

UNDERSTANDING THE RISE OF BOKO HARAM AND ITS DISCONTENTS

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Abstract

Religious extremism has plagued Africa for many years. From its earlier permutation in North Africa in the 1980s and 1990s to its recent expression in East and West Africa, every part of the continent has had its own story to tell about the violence unleashed by religious fanaticism. Boko Haram, a largely domestic group in Nigeria, has become one of the main players on the terror-front in the West African region. Although Boko Haram's grievances are rooted in cultural cleavages and a sense of injustice regarding identity affiliation in Nigeria, the group's activities are increasingly becoming regional involving neighbouring countries such as Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Benin. Recently the group has been parachuted to the international limelight. The kidnapping of young schoolgirls in Nigeria has suddenly racked the international media's attention, raising issues regarding

Boko Haram which have been issues long before the social media increased awareness, especially by using the very popular hashtag #bringbackourgirls, on the social media site, Twitter. Boko Haram, like most insurgent groups in Nigeria, emerged from a background of an age-old conflict, which can be described as a conflict between different identities in the country. It is, however, important to remember that a variety of identities do not necessarily lead to conflicts. The fact that a country has several ethnic or religious groups does not make conflict inevitable; it is only when mobilisation around identities occurs or they are politicised that they constitute the basis for conflict.³ Within this article, however, it will be noted that the conflict can be attributed to many influences and factors which should be examined and taken into consideration.

Keywords: Boko Haram; terrorism; Nigeria; counter-terrorism; critical terrorism studies; extremism; religious fundamentalism.

Stelwoorde: Boko Haram; terrorisme; Nigerië; teen-terrorisme; kritiese terrorismestudies; ekstremisme; religieuse fundamentalisme.

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3 EE Osaghae and RT Suberu, *A history of identities, violence, and stability in Nigeria*. Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity (CRISE). Working Paper no. 6 (Queen Elizabeth House: University of Oxford, 2005).

1. USING CRITICAL TERRORISM STUDIES (CTS) TO EXAMINE BOKO HARAM

The term “terrorism” is one of those few words that have insidiously worked their way into our day-to-day lives, and yet today there is no clear, consistent and widely agreed upon definition of either what constitutes terrorism or who the terrorist is.⁴

Terrorism and the development thereof is now one of the fastest-expanding areas of research in the Western academic world. Together with new analysis and studies in the field, a growing dissatisfaction can be noted with the state of the field of study. This dissatisfaction is partly attributed to the difficulty in explaining and defining the concept of terrorism. As the world evolves, so does terrorists and terrorism; thus there immediately exists a certain difficulty in using a single, static definition of the term. For the purpose of this article, the broad definition as adopted by the African Union in 1999 will be used.

“Any act which is a violation of the criminal laws of a State Party and which may endanger the life, physical integrity or freedom of, or cause serious injury or death to, any person, any number of group of persons or causes or may cause damage to public or private property, natural resources, environmental or cultural heritage and is calculated to:

- (i) intimidate, put in fear, force, coerce or induce any government, body, institution, the general public or any segment thereof, to do or to abstain from doing any act, or to adopt or abandon a particular standpoint, or to act according to certain principles; or
- (ii) disrupt any public service, the delivery of any essential service to the public or to create a public emergency; or
- (iii) create a general insurrection in a State”⁵

Previously, terrorism was studied within other related fields such as conflict resolution, strategic studies, military studies, etc. International Relations (IR) scholars studying political violence from a critical perspective – like Critical Security Studies – mostly ignored terrorism as a topic of study and left it to other subfields. Thus, terrorism studies’ place in IR was marginalized, an aspect that has now become exemplified in terms of the debates that are ongoing in the subfield of security studies.

Making the case for Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) depends on credible and compelling reasons for why it is seen as crucial to re-examine the current state of orthodox terrorism- and security studies. One of the most fundamental issues is that the central concept of the term “terrorism” remains highly contested. In practice, its use is often subjective and politically stigmatising. To avoid legitimatising or

4 R van der Walt and H Solomon, *Histories and spaces of terrorism in Africa: the post-9/11 strategic challenge of Somalia’s Al Shabab* (South Africa: University of the Free State, 2013).

5 Organization of African Unity Convention on the Prevention and Countering of Terrorism, (Adopted 14 July 1999). Article 1, Section 3(a), <http://au.int/en/sites/default/files/OAU_CONVENTION_PREVENTION_COMBATING_TERRORISM.pdf>, accessed 6 February 2013.

naturalising – either by scholars, journalists or the general public – the “terrorism” label, many scholars refer to the inherent artificiality of the term “terrorism”.⁶ Without discounting contributors of positivist social science, CTS rests on an understanding of knowledge as a social process constructed through language, discourse and inter-subjective practices. It can be said that terrorism knowledge always reflects the socio-cultural context within which it emerges – this explains the highly gendered and Eurocentric approach of some of the more orthodox research on the subject. CTS begins with an acceptance of the basic insecurity of all knowledge and the impossibility of neutral or objective knowledge and study of terrorism.

In keeping to the theoretical framework of CTS, the history and the process by which unrest and discontent is transformed into conflicts should be examined to get a historical and encompassing view of what led to Boko Haram – and similar groups – to act in the way that they do. By minimising the state-centric approach and focusing on not only the development of the militant group at hand, but also the development of economic, religious, and cultural frustrations, CTS examines external and underlying factors that influence different aspects of terrorism, especially in the African context.

2. COLONIALISM AS ONE OF THE ROOT DISCONTENTS

The country that we know today as Nigeria existed as a number of independent and sometimes hostile national states with various linguistic and cultural differences. The Governor General of Nigeria between 1920 and 1931, Sir Hugh Clifford, described Nigeria as “a collection of independent Native States, separated from one another by great distances, by differences of history and traditions and by ethnological, racial, tribal, political, social and religious barriers”.⁷ The building of modern Nigeria as a multi-national state began in 1900 with the creation of Northern and Southern Protectorates along with the colony of Lagos by the British government.⁸

In spite of historical attempts at unification of the different nations and states of Nigeria, the country can still be described as a divided country in so many ways, be it ethnic, religious, geopolitical, social or economic by nature. One of the problems besetting Nigeria is the divide between the northern and southern parts of the country. The country was amalgamated in 1914, with the merge of the two

6 R Jackson, *The core commitments of critical terrorism studies* (University of Wales: European Consortium for Political Research, Department of International Politics, 2007), pp. 244-251.

7 AA Atofarati, *The Nigeria Civil War: causes, strategies, and lessons learnt*. US Marine Command and Staff College (1992), <http://www.africamasterweb.com/Biafran_WarCauses.html>, accessed 21 May 2014.

8 *Ibid.*

principal regions – northern and southern – and the citizens have since co-existed under one common central government, but not under a common nationality.⁹

Nigerians view the amalgamation as the foundation of the unstable relationship between the two regions and religions of Nigeria. Northern Nigeria is largely Muslim. It was once the centre of the Islamic empire called the Sokoto Caliphate, and its Muslim populations generally look to the Middle East and the wider Muslim world for cultural, social and political inspiration. The south is largely Christian. The major socio-political influences are Western and traditional African beliefs.¹⁰ These differences are perceived as the source of many of the country's conflicts and mistrust between the two regions since independence in 1960. In addition to the already delicate political situation are the groups considered to be the ethnic and religious minorities within each region, whom also harbour grievances against ethnic and religious majorities who they interpret as oppressors. The question of who can be seen as the oppressed and the oppressors respectively, cannot easily be given a neutral answer. Once again the difficulty arises of who is the terrorist and who are being terrorised. When looking at Boko Haram and colonialism through the lens of CTS, it is crucial – even if it is only temporary – to try and advocate a more objective point of view with regard to the oppressor and the oppressed. In this regard it is not, as some traditional points of view will suggest, found in the state-centric, militaristic factors. It should rather be examined with regard to the impact made by colonialism, and the incapability of foreseeing and predicting the sociological and political impacts of colonialism and the subsequent amalgamation of what has proven to be two incompatible regions. What Boko Haram today considers a jihad or holy war, is a war that have been waged for more than a century, founded in the very conception of the Nigerian state.

3. THE POLITICISATION OF RELIGION AND THE RISE OF BOKO HARAM

Like many African nations, Nigeria is an artificial structure created by colonial powers. To describe the current crisis in Nigeria merely as a conflict between two religions would undermine the complexity of what is uniquely a Nigerian phenomenon. Three of Nigeria's original regions were composed of three major groupings of people: the Igbos (Ibo) of southeastern Nigeria, the Hausa-Fulanis of northern Nigeria, and the Yorubas of southwestern Nigeria. These groups are very

9 B Nwabueze, "Nwabueze, North-South divide, obstacle to nation", *Igbo Focus* (2013), <www.igbofocus.co.uk/nwabueze--north-south-divide--obstacle-to-nation.html>, accessed 19 May 2014.

10 M Ochonu, "The roots of Nigeria's religious and ethnic conflict", *Global Post* (2014), <<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/africa/nigeria/140220/nigeria-religious-ethnic-conflict-roots>>, accessed 21 May 2014.

diverse and have a wide variety of different customs, values, and belief systems and had historically remained fairly separated from one another. These differences, which gave each group a proud and unique identity, were overlooked by the British administration when it decided to merge these diverse nations into a single state called Nigeria.¹¹

Given the role played by the Sokoto Caliphate in Islamic civilisation in northern Nigeria religious identity became a crucial factor in the socio-political construct of Nigeria, and the conflicts that followed. Between the two largest ethnic groups, the Yorubas tend to define themselves ethnically, and the Hausa-Fulanis rather tend to emphasize their religious identity.¹² Thus religion became a major topic of national debates and a source of possible conflict. In northern Nigeria, clashes between Muslim groups, mainly Hausa and Fulani, and Christian and traditionalist communities became a regular sight, with horrific consequences. In this politically and religiously loaded environment, conflicts over resources, cattle, land and political positions more than often had the markings of religious undertones, with the conclusion being drawn that Muslims and Christians were pitted against each other.¹³ Thus adding to the mix of an already confused and unhappy population, still feeling the aftermath of British colonisation, the issue of religious unrest arose.

It would defeat the purpose of this article – and of CTS – to blame colonialism alone for the tensions and conflicts between Christians and Muslims. Even though colonialism cannot be seen as the only factor attributing to the discontents in Nigeria, it did make them worse.

4. UNEVEN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – FUELLING THE BOKO HARAM “FIRE”

In northern Nigeria, Muslim reformer and empire builder, Uthman dan Fodio, established the Sokoto Caliphate in the early 19th century over the Hausa trading states. A predominantly Fulani aristocracy ruled over the majority of Hausa-speaking civilians. Expansion of agriculture, trade, and crafts made this area probably the most prosperous in tropical Africa during the 19th century, engaged in trade both to the coast and through the traditional routes over the desert to North Africa. At the end of the 19th century, Britain began aggressive military expansion in the region, partially in order to counter competition from other Western countries

11 G Tarleton-Markov, *The Biafra War in Nigeria: causes, development and aftermath*, <<http://politics.knoji.com/the-biafra-war-in-nigeria/>>, accessed 21 May 2014.

12 Osaghae and Suberu.

13 Ochonu.

and to break down monopolies which local traders had established in commodities such as palm-oil, cocoa and peanuts.¹⁴

After half a century of exploration, oil was discovered in Nigeria in 1956 at Oloibiri in the Niger Delta. Nigeria joined the ranks of oil producing countries in 1958 when its first oil field came on stream, producing 5 100 barrels per day.¹⁵ After 1960, exploration rights in onshore and offshore areas adjoining the Niger Delta were extended to other foreign companies. In 1965 the Environmental Assessment (EA) field was discovered by Shell in shallow water southeast of Warri. In 1971 Nigeria was the world's seventh-largest petroleum producer and it joined the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). In 1977 Nigeria established the Nigeria National Petroleum Company (NNPC); a state-owned and state-controlled company, which is a major player in both the upstream and downstream sectors.¹⁶ One should think that the success story of Nigeria's economy and localised policies reserving some investments for Nigerians alone should have a growing positive effect on everyday-life in Nigeria.

Yet, we need to examine the effects of economic development on the local civilians of Nigeria – both northern and southern. Terrorism and violent acts do not come to exist because of unhappiness by a mere few individuals. These violent acts stem from decades of inequality, discrimination, corruption, and eventually frustration. Nigeria's economy has grown by an average of 6,8 per cent annually since 2005. The country, as stated above, is rich in oil, with about 37 billion barrels of proven crude reserves. But this has become something of a liability – the capital-intensive energy sector does little for employment and broad-based growth, leaving an unemployment rate of at least 23 per cent.¹⁷ While connecting the unequal situation of Nigeria to terrorism the impacts should be considered; it leads to a deep rooted dissatisfaction, with much the same effects as colonialism.

5. FEDERALISM, POWER SHARING AND THE RISE OF BOKO HARAM

The federal-character principle emerged as a balancing formula in the 1979 constitution to forestall the domination of the government or any of its agencies

14 JO Efoduh, *The economic development of Nigeria from 1914 to 2014*. Academia.edu. (2014), <https://www.academia.edu/4036100/The_Economic_Development_of_Nigeria_from_1914_to_2014>, accessed 23 May 2014 .

15 I Romanova, *Oil boom in Nigeria and its consequences for the country's economic development* (2007), <<http://www.grin.com/en/e-book/67959/oil-boom-in-nigeria-and-its-consequences-for-the-country-s-economic-development>>, accessed 23 May 2014.

16 *Ibid.*

17 J Fortin, *Beyond Boko Haram: the tangled roots of northern Nigeria's complicated conflict* (2013). *International Business Times*, <<http://www.ibtimes.com/beyond-boko-haram-tangled-roots-northern-nigerias-complicated-conflict-1455324>>, accessed 23 May 2014.

or resources by persons from one of a few states, ethnic groups or sections.¹⁸ The uneven rates of development among the states and sections was largely responsible for the tension and controversy associated with the application of this principle, complicated by the patterns of distribution of the major ethnic groups.

Federal balancing in Nigeria has been an issue since the country became a federation in 1954. Since the amalgamation of the southern and northern provinces in 1914, there have been accusations of marginalisation and domination from one province to the other. The colonial masters have been blamed by some analysts, but as CTS demands, the influence of colonialism and the lasting effects thereof have been discussed. Should the colonial masters be the sole bodies to take the blame for the situation, it can be argued that if the South was left alone and *vice versa*, the current problem would possibly never have risen. However, realistically it can be argued that the British merely did what was deemed as most beneficial for them at that time. Given the already forced and disputed territorially portrayed cleavages in Nigeria and the historical legacy of divisions among ethnic groups, regions and religious groups, the federal goal was so fundamental that even military governments attached importance to the continuation of a federal system of government.

State creation and the importance thereof can be attributed to the very nature and goal of the federation as a whole. From three regions in 1960, the number of constituent units had later increased to 21 states and the Federal Capital Territory. It was likely that a few more would be created. The increasing number of states was a direct response to the demand and frustrations of groups that were not satisfied with their positions in the federation. Initially, it was the minorities who demanded more states, but in 1990 the need for states had changed.¹⁹ They were no longer needed to protect groups' identity and autonomy. Groups that wanted a share of the national entity, or that wanted to maximise its share of the entity, demanded the creation of new states in which they were the majority. Although states were not designed to have an ethnic basis, the multiplicities of new states were largely created to give majority status to various ethnic groups. For example, the Igbos constituted the majority in only two states – Anambra and Imo; the Hausa/Fulanis and the Yorubas represented majorities in about five states each. The Igbos had persistently pressed for equality with other major groups by demanding new states.²⁰ Realising that the creation of states could go on endlessly, the federal government tried to bolster local governments as another way of meeting the demands of certain ethnic groups.

18 HC Metz, *Nigeria: a country study*. GPO for the Library of Congress, Washington (1991), <<http://countrystudies.us/nigeria/77.htm>>, accessed 19 May 2014.

19 O Ndigbo, *Boko Haram: quotes of the Middle Belt* (2013), <<http://www.elombah.com/index.php/articles-mainmenu/15393-boko-haram-quotes-of-the-middle-belt>>, accessed 12 June 2014.

20 *Ibid.*

However, the subordinate status of local governments, however, coupled with the continued use of the states as units for distributing national resources, made demands for more states a recurrent theme in the evolution of Nigerian federalism.

The discontent with federalism was manifested in several ways, including through insurgency. It is also one of the motivational issues regarding Boko Haram, as Shekau stated in 2012,

“We are optimistic that we will dismantle President Jonathan’s government and establish (an) Islamic government in Nigeria. Let the federal government and its agents do what they can, and we in return, would do what we can. We are calling on all Muslims in this part of the world to accept the clarion call and fight for the restoration of the caliphate of Usman Dan Fodio which the White man fought and fragmented. The White man killed prominent Islamic clerics and emirs and replaced the white Islamic flag with the British Union Jack flag. We now want all our people to come together and restore our lost glory.”²¹

Given Nigeria’s size and diversity, managing the complex web of interests and identities has challenged governance for decades. In general, control of the state has been accomplished through various forms of power-sharing. Within the ruling People’s Democratic Party (PDP), Nigeria elites reached an informal agreement, often referred to as “zoning”, from 1999 to 2011. It provides for the rotation of the presidency between the north and the south. When the president is from the south, the vice-president is appointed from the north, and *vice versa*. A southerner, Olusegun Obasanjo ruled from 1999 to 2007, and he was succeeded by a northerner, Musa Yar’Adua, who was due to rule for two terms ending in 2015. Following his untimely death in office, however, his southern vice-president, Goodluck Jonathan, completed Yar’Adua’s first term and was elected into office in 2011.

The economic and social imbalance between north and south makes political power-sharing a sensitive issue. The south is much richer and boasts far better socio-economic indicators than the north. Extensive oil reserves are located in the Niger Delta. The south is the economic hub of the country with Lagos the commercial and media capital of the country. While there are numerous ethnic groups, the two largest, the Yoruba and the Igbo, make up the majority of the diaspora that provides increasingly important foreign exchange remittances from abroad.²² Though Christians are a majority, there is also an important Muslim population in Yorubaland and across most of the south. Local conflicts in the south tend to be based more on ethnic differences and competition for access to resources, especially in the oil-rich Niger Delta, but very rarely do they occur on religious motives.²³

21 *Ibid.*

22 J Campbell, *Why Nigeria’s north south distinction is important*. Council on foreign relations (2011), <<http://www.cfr.org/nigeria/why-nigerias-north-south-distinction-important/p24029>>, accessed 24 May 2014.

23 *Ibid.*

6. RELIGIOUS RULE

Relations between Christianity and Islam over the centuries have ranged from conflict to concord, from polemics to dialogue, from commercial cooperation to open confrontation.²⁴

The classification of some legal systems as “religious” is problematic at the global level. Boko Haram’s interpretation of Sharia law is a prime example of this – what they deem as legal and illegal, is regarded at global level as extremist. A problem to be noted with regard to orthodox terrorism studies is the small amount of attention given to relations between religions. Religion itself and the diversity thereof are not the problem; the politicisation and misinterpretation thereof – by followers and academics – can be interpreted as something that plays a more crucial role.

The notion of “religious law” is based on western perceptions of religion, but there are differences between western and Islamic conceptions of religion.²⁵ In the West, “religious law” is limited to canon law, which is now merely the law regulating the Church.²⁶ Islamic law is a full-fledged legal system in the same manner as common and civil law – derived from the Holy Koran. In the Islamic law context “religious law” would refer only to the laws relating to worship (*ibadat*) as distinct from the laws relating to human interactions (*muamalat*).²⁷ The failure of the Nigerian state, from Boko Haram’s point of view, is the failure of the secular law and state. Thus, they argue that Sharia law can be more effective and serve the people better.

It is this “need” for a legal system, more effective than the secular “federal” system in Nigeria, which in part led to the frustration that motivated the formation of groups such as Boko Haram. Mohammed Yusuf stated this clearly in the early years of Boko Haram,

“We want to re-emphasize that our main objective is the restoration of the Sharia Legal System in line with the teachings of the Holy Qur’an. We want the Nigerian Constitution to be abrogated and Democracy suspended and a full-fledged Islamic State established. We want to emphasize that trouble started in this part of the world when the white men came, colonised our land, chased away the Emirs and righteous leaders and then replaced the system with Western Legislative, Judicial and Executive procedures. They also changed our pattern of learning and upbringing to the detriment of moral teachings; that was exactly what prompted the establishment of our organization.”²⁸

24 AE Akinade, *The precarious agenda: Christian-Muslim relations in contemporary Nigeria* (High Point: University High Point, North Carolina, 2002).

25 TJ Gunn, “The complexity of religion and the definition of ‘religion’ in international law”, *Harvard Human Rights Journal* 16, Spring 2003, pp. 189-215.

26 *Ibid.*

27 D Yerushalmi, “Shari’ah’s ‘Black Box’: civil liability and criminal exposure surrounding Shari’ah-complaint finance”, *Utah Law Review* 3, 2008, pp. 1019-1106.

28 H Campbell, *Boko Haram: “economic fundamentalism” and impoverishment send unemployed youths into religious militias* (2014), <<http://www.globalresearch.ca/boko-haram-economic>

Nigeria cannot be understood without a clear understanding of Islam. The areas of intersection between Islam and politics are significant. Firstly, the government's failure to promote development or enhance living standards will continue to make Islam an alternative ideology to organise change and seek better or alternative solutions to a range of problems. Secondly, tensions will continue to mount in the country and they will take various forms, including what we presently see happening in Nigeria regarding inter- and intra-religious conflicts. Within Islam, the Sufi and anti-Sufi conflicts are unlikely to disappear and different political parties and interest groups will seek to gain political power to further specific interests. Thirdly, Islamic leaders and Muslim organisations are very efficient and astute at building regional and international solidarity networks to promote their cause and to gain strength in greater numbers.²⁹

7. THE DEVELOPMENT OF BOKO HARAM

As this article aims to explain, poor social and economic conditions in the north, weak state control and heavy handed security measures have played a vital role in enabling Boko Haram to flourish, recruit and build its support base. An additional factor behind its rise has been its increasing interconnectedness to foreign terrorist organisations like AQIM (Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Magreb). The rise of Boko Haram illustrates how local radical Islamist groups, once internationally networked, can rapidly transform into a major threat in regions where governance is weak.

The roots of Boko Haram can also be traced to the Islamic history of northern Nigeria in which, for about 800 years, powerful sultanates centred on the Hausa cities close to Kano and the sultanate of Borno (more or less the region of the states of Borno and Yobe together with parts of Chad), constituting high Muslim civilisations. These sultanates were challenged by the jihad of Shehu Usman, Dan Fodio, who created a unified caliphate stretching across northern Nigeria into the neighbouring countries. Dan Fodio's legacy of jihad is one that is seen as normative by most northern Nigerian Muslims.³⁰

fundamentalism-and-impooverishment-send-unemployed-youths-into-religious-militias/5385934>, accessed 12 June 2014.

29 T Falola, *Islam and politics in Nigeria* (2009), <<http://www.e-ir.info/2009/07/29/islam-and-politics-in-nigeria/>>, accessed 23 May 2014.

30 M Hiskett, *The sword of truth: the life and times of Shehu 'Usman dan Fodio* (New York: Northwestern University Press, 1994).

8. THE INITIAL FORMATION OF BOKO HARAM

Likely founded in the mid-1990s as a religious study group, Boko Haram did not begin to transform into the insurgent group it is today until a young and charismatic Nigerian Islamic cleric, named Mohammed Yusuf, assumed control.³¹

The first mission of Boko Haram was mainly focused upon withdrawal from society – following the example of Dan Fodio – and establishing small camps and schools in remote regions of Borno and Yobe states during the years 2002-2005. As police pressure against these smaller groups began to grow, the groups morphed into more of an urban phenomenon practicing *al-amr bi-I-ma'ruf wa-I-nahy'an al-munkar* (enjoying the good and forbidding the evil). From such operations, usually against consumption of alcohol and other non-Islamic practices, the group began to shape its identity.³²

In 2009, Yusuf's followers once again clashed with security forces. The army shelled Yusuf's compound and, as Yusuf predicted, he was arrested and killed without trial. Surviving devotees went into hiding, some travelled abroad for training with other militants, and some regrouped in Kano around Abubakar Shekau, Yusuf's deputy.³³

Boko Haram's initial rise and enthusiasm was significantly reduced through direct confrontation with the Nigeria police and military, which culminated in the Nigerian military assault upon Yusuf's compound, associated mosques, and his judicial murder. Hundreds of members of the group were killed with him, and it is clear that one of the lessons learned by Boko Haram was to avoid having public bases.

9. IDEOLOGY AND MOTIVATION

The philosophy of Boko Haram is rooted in the practice of orthodox Islam. According to their interpretation, orthodox Islam abhors western education and working in the civil service.³⁴ This explains why the sect is popularly known as Boko Haram. Some sources state that it literally means “Western education is sin”.³⁵

The group attributes the campaign of ethnic cleansing of Hausa and Fulani people in the region. This “cleansing” again refers to removing western

31 S Sani, *Boko Haram: history, ideas, and revolt* (2011), <<http://www.vanguardngr.com/2011/07/boko-haram-history-ideas-and-revolt-5/>>, accessed 20 May 2014.

32 D Cook, *The rise of Boko Haram in Nigeria* (2011), <<https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-rise-of-boko-haram-in-nigeria>>, accessed 23 May 2014.

33 J Verini, “Northern Nigeria conflict”, *National Geographic* (2013), <<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2013/11/northern-nigeria/verini-text>>, accessed 20 May 2014.

34 FC Onuoha, *Boko Haram: Nigeria's extremist Islamic sect* (Nigeria: Al Jazeera Centre For Studies, 2012).

35 *Ibid.*

influences and attitudes. Boko Haram believes that the governing officials and the subsequent government of northern Nigeria have been infiltrated by false and corrupt Muslims.³⁶ The phrase “Boko Haram” suggests that western civilisation is prohibited, not specifically western education. Mallam Sanni Umaru corrected the incorrect assumption in a statement,

“Boko Haram does not in any way mean ‘Western education is a sin’ as the infidel media continues 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... 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 is not determined by Western education.”³⁷

Injustice and poverty, as well as the belief that the West is a corrupting influence in governance, are some of the root causes of both the desire to implement Sharia and Boko Haram’s pursuit of an Islamic state.³⁸ The emergence of Boko Haram can signify the ripening of long-festering extremist impulses that run deep in the social reality of northern Nigeria. But the group itself can be described as an effect and not a cause; it is a symptom of decades of failed government and elite delinquency finally ripening into social chaos.³⁹ The group’s positions were informed for many years by the extreme views of Muhammed Yusuf, who rejected evolution and scientific explanations for natural phenomena such as rainfall.⁴⁰ The reason for referring to Boko Haram as the “Nigerian Taliban”, especially in its early years, traces to its shared anti-western ideology, and its use of force as a means to imposing a stricter form of Sharia law than that which was being implemented in northern Nigeria through government reforms. Leaders of Boko Haram have also indicated publicly that they subscribe to Al-Qaeda’s ideology. In a statement issued in the wake of Yusuf’s death, Sanni Umaru, who claimed leadership of the group, declared that,

“Boko Haram is just a version of the 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 totally Islamised which is according to the wish of Allah.”⁴¹

Yusuf’s call to restore the model of the Sokoto Caliphate and true Sharia resonates with many Muslims in Africa and, in fact, elsewhere in the Muslim world. The

36 A Walker, *What is Boko Haram?* [Special report] (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2012).

37 FC Onuoha, “The Islamist challenge: Nigeria’s Boko Haram crisis explained”, *African Security Review* (19)2, pp. 54-67.

38T Johnson, *Boko Haram* (2013), <http://www.cfr.org/nigeria/boko-haram/p25739?cid=ppc-Google-boko_haram-122711&gclid=CJ_kvsLE2LwCFSvHtAodJBkAmQ>, accessed 19 February 2014.

39 *Ibid.*

40 Anti-Defamation League, *Boko Haram: the emerging Jihadist threat in West Africa* (2014), <<http://www.adl.org/combatting-hate/international-extremism-terrorism/c/boko-haram-jihadist-threat-africa.html#.U4JU5hVBtMs>>, accessed 25 May 2014.

41 *Ibid.*

international response suggested by CTS must be more than hashtags, media coverage, peace missions and drone strikes. Although the latter may prove sufficient in killing wanted terrorists, it does little to understand and confront the Islamic justification for jihad. Insisting that Boko Haram and similar groups are “extremist” or “radical” simply indicates the urgent need to diagnose and treat the problem, which, with regard to the ideology and motivation of such groups, can be partly attributed to the literal interpretation of the Qur’an.

10. MEMBERSHIP AND RECRUITMENT

There is little hard evidence that Boko Haram, like other Islamist militant groups, pay its members a wage. But, during an interview with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), a member of a gang in Niger mentioned that Boko Haram Islamist militants from Nigeria “regularly come across the border, looking for recruits”. The gang members, in their twenties, said they were paid \$3 085 to join the insurgency and since they were unemployed, they were willing to take the cash, but with no interest in protecting or implementing Sharia law. The youths said they were paid either to follow the militants to Nigeria, or to serve as informants in Niger.

“When they come, we inform them about what’s going on, what the security forces are up to. We have no jobs; some of us are still at high school, but we need money. Violence has become a form of work for us.”⁴²

These confessions were revealed in a BBC documentary in April 2014, after Thomas Fessy, a BBC reporter, visited the Diffa region in Niger. When Fessy asked if they agreed with Boko Haram’s reason for fighting, they answered in unison, “No. We only do it for the money.”⁴³ A lack of economic prosperity and development, along with porous borders, seems to have contributed to Nigeria’s national security issues.

It should be noted that Boko Haram does not solely consist of cross-border youths paid to work with the groups. Both Pham⁴⁴ and Campbell⁴⁵ believe that the organisation is composed of a number of different actors: Islamist militants, opportunistic criminals and thugs linked to certain northern political elites. Some of the more devout Nigerian members of the sect are motivated by the conviction that the Nigerian state is filled with social vices and corruption, thus “the best thing

42 C Agbambu and S Gesinde, “How Boko Haram recruits Niger Republic youths with \$3 000”, *Nigerian Tribune* (2014), <<http://www.tribune.com.ng/news/top-stories/item/3851-how-boko-haram-recruits-niger-republic-youths-with-3-000/3851-how-boko-haram-recruits-niger-republic-youths-with-3-000>>, accessed 26 May 2014.

43 *Ibid.*

44 JP Pham, *Boko Haram’s evolving threat*. Africa Center for Strategic Studies (2012), <<http://www.ndu.edu/press/lib/Africa-Security-Brief/ASB-20.pdf>>, accessed 14 February 2014.

45 J Campbell, *Nigeria’s battle for stability*. Council on Foreign Relations (2012), <<http://www.cfr.org/nigeria/nigerias-battle-for-stability/p25714>>, accessed 26 May 2014.

for a devout Muslim to do was to ‘migrate’ from the morally bankrupt society to a secluded place and establish an ideal Islamic society devoid of political corruption and moral deprivation”.

The exact numbers of Boko Haram’s members are not known, although it draws followers across 19 states of Nigeria, as well as members from the Niger Republic, Chad, Cameroon and Sudan. Its members are mainly disaffected youths, unemployed graduates, and former Almajiris.⁴⁶ The phenomenon of Almajiri (or street children) is a popular old practice whereby children are sent to live and study under renowned Islamic preachers in some cities in northern Nigeria. These Almajiris live and study in very appalling conditions, thereby making them vulnerable to recruitment into extremist sects, like Boko Haram’s indoctrination. Beside Almajiris, that form the bulk of its foot soldiers, the sect also has as members some well-educated, wealthy and influential people such as university lecturers, business contractors and politicians who are the major financiers.⁴⁷

Jacob Zenn identifies four main factors that attract recruits. Firstly, financial incentives; some members join because Boko Haram pays them to kill Nigerian government officials, steal cars in Boko Haram’s name and sell them to businessmen or government officials, or to rob banks. Secondly, kinship. Some northern Nigerians, including politicians, may affiliate with Boko Haram because they are related to members, or to some of the followers of the former leader, Yusuf. This point falls directly into context with the use of CTS as a principle. Proving that, in spite of the contribution that orthodox security studies made in terms of the state as an important role player, and religion being the main motivation, there are more sociological factors that should be considered when analysing the membership and loyalty of Boko Haram and its supporters. Thirdly, inter-religious and government violence. The history of violence between Muslims and Christians in the Middle Belt, and civilian deaths during battles with Boko Haram likely led some people to seek revenge against Christians or the Nigerian government through Boko Haram.

Lastly, radicalisation. Some Boko Haram members may have been radicalised by Nigerian imams. Ahmad Gumi, in a sermon, called Nigeria’s role in the French-led military intervention against Islamists in Mali a Christian-led “crusade”; and Ibrahim Zakzaky, an Iranian-backed Shia leader who organises anti-American protests, such as those against the “Innocence of Muslims” film, are some examples of such imams.⁴⁸ These imams create what is acceptable in mainstream Muslim society for many of the issues that Boko Haram uses for propa-
ganda.

46 Onuoha.

47 *Ibid.*

48 J Zenn, *Boko Haram recruitment strategies*. Africa in transition (2013), <<http://blogs.cfr.org/campbell/2013/04/16/boko-haram-recruitment-strategies/>>, accessed 25 May 2014.

11. AFFILIATION

In July 2010, Boko Haram declared its allegiance to Al-Qaeda and the Taliban. This served as a crucial turning point in the development of the group. One of the early signs of a relationship between Boko Haram, Al-Shabab and AQIM came in October 2010 when Boko Haram used AQIM's media division to release an Eid message that praised al-Qaeda's affiliates in Somalia, Iraq, Pakistan and Yemen, and rejected the legitimacy of the Nigerian government. This linkage has contributed to Boko Haram's transformation from a closed sect to a major terrorist threat.⁴⁹

12. BOKO HARAM LEARNING FROM AL-QAEDA

According to Binneh Minteh and Ashlie Perry's comparative analysis of Boko Haram and mainstream terrorist networks on the global political landscape, it is quite evident that the locally based terror group has more in common with Al-Qaeda than immediately meets the eye.⁵⁰ Even though Boko Haram operates at a local level in comparison to Al-Qaeda's international platform, a fundamental driving force for these similarities largely derives from the common ideology that characterises the two groups. In view of this common ideological lineage between Boko Haram and Al-Qaeda, it is no historical accident to see similar strategies and techniques used by both groups. For example, the two groups use the same tactics for suicide and car bombs, targeted assassinations and arson attacks against perceived enemies. Al-Qaeda's first World Trade Center attempt in 1993 was through a car bomb attack.⁵¹ Similarly, in an attempt to undermine US efforts in Iraq, Al-Qaeda has claimed responsibility for several car bomb attacks between 2003 and 2009.⁵² The same was true for Boko Haram when it used car bombings in both the August 2011 attack on the UN compound in Abuja, and the November 2012 attack on the St. Andrew Military Protestant Church at the Jaji barracks in Kaduna state. The use of kidnapping is another commonly used strategy for both Boko Haram and Al-Qaeda. Its affiliate group, AQIM, has long used the kidnapping of diplomats and tourists for ransom.⁵³ For the first time, Boko Haram has similarly carried out kidnappings demanding ransom, either for French nationals,

49 R Crowley and H Wilkinson, "Boko Haram: a new threat in West Africa", in M Trémolières, *Conflict over resources and terrorism: two facets of insecurity* (Paris: OECD, Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat, 2013).

50 B Minteh and A Perry, "Terrorism in West Africa – Boko Haram's evolution, strategy and affiliations", <https://www.academia.edu/3401735/Terrorism_in_West_Africa_-_Boko_Harams_Evolution_Strategy_and_Affiliations>, accessed 12 May 2014.

51 Crowley and Wilkinson.

52 Minteh and Perry.

53 *Ibid.*

international journalists, or even local schoolgirls. The issue of kidnapping and especially kidnapping for ransom (KFR) is further discussed in this article.

13. BOKO HARAM AND AQIM

Boko Haram's main target has always been the Nigerian government, seen as corrupt and "anti-Muslim", and the implementing of strict Sharia law. However, links and possible relationships with other militant and extremist organisations cannot be overlooked. It would also be foolish to overlook the benefits a local militant group would enjoy when investing in expanding international connections.

An active partnership between Boko Haram and AQIM, which operates in close proximity to Nigeria in Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Algeria, could explain the increased sophistication of recent Boko Haram attacks, including the use of car bombs and IEDs. It could also mean an increase in cash flow for Boko Haram. A link with AQIM will also heighten fear in an already tense Nigeria. The benefits for Boko Haram in teaming up with AQIM might be an influx of money and expertise – but also an international profile that would give it credibility as it attempts to recruit more followers.⁵⁴ Boko Haram has already claimed that it has sent its members via AQIM for further military training to Afghanistan, Lebanon, Pakistan, Iraq, Mauritania and Algeria. The training received at such camps would well account for the growing sophistication of Boko Haram's attacks.

While Boko Haram recruits are being trained by groups like AQIM and Al-Shabab, it should also be noted that they are exposed to Al-Qaeda's global ideology, and that this also influences the organisation as a whole. Such an external influence over Boko Haram is witnessed in the choice of targets. In August 2011, the groups targeted the UN headquarters in Abuja. Until then, Boko Haram had largely focused its attacks on local targets such as Nigerian government officials and police stations. This change of targeting might suggest that Boko Haram is shifting some of its focus to a more international goal. Similarly, in 2006 AQIM attacked the UN offices in Algiers.⁵⁵

The fact that these two groups have some sort of relationship has been established, but it is not enough to determine a plan of action "that fits all" groups. Although there are similarities to be found in ideology, strategy and mode of operation between AQIM and Boko Haram, CTS demands that these groups must still be examined individually, taking into account sociological and historical factors as well. CTS seeks to examine conventional views in order to better the

54 K Leigh, *Nigeria's Boko Haram: Al-Qaeda's new friend in Africa?* (2011), <<http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2091137,00.html>>, accessed 27 May 2014.

55 H Solomon, "The African state and the failure of US counter-terrorism initiatives in Africa: the cases of Nigeria and Mali", *South African Journal of International Affairs* 20(3), pp. 427-445.

understanding of the phenomenon of terrorism. Therefore, each terrorist group's uniqueness and specific elements should not be overlooked or put under an "umbrella" of terrorism as a whole.

14. BOKO HARAM'S SUSTAINABILITY

Since the death of Boko Haram founder, Mohammed Yusuf, the global threat of Boko Haram has grown tremendously. Boko Haram's operation, complexity and lethality keep Nigeria's security efforts reeling and struggling to keep up with continuously changing and evolving tactics. Conversely, Boko Haram seemingly adapts and adjusts almost effortlessly to Nigerian efforts. The more sophisticated tactics and weaponry suggest that Boko Haram can acclimatise so quickly thanks to a steady and constant flow of cash.

Shortly after Boko Haram was founded, it drew the majority of its funds from people in surrounding communities who supported its goal of imposing Islamic law, while ridding Nigeria of western influences. In more recent times, Boko Haram has broadened its funding by drawing on foreign donors and other ventures such as fake charity organisations, extortion, and deals with global drug cartels. Its most recent feat – the kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls to sell on the black market – is merely the outgrowth of a coherent strategy to find funds for expansion through whatever means necessary.⁵⁶

15. ACQUIRING WEAPONS

The Nigerian military recently captured from Boko Haram a cache of formidable modern weapons, including anti-aircraft guns; a clear indication of how well-financed the Islamic insurgency is.⁵⁷ The cache of weapons was discovered in a burnt-out church – the result of a previous Boko Haram attack – in Nigeria's northern Borno State. A captured Boko Haram member led the police to the cache, and explained that it was for the purposes of staging an assault on communities across the border in Cameroon. How the group is getting sufficient financing to purchase such weapons, is another indication of the group's expansion and increasing relationship with cross-border militant groups. Some of the funding is believed to be international, possibly including support from AQIM, but this does not appear to be Boko Haram's main source. As for generating the income themselves, Boko Haram also engages in drug trafficking and bank robbery. Another factor working to Boko

56 K Caulderwood, *Fake charities, drug cartels, ransom and extortion: where Islamist group Boko Haram gets its cash* (2014), <<http://www.ibtimes.com/fake-charities-drug-cartels-ransom-extortion-where-islamist-group-boko-haram-gets-its-cash-1585743>>, accessed 23 May 2014.

57 M Schultheiss, *Boko Haram weapons indicate Islamists well-financed* (2014), <<http://guardianlv.com/2014/03/boko-haram-weapons-indicate-islamists-well-financed/>>, accessed 27 May 2014.

Haram's advantage is the unrest elsewhere in Africa and the Middle East; a situation that has made acquiring weapons increasingly easy and cost-effective.⁵⁸

Boko Haram does not only acquire these weapons from allies across Africa. Another aspect to be taken into account is the thriving black market in Central Africa. Michael Leiter, former director of the National Counter Terrorism Centre and now an NBC News analyst, says Central Africa is brimming with weapons; a situation made considerably worse when the Libyan arms depots were looted during the 2011 Arab Spring.⁵⁹

16. KIDNAPPING

Probably the most known source of income, although considered as relatively new, is kidnapping for ransom. In 2013, armed men on motorcycles entered a national park in Cameroon, near the Nigerian border, and swiftly abducted a family of vacationing tourists – a husband, wife and their four children, along with their uncle. Two months later, the kidnappers released the hostages along with 16 others in exchange for \$3,15 million. The transaction was made by French and Cameroonian negotiators.⁶⁰

The Chibok kidnapping and the raid that killed about 300 villagers in Gambarou-Ngala put Boko Haram on the front pages of the international media and received enormous attention from social media. This probably came as a shock to Boko Haram, because carrying out these types of attacks and kidnappings is not a new tactic being used. For example, in May 2013, Boko Haram attacked the town of Bama on Nigeria's border with Chad and killed 55 people, including dozens as collateral damage in shoot-outs with security forces, while looting vehicles and property, destroying government buildings and kidnapping 12 wives and daughters of security officers.⁶¹ Shekau appeared on a video with these women and warned that they would become his slaves if the Nigerian security forces “do not release Boko Haram's wives and children”, including those of Shekau and several sub-commanders. Two weeks later the Nigerian government released 90 Boko Haram members from prison, including family members of militants, and also reportedly paid a ransom to Boko Haram.⁶² By the end of 2013 a precedent was set when Boko

58 *Ibid.*

59 R Windrem, *Missing Nigeria schoolgirls: where Boko Haram gets its weapons* (2014), <<http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/missing-nigeria-schoolgirls/missing-nigeria-schoolgirls-where-boko-haram-gets-its-weapons-n104861>>, accessed 26 May 2014.

60 Caulderwood.

61 J Zenn, *Boko Haram's mass-kidnapping in Chibok: Shekau's gains and objectives* (2014), <http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=42348&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=381&cHash=930ba5b0cb5a0931732f99fb491c7506#.U4YgqxVBtMs>, accessed 26 May 2014.

62 *Ibid.*

Haram KFR operations far surpass bank robberies as the militant group's most lucrative local funding source.⁶³

Boko Haram, ever-adapting as the group is, does not merely demand ransom in terms of monetary value. The militant group controls the fate of the kidnapped schoolgirls and this immediately increases Shekau's bargaining power to pressure the Nigerian government. With international pressure growing by the day, a ransom is likely to be paid, and additional action might also be taken. Shekau will probably also negotiate for the release of dozens, if not hundreds, of Boko Haram members imprisoned in Nigeria, Niger and Cameroon. Shekau simply justifies their actions by once again quoting the Qur'anic Surah 47:4, which, according to some interpretations, permits Muslims to accept ransom or prisoner exchanges for "infidel" hostages.

17. REGIONAL IMPACT

Boko Haram poses a real and serious challenge to security, stability and development in Nigeria, and for Nigeria's neighbours. The temporary closure of Nigeria's borders with Cameroon in 2012 – following the suspected Boko Haram activity in border towns – had a negative effect on their economies. The Islamist insurgency in Nigeria has already displaced hundreds of thousands of people and had a significant effect on the north's already stagnant economy. Escalating violence has discouraged private sector investment and hindered humanitarian operations.⁶⁴ It is crucial to understand that the threat from extremist groups like Boko Haram and AQIM is different from that of past rebellions, and thus requires specific interpretation and approaches. It also means recognising that the risks are not just local issues, but transnational ones.

18. THE (DELAYED) AFRICAN RESPONSE

One of the largest entities in Africa that can have an impact on security measures is the African Union (AU). Since its inception, the African Union's main concern regarding counter-terrorism has been to reinforce and implement existing counter-terror instruments and to promote coordination between states and the regional organisations. The AU also sought to serve as an interface between the continent and the international community, especially the UN. It can be said that the AU sought to provide guidelines and strategies for collective and individual state action against terrorism, but left the state itself to remain the primary instrument to

63 *Ibid.*

64 Crowley and Wilkinson.

combat terrorism.⁶⁵ More than two decades later, and with thousands of soldiers and civilians being lost, the effectiveness of this strategy can be seriously questioned.

In a rare show of unity, the leaders of Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger, Chad and Benin pledged cooperation, including joint border patrols and sharing intelligence, to find the kidnapped girls.⁶⁶ Goodluck Jonathan, Nigeria's president, described Boko Haram as a "terrorist organisation" and said it was part of an Al-Qaeda operation. The US department of defence suggested that the Nigerian army was not capable of confronting Boko Haram alone. Alice Friend, the department's African Affairs Director stated,

"The division in the north that mainly is engaging with Boko Haram has recently shown signs of real fear. They do not have the capabilities, the training or the equipment that Boko Haram does, and Boko Haram is exceptionally brutal and indiscriminate in their attacks."⁶⁷

This statement cannot be regarded as shocking, since this is not the first time that Nigeria has been in a serious security situation with regard to Boko Haram. The fact that Nigeria's difficulty in handling the threat is only being addressed now, is something that should raise some concern among the international policy-makers. In May 2013, the Nigerian president imposed a "state of emergency" in three states in an attempt to curb the increasingly violent attacks by Boko Haram. The decision came after a spate of attacks on security forces and government targets by Boko Haram in its northeastern stronghold.⁶⁸

Exactly a year after Jonathan's declaration, Nigeria is once again criticised over their response, or sufficiency thereof, regarding their campaign against Boko Haram. When analysing the history of extremist violence in Nigeria, it is clear that "practical" help is sorely needed. Condemning the actions of Boko Haram and pledging support without practical and immediate action being taken has proven insufficient. At a regional level, policy responses will require a paradigm shift in how countries work together to understand the threat and respond to it. Transnational risks are inherently complex and require regional co-operation, trusting relationships of interest, and shared investment to manage, in particular, security and development issues. At a minimum, joint border security initiatives will help stem the proliferation of weapons and reduce the ease with which terrorists can move across the region. Some initiatives, as well as Joint Committees

65 H Solomon, *The Achilles' heel of AU counter-terror efforts remains the African state* (2012), <<http://icsr.info/2012/02/the-achilles-heel-of-au-counter-terror-efforts-remains-the-african-state/>>, accessed 22 May 2014.

66 K Willsher, *Boko Haram: African leaders agree joint action in rare show of unity* (2014), <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/17/boko-haram-african-action-nigeria-school-girls>>, accessed 25 May 2014.

67 *Ibid.*

68 Al Jazeera, *French intervention in Mali: causes and consequences*. (11 February 2013), <<http://studies.aljazeera.net/en/positionpapers/2013/01/2013120113020737609.htm>>, accessed 3 December 2013.

on Security, already exist. Improving intelligence gathering, analysis, expertise and information sharing will also be crucial, as will learning from the experiences of other countries, like Algeria, in informing responses. As Boko Haram transitions from a localised insurgency to a wider regional threat, only intelligence sharing and cooperation among nations where it operates, will help prevent its advance.⁶⁹

Boko Haram is no longer merely a local rebellion or regional threat and the focus should be shifted to understand Boko Haram more broadly, and follow with subsequent means of amelioration. Although the sudden interest and outrage regarding the abduction of the schoolgirls can be described as too little too late, it can hopefully lead to a more effective and sustainable regional effort in ameliorating the threat of Boko Haram.

19. INTERNATIONAL ACTION

In a report issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC), prosecutor Fatou Bensouda found that the group has, from July 2009 to 2012, launched widespread and systematic attacks that have resulted in the killing of more than 1 200 Christian and Muslim civilians in different locations throughout Nigeria.⁷⁰ With conclusion of further investigation by the ICC, early in 2014, the ICC prosecutor clearly found that Boko Haram has “attacked religious clerics, Christians, political leaders, Muslims opposing the group, members of the police and security forces, ‘westerners’, journalists, as well as UN personnel. The group has also been accused of committing several large-scale bombing attacks against civilian objects, including deliberate attacks against Christian churches and primary schools.”⁷¹

This report could serve as encouragement to the thousands of families affected by Boko Haram’s activities, or it could be handled with a “so what?” attitude. The threat continues to grow, and still continues to threaten families in Nigeria and across the region. Also, similarly to regional and international governments “condemning” the actions of Boko Haram, it does not lead to a plausible, sustainable solution to the threat.

The most recent international activity towards Boko Haram is the UNSC’s decision of 22 May 2014, to add Boko Haram to its list of individuals and entities subject to targeted financial sanctions, arms embargo and travel bans set out in paragraph 1 of Security Council Resolution 2083 (2012), adopted under Chapter VII

69 Crowley and Wilkinson.

70 S Abubakar and A Emmanuel, *Nigeria: crime against humanity: International Criminal Court indicts Boko Haram* (2013), <<http://allafrica.com/stories/201308060291.html>>, accessed 23 May 2014.

71 Jubilee Campaign, *ICC determines that Boko Haram attacks in Nigeria constitute crimes against humanity* (2014), <<http://jubileecampaign.org/press-releases/icc-boko-haram-crimes-against-humanity/>>, accessed 25 May 2014.

of the Charter of the United Nations.⁷² As a result of the new listing, any individual or entity that provides financial or material support to Boko Haram, including the provision of arms or recruits, is eligible to be added to the Al-Qaeda Sanctions List and subject to the sanctions measures.⁷³ In this regard, CTS will question the effectiveness of such a move and what real impact it could have on the fight against Boko Haram. Elizabeth Donnelly cautioned against overstating Boko Haram's current reach, and defended the action of the UN in describing the sanctions as "largely symbolic". She added that Boko Haram is not truly an international organisation yet, and given what little solid information there is about both the scale and source of the group's resources, it will not have much immediate impact. But it is an important international signal to both the Nigerian state and Boko Haram.⁷⁴

Nigeria has until recently held off requesting international assistance to tackle Boko Haram; so it can be argued that the international community's hands were tied. Yet, Boko Haram is no new threat to the region in Africa and the fact that the girls' abduction served as a tipping point is, unfortunately, just what the Nigerian government needed to admit that the criticism of their responses toward Boko Haram can be justified, and that a more sustainable, practical response is needed.

20. CONCLUSION

The country today known as Nigeria has been described as a collection of independent states with diverse histories, traditions and social structures since before the formation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates and the amalgamation. Historic frustrations, stemming from the 1800s, lead to what the West refer to as extremists, doing only what they deem and believe as fundamentally right. Historic frustrations produce factors that lead to individuals and groups wanting to shape the state according to their own wants and needs. Nigeria has an economic history to be proud of. First the success of agriculture, and later the oil fields and the economic strength that goes along with being one of the world's largest oil producers. Yet, the civilians, especially in the north, feel they are being treated unfairly, and are marginalised and dominated; and all this after being amalgamated with the south, for economic reasons. Once again a finger can be pointed in the direction of historical and now, economic development, decades before Nigeria became a terrorist hub and home to one of the most effective militant insurgencies Africa has seen.

72 Security Council Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee, *Security Council Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee adds Boko Haram to its sanctions list* (2014), <<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2014/sc11410.doc.htm>>, accessed 26 May 2014.

73 *Ibid.*

74 *Business Day Live*. 2014. "Growing global opposition to Boko Haram", <http://www.bdlive.co.za/africa/africanews/2014/05/26/growing-global-opposition-to-boko-haram>>, accessed 26 May 2014.

Uneven rates of development and tension – be it religious or ethnical – led to the failure and distortion of federalism in Nigeria. Lack of sufficient governance in terms of development and living standards forces civilians to look for alternative forms of government, and in Nigeria’s case, it was the application of Sharia law. The problem with practising religious law is that it cannot be followed moderately. It is an all or nothing type of rule. What several analysts of Boko Haram tend to overlook, is that this was where Boko Haram saw the gap to promote Sharia law. What made Sharia law so appealing to several northern Nigerians was Boko Haram’s ability to promote this religious rule as the solution to the secular government of Nigeria’s failures. The new-found interest by the international community is something that was sorely needed, although it can be considered shameful that we are only now giving Nigeria and Boko Haram the attention it deserves. The UN finally listed Boko Haram as an Al-Qaeda affiliate, something that has been suspected for years before the kidnapping of the Chibok schoolgirls. There are scores of similarities that can be found between AQIM and Boko Haram, and it can be concluded that some shared measures should be taken to ameliorate the threat in the region, and not just in Nigeria alone. Hopefully the new-found interest of the international media and community will continue to place pressure on international actors to do more than profusely using hashtags and verbally condemning Boko Haram.