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Curbing Violence in Nigeria (II): The Boko Haram Insurgency

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Executive Summary

Boko Haram's four-year-old insurgency has pitted neighbour against neighbour, cost more than 4,000 lives, displaced close to half a million, destroyed hundreds of schools and government buildings and devastated an already ravaged economy in the North East, one of Nigeria's poorest regions. It overstretches federal security services, with no end in sight, spills over to other parts of the north and risks reaching Niger and Cameroon, weak countries poorly equipped to combat a radical Islamist armed group tapping into real governance, corruption, impunity and underdevelopment grievances shared by most people in the region. Boko Haram is both a serious challenge and manifestation of more profound threats to Nigeria's security. Unless the federal and state governments, and the region, develop and implement comprehensive plans to tackle not only insecurity but also the injustices that drive much of the troubles, Boko Haram, or groups like it, will continue to destabilise large parts of the country. Yet, the government's response is largely military, and political will to do more than that appears entirely lacking.

Most Nigerians are poorer today than they were at independence in 1960, victims of the resource curse and rampant, entrenched corruption. Agriculture, once the economy's mainstay is struggling. In many parts of the country, the government is unable to provide security, good roads, water, health, reliable power and education. The situation is particularly dire in the far north. Frustration and alienation drive many to join "self-help" ethnic, religious, community or civic groups, some of which are hostile to the state.

It is in this environment that the group called Boko Haram (usually translated loosely as "Western education is forbidden") by outsiders emerged. It is an Islamic sect that believes corrupt, false Muslims control northern Nigeria. The group and fellow travellers want to remedy this by establishing an Islamic state in the north with strict adherence to Sharia (Islamic law).

Boko Haram's early leader, the charismatic preacher Mohammed Yusuf, tried to do so non-violently. While accounts are disputed, the narrative put forward by Boko Haram and now dominant in the region is that around 2002, Yusuf was co-opted by the then Borno state gubernatorial candidate, Ali Modu Sheriff, for the support of his large youth movement, in exchange for full implementation of Sharia and promises of senior state government positions for his followers in the event of an electoral victory. Sheriff denies any such arrangement or involvement with the sect. As the group rose to greater prominence, the state religious commissioner was accused of providing resources to Yusuf, while the government never implemented full Sharia.

Yusuf subsequently became increasingly critical of the government and official corruption, his popularity soared, and the group expanded into other states, including Bauchi, Yobe and Kano. "After the politicians created the monster", a senior security officer commented, "they lost control of it". The State Security Services (SSS) arrested and interrogated Yusuf a number of times, but he was never prosecuted, reportedly because of the intervention of influential officials. He also was said to receive funds from external Salafi contacts, including Osama bin Laden, that he used to fund a micro-credit scheme for his followers and give welfare, food and shelter to refugees and unemployed youth.

A series of clashes between Boko Haram members and police escalated into an armed insurrection in 2009. Troops crushed the rebellion, killing hundreds of followers and destroying the group's principal mosque. Yusuf was captured, handed over to the police and shortly thereafter extrajudicially executed.

Boko Haram went underground and a year later launched attacks on police officers, police stations and military barracks, explicitly in revenge for the killings of Yusuf and his comrades. Its spokesman demanded prosecution of those responsible, release of their detained colleagues, restoration of the mosque and compensation for sect members killed by troops. Since 2010, the group's campaign has grown, targeting not only security forces, government officials and politicians, but also Christians, critical Muslim clerics, traditional leaders, the UN presence, bars and schools. Lately it has evolved into pure terrorism, with targeting of students attending secular state schools, health workers involved in polio vaccination campaigns and villages supporting the government.

In May 2013, President Goodluck Jonathan declared an emergency in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states and deployed additional troops that with the help of vigilantes drove Boko Haram from most cities and towns. He also established a committee to negotiate a settlement with its leadership, with little success. On 18 March 2014, National Security Advisor Mohammed Sambo Dasuki announced a "soft" approach to addressing the root causes of terrorism, but it remains to be seen whether and how it will be implemented.

The movement, never very hierarchical, is more dispersed than ever, with many leaders in the Adamawa mountains, Cameroon, and Niger. Its isolated leader, the violent Abubakar Shekau, probably has little daily control over cells, and it is fragmenting into factions, including the relatively sophisticated Ansaru, which focuses more on foreign targets. Able to move fairly freely, these groups are unlikely ever to be completely suppressed, unless the government wins local hearts and minds by implementing fundamental political reforms to address bad governance, corruption and underdevelopment. Insecurity in much of the north may also worsen political violence and undermine the credibility of the 2015 elections, further damaging government legitimacy.

Recommendations

To ensure greater human security in northern Nigeria, better protection from Boko Haram attacks and a more law-abiding, better resourced, professional security service

To Nigeria's Federal Government:

1. Discontinue heavy-handed military and police methods that risk pushing yet more restless, jobless and frustrated youths into violence and extremism.
2. Begin to address impunity (and a main Boko Haram demand) by completing prosecution of the police officers alleged to have extrajudicially executed Mohammed Yusuf; and investigate and prosecute crimes allegedly committed by the security services, government officials (state and federal) and Boko Haram members.

To state governments in the north:

3. Work with northern political, traditional and religious elites to disarm, deradicalise and re-integrate Islamist militants.

To Nigeria's international partners:

Regional

4. Continue to build bi- and multinational security ties and networks in the region.
5. Intensify mixed patrols at Nigeria's borders to curtail the movement of armed groups and criminals.
6. Share and exchange intelligence information on a more regular basis.

Others

7. Encourage the federal government to work with northern political, traditional and religious elites toward a political solution to the Boko Haram problem.

To switch from a mainly military approach to the challenge from Boko Haram, and radicalism in general, to one more attuned to root causes

To Nigeria's Federal Government:

8. Recognise that unless issues of bad governance and systemic corruption are addressed vigorously and transparently, all other measures will be nothing but stop-gaps.
9. Free up the necessary national resources to address sustained economic hardship, rising inequality and social frustration by expanding and strengthening the anti-corruption agencies, and ensure they work effectively at state and local levels, free of political manipulation.
10. Begin to tackle the root causes of growing radical Islamic and ethnic militancy by fully developing and implementing a Far North Development Commission, similar to the Niger Delta Development Commission, with a mandate that includes coordinating anti-desertification campaigns, developing large-scale irrigation,

agriculture, power and road projects and promoting small businesses that could create jobs for youths; and do so in a transparent, consultative and accountable manner.

11. Take steps to change the climate of secrecy and fear around radical Islam by encouraging greater public discussion on the causes of and ways to address radicalism.
12. Accredite senior ambassadors and defence attachés to all neighbouring countries and meet with them frequently to review the domestic and transnational security situations.

To state governments in the north:

13. Reform the Quranic educational system by introducing a dual curriculum (as in Kano) and paying teachers' salaries so as to relieve pupils of the need to beg for their upkeep.
14. Use the Northern Governors' Forum to set high standards of transparent and accountable state governance.

To Nigeria's international partners:

15. Support programs at all levels of government that address poverty, youth unemployment and women's lack of empowerment.
16. Encourage and support the federal government to genuinely implement a national policy of zero tolerance for corruption.

Abuja/Dakar/Nairobi/Brussels, 3 April 2013

Curbing Violence in Nigeria (II): The Boko Haram Insurgency

I. Introduction

Nigeria is a fractured state. It is rich but Nigerians are poor, many extremely so. Since returning to civilian rule in 1999, the state has suffered growing security, capacity and legitimacy gaps, demonstrated in the declining capacity of its institutions to deliver public goods, including security, transportation, water, medical care, power and education.

A prominent section of the elite thrives on crony capitalism and patron-client deals in violation of the rule of law. Its members are from different ethnic, political and religious communities; when they agree on how to share the spoils all is well, but when they disagree, they politicise, manipulate and instrumentalise ethno-religious and regional differences. With the failure of governance and development, an ever increasing number of ethnic militias, separatist groups and millenarian religious movements are being mobilised, both for self-defence and for pressing ideological and practical goals.

As Crisis Group noted in previous reports, bad governance, sustained economic hardship, rising inequality and social frustration are fostering the growth of radical extremist groups.¹ Boko Haram, the latest in a long list of northern fundamentalist movements, has tapped into Muslim revivalism in the north. A major challenge for the region's traditional, religious and political elites is how to rein it in and work with federal and state authorities to find a route out of the quagmire.

This report, the second in a series that examines insecurity in Nigeria, analyses the emergence, rise and evolution of Boko Haram.² Its analysis and findings are based on travel to and interviews in the federal capital, Abuja, as well as northern and north-eastern Nigeria, with federal, state and local government officials, security officers, Boko Haram members and their sympathisers, academics, journalists and other security experts. It was supplemented by research in Cameroon, Chad and Niger.

¹ Crisis Group Africa Reports N°113, *Nigeria: Want in the Midst of Plenty*, 19 July 2006, p. 26; N°119, *Nigeria's Faltering Federal Experiment*, 25 October 2006; N°168, *Northern Nigeria: Back-ground to Conflict*, 20 December 2010.

² The first was Crisis Group Africa Report N°196, *Curbing Violence in Nigeria (I): The Jos Crisis*, 17 December 2012.

II. Corruption, Political Violence and the Weak State

A. Politics, Political Violence, Bad Governance and Poverty

There is an intricate link in Nigeria between politics, governance, corruption, poverty and violence. Politics is largely driven by money. Elected officials are hardly accountable to citizens.³ The well-connected exercise undue influence according to the strength of their purse and the strings they can pull. The various elite factions – political, economic/business, bureaucratic, traditional and religious – have been drawn into a political economy driven by huge oil receipts and implicated in wide-scale and systemic corruption.

Nigeria is consistently ranked as one of the most corrupt countries.⁴ This has denied millions opportunities. According to former World Bank Vice President for Africa Dr Obiageli Ezekwesili, it has lost more than \$400 billion to large-scale corruption since independence in 1960.⁵ When corruption and clientelism do not work, politicians often revert to violence to achieve their aims. “Godfathers” use thugs and militias to intimidate opponents and in the vicious, sometimes deadly struggles for local power or against other ethnic or sectarian groups.⁶

The financial recklessness and extravagance of many former (and serving) governors is well documented. Debts have soared, and many states face bankruptcy.⁷ Some of the money used for corruption, patronage and political violence by governors comes from “security votes”, joint state/local government accounts and money laundering.⁸ The “security vote” is “a budget line that is meant to act as a source of discretionary spending that the executive can use to respond quickly and effectively to threats to peace and security”. It is the most abused budget item, because there is no oversight.⁹

³ Nigerian politicians are among the world’s best paid. “Nigeria boils over”, *The New York Times*, 12 January 2012. A legislator earns about \$189,000 per year. “Nigerian lawmakers top salaries chart”, *Daily Trust* (Abuja), 22 July 2013; “Rewarding work”, *The Economist*, 15 July 2013. Elected officials have full immunity while in office. “Immunity for president, governors hampers anti-graft war – EFCC [Economic and Financial Crimes Commission]”, *Vanguard* (Lagos), 4 October 2011.

⁴ In 2013, Nigeria ranked 144th of 177. “Corruption by Country/Territory: Nigeria”, Nigeria Transparency International (www.transparency.org), 2013.

⁵ “Nigeria loses \$400bn to oil thieves – Ezekwesili”, *Vanguard*, 28 August 2012.

⁶ For more see, Crisis Group Report, *Nigeria’s Faltering Federal Experiment*, op. cit., pp. 15-17; Briefing N°79, *Nigeria’s Elections: Reversing the Degeneration?*, 24 February 2011, pp. 5-6; “Criminal Politics: Violence, ‘Godfathers’ and Corruption in Nigeria”, Human Rights Watch, October 2007, p. 32.

⁷ “Total Public Debt Stock as at 30th September, 2013”, Debt Management Office of Nigeria (online), 30 September 2013. “The CIA World Factbook” (online), 13 January 2014. Total debt is more than the annual federal budget. “Understanding the 2013 Budget”, Budget Office of the Federation (online). Federal and state governments tend to borrow to finance budget gaps rather than development projects. “States face bankruptcy over N339.9bn foreign debt – RMAFC”, *Punch*, 15 March 2012.

⁸ “Chop Fine: The Human Rights Impact of Local Government Corruption and Mismanagement in Rivers State, Nigeria”, Human Rights Watch, January 2007, pp. 3-18; “Criminal Politics”, op. cit.; “A Rain of locusts”, *The News*, 18 July 2011, pp. 14-20.

⁹ “Criminal Politics”, op. cit., p. 39. Crisis Group interviews, Abuja, July 2013. The ambiguity and secrecy associated with national security has enabled misappropriation since President Ibrahim Babangida’s rule (1985-1993) and has expanded in recent years. Obiamaka Egbo, Ifeoma Nwakoby, Josaphat Onwumere and Chibuike Uche, “Security Votes in Nigeria: Disguising stealing from the pub-

Poverty is a product of bad governance, including a bloated administration. A bulging percentage of federal and state budgets is allocated to salaries, allowances, pocket money, foreign trips and temporary duty tours constraining capital and development projects. The federal government has been borrowing for recurrent consumption, not to invest in development. For many the name of the game has been spending, importing and looting.¹⁰

Prices but not salaries have risen.¹¹ Decaying infrastructure, chronic electricity shortages and an influx of cheaper imported products have led to massive factory closures and worsening unemployment.¹² Educated young people, including a growing number of university and polytechnic graduates, seek ever more elusive jobs.¹³ Many youths in the north lack education, have few or no skills and are hardly employable.¹⁴ Idle, they are easily recruited by anti-state and militia groups.

Poverty has been increasing despite relatively strong economic growth; 112.5 million – over 70 per cent of the population – are classified as poor and absolutely poor. Sokoto state in the North West has the highest poverty rate (86.4 per cent), Niger state in North Central the lowest (43). The North East, Boko Haram's main operational field, has the worst poverty rate of the six official "zones".¹⁵

lic purse", *African Affairs*, vol. 111, no. 445 (October 2012), p. 597; "Profligacy of state governments", *Punch*, editorial, 5 October 2011. On 31 December 2013, a federal high court in Abuja dismissed a suit filed by Chief Nkerekweme Akpan challenging the legality of security vote deductions by the governors. The court said it had no jurisdiction over matters involving state governments. Tobi Soniyi, "Court hands off case challenging legality of security votes", *This Day* (Lagos), 1 January 2014.

¹⁰ "Nigeria: before country goes bankrupt", *This Day*, 16 October 2011. Most is spent on three million office holders (about 2 per cent of the population), their families, dependents and "electoral constituencies". "75 per cent of Nigeria's resources spent on governance", *Nigerian Tribune*, 7 October 2011; "Overhead takes 72 per cent as government budgets N4.75 trillion for 2012", *The Guardian*, 17 November 2011. Olusegun Agagun, former finance minister and now trade and investment minister, revealed during his senate confirmation hearing in July 2011 that recurrent expenditure was 74 per cent of the 2011 federal budget. The finance minister and coordinating minister for the economy, Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, gave a 54.1 per cent figure. "Budget not good for development – Okonjo-Iweala", *Punch*, 7 July 2012. 76 per cent of the 2014 budget was allocated to recurrent expenditures. Obbo Effanga, "Inside Nigeria's scandalous 2014 Budget – Investigation", *Premium Times*, 11 January 2014.

¹¹ Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "A country's frustration fuelled overnight", *The New York Times*, 16 January 2012; "Fuel subsidy: public sector workers demand new wage", *The Sun*, 31 January 2012.

¹² "Our resource curse: Dutch or Nigerian disease?", *Premium Times* (Abuja), 28 April 2013. As of the end of 2013, Nigeria generated 3,563 megawatts of electricity, about 4 per cent of the 85,000 megawatts the Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA) estimates as the minimum requirement for industrial and commercial needs. "Electricity generation dropped by 954 mw in 2013", *Daily Trust*, 7 January 2014; "Nigeria needs 85,000mw of electricity to meet demand, says NACCIMA", *The Guardian* (Lagos), 4 March 2014.

¹³ "Jonathan laments lack of adequate skills among Nigerian graduates", *Vanguard*, 23 October 2013.

¹⁴ The president of the Nigeria Entrepreneurs Forum, Dr Sidney Inegbedion, said that according to the National Bureau of Statistics, unemployment had risen to 49 million, and that "52 per cent of these ... were unemployable due to lack of skills". "Lack of Skills, Cause of High Unemployment", *This Day* (Lagos), 26 June 2012.

¹⁵ The national economy, though still relatively strong, slowed from 7.4 per cent growth in 2011 to 6.6 per cent in 2012. "The oil sector continues to drive the economy, with average growth of about 8.0 per cent compared to -0.35 per cent for the non-oil sector. Agriculture and the oil and gas sectors continue to dominate economic activities The economic growth has not translated into job creation or poverty alleviation. Unemployment increased from 21 in 2010 to 24 per cent in 2011 be-

B. Declining Human Development Resources

Nigeria's dysfunctional state has tragically failed many of its people, particularly in the north. Key human development sectors – education, health and the judiciary, as well as the security agencies – are poorly funded or underperforming. Not even the Universal Basic Education (UBE) budget has been spared, with serious harm to school enrolment.¹⁶

In the north, millions of *Almajiri* students are sent to Quranic schools far from their families and required to beg for alms (*Almajiranchi*) or work as domestic help to pay for their upkeep.¹⁷ In a context of urbanisation and increasing poverty, this practice is open to abuse and may foster criminality.¹⁸ In cities like Kano and Kaduna, many *Almajiri* have graduated into *Yandaba*, adolescent groups that once socialised teenagers into adulthood but have in many cases become gangs. In 2005, the National Council for the Welfare of the Destitute estimated there were seven million *Almajiri* children in northern Nigeria.¹⁹

Tertiary education also suffers. The Federal Government Committee on Needs Assessment of Nigerian Public Universities reported in 2012 that public universities, once among the best in the Commonwealth, are “grossly under-staffed, relying heavily on part-time under-qualified academics”. It found that only 43 per cent of academics had doctorates.²⁰

In 2013, the Mo Ibrahim Governance Index ranked Nigeria's health-care system 40th of 53 African countries.²¹ There is little incentive for senior public office holders to fix it; they have access to overseas treatment at tax payers' expense.²²

cause the sectors driving the economic growth are not high job-creating sectors The major policy issue is employment generation, particularly among the youth, and inclusive growth”. “Nigeria Economic Outlook”, Africa Development Bank Group, 2013. Nigeria's states are officially grouped into six zones based roughly on linguistic affinity, contiguity and cultural affiliation. These are the North West, North East, North Central, South West, South East and South South. Crisis Group capitalises specific zones, but not regions such as the north.

¹⁶ In Gombe, Borno, Kebbi and Niger states, “UBE funds are being funnelled into the pockets of multiple contractors”. “How UBE money becomes slush fund”, *Daily Trust*, 16 October 2011.

¹⁷ *Almajiri* is the Hausa derivative of the Arabic *al-Muhajirin* (the emigrants), which refers to those who followed the Prophet Mohammed's migration from Mecca to Medina. Sending children to Islamic teachers is a longstanding practice, especially of fathers with many children. Many parents prefer sending their children to imams who teach them the Quran and Arabic rather than Western-style schools they believe have “corrupting” influences.

¹⁸ Murray Last, “Adolescents in a Muslim City: The Cultural Context of Danger and Risk”, *Kano Studies*, special issue, Bayero University, Kano, 1991, p. 19. According to Education Minister Ruqayyatu Ahmed Rufai, Nigeria had an estimated 10.5 million out-of-school children in 2012, 3.6 million more than in 2000 and 42 percent of the primary school-age population. “Nigeria: Declining Enrollment in Primary Education in Nigeria – Who Bears the Responsibility?”, *Premium Times*, 4 April 2013.

¹⁹ Cited in Moses T. Aluaigba, “Circumventing or Superimposing Poverty on the African Child? The *Almajiri* Syndrome in Northern Nigeria”, *Childhood In Africa*, vol. 1, no. 1, The Institute for the African Child, Ohio University, 2009, p. 21. Recently there have been considerable efforts in some states to correct some of the Quranic school system's failings, for example by introducing a dual curriculum (as in Kano) and paying teachers' salaries, hence, in theory at least, relieving the pupils of the obligation to beg for their teachers' upkeep. Crisis Group Report, *Northern Nigeria*, op. cit., p. 10. See also “*Almajirai* in Northern Nigeria: A collective responsibility”, Nigeria Research Network, February 2013.

²⁰ “Distressing news from the ivory tower”, *Punch*, 11 January 2013.

²¹ “2013 Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG)”, www.moibrahimfoundation.org.

Other institutions suffer similarly. Supreme Court Chief Justice Mariam Aloma Mukhtar has lamented the steady decline in funding for the judiciary.²³ The Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) has raised concerns over bought judgments, and a prominent lawyer describes judicial officers as “a danger to democracy”.²⁴ Security agencies suffer from underfunding, as well as misuse and misapplication of financial resources, without accountability for diversion or illicit award of contracts.²⁵ Many security operatives resort to self-help. By admission of the police service commission head, nearly a third of the 330,000 police are employed by senior politicians and businessmen as private escorts. Nigerians lack security, but not their leaders.²⁶ Yet, insecurity pays: the “security services were allocated” an estimated N1 trillion (\$6.25 billion) of the 4.9 trillion naira 2014 federal budget.²⁷

C. *Growing Alienation and Radicalisation*

A deep sense of frustration and alienation is the result of entrenched inertia. Perhaps most acute in the north, it is felt by diverse groups across the country. The responses are not uniform but have bred the emergence of militant groups based mainly on ethnic and religious identities.²⁸ However, there is no one-to-one relationship be-

²² For example, Senate President David Mark went to Israel in 2012, reportedly for dental and eye problems. Ex-President Umaru Yar'Adua alternated between German and Saudi Arabian hospitals. President Jonathan's wife, Patience, spent weeks in a German hospital in September and October 2012, reportedly receiving treatment for food poisoning. She returned to the same hospital in January 2013. (The presidency budgets billions of naira annually for facilities at the State House Medical Centre.) Nigeria spends annually \$200 to \$500 million on foreign medical care. The health minister, Onyebuchi Chukwu, announced in April 2012 that he would prepare a memo to the Federal Executive Council to stop officials' foreign trips for ailments that could be treated in Nigeria. Nothing has been heard about this since. “Stop funding of foreign medical trips”, *Punch*, editorial, 5 October 2012; “Overseas Medical Treatment”, *The Guardian*, editorial, 11 November 2012; “Nigerians spent billions on treatment abroad – Sambo [vice-president]”, *The Nation*, 14 December 2012; “Foreign medical treatments cost Nigeria N30 billion annually – Okonjo-Iweala [finance minister]”, *Punch*, 1 September 2011.

²³ According to the justice: “Over the years, funding of the courts has remained a challenge as evidenced in the condition of many courts in Nigeria today. Statistics have shown that, funding from the Federal Government has witnessed a steady decline since 2010, from N95 billion [\$596 million] in that year to N85 billion in 2011, then N75 billion in 2012 and dropped again in the 2013 budget to N67 billion”. “Poor court funding and judiciary's independence”, *Daily Trust*, 1 October 2013.

²⁴ “Judgement for sale, NBA raised alarm over cash and carry verdicts, Musdapher [immediate past chief justice] reads riot act to judges”, *The Sun*, 20 September 2011.

²⁵ At a ministerial briefing in Abuja in June 2013, then Police Affairs Minister Caleb Olubolade said police performance was hampered by three factors: poor funding and training, corruption and indiscipline. “Corruption, inadequate funding inhibit Nigeria Police performance- Minister”, *Premium Times*, 18 June 2013.

²⁶ “100,000 policemen carry handbags for wives of money bags, police service commission boss laments”, *Nigerian Tribune*, 19 October 2011. When President Jonathan visited Niger state in October 2011, about 5,000 of the state's 11,000 police were deployed for protection. “Jonathan's visit to Niger state: 5,000 policemen assigned duties”, *Nigerian Tribune*, 19 October 2011.

²⁷ “Security retains top spot in budget”, *Daily Trust*, 20 December 2013.

²⁸ The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) is the best known of many militias in the South South, the oil-bearing Delta region, seeking a national policy that gives the region more resource control. The Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MAS-SOB) in the South East seeks to revive the failed Biafra secession of the late 1960s that resulted in a 30-month civil war. It wants an independent republic for the Igbo people but rejects armed strug-

tween poverty and marginalisation and violence. Most northern Nigerians who are exposed to the anti-Western discourse of radical Islam are not violent extremists, but some radical Islamists exploit these factors. Extremist or fringe groups that instrumentalise violence to achieve their goals do not need an army of militants to produce an effect; only a few hundred committed, loyal and unwavering leaders and members are required – as evident from the Boko Haram experience in the past four years.²⁹

gle. The Odu'a People's Congress (OPC) was established to fight perceived Yoruba marginalisation after the controversial annulment of the 12 June 1993 presidential elections and death of its winner, Chief MKO Abiola, in detention.

²⁹ "Can France achieve its goals in Mali?", BBC News, 17 January 2013. Crisis Group interview, civil rights activist and publisher, Kaduna, 7 October 2012; conflict expert, Abuja, 13 February 2012.

III. The Rise of Boko Haram

Boko Haram grew out of a group of radical Islamist youth who worshipped at the Al-Haji Muhammadu Ndimi Mosque in Maiduguri, capital of Borno state, in the 1990s.³⁰ Its leader, Mohammed Yusuf, began as a preacher and leader in the youth wing, Shababul Islam (Islamic Youth Vanguard), of Ahl-Sunnah, a Salafi group.³¹ His erstwhile mentor was Sheikh Jafaar Mahmud Adam, a prominent Islamic scholar and preacher at the mosque.³² Yusuf was a charismatic and popular *Malam* (Quranic scholar) who spoke widely throughout the north. His literal interpretation of the Quran led him to advocate that aspects of Western education he considered in contradiction to that holy book, such as evolution, the big bang theory of the universe's development and elements of chemistry and geography, should be forbidden: in Hausa "Boko Haram".³³

While critical of the government, Yusuf was involved in official efforts to introduce and implement Sharia in several northern states in the early 2000s.³⁴ The failure to achieve this fully helps explain Muslim youths' anger with government "deception" and "insincerity" and the call for an authentic Islamist revolution.³⁵ Most accounts date the beginning of Boko Haram – its formal Arabic name is Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad) – to 2002, when it began to attract official attention.³⁶

³⁰ Andrew Walker, "What is Boko Haram?", U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP), June 2012, p. 3.

³¹ His full name is Abu Yusuf Mohammed Yusuf; he was born in 1970 in Girgir, Jakusko area of Yobe state. Waldek and Jayasekara, "Boko Haram", op. cit., p. 170. Salafis invoke the founding fathers of Islam, the so-called "venerable ancestors" (*al-Salaf al-Salih*, hence the movement's name), notably the Prophet Mohammed and the first four "rightly-guided" Caliphs – *al-Rashidun* – of the original Muslim community in seventh century Arabia in order to identify the fundamental principles of Islam in their original pristine purity. Since the 1960s, the Salafi movement has been closely identified with puritanism, based on literalist readings of scripture, of the Wahhabi tradition in Saudi Arabia. Crisis Group Middle East/North Africa Report N°37, *Understanding Islamism*, 2 March 2005, pp. 9-14.

³² Andrew Walker, "What is Boko Haram?", op. cit., p. 4.

³³ "Insurgency in Nigeria: Islamism and Militancy in Northern Nigeria", discussion paper presented at the National Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), Kuru, Plateau state, 10 July 2012.

³⁴ He was a member of the Borno State Sharia Implementation Committee under Governor Mallam Kachallah (1999-2003), and was active in debates on Islamic issues on local radio and television stations. A colleague recalled that even while on the committee, Yusuf was "against the system of government, and he used to regularly preach against it". Crisis Group interview, religious leader, Maiduguri, Borno state, 21 August 2009, in *Northern Nigeria*, op. cit., p. 37.

³⁵ Ibid, pp. 22-23; Ostebo, "Islamic Militancy in Africa", Africa Security Brief, no. 23, November 2012, pp. 4-5. Boko Haram established its principal bases in Maiduguri and Damaturu, capitals of Borno and Yobe states in the North East. According to the 2010 poverty profile, the North West has Nigeria's highest absolute poverty rate (70 per cent); the North East's is 69 per cent. The West fares best (49.8). Of the states where Boko Haram is most active, Borno (55.1) performs better than Yobe (73.8) and Bauchi states (73). Nigeria Poverty Profile, National Bureau of Statistics (Abuja, 2012), p. 25.

³⁶ Members prefer the full formal name and tend to consider "Boko Haram" offensive and derogatory, as its usage first became common among the group's Salafi critics, then gained popular acceptance. See Section III.B(2) below. For details on the emergence of Boko Haram and its fundamentalism, see David Iornongu Ker, "Diagnostic Review of Insurgency in Nigeria: The Cultural Dimension", op. cit., p. 130; Marc-Antoine Perouse de Montclos, "Boko Haram et le terrorisme islamiste au Nigeria: insurrection religieuse, contestation politique ou protestation sociale?", *Questions de Recherche*, no. 40, Centre d'études et de recherches internationales (June 2012); Roland

A. *The Muslim Battle of Ideas in the North*

There has been a surge of Islamic reform groups in the north that share broadly common stated goals of promoting a purist vision of Islam based on Sharia; eradicating heretical innovations; and, for many, establishing an Islamic state in the north. They have profoundly influenced the debate over religion and politics there, generally in favour of legalistic interpretations of religious texts. Although the traditional Sufi orders remain predominant, the Jama'at Izalat al-Bida wa Iqamat al-Sunnah (Society for the Eradication of Evil Innovations and the Reestablishment of the Sunnah), better known as the Izala Movement, in particular has contributed to a general religious revival and a much greater public and political role for Islam.³⁷ It was joined by several other reform movements, including the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria (MSS), widely regarded as a platform for young radical preachers, and the Islamic Movement of Nigeria, a more radical offshoot of the MSS better known as the Muslim Brotherhood, or Zakzaky, after its leader.³⁸

A smaller, far more radical movement emerged around the same time as Izala. Mohammed Marwa, nicknamed "Maitatsine" (meaning "the one who curses" in Hausa), a young preacher from northern Cameroon, took an aggressive stance against Western influence, refusing to accept the legitimacy of secular authorities. As his following swelled during the 1970s with unemployed urban youth, relations with the police deteriorated. In December 1980 a confrontation at an open-air rally in Kano sparked massive, weeks-long rioting, leaving many hundreds dead and spreading to other states. Marwa died in the initial riots, but pockets of violence continued for several years.³⁹

Marchal, "Boko Haram and the resilience of militant Islam in northern Nigeria", NOREF Report (Oslo, June 2012); Andrew Walker, "What is Boko Haram?" Special Report no. 308, USIP, June 2012; Jacob Zenn, "Boko Haram's International Connections", Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, 14 January 2013. Some analysts contend Boko Haram started operating in 1995 as the Shabaab Muslim Youth Organisation, with Mallam Lawal as its leader. Yusuf took over after Lawal left for the Middle East for further studies.

³⁷ The Izala Movement, founded in 1978 by Sheikh Ismaila Idris, is essentially anti-Sufi, opposed to what it considers *bidaa* (innovation) practised by the Sufi Brotherhoods, such as pilgrimage to or intercession at the tombs of saints, recital of praise-songs to the Prophet, a range of local customs and traditions and submission of the faithful to the authority of Sufi Sheikhs. Izala went into decline, but its reformist ideas have a considerable hold on many sections of society, and its adherents have gained positions of power and influence in many states.

³⁸ The Islamic Movement campaigns for an Islamic government and stricter adherence to Islamic law. Guided by the slogan, "Islam Only", many Muslims in the region regard it as a Shiite organisation, because some of its observances are more akin to Shiite traditions; but most members do not accept that label. For more on Zakzaky, see Crisis Group Report, *Northern Nigeria*, op. cit., pp. 14-15, 23; Jacob Zenn, "The Islamic Movement and Iranian Intelligence Activities in Nigeria", *CTC Sentinel*, vol. 6, no. 10, October 2013, pp. 13-18.

³⁹ "Insurgency in Nigeria", op. cit.; Toyin Falola and Matthew M. Heaton, *A History of Nigeria* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 206. Many see Marwa's movement as a re-occurrence of Mahdist type revivalist or millenarian Islam that periodically emerges in the north. Crisis Group interviews, Abuja, Zaria, Kano, June 2013. The revivalist groups, like Boko Haram, also tapped into Usman dan Fodio's Sokoto Caliphate (Dan Fodio created the last great empire in northern Nigeria in an attempt to reform the traditional African Muslim states in the region) as a key reference point for all who wanted "a new righteous leadership" through Sharia. Crisis Group Report, *Northern Nigeria*, op. cit., p. 3. Other more recent Muslim revivalist groups are Kala Kato and Darul Islam. "The Popular Discours-

B. *The Emergence and Evolution of Boko Haram*

In the early 2000s, a similar group appeared in the North East. Initially referred to as the Yusufiyya or Nigerian Taliban and later as Boko Haram, it also rejected all secular authority. Over time its position hardened, until it clashed with the police.⁴⁰ While it is comparable to the Maitatsine group, Boko Haram draws ideas and inspiration from newer radical Muslim entities. Importantly, it has concrete links with not only al-Qaeda, but a number of radical African Muslim jihadi groups as well. The skills they have imparted have made Boko Haram a much more significant threat than Maitatsine.

Boko Haram's principal goal is to create a strict Islamic state in the north that it believes would address the ills of society, including corruption and bad governance. The sect's core beliefs are strict adherence to the Quran and the Hadith (sayings of the Prophet Muhammed), and their interpretation as sanctioned by Ibn Taymiyyah (the preferred scholar of Mohammed Yusuf, the sect's leader).⁴¹ Like the majority of Salafi organisations, it is most concerned about what it means to be a good Muslim, defined by observance of the prescriptions of the faith, notably the categorical distinction between what is licit (*halal*) and what is forbidden (*haram*).⁴² Abu Qaqa, the group's best known spokesman, explained: "Our objective is to place Nigeria in a difficult position and even destabilise it and replace it with Sharia". He also said that the group's agenda is to "take Nigeria back to the pre-colonial period when the Sharia law was practised".⁴³

Yusuf, was always political, wanting an Islamic government, but not violent. That changed over time as more radical lieutenants pushed the movement in more confrontational directions. State harassment and perceptions that agreements had gone unfulfilled escalated into vicious conflict, and after Yusuf was killed in 2009 in police custody, all restraint was lifted, and Boko Haram morphed into the brutal organisation it is today.

1. Internal disagreements

In 2002, a more radical faction split from the movement, then known as the Yusufiyya (followers of Yusuf) and among themselves as Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jama'a ala Minhaj as-Salaf (People of the way of the Prophet and the community according to the approach of the Salaf). The 200-strong splinter group led by Abubakar Shekau and Aminu Tashen-Ilimi accused Yusuf of being too soft and went to the then governor of neighbouring Yobe state, Bukar Abba Ibrahim, and requested rural land on which to live an ascetic life away from modern immorality. Ibrahim allowed it to settle in Dapchi, in the Bursari local government area, with a large dam for fishing and

es of Salafi Radicalism and Salafi Counter-radicalism in Nigeria: A Case Study of Boko Haram", *Journal of Religion in Africa*, vol. 42 (2012), p. 120.

⁴⁰ Crisis Group Report, *Northern Nigeria*, op. cit., pp. 36-38.

⁴¹ "Insurgency in Nigeria", op. cit. The author analysed a series of debates between Yusuf and Islamic Scholars from 2006-2009.

⁴² The "pious ancestors" – *al-Salaf al-Salih* – are invoked mainly as exemplars of the good Muslim, but also as validators of conservative readings of scripture. Crisis Group Report, *Understanding Islamism*, op. cit., p. 11.

⁴³ Ibid, pp. 61-62. Sharia as practised in Nigeria had always been limited to civil matters. The northern states that adopted it in the early 2000s sought to extend it to criminal matters. Boko Haram's agenda is to implement Sharia fully in both areas.

irrigation.⁴⁴ It initially lived in peace with the locals but misunderstandings over fishing rights soon developed that forced the police to mediate on several occasions. It then asked permission to relocate and moved to Kanamma, a village on the border with Niger. Soon after, members began to have similar misunderstandings with that community.⁴⁵

The police frequently intervened, arresting and questioning group members as a result of local complaints from community members. In December 2003, the group, then called the Nigerian Taliban, attacked Kanamma, looted the police arsenal and burned down the station and some government buildings. A smaller faction then proceeded to Dapchi, where it attacked the police station and carted away additional arms; Babbangida town, where it burned down the local government secretariat and a government lodge; and Damaturu, where it stormed a police station, took guns and killed an officer. It was stopped on its way to Maiduguri by a police checkpoint, and fighting left two police and three sect members dead. Troops later deployed to Kanamma engaged the militants in a two-day battle, killing scores and arresting those who did not escape.⁴⁶

The radical faction regrouped in September 2004 and attacked police stations in Bama and Gwoza, near Cameroon, killing some officers, including an assistant police commissioner and seizing arms before fleeing into the 900km-long Mandara Mountains along the border. Troops aided by gunships pursued them and killed a number. Five who crossed into Cameroon were arrested by gendarmes and handed over to Nigeria.⁴⁷ Those who escaped went underground.

In 2003, Yusuf fled to Saudi Arabia, ostensibly to study. The police declared him wanted.⁴⁸ He claimed he had nothing to do with the attacks, and the then Borno state deputy governor, Adamu Dibal, reportedly met him while on Haj and used contacts with the security agencies to obtain permission for him to return to Maiduguri.⁴⁹ Yusuf appears to have concluded, however, that the splinter group was a major asset, as it comprised his most committed disciples, and he called for an internal truce in December 2004. Unhappy with the state government (see below) and apparently to cater to his more radical lieutenants, his preaching took a harder line. He criticised the ruling elite, denouncing corruption, impunity, and government failures to the general admiration of the local population. Recordings of his sermons became an important revenue source for Yusuf and his group.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, University of Maiduguri professor, 18 September 2011.

⁴⁵ Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, former aide of then Yobe state Governor Bukar Abba Ibrahim, 2 January 2012.

⁴⁶ Crisis Group Report, *Northern Nigeria: Background to Conflict*, op. cit., p. 36. Those arrested were taken to Abuja. Crisis Group has been unable to ascertain their status or whereabouts.

⁴⁷ The Nigerian authorities have refused to discuss their status or whereabouts.

⁴⁸ "Nigeria arrests official of British-based Muslim Charity in connection with Islamic uprising", Associated Press, 20 February 2004.

⁴⁹ "Nigerian sect planned bomb attack during Ramadan", Reuters, 4 August 2009.

⁵⁰ Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, Islamic audio cassettes vendor at Monday market (Maiduguri's main market), February 2005.

2. A dangerous political tool

While already popular, Yusuf rose to much greater prominence when he reportedly formed an alliance with Ali Modu Sheriff, a politician and wealthy businessman from a prominent Maiduguri family. The connection allegedly also generated resources for Yusuf and his followers. Sheriff and his associates have denied any alliance with Yusuf and accused the PDP of creating Boko Haram.⁵¹

In 1999 Sheriff won the Borno North senatorial seat and helped Mala Kachalla, a far older politician, become governor on the ticket of the All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP) that controlled both Borno and Yobe state. However, an ANPP politician said, they fell out when Kachalla backed out of an agreement to give way to Sheriff after one term.⁵² It is widely believed in the region and by many Boko Haram members that Sheriff then cut a deal with Yusuf, whose large youth following was a significant electoral bloc. Yusuf allegedly promised to help Sheriff, provided he would implement Sharia and give the sect some senior government appointments.⁵³ Sheriff denies any agreement, though many politicians and observers say Yusuf gave massive support to his campaign, reportedly including fiery attacks that portrayed Kachalla as a bad Muslim uninterested in Sharia.⁵⁴

Sheriff took control of the ANPP's party machinery and legislators in Borno, forcing Kachalla to run on the ticket of Action for Democracy, a party mostly based in south-west Nigeria.⁵⁵ Sheriff also has been accused of enlisting a group, named "ECOMOG" after the Nigeria-led West African peacekeeping force in Liberia, to intimidate and silence political opponents with impunity.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Crisis Group interview, University of Maiduguri lecturer writing a book on Boko Haram, 11 October 2013. For more on Yusuf's general support to Sheriff, see Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos (ed.), *Boko Haram: Islamism, politics, security and the state in Nigeria* (Leiden, 2014), pp. 40, 147-149, 166, 237. According to a former Sheriff ally, his involvement with Boko Haram was for both political and financial interests. Crisis Group interview, former Sheriff ally now loyal to Governor Shettima, 23 October 2013. Sheriff and his associates have denied entering into any alliance with Yusuf and accused the PDP of creating Boko Haram. "Boko Haram: Now, Senators Sheriff, Zanna, clash on the truth", *Sunday Trust*, 28 October 2012; "Sheriff fumes: I didn't create Boko Haram", This Day Live (online), 14 July 2011.

⁵² Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, Maiduguri, 2012; Isaac Olawale Albert, "Explaining 'godfatherism' in Nigerian politics", *African Sociological Review*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2005, pp. 95-96.

⁵³ Crisis Group interview, Boko Haram member, 29 March 2014; Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, University of Maiduguri lecturer, 20 September 2011; "Borno and the Politics of Boko Haram", *This Day*, 24 January 2014; Johannes Harnischfeger, "Boko Haram and its Muslim critics: Observations from Yobe state", and Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, "Boko Haram and politics: From Insurgency to terrorism", in Montclos (ed.), *Boko Haram*, op. cit., pp. 40, 148. The implementation of Sharia in Zamfara, another ANPP-controlled state, had fuelled agitation for its re-introduction across the predominantly Muslim northern states.

⁵⁴ Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, prominent ANPP politician Maiduguri, June 2012; "Boko Haram: Now, Senators Sheriff, Zanna, clash on the truth", *Sunday Trust*, 28 October 2012.

⁵⁵ "Rough times for Mala Kachalla", *NewsWatch Magazine*, vol. 36, no. 5, 5 August 2002; "The affliction called second term", *Sun Newspaper*, 23 February, 2003. Since Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999, Borno and Yobe have been ruled by the opposition party, the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP).

⁵⁶ In January 2011 Abdullahi Gwange, a staunch PDP (Peoples Democratic Party) supporter was shot dead in broad daylight by "ECOMOG" reportedly on orders of its leader, Duhu (darkness). Alhaji Kiram, another PDP supporter hostile to Sheriff, was reportedly deliberately run over in Oc-

The state government allegedly provided funds to Yusuf through Buji Foi, known locally as a Yusuf disciple whom Sheriff made religious affairs commissioner when he became governor.⁵⁷ Yusuf used the money to organise an informal micro-credit scheme that gave his disciples capital to set up businesses. They in turn gave part of their profits as alms to the group, which began amassing arms, mostly Kalashnikovs from neighbouring Chad, allegedly with Baba Fugu, Yusuf's father-in-law who was killed during the 2009 crackdown, as supplier.⁵⁸

Cracks appeared in the purported Yusuf-Sheriff alliance, however, after the latter became governor in 2003. According to Boko Haram members, he reneged on his promise to implement Sharia fully in the state, limiting its courts to social matters and refusing to allow traditional criminal punishments such as flogging for theft and fornication, amputation and stoning to death for adultery. Yusuf began to direct sermons against Sheriff and his government, ultimately branding him an apostate.⁵⁹ In 2007, Buji Foi resigned as religious affairs commissioner in protest.

Yusuf's criticism of Western education brought him into disagreement with other clerics, including fellow Salafis; his former mentor, Sheikh Mahmud Jaafar Adam, was his foremost antagonist. Izala clerics, particularly Jaafar Adam and Adam Albany, devoted considerable time to criticising the group and warning the government about it.⁶⁰

tober 2010 by an "ECOMOG" bus, suffering a fractured leg. Crisis Group interviews, Maiduguri, July 2013. "Nigeria: The 'ECOMOG' factor in the North-East", *Weekly Trust* (Abuja), 6 August 2000; "Nigerian security service says politicians sponsor Boko Haram Islamists", Reuters, 21 November 2011; Isaac Olawale Albert, "Explaining 'godfatherism' in Nigerian politics", op. cit., pp. 95-96; Freedom Onuoha, "Boko Haram and the evolving Salafi Jihadist threat", in Montclos (ed.), *Boko Haram*, op. cit., pp. 166-167. A group called the Borno Elite for Peace, Progress and Stability (BEPSP) asserted in a statement: "... under Sheriff ... the dreaded thugs codenamed ECOMOG went about attacking rival political groups and openly using cutlasses to kill people on the streets of Maiduguri", *This Day*, 16 January 2014. A close ally, Alhaji Umaru Duhu, denied the former governor was linked to ECOMOG. "Interview: Ali Sheriff is more a victim of Boko Haram than a sponsor – says ex gov's ally", *Newsdiaryonline.com*, 1 November 2012. On political thugs, see also Crisis Group Reports, *Nigeria: Want in the Midst of Plenty*, op. cit., pp. 27-28; *Nigeria's Faltering Federal Experiment*, op. cit., p. 17; "Criminal Politics: Violence, 'Godfathers' and Corruption in Nigeria", Human Rights Watch, October 2007; "Watching us die on CNN", Report of the Study on Community-Level Management Mechanisms in the Niger Delta, Middle Belt and North East Zones of Nigeria, vol. 1, Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Program, Abuja, December 2012, pp. 76-79.

⁵⁷ Sheriff says he did not know Buji Foi was a sect member when he was made religious affairs commissioner. Several sources in Maiduguri said Buji Foi was known as a devout Salafi and very close to Yusuf, whose sermons he regularly attended even before becoming commissioner. Crisis Group analyst interviews in another capacity, including Boko Haram members, Maiduguri, 30 July 2009; "Sheriff fumes: I didn't create Boko Haram", op. cit.

⁵⁸ The state government allegedly also gave Yusuf's group 50 motorcycles that it used to set up taxi businesses. The motorcycles were parked at the Boko Haram headquarters, in Markaz, at the close of day by the operators, who would hand over the 100 naira (\$1) fee. Crisis Group saw photos of scores of those motorcycles burned in the military offensive at Markaz in 2009 that destroyed the sect's headquarters. Maiduguri residents say Fugu had police connections and helped obtain the release of criminals and those suspected of serious crimes including murder, gun-running and armed robbery. Crisis Group analyst interviews in another capacity, Maiduguri, 31 July 2009.

⁵⁹ Crisis Group analyst observations in another capacity, northern Nigeria, 2005-2009.

⁶⁰ See, for example, audio preaching from Sheikh Jaafar Adam's month-long *Tafsir* (Quran commentary) in Maiduguri during Ramadan, September 2008. Crisis Group interviews, Kano, Abuja, July 2013; "The Popular Discourses", op. cit.; "Insurgency in Nigeria", op. cit., pp. 12-21. About this time members began to brandish clubs and leaders to carry swords, arguing that Islam enjoins

Though never prosecuted, Yusuf experienced arrests and interrogations by the State Security Service (SSS) that caused his popularity to soar. The Maiduguri SSS reportedly sent forward eleven reports on him and the group, but none were taken seriously. On a number of occasions Yusuf was arrested, taken to the SSS Abuja headquarters, quickly released and returned to Maiduguri. The SSS halted the harassment when it became apparent his followers became more restive with each arrest.⁶¹

In December 2008, the Borno state government charged Yusuf with terrorism before the federal high court in Abuja. He was released on bail, allegedly following the intervention of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) members. Four influential Nigerians, all Christians, reportedly signed the bail bond.⁶² This led to speculation that Yusuf had backing from northern Christian elites and conspiracy theories that he was being used to undermine northern Muslim leaders.⁶³

3. The uprising

Clashes in summer 2009 escalated in July into a full-scale armed insurrection targeting police headquarters, stations and officer's homes to establish an Islamic state in Maiduguri and some cities in the north including Bauchi, Potiskum and Kano.⁶⁴ A brutal, multi-day military crackdown killed over 800, mostly Boko Haram members. The group since has alleged that Sheriff ordered the killings of Yusuf, Buji Foi and Baba Fugu to cover up his involvement with Boko Haram – a charge he staunchly rejected.⁶⁵ After Sheriff declared Foi wanted for funding Boko Haram, he reportedly was arrested by the military in his village farmhouse and taken to the state police headquarters in Maiduguri, where he was killed.⁶⁶ Two days later Yusuf was captured by troops, handed over to police and shortly thereafter extrajudicially executed at police headquarters.⁶⁷ Fugu, who appeared voluntarily at the headquarters, also was killed.⁶⁸

Muslims to carry arms for self-defence. Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, Aminu Tashen-Ilimi, Maiduguri, 11 January 2006.

⁶¹ Crisis Group analyst interviews in another capacity, Mohammed Yusuf, Maiduguri, 10 January 2006; SSS officers, July 2009, September 2011. The SSS is the primary domestic intelligence service.

⁶² Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, Borno state government spokesman Usman Ciroma, 2 August 2009. The PDP controls the federal government.

⁶³ Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, University of Maiduguri lecturer, 20 September 2011.

⁶⁴ "Nigeria police fight deadly battle with Islamists", Agence France-Presse, 27 July 2009. For more on the events that escalated into the uprising, see Crisis Group Report, *Northern Nigeria*, op. cit., pp. 36-38; "Spiraling Violence: Boko Haram Attacks and Security Forces Abuses in Nigeria", Human Rights Watch, 11 October 2012, pp. 32-36.

⁶⁵ Crisis Group interview, University of Maiduguri lecturer writing a book on Boko Haram, 11 October, 2013; "Breaking News: Boko Haram Announces cease Fire! ... The arrest and prosecution of ex-Gov Ali Modu Sheriff is part of their condition", *Desert Herald*, 1 November 2012. See also, Crisis Group Report, *Northern Nigeria*, op. cit., p. 36.

⁶⁶ State-run BRTV (Borno Television) news bulletin, 28 July 2009. Press conference with Colonel Ben Ahanotu, commander of the military operation against Boko Haram, 30 July 2009.

⁶⁷ There are different accounts of Yusuf's death, including Boko Haram's that he was killed by police in custody and the police's that he was shot and killed after he fled. Video recording of his bullet-riddled body circulated in Maiduguri on 31 July 2009; on 3 August, the military in Maiduguri released a video clip of his interrogation. Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, Colonel Ben Ahanotu, 31 July 2009; interviews, Abuja, June 2013; Crisis Group Report, *Northern Nigeria*, op. cit., p. 36, fn. 72. Seven policemen were identified, based on video evidence, as taking part in

IV. A Rapidly Evolving Threat

A. *Revenge, Changing Tactics and Terrorist Violence*

After the 2009 crackdown, Boko Haram went underground for a year before surfacing with attacks on police, their stations and military barracks to avenge the killings of Mohammed Yusuf and other comrades. The group also carried out jailbreaks to free members and demanded prosecution of Yusuf's killers, release of detained colleagues, restoration of its destroyed mosque and compensation for members killed by troops.⁶⁹ Originally directed mainly at security forces and government officials, the campaign has expanded to include attacks on Christians, critical Muslim clerics, traditional leaders, suspected collaborators, UN agencies, bars and schools.⁷⁰ It has evolved into terrorism, including against students at state (secular) schools and health workers involved in polio vaccination campaigns.⁷¹

From targeting security services, Boko Haram expanded its attacks to assassinating neighbourhood chiefs who it believes helped troops identify members and Muslim clerics who opposed their ideology. They also started killing Borno state ANPP politicians, who they claim reneged on promises. "After the politicians had created the monster", a former SSS officer said, "they lost control of it".⁷² Victims included Madu Fannami Gubio, a gubernatorial candidate, and Modu Sheriff's cousin, shot with five others outside his family house in Maiduguri on 28 January 2011; and Awana Ngala, ANPP's national vice chairman, shot in his home with a friend on 27 March 2011 (just over a month before that year's general elections).⁷³ This led the ANPP to accuse the rival PDP of orchestrating the killings.⁷⁴ The "ECOMOG" thugs also became targets; most were forced underground, while others fled Maiduguri.

Yusuf's arrest and killing: Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) JB Abang, ACP Akeera, Chief Superintendent (CSP) Mohammed Ahmadu, ACP Mada Buba, Sergeant Adamu Gado, and Constables Anthony Samuel and Linus Luka. Five (Abang, Akeera, Mada Buba, Mohammed Ahmadu and Adamu Gado) were arraigned in July 2011. Trial of Suspected Killers of Sect Leader Stalled", *This Day*, 14 July 2011. The trial continues. "Judge may stop trial of alleged B'Haram founder's killers" *Punch*, 5 March 2014.

⁶⁸ Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, Boko Haram member, September 2011.

⁶⁹ Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, Yusuf's brother-in-law Babakura Fugu, 17 September 2011. He was part of a meeting between former President Olusegun Obasanjo, Yusuf's family and sect members when they presented these demands as conditions for ceasefire.

⁷⁰ On 1 February, the sect killed Sheikh Adam Albani, along with his wife and son. Among the seven arrested was Yakub Abdullahi, allegedly its Kaduna and Niger states sub-regional commander. He publicly confessed to planning the assassination and said it was on the orders of the sect's Shura (council). "Update: SSS Parades killers of Zaria cleric Sheikh Albani", *Daily Trust*, 3 March 2014. Shekau, in a video, admitted ordering the killing and threatened to kill other prominent Muslim and political figures. "Boko Haram chief threatens attacks in Nigeria oil fields", Agence France-Presse, 19 February 2014.

⁷¹ "Spiraling Violence", op. cit., pp. 30-57. "Nigeria massacre: Boko Haram Islamists kill 42 at boarding school in Yobe state", *The Independent*, 8 July 2013; "Polio workers in Nigeria shot dead", *The Guardian*, 8 February 2013.

⁷² Crisis Group interview, July 2013.

⁷³ "The travails of Ali Modu Sheriff", *The Nation*, 17 July 2011, p. 11. The sect also killed ANPP youth leader Alhaji Modunga Borift and two friends shortly after a 3 December 2011 wedding.

⁷⁴ The Borno state government noted all those killed were members of the ANPP. PDP National Publicity Secretary Chief Olisa Metuh warned the opposition against playing politics with lives. "PDP behind killings in Borno – state govt", *Vanguard*, 12 November 2012; "Boko Haram Kills ANPP

Despite the violence, controversy over alleged political links reportedly continued. On 3 November 2011, the SSS arrested Ali Sanda Umar Konduga, a purported Boko Haram spokesman who used the alias Usman al-Zawahiri. In a confession, Konduga claimed he was employed by Ali Ndume, a then-PDP senator from Borno state, who, he reportedly said, recruited him to send threatening messages to political adversaries.⁷⁵ Konduga's statement also implicated Nigeria's former ambassador to São Tomé and Príncipe and former PDP chairman in Borno state, Sa'idu Pindar.⁷⁶ On 4 November 2012, Ndume was summoned by the SSS and arraigned in court, along with Konduga, on terrorism charges. He pleaded not guilty, is out on bail and still facing trial; Konduga entered into a plea bargain and was sentenced to three years in prison.⁷⁷

Sources in Maiduguri described Konduga as a political thug who was never religious and wondered how he could have become a Boko Haram spokesman.⁷⁸ Such testimony and the lenient SSS treatment led many people to believe he was used to get at Ndume, who insisted that his sole contact with Boko Haram was as a member of the Presidential Committee on Security Challenges in the North East Zone (the Usman Galtimari committee, see below) and a Borno senator with a stake in the state's security.⁷⁹

On 20 October 2012, it was reported that the Joint Task Force (JTF, combining the military, police and other security agencies) arrested Shuaibu Mohammed Bama, a top commander of the group, in the Maiduguri home of his uncle, Ahmed Zanna, a

Youth Leader, Konduga's Father Declares Son Insane", *Leadership*, 4 December 2011. Ex-Governor Sheriff said a 14 January 2014 car-bomb attack in Maiduguri that killed 43 and was attributed to Boko Haram was the work of political opponents. "Official: Politics Behind Deadly Nigeria bombing", Associated Press, 16 January 2014.

⁷⁵ Boko Haram threatened some radio stations airing his interviews, warning them to stop as he was not a member and alleging he was paid by the SSS. Ndume denied Konduga's allegations and that he backed Boko Haram. "Nigeria's ex-Boko Haram spokesman Konduga jailed", BBC, 6 December 2011. The SSS gave the court evidence that its analysis of the senator's mobile phone call records showed he called Konduga at least 73 times and told Konduga to call and threaten the federal attorney-general and justice minister, Mohammed Adoke. Ihuoma Chiedozie, "Court admits Ndume, Konduga call logs as evidence", *Punch*, 12 December 2012; "Ndume communicated with Konduga 73 times – Witness says", *Daily Trust* 13 December 2012. The court's ruling was later overturned. Ndume joined the opposition APC in January 2014. "11 PDP senators defect to APC", *Premium Times*, 29 January 2014.

⁷⁶ "Boko Haram Disowns Konduga As Jonathan Says The Sect Will Soon Be History", *The Nigerian Voice*, 25 November 2011. Pindar died in a car crash on 31 August 2011, two months before Konduga's capture. A Maiduguri native, he was also PDP vice chairman in the North East.

⁷⁷ On 23 May 2013, an Abuja appeals court fixed 2 October for briefs on Ndume's appeal for a stay in his terrorism trial at a federal high court. "Court fixes Oct 2 for Sen Ndume's appeal", *The Guardian Mobile*, 24 May 2013. The case was adjourned to 1 November. "Terrorism: Appeal Court to Hear Ndume's Case Nov 1", This Day Live, 1 November 2013. On 18 December, the court upheld two of his appeals regarding the admissibility of phone-record evidence. "Ndume's Trial for Terrorism Suffers Major Setback", This Day Live, 18 December 2013.

⁷⁸ Crisis Group analyst telephone interview in another capacity, neighbour of Ali Umar Sanda Konduga in Maiduguri, 7 November 2012. A man claiming to be his guardian said Konduga had mental problems. "Boko Haram: Father declares suspect insane", *Vanguard*, 4 December 2011.

⁷⁹ Alhaji Ba Basharu (PDP) called the Koinduga accusations against Ndume and Pindar "politically motivated", an attempt to force the PDP to back out of a court case against the ruling ANPP party in the state. He accused Sheriff of masterminding the accusations to get revenge on Ndume for leaving the ANPP. "Ndume's Indictment Political – Borno PDP", *Daily Trust*, 22 November 2011.

PDP senator. Zanna strongly denied that Bama was arrested there and insisted that he was actually arrested at the home of Modu Sheriff, whom he had defeated in the previous April's senatorial election.⁸⁰ Zanna's assertion opened a floodgate of recriminations, with each accusing the other of sponsoring Boko Haram and issuing their own denials.⁸¹ On 21 October, the SSS interrogated and released Zanna; no charges have been filed against him or his nephew, who apparently remains in SSS custody.

The local population is convinced that politics played a role in the crisis. Even the "Civilian Joint Task Force" (CJTF), comprised of youths helping the security forces combat Boko Haram, vented its rage at the political establishment, storming the private residence of the Borno state ANPP chairman, Alhaji Mala Othman, on 1 July 2013 and setting it ablaze, because, it alleged, he is a sponsor of Boko Haram. Subsequently, hundreds of youths tried unsuccessfully to burn Sheriff's private residence. They asserted that both Sheriff and Othman supported Boko Haram and had fuelled the crisis.⁸² Othman was taken into JTF custody on 6 July and detained for over a month.⁸³

Boko Haram expanded its operations beyond its core areas of Borno and Yobe states. High-profile attacks included the drive-by shooting of a retired deputy inspector-general of police in Kano, the murders of a former head of the Nigerian Immigration Service and his two bodyguards in Azare, Bauchi, and the killing of a Borno state comptroller of prisons in his home in Potiskum, Yobe.

Tactics became more sophisticated, both in response to increased security and in an effort to stir sectarian conflict. The first attacks in 2010 were predominantly shootings,⁸⁴ but improvised explosive devices (IEDs) began to be used in December, especially in the run-up to the 2011 elections. After those elections, the movement turned to vehicle-borne IEDs (VBIEDs), cars typically packed with several propane cylinders or explosives-filled drums. In August 2011, it attacked the UN headquarters in Abuja with a suicide VBIED.⁸⁵

Boko Haram also spread its campaign in 2011 to churches. That year's deadliest bombing was on Christmas Eve against St Theresa Catholic Church in Madalla, outside Abuja, in which over 40 worshippers were killed and dozens injured. The group claimed responsibility, and security agencies believe Kabiru Sokoto, a Boko Haram/Ansaru leader (see below), was the mastermind.

⁸⁰ Sheriff had completed the maximum two terms as governor and intended to return to the senate.

⁸¹ "Senator Zanna Is A Boko Haram Kingpin, Says Former Borno Governor Modu Sheriff", Sahara Reporters, 22 October 2012; "Boko Haram: Now, Senators Sheriff, Zanna clash on the truth", *Sunday Trust*, 28 October 2012; "Boko Haram: Zanna Urges FG to Probe Sheriff", This Day Live, 29 October 2012.

⁸² "Nigeria: 'Civilian JTF' Burns Borno ANPP Chair's Home", *Daily Trust*, 2 July 2013.

⁸³ Othman denied sponsoring Boko Haram. "Our chairman is not a Boko Haram sponsor – Borno ANPP", *Premium Times*, 5 July 2013. According to Maiduguri ANPP members, Othman's detention created a rift between Sheriff and current Borno state Governor Kashim Shettima. Sheriff reportedly pressed Shettima to cut short a trip to China in an attempt to secure Othman's release. "Arrest: Borno ANPP Officials Disown State Chairman", *Daily Trust*, 7 July 2013. Shettima reportedly refused to get involved because he did not want to interfere in the work of security agencies and be seen as blocking efforts to end Boko Haram's insurgency in the state. Crisis Group interview, aide to Governor Shettima, 10 August 2013.

⁸⁴ Often a motorcycle team was responsible, with the rear rider the shooter. Security forces banned motorcycles in some cities and in others forced the riders to dismount at checkpoints.

⁸⁵ "Special Report: Boko Haram", Control Risks, February 2013.

On 20 January 2012, Boko Haram killed at least 185 people, mostly Muslim civilians, in coordinated bombings and shootings targeting state security agencies in Kano. The intention was to force the state government to stop the arrests of members fleeing Maiduguri to Kano.⁸⁶ For several months the state was a major theatre for the sect, prompting an extensive military response. Following a sweeping crackdown in September 2012 that resulted in arrests and killings of prominent members, including Abubakar Adam Kamar, Abul Qaqa, Mohammed Suleiman and Malam Ghali, scores of top Boko Haram commanders fled, supposedly to Mali and Somalia. Some reportedly were arrested by Niger security operatives in the border town of Kwanni, handed over to Nigerian authorities and taken to Abuja. They have not been heard of since.⁸⁷

Boko Haram was arguably at its apex in early 2013, when it took control of large swathes of northern Borno state. The subsequent military build-up of the Joint Task Force (see below), the military offensive and use of vigilante groups (the CJTF) have hurt the movement. Tactics, however, continue to evolve rapidly, and partially in response to losses and a turn in public opinion, it increasingly relies on attacks on secular schools (first at night, later when students were in classes), villages and CJTF groups.

With its rank and file decimated, Boko Haram reportedly has resorted to forced conscription and recruiting of criminals and thugs (area boys), paying them for attacks, sometimes with a share of the spoils.⁸⁸ On 15 November 2012, Kano police declared two notorious gangsters wanted who had been involved in a major armed robbery at the main bureau de change two days earlier.⁸⁹ A month later, troops shot dead a major hashish dealer, known as Dan-Madina, in Damagun, north-eastern Yobe, for alleged involvement in Boko Haram attacks.⁹⁰ The movement has also resorted to kidnapping, allegedly for ransom payments, including in neighbouring

⁸⁶ In November 2011, the sect wrote an open letter to Kano Governor Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso, Emir Ado Bayero and other prominent persons, threatening attacks if the arrests did not stop and demanding release of detainees. A Boko Haram/Ansaru member said there were SSS-mediated meetings between Kano state officials and intermediaries on Boko Haram demands the government refused. Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, Kano, 7 February 2013. An official said the intermediaries were told all detained Boko Haram members were arrested in connection with armed robbery, not as sect members. Crisis Group interview, September 2012.

⁸⁷ Ibid. Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, SSS officer, 26 October 2012. In September 2012, the group launched coordinated attacks on telecommunications infrastructure in northern states. See Freedom Onuoha, "The Cost of Boko Haram Attacks on Critical Telecommunication Infrastructure in Nigeria", e-International relations (www.e-ir.info), 3 November 2013. Some may have died in custody. "Nigeria: Deaths of hundreds of Boko Haram suspects in custody requires investigation", Amnesty International, 15 October 2013.

⁸⁸ In June, 2013, male Bama residents began to flee the town 60km from Maiduguri following forced conscription by Boko Haram, which threatened to behead whomever refused to join. Crisis Group interviews, Maiduguri, 18 July, 2013; Lt. Colonel Sagir Musa, JTF spokesman, Maiduguri, 19 July, 2013; Kano state police spokesman, Magaji Musa Majia, August 2013. It is possible criminals are using Boko Haram as cover for their illegal behaviour.

⁸⁹ A trader was killed. Press statement by Kano state police spokesman Magaji Musa Majia. "Gunmen kill one in Kano", *Daily Trust*, 13 November 2012. Police said Boko Haram recruited them to rob, then share proceeds. Crisis Group interviews, police officers, Kano, 17 August 2013. In 2011, more than 30 bank robberies were attributed to Boko Haram. "Boko Haram, armed robbers attack 100 bank branches", *This Day*, 10 December 2011.

⁹⁰ Crisis Group analyst telephone interview in another capacity, military officer, Potiskum, December 2012.

Cameroon. The latest abduction was of French priest Georges Vandenbeusch on 13 November 2013 in Nguetchewé parish of Mayo-Moskoto. He was freed on 31 December, reportedly after Boko Haram obtained payment of a ransom and the release of an important member imprisoned in Maroua, Cameroon.⁹¹

Although Boko Haram has been pushed into the bush, it can still carry out spectacular attacks.⁹² On 2 December 2013 around 200 insurgents dressed in military uniform and armed with rocket launchers, explosives and assault rifles infiltrated Maiduguri and conducted coordinated attacks on the air force base and a military barracks. Most of the buildings were reportedly destroyed, as well as five aircraft.⁹³ On 20 December 2013, several hundred fighters stormed military barracks outside Bama, close to the Cameroon border, in a predawn raid, torching the compound and killing many soldiers, their wives and children.⁹⁴ The army said the Islamists tried to escape across the border, but fighter jets killed many of them, as well as civilians.⁹⁵

B. Diffuse Organisation and Leadership

Boko Haram grew to prominence under the charismatic Mohammed Yusuf, an inspirational speaker who was not a particularly effective leader and had trouble keeping his unruly lieutenants, particularly Abubakar Shekau, in check. The movement never had firm command and control.⁹⁶ It is formally led by an *amir ul-aam* (commander in chief) with a Shura (council) of trusted *kwamandoji* (commanders in Hausa) that is its highest decision-making body. The *amir ul-aam* cannot speak for the group without Shura approval.⁹⁷ In major cities and towns where the group has a presence, a local *amir* is in charge, beside a commander who oversees and coordinates armed operations. Depending on his influence, the commander may be a Shura member. He is assisted by a *nabin*, (deputy), who is in turn aided by a *mu'askar*, who passes orders from the commander and the deputy to foot soldiers. Cities and large towns

⁹¹ Formally the negotiations were led by senior government officials close to Cameroon President Biya, but the real negotiator was reportedly a wealthy businessman from Cameroon's far north. Both France and Boko Haram denied that any ransom was paid. Crisis Group telephone interviews, rapid intervention battalion members, interior ministry official, Cameroon, 5 January 2014; "Libération du père Georges Vandenbeusch", *L'œil du Sahel*, 6 January 2014; "Comment le père Georges a été libéré", *Le Jour*, 2 January 2014.

⁹² The insurgents moved to the Sambisa forest and villages in the mountains around Gwoza on the Cameroon border. Crisis Group interview, Boko Haram member, 24 November 2013.

⁹³ They also looted and burned shops and homes. "5 aircraft destroyed in Maiduguri attack", *Daily Trust*, 3 December 2013; "Boko Haram launches major urban attack against Nigerian military" Agence France-Presse, 2 December 2013; "Scores feared dead as Boko Haram attacks Maiduguri air force base", *Vanguard*, 3 December 2013. 35 bodies (unclear whether soldiers or insurgents) in uniform were taken to the Maiduguri Teaching Hospital morgue. Crisis Group interview, University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital, 3 December 2013. The sect's expulsion from the city had bred complacency. Crisis Group interview, military officer, 16 December 2013.

⁹⁴ "Suspected Islamists attack Nigeria military barracks: army", Agence France-Presse, 20 December 2013; "Boko Haram attacks barracks in Bama", *Daily Trust*, 21 December 2013.

⁹⁵ "Nigeria pursuit of Islamists destroys villages, kills civilians: witnesses", Agence France-Presse, 24 December 2013; "Army trails insurgents", *Daily Trust*, 21 December 2013.

⁹⁶ Some attacks attributed to Boko Haram, particularly robberies, may also be by other groups.

⁹⁷ Crisis Group interview, University of Maiduguri lecturer writing a book on Boko Haram, Maiduguri, 11 October 2013.

are divided into *lajna* (sectors) supervised by sub-amirs for operational and administrative purposes.

Yusuf's main lieutenants were Muhammad Lawan (Potiskum, Yobe state), Mamman Nur and Shekau. Lawan parted ways with him in December 2007, after disagreeing over the ideology and Quran interpretation. He issued an audio recording accusing Yusuf of insincerity and rejoined Izala. Boko Haram attacked his home in a failed attempt on his life during its 2009 uprising.⁹⁸

Mamman Nur is a Shuwa Arab born and raised in Maiduguri by Chadian parents. He befriended Shekau while both were doing higher Islamic studies at the Borno State College of Legal and Islamic Studies (BOCOLIS).⁹⁹ He apparently introduced Shekau to Yusuf.¹⁰⁰ Shekau is a Kanuri from Shekau village on the border with Niger in Tarmuwa local government, Yobe state.¹⁰¹ In 1990 he moved to the Mafoni area in Maiduguri and studied under a traditional cleric before entering BOCOLIS.¹⁰² Nur, said to be more knowledgeable, mature and level-headed, was seen as Yusuf's deputy and eventual successor, but Shekau was chosen after Yusuf's death because he was more radical and aggressive. Nur did lead in an acting capacity while Shekau recovered from a 2009 gunshot wound.¹⁰³

With Shekau (whose nom de guerre is Imam Abu Mohammed Abubakar bin Muhammed Shekau) at the helm of its most significant faction (see below), Boko Haram has grown more ruthless, violent and destructive and less open to dialogue. Perhaps most audacious were its suicide bombings in Abuja of the police headquarters and the UN building in June and August 2011.¹⁰⁴

The security forces became more aggressive in turn in September 2012. On 22 September, troops slapped round-the-clock curfews on three cities in the North East, Damaturu, Potiskum and Mubi, killed 36 suspected militants, including a top sect commander and arrested more than 200 in house-to-house raids. Two days later they stormed a Boko Haram enclave in Damaturu, including Shekau's home. They

⁹⁸ Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, Boko Haram member, September 2011.

⁹⁹ Ibid. Shuwa Arabs are a nomadic tribe related to the Baggara of Sudan that migrates throughout the eastern Sahel. BOCOLIS is a prestigious institute of advanced Islamic studies.

¹⁰⁰ Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, Boko Haram member, September 2011.

¹⁰¹ The Kanuri originated from the Kanem Empire, which emerged by the ninth century in what is now south-western Chad. Internal instability forced them westward across Lake Chad. Subduing the local people, they established the Borno Kingdom, distinct from the Hausa states, in around the eleventh century. Assimilating and inter-marrying with local ethnic groups, they came to be known as Kanuri, now the largest ethnic group in north-east Nigeria, south-eastern Niger, western Chad and northern Cameroon. Toyin Falola and Mathew Heaton, *A History of Nigeria* (Cambridge, 2008), chapters 1-2. Authorities claim Shekau's parents were from Niger and settled in Shekau several decades ago. "Baga killings: Senate questions casualty figures, seeks increased recruitment in security agencies", *Premium Times*, 26 June 2013.

¹⁰² Crisis Group analyst interviews in another capacity, Muslim cleric, school teacher, perfume vendor, Mafoni, Maiduguri, 18-21 September 2011.

¹⁰³ Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, Boko Haram member, September 2011.

¹⁰⁴ Citing the latter case and the Madalla Church 2011 Christmas attack, the U.S. named Shekau and two lieutenants – Abubakar Adam Kambar and Khalid al-Barnawi – as "specially designated global terrorists" (SDGT) under Executive Order 13224. It singled out Shekau as "the most visible leader of the Nigeria-based militant group, Boko Haram" and said the sect and three men "have close links to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, a designated foreign terrorist organisation (FTO)". "Terrorist Designations of Boko Haram Commander Abubakar Shekau, Khalid al-Barnawi and Abubakar Adam Kambar", U.S. State Department media note, 21 June 2012.

almost caught him – he had sneaked in the day before for the naming ceremony of his six-day old baby. Fighting was fierce: 35 militants were killed and two soldiers injured. Shekau escaped, with a thigh wound; his wife and three children were taken into military custody. Three SUVs, seven laptops and a large arms cache reportedly were recovered from the house.¹⁰⁵

Shekau was said to have been spirited to Gao, in northern Mali, when it was held by Islamist armed groups.¹⁰⁶ This is one reason Nigerian troops were deployed to Mali in January 2013 to support the French Operation Serval that expelled Ansar Dine and the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) from that country's northern cities.¹⁰⁷ Shekau now reportedly travels frequently to Niger and Cameroon, facilitated by his Kanuri ethnicity and the long, porous borders. He re-surfaced in 2013, however, in internet videos demanding the release of detained Boko Haram women and children (presumably including his own family).¹⁰⁸

A top commander, Abubakar Yola, alias Abu Jihad, was killed in a shoot-out with troops in Mubi, where 156 suspected members were rounded up. Other factions were neutralised following the capture or killing of their leaders.¹⁰⁹ On 17 September 2012, soldiers shot dead a sect spokesman, alias Abul Qaqa, outside Kano, along with the sect commander in charge of central Kogi and Kaduna states and Abuja.¹¹⁰ This was a significant blow, a source close to the sect said, because the two were considered its “think-tank”.¹¹¹

On 23 November 2012, the army offered a 290 million naira (\$1.3 million) reward for information leading to the arrest of Shekau and eighteen other leaders and senior figures.¹¹² Security officials say their successes are due to leaks from disenchanted

¹⁰⁵ Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, military officer, 28 September 2012.

¹⁰⁶ “Boko Haram leader Shekau shot, escapes to Mali”, *Vanguard*, 19 January 2013.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*; “Boko Haram leader, Shekau, found in Mali”, *Nigerian Tribune*, 19 January 2013. For more on Mali, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°201, *Mali: Security, Dialogue and Meaningful Reform*, 11 April 2013; and Briefing N°90, *Mali: The Need for Determined and Coordinated International Action*, 24 September 2012. “Nigeria will not only be supporting the resolution of the international community but also enhancing its own security and that of its immediate neighbours by undertaking this operation”. “Mali-trained terrorists in Nigeria – Army chief”, *Punch*, 18 January 2013; “Nigerian Air Force (NAF) deploys F7 supersonic, Alpha jets to Mali”, *Vanguard*, 18 January 2013. The intervention brought reprisals. On 19 January 2013, two of the Nigerian contingent were fatally ambushed along the Okene-Lokoja road in Kogi state (central Nigeria) and four wounded. Ansaru claimed responsibility and said it was to punish the government for joining efforts to “demolish the Islamic empire of Mali”. “Two soldiers killed as Boko Haram attacks military convoy in Kogi”, *Punch*, 19 January 2013; “Mali conflict: French troops enter Diabaly”, BBC News, Africa, 21 January 2013.

¹⁰⁸ Crisis Group interview, SSS officer, October 2013.

¹⁰⁹ “Boko Haram chief killed in Adamawa, 156 arrested”, This Day Live, 25 September 2012.

¹¹⁰ With Qaqa's death, regular press statements and video postings ceased. He apparently had all the media contacts, and Boko Haram found it difficult to find a competent replacement. Shekau released a video in May 2013 announcing Abu Zinnira as his new spokesman.

¹¹¹ Crisis Group interview, military officer, October 2013.

¹¹² The rewards ranged from 50 million naira (\$317,000) for Shekau to 10 million naira (\$63,400) for commanders. Those declared wanted by the Joint Task Force included five members of the Shura and nineteen commanders. The other named Shura members are Habibu Yusuf (aka Asalafi), Khalid Albarnawai, Momodu Bama and Mohammed Zangina. A N25 million reward was placed on each. A N10 million reward was placed on the following commanders: Abu Saad, Abba Kaka, Abdulmalik Bama, Umar Fulata, Alhaji Mustapha, (Massa) Ibrahim and Abubakar Suleiman-Habu aka Khalid. Other commanders include Hassan Jazair, Ali Jalingo, Alhaji Musa Modu, Bashir

members. Some are fed up with the bloodletting, want to settle down, but fear advocating negotiations could mean execution by decapitation.¹¹³ Shekau has repeatedly ruled out talks with the government, despite claims by some purported sect members that these were ongoing. Members who proposed dialogue were killed on Shekau's orders, silencing other pro-dialogue individuals.¹¹⁴

The information obtained from such persons led to a major government offensive in three areas of Maiduguri – Ngarnam, Bakin Quarters and Bulabulin – on 15 November 2012 in which scores of sect members were killed, including Ibn Saleh Ibrahim, a commander in charge of north-western and north-eastern Nigeria. He had masterminded the assassination of General Mohammed Shuwa, a Nigerian civil war hero, at his residence in the Gwange area, Maiduguri, on 2 November. High-profile arrests included Kabiru Sokoto, Abdullahi Damasak and Kabiru Banki.¹¹⁵

The killing and capture of top commanders significantly impacted the sect's eleven-member Shura, leading to its expansion to 37. This made it difficult to reach unanimous decisions, with consequent adverse consequences for operations.¹¹⁶ Furthermore,

Aketa, Abba Goroma, Ibrahim Bashir, Abubakar Zakariya and Tukur Ahmed Mohammed. "Boko Haram leader Shekau shot, escapes to Mali", *Vanguard*, 19 January 2013.

¹¹³ Crisis Group interview, SSS officer, October 2013.

¹¹⁴ Crisis Group interview, intelligence officer, September 2013.

¹¹⁵ Press statement JTF Spokesman Sagir Musa, 15 November 2012. Sokoto was arrested on 14 January 2013 in the Borno state government lodge but escaped a day later when taken by the anti-terrorism unit to search his house in Abuja's Abaji area, where he was an imam in a local mosque. When residents saw him handcuffed in a police van, they confronted the officers, and he fled in the confusion. His escape was a national embarrassment. President Jonathan fired Inspector-General of Police Hafiz Ringim and suspended and later dismissed the anti-terrorism unit head, Assistant Police Commissioner Zakari Biu. Sokoto was re-arrested on 10 February 2013 in Mutum Biyu, Taraba state, to where security agents traced him after he phoned the then-Boko Haram spokesman, Abul Qaqa. A security official said his escape was arranged by Ringim to save the inspector-general's wife and mother, who were being held hostage by a Boko Haram member. Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, April 2012. Damasak, from the town of that name near the Niger border, was Boko Haram's spiritual leader and believed to have strong fetish powers (belief in occult powers is particularly prevalent in northern Borno). His arrest shook sect members. Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, security source with close Boko Haram contacts and knowledge of its inner workings, October 2012. In January 2013, Mohammed Marwan, claiming to speak for Shekau, began making pronouncements on radio, particularly the Voice of America (VOA) and Radio France Internationale (RFI) Hausa services. On 20 April 2013 on VOA he announced a ceasefire agreement, allegedly on Shekau's orders. Kabiru Tanimu Turaki, the special duties minister and chairman of the government's dialogue committee, confirmed the agreement, saying it was reached after face-to-face meeting with sect leaders. But Shekau denied the ceasefire in a 13 July 2013 video and dismissed Marwan as an impostor and a government stooge. "Boko Haram denies ceasefire agreement with FG", *Leadership*, 13 July 2013; "Boko Haram denies ceasefire with government", *Punch*, 14 July, 2013. A senior police intelligence officer identified Marwan as Damasak, and said he was recruited by Turaki to talk to the media and convince more moderate Boko Haram elements to accept the ceasefire. The dialogue committee chairman was apparently under intense pressure from security chiefs uncomfortable with dialogue. Crisis Group interview, senior police intelligence officer, 17 July 2013. On 30 July, 2013, explosions hit two beer parlours in Kano's predominantly Christian Sabon Gari neighbourhood, killing eleven people and breaking a six-month calm. On 1 August 2013 on VOA's Hausa service Marwan claimed responsibility, saying it was to prove he represented a significant Boko Haram faction. Since then nothing has been heard of him or the ceasefire. Banki, a top commander from the town of that name on the Cameroon border, was famed for magic that made many believe he was beyond capture.

¹¹⁶ Crisis Group interview, Boko Haram member, 10 August 2013.

in the past four years it has split into many factions with varying aims, to the point that some believe it is too fragmented to present a common front for dialogue. The group also formed links with foreign Islamist groups, such as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Al-Shabaab in Somalia, that have radicalised its leadership.¹¹⁷

Many of these factions were either eliminated by security forces or forced to join stronger groups to avoid capture or death. Of the six current Boko Haram factions, the largest, concentrated in the North East, is led by Shekau and has been responsible for most attacks in recent months.

Shekau also nominally controls fighters commanded by Mamman Nur. However, at least one source claims most commanders and foot soldiers are more loyal to Nur, because of his guerrilla expertise and Al-Shabaab and AQIM contacts, but that he chooses to maintain the status quo because of Shekau's ruthlessness.¹¹⁸

Another faction is headed by Aminu Tashen-Ilimi, who led the December 2003 Kanamma uprising alongside Shekau. A University of Maiduguri drop-out, from Bama in northern Borno, he was also among the commanders who led the 2009 Maiduguri uprising. On the third day of that uprising, Yusuf allegedly gave him 40 million naira (then approximately \$275,000) to buy arms from the Niger Delta. After Yusuf's murder, he stayed in Port Harcourt, then relocated to Kaduna, where he reportedly used the money to establish himself as a car dealer. While he is believed to still control a faction, he keeps a low profile.¹¹⁹

The most sophisticated faction, Ansaru (see below), was commanded by Khalid Barnawi. Although seen as independent, it is actually a Boko Haram splinter group comprising mostly its Western-educated members. A fifth faction is led by Abdullahi Damasak, also known as Mohammed Marwan.

The sixth and least known faction is based in Bauchi and led by Engineer Abubakar Shehu, alias "Abu Sumayya". Both Shekau and Ansaru leaders suspected he was a mole, and in early 2012 they agreed to eliminate him. Ansaru men stormed his Bauchi hideout, injuring him and leaving him for dead. However, he survived after treatment in the 44 Army Reference Hospital in Kaduna and a German hospital. He then disclosed Khalid Barnawi's Kano hideout to the security agencies, which killed him in their August 2012 raid.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ A January 2012 UN report stated that seven members of Boko Haram "were arrested while transiting through the Niger to Mali, in possession of documentation on manufacturing of explosives, propaganda leaflets and names and contact details of members of Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb [AQIM] they were allegedly planning to meet". "Report of the assessment mission on the impact of the Libyan crisis on the Sahel region", Security Council, S/2012/42, 18 January 2012. p. 12. On 24 January 2012, Niger's foreign minister, Mohamed Bazoum, told a regional security summit: "There is no doubt that there is confirmed information that shows a link between Boko Haram and AQIM (Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb), and it consists primarily of the training given to elements of Boko Haram One group has been received in AQIM bases here in the Sahel and another group got training, based on information we've gotten, with the Shabaabs in Somalia". "Boko Haram got al Qaeda bomb training, Niger says", Reuters, 25 January 2012

¹¹⁸ Crisis Group interview, August 2013.

¹¹⁹ Crisis Group interview, Boko Haram member, 10 August 2013.

¹²⁰ Crisis Group interview, Boko Haram member, August 2013.

C. External Links and Networks

Since 2009 the sect has grown from being a localised problem to a national and regional threat. “It has opportunistically tapped into Islamic revivalism globally, and, while it has local roots and origins, it is part of a broader, global ideological current”.¹²¹ In some cases, this includes ties to organisations outside Africa.

History, religion and ethnicity link northern Nigeria to North Africa, the Middle East and the larger Muslim world. Nigerian Muslims, particularly elites, travel frequently to the Middle East and Muslim Asia and are part of the struggle of ideas in which al-Qaeda and other jihadi groups also participate. Boko Haram members reportedly have links with a number of radical groups, including al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban. In the aftermath of their June 2009 insurrection, 30 members were arrested in Adamawa state and returned to Maiduguri, where they reportedly admitted having received training in Afghanistan.¹²²

Between 2000 and 2002 Osama bin Laden issued two audio messages calling on Nigerian Muslims to wage jihad and establish an Islamic state. His interest dated from his 1992-1996 stay in Sudan, where he reportedly met Mohammed Ali, a Nigerian from Maiduguri studying at the Islamic University in Khartoum who became his disciple and trained in Afghanistan; according to Boko Haram sources, Bin Laden asked him to organise a cell in Nigeria with a 300 million naira budget (approximately \$3 million in 2000).¹²³ Ali returned home in 2002 and began funding religious activities of Salafi groups that were unaware of the plan. Mohammed Yusuf and his group allegedly were the major beneficiaries.¹²⁴

With the 2003-2004 Kanamma uprising, in which Mohammed Ali was a major player, Izala groups distanced themselves from him as too radical.¹²⁵ He and three lieutenants reportedly were killed in Jaafar Adam’s guest house during a visit to Kano.¹²⁶ Boko Haram accused Jaafar Adam of complicity and vowed revenge. It also accused Ali’s point man, Babagana, of being an informant and marked him for assassination. Adam was killed by Boko Haram gunmen in April 2007, while leading the morning prayers in his mosque in Kano’s Dorayi area.¹²⁷

Boko Haram’s links with foreign Islamist groups were strengthened following the 2009 military crackdown. Surviving sect members escaped through Chad and Niger to Somalia, Algeria and, reportedly, Afghanistan, where they joined other Islamists and received guerrilla training.¹²⁸ This included Mohammed Nur, who is accused of

¹²¹ Ostebo, “Islamic militancy in Africa”, op. cit., p. 2.

¹²² Crisis Group interview, police officer, Maiduguri, July 2013.

¹²³ Crisis Group interview, Boko Haram member, 18 October, 2013.

¹²⁴ Ali, who was still studying in Khartoum, delegated a man known only as Babagana to run his business affairs in Kaduna, while he shuttled between Khartoum and Nigeria. Babagana lived in the Tudun Murtala area of Kano. Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, Boko Haram turned Ansaru member, September 2011.

¹²⁵ Some consider Ali the leader of the Kanamma group. Andrew Walker, “What is Boko Haram?”, op. cit., p. 3.

¹²⁶ Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, Boko Haram turned Ansaru member, September 2011. There were no official or media reports of the incident.

¹²⁷ On the same day Babagana was badly wounded by Boko Haram gunmen in Kaduna. Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, Boko Haram member, September 2011.

¹²⁸ In 2010-2012, Boko Haram was reported to have trained in Somalia’s Lower Shabelle and Lower Juba regions, acquiring IED and suicide attack skills. Members en route to Somalia allegedly entered Kenya posing as Muslim preachers and social workers. Crisis Group email correspondence,

masterminding the 26 August 2011 UN building bombing in Abuja that killed 26 people. He fled to Somalia and reportedly joined Al-Shabaab, through which he is alleged to have made contact with AQIM. He returned to Nigeria a year later.¹²⁹ Another sect member, from Yola in Adamawa state, reportedly fled to Afghanistan and received bomb-making training from al-Qaeda.¹³⁰ Most bombs are relatively crude, made from local materials that are easy and cheap to obtain, but some are increasingly sophisticated and lethal. On 10 October 2013, the JTF and SSS recovered from a Boko Haram hideout in Kano's Gunduwawa suburb a cache of weapons and IEDs that was said to include a sophisticated knapsack-packed suicide bomb.¹³¹

Links appear to be most significant with Ansar Dine ("Supporters of the Faith" in Arabic), AQIM and the MUJAO, an AQIM splinter group.¹³² Many of these groups' leaders and fighters from Mali, Mauritania and Algeria have engaged in lucrative criminal business with arms traffickers, narcotics smugglers, kidnappers and human trafficking gangs.¹³³ Some fighters were trained and armed by the former Libyan strongman, Muammar Qadhafi, to destabilise their home governments.¹³⁴ His fall opened many arms depots to local militants.¹³⁵

The three Islamist groups have boosted Boko Haram. In particular AQIM made its financial resources, military arsenals and training facilities available.¹³⁶ During his police interrogation, Yusuf reportedly provided information on the flow of weapons to the sect from, among others, private sources in Niger, Cameroon and Chad.¹³⁷ The military believes the sect has significant transnational links. On 27 September 2012, Chief of Army Staff Lt.-General Azubike Ihejirika said it was funded and equipped from abroad. He cited, as evidence, the types of weapons and communication equipment it uses, as well as the expertise it displays with IEDs. Senior security officers worry about the ungoverned territories along Nigeria's borders with Niger

African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) official, March 2014; analyst interview in another capacity, Boko Haram member, September 2011. Crisis Group has found no corroborating evidence of the training linkages claimed by Boko Haram or other sources beyond AMISOM officials, but sufficient concerns have been raised because of these individual associations.

¹²⁹ Crisis Group interview, AMISOM official, Nairobi, 11 July 2013; Jacob Zenn, "Boko Haram's International Connections", op. cit.; "Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea pursuant to Security Council resolution 2060 (2012)", S/2013/413, 12 July 2013, pp. 66-67.

¹³⁰ Crisis Group interview, Boko Haram member, 18 October, 2013.

¹³¹ "Suicide bombers now package IEDs in school bags", *Weekly Trust*, 12 October 2013.

¹³² Crisis Group roundtable, National Defence College, Abuja, 8 February 2012. See also Jacob Zenn, "Boko Haram's International Connections", op. cit.; "New threat in Nigeria as militants split off", *The New York Times*, 23 April 2013.

¹³³ See Crisis Group Report, *Mali: Avoiding Escalation*, op. cit., p. 18. AQIM has made a large amount of money from ransoms for kidnapped westerners.

¹³⁴ Boko Haram's renewed insurgency from summer 2011 has been traced to the return of over 60 militants trained in Libya. Crisis Group roundtable, National Defence College, Abuja, 8 February 2012.

¹³⁵ For more, see Crisis Group Report, *Mali: Avoiding Escalation*, op. cit., p. 27; and Middle East/North Africa Report N°115, *Holding Libya Together: Security Challenges After Qadhafi*, 14 December 2011, pp. 32-33.

¹³⁶ "We are in Mali to secure Nigerians – Jonathan", *Vanguard*, 23 January 2013.

¹³⁷ "Boko Haram declares war", *Africa Confidential*, 24 June 2009; "Inside Boko Haram: Islamists raise the stake as they take on Yar'Adua", *Africa Confidential*, 7 August 2009.

and Chad. Many weapons, including IEDs, recovered from Boko Haram have reportedly been traced to Libya.¹³⁸

A fall-out from the military's crackdown is that it has increased the movement's presence, and presumably radicalisation, in Niger, Chad and Cameroon.¹³⁹ Members can easily travel there because of porous borders and shared ethnicity (many are from the dominant regional ethnic group, the Kanuri, as well as other communities that straddle the borders). In July 2009, Nigeria expelled dozens of Boko Haram members who were citizens of Niger.¹⁴⁰ The group reportedly has developed rear bases in the south of that country, which it considers a safe haven and recruitment area. Niger security services regard the group as a bigger threat to stability than AQIM. They have reportedly prevented a number of attacks and captured several couriers carrying money and messages between AQIM, MUJAO and Boko Haram.¹⁴¹ Though it is unclear which group organised it, a June 2013 attack on a Niamey prison allowed several Boko Haram members to escape.¹⁴² So far there have been no major attacks in Niger.

Nigeria and Niger have entered into security cooperation agreements, including for joint border patrols (see below). However, Niamey, anxious to avoid aggravating the situation, demonstrates caution toward Boko Haram by not suppressing the group too vigorously.¹⁴³

Elements are also present in N'Djamena and other parts of Chad.¹⁴⁴ The question for security analysts there is no longer will Boko Haram organise a terrorist attack in the country, but when and where. Its involvement in the Joint Multinational Task Force (JMNTF) against Boko Haram shows that N'djamena takes this threat seriously.¹⁴⁵ In July 2013, Chad's and Niger's foreign ministers agreed to reinforce security force and intelligence service cooperation.¹⁴⁶

¹³⁸ In May 2013, a senior Nigerian military official said Boko Haram fighters were "very, very well-armed with weapons from Libya". "Nigerian military in heavy fighting with Boko Haram militants", *The Guardian* (London), 21 May 2013; "Boko Haram leader Shekau shot, escapes to Mali", *Vanguard*, 19 January 2013.

¹³⁹ Boko Haram's media messages also began to appeal to a more international audience. In November 2012, he released his first video message completely in Arabic.

¹⁴⁰ "Niger: 2009 Country Report on Terrorism", U.S. embassy Niamey cable, 16 December 2008, as published by WikiLeaks.

¹⁴¹ Crisis Group interviews, Niamey, April 2013. They consider AQIM a foreign movement, while many Boko Haram members are from the Hausa tribe that lives on both sides of the border. See also Crisis Group Africa Report N°208, *Niger: Another Weak Link in the Sahel?*, 19 September 2013, pp. 36-45.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 42.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.* This is becoming a growing concern in Nigeria. See, for example, "Anxiety over failure of Nigeria's neighbours to back anti-terror fight", *The Guardian*, 20 November 2013.

¹⁴⁴ Crisis Group interview, military sources. N'Djamena, 4 July 2013.

¹⁴⁵ The Joint Multinational Task Force (JMNTF) was established by Chad, Niger and Nigeria in 1998 to fight transnational crime, especially trans-border small arms smuggling, but its mandate was expanded in 2009 with the emergence of Boko Haram to include terrorism. Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, JMNTF commander, Brigadier-General Austin Edokpayi, JMNTF headquarters, Baga, northern Borno, 30 April 2013. There are no indications that Chadian troops were involved in the reported April 2013 Nigerian military abuses in Baga. "Nigeria: massive destruction, deaths from military raid; satellite images, witness accounts raise concerns of cover-up", Human Rights Watch, 1 May 2013.

¹⁴⁶ "Under attack? Niger faced with religious extremism and terrorism", ECOWAS Peace and Security Report, no. 7, Institute for Security Studies, September 2013, p. 8.

Boko Haram is also in Cameroon, as demonstrated by the kidnappings of French citizens in March and November 2013. Combatants are in the far north, but there are ideological sympathisers in the north and Yaoundé (La Briqueterie district). Members reportedly reside in the cities of Kousséri, Mokolo, Kolofata and Mokolo.¹⁴⁷ Some are allegedly involved in crime to finance the movement. At the end of 2013, Boko Haram sent extortion letters to traders in the far north and letters (in Hausa and Arabic) demanding that the Mayo Sava department authorities implement Sharia and stop working with Westerners.¹⁴⁸

The Cameroon government is beginning to suppress Boko Haram activities and increasing collaboration with Nigeria.¹⁴⁹ During the May 2013 Nigerian offensive, Cameroon deployed around 1,500 troops of its Rapid Battalion Intervention (BIR), Infantry and Motorised Brigade (BIMA) and gendarmerie to the northern border. The BIR has an agreement with the Nigerian JTF that allows each to pursue bandits and criminals across the border for up to 8km.¹⁵⁰ The Cameroon government does not normally deal with terrorists, but it reportedly paid a ransom to Boko Haram for the release of the Moulin-Fournier family in March 2013,¹⁵¹ and another, through a proxy, for Father Georges Vandenbeusch's release in December (see Section IV.A above).

D. From Boko Haram to Ansaru

Ansaru, formally Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis Sudan (loosely translated as "Vanguards for the Protection of Muslims in Black Africa"), announced its existence on 1 January 2012, though it has been around much longer. It distanced itself from the rest of Boko Haram because it disapproved of its indiscriminate killings and Shekau's lack of tact. At its core are sect members who, after the 2009 crackdown, fled to Somalia and Mali, where they joined and trained with Al-Shabaab and AQIM respectively.¹⁵²

Abubakar Adam Kamar and Khalid Barnawi, two leaders from Maiduguri and former close Yusuf allies, reportedly trained in an AQIM camp in the Algerian desert and forged a close alliance with the group. Those who trained there were called Yan Sahara ("Sahara Men" in Hausa). The experience gave them more sophisticated skills and a global jihadi orientation. They disapproved of Boko Haram's indiscriminate attacks, preferring high-profile killings and targeting Western interests. Citing France's ban on Muslim veils in schools and Mali intervention, they seized Francis

¹⁴⁷ Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, Cameroon analyst, Yaoundé, October 2013. Crisis Group interview, Boko Haram member, Nigeria, 24 November 2013; telephone interview, Cameroon analyst, 14 December 2013.

¹⁴⁸ Crisis Group telephone interview, Cameroon government official, 14 December 2013. "Cameroon – Mayo-Sava: Boko Haram menace les autorités", *Le Jour*, 4 December 2013.

¹⁴⁹ Crisis Group telephone interview, Cameroon diplomat, Yaoundé, 14 December 2013.

¹⁵⁰ Crisis Group telephone interview, Cameroon analyst, 14 December 2013.

¹⁵¹ Crisis Group telephone interview, Cameroon diplomat, Yaoundé, 14 December 2013. Ansaru and Boko Haram said the group was paid €7 million. Crisis Group interview, Boko Haram member, July 2013. Reuters reported that it was €3.15 million, based reportedly on a leaked Nigerian intelligence document. "France denies paying ransom as Sahel hostages return", Reuters, 30 October 2013.

¹⁵² Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, Ansaru member, 8 November 2012. Some say the formation of the group was announced in June 2012. "US adds Boko Haram, Ansaru to list of foreign terrorist organizations", Long War Journal (www.longwarjournal.org), 13 November 2013.

Collomp, a French engineer working for S.A. Vergnet France on a wind energy project in Rimi village, Katsina, 19 December 2012.¹⁵³

Ansaru became Nigeria's al-Qaeda franchise.¹⁵⁴ The Sahara Men chose as their leader Kambar, alias "Abu Yasir", who on his return settled in Kano but was killed in a shoot-out during a raid on his Kano hideout in August 2012.¹⁵⁵ Barnawi, assuming the nom de guerre "Abu Usamatal Ansari", took control and has been its leader ever since. He organised the 13 March 2011 kidnapping of Christopher McManus and Franco Lamolinara, two construction engineers working in northern Kebbi state who were killed in a failed rescue bid by British and Nigerian Special Forces in Sokoto on 7 May 2012.¹⁵⁶

Ansaru is funded in part by ransom payments. Barnawi reportedly earned 50 million naira (\$325,000) as his share of €11 million paid to AQIM for release of French hostages he participated in kidnapping. Trying to forge an alliance, he donated 40 million naira (\$265,000) to Shekau. This almost tore Boko Haram apart, because leaders disagreed over its use. Shekau and some lieutenants wanted to apply part to operations and share the rest with members; others argued it should go to families of killed sect members. Reportedly, relations became so bad the two men were not on speaking terms for a time.¹⁵⁷

After they reconciled, Barnawi allegedly entered into a deal by which Shekau, who had the men, would provide security cover, while Barnawi, who had the skills, would kidnap Westerners. Part of the ransom money would fund Boko Haram operations.¹⁵⁸ However, the capture of McManus and Lamolinara appears to have been a blunder. It was planned and executed by Barnawi's group without consulting AQIM. Barnawi found it difficult to negotiate the ransom, and AQIM refused to take over, because it had not sanctioned the operation.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵³ Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, Ansaru member, 8 November 2012. On 16 November 2013, Collomp escaped from his abductors, who had moved him from Katsina to Zaria in Kaduna State. "Hostage Francis Collomp describes escape in Nigeria", BBC, 28 November 2013.

¹⁵⁴ Al-Qaeda cells received communications from Osama bin Laden through intermediaries; the more important a cell, the fewer go-betweens. An Ansaru member claimed Bin Laden's deputy (now al-Qaeda leader), Aiman Al-Zawahiri, communicated directly with Kambar. Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, Ansaru member, 8 November 2012.

¹⁵⁵ Crisis Group analyst interviews in another capacity, military officer, 11 September 2012; Ansaru member, 8 November 2013. The military only confirmed his death in June 2013. It said to have done so earlier would have jeopardised operations.

¹⁵⁶ On 5 March 2012, security agents raided the hideout of Barnawi's lieutenant, Abu Muhammad, in the Hanwa area of Zaria city following arrests of his followers in Adamawa, Katsina, Kaduna, Sokoto and Kebbi states, who were allegedly involved in the kidnapping. During the raid in which Abu Muhammad and five others were arrested, one escaped and conveyed Abu Muhammad's instruction to kill the hostages upon any rescue attempt. On 14 March 2012, the SSS announced that Abu Muhammad had died from gunshot wounds sustained during the raid.

¹⁵⁷ Barnawi also insisted that he receive periodic expenditure details, a request Shekau vehemently rejected on the ground that he had no right to the money he gave as charity. Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, Ansaru member, 8 November 2012.

¹⁵⁸ Boko Haram publicly denied involvement in Ansaru hostage taking. Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Barnawi's group was able to start back-channel talks with McManus's family, which reportedly began secret payments to it before the botched rescue. Ibid. "Hostages families had paid kidnappers 1 million pounds: Deal to release Briton and Italian held in Nigeria was very close after 4 million pounds ransom demand agreed", *Daily Mail* (online), 10 March 2012; "Nigerian kidnappers received ransom downpayment", *The Guardian*, 10 March 2012; "£1 million ransom deal had been struck for British hostage", claims al-Qaeda", *The Telegraph*, 10 March 2012.

The kidnapping's supposed mastermind, Abu Mohammad (an alias), allegedly trained at the AQIM-linked camp under Barnawi. He died in custody in March 2012, purportedly from gunshot wounds received in a raid on his hideout in Zaria. Barnawi's group was also behind the 26 January 2012 kidnapping of a German construction engineer, Edgar Raupach, in Kano. The hostage was killed along with his four captors in a botched rescue operation by Nigerian troops on 30 May 2012 at a hideout in the Kano outskirts.¹⁶⁰

On 29 November 2012, Shekau posted a 39-minute video on extremist websites saluting global jihadists and expressing Boko Haram's solidarity with al-Qaeda and its leaders – a radical departure from the group's domestic focus.¹⁶¹ This brought Boko Haram and Ansaru closer, a rapprochement solidified by Shekau's decision to make Babagana Assalafi, Barnawi's closest disciple, his deputy. Due to his close links to AQIM, Barnawi allegedly became its channel for the supply of funds and weapons to both Ansaru and Boko Haram. Assalafi was killed along with three lieutenants in March 2013 in a Nigerian army raid on his hideout in the Mabea area of Sokoto.¹⁶² The French and African Union (now UN) military push against Islamists in northern Mali disrupted the money and arms supply and forced Ansaru and Boko Haram to work more closely together.¹⁶³

On 25 February 2013, Boko Haram posted an internet video clip claiming responsibility for the kidnapping six days earlier of the Moulin-Fournier family near Waza Nature Park in northern Cameroon, on the border with Borno state. It was the group's first kidnapping of foreigners.¹⁶⁴ In the video, the captors called on President Goodluck Jonathan to release all women arrested during raids on the sect's hideouts.¹⁶⁵

On 16 February 2013, heavily-armed gunmen in all-terrain vehicles stormed the town of Jama'are, in northern Bauchi, and kidnapped seven expatriate construction staff of Setraco, a Nigeria-based, Lebanese-owned civil engineering company working on the Kano-Maiduguri highway.¹⁶⁶ It was a sophisticated night operation; the group first launched coordinated attacks on a prison and a police station as a distrac-

¹⁶⁰ Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, Ansaru member, 8 November 2012.

¹⁶¹ "The world should witness, and America, Britain, Nigeria and other crusaders, meaning America and Britain, should witness, and the Jews of Israel who are killing the Muslims in Palestine should witness ... that we are with our mujahidin brothers in the cause of Allah everywhere", Shekau said in Arabic and showered praises on fallen al-Qaeda figures including Osama bin Laden, Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi and Abu Omar al-Baghdadi.

¹⁶² First Brigade (based in Sokoto) Commander Brigadier-General Mohammed Tasiu told a 13 March 2013 press conference four gunmen were killed in the raid. On 27 April 2013 Maiduguri JTF spokesman Lt.-Colonel Sagir Musa told reporters Assalafi was among the four.

¹⁶³ Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, Ansaru member, 8 November 2012.

¹⁶⁴ An Ansaru member said Barnawi planned and supervised the operation but allowed Boko Haram to claim it to strengthen ties and give it a boost after the military crackdown that weakened its operational capability. Crisis Group interview, 26 February 2013. Kidnapping of family members of high-profile office holders is becoming a major enterprise. Arguably the most spectacular was of Professor Mabel Kamene Titi Okonjo-Iweala, the 82-year-old mother of Finance Minister, Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala kidnapped on 9 December 2012 from the home of her husband, also a retired professor, at Ogwashi-Uku LGA of Delta state. She was released on 14 December after the family reportedly paid between N10 and N15 million (\$66,000-\$100,000). The kidnappers reportedly "asked for the resignation of the minister and mentioned the oil subsidy palaver". "How Okonjo-Iweala's mother was rescued", *Vanguard*, 15 December 2012.

¹⁶⁵ www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=PrjBbjGk8kI.

¹⁶⁶ The hostages were a Briton, Italian, Greek, two Lebanese and two Syrians.

tion, then hit the construction yard. A company security guard was killed. Ansaru claimed responsibility in a short email statement citing “the transgressions and atrocities done to the religion of Allah ... by the European countries in many places such as Afghanistan and Mali”.¹⁶⁷

On 9 March the U.S.-based SITE group, which monitors jihadi websites, reported a claim from Al-Qabidun ‘Ala al-Jamr (“Grippers of Embers” in Arabic) Media Foundation, an affiliate of the Sinam al-Islam Network, that the seven hostages were killed following a rescue attempt by Nigerian and British forces.¹⁶⁸ It was the first time Ansaru used a jihadi website to send a message. It normally emails statements to the Nigerian media, and its videos are usually uploaded to the website of the *Desert Herald* newspaper based in Kaduna. Nigeria and the UK denied any rescue operation.¹⁶⁹ On 11 March 2013, a 91-second grainy video purporting to be from Ansaru appeared on YouTube showing what it said were the bodies of the hostages; only four were shown. The UK, Italy and Greece subsequently issued statements lending credence to the claim that the hostages were killed.¹⁷⁰ Nigeria remained cautious, declining to confirm the claim.¹⁷¹ Two Ansaru members said the claim was a hoax and the seven hostages are alive in the group’s custody.¹⁷² Since then, nothing more has been heard of the hostages.

With AQIM funding reduced and the sustained security crackdown making it increasingly difficult to rob banks, Boko Haram has resorted to extortion. Members telephone or text wealthy individuals asking for specific sums of money to enable them to carry out God’s work (“*aikin Allah*” in Hausa) or risk the sect’s wrath, according to victims and the military.¹⁷³ Lt. Colonel Sagir Musa, JTF spokesman in Maiduguri, said on 26 October 2012 that the military received reports Boko Haram was texting traders, contractors, politicians and government officials, demanding large sums for building mosques and carrying out jihad.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁷ The email was sent to media outlets, including a Crisis Group researcher.

¹⁶⁸ The communiqué in Arabic and English included images from a video supposedly showing the dead hostages. “Boko Haram leader salutes al-Qaeda in jihadist video”, Agence France-Presse, 29 November 2013.

¹⁶⁹ “As far as we are concerned there was no rescue operation to free the hostages, I don’t know where that information emanated from”, said Nigerian defence ministry spokesman Colonel Mohammed Yerima. “Video claims to show bodies of foreign hostages in Nigeria”, Agence France-Presse, 11 March 2013.

¹⁷⁰ “Video claims to show bodies of foreign hostages in Nigeria”, Agence France-Presse, 11 March 2013; “Extremists who killed Briton post video of hostages’ bodies”, *The Telegraph*, 11 March 2013.

¹⁷¹ Interior Minister Abba Moro said, “the claim is unconfirmed, and as long as it remains unconfirmed, we will do all that is possible to free them and ensure the safety of their lives. I want us to also think that belief is quite different from confirmation ... on its part, the country where it is said to have happened, based on what it sees, is doing the best it can in ensuring the men are freed, who it hopes are alive”. “Extremists who killed Briton post video of hostages’ bodies”, op. cit.

¹⁷² Crisis Group analyst telephone interview in another capacity, two Ansaru members, 11-12 March 2013.

¹⁷³ Crisis Group interviews, Maiduguri, 19-22 July 2013.

¹⁷⁴ “JTF: Boko Haram extorts money through threat SMS”, *Weekly Trust*, 27 October 2012.

V. A Complex Conflict

A. The Government's Response

The escalation of the insurgency in early 2010 caught the government flat-footed.¹⁷⁵ It initially believed the violence would peter out.¹⁷⁶ Sustained attacks, however, ushered in more sober responses. Since 2012, it has tried to address the challenge on multiple tracks but especially by increasing the defence budget from 100 billion naira (\$625 million) in 2010 to 927 billion naira (\$6 billion) in 2011 and 1 trillion (\$6.25 billion) naira in 2012, 2013 and 2014. Much of these increases was to combat Boko Haram.¹⁷⁷ Other measures include strengthening anti-terrorism legislation, boosting the capacities of the military and other security agencies, exploring dialogue with the insurgents, declaring a state of emergency in the North East and launching military offensives against the insurgents. Results have been limited.

1. Strengthening anti-terrorism legislation

President Jonathan signed the Terrorism (Prevention) Act in 2011.¹⁷⁸ It was amended in 2012 to designate the Office of the National Security Adviser (NSA) as the national coordinator for anti-terrorism, in order to prevent in-fighting among security agencies.¹⁷⁹

On 4 June 2013, the government proscribed Boko Haram and Ansaru, describing their activities as terrorism, and warned that any persons associated with the two groups was liable to prosecution.¹⁸⁰ It is prosecuting hundreds of suspected Boko Haram and Ansaru members and collaborators. Mohammed Bello Adoke, the attorney-general and justice minister, reported that eleven convictions of Boko Haram members were obtained in 2013.¹⁸¹ On 4 December 2013, the defence headquarters

¹⁷⁵ "Boko Haram took us by surprise – Jonathan", *Daily Trust*, Abuja, 8 August 2013.

¹⁷⁶ On 25 December 2011, President Jonathan said, "the bombing is a burden we must live with. It will not last forever; I believe that it will surely be over". "Bomb blast: A burden we must live with – Jonathan", *Vanguard*, 26 December 2011. On 23 January 2012, then Chief of Defence Staff Air Vice Marshal Oluseyi Petinrin said the militants would soon run out of "idiots" willing to carry out their suicide bombings. "Boko Haram'll soon run out of bombers – CDS", *Punch*, 24 January 2012. On 27 March 2012, Jonathan, in an interview with a South Korean paper while attending the Seoul Nuclear Security Summit, said the attacks would end by mid-2012. "Nigerian leader calls for peaceful use of nuclear energy", *Yonhap News Agency*, 27 March 2012.

¹⁷⁷ "FG spends N3.38 trn in 4 years on security", *Leadership* (Abuja), 10 March 2014.

¹⁷⁸ It is "an act which is deliberately done with malice, afterthought and which may seriously harm or damage a country or an international organisation and is intended or can reasonably be regarded as having been intended to unduly compel a government or international organisation to perform or abstain from performing any act; seriously intimidate a population; and seriously destabilise or destroy the fundamental political, constitutional, economic or social structures of a country or an international organisation". The law lists terrorist acts to include attacks on a person that may cause serious bodily harm or death; kidnapping; pipeline destruction, oil bunkering, piracy, air-plane hijacks or similar acts that lead to loss of lives. Terrorism (Prevention) Act, 2011.

¹⁷⁹ It stipulates that the NSA "will be the coordinating body for counter-terrorism measures in the country; to ensure timely and well-coordinated response by all law enforcement and security agencies which are to continue to perform their statutory roles with respect to counter-terrorism and other violent acts in the country". "Anti-terrorism bill: Nigeria's Senate endorses life sentence for terrorists", *Information Nigeria*, 18 October 2012.

¹⁸⁰ Gazetted as the Terrorism (Prevention, Proscription Order) Notice 2013.

¹⁸¹ "11 Boko Haram members Convicted in One Year – Adoke", *Leadership*, 22 November 2013.

recommended the immediate trial of over 500 suspects arrested in the north-eastern states of Yobe, Borno and Adamawa.¹⁸² They were among almost 1,400 detainees in Maiduguri, Yola and Damaturu screened by a joint investigation team.¹⁸³ Among those recommended for trial were paramilitary personnel and a medical doctor who allegedly offered the militants direct logistical support; others who trained them in weapons handling; and those who confessed that they were trained in Mali and other countries.¹⁸⁴

2. Boosting the capacities of the military and other security agencies.

The military had not anticipated the insurgency and was not prepared for its bombing campaign, as the late National Security Adviser Owoeye Azazi admitted in August 2011.¹⁸⁵ Over the last two years, the government has sought to improve the capacities of the military and security services to respond to the challenge, particularly by improving training, equipment and coordination. More emphasis has been placed on retraining personnel in urban warfare, counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency. Personnel management and training is also prioritised, as well as equipment for close-quarter combat, intelligence and amphibious operations, demolition and explosive breaching, tactical communication and civil-military relations.¹⁸⁶

In September 2012, the Counter-Terrorism and Counter-Insurgency Centre in Jaji, Kaduna graduated 316 personnel, its ninth class. According to its commandant, Brigadier-General Tijani Golai, the army has trained over 7,000 from the army, police and Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC).¹⁸⁷

Seeking to strengthen counter-insurgency capacity, the army recently built the country's first indigenous armoured personnel carriers (APCs) and now produces other protective gear, such as bullet-proof vests. On 17 December 2013, President Jonathan unveiled the first drone designed and constructed by the air force.¹⁸⁸

Senior security officials are first to admit, however, that their agencies are ill-prepared for today's challenges, especially terrorism. Factors blamed include under-

¹⁸² "Defence HQ okays trial of 500 Boko Haram suspects", *The Guardian*, 5 December 2013.

¹⁸³ Defence headquarters had in July 2013 set up a nineteen-member joint investigation team to screen and categorise detainees apprehended during operations in the North East. This was intended to reduce crowding in detention facilities in the operations area and ensure that necessary processes were set in motion for expeditious prosecution of terror suspects. The team of military, police and officials of the federal and state justice ministries, as well as immigration, prisons, and customs officers, was tasked to examine, classify and recommend appropriate actions against detainees in the detention centres in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states.

¹⁸⁴ "Boko Haram: WHO doctor, 499 other suspects for trial", *Vanguard*, 5 December 2013.

¹⁸⁵ "Nigeria not prepared for bombings – NSA", *Punch*, 7 September 2011.

¹⁸⁶ Musa, "Understanding JTF's Operation Restore Order in Borno state", *op. cit.*

¹⁸⁷ The NSCDC is a federal paramilitary organisation.

¹⁸⁸ "Nigeria: With new inventions, army aims to check terror attacks", *AllAfrica*, 27 July 2012. The "Gulma" (gossip in Hausa) drone was built by engineers at the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT) in Kaduna. It is a 40kg intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance platform that can fly for seven hours. Security chiefs expressed optimism it would be a major boost for counter-insurgency. Crisis Group interviews, two senior air force officers, 17 December 2013.

funding, lack of training and equipment, poor intelligence, corruption, complicity, inter-agency rivalries¹⁸⁹ and lack of effective political leadership.

The Galtimari Committee, established to analyse the security challenges in the North East, noted in September 2011 that “on the part of the security forces, there are palpable operational lapses, service rivalry, under-funding, under-equipment and lack of collaboration”. This perhaps explains why the inspector-general of police said in December 2011 that all suspected Boko Haram militants arrested were mere “foot soldiers; that the security agencies lacked evidence to apprehend the leaders of the sect”.¹⁹⁰

The police force is ill-equipped to address the Boko Haram threat and enjoys little public confidence.¹⁹¹ It has been grossly underfunded – less than 5 per cent of the budget – since military rule ended in 1999 and needs reform. The 2012 budget allotted 1.6 million naira (\$10,000) per soldier but only 870,000 naira (\$5,400) per police officer. At current levels, police colleges “can only turn out demoralised, frustrated and dehumanised policemen”. Many residents accused police of selling informants’ identities to Boko Haram.¹⁹² Given the urgency of the situation, the police are in no fit state to answer the Boko Haram challenge, but to truly achieve stability in the long term, Nigeria will need to address the shambolic state of law enforcement and carry out systematic police reform.

¹⁸⁹ The Inspector-General of Police cited corruption; “SSS arrests Boko Haram bomb manufacturer”, *This Day*, 3 May 2012. A former SSS director said the rivalries are driven by each agency’s desire for autonomy, relevance and more resources. AIT News, Lagos, 13 February 2012.

¹⁹⁰ “ECOWARN Daily Highlights Report”, ECOWAS Commission, Abuja, 27 September 2011. “Boko Haram: we have arrested only foot soldiers, says Inspector General”, *Punch*, 30 December 2011. The seven-person Presidential Committee on Security Challenges in the North East, headed by Ambassador Usman Galtimari, to examine the Boko Haram crisis and recommend solutions submitted its report in September 2011.

¹⁹¹ “Even though violent crimes such as armed robbery, homicide, kidnapping and bombing of individuals and public institutions are not unknown in Nigeria, the monstrous dimensions they have assumed in recent years, particularly bomb attacks, have not only exposed major deficiencies in the ability of the NPF [Nigerian Police Force] to perform its most basic functions, namely ‘prevention and detection of crimes and apprehension of offenders’ but have also brought to the fore the urgency of revamping the security establishment of the country, particularly the NPF”. “Civil Society Panel on Police Reform in Nigeria, 2002: Final Report”, September 2012, p. 19. The panel was appointed by President Jonathan to “to advise your government on measures that can be taken to improve the performance of the Nigeria Police and restore public confidence in the institution”. Its members took on the task, “even though it was preceded by three previous presidential committees on police reform whose recommendations were neither made public nor seriously or scrupulously implemented”. *Ibid*, p. 3.

¹⁹² “Police college and the shame of a nation”, *Punch*, editorial, 23 January 2013. Crisis Group interviews, Maiduguri, July 2013. On 28 September 2012, the JTF disclosed the arrest of an immigration officer, Ahmed Grema Mohammed, for Boko Haram membership. His confessions led to arrests of security personnel for facilitating attacks on government officials in Borno and Yobe states. According to a JTF spokesman, Grema was arrested at a checkpoint in Damaturu on his way to Maiduguri while allegedly impersonating an army lieutenant. He also reportedly confessed to having been trained in Niger alongside fifteen other sect members in weapon handling, assassinations and special operations. “Nigerian security officers arrested for Boko Haram links”, Agence France-Presse, 29 September 2012. “Army arrests immigration officer, others over Boko Haram links”, *This Day Live*, 29 September, 2012. “Nigeria officials held for Boko Haram links”, Aljazeera.com, 30 September 2012.

The problem with intelligence is not so much its gathering as its poor and inconsistent application. Politics also sometimes interferes. Both General Sani Abacha (who ruled the country from 1993 to 1998) and former President Umaru Yar'Adua (2007-2010) ordered the release of some detained Islamist extremists for fear of alienating northern supporters.¹⁹³ The SSS says it alerted the political leadership to the Kano bomb attacks 48 hours before they happened in January 2012, but nothing was done.¹⁹⁴ In September 2011, however, a pro-active response to intelligence reportedly prevented the defence headquarters bombing.¹⁹⁵ Constraining factors also include inter-agency mistrust, poor information sharing and institutional flaws such as unsound recruitment.¹⁹⁶

3. Exploring dialogue with the insurgents

From the insurgency's onset, the government has said it is open to dialogue with Boko Haram, but it has often wavered in seeing this through. At times, officials speak of ongoing indirect negotiations; on other occasions they deny this. On 2 August 2011, the government set up an eight-member committee led by Usman Galtimari, its former envoy to Chad, to study the Boko Haram security challenge and advise on ending the violence. Its report, submitted on 26 September 2011, recommended talks and amnesty for sect members who renounce violence.¹⁹⁷

On 16 September 2011, former President Olusegun Obasanjo held talks in Maiduguri with Boko Haram members, who laid out conditions for a temporary ceasefire. These were and remain an end to arrests and killings of sect members; compensation for families of members killed by security personnel; and prosecution of police responsible for Yusuf's extrajudicial execution.¹⁹⁸

In a televised interview on 18 November 2012, President Jonathan contradicted repeated claims by officials of behind-the-scene negotiations.¹⁹⁹ On 17 April 2013 and under mounting pressure from northern elites, including the Sultan of Sokoto, Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar, Jonathan set up a 26-member amnesty committee headed by Special Duties Minister Kabiru Tanimu Turaki. It was given a three-month mandate (later extended) to engage in a dialogue and convince Boko Haram to lay

¹⁹³ Crisis Group interview, special assistant on terrorism and counter-insurgency to a state governor, Nigeria, February 2012.

¹⁹⁴ Likewise for the bombings of the church in Madalla and the UN building in Abuja. Crisis Group roundtable, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 10 February 2012.

¹⁹⁵ "Boko Haram plans to bomb defence headquarters – Report", *Nigerian Tribune*, 9 September 2011.

¹⁹⁶ Crisis Group roundtable, Nigerian Defence College, Abuja, 8 February 2012.

¹⁹⁷ It was published in May 2012.

¹⁹⁸ Crisis Group analyst telephone interview in another capacity, Babakura Fugu, Mohammed Yusuf's brother-in-law who was at the meeting with Obasanjo, 16 September 2012. Fugu was shot dead outside his Maiduguri home on 18 September 2012, apparently by a member of a Boko Haram faction opposed to dialogue.

¹⁹⁹ "There is no dialogue with Boko Haram and government. There is no dialogue that is going on anywhere. There is no face so you don't have anybody to discuss with". "No negotiations with Boko Haram", *Vanguard*, 19 November, 2012. "No talks with Boko Haram Islamists: Jonathan", Agence France-Presse, 18 November 2012; "Presidency – Talks with Boko Haram are indirect", *Daily Trust*, 27 August 2013. However, Jonathan's spokesman, Reuben Abati, said there were "back-channel talks" with the sect aimed at ending the deadly violence. "Nigeria in talks with Islamists via 'back-channels'", Reuters, 26 August 2013; "Nigeria in back-channel talks with Islamists", Agence France-Presse, 26 August 2013.

down arms.²⁰⁰ The report of the committee, renamed the Dialogue and Reconciliation Committee, submitted to the president on 5 November, said many insurgents “positively responded to contacts and have accepted the dialogue options [as being] capable of full resolution of the conflict”; but Boko Haram and others dismissed the report as a farce.²⁰¹

4. Military operations and civilian vigilantes

Starting in early 2011, the government deployed some 3,600 personnel to Maiduguri and other major north-east towns as part of the Joint Task Force (JTF), a special formation of military, police and SSS units.²⁰² They were supplemented by small contingents from Chad and Niger, members of a Joint Multi-National Task Force (JMNTF) initially created to combat smuggling (see above). The troops, however, were stretched too thin to control the large region.²⁰³

On 11-12 May 2013, the government sent 2,000 additional troops, accompanied by heavy military equipment including fighter jets, to Maiduguri. On 14 May Jonathan declared a state of emergency in the North East (Adamawa, Borno and Yobe). In a national broadcast, he ordered the troops to “take all necessary action ... [to] end to the impunity of insurgents and terrorists”.²⁰⁴ The next day, fighter jets began bombarding Boko Haram camps in northern Borno, and a day later troops sealed parts of the borders with Chad, Niger and Cameroon. Phone networks were taken down on 16-17 May in Yobe and Borno and remain down. On 19 August, a new army division, the 7th, codenamed BOYONA and headed by a major general, took over counter-terrorism operations in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa.²⁰⁵

Since June 2013, operations in Maiduguri have been supported by civilian vigilantes, youths from city neighbourhoods who initially organised themselves into groups to patrol streets in search of Boko Haram. They stormed homes of known, and suspected, members, hacking them to death or manhandling and then handing them over to the military.²⁰⁶ Armed with machetes, axes, bows and arrows, clubs, swords and daggers, this “Civilian JTF” (CJTF) became instrumental in the anti-insurgent cam-

²⁰⁰ Shehu Sani and Datti Ahmed, involved in previous failed mediated talks between Boko Haram and the government, declined invitations to join the amnesty committee, accusing the government of insincerity.

²⁰¹ “Turaki c’ttee submits report, recommends better equipment, pay for security agencies”, *Daily Trust*, 6 November 2013. On 3 November 2013, Shekau released a video (obtained by Crisis Group), denouncing the Turaki committee report and claiming responsibility for the 24 October 2013 attacks on Damaturu. The report’s main recommendations had been in the media days earlier. A non-governmental organisation, Human Rights Writers’ Association of Nigeria (HURIWA), in a public statement described the committee and its report as “a huge scam and a scandalous contraption which ought not to have being set up in the first place”. “Huriwa – Boko Haram’s peace c’ttee is a huge scam”, *This Day*, 22 July 2013.

²⁰² The military, police and SSS units operate separately under an overall joint command, but depending on situations, can be integrated. Crisis Group interview, Nigerian general, July 2013.

²⁰³ The area includes Borno state (70,898 sq km), Yobe state (45,502 sq km) and Adamawa state (36,917 sq km).

²⁰⁴ “President declares state of emergency Fighter jets, troops move to Borno, Yobe. Adamawa”, *Daily Trust*, 15 May 2013; “Nigeria declares emergency in areas hit by Islamists”, Reuters, 14 May 2013; “Nigeria’s President declares state of emergency”, *The Washington Post*, 14 May 2013.

²⁰⁵ “Government creates new army division against Boko Haram”, *Premium Times*, 18 August 2013.

²⁰⁶ Crisis Group interviews, Maiduguri, July 2013.

paign. The vigilantes are organised into neighbourhood “sectors” under the supervision of JTF sector commands.²⁰⁷ Their success in helping to drive many insurgents out of Maiduguri and largely stopping Boko Haram killings and bombings in the city, residents said, was accompanied by human rights abuses.²⁰⁸

In July 2013, the JTF spokesman said the military was “guiding and monitoring the activities of these youth groups”. As part of this, it gave them ID cards and organised them into units in designated areas.²⁰⁹ Although the vigilantes are volunteers, they now receive a state stipend, and the JTF pays for treatment of injuries sustained in encounters with Boko Haram and gives financial assistance to the families of those killed in action.

With their assistance, the security situation around Maiduguri has improved significantly.²¹⁰ The CJTF has received praise from all quarters, including the military. On 17 July 2013 President Jonathan called them “new national heroes”. “We support, we commend, and we appreciate the efforts of the Youth Vigilante Groups called Civilian JTF in Borno state”, said Lt. Colonel Sagir Musa, the JTF spokesman in Maiduguri at the time.²¹¹ The federal government needs to develop a coherent policy for dealing with the vigilantes, so that it can work with authentic community policing projects while stopping the continued expansion of unregulated armed groups; this also requires demonstrating that the state has sufficient capacity to restore law and order on its own. If the government fails to deal with this issue, militias could spread across the country, triggering more violence and further damaging the rule of law. It should also ensure that state-supported groups like the CJTF are not used for political purposes in the 2015 elections.

The measures described above have diminished Boko Haram’s ability to conduct the coordinated campaigns it carried out in major urban centres in 2011 and 2012, but it has not been defeated, as a daring attack on military facilities in Maiduguri on 2 December 2013 and subsequent strikes on civilian communities continue to demonstrate. On 17 February 2014, following a string of deadly attacks against communities in Borno state, a distraught Governor Kashim Shettima warned that the North East was sliding into “a state of war” and that “given the present state of affairs, it is absolutely impossible for us to defeat Boko Haram”.²¹² On 14 March, Boko Haram attacked the Giwa barracks in Maiduguri, Borno state and released more than 1,000 detainees, who were arrested under suspicion of being members of the group or sympathisers. Three days later, a new video emerged in which Shekau claimed the

²⁰⁷ Crisis Group interview, Lt. Colonel Sagir Musa, JTF spokesman, Maiduguri, 19 July 2013.

²⁰⁸ Crisis Group interviews, Maiduguri, 19–21 July 2013.

²⁰⁹ “As of today, we have succeeded in profiling 85 per cent of the Youth Vigilante Groups, not only documenting them, [but] giving them basic training in terms of attitude in the course of their operation. The abuses as far this civilian JTF is concerned [are] not much; [it] is something that we can manage”. Crisis Group interview, Lt. Colonel Sagir Musa, JTF spokesman, Maiduguri, 19 July 2013.

²¹⁰ Crisis Group interview, civil rights activist, Maiduguri, 20 July 2013.

²¹¹ Crisis Group interview, Maiduguri, 21 July 2013.

²¹² “Boko Haram better armed, better motivated – Shettima”, *Vanguard*, 17 February 2014. “Shekau claims killing Albani, threatens mayhem”, *Daily Trust*, 20 February 2014. Reportedly the northern governors are unhappy with President Jonathan and his policies and raised this in Washington. “12 northern govs take Boko Haram controversy to White House”, *The Guardian*, 22 March 2014.

attack and vowed, for the first time, that the group would attack oil refineries in the Niger Delta and kill several national leaders.²¹³

5. Contradictory strategies and fraud

Progress toward a negotiated end to the violence has been minimal, due to the government's contradictory strategies and fraud, as well as Boko Haram's suspicion of the authorities' intent and its own divisions.

A robust strategic response to counter religious extremists and terrorists has a chance only if driven by credible political and traditional leaderships at state and national levels.²¹⁴ Their lack has been cited by a former police commissioner as responsible for a hardened Boko Haram. He added: "With what is happening in this country ... we have no leaders. If we have leaders, especially traditional leaders, we could have had people who could call these Boko Haram people to order, and Boko Haram will obey them Politics has taken over the mind of everybody".²¹⁵ Unless political and traditional leaders show greater will and determination to stop local support for Boko Haram, the impression will persist that they are not really interested in ending the sect's terrorism.²¹⁶

Troop deployments and the president's "declaration of war" have complicated the government's pursuit of dialogue to end the violence. Some analysts argue that it was counterproductive to impose emergency rule while a reconciliation committee for dialogue and reconciliation was reaching out to sect members.²¹⁷

Another apparent obstacle to dialogue is the involvement of fraudsters. Shehu Sani, director of the Civil Rights Congress, a prominent human rights group in the north, claims that on a number of occasions the government was deceived by people who presented peace proposals that were scams.²¹⁸ Several shadowy individuals claiming to be speaking on behalf of Boko Haram have been disowned by the sect. Some observers assert that government officials seeking to make private gain spon-

²¹³ He also warned he would come after the civilian JTF: "But specifically, I will devote half of my speech to the issue of Civilian JTF. Your name is not Civilian JTF but Civilian Trouble My advice to you so-called Civilian-JTF is to flee, take up arms, get conscripted into the army or police, because I am telling you ... that I have started a war against you. The war against you has just begun". "Boko Haram: Shekau claims responsibility for attack on Giwa Barracks, threatens to attack universities, Civilian-JTF", *Premium Times*, 24 March 2014.

²¹⁴ Crisis Group roundtable, Lead City University, Ibadan, 12 October 2012.

²¹⁵ "Leadership vacuum makes Boko Haram difficult to solve", *The Sun*, 5 June 2012.

²¹⁶ Several observers argue that since the government claims it knows who the prominent northern politicians sponsoring the Islamist group are, it should go after, expose and prosecute them. Otherwise, it risks being accused of manipulation. Crisis Group interviews, senior security specialist, Abuja, 5 October 2012; senior journalist, Abuja, 11 February, 6 October 2012. According to the Catholic Bishop of Osogbo (capital of Osun state in the south west) Diocese, the Rt. Rev. Leke Abegunrin, "Nigeria does not want to end the Boko Haram menace yet ... security personnel disclosed that they know those behind the menace but they are not able to pick them up The president should move his security to act Let them raise the dust and let's see what happens". "Government does not want an end to Boko Haram crises, says Catholic bishop", *Nigerian Tribune*, 8 May 2012.

²¹⁷ "The state of emergency will hamper the work of the amnesty committee because it will now make it inconvenient for Boko Haram to come out and dialogue with the committee for fear of being arrested or killed The measure sends conflicting signals to Boko Haram on government's sincerity in negotiations". Crisis Group interview, retired police commissioner Abubakar Tsav, Kano, 15 May 2013.

²¹⁸ Crisis Group analyst telephone interview in another capacity, 26 November 2012.

sored these impostors.²¹⁹ There are also allegations that substantial sums are pocketed from defence and security appropriations by government officials, security chiefs and the contractors supplying military hardware.²²⁰ However, military authorities strongly dismiss the allegations.²²¹

B. *Boko Haram's Suspicion and Divisions*

Boko Haram has accused the government of insincerity, saying it cannot be trusted, and dialogue is used as bait to arrest sect members. On 26 January 2012, the SSS announced it had arrested Boko Haram spokesman Abul Qaqa in Kaduna. The sect said the name of the individual was Abu Dardaa, who was in Kaduna for a preparatory meeting on peace talks with the government, and accused the SSS of betrayal.²²²

On 17 March 2012, Ibrahim Datti Ahmed, a medical doctor-turned-cleric who was acting as intermediary, said:

To our shock and dismay no sooner had we started this dialogue [then] Nigerian newspapers came out with a lot of the details of the meeting held. This development has embarrassed us very much and has created strong doubt in our mind about the sincerity of the government, as the discussion is supposed to be very confidential to achieve any success. In view of this unfortunate and unhelpful development, we have no option but to withdraw from these early discussions.²²³

On 22 August 2012, Boko Haram announced: "Since the Federal Government lured and arrested one of our leaders, Abu Dardaa, who was sent to dialogue on our behalf and also frustrated one facilitated by ... Dr Ibrahim Datti, we have foreclosed any possibility of talks with the government".²²⁴

Suspensions of insincerity were reinforced when the government on 21 June 2012 designated Abubakar Shekau, Abubakar Adam Kambar and Khalid al-Barnawi as terrorists.²²⁵ The Nigerian military's 23 November 2012 decision to put rewards of

²¹⁹ Ibid; Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, security analyst, 2 December 2012.

²²⁰ Officials and defence contractors are believed to consistently undermine and sabotage any effort that will bring an end to the violence, Shehu Sani said, while security chiefs deliberately worsen and prolong the violence to profit from security allocations. Crisis Group analyst telephone interview in another capacity, 26 November 2012. Crisis Group telephone interview, security analyst, 17 September 2013.

²²¹ "This situation does no one any good. We want an end to this insecurity so that we will go back to our barracks and face our primary duty of soldiering. We support dialogue, but that doesn't mean we should abdicate our mandate of tackling the terrorist menace and restoring peace. While politicians deal with the issue of dialogue we carry on with our responsibility". Crisis Group analyst telephone interview in another capacity, Lt. Colonel Sagir Musa, JTF spokesman, Maiduguri, 27 November 2012.

²²² On 2 February 2012, the sect issued a statement saying, "the arrest of Abu Dardaa is an outright deception and betrayal by the Nigerian government and security agents. They proclaimed dialogue and are doing the opposite. His arrest has proven to us that they were waiting for us to avail ourselves so that they can arrest us". "How Boko Haram chief was holed up in Kaduna – Our man was deceived – sect", *Daily Trust*, 3 February 2012.

²²³ "Boko Haram: intermediary pulls out of talks with government", Agence France-Presse, 17 March 2012; "Boko Haram talks in doubt as mediator quits", Reuters, 18 March 2012.

²²⁴ "Boko Haram denies dialogue with government", *Premium Times*, 22 August 2012.

²²⁵ According to a security officer involved in efforts to bring Boko Haram to the negotiating table, the designation angered the sect leadership and closed any possibility of negotiation. He said Mam-

50 million naira (\$317,000) on Shekau and 10 million naira (\$63,400) each on eighteen other commanders suggested an end to any talks.

In late May 2013, following a sweeping military offensive, ten Boko Haram commanders held a peace meeting with the Dialogue and Reconciliation Committee in Côte d'Ivoire with Shekau's blessing. It ended with an apparent peace agreement that was to begin with a ceasefire. Shekau seemed particularly impressed by the treatment accorded his representatives and reportedly asked a lieutenant to go to Abuja to announce the ceasefire to a select group of reporters. However, on 3 June, the U.S. placed a \$7 million reward on Shekau and a \$5 million reward on AQIM's Mokhtar Bel Mokhtar, upsetting the prospective deal. The next day the Nigerian government outlawed Boko Haram and Ansaru.²²⁶ The declarations by the two governments foreclosed any room for talks, truce or amnesty. On 13 July, Shekau released a ten-minute video in which he ruled out any further dialogue with the government and declared support for the recent attacks on schools.²²⁷

Boko Haram's difficulties in agreeing and coordinating on positions have also undermined dialogue.²²⁸ Intelligence officials said that soon after his June 2012 appointment, National Security Adviser Col. (ret.) Sambo Dasuki made phone overtures directly to Shekau. He appeared interested but asked for time to consult the Shura. That body could not agree, and Shekau reportedly told Dasuki that he would have to back out of any possible negotiation with the government.²²⁹

C. *The Civilian Joint Task Force*

While the use of civilian vigilantes has won praise for helping to drive many Boko Haram members out of Maiduguri, residents complained the same CJTF harangued, insulted and manhandled motorists at checkpoints. The vigilantes' operations have also provoked increased insurgent reprisal attacks against them, as well as local communities suspected of collaborating with the security forces. Residents further fear that as the vigilantes include remnants of "ECOMOG" and "area boys" (many of them drugs users), they could eventually become another source of insecurity. The Borno state government has started giving them skills training so that they can become productively engaged.²³⁰ Unless these programs are continued, the government risks creating yet another group of unemployed youths with fighting skills.

man Nur told him over the phone he wanted to "lay down arms and have a stable life but was afraid he would be charged for the UN bombing, and the terror designation of his colleagues affirmed his fears". Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, October 2012.

²²⁶ The "Terrorism (Prevention, Proscription Order) Notice 2013" made membership in, or association with, the two Islamist groups a crime punishable by at least a twenty-year jail term. "Jonathan bans Boko Haram, Ansaru", *Vanguard* (online), 5 July, 2013; "Jonathan bans Boko Haram, Ansaru", *Daily Trust*, 5 July 2013.

²²⁷ On 9 October 2013, he released a video in which he again ruled out dialogue. "Shekau displays seized weapons in new video, vows fresh attacks", *Daily Trust*, 9 October 2013.

²²⁸ Moreover, in the past sect members who proposed dialogue were killed on the orders of Shekau, silencing other pro-dialogue sect members.

²²⁹ Crisis Group analyst interview in another capacity, intelligence officer, July 2012.

²³⁰ The Borno state government gives a 18,000 naira (\$113) monthly allowance and has begun the Borno Youth Empowerment Scheme (BOYES), a skills acquisition program that includes human rights lessons. 800 vigilantes have been trained, and 1,000 began on 28 November 2013. "Borno trains 800 Civilian JTF", *Blue Print*, 27 September 2013; "Borno Govt. To train 5,000 'Civilian JTF' by 2015", *Premium Times* (online), 28 December 2013.

The federal government needs to develop a coherent policy for dealing with the vigilantes, so that it can work with authentic community policing projects while stopping the continued expansion of unregulated armed groups; this also requires demonstrating that the state has sufficient capacity to restore law and order on its own. If the government fails to deal with this issue, militias could spread across the country, triggering more violence and further damaging the rule of law. It should also ensure that state-supported groups like the CJTF are not used for political purposes in the 2015 elections.

D. *The 2015 Elections*

Boko Haram violence poses a serious threat to the 2015 elections. Electoral officials and analysts express concerns it may not be possible to hold the votes in the North East, particularly Borno and Yobe states.²³¹ This has fuelled suspicions the ruling PDP and President Jonathan, who is expected to seek a new term, are trying to suppress ballots in the region, which is largely controlled by the newly-formed opposition party the All Progressives Congress (APC).²³² Not holding polls in the North East, or reducing their scope, could create political chaos, with the opposition rejecting a close unfavourable national tally.²³³ It is also feared that Boko Haram could escalate attacks to undermine the elections.

Failure to conduct elections in the three states could likewise raise serious constitutional issues. The successful presidential candidate must win “not less than one-quarter of the votes cast at the election in each of at least two-thirds of all the States in the Federation and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja”.²³⁴ If the presidential polls are not held in the three north-eastern states, the results could be challenged as unconstitutional, leading to lengthy legal battles.

Another Borno state issue is a simmering dispute between Governor Shettima and his erstwhile political godfather, ex-Governor Sheriff, who anointed Shettima his successor before the 2011 elections, apparently with an understanding he would hand over to Sheriff’s closest associate, Kashim Imam, a former federal House of Representatives member, after one four-year term.²³⁵ Their differences led to a very public dispute in January-February 2014 and trading of accusations in the press that

²³¹ Professor Attahiru Jega, chairman of Nigeria’s Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), expressed such a reservation at a 16 December 2013 stakeholders forum organised by the Senate Committee on INEC, in collaboration with the Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre, Abuja and the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

²³² In a communiqué at the end of its national executive committee meeting in Abuja on 21 December 2013, the APC accused INEC and the federal government of planning to disenfranchise its members in the South West and North East and warned that it would not accept “the deliberate disenfranchisement of large swathes of citizenry”. But the INEC chairman’s spokesman, Kayode Idowu, rejected the notion the 2015 general elections would not be conducted in states under emergency, saying “such notion is born out of a misrepresentation”. “Rumbles in Borno, Yobe, Adamawa over Jega’s comments on 2015”, *Sunday Trust*, 22 December 2013.

²³³ Jonathan has been haemorrhaging support in recent months with the defection of five PDP governors and various members of the lower parliament to the APC. The latter briefly cost the PDP its parliamentary majority, and defections from one party to the other continue.

²³⁴ Constitution, 1999, Chapter VI, Section 134, Subsection 1(b).

²³⁵ Crisis Group interview, close political ally of Shettima and former member of Sheriff’s kitchen cabinet as governor, 17 October 2013.

the other supported Boko Haram.²³⁶ Tensions subsided, but were not resolved, after the intervention of powerful Senator Bola Tinubu.²³⁷ The rivalry could lead to more campaign violence as the elections approach.

E. Impact on the North and Implications for Nigeria

Boko Haram's attacks have undermined public safety across the region and scarred its economy and development. Thousands of lives have been lost during the insurgency.²³⁸ The attacks increased during the first three months of 2014, with almost daily killings, bombings, thefts and destruction of schools, homes and businesses. According to Amnesty International, at least 1,500 people were killed in that period.²³⁹ Several weeks earlier, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) reported that more than 1,000 were killed and 249,446 displaced (one in five of the total population) since January in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states.²⁴⁰

In Borno state, the attacks had destroyed 882 classrooms as of August 2013; in Yobe state, all schools were shut from June to September 2013. On 6 March 2014, the federal government closed five federal colleges (also known as unity schools) in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states, ordering their estimated 10,000 students to relocate.²⁴¹ Parents, fearing attacks, have withdrawn thousands of children from schools, in a region already the most educationally backward in the country. Economic activities have been similarly disrupted. In September 2012, the insurgents destroyed more than 25 masts and base stations in Maiduguri, Potiskum, Bauchi, Gombe and Kano, setting back efforts to improve telecommunications in the region.²⁴²

Boko Haram's attacks have also deepened religious and regional fault lines, reversing some of the country's hard-won gains in building national unity and stability. Its assaults on Christians and churches and its declared goal of establishing an Islamic

²³⁶ The dispute escalated after thugs attacked Sheriff's convoy on 13 January, reportedly in retaliation for an attack by Sheriff supporters on Shettima's convoy two days previously. "Ex-Governor Sheriff's convoy stoned in Maiduguri", *Daily Trust*, 14 January 2014. A subsequent bomb blast claimed by Boko Haram that killed more than 40 people near a busy market led to mutual accusations that the other camp was behind the violence in the state. "Boko Haram claims responsibility for Tuesday's Maiduguri attacks", Sahara Reporters (Saharareporters.com), 14 January 2014; "Sheriff blames Maiduguri bomb blast on state govt", *This Day*, 16 January 2014; "Borno bombing: arrest Modu Sheriff now – group", *The Sun* (online), 16 January 2014; "Ali Sheriff, this is reckless", *Sunday Trust*, 19 January 2014.

²³⁷ "Shettima, Sheriff Resolve Dispute – Deputy Governor", *Daily Trust*, 10 February 2014; "Shettima, Sheriff Reconciliation Meeting Ends in Deadlock", *This Day*, 11 February 2014.

²³⁸ For more detail on the violence, see "Nigeria Security Tracker", Council on Foreign Relations (www.cfr.org).

²³⁹ "Nigeria: War crimes and crimes against humanity as violence escalates in north-east", Amnesty International, 31 March 2014.

²⁴⁰ NEMA also said 3.2 million people, a third of the three states' population, were affected by the violence and 1.5 million people were in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. "1,000 killed in Boko Haram conflict this year: Nigeria", Agence France-Presse, 26 March 2014. According to the UN, 70 per cent of them are women and children. "Humanitarian response gap grows in northern Nigeria", IRIN, 14 March 2014.

²⁴¹ "Closure of unity colleges: thousands of students face uncertainty", *Daily Trust*, 10 March 2014.

²⁴² "Counting the costs of terror attacks on telecommunication facilities", *The Guardian* (Lagos), 12 September 2012. The security services have also shut down mobile phone networks to prevent Boko Haram members from coordinating attacks.

state across the north are not shared by most Muslims but have strained inter-faith relations throughout the country.²⁴³

On 17 June 2012, coordinated attacks on three churches in Kaduna drew reprisals by Christian youths, sparking three days of fighting that left over 70 dead and at least 130 severely wounded. The president of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Bishop Ayo Oritsejafor, said, “Boko Haram has declared war on Christians and Christianity in Nigeria”. In April 2013, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) threatened that from 31 May and in order to “save Christians from Boko Haram”, it would attack any mosques and Islamic clerics who preached hate messages. Though it withdrew the threat following an appeal by the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, these and similar incidents elsewhere further weakened already fragile religious and ethnic relationships in the country, with possibly long-term effects on national unity and stability.

²⁴³ Crisis Group interviews, Abuja, Kaduna, Kano, July 2013.

VI. A Way Forward

A. Federal Government

Several political and military leaders do not believe the federal government's strategy of relying largely on a military approach to end the Islamist insurgency will deliver a lasting solution. Former Chief of Defence Staff General Martin Luther Agwai (ret.) has said, "you can never solve any of these problems with military solutions. The military can always be an enabling force. They will sensitise; they will stabilise the area [but] it is a political issue; it is a social issue; it is an economic issue, and until these issues are addressed, the military can never give you a solution".²⁴⁴ The government needs to pursue urgently a more comprehensive strategy that targets the economic, social and cultural roots of the crisis. On 18 March 2014, National Security Adviser Mohammed Sambo Dasuki announced a "soft" approach to addressing the root causes of terrorism (see below), but it remains to be seen whether and how it will be implemented.²⁴⁵

1. A far north development commission

As many northern intellectuals, activists, politicians and religious leaders have demanded, the strategy must address the high poverty and unemployment in the far north. Some, like former Central Bank Governor Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, who is from Kano State, push for a "northern Nigeria development council" to address economic deprivation.²⁴⁶ Others demand a federal ministry for northern development.

Opening the second North-East Economic Summit in Gombe on 3 December 2013, President Jonathan noted "the unique experience that this region has had with Boko Haram necessitates aggressive and urgent action to revitalise its economy". He said his administration was developing a program for the region's accelerated socio-economic development, based on a partnership model "involving the Federal Government, state and local governments as well as traditional leaders of thought in the region".²⁴⁷ To be effective, the president needs to establish a Far North Development Commission, similar to the Niger Delta Development Commission, with a mandate

²⁴⁴ Press conference, Abuja, 28 September 2013. General Agwai was also force commander of the AU/UN hybrid operation in the Darfur area of Sudan.

²⁴⁵ Presentation at <http://abusidiqu.com/nigerias-soft-approach-counterterrorism-mohammed-sambo-dasuki>.

²⁴⁶ Mohammed Haruna and Patrick Smith, "Nigeria: fixing the fractured North", *The Africa Report*, no. 42, July 2012, p. 28.

²⁴⁷ "FG'll assist to revitalize N'Eastern states' economy – Jonathan", *Punch*, 4 December 2013, p. 9. On 29 December 2013, Dr Yerima Ngama, minister of state for finance, said the federal government had approved a five-year special intervention program that would enable it to accelerate the socio-economic development of the North East. "FG approves five-year economic package for troubled states", *Punch*, 30 December 2013. The government reportedly has provided 2 billion naira (about \$11.8 million) to the region in the 2014 budget, primarily to repair public buildings damaged by the insurgents. It says this could increase when the states present a fuller assessment of the damage they have suffered. Officials also say President Jonathan is formulating an "elaborate" five-year program for development intervention in the North East, and according to a finance ministry official, a small "contact group" has been formed that is consulting with various stakeholders, including development partners. It is intended to target education, water supply and health services, but priorities and framework are still unclear. Crisis Group interviews, government officials, Abuja, January 2014.

that includes coordinating anti-desertification campaigns, developing large-scale irrigation, agriculture, power and road projects and promoting small businesses that could create jobs for youths.

To fund the commission, the government requires large sums of money. One way would be to deploy energy and political will to stop the massive oil theft (oil bunkering) that costs the government over 780 billion naira (about \$7 billion) annually.²⁴⁸ A portion of federal revenues raised by ending this huge criminal diversion could be committed to funding development in the north.

2. Improved governance and service delivery

Merely committing more resources to the far north will not suffice. Experience shows that most funds pumped into such initiatives as the National Accelerated Wheat Production Program and the Nomadic Education Program in the 1980s were stolen.²⁴⁹ The Jonathan government must vigorously pursue governance reform at all levels so that money appropriated for development projects and services actually deliver results. The anti-corruption agencies – the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Offences Commission (ICPC) – must put an immediate stop to frauds through which funds earmarked for development end up in private pockets.

3. An end to impunity

Official impunity is a major grievance for many and an effective recruiting tool for Boko Haram and other militant groups. The government must investigate and prosecute not only crimes committed by militants, but also those perpetrated by political leaders and security personnel. A major Boko Haram condition for a ceasefire has been prosecution of the police identified as involved in Mohammed Yusuf's extrajudicial execution in 2009. Nigerian human rights groups repeat this demand.²⁵⁰ The government needs to respond, as a step toward discouraging impunity.

4. Win hearts and minds

The federal government, and particularly its military and security agencies, must step up efforts to win the hearts and minds of citizens, especially in the North East. This involves equipping units appropriately and conducting military operations more clinically and professionally, so as to minimise collateral casualties, damage to livelihoods

²⁴⁸ Statement credited to Petroleum Minister Diezani Allison-Madueke, in "Nigeria: country lost over \$7 billion to oil theft in one year", *Leadership*, 19 May 2012. Nigerian crude is being stolen on an industrial scale. Christina Katsouris and Aaron Sayne, "Nigeria's Criminal Crude: International Options to Combat the Export of Stolen Oil", Chatman House, September 2013.

²⁴⁹ The nomadic education program, started in November 1986, is a federal government initiative to ensure that children of nomadic pastoralists, notably the Fulani, acquire a basic formal education. Over the years, it has been plagued by corruption and yielded scant results. In October 2012, Mallam Abdulkarim Mohammed, a senior Nasarawa state education official, lamented it was only a conduit to siphon public funds. "Nigeria: Corruption Stifles Primary Education Devt – UBEB Chairman", *Leadership*, 11 October 2012. See also, "The massive MDG fraud: how officials steal billions meant to educate Fulani herdsmen", *Premium Times*, 17, August 2012; "Nigeria nomadic education agency enrolls 682,000 students in schools", *Premium Times*, 10 January 2013.

²⁵⁰ "Group urges prosecution of killers of Boko Haram's leader", *The Nation* (Lagos), 13 October 2010; "Nigeria: Prosecute Killers of Boko Haram Leader, Peace Corps Urges FG", *Daily Trust*, 3 May 2013.

and human rights violations. Military authorities must ensure greater adherence to rules of engagement, accountability and timely redress for violations and abuses. They must spare no effort to convince citizens and communities that they will enjoy better security and peace by cooperating with federal and state authorities.

National Security Adviser Dasuki has outlined a strategic communications plan built largely around the themes that counter-terrorism is not directed against Muslims, and Muslims must be encouraged and empowered to speak out against terrorism.²⁵¹ On 18 March 2014, he expanded on that plan, outlining the four “streams” that comprise what he called a “soft approach”: de-radicalisation of convicted terrorists, those awaiting trial and those who might be released; a “whole of society approach”, seeking to “build community engagement and resilience through building trust, creating awareness and resilience”; building the capacity to “communicate our national values better” through military, law enforcement and civilian institutions; and working with the governors of the six states of the North East to revitalise the economy.²⁵² This plan should be elaborated, resourced and implemented vigorously, particularly by northern state governments

The perception is rife that neither northern-led federal governments in the past nor current northern state governments have used their power to develop the region and improve citizens’ lives. Sitting governors from the region have the opportunity to change this perception. A leading editorialist recently wrote: “The northern elites should with sincerity of purpose address fundamental issues of food, health and education, corruption among state executives, good governance and its broken down social cohesion ... they should conjure realistic and pragmatic steps towards containing insurgency and other security challenges”.²⁵³

Northern leaders must also transparently address perceptions, held by many in other parts of Nigeria, that there is a link between the resurgence of violence in the core north and the 2011 presidential elections, and that Boko Haram is a tool for some northern political elites to negotiate power.²⁵⁴ The north felt it was cheated by the PDP when it chose Jonathan, a southerner, as its presidential candidate in January 2011.²⁵⁵ In April 2012, the president’s national security adviser (since deceased), General (ret.) Owoye Azazi, asked rhetorically: “Is it not amazing that after the elections Boko Haram became better trained, better armed and better funded Boko Haram could not have had that kind of sophistication without a backing?”²⁵⁶ Northern leaders need to dispel this perception to rally federal government support for regional development programs.

²⁵¹ Colonel Sambo Dasuki, National Security Adviser, Address at Opening Session of “Workshop on Strategic Communication Plans for Counter-Insurgency Operations against Terrorism and Extremist Organisations”, National Defence College, Abuja, 9 December 2013.

²⁵² For more details, see <http://abusidiqu.com/nigerias-soft-approach-counterterrorism-mohammed-sambo-dasuki>.

²⁵³ “Violence in the north”, *The Guardian*, editorial, 9 January 2013.

²⁵⁴ Crisis Group interview, senior journalist and publisher, Abuja, 5 October 2012.

²⁵⁵ The north wanted the party to respect its zoning principle and allow the region to elect a northerner to complete the two four-years terms stipulated in the constitution. See also, Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°81, *Lessons from Nigeria’s 2011 Election*, 15 September 2011, pp. 7-9.

²⁵⁶ “National Security Adviser blames PDP for Boko Haram crisis”, *Punch*, 28 April 2012. The ruling party denied this, saying it had always respected the canons of equity, fairness and inclusiveness. “Jonathan to summon Azazi for linking PDP with bombings”, *Punch*, 29 April 2012.

These leaders must also commit to the region's social transformation and show greater commitment to promoting education and skills acquisition, including for girls, so as to equip youths for gainful employment in a rapidly changing world. They likewise need to initiate campaigns to reform the *Almajiri* system. As Sheikh Ibrahim El Zakzaky, leader of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria, has argued: "There has to be a campaign to enlighten people on how to educate their children. These children have to be in their own homes, not roaming around the villages with some Quranic teacher".

B. *Nigeria's Partners*

Particularly after the government's 2011 military offensive, Boko Haram has become a regional crisis. Nigeria needs bilateral and multilateral partners in the West African region and internationally to address instability caused by the movement and groups like it. This includes securing its porous borders better; combating terrorists, narcotic and human traffickers; better intelligence gathering, sharing and application; and reducing the large amounts of weapons in circulation outside state control.

1. Regional partners

Increasing concern about Boko Haram's growing ties with other African extremist groups prompted Nigeria to deploy troops to Mali and help uproot AQIM, which was giving the sect sanctuary, funding and training. By combating AQIM in Mali, it also weakened Boko Haram.²⁵⁷ But because of the need to combat Boko Haram (and other internal security challenges), it was forced to reduce its troop contribution to the UN Mission for the Stabilisation of Mali (MINUSMA).²⁵⁸

Terrorism, transnational crime, drug trafficking, piracy and kidnapping in the region present a unique chance to better confront local security challenges. Nigeria should intensify relations with the Lake Chad countries and continue to build security ties and networks with, among others, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Mali and Mauritania. It also should urgently implement its recently declared policy of sending senior ambassadors and defence attachés to the West African sub-region. The authorities in Abuja should then consult frequently with them.

President Jonathan reached agreement in a one-day visit on 18 October 2013 to form a common front with Niger in the fight against Boko Haram and other terrorist groups, including defence pacts and joint border patrols. It provides for mixed patrols along the border from Gaya to Diffa (1,500km long) and a mixed command. Nigeria also reportedly established, in November 2011, a defence outpost in Niger.²⁵⁹ It should do the same with other immediate neighbours. It is, however, difficult to see how such pacts can be used to halt the movement of Islamist jihadis, or even dangerous illegal immigrants, across the vast, lightly administered border spaces. Nigeria's immigration service says that even the number of unapproved routes is unknown. In February 2012, the government deported over 7,000 "illegal" immigrants, mostly Chadians and

²⁵⁷ "Nigerian troops'll be deployed to Mali – Jonathan", *Vanguard*, 15 January 2013.

²⁵⁸ The government was said also to be irritated that a Nigerian was not appointed MINUSMA's force commander.

²⁵⁹ "Le Niger et le Nigéria renforcent leur coopération et signent un accord de défense", RFI, 19 October 2012. The countries share a 920km border. "Nigeria establishes defence outpost in Niger republic over terrorism", *The Guardian*, 20 November 2011.

Nigeriens. Some were suspected terrorists accused of increasing the Boko Haram threat, while others were said to be inciting radical views.²⁶⁰

2. Other partners and donors

In addition to ongoing counter-terrorism assistance, international partners should support comprehensive security sector reform and development at all levels meant to genuinely address widespread poverty, youth unemployment and women empowerment. (Previous efforts failed because they lacked political will and were undermined by systemic corruption.) They should press the federal government to go beyond proclaiming “zero tolerance” for corruption and actually strengthen the agencies – EFCC and ICPC – mandated to enforce that policy. Donors should adjust aid priorities, from a national focus, to encourage enforcement at all levels. However, Nigeria has enough money to develop projects and programs that can genuinely improve citizens’ quality of life and does not need more financial support. Instead the focus of foreign partners and donors should be on technical assistance and pressing leaders to improve governance.

International partners should particularly encourage the federal government, working with northern political, traditional and religious elites, to vigorously and urgently seek a comprehensive solution to Boko Haram’s challenge. The U.S. has set the right tone in the Binational Commission (BNC), created to expand mutual cooperation across a broad range of shared interest. At the BNC’s 15 August 2013 regional security working group meeting in Abuja, Under Secretary of State Wendy Sherman argued that while “security efforts are necessary”, defeating Boko Haram “may require a new social compact with Nigerian citizens that encompasses an economic recovery strategy as a complement to the government’s security strategy”.²⁶¹ But the U.S. and other international security partners need to keep the pressure on and follow up with support for projects and programs that address the poverty, corruption and impunity that swell insurgent ranks.

The UK Department for International Development (DFID) aid program, one of the largest focused on the north, wants to deliver more direct support to poor people, help change the lives of many more girls and women and assist in closing the huge Millennium Development Goals gaps in this region.²⁶² The 2011 mutual cooperation agreement entails regular meetings between selected judges and UK counterparts to exchange ideas on combating terrorism. It also includes strengthening cooperation in areas of countering and managing terrorism that involve adjudication and due process.²⁶³ DFID needs to implement this agreement vigorously but withdraw support if it does not deliver results.

In 2011, the EU approved €98 million to fight corruption and organised crime and aid justice sector reform.²⁶⁴ Close monitoring is needed to ensure it makes a real contribution to governance; if it does not, the funding should be suspended.

²⁶⁰ “Illegal routes into Nigeria countless – Immigration”, *Punch*, 15 July 2012. “ECOWARN Daily Highlights Report”, ECOWAS Commission, Abuja, 27 September 2011.

²⁶¹ See “B’Haram: FG must win over northerners, says US”, *Punch*, 16 August 2013, p. 2.

²⁶² Crisis Group interview, senior DFID official, Abuja, 13 February 2012; “Operational Plan 2011-2015”, DFID Nigeria, updated June 2012.

²⁶³ Crisis Group interview, DFID official, Abuja, 25 June 2013.

²⁶⁴ The goal is to strengthen the anti-corruption policymaking, coordination and monitoring mechanisms, build institutional and operational capacities and empower civil society organisations. The

C. *Addressing Extremism*

The best way to deal with extremism is to mitigate underlying causes. Social reforms can promote inclusive governance and respect for majority and minority groups alike. As Crisis Group wrote of similar problems in other countries, “the government needs to realise that if people no longer believe in the state to provide justice and well-being they will look elsewhere. The challenge is enormous, but the solution is in the hands of the state”.²⁶⁵ Nigeria needs to:

- ❑ undertake far-reaching socio-political and economic reforms to achieve equitable power and resource sharing;
- ❑ name, shame and prosecute all those, including security personnel and politicians, stoking religious intolerance and/or benefiting from the crisis;
- ❑ create a police force that sees itself as a partner to citizens in detecting and dealing with threats to public safety and security;
- ❑ launch and sustain a concerted civic education program to halt politicisation of religions; and
- ❑ increase efforts through educational institutions and the mass media to increase understanding and appreciation for other religions and promote tolerance and mutual respect.²⁶⁶

D. *Local and National Dialogue*

Eliminating Boko Haram requires a combination of political settlement and military solution. After several false starts, genuine talks should begin without further delay.²⁶⁷ The federal government should proceed in two ways: first with the Islamists; secondly, in a more broad-based or national dialogue. The government should seek to separate the more moderate factions and their affiliates from the more radical groups, incentivising them to repudiate violence. It should then engage them in an open and public dialogue. For its part, Boko Haram should formulate clear minimalist conditions for ending the violence. While some aspects of Sharia are incompatible with a secular state, the sect and its affiliates should explore with the government how to reach a rapprochement.

project is a continuation of the ninth European Development Fund that supported the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the judiciary. The European Commission approved funding for eight projects totalling €478 million within the framework of the 2011 multi-year Annual Action Program for Nigeria.

²⁶⁵ Asia Report N°58, *Radical Islam in Central Asia: Responding to Hizb ut-Tahrir*, 30 June 2003, p. 26; also, Africa Briefing N°87, *Somalia: An Opportunity That Should Not Be Missed*, 22 February 2012.

²⁶⁶ A senior journalist asked: “Why are the JNI and the northern political elite keeping quiet and allowing a handful of people to soil their religion and pit Muslims against Christians? We recall the ferocity with which Muslims rise up each time the Quran or the Prophet is perceived to have been insulted”. Crisis Group interview, Kaduna, 16 February 2012.

²⁶⁷ One of several such starts was widely publicised by the local media in March 2012: “Talks have opened with an indirect contact made between the two sides over the past week through two senior clerics. A deal is being worked out for a three-month ceasefire during which there would be no attack by the sect and no ‘harassment’ from the government”. See “As Talks begin, federal government, Boko Haram consider ceasefire”, *Daily Trust*, 16 March 2012.

Dialogue with radical Islamists, however, may fail, and other aggrieved groups currently ignored by the authorities could become real threats. The government should, therefore, use the national conference that began on 17 March 2014 to discuss critical governance issues such as the structure of government, federalism, revenue distribution, political representation and power sharing, as an all-encompassing springboard to re-define the basis of Nigeria's corporate existence. A prominent columnist has suggested: "The whole question of Nigeria is what needs to be negotiated – in a wider conversation that must involve all interests within the Nigerian space ... piecemeal negotiation with different separatist or terrorist groups will ultimately not be useful".²⁶⁸

The most urgent national question is the constitutional and practical devolution of power, responsibilities and resources from the centre to the states and local councils. Many feel the central government is too powerful and are unhappy with how it allocates resources.²⁶⁹ The national conference must address this comprehensively. A restructured and capacitated Nigeria should be able to tackle the root causes of conflict and violence.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁸ Okey Ndibe, "(Not) negotiating with ghosts", *The Sun*, 27 March 2012.

²⁶⁹ Because many of the states are financially insolvent, some have called for a return to the regional system of the first republic (1963-1966). This could be done by merging groups of states into bigger units. Crisis Group roundtable, senior journalists, Lagos, 6 February 2012.

²⁷⁰ Crisis Group plans a subsequent briefing on the national conference.

VII. Conclusion

Boko Haram is one of several profound threats to Nigeria's stability. It has grown quickly to be a major security challenge because it taps into wide discontent with bad governance, corruption and official impunity. To address this challenge, the federal and state governments, as well as the region, must develop and implement comprehensive plans to tackle not only physical security but also the grievances that fuel the insurgency. Ultimately radical reform of governance and the country's political culture is required. This is a big agenda, one Nigeria's elites have not yet demonstrated they have the will to attack. But if they do not, Boko Haram, or groups like it, will continue to destabilise large parts of the country.

Abuja/Dakar/Nairobi/Brussels, 3 April 2014

Appendix A: Map of Nigeria



Appendix B: About the International Crisis Group

The International Crisis Group (Crisis Group) is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, with some 150 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

Crisis Group's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, it produces analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers. Crisis Group also publishes *CrisisWatch*, a twelve-page monthly bulletin, providing a succinct regular update on the state of play in all the most significant situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.

Crisis Group's reports and briefing papers are distributed widely by email and made available simultaneously on the website, www.crisisgroup.org. Crisis Group works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analyses and to generate support for its policy prescriptions.

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April 2014

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Chad's North West: The Next High-risk Area?, Africa Briefing N°78, 17 February 2011 (only available in French).

Congo: The Electoral Dilemma, Africa Report N°175, 5 May 2011 (also available in French).

Congo : The Electoral Process Seen from the East, Africa Briefing N°80, 5 September 2011 (also available in French).

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