education, politics and with programs that help fighting the ongoing poverty and end the humanitarian crisis in the region.

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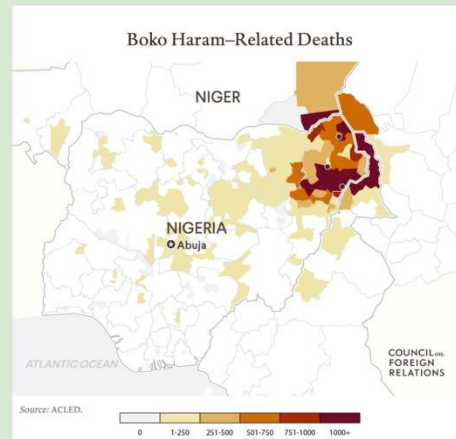UN Refugee Agency: https://www.unhcr.org/nigeria-emergency.html

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VI.ANNEX

BOKO HARAM 2020

Vera Bohm
ICT Internship
Dr. Liram Stenzler-Koblentz

IDEOLOGY

- "Boko Haram": western education is sinful
- under Yusuf: religious sect
  - mostly clashes with government, security forces
  - Nigerian state is illegitimate (democracy)
  - against western values/culture/education
- under Shekau: jihadi-salafist terror group
  - fundamentalist, puritanic undestanding of Islamic
  - very narrow and radical definition of who is true believer; everyone else is target
  - everyone who opposes BH ideology is an apostate
  - targeting of Muslims
- goal: establishment of caliphate under sharia law in Nigeria

GEOGRAPHIC REGION OF OPERATIONS I

- started in Maiduguri, Borno state, Nigeria
- 2013-2014: capture of territory and establishment of caliphate in northern Nigeria
- 2015: coordinated offensive of MNJTF Multinational Joint Task Force (Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Niger);
  - President Buhari December 2015: BH is "technically defeated"
- 2016: BH has lost 80% of territory, retreat into Sambisa forest

Boko Haram–Related Deaths

NIGER

NIGERIA
Abuja

ATLANTIC OCEAN

COUNCIL on.
FOREIGN
RELATIONS

Source: ACLED.

0   1-250   251-500   501-750   751-1000   1000+
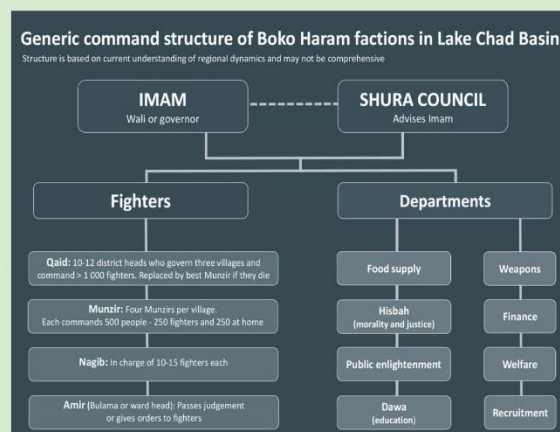
GEOGRAPHIC REGION OF OPERATIONS II

- BH retains stronghold and operation headquarters in Sambisa forest, despite military offensives to oust them
  - "The Sambisa forest hosts the organisational, operational, logistical and technical infrastructure of Boko Haram, including its command, armoury, training, detention and execution camps, landmines, artisanal bomb-making factories, prayer grounds, military and civilian supplies, loots, and livestock." (Okoli, 2019)
- control of border with Cameroon
- control of important streets
  - increased isolation of Borno state by cutting off major road Maiduguri-Kano
- attacks in Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE I

- clandestine organization, hard to establish facts about who is who
- decentralized structure of cells
  - cells operate quite autonomous
  - little reciprocal knowledge of plans and activities
- Shekau: spiritual leader and commander-in-chief; predominant in guiding actions
- Shura council of 30 members (maybe disbanded)

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE II

Generic command structure of Boko Haram factions in Lake Chad Basin
Structure is based on current understanding of regional dynamics and may not be comprehensive

Mahmood, O. S., & Ani, N. C. (2018)

AFFILIATIONS AND SPLITS

- 2011: split Ansaru; rejoin BH later
    - leaders of Ansaru were former AQIM members or AQIM trained
- 2015: Shekau pledges allegiance to al Baghdadi; IS endorses BH
- 2016: Shekau gets replaced by Abu Musabal-Barnawi > split ISWAP
    - little coordination or competition between BH and ISWAP
    - mostly cohabitate

    >> Ansaru and ISWAP disapprove Shekau's killing of Muslims

RECRUITMENT

- who
    - uneducated, jobless youth, political thugs and students from low socio-economic background
    - Almajirai: children of the streets, Islamic students > steady stream of recruits
- where
    - religious institutions, mosques
    - immediate social circle, sisterhoods
    - families
    - less via social media
- forced recruitment
    - lack of popular support
    - abductions of young girls and boys
    - choice between joining and being killed

FUNDING

- kidnapping for ransom
  - high profile kidnappings of foreigners and Nigerians
  - thousands of regular people for less ransom
- extortion of businessmen, politicians and regular citizens
- protection money
- looting
- cattle rustling
- illicit trafficking (drugs, human, weapons)

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- less use for recruiting
- communication within BH via encrypted tools (Telegram)
- propagation of publication of attacks and operational successes
  - Chibok girls, downing of Nigerian fighter jet, etc.
  - discreditation of government
  - propaganda of fear, not to gain support
- videos of Shekau
  - reputation of his persona as invincible and unpredictable
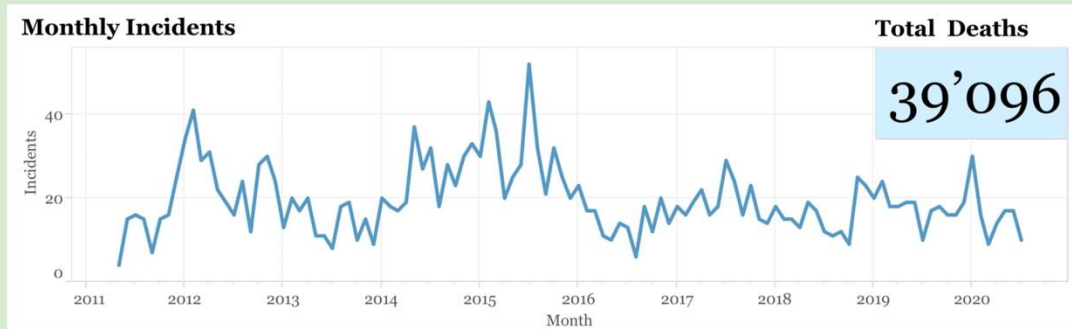
MODUS OPERANDI

- raids on towns and villages (guns, anti-aircraft missiles, RPGs, tanks, cars, on foot)
  - killing (indiscriminate or specific targets)
  - destruction of infrastructure
  - looting, stealing of livestock and food
- raids on military bases
  - stealing of equipment
- abductions for ransom or forced recruitment
- suicide bombings
  - linked attacks, pairing of bombers
  - average 4.5 killed per attacker and attack: not very high rate of killings per attack
  - many technical failures, voluntary surrenders, arrest by security forces
- use of women and children as suicide bombers

ATTACKS 2020

- attacks in Nigeria (23), Niger (2), Cameroon (2) and Chad (1)
- 204 civilians killed, 324 total killed
- 28 attacks
- 2 suicide bombings
  - tandem attack kills 10
  - female attacker only kills herself
- road ambushes
- mostly village raids
- Feb 10 - Auno attack: 30 civilians killed; many women and children abducted
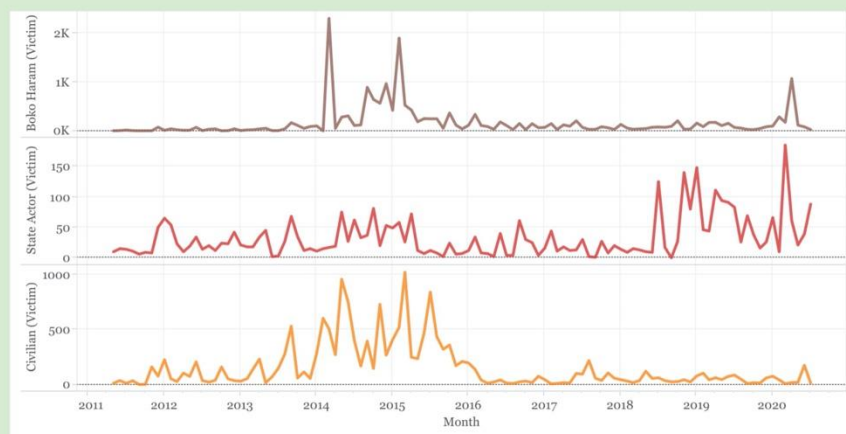- June 9 - Gubio attack: 81 civilians (also women and children) killed; 7 abducted

data: Nigeria Security Tracker, Council on Foreign Relations

MONTHLY INCIDENTS

Monthly Incidents

Total Deaths

39'096

https://www.cfr.org/nigeria/nigeria-security-tracker/p29483

DEATHS

https://www.cfr.org/nigeria/nigeria-security-tracker/p29483

BOKO HARAM AND CORONA

- > 40k confirmed cases, 858 deaths (27.07.2020)
- "deadly alliance" (Telegraph, Bukarti 2020)
- attacks continue - no truce - BH exploits Corona crisis
- redeployment of government resources to fight Corona instead of BH
  - military forces: redistribution of forces for enforcement of lockdowns
  - economic cost of virus
    - drop of oil price
    - additional costs for health equipment, testing facilities, etc.
- target health workers