

PORGMUN 2019



**Addressing the Growing Influence and Power of Islamist Militant Groups
in The Lake Chad Region**

Forum: African Union (AU)

1) Introduction

Conversations of Radical Islam and Middle East are mostly intertwined, yet militant terrorist groups are not bound to one region or another. In the past decade, a seemingly unimportant Nigerian Islamic sect was allowed to turn into a deadly, coordinated extremist mob that swore its allegiance to ISIS in 2015. Boko Haram launched an insurgency against the Nigerian government in 2009 with the aim of establishing an Islamic caliphate in West Africa. The chaos resulted in the deaths of nearly 30 thousand, sweeping physical destruction, the displacement of over two million people and a dire food crisis affecting six million more. Jeopardizing education and health services, causing a sudden halt of a previously booming economy and undercutting government authority in Nigeria and abroad.

Boko Haram's organization is not united by a location, but rather a vengeance disguised as an ideology. Hence, their strategy is not the one of centralization. Considering the semi-successful intervention of the Coalition, the group has been forced to be spread out. Pushed outside of Nigerian villages, the mob expanded its territory, menacing the safety and stability across the Lake Chad Basin.

2) Definition of Key Terms

Boko Haram – coined tag for a terrorist group/sect whose actual name is Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad, in other words People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad

Insurgency - an active revolt or uprising

Lake Chad – shared between **Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and Chad**

Maiduguri – capital of the Borno state

MNJTF - Multinational Joint Task Force, a combined multinational formation, comprising units, mostly military, from **Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria**. It is mandated to bring an end to the Boko Haram insurgency.

3) General Overview

BOKO HARAM RISE, STEP BY STEP

In many African states, colonization aftermath does not just linger, it shatters any potential prosperity of the said regions. Ever since the Sokoto caliphate, which ruled parts of what is now Nigeria, Niger and Cameroon, fell under the British Empire in 1903, resistance has been building up among some of the area's Muslims to Western education. To this day, many still refuse to send their children to government-run schools, disgusted by their 'Western influence', an issue that's exacerbated by the ruling elite which refuses to see education as a priority.

As a way to combat government's negligence and purge the aversion towards the Western education, an influential Islamist cleric from Borno State, Mohammed Yusuf, formed

Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (now known as the infamous Boko Haram) in Maiduguri in 2002. He set up a religious complex, including a mosque and an Islamic school. Not long after, several poor Muslim families from both Nigeria and neighbouring countries, enrolled their children at the school. However, Yusuf's sect was not solely interested in education. Its wider political goal was to create an Islamic state, the school's primary function being a recruiting ground for future jihadists.

With time, the group expanded and in 2009 carried out a spate of attacks on police stations and other government buildings in Maiduguri. Consequently, as a result of numerous shoot-outs on Maiduguri's streets, hundreds of Boko Haram supporters were killed and thousands of residents fled the city. Nigeria's security forces later managed to seize the sect's headquarters, arresting the fighters and exterminating Mr Yusuf himself. His body was displayed on state television and Boko Haram was declared to be conquered. As we now know, the fight was not over. Riots broke out and the former deputy Abubakar Shekau took over Boko Haram, turning it into ever so extremist and violent killing machine. The sect began targeting those they considered complicit in Yusuf's killing, including the Nigerian military and police, as well as others they associated with the Nigerian state. The UN became a target in 2011 due to its development support to the government.

In 2015, its campaign to capture and control territory in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa further states escalated alongside attacks in Cameroon, including repeated abductions and the mass kidnapping of children. The violence spread beyond Nigeria's border, both the border town of Bosso in Niger and Ngouboua village in Chad came under the strike. Thus, establishing that Niger, Chad and Cameroon had become part of Boko Haram's fighting ground. The group continued to terrorize anyone and everyone and declaring its allegiance to the Islamic State in 2015, rebranding itself as the Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP).

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Nigeria decided to combine forces against the deadly organisations with neighbouring states like Cameroon and Chad as well as privately operated military contractors as it was in everyone's interest to prevent innocent people from dying, making them homeless or pushing them out of schools. The said Coalition pushed Boko Haram to back down and hide in the Sambisa forest, and be further forced to move away from terrorizing Nigerian villages to the region of Chad river basin. The government took the measure to prevent Boko Haram from stealing any boats or ambushing cargo by prohibiting any traffic on the lake. Nothing can come in or out, the economy was hence put onto a halt with hopes of stopping deadly angry men in masks. Regardless of the Coalition's gains, violence, namely, children suicide attacks, have carried on whilst Boko Haram's geographic reach has decreased. Further anxiety has been displayed as to the lack of Nigerian military in villages reclaimed from Boko Haram.

HOW DID ALL OF THIS HAPPEN?

One of the few catalysts that facilitated such fast creation of this remorseless rebel group might be attributed to the problematic resource allocation. The crude oil, petroleum is mainly found in the South, promoting its overall economy and living standards. The North lacks such resources and is generally less financially advanced. Poverty and extremism go hand in hand. Nigeria is the biggest growing economy in its entire continent, yet it is consistent of one of the poorest populations. About 100 million people live less than \$1.90 a day, the poverty prevails mainly in the Muslim-majority northern regions. As analyst Chris Ngwodo puts it: "*The group*

itself is an effect and not a cause; it is a symptom of decades of failed government and elite delinquency finally ripening into social chaos."

Despite having a Muslim origin, Boko Haram devastating attacks do not target one specific group, the group murders everyone regardless of their gender, religion or age. It's burned both churches and mosques, full villages, kidnapped women and kids to use them as suicide bombers as well as child soldiers. The members of Boko Haram are referred to as *"devils"* by the civilians. It's been described to follow Sharia law that is *"too extreme for Al Qaeda"*. Even with religious ideologies being mostly scattered and divided onto North and South, Muslims and Christians generally get along well, they coexist as friends and brothers. Thus, it is up most salient, we remember that religion itself is not the problem, it is the extremism. Boko Haram violates the very basics of the Islamic doctrine and murders Christians and Muslim alike.

The reason behind Boko Haram's abrupt and destructive rise to power is that it was allowed to grow. The authority failed to deal with the evolving offences and put an end to the ever-spreading organisation. Neither the Nigerian government nor the rest of the world cared to notice the alarming dangers of the emerging sect until the notorious bombings of the UN headquarters (2011) and the infamous abduction of over 200 of school girls (2014 - Bring Back Our Girls campaign).

HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

Certain areas of Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Nigeria were severely affected by various chronic crises even before struggles accompanied with the rise of Boko Haram. The incoming masses of those fleeing the conflict, the majority of which live in local communities, have definitely put additional burden on the limited supply of food, housing and sanitation. In Nigeria, the amount of people suffering with basic lack of food double since March 2016. What's more, displaced people of these areas, some of whom have been displaced for over 2 years, are easier targets for further violence.

The counter-insurgency campaign managed to make some gains in terms of eradicating a portion of the group, however in doing so violated numerous human rights. It disrupted an entire spectrum of humanitarian efforts in the affected areas of the Lake Chad Basin. The previous instability compiled with the evolving conflict made the living situation of civilians impossible to exist peacefully in. MNJTF forces have further been criticized for the treatment of civilians in areas under the influence of Boko Haram. To balance this heavily militarised response to the Boko Haram threat, far more civilian capacity must be gradually brought in. This would include a stronger involvement of local authorities in strategic decision-making and a better administrative presence to rebuild social services that ensure that civilian needs are taken into account.

BOKO HARAM – DEFEATED?

Nigerian government has repeatedly proclaimed that Boko Haram has been conquered, nevertheless numerous analyses (BBC) of the jihadist group show little change. Boko Haram is responsible for killing over 900 people in 2017, that is significantly more than it did in 2016. Their covert strategy is what kept the insurgency alive during government offensives. It's the jihadists ability to blend into local communities that allows for their devastating campaign of violence. Decentralisation does not equal defeat, various factions of the group carry on

threatening the stability of Nigeria's north-east and the wider Lake Chad Basin area. As such, any chances of this deadly sect being routed anytime soon are unlikely. Not to mention the region's chronic poverty and poor education system that both function as harmful catalysers recruiting new Boko Haram members.

4) Major Parties and Their Views

Nigeria

Nigerian security forces have made sizable gains against Boko Haram with the help of neighbouring states, but the momentum to stamp out the insurgent group appears to have slowed in recent years, and communities in the country's northeast remain besieged.

As a retired British military ambassador to Nigeria put it himself, the issue with Nigerian government is their naivety of their ability to fix everything at once. A country cannot simply push big red button and dissolve any and all of its problems. Especially, when some of those are situated the very core of the government itself.

In April 2018, the government approved a release of \$1bn for the procurement of security equipment to fight insurgency and revolt in the country. This announcement came days after an attack by Boko Haram that left 18 dead in northern Nigeria.

On January 7th this year, current Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari pledged to boost the nation's security: *"I'll raise the standard of the Nigerian armed forces and get resources to encourage them to do better the fight against Boko Haram Islamists."*

Nevertheless, Buhari has been criticized heavily from multiple sources regarding not only distancing himself from the whole affair (since rich northerners are thought to manufacture Boko Haram to 'play politics'). In the statement of a retired military general, Mr Obasanjo, accused Buhari of not only failing in all aspects of governance but also plotting to rig the upcoming election (February 16th).

Not so unexpectedly, Buhari triggered a political crisis in Africa's top oil producer just three weeks before a general election by suspending the nation's top judge. The move has been condemned by opposition leaders, the legal community, the U.S. and European Union.

Chad

Chad's military engagements and its role in the fight against terrorism round Lake Chad have brought significant diplomatic gains, most recently the appointment of Foreign Minister Moussa Faki as chairperson of the African Union Commission. But the security risk hasn't disappeared. To counter the ongoing threat while responding to the immediate and longer-term needs of the population, Chadian authorities are in need of carrying on with the relatively successful regional security cooperation, start to move away from their highly militarised response to include a more significant civilian component, elaborate a more coherent economic development plan and deal more effectively with former Boko Haram members.

Cameroon

As fighting between government forces and the Boko Haram insurgents in Cameroon's

Far North diminishes, a lasting peace depends on how the government deals with former members of the jihadist movement, its former prisoners and vigilante groups set up to fight it. A well-designed policy toward former Boko Haram members could lead those that are still active to surrender.

US

Since 2018 the US agreed to sell weapons to Nigeria. In early 2018, U.S. President Donald J. Trump pushed through a roughly \$600 million deal to sell a dozen Super Tucano aircraft to Nigeria to support its counterterrorism efforts.

Human Rights Watch + Amnesty International

The two organisations have both criticised the Nigerian military for their tactics. (Amnesty reported that about 600 people were killed by the military following an attack on Maiduguri.) Furthermore, outside intervention with the help of international military is from this perspective an advisable option for further progress as Nigerian army, since even with its tenacious efforts, it tends to fall to corruption.

5) Timeline of key events

- 1903** – British take control of the Sokoto caliphate (parts of Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon)
- 1998** – MNJTF created by the Lake Chad Basin Commission to address cross-border security issues in the Lake Chad region
- 2002** – Boko Haram founded by Mohammed Yusuf
- 2009** – Hundreds killed when Maiduguri police stations stormed; leader Mohammed Yusuf captured and killed
- 2010:** Boko Haram bombs Jos, killing 80 people, also blamed for New Year's Eve attack on Abuja barracks
- 2011:** Boko Haram bombs on Abuja police HQ and UN building
- 2012:** Deadly Easter church attack in Kaduna; ThisDay newspaper offices bombed (both by Boko Haram)
- 2012** – MNJTF reactivated with an expanded mandate to encompass counter-terrorism operations
- 2013:** Heavily armed incursion into Bama town prompting a state of emergency to be declared
- 2014:** Hundreds of militants attacked military headquarters in Maiduguri
- 2014:** Boko Haram hijacks more than 200 girls from a school Chibok in Borno state
- 2015:** Muhammadu Buhari is elected Nigerian president
- 2015:** Boko Haram declared its allegiance to the Islamic State

5) Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Since 2015, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger have deployed thousands of troops as part of a multinational force authorized by the African Union. Each country agreed to deploy a battalion of up to 700 troops within its own national boundaries, in addition to the deployment of troops to the MNJTF headquarters.

The Multinational Joint Task Force was provided with pledges of financial support from international actors including the African Union (AU), the United States, the United Kingdom, the European Union (EU) and France.

International partners also offered military advisors, intelligence and surveillance capabilities and training. Its mandate included conducting military operations to prevent the expansion of Boko Haram activities; conducting patrols; preventing transfers of weapons or logistics to the group; actively searching for and freeing abductees, including the girls kidnapped from Chibok in April 2014; and carrying out psychological operations to encourage defections within Boko Haram ranks.

The UN Security Council imposed economic sanctions and an arms embargo on the insurgent group in 2014. This move is mostly symbolic though as the financial assets and movements of Boko Haram militants are close to impossible to track.

In Feb. 2017, a conference on the Lake Chad region, co-hosted by Germany, Nigeria, Norway, and the United Nations took place in Oslo where donors pledged 672 million dollars to emergency assistance and support in 2017 and beyond. (NAN)

Local governments as well as international organisations crafted a regional Humanitarian Response Plan for 2017 for the four Lake Chad Basin countries in September 2016. Unfortunately, this ambitious plan requires \$1.5 billion in funding and at the time of writing, this target remains largely unmet.

(*‘The humanitarian situation is still bad, but it is better.’* – Mark Lowcock) - <https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/09/1018252>

6) Questions a Resolution Should Answer

Why has Boko Haram not been defeated yet?

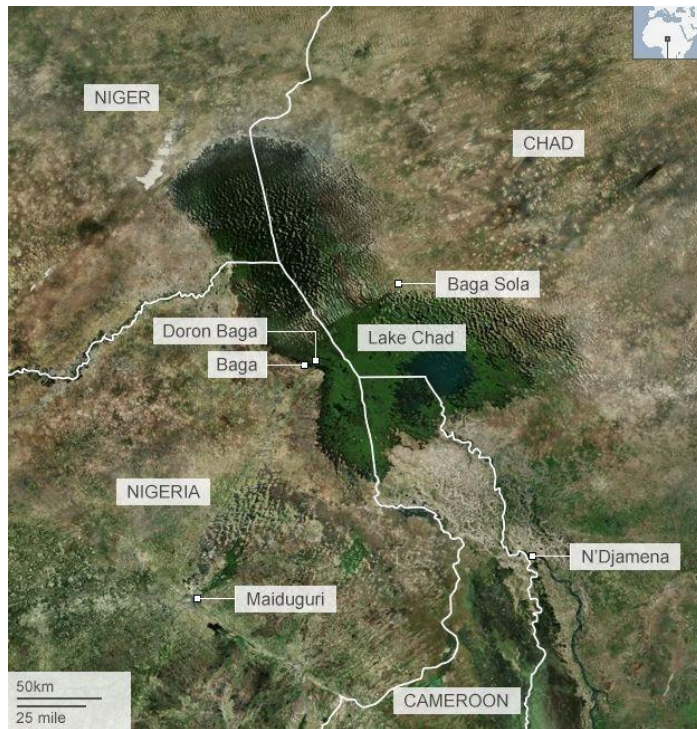
Are there any other core struggles within the government, preventing further progress?

What measures are to be taken in order to eradicate this deadly sect?

Are the foreign actors to intervene? If so, to what extent?

What can be done to alleviate the ever-deteriorating humanitarian crisis in the midst of such situation?

MAP OF THE REGION



BOKO HARAM GROUP

APENDIX:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1kimbo5c0Ak>

VICE DOCUMENTARY ON THE "THE WAR AGAINST BOKO HARAM" / 2015

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YsyM6p2hNqE&t=11s>

VICE DOCUMENTARY ON CHAD'S FIGHT AGAINST BOKO HARAM / 2015

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RJvh42OqWgw>

VOX'S "BOKO HARAM AND THE CRISIS IN NIGERIA, EXPLAINED"

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/dsgsm1146.doc.htm>

UN REPORT ON THE AID NEEDED TO ALLIVIAE THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN THE LAKE CHAD AREA

<https://newint.org/features/2018/09/01/boko-haram-peace-nigeria>

INTERESTING ARTICLE ON WHETHER FIGHTING VIOLENCE WITH VIOLENCE IS THE BEST THING THE GOVERNMENT CAN DO

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/16/cameroon-mosques-offer-free-education-girls-fight-radicalisation-boko-haram>

GUARDIAN ARTICLE PROPOSING PRO-ACTIVE SOLUTIONS TO PROTECT GIRLS

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/paying-for-terrorism-where-does-boko-haram-gets-its-money-from-9503948.html>

AN ARTICLE THAT ANSWERS WHERE BOKO HARAM GET ITS FINANCES FROM

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Hpn, Odi. "The Evolution and Impact of Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin." *ODI HPN*, odihpn.org/magazine/the-evolution-and-impact-of-boko-haram-in-the-lake-chad-basin/.

"Briefing Security Council on West Africa, Sahel, Special Representative Warns Volatility Could Reverse Democratic Gains in Region | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases." United Nations, United Nations, www.un.org/press/en/2018/sc13426.doc.htm.

Vanguard. "Boko Haram Insurgency: President Buhari Heads to N'Djamena." Vanguard News. November 29, 2018. Accessed January 29, 2019. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/11/boko-haram-insurgency-president-buhari-heads-to-ndjamena/>.

"Who Are Nigeria's Boko Haram Islamist Group?" BBC News. November 24, 2016. Accessed January 29, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13809501>.