

Who Are You, Boko Haram?

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims at presenting the different contexts of the activity of Boko Haram, a Salafi Jihad terrorist organization, one of the most murderous terrorist organizations in Africa, which operates in the huge country of Nigeria. The country has been defined by the USA as a strategic asset (the USA's third largest oil supplier and one of the two African economic superpowers, the other being South Africa). It is imperative to be familiar with Boko Haram not only due to the challenges and threats it poses to the governmental stability in Nigeria and its regional influence in the context of ethnic and religious rivalry (between the Muslim and Christian communities), but also because of its declared connections with Al-Qaeda and Global Jihad and the threats its leaders have published against the USA and the western world. In this paper the author discusses several aspects which are important and vital for grasping a comprehensive picture of the organization, the stages in its development and the ways in which it operates.

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WHO ARE YOU, BOKO HARAM?

BACKGROUND

The Federal Republic of Nigeria has a long and bleak history of tribal conflicts and violence based on ethnic and religious differences. Since 1999, with the return of democracy, there have been numerous outbursts of violence and bloodshed among different communities in the state of Plateau, the Middle Belt of Nigeria. Riots also occurred in the centers of the towns of Kaduna and Kano. The conflict of the Seyawa tribe in Tafawa Belewa, in the Bauchi region, has been increasingly intensifying for several decades. The best-known violent conflict owing to its motives, dimensions and outcomes is the Biafra War (1967 – 1970), in which millions of people died either in fighting or from starvation.^[iii] No less-known is the violent and on-going conflict in the south of the country, which is rich in oil and gas, with the MEND organization – the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, a movement that strives for separation from the central government and aspires to reach a more equal distribution of resources of the country; to achieve this end it carries out terrorist acts and kidnaps people for ransom.^[iiii]

From the outside, these conflicts seem to be about religious differences and tension between groups of Muslim and Christian residents. But a closer observation reveals that politics – more precisely control over the patronage of the federal government – is the central reason for many of these conflicts. Continuous disagreements over presidential elections caused a breach in the fragile social texture between Muslims and Christians. For example, in the last presidential elections in 2011, groups of young people raged in southern Kaduna. In such circumstances, the cause of a violent outbreak is usually competition among ethnic groups for the control over centers of power in the country.^[iv]

Nigeria has a history of growth of Muslim factions in towns in the north of the country. The Maitatsine faction^[v], under the leadership of a preacher of Cameroon origin,

Muhammad Yusuf Marwa, was formed in the 1980's. Marwa claimed that the prophet Muhammad was not sent by Allah, and the faction denied certain parts of the Koran. It based itself in the poor neighborhoods of Kanu and was cruelly suppressed.^[vi] The group scattered and was essentially eliminated. In December 1980, as part of warfare against insurgents in Kanu, the women and children, who fought armed with arrows and knives, were killed. The leader of the group, Muhammad Yusuf Marwa, was killed as well.

The weakness of the central political institutions and the security services created a political situation where threats as those described above were usually not treated until a stage in which violence was incontrovertible. In other words, the ruling politicians tended to take counter measures only as the threats increased or became contrary to their political interests, thus becoming uncontrollable. This is the weakness of the security institutions; the terrorist organization of Boko Haram was born in these circumstances.

Boko Haram is an Islamic faction that believes the political institutions of the north have been taken over by a group of false and corrupt Muslims. Its purpose is to wage war against them and against the entire Federal Republic of Nigeria, in order to establish a "pure" Muslim country that functions according to the *sharia*.^[vii] Since 2009 the organization has been driven by the desire to take revenge on politicians, the police, and the Muslim authorities for their role in the brutal suppression of the group that year, and for killing their leader, Muhammad Yusuf after he was captured.

The organization first appeared on the arena of global terrorism on August 26, 2011, when a car bomb driven by a suicide bomber, Muhammad Abu al-Barra, detonated in the UN compound in Abuja, the federal capital of Nigeria. The car bomb, a pickup truck, carried 125 kilograms of plastic explosives which included PETN - pentaerythritol tetra nitrate and TATP - triacetone triperoxide. Twenty-three people were killed in the explosion and 89 were injured.^[viii] The speed in which the group developed its ability to

produce big and effective explosive devices and to recruit suicide bombers to activate those devices implies support and assistance from outside.^[ix]

The assumption is that Boko Haram will continue to attack soft civil targets and expand its war against the influence of corrupt authorities, and will continue to take part in the ongoing conflict in the state of Plateau. Boko Haram, as many other groups in Northern Nigeria, believes that Jonah David Jang, the governor of Plateau, is responsible for the campaign of "ethnic purging" against the Hausa and the Fulani populations, and that this is a good enough reason for fighting the authorities.^[x]

However, if the organization escalates its attacks on the Christians in the north and expands the conflict in the north of the country and beyond, there will be grave implications for the unity of the country and the ability of the central government to govern the 36 states of the federation of Nigeria. Growing instability and fighting might expand to Muslim countries adjacent to Nigeria suffering from similar symptoms of corruption, poverty, famine and diseases, failing governing and lack of public and personal security.

THE HISTORY OF BOKO HARAM

The roots of Boko Haram stem from an Islamic radical youth group that used to pray in the Alhaji Muhammadu Ndimi Mosque in Maiduguri a decade ago. In 2002, a part of this Islamic youth group (that was not yet known as Boko Haram) announced that the town and the Islamic establishment were intolerably and incurably corrupt. The group declared *hijra* (inspired by the emigration of Muhammad and his followers to the city of Medina in 622 CE). It moved from Maiduguri to Kanama, a village in the state of Yobe near the border with Niger, in order to establish a separatist community administrated according to strict Islamic principles. The leader, Muhammad Ali, urged other Muslims

to join the group and live according to the "true" Islamic law, in order to create a more perfect society away from the corrupt establishment.

The methods chosen by the group to distribute its ideology were based on the conduct that characterizes the establishment and function of al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya organizations in Egypt and the one of South East Asia, in Indonesia. It is based on founding small independent cells dispersed in the area, which gradually integrate into the Muslim society. The ultimate goal is accumulation, even by means of violence, of enough power and influence needed for the establishment of a religious state governed according to the *sharia*.^[xi]

In December 2003, after a local dispute over fishing rights, the group clashed with the police. The members of the group overpowered the unit of local policemen and seized their weapons. This violent clash resulted in a siege of the group's mosque by the Nigerian army. The siege ended when the soldiers killed about 70 members of the group, including their leader, Muhammad Ali.

The group received extended attention in the Nigerian media and evoked considerable interest of certain circles in the American embassy in Abuja, due to the catchy name it was given by the locals, the *Nigerian Taliban*. The media's attention was also the result of the fact that many of the group's members were children of rich and influential Nigerians from the north. One of them was the son of the governor of Yobe, Bukar Abba Ibrahim. A dispatch sent from the US State Department in 2004 – was exposed by WikiLeaks – led the US embassy in Abuja to believe that the group did not pose any international threat, and had probably no ties with organizations of the Global Jihad.^[xiii]

The few survivors of the *Nigerian Taliban* returned to Maiduguri, where they settled down and joined other members of the Ndimi Mosque original youth group. Muhammed

Yusuf, the charismatic leader of the Maiduguri group, started building a new mosque for the Maiduguri group. This new mosque, which was given the name *Ibn Taimiyyah Masjid*, was built on ground north of the center of the town, near the rail station owned by Baba Fugu Mohammed, Muhammed Yusuf's father-in-law. The mosque attracted the young residents of the town and became a center of education for the younger generation of the young jihadists, youngsters who joined the organization. The local authorities allowed the group to develop, and it expanded to other states in Nigeria, such as Bauchi, Yobe and Niger. The neighbors of the group in Maiduguri called it *Boko Haram*, which in the local Hausa language means "*Western education is a sin*". Formally, the organization calls itself "*Jama'atul Alhul Sunnah Lidda'wati wal Jihad*", which means "people committed to spreading the heritage of the prophet and the Jihad".

The group established "a state within a state" with governmental institutions and religious police; it also developed agricultural economy. It attracted more and more supporters and believers by giving out welfare, food, free Islamic education and shelter. Many of the people who joined it were refugees of wars with Chad from beyond the border, and poor, unemployed young Nigerians. Boko Haram may be deemed a hybrid, sub-state organization combining modern terrorism, adopting structures, not all of which are organized, and waging some kind of war against the formal institutions of the country, while presenting itself as a legitimate player on the political stage by simultaneously managing institutions of education, welfare and internal police.

Achieving a short-term goal, the organization purged the regions of Yobe and Borno of Christian population and of any symbol of the central government, in order to establish a religious Islamic state to which all willing Muslims from other Nigerian states could emigrate. This goal was clearly reached, since thousands of Christians fled from these states. However, this attitude created open antagonism and strong opposition to the organization, especially among the Muslim elites.

The ideology of the organization is stated in the interview given by Muhammed Yusuf to the BBC:

There are prominent Islamic preachers who have seen and understood that the present Western-style education is mixed with issues that run contrary to our beliefs in Islam [...] like rain, we believe it is a creation of God rather than an evaporation caused by the sun that condenses and becomes rain [...] like saying the world is a sphere. If it runs contrary to the teachings of Allah, we reject it. We also reject the theory of Darwinism.^[xiii]

Such sayings tie Muhammed Yusuf's ideology with Wahhabi Salafism.^[xiv]

THE FINANCIAL SOURCES OF THE BOKO HARAM ORGANIZATION

The financial sources of the Boko Haram organization are not transparent enough. There are various explanations for these sources. For example, members of the Borno state religious establishment claim that as a result of his two *hajj* pilgrimages, Muhammed Yusuf received money through his connections with the Salafis from Saudi Arabia.

Boko Haram robs banks, convoys carrying money, and successful businesses, not only in Maiduguri, but also in Bauchi, where the organization still maintains its power. According to Boko Haram's conviction, bank robbery is allowed by the Koran, since the money from the banks is considered "spoils of war".^[xv] Some estimate that the robberies brought the organization about 1 billion *naira* (about 6 million US dollars, or 4 million pounds). This data is difficult to verify.^[xvi]

Other financial sources are donations of rich Nigerians from the north. In 2006, Alhaji Bunu Wakil, a wealthy businessman and contractor from the north, was arrested with other 91 suspects by the state security services (SSS) after a group of children claimed that they had been sent by the organization to an Al-Qaeda training camp in Mauritania.

In his defense, the businessman claimed that his donations to the organization are an innocent attempt to observe the religious precept of *zakat*, which requires every rich Muslim to donate to charity.^[xvii]

In November 2011 the authorities arrested the Senate member, Ali Ndum, of the People's Democratic Party (PDP). The senator from Borno was charged with financing Boko Haram. His arrest became possible after a senior member of the organization was captured and revealed information on the senator.^[xviii]

The organization receives money raised all over Europe by Muslim charity organizations which function illegally, as proven by the example from 2012, when the British House of Lords initiated a comprehensive investigation against the British charity organization Al-Muntada Trust Fund, accused by the Nigerian SSS of transferring funds to the Boko Haram organization.^[xix]

In addition, despite its absolute religious ideology which forbids drug use and trade, the organization is suspected of drug trafficking and weapons smuggling. However, these suspicions are not supported by clear-cut evidence.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE ORGANIZATION

The world developments after September 11, 2001 have been a substantial source of inspiration for the Boko Haram organization, as an immense anti western wave swept the Third World in general and the Muslims in particular. It was not only the result of western military intervention in the Middle East and Afghanistan; it was also caused by the grave poverty and the social gaps which derive from the corrupt regimes and the wealth of the financial elites that are under the patronage of giant western corporations. This wealth is not distributed and invested in infrastructures, improved education, health care and other similar fields. Boko Haram takes advantage of this situation and plants deep roots in weaker Muslim strata in the north of Nigeria.^[xx]

The core group of the organization has developed and became a network of cells controlled by *shura*, which literally means consultation, a council of 30 members who do not share one location. The members of the council are capable of traveling in Nigeria and the surrounding countries. They tend to use mobile phones rather than hold face-to-face meetings. Each member of the council is in charge of a cell, and each cell focuses on a specific task in a geographic region. The compartmentalization of the cells is so strict that a member of the lowest rank in a cell might not know another member of the same rank. The organization's activities are generally discussed in the forum of the council, but sometimes Abubakar Shekau, the leader, makes operative decisions without consulting the members of the *shura*. *Amir*, a reliable and trustworthy person, is positioned in every state where the organization is active; local "*emirs*", report to him, are the direct operations officers of the recruited *jihadi*.^[xxi]

In 2007, on the eve of the presidential elections in Nigeria, Sheikh Ja'afar Mahmoud Adam was murdered in Kanu, while he was praying in the mosque under his management. He was a famous and popular preacher in the Ndimi mosque in Maiduguri. For a while, the murder remained a mystery. Later, however, it turned out that it was carried out at the orders of Muhammed Yusuf as Sheikh Ja'afar had criticized Boko Haram and its rigid ideology. The Sheikh had also foreseen the eventually that the organization would confront the authorities and the military. The Sheikh's elimination can be seen as an important turning point in the development of Boko Haram, since it put an end to a possibility to bring Muhammad Yusuf and his followers back into the mainstream of the Muslim establishment of the north.

Between July 26 and 31 2009 the organization confronted the authorities in a very similar manner to the confrontations 6 years earlier. During a public funeral of a member of Boko Haram, its members were arrested by the traffic police that enforced the regulation of wearing helmets by motorcycle riders (in Nigeria, as in most countries, this regulation is not mandatory). This enforcement caused a violent clash. It was reported that a

member of the organization opened fire on the policemen and wounded several of them. Later, the group attacked the police stations in Bauchi and Yobe and killed a number of policemen. Muhammed Yusuf published videotaped sermons in which he openly threatened to turn to violence against the government and the police; these videotaped sermons were watched by masses.

The violent events led to a counter-attack by the government and security forces in the course of which over 700 organization members were arrested and imprisoned. The police surrounded the organization's mosque, but its members succeeded in sneaking out of it and kept fighting in the city for 3 more days. They wandered around the city and acted independently, confronted the policemen they met, indiscriminately killing Christian and Muslim civilians.

Eventually, after the arrival of reinforcements, the police managed to gain control over Maiduguri and started gathering the members of Boko Haram and anyone suspected of supporting the group or identifying with it. Dozen were arrested and executed without trial, including Muhammed Yusuf's father-in-law. Muhammed Yusuf himself was arrested by the military and handed over to the police, who killed him after a few hours. The police spokespersons denied the execution of Muhammed Yusuf, and claimed that he was shot during an attempted escape.^[xxii] Many of the organization's activists escaped to neighboring countries, where they joined radical Muslim elements and groups that flourished in the Sahel region and joined the Global Jihad.

With the elimination of Muhammed Yusuf, Boko Haram moved to another phase. It became an ultra-violent, vengeful organization that wishes to settle accounts with the Nigerian police and army because of the elimination of the charismatic leader and the treachery of the government and the security services.^[xxiii]

For a year after the elimination of Muhammed Yusuf the organization had not carried out any terrorist attacks. The Nigerian authorities assumed that after the military defeat it had suffered the organization ceased to exist; but they were wrong, in a big way.

THE PERIOD AFTER MOHAMMED YUSUF

In August 2009, about a week after the death of the leader Muhammed Yusuf, Sanni Umaru, the interim head of the organization, published an ideological declaration regarding its goals and methods of operation that has to be regarded as a milestone in the organization's move to the second phase.^[xxiv]

□ Boko Haram does not in any way mean 'western education is a sin' as the infidel media continue to portray us. Boko Haram actually means 'western civilisation' is forbidden. The difference is that while the first gives the impression that we are opposed to formal education coming from the West, that is Europe, which is not true, the second affirms our belief in the supremacy of Islamic culture (not education), for culture is broader; it includes education but not determined by western education. In this case, we are talking of western ways of life which include: constitutional provisions as they relate to, for instance, the rights and privileges of women, the idea of homosexuality, lesbianism, sanctions in cases of terrible crimes like drug trafficking, molestation of infants, multi-party democracy in an overwhelmingly Islamic country like Nigeria, porn films, prostitution, drinking beer and alcohol and many others that are opposed to Islamic civilization.

□ In fact, we are spread across all the 36 states in Nigeria, and Boko Haram is just a version of Al-Qaeda, which we align with and respect. We support Osama bin Laden, we shall carry out his command in Nigeria until the country is completely converted to Islam, which is according to the wish of Allah.^[xxv]

□ Mallam Yusuf has not died in vain and he is a martyr. His ideas will live forever.

□ We lost over 1000 of our martyr members killed by the wicked Nigerian army and police, mostly of southern Nigerian extraction. The Southern states, especially the infidel Yoruba, Igbo and Ijaw infidels will be our immediate targets.

□ The killing of our leaders in a callous, wicked and malicious manner will not, in any way, deter us.

The demands of the organization are stated in the second part of the manifesto:

□ We have started Jihad in Nigeria, which no force on earth can stop. The aim is to convert Nigeria to Islam and ensure the rule of the majority Muslims in the country.

□ From the month of August, we shall carry out a series of bombings in Southern and Northern Nigerian cities, beginning with Lagos, Ibadan, Enugu and Port Harcourt. The bombings will not stop until Sharia is established and western civilization wiped out from Nigeria. We will not stop until these evil cities are turned into ashes.

□ We shall make the country ungovernable, kill and eliminate irresponsible political leaders of all propensities, hunt and gun down those who oppose the rule of Sharia in Nigeria and ensure that the infidel does not go unpunished.

□ We promise the West and Southern Nigeria, a horrible time. We shall focus on these areas which are the devil empire and have been the ones encouraging and sponsoring western civilization to the shores of Nigeria.

□ We call on all Northerners in the Islamic States to quit (membership) of the wicked political parties leading the country, the corrupt, irresponsible, criminal, murderous political leadership, and join the struggle for an Islamic Society that will be corruption free, Sodom free, where security will be guaranteed and there will be peace under Islam.

□ Very soon, we shall stir Lagos, the evil city and Nigeria's South West and South East, in a way no one has ever done before.

The manifesto ends on a decisive note:

"Are you with or against us?"

In 2010 Boko Haram returned to Maiduguri and launched a series of assassinations and acts of vengeance. It started with a hit and run attack against police check points in Borno and Yobe. The preferred method used by the organization is a motorcycle ridden by two; the back rider shoots the policemen and grabs their weapons. Armed members broke into houses of local leaders who had in past cooperated with the police and turned in members of the group, and killed them. They also killed those who had taken control of their houses and property after members of Boko Haram had escaped or been forced out.

Between September 2010 and November 2011 the organization carried out more than 45 attacks all over Nigeria, which were focused on attacking the police and the army.

Today the leader is Abubakar Shekau, who used to be Mohammad Yusuf's right-hand man. Shekau does not hesitate before launching on YouTube videos on the organization's activities.^[xxvi] His statements after the murderous terrorist attack in Kanu in January 2012 prove his ruthlessness:

I enjoy killing anyone that God commands me to kill – the way I enjoy killing chickens and rams.^[xxvii]

The leaders and spokespersons have voiced threats against American and western targets. In July 2010 the spokesman Musa Tanko said:

Islam doesn't recognize international boundaries, we will carry out our operations anywhere in the world if we have the chance, the United States is the number one target for its oppression and aggression against Muslim nations, particularly in Iraq and Afghanistan and its blind support of Israel in its killings of our Palestinian brethren [...] for now our attention is focused on Nigeria which is our starting point.^[xxviii]

On Christmas Eve 2010 six explosive charges detonated near churches and markets in two regions of Jos in the state of Plateau, killing several dozen of people. At the time it was assumed that Boko Haram was not responsible for the attacks; they were assumed to be the grave results of the ongoing ethnic-political conflict. However, on the same

Christmas Eve 2010, bombs detonated in a popular fish restaurant and in the market inside the Mogadishu Barracks compound, about 60 kilometers out of Abuja; dozens of people were killed in these terrorist attacks.^[xxix] In the beginning of 2011 an FBI investigation concluded that the charges in the Mogadishu compound were constructed in the same methods and consisted of the same components as those that detonated in the town of Jos. Boko Haram was suspected of being accountable for the combined attacks, which proved that the organization was prepared and ready to attack in vulnerable and crowded sites and cause maximal damage and cost in human lives.

DEVELOPMENT IN THE MODUS OPERANDI OF THE BOKO HARAM ORGANIZATION

2011 seems to be the year of change in the development and activity of the Boko Haram organization. Two central events have turned the local deadly group into an international organization whose targets are found beyond the borders of Nigeria, and who coordinates with Al-Qaeda:

- The first event refers to the trip Abubakar took with several of his assistants to Saudi Arabia in August 2011 for training, talks about financing and a *hajj* to Mecca. On this trip the leaders of Boko Haram met with senior Al-Qaeda functionaries, who promised to finance and fulfill all future requests by Boko Haram.^[xxx] In other words, the organization openly and officially declared its joining Global Jihad. It is not really clearly understood if such a meeting did take place, since the enormous risk from both sides in such a meeting on Saudi Arabia soil.
- The second event, which took place in late August 2011, was the quality attack on the UN headquarters in the capital Abuja, by a car bomb driven by a suicide bomber and loaded with sophisticated explosives.^[xxxi]

It can be determined that Boko Haram adjusts itself to the modes of operation of other terrorist organizations in the world and uses suicide bombers, as the ones it sent to the police headquarters in the capital Abuja in June 2011 and to the UN headquarters in

August 2011. The shift in the operative tactics and adoption of sophisticated ways of operation, use of communications and the Internet, doubtlessly point to the shift in the direction and power of the organization's modus operandi. According to experts, the success of both operations indicates that a foreign hand was involved in training of Boko Haram, including the setting of charges.

The type of explosives used by the group is found in mining sites of quarried substances and construction, which are found in abundance in northern Nigeria.

Following the terrorist attacks in Abuja and with regard to their high quality, the commander of the American forces, General Carter Ham of the USAFRICOM defined the organization as a threat to American and western interests.^[xxxii]

This new situation, the shift from local attacks to terrorist attacks against western interests and overt collaboration with Al-Qaeda resulted in a debate in the American Congress concerning whether or not Boko Haram should be considered an international terrorist organization, and if so, whether it should be included in the FTO (Foreign Terrorist Organizations) list, with all the implications such decision entails.^[xxxiii]

Following the two terrorist attacks in Abuja, the Department of Homeland Security founded the Joint Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence, of the Intelligence and the House of Representatives, chaired by Patrick Meehan. On November 30 2011 the committee designated Boko Haram a threat to American interests, both inside the country and in the world.^[xxxiv]

In January 2012, Owoye Azazi, The NSA (National Security Adviser) of Nigeria, and other security experts told the Reuters news agency that the security services of Nigeria had traced "several dozen" Nigerians who were on their way to training camps in Algeria.

They revealed that the information was based on informants in these camps. The Security Council of the UN has also claimed that members of Boko Haram had trained in the Tuareg insurgents camps in Mali.^[xxxv] Today it is believed that the leaders of the organization, including Abubakar Shenau, his second-in-command Mamman Nur and other senior members such as Abubakar Adam Kamar and Khalid el Barnawi (all of whom are on the WANTED list of the State Department for involvement in global terrorism)^[xxxvi], hide somewhere in the north of Cameroon.

Assessments regarding cooperation with AQIM (the Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb) were published as early as November 2011, when the Algerian Deputy Foreign Minister, Abdelkader Messahel, was quoted,

We have no doubts that coordination exists between Boko Haram and Al-Qaeda, the way both groups operate and intelligence reports show that there is cooperation.^[xxxvii] The operative ties between Boko Haram and Al-Qaeda have been closely followed and published for the last three years, since they are overt and announced by the senior spokespersons of both organizations.^[xxxviii]

The organization initiates contacts using communications whenever it serves its purposes. The Boko Haram spokesman, whose underground name is Abul Qa'qa, made contact with reporters and assumed accountability for the terrorist attacks in Abuja.^[xxxix]

MILESTONES IN THE ACTIVITY OF BOKO HARAM

Year	Milestone
2002	The establishment of the organization in Maiduguri in the state of Borno.
2009	<u>July</u> Hundreds killed in an assault on police stations. The police capture Muhammed Yusuf, the leader of the faction, and kill him. Abubakar Shenau, Muhammed Yusuf's right hand man, is appointed head of the organization.
2010	<u>September</u> Hundreds (721) of prisoners released from Bauchi prison, among them

Year	Milestone
	100 members of the organization. <u>December</u> Terrorist attack in Jos – 80 killed. Terrorist attacks in Mogadishu Barracks, near Abuja, on Christmas Eve.
2011	<u>June – August</u> Terrorist attacks on Abuja police headquarters (June 17 – first suicide attack) and on UN building (August 26 – first attack against a western target), dozen killed. Kidnapping of two Europeans (British and Italian) - <u>November</u> Combined attacks in states of Yobe and Borno; in the town of Damaturu, Yobe 150 Christians killed. - <u>December</u> Numerous terrorist attacks on Christmas – dozens killed. The American Congress designates Boko Haram as a growing threat to American targets, and potentially connected to al Qaeda.
2012	<u>January</u> A wave of violence all over north-east of Nigeria – a car bomb with suicide bombers in Kanu – at least 180 killed. <u>March</u> A Nigerian-British failed rescue attempt. The European hostages killed. - <u>May</u> Bombing of the This Day newspaper offices. First attack on media offices. - <u>June</u> 150 killed during a week of violence.

A table that summarizes the terrorist attacks carried out by Boko Haram in Nigeria between July 27, 2009 and February 17, 2011 appears in the comprehensive article by Professor Adagba Okpaga of the Benue University.^[xli]

THE CHALLENGE OF RECOGNIZING BOKO HARAM

The structure of Boko Haram presents difficulties and barriers in understanding the organization. Since it is comprised of cells and based on a high degree of compartmentalization, only a small amount of information about it is verifiable. Naturally, questions arise regarding terrorist attacks that it has – or has not – carried out, and its accountability for them. Many sources of information, associated with the

government, the military and the security services are not coordinated. In Nigeria, problems of governability, the essence and degree of accountability are sensitive issues that are in the process of development and implementation according to the western norms. Occasionally, corrupt or undeserving officers fight for their own or their tribe's good rather than fully and transparently cooperate with other civilians and agencies.^[xlii] Due to lack of transparency and inter-agency cooperation, only rarely do the police release useful information. In this context, Boko Haram is interested neither in providing the public with reliable or accurate information on terrorist attacks it has accomplished, nor about the organization in general. More than once it has denied responsibility for attacks that match its modus operandi. Some attacks are ascribed to Boko Haram, but they could easily have been carried out by robbers that operate under its disguise. Political rivals might also use such disguise in order to settle accounts and carry out attacks. In one example the police claimed that a failed attack in March 2012 that aimed at bombing a church in Bauchi was carried out by a rival Christian organization. Had the explosion been successful, it is easy to see how it would have been attributed to Boko Haram.

The nature of the Nigerian politics – complicated internal politics – poses difficulty in understanding the alignment of relations between the organization and the federal government. For instance, in January 2012 President Jonathan Goodluck declared that members of Boko Haram had infiltrated the highest levels of politics and military. The President drew an image of a group of puppets exploited by disappointed politicians from the Muslim north and the rich Delta region. Following this accusation, a serving senator was arrested and charged with maintaining contacts with Boko Haram.^[xliii] Some define the President's remarks as political opportunism. However, in Nigerian politics accusing political rivals is a common, even when irrelevant, maneuver. The President's announcement's objective might have been an attempt to divert the attention of the

Nigerians from the burdensome raising of the price of fuel, which was about to take place.

On March 9 2012, after Britain's and Nigeria's failed joint attempt to rescue the European hostages, the British Chris McManus and the Italian Franco Lamolinara in Sokoto, in the north-west of the country, who were kidnapped in May 2011, President Goodluck changed his attitude to the organization and emphasized its ties with the international terror. He wrote to the Italian and British governments:

The Nigerian government remains resolutely committed to facing up squarely to the challenge of terrorism on our shores and in the international community.

The letter was carefully phrased so as to diminish the importance of local politics and not refute any potential connection between Boko Haram and al Qaeda. In this letter he also implied that the special relations and strong ties that exist among the three nations “can only grow deeper and stronger”. This might be a covert request from the Europeans for money and support in fighting Boko Haram.^[xliii] In June 2012, after a particularly violent weekend which amounted to 150 victims, the president dismissed his NSA and the minister of defense, claiming that new tactics were needed to fight Boko Haram.^[xliv]

Although the patterns of the organization's operations change with time, the "great idea" from 2002 remains the same: establishment of a "pure" Muslim state that is administered according to the *sharia*. Like Muhammed Yusuf, the leadership aspires at founding a state-like organization, first on a small, local scale, in parallel with the federal government. The leaders believe that inevitably the organization will grow and expand until it replaces the existing state. This was the organization's goal in 2002 – 2003 where it operated without disturbance. For years this was the way it conducted its activity in Maiduguri, gradually expanding until undertaking "state-like" functions, such as providing an array of welfare benefits, professional training, jobs in small industries,

resources for the rest of the community, and a "moral police", according to the principles of *Hisba*, the religious police of Kanu. These functions, including distribution of robbed money to widows of the organization, are applied in north Nigeria, as part of a broad vision of the state's goals.

Experts who have studied Boko Haram do not consider it to be in the same slot with Global Jihad such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb of Algeria or al-Shabaab of Somalia. According to this analysis, the distinction between Boko Haram and Al-Qaeda, which is committed to attacking western targets, is clear-cut. The attack on the UN headquarters in Abuja, anomalous in itself, might be seen as a far-off incident, isolated from the regular activities of the group and its choice of targets. Therefore it may be analyzed in two ways: either it was carried out in return for assistance the group received during the crisis in 2009, or it was aimed at embarrassing the Nigerian government. As a matter of fact, since August 2011 there have been no more attacks or attempts to assault international targets by Boko Haram. There have, however, been declarations of intentions to attack western targets.

Today the ambitions of the organization pose a greater danger to the Muslim citizens in the north of Nigeria – the biggest population in that part of the country – as well as to the Christian minorities in the north, including the nomads who migrate from the north of the country to the south as a result of economical distress, and to local groups, than it does to international interests.

ARE NEGOTIATIONS WITH BOKO HARAM POSSIBLE?

It is difficult to see how a meaningful and effective dialog between the federal government and Boko Haram can be conducted. President Jonathan Goodluck has frequently expressed his wish to conduct a dialog with the leaders of the organization, but stated that it would not happen as long as Boko Haram remains "faceless".^[xlv] In August

2012 a videotape was released in which Abubakar Shekau, the head of Boko Haram, demanded that the Nigerian President resign and convert to Islam. On the tape the leader insisted he will not negotiate with a central government presided by a Christian. This is considered a huge offence against the Islam. Therefore, a "regional deal" must be negotiated, which regulates a rotation of the division of political power between the north and the south.^[xlvi]

In this context, it seems worthwhile to quote the former president of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo (1997-2007), in connection with the suppression of the insurgency in the north of Nigeria. In an interview to the BBC in October 2011, the former president explained that he would have acted against Boko Haram in north Nigeria as he had acted against MEND (the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta)^[xlvii] in the south of the country, applying the method of "carrot-and-stick". According to his approach, the "carrot" is dealing with poverty and unemployment, whereas the "stick" is collecting massive intelligence in order to uproot the insurgents.^[xlviii]

Lt. General Azubuike Inejirka, the Chief of Army Staff of the Nigerian army, declared on January 24, 2012, in a seminar on the national security of Nigeria that for the sake of the national security of Nigeria the government would not negotiate with the organization, as a dialog is not a cure for terror, but creating a civilian society that rejects the instigators and senders of terror is.^[xlix]

NIGERIAN MEASURES AND TACTICS AGAINST BOKO HARAM

In their struggle against Boko Haram the Nigeria government and the security services employ considerably resolute and stern measures and tactics, but their efficiency is questionable. Abubakar Kari, an analyst of the Abuja University, refers to the political and military approach from 2009, calling it "incompetent". This approach led to a violent confrontation in which the leader of the organization, Mohammad Yusuf found his death. Whereas today innovative methods and approaches are needed to fight Boko Haram,

which was allowed to grow to its current dimensions due to the shortsightedness of the authorities, defective assessment and inadequate operations of security forces.^[ii] Relying on extreme violence as tactics in "dealing with" a problem connected to the organization not only formed Boko Haram as it is today, but also sustains it and encourages its expansion. The violent approach of the Nigerian police and military (JTF – joint task force) resulted in even more difficulties in tracing and capturing members of the organization, who enjoy shelter and cover in the midst of sympathizing and supportive population. The paradox is that the population of Maiduguri and Kanu fear the police and the army more than they fear Boko Haram.^[iii]

The main technique the security forces of Nigeria employ today in chasing members of Boko Haram are mass arrests on locations of attacks. Policemen catch as many people as possible, while the terrorists who carried the attack are long gone. Instead of being questioned and interrogated, these people are subjected to threats and extortion of money. Any data about potential hideouts of Boko Haram become "hot information". Police and military besiege the hideout area and open massive, indiscriminate fire, shooting and killing innocent passers-by.

Holding relatives of those suspected as members of Boko Haram as hostages is another preferred tactic. The Human Rights Watch has reported that in cases of extortion that are not connected to Boko Haram the police killed the apprehended people because they were unable to raise the money required for their release.^[iii]

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion of this paper, I would like to point out several issues.

- The fast development and growth of the organization poses a threat on the governmental stability in Nigeria and the unity of the country. The fast development should not be dismissed as unimportant.

- The overt ties of Boko Haram with elements of Al-Qaeda and being aided by it have upgraded the standard and quality of its operations. These overt ties with AQIM in the Maghreb and al-Shabaab in Somalia pose a clear threat on American and western interests in the world, and make them legitimate targets of terrorist attacks.
- The cooperation with Al-Qaeda increases the operative capacities of the organization and intensifies the rhetoric voiced by its leaders and spokespersons.
- The western countries led by the USA should mobilize, the sooner the better, and join Nigeria in its struggle against the terrorist organization of Boko Haram, providing equipment and training of forces skilled in anti insurgency warfare.

NOTES

^[i] The author of this paper is David Doukhan, a Ph.D. student in the Department of Political Sciences at the Bar Ilan University, who specializes in issues of urban warfare theories and terrorism. November 18, 2012

^[ii] For more information on the war in Biafra, see:

<http://www.biafragenocide.org/>

^[iii] For more elaborate discussion regarding MEND and oil in the Niger Delta see: Cyril Obi and Siri Aas Rustad: *Oil and Insurgency in the Niger Delta: Managing the Complex Politics of Petro-violence*, ZED books, 2011.

^[iv] Currently, the population of Nigeria is approximately 170 millions, it is extremely heterogeneous and includes over 250 groups that differ in their languages, cultures and religions. For more, see:

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html>

^[v] In Hausa, 'Maitatsine' means "he who curses".

^[vi] Falola, Toyin (1998), *Violence in Nigeria: The Crisis of Religious Politics and Secular Ideologies*. New York: University of Rochester. p.143.

^[vii] Since 2000, 12 states in Nigeria accepted the Islamic *sharia* laws. However, implementing and enforcing the *sharia* laws is problematic as the police in Nigeria are a federal institution. Local Muslim authorities bypassed the constitutional issue by establishing a moral police called *Hisba*. For more on the subject please see Ruud Peters' research conducted for the European Union in 2001, and discusses the constitutional problems regarding the implementation of the *sharia* law in Nigeria: Ruud Peters, *Islamic Law in Nigeria*, Abuja: Spectrum Books, 2003, pp.44-45.

^[viii] See Reuters's report: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/08/29/us-nigeria-bombing-claim-idUSTRE77S3ZO20110829>, and also:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/01/31/us-nigeria-bokoharam-idUSTRE80U0LR20120131>

^[ix] On June 13th 2011, Boko Haram announced its intentions to attack the city of Abuja. The capital city of the federation is a symbol of the unity of Nigeria. The announcement included information regarding the insurgents who will carry out the attack. They came back to Nigeria after completing their training in Somalia. See the announcement as reported by Agence France Presse on June 13th: <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hvNBLQti-6QLphVdW7gU24qGfCVA?docId=CNG.7c89daafc598520ace67ee7e41be9139.9a1>

^[x] The three largest groups in Nigeria constitute 65% of the country's population:

Hausa – Fulani is a Muslim group that resides mainly in the prairie areas and includes 60% of the Muslims in the north.

Yoruba – a Christian – animistic group that includes 70% of the population of Western Nigeria.

Igbo – A rural Christian group which resides mainly in the rural areas of Eastern Nigeria.

For further discussion of the crisis in Plateau and the city of Jos and responsibility attributed to the governor, see:

<http://www.vanguardngr.com/2011/09/between-god-jonah-jang-and-the-plateau-crisis/>

^[xi] Institute of Defense and Strategic Studies, Working Papers 117, November 2006, pp.777-800.

^[xii] <http://allafrica.com/stories/201012130154.html>

^[xiii] BBC News, July 31, 2009 Joe Boyles, *Nigeria's 'Taliban' enigma*,

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8172270.stm>

^[xiv] See: Parviz Hoodbhoy, *Islam and Science*, London: Zed Books, 1991, pp. 9-48.

^[xv] See in the Koran – *sura* 8: "The Spoils of War", paragraph 41: "You should know that if you gain any spoils at war, one fifth goes to God and his messenger..."

^[xvi] Karen Leigh, "Nigeria's Boko Haram: Al Qaeda's New Friend in Africa?" *Time*, August 31, 2011.

^[xvii] Ndahi Maram, Boko Haram Financier Arrested in Maiduguri, *Vanguard* January 4 2011.

^[xviii] <http://panafricannews.blogspot.co.il/2011/11/nigerian-senator-mohammed-ali-ndume-has.html>

^[xix] <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2012/09/mp-accuses-uk-trust-fund-of-funding-boko-haram/>

^[xx] Despite of Nigeria's many natural sources of minerals and petroleum, the country is extremely poor. According to the CIA data from 2012, the PPP is \$2,436 and the HDI is 0.459. See more information collected by the UN:

http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2011_EN_Table1.pdf

^[xxi] <http://globalsecuritystudies.com/Connell%20Boko%20Haram.pdf>

^[xxii] See footnote 10.

^[xxiii] Abimbola Adesoji, "The Boko Haram Uprising and Islamic Revivalism in Nigeria" *Africa Spectrum*, Volume 45, no. 2

^[xxiv] Boko Haram threatens to Attack Lagos, Claims Link to Al-Qaeda. <http://www.nairaland.com/310123/boko-haram-new-leader-teach>

^[xxv] In 2003 bin Laden noted that Nigeria is a country that is ready to be liberated, see: Charlie Szrom and Chris Harnisch, "Al Qaeda's Operating Environments: A New Approach to the War on Terror", Washington DC: The American Enterprise Institute, March 2011, p. 10.

^[xxvi] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=umkj50SUzck>

^[xxvii] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-18020349>

[^{xxviii}] Aminu Abubakar, "Nigerian Islamist Sect Threatens to Widen Attacks", Agence France Presse. 2010. <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5j1FA1NjRS-ES89YWeX4f--kcQGmA>

[^{xxxix}] For more on the attack on the church, see: <http://www.ibtimes.com/39-dead-nigeria-christmas-day-bomb-attacks-boko-haram-claims-responsibility-387420>

For information on the attack in Mogadishu barracks see: <http://www.tribune.com.ng/sun/front-page-articles/2857-abuja-blast-security-agencies-suspect-external-forces-begin-forensic-analysis-raise-alarm-over-importation-of-special-perfumes-jos-mogadishu-bombs-similar-jonathan-soldier-loses-legs-arm-as-daughter-fractures-leg>

[^{xxx}] Details about the meeting were published by al-Qaeda's spokesman in an interview published on Jihad Watch website. <http://www.jihadwatch.org/2012/01/boko-haram-vows-to-fight-until-nigeria-establishes-sharia-law-you-dont-put-down-your-arms-in-islam-y.html>

[^{xxxii}] Boko Haram spokesman, Abul Qa'qa, stated during a telephone interview from Maiduguri that the attack was aimed against western targets because the west supports the Nigerian government. Qa'qa accused the latter of persecuting Muslims in Nigeria. <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2011/08/un-house-bombing-why-we-struck-boko-haram/>

[^{xxxiii}] See footnote 13.

[^{xxxiii}] Members of the American Congress pressured the Obama administration to add the organization to the FTO list. The pressure was partly successful. In June 2012 the administration agreed to add the known leaders of the organization to the most wanted list and to compensate their property and money, in case those are being held on American soil. <http://sahelblog.wordpress.com/2012/06/21/nigeria-a-middle-course-on-designating-boko-haram-a-foreign-terrorist-organization/>

For more on the FTO and the three criteria that must be met in order to define an organization as a terror organization, see:

<http://sahelblog.wordpress.com/2012/05/22/debating-a-foreign-terrorist-organization-designation-for-nigerias-boko-haram/>

[^{xxxiv}] The committee report:

<http://homeland.house.gov/sites/homeland.house.gov/files/Boko%20Haram-%20Emerging%20Threat%20to%20the%20US%20Homeland.pdf>

[^{xxxv}] <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/01/31/us-nigeria-bokoharam-idUSTRE80U0LR20120131>

[^{xxxvi}] <http://www.ipsnews.net/2012/06/nigeria-three-boko-haram-leaders-put-on-u-s-terrorism-list/>

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/06/21/us-usa-militants-bokoharam-idUSBRE85K19K20120621>

[^{xxxviii}] Ezra Ijioma and George Agba, "Boko Haram Has Ties with Al Qaeda: Algeria Intelligence", *Leadership* (Abuja), November 14, 2011.

[^{xxxviii}] For more on the ties between the two organizations during 2009 – 2011 see footnote 29, the JSOU report of May 2012. Pp. 77 – 82.

[^{xxxix}] <http://tribune.com.ng/index.php/front-page-news/39997-abuja-kaduna-bomb-blasts-why-we-struck-boko-haram>

[^{xl}] [http://www.arabianjbm.com/pdfs/OM_VOL_1_\(9\)/6.pdf](http://www.arabianjbm.com/pdfs/OM_VOL_1_(9)/6.pdf); A complete list of the attacks also appears in the JSOU report of May 2012, by James J. F. Forest. *Confronting the terrorism of Boko Haram in Nigeria*. Pp. 135 – 142.

http://www.jamesforest.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Boko_Haram_JSOU-Report-2012.pdf

^[xli] As Nigeria is a federal country; in addition to the Head of the Police that operates from Abuja, every federal state has a local police force and a local Police Commissioner.

^[xlii] See footnote 17.

^[xliii] <http://digitaljournal.com/article/320897>

<http://www.vanguardngr.com/2012/03/b-r-e-a-k-i-n-g-n-e-w-s-boko-haram-killed-british-italian-hostages-jonathan/>

^[xliv] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-18580312>

^[xlv] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-18580312>

^[xlvi] <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/articles/370695/20120806/boko-haram-nigeria-president-goodluck-jonathan-resign.htm>

^[xlvii] For more information on MEND, see: <http://mendnigerdelta.com/>

^[xlviii] <http://odili.net/news/source/2011/oct/20/1.html>

^[xlix] [http://www.arabianjbm.com/pdfs/OM_VOL_1_\(9\)/6.pdf](http://www.arabianjbm.com/pdfs/OM_VOL_1_(9)/6.pdf) p. 94.

^[l] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-15690981>

^[li] For more on human rights violations during the security forces fight against Boko Haram, see:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2012/11/2012111141929420958.html>;

[http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/11/01/us-nigeria-bokoharam-amnesty-](http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/11/01/us-nigeria-bokoharam-amnesty-idUSBRE8A012K20121101)

[idUSBRE8A012K20121101](http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/11/01/us-nigeria-bokoharam-amnesty-idUSBRE8A012K20121101); <http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/nigeria-security-forces-out-control-fight-against-terror-boko-haram-2012-11>

^[lii] With regard to Human Rights Organizations accusations of war crimes committed both by Boko Haram and Nigerian security forces see: Human Rights Watch accuses Gov., Boko Haram of abuses in:

<http://thenationonlineng.net/new/news/human-rights-watch-accuses-govt-boko-haram-of-abuses/>