BOKO HARAM
FROM LOCAL GRIEVANCES TO VIOLENT INSURGENCY

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report responds to the question of how we might approach and understand the Boko Haram insurgency. In providing an answer, the report addresses three main controversies within the field of Boko Haram studies. First, whether local grievances or religious radicalisation is the main driver of the insurgency. Second, to what extent Boko Haram is mainly a local/national or regional/international group. Finally, to what extent Boko Haram and their leaders act according to a well-planned military strategy or on a more ad hoc basis. The report explores how these diverging perspectives co-exist.

How to approach Boko Haram depends upon how Boko Haram and their activities are framed. Thus, a main argument of the report is that framing Boko Haram as part of a larger regional terrorist threat may mobilise support for Western military operations. If defined only as militant jihadists operating in "an arc of terrorism" it may seem as if a military response is the only right one. However, religious political violence cannot be addressed through military means alone but requires a comprehensive approach including separate socio-economic perspectives on contending incitements to engage in illicit economic activities and terrorism.

Since the inauguration of a regional multinational joint task force with considerable support from international security actors in January 2015, attacks in Nigeria's neighbouring countries have increased remarkably. Thus, it appears as if more international and regional military responses are contributing to the strengthening of the group. In view of this development, we want to bring forward the claim that according to the logic of retaliation that Boko Haram seems to predominately obey, there is a dynamic and mutually constitutive relationship between the way in which

the Nigerian state, its neighbouring countries and the international community names and frames responses to Boko Haram, and the way in which Boko Haram operates and stages itself as a global jihadist group.

Rather than rephrasing de-contextualised discourses of trans-Saharan terrorism, global jihad and international connections to Islamic State it seems more possible that the situation in north-east Nigeria is heading towards a fragmented protracted conflict with very complex social tensions. The key issues in the approach to Boko Haram are to understand and include the local dynamics of the insurgency. Therefore there is a need to pay attention in future debates and potential interventions to current military operations by Niger, Chad and Cameroon, to avoid that they repeat the same mistakes as Nigeria in 2013: human rights violations and economic sanctions that might transform a jihadist uprising into a people's revolt.

Furthermore, the report emphasises the need to include gender perspectives and the role of women within Boko Haram, and as protesters against Boko Haram, in future interventions and policymaking.

Finally, strengthening of the public sectors in Nigeria and its neighbouring countries to deliver social protection to the citizens living in highly fragile environments should be supported, in order to (re)establish the social contract between state and citizens and avoid mistrust that may force some people to search out alternative forms of protection from radical jihadist groups.

ABBREVIATIONS

AFRICOM	US Africa Command
AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
AU	African Union
CAR	Central African Republic
CJTF	Civilian Joint Task Force
CONOPS	Concept of Operation
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EUCAP	European Union CSDP mission in the Sahel
EUTM	European Union Training Mission
IDP	Internationally Displaced People
IED	Improvised Explosive Devices
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JTF	Military Joint Task Force
LCBC	Lake Chad River Basin Commission
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali
MNJTF	Multinational Joint Task Force
MUJAO	Mouvement pour l'Unité et le Jihad en Afrique de L'Ouest (Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa)
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PDP	Peoples Democratic Party
PFCA	Political Framework for Crisis Approach
PSC	Political and Security Committee
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
TSCTP	Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WFP	World Food Programme

INTRODUCTION

It would take the audacious abduction of over 250 girls in 2014 from a high school in north-east Nigeria and a global outcry sparked by the social media campaign #BringBackOurGirls to firmly place the spotlight on Boko Haram. Boko Haram has terrorised mostly the northern regions leaving a trail of sorrow, tears and blood in its wake. It targets churches and mosques, Christians and Muslims, civilians and uniformed personnel. It was behind the bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Abuja, media houses and many police stations (Iruemiobe 2014; Smith 2015). It is estimated that more than 20,000 people have been killed by Boko Haram since 2009 (Amnesty International 2015b), but the actual numbers are likely to be higher. The story that has unfolded in the global media concentrates to a large extent on terror, slavery and questions of international interventionism. While this may have some elements of truth in it, understanding insecurity in Nigeria and Boko Haram, as well as how the international society might contribute to the containment of the violence fuelled by the Boko Haram insurgency, requires a multifaceted approach. This report aims to inform and make recommendations to Danish and international stakeholders on:

- How to approach the Boko Haram insurgency; this is answered by shedding light on two interlinked questions:

- What is Boko Haram? What do they want to achieve and through which means?

- What type of threat does the Boko Haram insurgency constitute inside and outside Nigeria? This question addresses: Boko Haram's tactics and methods including the use of female suicide bombers and abductions; Boko Haram's regional and international relations as well as the humanitarian consequences of the insurgency.

Boko Haram is a closed organisation per se and the sources of information available are fragmented, politicised and contested (see methodology section). This turns the Boko Haram insurgency into a field full of speculation and diverging interpretations of how to make sense of what Boko Haram is. Within these diverging interpretations and points of contestation we have identified three cross-cutting themes that seem to shape the current debates about how to understand Boko Haram and the Nigerian insurgency:

First, whether local grievances or religious radicalisation is the main driver of the insurgency is highly debated between scholars. Adherents of the local grievances perspective emphasise how northern Nigeria has been historically and structurally marginalised, leading to deep inequalities and local grievances that have only been exacerbated by the Nigerian security force's violence against Boko Haram, its members and increasing number of civilians accused of complicity (Meagher 2013). At the other end of the spectrum scholars claim that though local grievances might explain certain aspects, for instance recruitment, Boko Haram before anything else is a war within Islam and, thus, religious worldviews and the quest for radical Islamist reform is central to Boko Haram's claims and violent responses vis-à-vis Nigeria and the neighbouring states.

Second, another disputed issue is the extent to which Boko Haram (or the aspirations of Boko Haram) is mainly a local/national or regional/international group. Related to this debate is the question the degree to which Boko Haram is part of larger cross-Saharan Africanist jihadist terrorist network against the West, as they have claimed in their various video productions.

Finally, a third dispute is about to what extent Boko Haram and their leaders act according to a well-planned military strategy or on a more ad hoc basis. At one end of the scale are those who see Boko Haram's organisation into highly decentralised semi-autonomous units might indicate a conscious strategy of hyper mobility that makes them extremely flexible and therefore dangerous. At the other end of the scale Boko Haram is perceived as weakened by the ongoing military interventions against them, which have hampered their capacity to exercise authority in the areas they strive to control. As such, and in particular in response to the 2015-elected President Buhari's determination to fight Boko Haram, there is controversy about whether the group is strengthening, by spreading into neighbouring states, or reaching the limits of its capacity. Attacks, events and changes of tactics could point in either direction. In later sections we discuss how in particular the use of women and suicide bombers in the Boko Haram organisation, might play into this debate.

The approach of this report is that the above cross-cutting themes should not be regarded as mutually exclusive; rather they often co-exist depending on perspectives. What makes these controversies within analytical circles of significant relevance to this report is, however, that policy responses tend to be constructed depending

upon which end of the continuum different actor perspectives tend towards. E.g. if Boko Haram is primarily viewed as a Nigerian problem anchored in Boko Haram's broader critique of the Nigerian state and escalated as a response to the Nigerian army's brutal counter-insurgency, the responsibility to fight Boko Haram lies primarily with the Nigerian government. These themes are continuously reflected upon in the report to emphasise the many unanswered questions constituting the basis on which decision makers frame their responses to Boko Haram.

Since the inauguration of a multinational joint task force with considerable support from international security actors in January 2015 there has been a remarkable increase in attacks in Nigeria's neighbouring countries. Thus it may appear as if more international and regional military responses are contributing to the strengthening of the group. In view of these developments, we want to advance the claim that according to the logic of retaliation which Boko Haram seems to predominately obey, there is a dynamic and mutually constituted relationship between the way in which the Nigerian state, its neighbouring countries and the international community names and frames responses to Boko Haram, and the way in which Boko Haram operates and stages itself as a phenomenon.

STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The first part of the report analyses the fundamentalist group Boko Haram and sets the broader context for understanding the dynamics of terror within Nigeria and Boko Haram's changing relations to other fundamentalist groups in West Africa, such as Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in Mali. These changes of focus and modus operandi are analysed in relation to conflict and collaboration between the different factions, highlighting the fragmented and at times contradictory, characteristics, ambitions and agendas of Islamic insurgents in Nigeria and in West Africa in general. This provides a nuanced understanding of how the groups operate, thrive but also at times dissolve and break apart.

The report further unfolds the role of the Nigerian army's counter-insurgency in creating a terror dynamic of retaliation and explores how Boko Haram's activities are anchored not only in fundamentalism, but also in domestic politics, regional and social dynamics. The gendered aspects of Boko Haram's activities – from abducted girls to the increase in female suicide bombers – are set into context by discussing the situation of women in north-east Nigeria more broadly. Finally, the report discusses the regional and international responses and consequences of the Boko

Haram insurgency and makes recommendations as to how the international society and, in particular, the policymakers and the Danish defence department might approach the increasing international military engagement in the fight against Boko Haram.

METHODOLOGY

In general there are few verified facts and many issues on which analysts can only speculate with regard to Boko Haram. This report builds on a literature review, intelligence data, field reports, email correspondence and qualitative interviews conducted in the period from August –November 2015 with: journalists in Nigeria; the Danish Ministry of Defence; the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs; The Danish Embassy in Abuja, Nigeria; Researchers at Danish and European universities; La Commission Nationale des Droits Humains and La Haute Autorité pour la Restauration de la Paix in Niger. It is also informed by participation in and discussions during the EU Institute for Security Studies "Building Security in Sahel"- conference in September 2015 in Brussels. Finally both authors draw on previous long-term research experience in Nigeria and the region (Niger and Mali).

Nigeria

A number of recent thorough and nuanced books, journal articles and reports (by scholars; United Nations (UN); European Union (EU), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and governmental agencies) have been published on Boko Haram. In general they all caution that Boko Haram is an extremely closed and fragmented group and that security concerns make access to primary sources and data in north-east Nigeria particularly difficult. As such the material is generally produced under the constraints that research-based data and information on Boko Haram in terms of their emergence, organisation, size and whereabouts are limited, and that significant underreporting and discrepancies between figures make it difficult to verify the scale of the insurgency (Nagarajan 2015). While the media provides numerous accounts of Boko Haram, the report makes less use of such data, as this information is often politicised and too anecdotal to be verified. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are included in the data material as they provide relevant insight into how Boko Haram is perceived and debated in Nigeria. Finally, the report draws on Boko Haram's increasing use of social media through Twitter and YouTube gathered through SITE intelligence. While the report is based on carefully selected available sources of information that have been evaluated and analysed with utmost caution, the report does not claim to be exhaustive.

The study is commissioned by the annual grant to Danish Institution of International Studies (DIIS) from the Ministry of Defence.

TERMINOLOGY

There are various terms to describe Boko Haram. The name "Boko Haram" is a Hausa nickname often translated as "Western education is forbidden" and is used by the media and outsiders to describe the group's rejection of what are believed to be un-Islamic values. The group itself denies the term and uses Jama'atu Ahlis Sunnah Lidda'awati w'al Jihad, which can be translated as "People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teaching and Jihad". In March 2013 the group pledged loyalty to Islamic State and took up the name "Islamic State in West Africa". In this report we use the name Boko Haram, as this is how it is referred to more broadly in policy circles as well as in the national and international press.

In the aftermath of the abduction of the girls from Chibok the UN Security Council declared Boko Haram a terrorist organisation (Press 2014). There are various terms to describe what type of group Boko Haram is, and these are often used interchangeably, such as: sect, movement, group, combatants, militants and terrorists. Likewise, the situation in northern Nigeria is also described in various terms such as: conflict, insurgency, rebellion and war by different actors. Each of these terms carries particular connotations and associations. As argued by Serrano and Pieri (2014), since the 9/11 attacks on the US and subsequent attacks in Europe, an increasing number of non-state violence has been securitised through the lenses of "war against terror". Boko Haram, for whom terrorist strategies are an integrated part of their modus operandi, is no exception. However, we apply the terms "group" and "insurgency" as we find that they most accurately enable us to address how the correlation of religious world views, local grievances and state-produced violence have amalgamated into what is today's Boko Haram.

WHO ARE BOKO HARAM AND WHAT DO THEY WANT?

To an outsider, Boko Haram may appear to be an unreliable, irrational, murderous group. However, its practicing of religious violence forms part of a larger struggle for liberation, justice and what its members conceive of as a better sociopolitical order (AA 2012). As such, Boko Haram is first and foremost a war within Islam and a struggle over interpretations of Muslim ideas and identity unfolding in the particular local political context of northern Nigeria where the role of religion, as elsewhere in Nigeria, is central (Kastfelt 2015). The group took a radical violent turn in response to the violent clashes with Nigeria's security forces and the subsequent inability of the Nigerian state to manage the crisis. They also seem to draw upon inspiration from other regional and global jihadist groups such as Al Qaeda and Islamic State, who claimed they became radicalised by the "global war on terror" and US and European foreign policy interventionism (Mohammed 2014). As such, a combination of internal local conflict dynamics and external influence from other radical jihadist groups has shaped the development of Boko Haram.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND IDEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

Boko Haram draws, among other things, upon historical references to the Islamic empire of Dan Fodio's Sokoto Caliphate in the 19th century that introduced and institutionalised Islam in northern Nigeria. The Sokoto Caliphate consisted of Sharia-based emirates led by local emirs (commanders), which continued to exist after the British colonial powers made it an integrated part of the Nigerian state when they occupied the territory. Today, the sultan of the Sokoto caliphate is the religious leader of Nigeria's more than 70 million Muslims (Kastfelt 2015), most of whom Boko Haram considers infidels that have been co-opted by the corrupt government. As Boko Haram denies the authority of the secular state, they do not acknowledge the present sultan of Sokoto as the ruler of Muslims (Solomon 2015; Kastfelt 2015).

The emergence of Boko Haram can be seen in the broader context of the radical Islamic reform movement inspired by Wahhabism and Salafism that flourished in northern Nigeria in the 1980s. These groups included among others the radical, anti-modern and violent Maitatsine movement who were not, however, organisationally linked to Boko Haram (AA 2012, 120). Another influential, more organised, non-violent movement was the Izala, founded by highly educated and well positioned members who also established a network of modern Islamic schools, the students of which were pursuing academic education in the 1980s in Nigeria and abroad. Several of these students received grants to study in Saudi

Arabia. In general, the rise of more radical interpretations of Islam was introduced during the 1970s and 1980s through, amongst others, Saudi Arabia, which invested in mosques; madrassahs, Arabic teaching and community-led projects as well as providing scholarships for university students to study in Saudi Arabia. These developments are believed to have had a large impact on spreading radical Islamist ideas in the region, but are not necessarily linked to the radical political violence, which by contrast has to be considered in the context of the violent militant responses by the Nigerian security forces (AA 2012). Thus, as argued by Sampson (2015, 27);

> " Since 2008, Nigeria has been locked in a vicious circle of violence, as BH [ed.Boko Haram] and Nigeria's security forces have engaged in violence and counter-violence, with devastating consequences on human and national security. "

The radicalism and disruption in northern Nigeria intensified as younger members of the Izala movement returned from Saudi Arabia to northern Nigeria in the 1990s. These young members were eager to spread their newly-acquired ideas but were opposed by the older generation of Islamic intellectuals who did not wish to give them space, voice and power in the religious arena (AA 2012, 121). Hence, they created a new Salafiya youth group, which was subsequently followed by violent contestations and more splintering into an increasing number of fragmented religious-political groups engaged in harsh competition to recruit followers. In this context, more ultra-radical groups emerged, one of them led by Boko Haram's former leader Mohammed Yusuf, a largely self-educated man, who started to articulate new discourses based on Salafi doctrines and who also rejected the more formally organised Izala movement and its relationship to the state (Kastfelt 2015; Brigaglia 2012; AA 2012).[1] According to several sources (AA 2012; Mohammed 2014; Brigaglia 2012; Kastfelt 2015) the rejection of Western democracy may have been sharpened by Mohammed Yusuf's readings and interpretations of Saudi based scholars. These radical Islamic interpretations were, however, translated into a particular local context in northern Nigeria, in the process of which they gained strength and potential followers. In this regard the claims are also linked to the fierce competition for recruitment among religious leaders in northern Nigeria and Mohammed Yusuf's quest for power (AA 2012, 122).

---

1 As stated by AA (2012) Salafism/Wahhabism is by no means a monolithic ideology of radical Islam and diverging interpretations are globally widespread.

The aims and claims of Boko Haram

The main pillars in the overlapping ideas in Boko Haram's ideology, as formulated by the former leader Mohammed Yusuf, are:

FIRST, a rejection of democracy and politics entailing that the Nigerian state should be replaced with an Islamic state based on Sharia law. This aim may be shared by other Salafist groups, but the difference lies in the way Boko Haram perceive that this aim should be achieved through violent means (AA 2012, 127). Specifically, in a situation where the secular government holds the majority of power, and the excessive use of force may cost the lives of fellow Muslims; an issue that is source of overt contestation within global jihadist groups (Crone 2014a; Andersen 2014).

SECOND, rejection of Western education has been a defining characteristic of the group (cf. the name Boko Haram). According to Wahhabi scholars, European colonialism introduced modern secular education to Islamic societies as a conscious strategy to maintain hegemony and disrupt Islamic pietistic morale. Consequently, Boko Haram rejects various subjects of modern education they regard as contradicting Salafi doctrines of Islam (AA 2012, 24-25). This claim resonates with the local historical conditions in northern Nigeria, where education was brought in by the British colonial administration. Although the practice of Islam has historically been a means of resistance to the imposition of indirect colonial rule through education and state formation in general, the extremely violent expression of this resistance is new (Mohammed 2014).

THIRD, rejection of working for the un-Islamic government in general and in particular in areas of judgement and law enforcement. Through this assertion Boko Haram indirectly defies more organised institutionalised groups like the Izala whose members may work for the government and enjoy more developed relationships with local state actors.

FOURTH, Boko Haram is motivated by stark feelings of injustice by the Nigerian state, which they consider to have terrorised them (see later section). As such revenge constitutes a leitmotif of Boko Haram's actions in response to the atrocities carried out by the state security forces.

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

What makes Boko Haram distinct from other Salafi groups are the methods and tactics they deploy to achieve their aims and justify their claims, which have developed over time in four distinct but overlapping phases of development:[2]

2003–2009. MILITANT MOBILISATION PHASE

Under the charismatic leadership of Mohammed Yussuf members of the group were actively engaged in a mobilisation to demand the implementation of Sharia law in some of the northern states. Recruitment also involved a system of informal social welfare through microfinancing (Comolli 2015b). Yusuf was apparently let down by his political alliances on their promises to implement Sharia fully in Borno state, after which his methods and preaching took a violent and radical turn towards militant Islam, where members became disassociated from the larger society (ICG 2014; Onuoha 2012; Pérouse de Montclos 2014, 147-48). The sect first took up arms against security forces in 2003, attacking police stations and public buildings in Yobe state.

Subsequently soldiers and police killed 18 and arrested dozens of its members and the group dispersed into other northern States where they, among others things, established a base named "Afghanistan" on the border of the republic of Niger, following which they gained the name the "Nigerian Taliban", although no formal connections with the Taliban have been established. Nevertheless they continued to attack and rob police stations on a massive scale. In 2004 Mohammed Yussuf escaped to Saudi Arabia, but he eventually returned to Nigeria. In 2008 Boko Haram members were excluded from use of the mosques in Maiduguri by the Izala. Following contestation over ownership of mosques with the Izala, Boko Haram members were arrested by the police (Mohammed 2014) .

The security forces set up the first joint military operation code, Operation Flush II, which mismanaged the crisis from the outset by banning driving motorcycles at night, introducing road blocks and obligations to wear helmets, with often violent enforcement. The harsh police response gave Boko Haram some sympathy in the population (Loimeier 2012). The police violence took another turn, notably when 17 Boko Haram members were shot at while attending the funeral of a fellow member (Mohammed 2014). In July

---

2   There is uncertainty about the exact time and place of Boko Haram's emergence and organisation. Some authors include a "latent incubation stage" (Onuoha 2012). We take our departure in Mohammed Yussuf's leadership as a defining moment for the group. The categorisation of these phases builds on a presentation made by Dr. Marc-Antoine Pérose de Montclos at DIIS, on 12 November 2015. For a thorough list of Boko Haram attacks see (Sampson 2015, 40-52).

2009 the group launched its so far largest uprising during which, according to Onuoha (2012), more than 800 people died (including 28 policemen) and hundreds were arrested including Mohammed Yussuf, who was killed in custody by the Nigerian police force – an event that further radicalised Boko Haram members.

2009–2013. CLANDESTINE PERIOD/ ISLAMIC INSURGENCY

After the death of Mohammed Yusuf, Boko Haram went underground and re-emerged under the new leadership of Abukar Shekau, an ethnic Kanuri from Yobe state, who transformed the group from mobilising youth among the public, to a clandestine network well equipped for asymmetrical warfare. Shekau has been described as the most radical of the aspiring leaders, and extremely violent (Comolli 2015b, 61). Some argue that Shekau is a nom de guerre for several leaders of Boko Haram's extremely decentralised franchise, consisting of at least six semi-autonomous units of which the largest and most deadly is headed by Shekau, who has been declared dead several times (ICG 2014, 18-19). In this phase, Boko Haram fighters developed new and more violent tactics including targeted assassinations, drive- by shootings and use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

To revenge the arrests of its members during the 2009 revolt, Boko Haram staged an attack on Bauchi prison in 2010 to liberate its members. Subsequently, the violence and death toll increased. Statements were launched of ties to other regional jihadist militants like the Al Shabaab and Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Eventually, and partly in response to the increased security measures deployed by the Nigerian state, suicide bombings became part of the repertoire, targeting among other things, the Abuja police station in 2011 and the UN headquarters killing 23 people (Onuoha 2012).

In June 2011, 3,600 men were deployed in a special military Joint Task Force (JTF) named Operation Restore Order comprising personnel and officers of the Nigerian army, navy, air force, police and state security service (SSS) stationed in Maiduguri with a mandate to neutralise Boko Haram (ICG 2014). The JTF was perceived locally as an occupation army known for their brutal retaliation against the population (Mohammed 2014) including mass arrests of people suspected to be Boko Haram and extrajudicial killings of suspects i.e. an increasing intensity of human rights violations further alienated the population (Sampson 2015).

2013–2015. FULL-SCALE WAR

According to Mohammed (2014, 25) Boko Haram would consciously provoke the military knowing they would strike back at civilians. (Mohammed 2014). After Boko Haram seized territory in remote areas of the region, in 2013, former president Goodluck Jonathan declared a state of emergency in three northern states and allocated another 2,000 troops to join the JTF (Smith 2015; Group 2014). In April 2013, according to Mohammed (2014) the military had killed at least 185 unarmed civilians and burnt more than 2,000 houses. According to Amnesty International (2012) there are numerous examples of unrecorded atrocities carried out by the JTF, all of which they have nevertheless denied. Alongside the JTF, groups of civilians organised into a Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) to complement the efforts of the Nigerian soldiers. The CJTF consists of local vigilantes who were believed to have local knowledge about the whereabouts of Boko Haram, but the presence of whom has, nevertheless, spurred increasing concerns that such groups could become militias like Boko Haram themselves exacerbating local level violence (Eke 2015).

The deployment of the CTJF only encouraged Boko Haram to claim more lives of civilians, whom they had formerly spared, but now considered to have betrayed them (Smith 2015), as well as increasing attacks on schools, school teachers and pupils. Boko Haram, thus, loss local support and started engaging in forced recruitment while military repression continued. Kidnapping of foreigners also became part of their tactics, generating both media attention and legitimacy among other radical Salafi groups (Mohammed 2014).

2015 AND ON. REGIONALISATION/INTERNATIONALISATION?

This period is seeing a return to guerrilla warfare of haphazard attacks on civilians, markets, motor parks and religious places as well as an increasing number of attacks in the neighbouring countries including Niger, Cameroon and in the capital of Chad. It is claimed that 2,000 were killed in the massacre in Baga close to the border with Chad. In January 2015 the African Union authorised a multinational joint task force to combat Boko Haram. In March 2015, Boko Haram gave a pledge of loyalty to Islamic State, which was subsequently accepted by the group's leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in an audio recording (SITE 2015).

LOCAL GRIEVANCE AND RECRUITMENT

Boko Haram's project of creating a new form of order in Nigeria manifests itself in the attempt to establish authority through use of violence but also by offering, though limited, financial means in terms of payment and security to local recruits and by proposing a radical, alternative ideological framework to that of Nigeria's corrupt state. To become an authority Boko Haram constantly has to negotiate the inherent contradiction between their social legitimation and the violence they exert. Boko Haram seems to easily recruit young destitutes as members by offering them money, jobs and networks, and by addressing their profound grievances related to failed governance, corruption, absence of the possibility to have future aspirations and underdevelopment in some of the world's poorest regions. Furthermore, ideas of masculinity and "how to be a man" play a significant role in their recruitment, as expressed in the following quote from Nagarajan (2015):

> Boys and young men are pressured to join groups by threats to their families and incentivised by cash. Such pressure is difficult to resist. In Northern Nigeria, gender norms and ideas of how to be a man oblige men to provide "bride price" and be the family breadwinner. Faced with these responsibilities and high rates of unemployment, joining Boko Haram can offer livelihood opportunities. This is especially so, when manhood is synonymous with aggression and power. Add to these ideas the notion of a man's responsibility to defend the community, whether from the encroachment of Western ideas, or from the abductions and killing by Boko Haram.

INTERNAL CONTESTATION

Although Salafism is considered the remedy to the injustices of the Nigerian state by various extremist groups in the Nigerian north, the different factions often have incompatible positions on two central questions; how and whether to collaborate with or fight against the Nigerian state, and secondly whether civilians and fellow Muslims constitute legitimate targets. The first question is crucial for the prospect of brokering peace deals with Boko Haram by offering an amnesty to its members. Such attempts have been made, but have not been successful, as members of different factions seem to disagree on openness to reconciliation (Cummings 2015,

34; ICG 2014). Secondly, killing of civilians has been a continuous point of discussion among radical groups in northern Nigeria. Shekau legitimises killings of civilians by primarily drawing on the Prophet and an established system within Islam, as well as on the many violent acts carried out by the Nigerian state, among which the killing of Mohammed Yusuf and other Boko Haram members by the security forces are pivotal. In January 2012 the most prominent of Boko Haram's factions, Ansaru announced its existence (though they may have been around but operating under different names for longer). Although sharing Boko Haram's doctrines they resisted the haphazard killing of innocent civilians (Pérouse de Montclos 2014; Mohammed 2014; Zenn 2014) and apparently specialised in the kidnapping of foreigners, most likely due to their members being trained by AQIM (ICG 2014, 26). These members constituted key members of the so-called "yan-Sahara" who built relationships with AQIM leading to new tactics and increased funding but also to clashes, conflicts and rupture within Boko Haram. A reconciliation process between Boko Haram and Ansaru may have taken place in northern Mali during the time when Shekau apparently fled to Gao (Zenn 2014, 27). In November 2012 Shekau appeared in a video expressing his solidarity with Al-Qaeda, which was a radical departure from the groups' domestic focus, bringing Boko Haram and Ansaru closer together (ICG 2014). The French military intervention in Mali may have further excited the more regional-oriented section of Boko Haram. This "provided them an opportunity to present themselves as regional and global players" (Mohammed 2014, 30).

EXTERNAL CONNECTIONS TO AL QAEDA AND ISLAMIC STATE

In its more recent stages, the Boko Haram seem to be increasingly inspired by global jihadist groups like Al Qaeda and Islamic State. They are also suspected of having had links to a number of radical African Muslim groups like Al Shabaab, Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) and AQIM (ICG 2014, 9). These ad hoc connections, as International Crisis Group (2014) has argued, make them a dangerous organisation for the regional stability of West Africa but, in particular, for the people living in the areas Boko Haram strive to control. This image was particularly strengthened by Boko Haram's pledging of loyalty to Islamic State in March 2015. It is, however, disputed how significant this statement and the relationship to Islamic State actually is to the tactical development of the group (Bodansky 2015), and it may most of all serve the purpose of propaganda and attracting media attention, which could incentivise some followers.

In the media and in policy circles Boko Haram is often portrayed as forming part of a so-called "arc of terrorism" reflected in expressions such as "Afrighanistan" (Barrios and Koepf 2014, 19; Economist 2013) or "Sahelistan" imagining a terrorist collaboration between African jihadist groups across the Sahel.

However these ties and the extent to which Boko Haram has a broader global goal are highly disputed among scholars. They may well be inspired by them, and certainly draw international media attention from the statements they make, but their goals remain local, in a context that is nevertheless characterised by porous borders. As such Boko Haram has from the outset been regional, as they have used the border regions in neighbouring countries for recruitment, refuge and training, where the security forces have acted according to a policy of "if you don't bother us, we don't bother you". But since the inauguration of the Multinational Joint Task Force more attacks in these countries have occurred, disrupting the previous tacit non-interference policy of regional security actors.

BOKO HARAM'S CONNECTIONS TO MALI

The Malian security crisis in 2012–2013 significantly strengthened the perception of a pan-African terrorist threat as security sources reported the presence of individuals suspected to be of Nigerian origin, fighting side by side with Al-Qaeda related groups in Northern Mali, (Comolli 2015b). These allegations advanced the theme of internationalisation of the Boko Haram insurgency and made in an imperative for former president Goodluck Jonathan to deploy 1,200 Nigerian soldiers and air force fighters to Mali to support the French-led Operation Serval (ICG 2014, 20) (Adingupu 2012; Omonobi 2013; Zenn 2013, 25). However, Nigerian newspapers criticised Goodluck Jonathan for overemphasising Boko Haram's ties to Mali in order to legitimise sending troops to Mali, while failing to fight Boko Haram back home (Omonobi 2013; Confidential 2012; Omonobi 2012).

Perceived Arc of Terrorism as of 2014
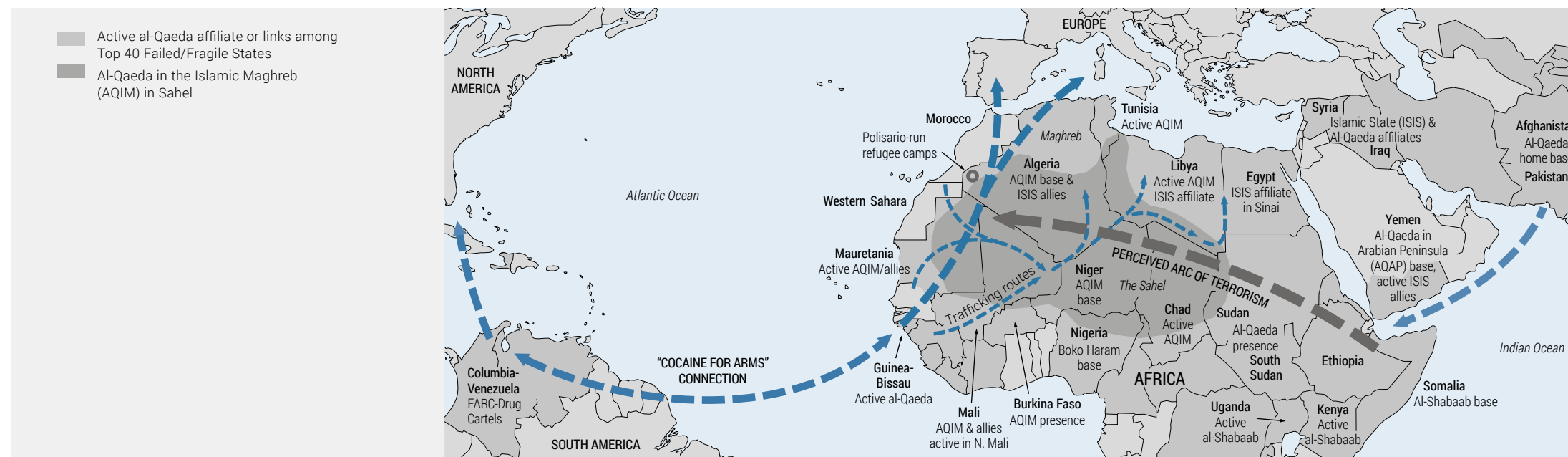
MALI'S SECURITY CRISIS

Accelerated by the fall of Gaddafi in Libya in 2011, the security crisis in Mali broke out in January 2012 when a Tuareg rebellion in the north was overturned by a coalition of jihadist groups. Following a military coup in the capital, the coalition took control of the northern regions of Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal for nine months using hardline interpretations of Sharia (Cold-Ravnkilde 2013). As the jihadists group threatened to expand further south, a French-led military intervention, operation Serval, was inaugurated in December 2012, which Denmark also contributed troops to. In April 2013 the Danish-supported UN peacekeeping mission, MINUSMA, was mandated. In July 2014 operation Serval was replaced and expanded by the French anti-terror operation Barkhane composed of 3,000 French soldiers with headquarters in N'Djamena, the capital of Chad, operating in the former French colonies of Burkina Faso (550 troops), Chad (1,200 troops), Mali (1000 troops), Mauritania and Niger (300 troops).

After operation Serval chased the jihadists from their northern strongholds, the jihadist groups also spread out to the neighbouring countries of Niger and southern Libya (Crone 2014a). Many of them remain highly operative in Mali, among other things targeting the forces of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). But there have so far not been reports of Boko Haram soldiers in Mali. Most Nigerian fighters probably returned home, but there is speculation that the Mali adventure may have strengthened the collaboration between Ansaru and Boko Haram, as the group benefitted from the training abroad to carry out larger and more sophisticated attacks in Nigeria (Zenn 2014, 4). According to some sources, the ties between Boko Haram and AQIM were in particular developed in the aftermath of 2009 and the crisis in Boko Haram due to the extrajudicial killing of Mohammed Yusuf, when it is believed that AQIM trained Boko Haram members in Algeria (Onuoha 2014; Zenn 2013; Comolli 2015b).

"
If we were to attempt to map the alleged "arc of terrorism" in Africa in general, and in Sahel in particular, then we would best be left with a series of dots with often ill-proven connections between them. "

Barrios and Koepf (2014, 19),

Jihadist groups in the Sahel are highly fragmented, mobile and fluid and operate in various militant and smuggling networks in the "smooth space" of the Sahel where borders are porous, (Strazzari 2015, 2). Despite claims to shared ideology, these rival groups often have highly localised goals of securing access to and control of territories they use for various forms of illicit trafficking. They often break up, and change names due to internal disputes and over merging leaderships and their strategic name changing can seem to be the most stable of their characteristics (Strazzari 2015, 2). The groups may collaborate and enter oppor-tunistic alliances that can wax and wane according to pragmatic purposes, which was most visible during the jihadist occupation of northern Mali (Cold-Ravnkilde 2013). But the regional fluidity of the armed groups does not imply that they all share an objective, readiness or capacity to engage in global Jihadism and attacking the West. Collaborations between these groups are short-lived and strategic; exchanges of money, weapons and training. Furthermore there are limitations to the collaboration in terms of logistics, diverging ideology, cultural barriers and conflicts of interests (Cold-Ravnkilde 2013; Barrios and Koepf 2014, 28-29).

In addition to ideological ties, there are suggestions that smuggling of weapons from Mali to northern Nigeria travels through Niger (Muhammad 2015). According to recent research, smuggling of weapons is facilitated by the widespread petty corruption among border control agents turning a blind eye to the illicit activities (Hahonou 2015). Boko Haram is believed to gain an income by controlling parts of the trans-border trade between Nigeria and Niger including smoke fish trade from the Lake Chad area (Hahonou 2015). This suggests that Boko Haram may partly fund its activities through control of illicit trade and that there are thus possible correlations between terrorism and organised crime – a pattern that is well established elsewhere in the Sahel.

BOKO HARAM AS A NIGERIAN PROBLEM

Boko Haram and the Nigerian Army's counter-insurgency should be interpreted in light of domestic politics as well as the common lack of legitimacy of Nigerian politicians and the Nigerian government. When Boko Haram abducted the schoolgirls from Chibok in 2014 the initial reaction from the central government was to publicly doubt the occurrence of the incident and hence former president Goodluck Jonathan delayed the reaction to investigate the abductions. The rationale behind this, as it was debated in media and social media within Nigeria, was that the abductions were a gimmick by some northern politicians to once again make the southern presidency look bad (Iruemiobe 2014).

Furthermore, although it was easy to fathom who was likely to be behind the continuous bomb blasts in the north as well as in Abuja, these events have over the years been interpreted differently across different actors in Nigeria. In Nigeria motives for political intervention, or the lack of it, are almost always debated and questioned – this also goes for the Boko Haram insurgency. For instance southerners, mostly of the south-south and south-east regions pointed to a conspiracy that northern politicians, by their focus on Boko Haram, were attempting to discredit the former president Goodluck Jonathan, a southerner, and hijack the spotlight on Nigeria's recent new status as the biggest economy in Africa in the run-up to the hosting of a World Economic Forum in the month of May 2014 in Abuja (Iruemiobe 2014). These disputes are related to the way in which Nigeria is often described as two countries merged and administered as one, an act of the former British colonial government. It is divided into the predominantly Muslim North and the Christian South. To prevent domination of the presidency by one zone in Nigeria the powerful ruling Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), after the return to democracy in 1999, adopted a rotation of presidential power among six geo-political zones, namely; the north-west, north-central, north-east, south-west, south-south, south-east (ibid). Since then disputes between north and south and the multiple ethnic groups have been recurring themes in Nigeria – also in relation to Boko Haram.

THE NIGERIAN HESITATION TOWARDS INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION

The above-described domestic disputes partly explain the loudly voiced fear within Nigeria and among Nigerians that an international intervention including the US, UK and other international defence forces would defer Nigerian sovereignty to foreign forces with clandestine agendas. The perceived risk is that international actors would overlook escalating complex and historical internal problems of religion,

ethnicity and land disputes, which could be contained locally. It has also become a question of domestic politics, as the acceptance of a foreign intervention could be interpreted as sign of government weakness, and finally, it is feared that the moment foreign forces are deployed in Nigeria it will become difficult to later prevent an international vortex with no point of return (Amnesty International 2012; Anyadike 2013). Exploring social media and the Nigerian media in general the questions debated within Nigeria regarding international intervention against Boko Haram are multiple: is Nigeria prepared to sleep with Western powers that are notorious for adopting policies that primarily aim to further their own ambitions? Is this a way for the US to assert its dominance over China in the power struggle taking place in the continent? Are they only interested in rescuing the Chibok girls, or do they also care about other Nigerian citizens? Is this "assistance" the start of the Western powers' incursion into other parts of Africa if allowed the keys to the biggest prize – Nigerian oil? Is Nigeria prepared to be in partnership with Western countries as it tackles terrorism in a move that would not be taken to warmly by the northern regions and neighbouring Muslim countries? Is Nigeria prepared to be dragged into the global war on terror, thereby potentially opening a floodgate of retribution, pitting foreign jihadists against the Western alliance on Nigerian soil? These are merely some of the difficult questions newly-elected president Buhari is confronted with, and these questions manifest how the Nigerian population has entered into a new era as a country and a people targeted by radical Islamist terrorism.

A COUNTER-INSURGENCY TRAPPED IN VIOLENCE

Nigerian military forces are accused of having committed serious human rights violations, war crimes and acts which may constitute crimes against humanity during counter-insurgency operations in the name of protecting Nigeria from Boko Haram in both Nigeria and Cameroon (Amnesty International 2015c, 2015a). Attacks by security forces during raids against Boko Haram causing high numbers of civilian casualties have been reported, yet these attacks and the numbers of casualties are often complicated to verify (UN Human Rights Council 2015). Thousands of people suspected to be associated with Boko Haram have been extrajuridically detained and subjected to torture (Amnesty International 2014). Furthermore, there is consistent evidence that Nigerian security forces retreated from the line of fighting, leaving villages and civilians without any protection. Such situations are explained by sources as a result of a lack of military equipment, adequate salaries for soldiers and unfair working conditions – but also as being

about possible collusions with Boko Haram fighters (Amnesty International 2015a). The violent activities of the Nigerian army towards Nigerian civilians creating unknown numbers of "collateral damage" increase the illegitimacy of the Nigerian state in the north-east. The mutual retaliations between Boko Haram's insurgency and the Nigerian army's counterinsurgency create what has trapped Nigeria in a "cycle of violence" (Amnesty International 2012), which does little to protect civilians or reduce the humanitarian crisis.

NEW PRESIDENT – NEW HOPE?

"We are going to tackle Boko Haram head on…Nigerians will not regret that they have entrusted to us" pledged Muhammadu Buhari when he took office in May 2015 (Al-Jazeera 2015). Buhari returned to the presidential seat 30 years after his first attempt as military Head of State (Akinloye 2015b). The expectations of Buhari from an impatient population and the international society are mile-high. In particular, as Buhari is a Muslim, in contrast to former president Goodluck Jonathan, it is hoped that he will be able to bridge the north/south, Christian/Muslim divides, which are pertinent issues in Nigeria. More so, Buhari seems to have been elected due to his strong-willed approach towards fighting Boko Haram. Buhari pledged to defeat Boko Haram by December 2015 but also acknowledged he would be willing to negotiate with the group to secure the release of the kidnapped Chibok schoolgirls (Al-Jazeera 2015). There seems to be a shared understanding that Buhari has indeed been able to weaken Boko Haram by intensifying the counter-insurgency, providing the Nigerian army with better and more equipment and a more systematic strategy, as well as by collaboration with regional states and other actors (Akinloye 2015a).

> **We are going to tackle Boko Haram head on…Nigerians will not regret that they have entrusted to us.**

Buhari's plan is, however, not merely of a military nature. Rather his approach suggests awareness of the complex intricacies between military, development and humanitarian interventions. In September 2015 he proposed a nine-point Nigerian Marshall Plan, in particular emphasising how these points were relevant in northern Nigeria. The points were in summary: pursuing economic policies for shared

prosperity and attention on youth employment; quality education for development, modernity and social mobility; agricultural productivity and ensuring food security; investments in industries; restoring public services; and tackling corruption which has become blatant and widespread (Aziken 2014). Hence Buhari's solutions to Boko Haram seem to be a combination of military intervention establishing security for civilians and humanitarian actors in the regions, but also integrate long-term sustainable solutions. Buhari himself asks the Nigerian population for patience, insisting that nobody should expect him to perform magic since the situation of the Nigerian economy and unemployment is damaged after many years of neglect. According to Buhari;

> "
> We are trying to dampen the high expectations, there is no way we can perform miracles. "
>
> Akinloye (2015b).

REFUGEES, FOOD SHORTAGES AND
THE HUMAN COST OF BOKO HARAM

The increasing humanitarian crisis and forced displacement in the north-east of Nigeria is often overlooked in the attention to military solutions and violent acts. The widespread insecurity and violence in the region in general raises significant and immediate humanitarian concerns. It is estimated that approximately 20,000 civilians have been killed by Boko Haram since 2009 (Amnesty International 2015b). However the actual number of fatalities is likely to be much higher. The death toll by Boko Haram is in 2015 alone is 3,500 civilians (ibid). Civilians have over the years been shot, beheaded, amputated, stoned, drowned, burned and bombed (ibid). The killings were often (according to interviews with eye witnesses collected by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) preceded by persecution, death threats or Boko Haram "inviting" men and boys to join them in "in the work of Allah" (UN Human Rights Council 2015). Those who refused to join were killed. Boko Haram also abduct boys and girls. The rationalities behind the abductions are diverse across the literature, ranging from abductions for ransom to

Nigeria IDPs and Refugees as of 2015

fund Boko Haram's activities (HRW 2014); abductions for indoctrination of boys into Boko Haram's teaching (UN Human Rights Council 2015); abductions to use boys and girls as forced combatants; abduction of girls to marry Boko Haram members (HRW 2014); work as domestic servants or to be forced suicide bombers (Pearson 2015). Today the number of abducted people and their whereabouts is unknown, while victims who have escaped from Boko Haram refer to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, sexual violence and other forms of abuse (UN Human Rights Council 2015, 8).

FORCED DISPLACEMENTS AND ASYLUM IN EU

The forced displacement of people in north-east Nigeria and in neighbouring countries continues to increase. As of July 2015, there were 1.3 million internally displaced people (IDPs) (56% of whom are children) in Nigeria, spread across the region (UN Human Rights Council 2015; UNHCR 2014). According to a joint international NGO assessment in 2015, numbers reach more than two million (INGO Forum in Nigeria 2015). These IDPs are in camps, informal settlements, host communities, with families, in rented houses, in places of worship and public buildings, and at border crossings (UNHCR 2014, 4). Since the escalation of violence in north-eastern Nigeria in 2013, thousands have fled across the border into Cameroon, Chad and Niger, while attacks in Niger led people from Diffa to flee across the border into Chad. This has resulted in a major refugee crisis in the north-east region (UNHCR 2014) leading UNHCR to appeal to neighbouring nations to open their borders to Nigerians who may be in need of international protection (Giwa 2013). With regard to Nigerians applying for asylum in EU countries on grounds of persecution by Boko Haram, the numbers are limited as most seem to relocate internally from the most effected states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe.
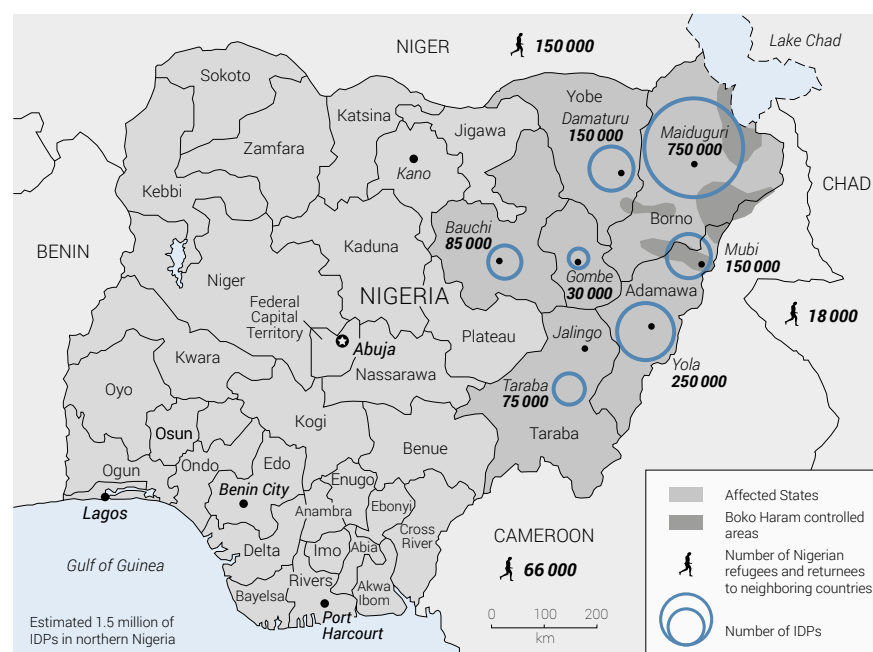
FAMINE AND FOOD SHORTAGES

As a consequence of people being displaced from their homes there are food shortages as farmland is not cultivated (Norwegian Refugee Council 2014) and many have been deprived of their means of subsistence (UN Human Rights Council 2015). The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimated that as many as three million people in northern Nigeria alone would not meet their basic food needs without humanitarian aid after July 2015 (UN OCHA 2015; OCHA

in UN Human Rights Council 2015, 4). Furthermore, in Cameroon most of the border villages in the far north remain deserted and the World Food Programme (WFP) has warned that famine will be unavoidable in the coming year if IDPs are unable to return to their homes and cultivate farmlands (UN Human Rights Council 2015). In general the highly volatile and insecure operating environment partly explains the sparse presence of humanitarian actors in some of the worst affected areas (IOM 2015). There are actors such as Amnesty International, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UNHCR in the region, but making long-term plans is complicated as long as security for humanitarian personnel as well as for civilians is not in place. Thus the attempts to solve the humanitarian problems or significantly reduce the consequences have been fairly disparate. These immediate humanitarian concerns are amplified and entangled with pre-existing conditions such as poverty, inequality and other grievances in northern Nigeria.

THE DANISH HUMANITARIAN CONTRIBUTION IN 2015 IN RELATION TO BOKO HARAM IN NIGERIA	
Danish Red Cross	879,882 USD
Danish Refugee Council	283,691 USD
Save the Children	99.342 USD
CARITAS to IDPs in Niger	141,916 USD
Total 2015	**1,404,831 USD**

Source: Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Department for Humanitarian Action, Civil Society and Personnel Assistance, HCP.
Exchange rate: 1DKK=7.0464USD on the 2nd of December 2015.

#BRING BACK OUR GIRLS SO THAT THEY CAN Live THEIR DREAMS!

From Victims to Perpetrators
THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN BOKO HARAM

The Boko Haram insurgency is commonly seen to be between young men in the army and young men in Boko Haram, with women only occupying the space of victimhood (Nagarajan 2015). Yet, the abduction of the schoolgirls from the town of Chibok is not the only way in which women and girls play a significant role in Boko Haram. Rather, the roles of women in Boko Haram and in the conflict are multiple and increasingly impact men and women differently. As women are central for Boko Haram as well as for international interventions, it seems fair to say "that women's rights, their bodies and freedoms in north-east Nigeria have become "the battleground on which the war is being fought" (Ibid, 2).

#BRINGBACKOURGIRLS AND ABDUCTION OF WOMEN

The social media campaign #BringBackOurGirls and the explosion of tweets in the aftermath of the abduction of the schoolgirls in Chibok in April 2014 catapulted Boko Haram onto the international scene. Advocates in Nigeria, the EU and the US urged institutions to protect the innocent girls, even if that meant a military intervention. As of May 2014 the #BringBackOurGirls hashtag had reportedly received 1.5 billion impressions and reached over 440 million people worldwide, spreading over several countries and over 50 cities across the world (Okoro 2014 in Amao 2015, 129). A few weeks after the abductions, in the wake of the social media campaign, Pentagon spokesman Army Col. Steve Warren announced on behalf of US President Barack Obama that, "The US Defense Department stands firmly with the people of Nigeria in their efforts to bring the terrorist violence perpetrated by Boko Haram to an end while ensuring civilian protection and respect for human rights" (Roulo 2014).

The abduction of the schoolgirls in Chibok was, however, not the first time women and girls had been abducted by Boko Haram, neither was it the last (HRW 2014). One of the preceding events leading up to the Chibok abductions was in 2013, when a group of twelve abducted women from Bama were exchanged for the release of 90 Boko Haram members, their wives and children. Possibly the ransom money and the release of Boko Haram members for these twelve women incentivised Boko Haram to carry out more abductions, such as the one in Chibok (Zenn 2014, 4). In this way abductions of women (and in some cases of men), and the way they are organised should be understood in the larger context of Boko Haram's activities.

While ransom and prisoner release are two reasons – retaliation seems to be another. In a video released in May 2014 Boko Haram claimed that the reason for the Chibok abductions was in retaliation for similar tactics deployed by the Nigerian government, who had abducted the wives and children of Boko Haram members. As retaliation Boko Haram abducted the wives and children of Government soldiers from military barracks in Borno and the rate and scale of abductions has increased after this. In the same video Shekau announces that the wives and children would only be released if its detained members were freed (BBC 2014). Boko Haram draws on the following verse as Qur'anic justification to abduct so-called enemy women. "Also (forbidden are) women already married, except those (captives and slaves) whom your right hands possess. Thus has Allah ordained for you". (As invoked in Nagarajan 2015). Thus, in another announcement Shekau said, "Since you are now holding our women, just wait and see what will happen to your own women. Just wait and see what will happen to your own wives according to Sharia law, just wait and see if it is sweet and convenient for you".

> **The US Defense Department stands firmly with the people of Nigeria in their efforts to bring the terrorist violence perpetrated by Boko Haram to an end while ensuring civilian protection and respect for human rights.**

Finally, the abduction of young girls and women evinces another possible motive of the group: an aversion to Western education (Amao 2015, 127). In a published video, Shekau says they "kidnapped Christian girls to convert them to Islam and punish them for attending Western/modern schools" (Amao 2015; HRW 2014). In 18 abduction cases of women counted by Human Rights Watch from April 2013 to July 2014, the women and girls abducted were traders, students, wives and children of soldiers. In most cases abductions of women and girls have taken place in the predominantly Christian area of southern Borno State (HRW 2014, 27). In general, data suggests that with the emergence of Boko Haram there has been an increase in gender-based violence against Christian women and children in all six states of the north-eastern region (Barkindo 2013, 24-25). Interviews with escaped women also suggest that Boko Haram insurgents separated Christian and Muslim women, releasing those confirmed Muslim and abducting only the Christian women (HRW 2014).

FEMALE SUICIDE BOMBERS – DESPERATION OR STRENGTH?

The use of women bombers is often described as the last resort of terrorist organisations, when all other resources are depleted and alternative tactics are few and desperate (Pearson 2014). When looking at Boko Haram, the increasing use of female suicide bombers might indeed be an act of desperation as Boko Haram's military resources could be decreasing, for instance as Boko Haram has not yet been capable of holding land. Some newspapers emphasise that the enforced counter-insurgency by the new president Buhari seems to have weakened Boko Haram's position since March 2015, after which the numbers of female suicide attacks have increased (Pearson 2015).

> There is a women's wing of Boko Haram made up of women and girls who chose to join or were forced to do so after being abducted.

An alternative interpretation exists – that the use of female suicide bombers may be a sign of strength suggesting a careful, symbolic strategy with the willingness to turn to the radical means of using girls as young as ten years old as living bombs (Pearson 2015). This is explained by the argument that Boko Haram is relatively new and 2014–2015 has been it's most ambitious and bloodiest year to date. They have also been able to recruit and abduct young men from occupied areas as insurgents (ibid). Therefore female suicide bombers could arguably be a sign of strength rather than weakness (Pearson 2014). This is also related to the propaganda and sensational aspects of female suicide bombers. Attacks by women attract significant attention from the media, despite the fact that the attacks have all taken place in soft spots such as markets and bus stands, rather than military buildings and, typically, are outside of Boko Haram's normal regions of operation. They hold the potential of attracting public attention and instilling fear in Abuja and Lagos where Boko Haram, until now, has been seen as a distant militant conflict. In a broader perspective, attacks by women distance Boko Haram from Al Qaeda ideology since only rarely have Al Qaeda advocated for women participating in violent jihad (ibid). The use of women seems to be more inspired by the warfare of

Islamic State to whom Boko Haram is believed to have recently pledged allegiance, albeit probably mostly for propaganda purposes. Boko Haram's use of female suicide bombers then suggests that they are ready to subvert themselves to different interpretations of jihad for tactical advantage (Pearson 2015).

Finally, in the debate on the role of women in Boko Haram and in violent jihad it is crucial to emphasise that women in Boko Haram are not merely passive apolitical abducted victims, in contrast to male Boko Haram members as conscious political-religious activists. A range of data suggest that women as individual combatants and family members of male Boko Haram members take an active role in Boko Haram, not only standing in the shadows and victimised (Nagarajan 2015). Further-more, it would be too simple to argue that female suicide bombers are abducted girls, for instance some of the Chibok girls, or/and women forced to become suicide bombers. Though the use of some very young girls of ten years of age does suggest some Chibok girls may have been used as suicide bombers, there are also several cases of adult women hiding bombs in the clothing and driving on motorbikes towards their targets (Pearson 2015). Though low in numbers there are active female members of Boko Haram willing to participate armed in the conflict. As Chitra Nagarajan (2015) writes in her thorough analysis of women in Boko Haram: "There is a women's wing of Boko Haram made up of women and girls who chose to join or were forced to do so after being abducted. Although coercion is at play through the use of drugs, indoctrination and fear, at least some of these women are active agents who have chosen to join the sect". Gender inequality is tied to the reasons why many women get involved.

Furthermore, research on radicalisation and the role of women has found that societal and cultural expectations of women to depend economically on men leave them with few options when husbands or fathers leave to become active members of Boko Haram or if they die (Zainab Usman, Sherine El-Taraboulsi and Khadija Gambo Hawaja as invoked in Nagarajan 2015). Without education and with little access to jobs, women have few ways to support themselves and their families. Boko Haram gives money, food and other benefits to members and has a dedicated fund for widows of insurgents, in contrast to the lack of compensation or social safety net provided by the Nigerian state (ibid).
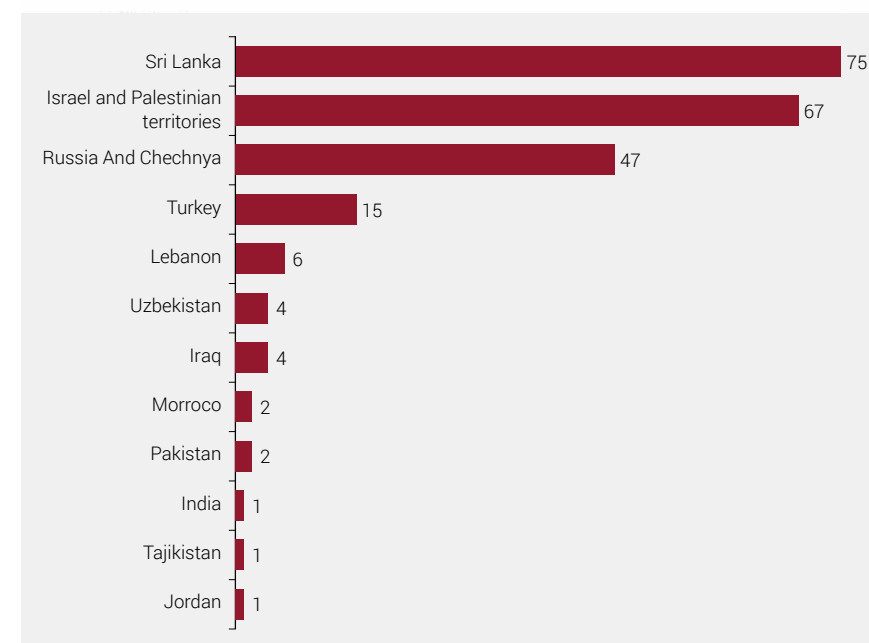
THE MILLION WOMAN MARCH

What is often lost in the narrative of Boko Haram is that there are local protests in northern Nigeria, and elsewhere in Nigeria, in particular with women at the frontline. Even before the mass abduction of the Chibok girls, women under the aegis of "Concerned Mothers of Borno" marched for peace back in 2009 (Nagarajan 2015). This movement seems to have started in Maiduguri, Borno's capital, by women who live with the conflict every day. Such protests and activities by civil society in the north might hold a strong potential in the fight against Boko Haram.

In general Nigerian women have been at the forefront of Boko Haram's activities, not only as victims of abduction or suicide bombers but also as galvanisers of political action and protest against the conflict (Nagarajan 2015). A week after the abduction of the Chibok girls, Nigerian women called on the Nigerian government and former President Goodluck Jonathan to take action. "Their voices came from the heart of the conflict and in the face of great personal risk and fear of reprisals" (Ibid, 5). In April 2014, it was the "Million Woman March", arranged primarily by Nigerian women protesting the mass abduction of the girls from Chibok, organised in the capital, Abuja, which rapidly spread throughout the country and across the world (ibid).

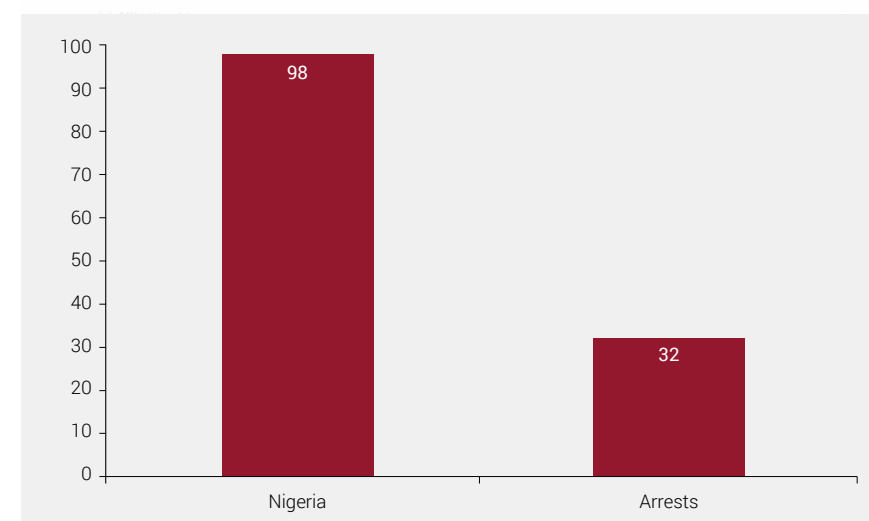> Their voices came from the heart of the conflict and in the face of great personal risk and fear of reprisals.

Women are active in fighting Boko Haram in several arenas. Women are also crucial in keeping families and communities going. They have been finding new ways to ensure access to education despite closure of government schools (Nagarajan 2015). Finally, women have been vocal in pressuring the government and traditional and religious leaders to take action. This reality is in stark contrast to the common portrayal of the role of women in Boko Haram as solely abducted girls, and to stereotypical images of north-eastern Muslim Nigerian women as merely victims of abuse, married off at an early age, in seclusion with little agency or power (ibid). These gender perspectives – the role of women within Boko Haram and as protesters against Boko Haram – should be included in future interventions and policy.

Figure 1. Female Suicide Bombers, by Targeted Areas, 1985-2006

Sri Lanka	75
Israel and Palestinian territories	67
Russia And Chechnya	47
Turkey	15
Lebanon	6
Uzbekistan	4
Iraq	4
Morroco	2
Pakistan	2
India	1
Tajikistan	1
Jordan	1

Source: Database complied by Yoram Schweitzer

Figure 2. Nigeria Female Suicide Bombers June 2014 - October 2015

Source: Elizabeth Pearson & Jacob Zenn

The data includes attacks attributed to, and likely to be by Boko Haram in not just Nigeria but Chad, Cameroon and Niger. it relies on media sources. The numbers refer to bombers not incidents.

> " We don't know Cameroon or Chad...I don't have a country.
> Islamiyya is what I have. "

Zenn 2014,1.

As the above quote from Shekau suggests, Boko Haram, almost per definition, defies colonial era political boundaries. The group has operated in Cameroon, Chad and Niger since it emerged in 2002, taking advantage of the porous borders between the countries and using the neighbouring countries for refuge, training, transit, planning and recruitment (Pérouse de Montclos 2015). One significant step taken by new president Buhari in the strengthened fight against Boko Haram was his reaching out to create a common standing to fight Boko Haram amongst Nigeria's neighbours. So far the regional fight against Boko Haram has been somewhat fragmented, uncoordinated and characterised by national conflicts of interests and precarious historical relationships. Nigeria in particular has been rather sensitive to having foreign troops on its territory (Pérouse de Montclos 2015).

THE MULTINATIONAL JOINT TASK FORCE

Nigeria's neighbouring countries have already committed to tackle Boko Haram and in addition to Nigeria, Niger (October 2014), Cameroon (May 2014) and Chad (January 2015) have all deployed troops. In 2015 the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), in existence since 1998 under the umbrella of the Lake Chad River Basin Commission (LCBC), was revised and endorsed with an African Union Peace and Security Resolution of January 29th to deploy 10,000 soldiers (Nigeria: 3250, Chad: 3000, Cameroon 950, Benin 750, Niger 750). The MNJTF is to undertake cross-border operations in the four countries affected by Boko Haram and replace the existing ad hoc military coalition. Since, the deployment of the MNJTF there have been more Boko Haram attacks in the neighbouring countries, raising concerns in the international society and the EU in particular.

Furthermore, human rights violations carried out by regional security actors in the coalition to fight Boko Haram, and the implementation of a number of economic sanctions to the detriment of the local economy, have emerged in response to the increasing Boko Haram attacks in the neighbouring countries. Such trends may

suggest that the regional coalition could be running a risk of ending up replicating the mistakes made by the Nigerian forces during various joint task force operations, which contributed to spurring the transformation of a Jihadist insurgency into a people's revolt.

In addition to budgetary and logistical challenges, a number of institutional and political issues remain. Chad and Nigeria apparently disagree about whether the mandate (and hence accountability) of the MNJTF should fall under the region with UN support (Chapter VI resolution – the Nigerian preference) or under UNSC mandate (Chapter VII – the Chadian preference). Furthermore cooperation between the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), with each having two countries affected by the Boko Haram crisis, has historically been weak (EU 2015). The functioning of the MNJTF will depend on enhanced regional cooperation and international financial support.

NIGER. BETWEEN STATE FRAGILITY AND MILITARY ARMAMENT

In the context of the post-Gaddafi regional instability, due to its geographic situation in between Mali to the east, Libya to the north and Nigeria to the south, all perceived as current hotspots for jihadist and criminal activities, and in virtue of being a transit country for undocumented migration from West Africa to Europe, Niger is of strategic importance for European (and American) security politics. After operation Serval in Mali, many jihadist groups are suspected to be highly active in Niger. In 2013 Niger became a key base for American and French drones and the two countries have been cooperating out of Niamey in attempts to combat jihadism in Africa. In September 2014 the US opened a second drone base in central Niger to track extremists in Mali and Libya more effectively (Russia Today 2014). Nigeria and Niger have entered into collaboration on joint border control supported by the European Union Common Security and Defence Policy (CSPD) mission EUCAP Sahel (Niger) that supports military and police capacity development in Niger. Niger security forces consider Boko Haram a significant threat to stability. According to International Crisis Group (2014, 25) Niger's security forces have prevented a number of attacks and arrested couriers carrying money and messages between AQIM, MUJAO and Boko Haram.

At the same time Niger is also a source of great concern and is the world's poorest country. It has been dubbed "another weak link in the Sahel" by International Crisis Group (ICG 2013). Niger has experienced four state coups since independence and similarly to Mali, Niger faced Tuareg rebellions in the 1990s and in 2007.[3] Niger is considered to manifest elements of state fragility due to widespread corruption and public discontent, but has so far maintained stability under the presidency of Mahamadou Issoufou (Pérouse de Montclos 2014). Given Niger's poorly functioning public sector, basic service delivery is a challenge, also in terms of ensuring state legitimacy in the eyes of Niger's population. Due to increasing international pressure, in the period 2009–2013 the military budget quadrupled, giving rise to public discontent, as it means less money will be spent on the social sector. In addition, the fight against Boko Haram in, for e.g. Diffa, has led to more arrests and jailing of people without trial, which is clearly against the human rights principles that the EUCAP should be training them in (personal communication, human rights officer, Niger). Such developments may undermine the already decreasing state legitimacy if security measures are not linked with efforts to rebuild state institutions and service provision in the world's poorest country (Hicks 2015, 123).

The local effects of Boko Haram – reports from Diffa

Situated 1400 kilometres from the capital of Niamey on the borders of Borno state in Nigeria, Niger's poorest region, Diffa, has been described as Niger's "frontline" in the Boko Haram insurgency. Taking advantage of minimal state presence and the high mobility of its population, Diffa has for a long time served Boko Haram as a hideout for soldiers, a reservoir for recruitment and a stage for attacks. Due to the increasingly frequent Boko Haram attacks in the Lake Chad Basin more than 150,000 people are reported to have fled to Diffa (Reuters 2015), which is currently facing a humanitarian crisis. Furthermore, the immediate border is closed and many markets in northern Nigeria have shut down, with devastating consequences for the cross-border trade that is indispensable for the exchange of goods between farmers and pastoralists and the local economy. This can be particularly critical for the unemployed youth, making them more prone to jihadist recruitment. According to reported local sources (Thurston 2015), Boko Haram can offer "new recruits 300,000 Francs-CFA (approximately 500 USD), plus a motorbike and the promise of a bride", which is a great deal in the absence of alternative livelihood strategies.

---

3   Niger signed a peace accord with the Tuareg in 1995, but both government and Tuareg responses to the peace agreements have been different from those in Mali. The Tuaregs in Niger are more spread out in the entire country, and the rebellion has never developed into a territorial claim for independence in Niger.

After Niger's engagement in the multilateral task force fighting Boko Haram in January 2015, an increasing number of attacks including, amongst others, a prison break and suicide bombings have been carried in Diffa (Afrique 2015b, 2015a). Despite Niger's government declaring a state of emergency in the Diffa region in February 2015, attacks have continued throughout the year (News 2015).

NIGER'S STATE FUELLING A HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN DIFFA

In May 2015, on instruction from Niger's national authorities, the governor of Diffa ordered around 30,000 people from the islands of Lake Chad to evacuate to Diffa in order for Niger's army to fight Boko Haram. According to human rights organisations the authorities threatened people to make them move, claiming they would be considered Boko Haram affiliates if they did not move within a very short timeframe. The message was transmitted by radio and no logistical support was provided to the thousands of people who had to leave their homes and belongings, most of them on foot without water and food in the hottest and driest month of the year. More than 12 people died on the harsh journey in the desert areas. Arriving in Diffa, no support system was prepared to receive them and many are now living under conditions that the UN describes as dramatic. Such incidents undermine the population's already tried trust in the state and its ability to offer them protection. The Nigerien authorities have officially recognised the default and the Prime Minister and the international partners have made attempts to ameliorate the situation.

CAMEROON. KIDNAPPINGS, RECRUITMENT AND RISING POVERTY

Cameroon is currently less a centre for European interventions and is not included in the European Union's Sahel strategy. Nevertheless, it faces similar challenges to its neighbouring countries in terms of potential state instability due to upcoming elections and general corruption, socio-economic stagnation and internal divisions in the state and security apparatus, all of which the Boko Haram insurgency is likely to aggravate (Tull 2015). In history, the Kanuri from the Borno region in Nigeria have had excessive political and economic power in northern Cameroon and important Boko Haram personages, like Maman Nur who organised the bombing of the UN headquarters in Abuja in 2011, originated from Cameroon (Pérouse de Montclos 2015, 3). Since the beginning of the insurgency in 2002, northern Cameroon has

been a pivotal territory for attacks, retreat and recruitment for Boko Haram. Moreover, since 2013 the far north region has expanded as stage for clashes and arrests of suspected Boko Haram soldiers and kidnappings of foreign nationals.

Early 2013 saw the kidnapping of seven French family members, suspected to be the result of successful collaboration between Ansaru and Boko Haram. The kidnappings gave Boko Haram attention, as it was followed by a launch of YouTube videos with Shekau Amadou threatening the Cameroon, Niger and French governments, claiming that the kidnapping was retaliation for the French military intervention in Mali (Comolli 2015a, 88). Soon after, more kidnappings followed (Pérouse de Montclos 2015, 3).[4] Various rumours flourished about France paying ransoms to the group in relation to the release of several of these hostages, possibly strengthening the capacity of the group. In the beginning of 2014 the Boko Haram infiltration in Cameroon resulted in the deployment of extra military units to "beef up" security along the border (Comolli 2015a, 89). However military collaboration between Cameroon and Nigeria has previously been hampered by, amongst other things, tensions over the oil-producing borderland territory of the Bankassi peninsula. The military expansion has met a range of challenges in terms of adding to the existing internal divisions in the security forces. Furthermore the government's anti-terror law of 2014 has been criticised by civil society organisations for curtailing civil and political rights and there is growing concern that Boko Haram is used by the government to distract attention away from structural problems (Tull 2015). Currently the political-economic situation in Cameroon is particularly precarious due to declining oil prices, reduced trade, closing borders and increased expenditure used on fighting Boko Haram, all of which is draining Cameroon's economy.

CHAD. AN EMERGING REGIONAL POWER?

Following four attacks on villages in the Lake Chad area in December 2014 in proximity to the capital Ndjamena, in early 2015 Chad sent troops to Cameroon and Nigeria to fight Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region. In June 2015 Boko Haram posted threats against the president, Idriss Déby, if he engaged in the fight against the group. On 15 June 2015, the capital was hit by two suicide bombers killing 37, which led to heightening of security measures and the banning of veils and turbans

[4]   In addition to the wife of the Cameroonian deputy prime minister, a French priest was kidnapped in 2013 followed by two Italian priests and a Canadian nun and ten Chinese workers in 2014.

to prevent suicide attacks. Chad's military intervention against Boko Haram has been praised for its effectiveness by the neighbouring countries, but is it also adding to the risks of more Boko Haram attacks against Chad. For this reason several sources promote the argument that the increasing international and regional military response to Boko Haram is in fact contributing to a strengthening of the group (Pérouse de Montclos 2015).

THE LATE CHAD BASIN

Chad is separated from Nigeria by Lake Chad, a so-called wetland area of the semi-arid Sahel. Recently oilfields spread over four countries has been discovered that may contain up to 2.3 billion barrels of oil (Edinburgh International 2014). Historically, the Lake Chad Basin has been of vital importance to the local communities, providing the basis of thousands of livelihoods dependent on its seasonal fluctuations to renew fish stocks, farmland and rangeland (Sarch 2001). The islands of Lake Chad have been used by the fishing communities for shelter against Boko Haram (Pérouse de Montclos 2015). The lake has undergone considerable climatic changes during in the past 50 years, which is a source of great concern (Magrin 2015). The local communities, for whom the lake provided sustenance, are poverty stricken as national government fails to address deep socio-economic imbalances. Historically, the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) has been rather inefficient at managing conflicts and shared water resources, and the question of whether increased international support and facing the common enemy of Boko Haram will increase its capacity to face such challenges and diverging regional interests remains.

Initially Chad was less affected by the Boko Haram insurgency than Niger and Cameroon, which has given rise to a number of speculations. Chad's president, Idriss Déby, has been accused of nurturing a friendly relationship with Boko Haram (Edinburgh International 2014). While until recently the group had not been active in attacking and capturing territory in Chad, it is commonly believed that key commanders live in and operate from Chad, and that a cluster of camps are located across the Chadian border, as well as hostage and weapon smuggling routes being located in Chad (Brimah 2014). Furthermore, the previous passive role of Chad against Boko Haram has met criticism, and Nigerian newspapers have heavily accused Chad of taking advantage of and feeding the insurgency in order to keep tapping oil from shared underground resources (Yusuff 2014; Brimah 2014). Now

such rumours have been dispelled by Chad taking up arms against Boko Haram. But in any case, the oilfields of the Lake Chad Basin are not important enough to play a role in politics (personal communication with expert, 2015). Compared to Nigeria, Chad is a small producer and exporter of oil, but due to its military engagements in the region it is being considered an emerging regional power.

According to Hicks (2015) Chad's military strength was initially bought with oil money.[5] Decreasing oil prices may restrain Chad's ability to cover the cost of military deployments in the Central African Republic and Mali. Chad's military engagements are, nonetheless, benefitting from the presence of external security actors. In 2014 France declared Ndjamena as the headquarters of its regional Sahel operation Barkhane.

5   In the 1990s the World Bank attempted to create a development model for the oil sector that would avoid a resource curse similar to the one in, for e.g., Nigeria inner delta by ensuring oil revenues were spent on social sectors with a high degree of transparency. Despite the ambitious agenda, in 2008 the World Bank pulled out because Chad's government, facing rebel attacks, decided to spend oil money to buy arms, which in the short term ensured the stability of Déby's regime (for a thorough analysis of the Chad oil venture, see also Hicks 2015).

BOKO HARAM & THE WEST

Boko Haram insurgency is primarily driven by local conflict dynamics that, lately, are increasingly involving neighbouring countries with porous borders with northern Nigeria. It is unlikely that Boko Haram will develop the aim of and capacity to carry out attacks in the West, and so far there have not been reported foreign Western fighters in Nigeria. But Boko Haram may continue to target Western interests in Nigeria.

Nigeria is a major oil producing country in which European and multinational and corporations and businesses have large stakes. Thus the instability in the region is also a concern for the US and other Western countries. Following the abduction of the Chibok schoolchildren in March 2014 the UN declared Boko Haram to be a terrorist organisation. The international community including the EU has since then paid more attention to Boko Haram, concurrently with the increased number of attacks in the region. Until the election of Buhari in 2015, Nigeria ruled out the need for foreign intervention either by a UN or an AU-backed force (although Goodluck Jonathan did employ private South African mercenaries to assist in finding the Chibok hostages). Moreover, the regional organisation ECOWAS (that is heavily influenced by Nigeria, its currently most powerful member) has not pursued an active role in the fight against Boko Haram (EU 2015). On 14 October 2015 Barack Obama sent 300 American soldiers to Cameroon to set up a drone base to track fighters from Boko Haram through surveillance operations and the gathering of intelligence (Whitlock 2015).

The European Union

The EU highlights the Lake Chad Basin region (Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon and Chad) as a particularly volatile one due to the presence of Boko Haram but also due to the fragility of southern Libya. Thus, seen from the perspective of the EU, Boko Haram and northern Nigeria is gateway to the larger Sahel, which is considered a hot spot for organised crime, trafficking and terrorism. Yet Boko Haram is explicitly not part of the EU's strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel formulated in 2012, focusing on four axes of intervention reflecting European interests: development, political and diplomatic action; security and the rule of law; countering violent extremism and radicalisation. The action plan for 2015 expands the Sahelian countries from Mali, Niger and Mauritania to include Burkina Faso and Chad – the so called G5 countries. In April 2015 the European external action service presented the EU's Political Framework for Crisis Approach (PFCA) for the Boko Haram crisis that was welcomed by the Political and Security Committee (PSC) as a basis to guide the EU response to the crisis, and the best way forward for the EU to support the MNJTF. There is a newly-deployed EU security expert in Abuja who is to engage

more with the Nigerian army and EU member states to facilitate support. In addition, the EU is considering supporting reconstruction, rehabilitation, resettlement and long-term development processes in areas affected by the insurgency.

Historically, there has been a tense relationship between France and Nigeria. In March 2015 France announced it would step up its logistical support and intelligence to the neighbouring countries fighting Boko Haram. Since December 2014 the fight against Boko Haram has become part of the mandate of the French pan-Sahel counter-terrorism operation Barkhane (replacing and expanding operation Serval) composed of 3,000 French soldiers with its headquarters in N'Djamena (Chad) operating in the former French colonies of Burkina Faso (550 troops), Chad (1200 troops), Mali (1000 troops), Mauritania and Niger (300 troops). (See map of military presence below). As stated by Griffin (2015, 25) "the fight against Boko Haram is part of a region-wide strategy ultimately aimed, in words of the French Defence

Foreign Military and Civilian Operations as of 2014
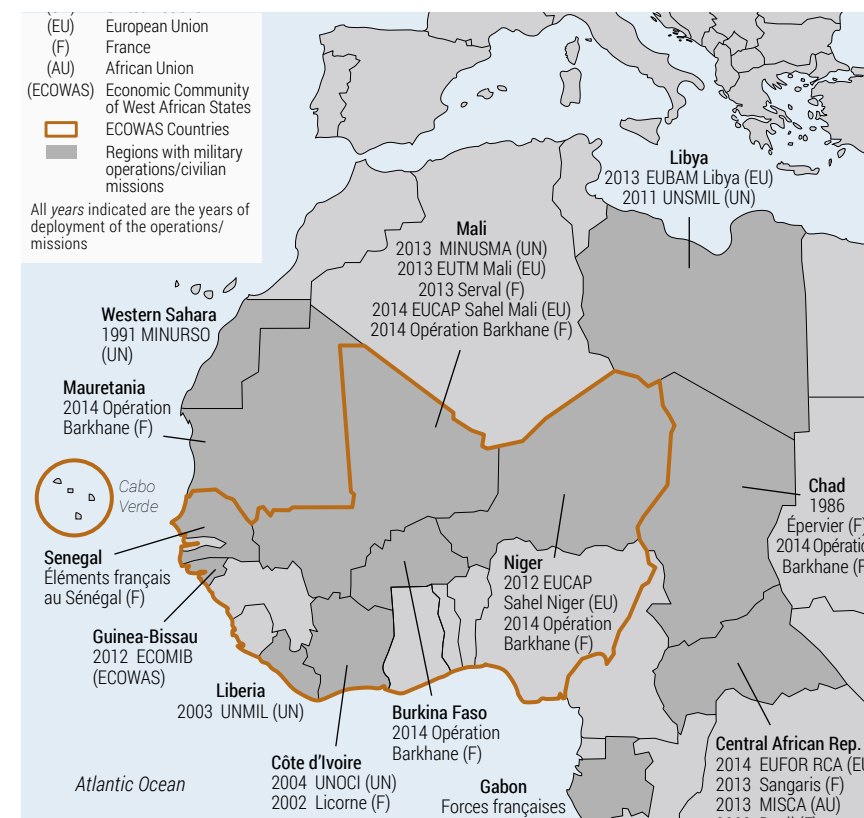
Minister, at the eradication of jihadist terrorism in the Sahel". France does not take part in the combat because it is stretched thin with only 3,000 soldiers. To complement Barkhane, EU's three Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions include the civil missions of EUCAP Sahel in Niger and Mali that work with capacity building of national authorities and internal security forces in order to combat terrorism and organised crime.

In virtue of being the former colonial power there are historical and ambiguous ties between Nigeria and the UK. So far UK security concerns have focused on the Niger Delta and anti-piracy, but with the deteriorating situation in the north, counter-terrorism has crawled up the agenda (149Comolli 2015b). The British Special Forces participated in a failed mission to rescue British hostages kidnapped by Ansaru in 2012, whereafter the group joined Boko Haram on Britain's list of terrorist organisations. In 2012 Shekau mentioned Britain as target in one of his videos for the first time. According to Comolli (2015b), there has been a tendency to overlook allegations of human rights abuses in Britain's military cooperation with Nigeria.

USA

Nigeria is the US' number one trading partner in Sub-Saharan Africa and has various types of cooperation including regional security cooperation such as military training for Nigerian forces since the 1980s and the 2005 Trans-Sahara Counter-terrorism Partnership (TSCTP) aimed at countering terrorism in Mauritania, Mali, Chad, Nigeria, Niger, Senegal and Burkina Faso through local capacity building and increased cooperation with Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia (Comolli 2015b, 143). The TSCTP built on a "Diplomacy, Defence and Development" model led by the US state department to perform activities like the annual Flintlock counter-terrorism exercise sponsored by the US Africa Command (AFRICOM) as well as a range of other conflict management and legal enforcement activities. According to Comolli (2015a), Nigeria has been reluctant to acknowledge the size of the insurgency except when facing international audiences, then there could be a tendency to exaggerate Boko Haram's international connections with a view to receiving foreign aid (ibid. 144).

After the Chibok abduction in 2014 the US sent a surveillance drone and 80 soldiers to Chad to assist the finding of the schoolgirls. Up until that point the US had not considered Boko Haram a security concern. According to (Crone 2014b) the Obama administration's approach to Boko Haram should be considered in the context of US foreign policy and internal contestations within the White House between the

Obama administration and his neo-conservative critics who focus on previous links between Osama Bin Laden and Boko Haram. The neo-conservatives perceive Boko Haram to be an ideological anti-Western terrorist organisation i.e. a continuation of the axis of evil that requires a military response similar to that in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In opposition to this, Obama articulates Boko Haram as a local and socio-economically motivated insurgency, and his military support to #BringBackOurGirls was specifically framed as a rescue operation, not a war against terror (Crone 2014b). Though the US increased its support to fight Boko Haram after the kidnappings of the Chibok girls, concerns over human rights abuses by the Nigerian military made the US wary of sending helicopters and more military equipment. Nigeria used to supply more oil to the United States than most middle-income countries. In 2010, Nigeria was among America's top five oil suppliers but in 2014, for the first time since 1973, the US stopped the import of Nigerian oil. The halt was possibly due to increased US oil production, but according to some sources it is likely that the sudden termination of oil imports and the refusal of the US government to sell weapons to Nigeria to fight Boko Haram was a way for Barack Obama to demonstrate his lack of support for ex-president Goodluck's government (Amanze-Nwachuku 2014).

Denmark

In terms of security concerns Boko Haram is not perceived as a direct threat to Danish interests in Nigeria (FE 2014) as compared to piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. In 2014 Denmark opened up an embassy in Abuja and a trading office in Lagos. Some of the giant shipping companies have been in Nigeria for long, and Mærsk has recently invested 16.3 billion DKK to build a new harbour in Lagos (Redder 2015). Sectors like agriculture, health and design are increasingly attracting Danish companies to invest in Nigeria, which can create new development potential and partnerships in the future (Gettermann 2014).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This synthesis report sheds light on how Boko Haram emerged in the context of a broader Islamic reform movement in northern Nigeria in the 1990s and subsequently developed from an Islamic insurgency into a full-scale war in 2013. In the course of these events mutual retaliations carried out by Boko Haram and the Nigerian army's counter-insurgency have trapped northern Nigeria in a spiral of violence. With the newly-elected president Buhari's strong-willed approach to fighting Boko Haram and new propositions of socio-economic development plans for northern Nigeria, there is a glimmer of hope for containing the violence in northern Nigeria. However, there are signs that the deepening involvement of neighbouring countries may give rise to reactive attacks against the newly established regional coalition, which is profoundly supported by international security actors progressively engaged in the fight against Boko Haram.

In the context of regional instability after the fall of the Gaddafi regime in 2011, and particularly in relation to the the security crisis in Mali, the Boko Haram insurgency is increasingly perceived as forming part of and contributing to a larger "arc of terrorism" across the Sahel. Such perceptions have been strengthened as attacks in the neighbouring countries have increased and by Boko Haram pledging loyalty to Islamic State in March 2015. A main argument in the report is that the framing of the group as part of a larger pan-African terrorist threat informs military operations, such as the French counter-terrorist operation Barkhane. However, the disadvantages of overestimating the "arc of terrorism" and the perceived threat to the West are that: First they may serve the opposite purpose of assigning the groups more credibility and capacity, which may strengthen their aim, image and potential recruitment. Second, the emphasis on an "arc of terrorism" downplays the root causes, and local

and national dimensions of the conflicts such as the human rights violations and abuses of civilians carried out by Nigeria's security actors, corruption, illegal economic activities, poverty and inequality. It is the tackling of these issues that holds the key to solving the multi-faceted crisis of Boko Haram. Third, such discourses fail to distinguish between ideologically driven core members and followers whose motivations are mainly economic and even survival. Finally, an emphasis of an "arc of terrorism" may inform the wrong policy responses, that could potentially escalate and further regionalise the conflict ignoring the national Nigerian responsibility and local drivers of conflict.

Rather than rephrasing de-contextualised discourses of "an arc of terrorism", global jihad and international connections to Islamic State, it seems more possible that the situation in north-east Nigeria is heading towards a fragmented protracted conflict with very complex social tensions. The key issue in the approach to Boko Haram is to understand and include the local dynamics of the insurgency. Therefore there is a need to pay attention, in future debates and potential interventions to current military operations by Niger, Chad and Cameroon, in order to avoid that they repeat the same mistakes made by Nigeria in 2013: human rights violations and economic sanctions that might transform a jihadist uprising into a people's revolt.

Furthermore, to address the insurgency the report suggests paying more attention to how gender norms influence male and female recruitment. Gender perspectives and the role of women within Boko Haram and as protesters against Boko Haram should also inform future interventions and policy.

Finally, Boko Haram insurgency has entailed tremendous humanitarian consequences in its wake. Civilians have been shot, beheaded, amputated, drowned, burned and bombed, and the violence has prompted the forced displacement of more than two million people in Nigeria and across the region. Food shortages and famine are major concerns while the high level of insecurity constrains the conditions for humanitarian workers to alleviate the situation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The international community should support and capacity build the regional coalition to avoid human rights abuses while simultaneously seek to strengthen the public sectors in countries affected by the insurgency.

- In Nigeria, root causes of the insurgency i.e. political and economic marginalisation (inequality) and poverty should be addressed by supporting national initiatives to develop the north. Furthermore international security actors could support Nigeria to initiate large-scale security sector reform along with the political and economic integration of marginalised north-eastern communities.

- International partners should support gender training of Nigerian and regional security actors according to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (and its additional resolutions) specifically addressing gender roles and the inclusion of women in prevention and resolution of conflict.

- Social protection and humanitarian aid to the citizens living in highly fragile environments should be supported, in order to (re)establish the social contract between state and citizens, and avoid mistrust that may force some people to search for alternative forms of protection from radical jihadist groups.

Bibliography

Adingupu, Charles. 2012. Mali Islamists, Boko Haram: The log in Jonathan's eye. http://www.vanguardngr.com/2012/11/mali-islamists-boko-haram-the-log-in-jonathans-eye/

Afrique, Jeune. 2015a. "À Diffa, Boko Haram commet l'un de ses plus lourds massacres au Niger ".

Afrique, Jeune. 2015b. Niger: des combattants de Boko Haram prennent d'assaut la prison de Diffa Jeune Afrique, February 09, 2015.

Akinloye, Lagun. 2015a. Nigeria: Buhari's government begins to take shape, but it's not over yet.

Afrique, Jeune. 2015b. President Buhari and the long road ahead.

Al-Jazeera. 2015. Can Buhari defeat Boko Haram?

Amanze-Nwachuku, Chika. 2014. "Nigeria: As U.S. Shuts Its Door On Nigeria's Oil Exports." This Day, 3 October 2014.

Amao, Olumuyiwa Babatunde & Maiangwa, Benjamin. 2015. ""Daughters, Brides, and Supporters of the Jihad": Revisiting the Gender-Based Atrocities of Boko Haram in Nigeria." African Renaissance no. 12 (2):117-144.

Amnesty International. 2012. Nigeria: Trapped in the cycle of violence. Amnesty International.

Amnesty International. 2014. 'Welcome To Hell Fire' Torture and Other Ill-treatment in Nigeria.

London: Amnesty International. 2015a. Nigeria: Boko Haram and Nigerian military committing crimes under international law in north east Nigeria. Amnesty International.

London: Amnesty International. 2015b. Nigeria: Horror in numbers. edited by Amnesty International: Amnesty International.

London: Amnesty International. 2015c. Stars on Their Shoulders. Blood on Their Hands: War Crimes Comitted by The Nigerian Military. London.

Andersen, Lars Erslev. 2014. "Den regionale trussel fra Islamisk Stat." Udenrigs no. 3:17-27.

Anyadike, Nkechi O. 2013. "Boko Haram and National Security Challenges in Nigeria; Causes and Solutions." Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development no. 4 (5).

Aziken, Emmanuel Nwabughiogu, Levinus. 2014. My Marshall Plan to save Nigeria - Buhari. http://www.vanguardngr.com/2014/10/marshal-plan-save-nigeria-buhari/

Barkindo, Atta Gudaku, Benjamin Tyavkase Wesley, Caroline Katgurum. 2013. Our Bodies, Their Battleground: Boko Haram and Gender-Based Violence against Christian Women and Children in North-Eastern Nigeria since 1999. Nigeria's Political Violence Research Network NPVRN.

Barrios, Cristina, and Tobias Koepf. 2014. Re-mapping the Sahel: Transnational security challenges and international responses. In ISSUE, edited by Antonio Missiroli. Paris: European Union: Institute for Security Studies.

BBC. 2014. Nigeria kidnapped girls 'shown in Boko Haram video'. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-27373287.

Bodansky, Yossef. 2015. "The Islamic State in West Africa – Boko Haram Up-Date III." International Relations and Security Network (ISN) (368):8.

Brigaglia, Andrea. 2012. "Ja'far Mahmoud Adam, Mohammed Yusuf and Al-Muntada Islamic Trust: Reflections on the Genesis of the Boko Haram phenomenon in Nigeria." Annual Review of Islam in Africa (11).

Brimah, Peregrino. 2014. Boko Haram, Big Oil And The Chad Connection. http://edinburghint.com/insidetrack/chadian-oil-and-instability-in-the-lake-chad-basin/

Cold-Ravnkilde, Signe Marie. 2013. Krig og fred i Mali - Baggrund og perspektiver. In DIIS Report. Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies.

Comolli, Virginia. 2015a. "Selected Chronology of Key Events." In Boko Haram: Nigeria's Islamist Insurgency, 167-174. London: C. Hurst & Co. (Publishers) Ltd.

Comolli, Virginia 2015b. Boko Haram: Nigeria's Islamist Insurgency. London: Hurst.

Confidential, Africa. 2012. Boko Haram looks to Mali. Africa Confidential 53 (20).

Crone, Manni. 2014a. "Den diskrete krig mod terror i Sahel." Udenrigs no. 3:28-35.

Crone, Manni; Tjavle, Vibeke Schou; Bang Lindegaard, Anne Sofie 2014b. "Mandagsanalyse: Obama varsler ny sikkerhedspolitik." Politiken, June 09, 2015.

Cummings, Ryan. 2015. Why would a Boko Haram faction want to negotiate? African Arguments, http://africanarguments.org/2015/09/01/why-would-a-boko-haram-faction-want-to-negotiate/

Economist, The. 2013. "Afrighanistan? The real danger is that the world turns its back on another poor place threatened by jihadists." The Economist.

Edinburgh International. 2014. Chadian Oil and Instability in the Lake Chad Basin. http://edinburghint.com/insidetrack/chadian-oil-and-instability-in-the-lake-chad-basin/

Eke, Surulola James. 2015. How and why Boko Haram blossomed: examining the fatal consequences of treating a purposive terrorist organisation as less so. Defense & Security Analysis.

EU. 2015. The Boko Haram insurgency, a Political Framework for Crisis Approach. edited by Africa Department. Brussels: European External Action Service.

FE. 2014. Efterretningsmæssig Risikovurdering København: Forsvarets Efterretningstjeneste.

Gettermann, Torben. 2014. Behov for reformer i Nigeria for at knække Boko Haram. http://www.altinget.dk/artikel/behov-for-reformer-i-nigeria-for-at-knaekke-boko-haram/

Giwa, Adewale. 2013. Boko Haram: UNHCR Begs Nations to Grant Nigerians Asylum.

Griffin, Christopher. 2015. Operation Barkhane and Boko Haram: French counterterrorism and military cooperation in the Sahel. In TRENDS Research & Advisory. Abu Dhabi: TRENDS Research & Advisory.

Group, International Crisis. 2014. Curbing Violence in Nigeria (II): The Boko Haram Insuregency In Africa Report, edited by International Crisis Group. Brussels: International Crisis Group.

Hahonou, Eric Komlavi. 2015. Sahel: Everyday petty corruption, insecurity and border control. edited by Danish Institute for International Studies. Copenhagen Danish Institute for International Studies.

Hicks, Celeste. 2015. Africa's new oil: power, pipelines and future fortunes, African Arguments. London: Zed Books.

HRW. 2014. "Those Terrible Weeks in their Camp" Boko Haram Violence against Women and Girls in Northeast Nigeria. New York: Human Rights Watch.

ICG. 2013. Niger: Another Weak Link in the Sahel? In Africa Report. Brussels: International Crisis Group.

ICG. 2014. Curbing Violence in Nigeria (II): The Boko Haram Insurgency. In Africa Report N°216. Brussels: International Crisis Group.

INGO Forum in Nigeria. 2015. Joint INGO Humanitarian assessment in Borno, Yobe, Adamawa and Gombe. Abuja: INGO Forum in Nigeria.

IOM. 2015. IOM Highlights Need for Regional Response to Boko Haram Displacement. https://www.iom.int/news/iom-highlights-need-regional-response-boko-haram-displacement.

Iruemiobe, Busayo. 2014. Kronik: Bag om #Bringbackourgirls. Udvikling.

Kastfelt, Niels. 2015. Hvad vil Boko Haram? RÆSON, 50-53.

Loimeier, Roman. 2012. Boko Haram: The Development of a Militant Religious Movement in Nigeria. Africa Spectrum, 137-155.

Magrin, Géraud Lemoalle, Jacques Pourtier, Roland 2015. Atlas du lac Tchad. 1 ed. Paris: IRD Éditions/Passages.

Meagher, Kate. 2013. "The Jobs Crisis Behind Nigeria's Unrest." Current History no. 112 (754):169-174.

Mohammed, Kyari. 2014. "The Message and Methods of Boko Haram." In Boko Haram: Islamism, politics, security and the state in Nigeria, edited by Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, 9- 32. Leiden, Netherlands: African Studies Centre.

Muhammad, Garba. 2015. "Police nab suspected gun-runner in Kebbi." Daily Trust, March 1, 2014.

Nagarajan, Chitra. 2015. Beyond Chibok: Nigerian Women in the Middle, Grasping for Peace. Laguna Magazine.

News, The. 2015. "Despite state of emergency, Boko Haram attacks Diffa in Niger." The News, Decmeber 07, 2015.

Norwegian Refugee Council. 2014. Multiple Displacement Crisis Overshadowed by Boko Haram. Geneva: Norwegian Refugee Council, Internatal Displacement Monitoring Centre.

Omonobi, Kingsley. 2012. Nigerian troops in Mali will halt spread of Boko Haram – Salamatu Suleiman. http://www.vanguardngr.com/2012/11/nigerian-troops-in-mali-will-halt-spread-of-boko-haram-salamatu-suleiman/

Omonobi, Kingsley. 2013. Boko Haram leader Shekau shot, escapes to Mali. http://www.vanguardngr.com/2013/01/boko-haram-leader-shekau-shot-in-mali/

Onuoha, Freedom. 2012. "From Ahlulsunna wal'jama'ah hijra to Jama'atu Ahlissunnah lidda'awati wal Jihad: The Evolutionary Phases of the Boko Haram Sect in Nigeria." Africa Insight no. 41 (41):159-175.

Onuoha, Freedom. 2014. "Boko Haram and the Evolving Salafi Jihadist Threat in Nigeria." In Boko Haram: Islamism, politics, security and the state in Nigeria, edited by Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, 158-191. Leiden, Netherlands: African Studies Centre.

Pearson, Elizabeth. 2014. Nigeria: Do Nigeria's Female Suicide Attackers Point to Desperation or High Ambition for Boko Haram? In All Africa. Cape Town: All Africa.

Pearson, Elizabeth. 2014. 2015. "Boko Haram and Nigeria's Female Bombers." Nigerian Security no. 35 (5).

Pérouse de Montclos, Marc-Antoine. 2014. Nigeria's Interminable Insurgency? Addressing the Boko Haram Crisis. In Research Paper. London: Chatman House, The Royal Institute of International Affairs.

Pérouse de Montclos, Marc-Antoine. 2015. Boko Haram Regional Issues Around the Uprising. In Fondation Jean-Jaurès.

Pieri, Zacharias, Serrano, Rafael. 2014. "By the Numbers: The Nigerian State's Efforts to Counter Boko Haram." In Boko Haram: Islamism, politics, security and the state in Nigeria, edited by Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, 192- 212. Leiden, Netherlands: African Studies Centre.

Press, Associated. 2014. "U.N. Security Council declares Boko Haram terrorist group linked to al-Qaida." WJLA Washington, 23 May 2014.

Redder, Hakon. 2015. "APM Terminals Bygger Kæmpehavn i Afrika." Børsen, 12th of August.

Reuters. 2015. Refugees Fleeing Boko Haram Raids Flood Niger's Diffa Region http://www.voanews.com/content/refugees-fleeing-boko-haram-flood-niger-diffa-region/2873785.html

Roulo, Claudette. 2014. U.S. Military to Assist in Search for Missing Nigerian Girls. http://archive.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=122207

Russia Today. 2014. US Reaper drone crashes at Niger airport https://www.rt.com/news/197668-drone-crash-niger-airport/

Sampson, Isaac Terwase. 2015. "Between Boko Haram and the Joint Task Force: Assessing the Dilemma of Counter-Terrorism and Human Rights in Northern Nigeria." Journal of African Law no. 59 (01):25-63.

Sarch, M. T. 2001. "Fishing and farming at Lake Chad: Institutions for access to natural resources." Journal of Environmental Management no. 62 (2):185-199. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1006/jema.2001.0430.

SITE. 2015. IS Fighters and Supporters Welcome Boko Haram Pledge, Tout International Network.

Smith, Mike. 2015. Boko Haram: Inside Nigeria's Unholy War. London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd.

Solomon, Hussein. 2015. Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism in Africa: Fighting Insurgency from Al Shabaab, Ansar Dine and Boko Haram. Edited by Stuart Croft, New Security Challenges. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Strazzari, Francesco. 2015. Azawad and the rights of passage: the role of illicit trade in the logic of armed group formation in northern Mali. In Report january 2015, edited by Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre: The Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre.

Thurston, Alex. 2015. Guest Post: An Account from Diffa, Niger about the War with Boko Haram. https://sahelblog.wordpress.com/2015/07/16/guest-post-an-account-from-diffa-niger-about-the-war-with-boko-haram/

Tull, Denis M. 2015. Cameroon and Boko Haram: Time to Think beyond Terrorism and Security. In SWP Comments, edited by Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik: German Institute for International and Security Affairs.

UN Human Rights Council. 2015. Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on violations and abuses committed by Boko Haram and the impact on human rights in the affected countries. United Nations Human Rights Council.

UN OCHA. 2015. Bulletin humanitaire Niger. In Bulletin humanitaire, edited by Dieudonne Bamouni: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

UNHCR. 2014. Boko Haram Attacks in Nigeria Force 13,000 to flee Cameroon. http://unhcr.org/print/546228896.html

Whitlock, Craig 2015. "Pentagon setting up drone base in Africa to track Boko Haram fighters." the Washington Post, October 14, 2015.

Yusuff, Sodiq 2014. EXCLUSIVE: Chad 'fuelling' Boko Haram insurgency with eyes on Borno oil deposits. https://www.thecable.ng/exclusive-chad-fuelling-boko-haram-insurgency-eyes-borno-oil-deposits/

Zenn, Jacob. 2013. Boko Haram's International Connections: Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. G:\Global Regulering\Boko Haram\Litterature_Boko_Haram.Data\Ny litteratur endnu ikke registreret\Boko Haram's International Connections _ Combating Terrorism Center at West Point.html/

Zenn, Jacob 2014. "Boko Haram and the Kidnapping of the Chibok Schoolgirls." CTC Sentinel no. 7 (5):1-28.

AA. 2012. "The Popular Discourses of Salafi Radicalism and Salafi Counter-radicalism in Nigeria: A Case Study of Boko Haram." Journal of Religion in Africa no. 42:118-144.

DIIS · Danish Institute for International Studies

The Danish Institute for International Studies is a leading public institute for independent research and analysis of international affairs. We conduct and communicate multidisciplinary research on globalisation, security, development and foreign policy. DIIS aims to use our research results to influence the agenda in research, policy and public debate, and we put great effort into informing policymakers and the public of our results and their possible applications.

Defence and Security Studies at DIIS

This publication is part of the Defence and Security Studies that DIIS carries out for the Danish Ministry of Defence. The aim of these studies is to provide multidisciplinary in-depth knowledge on topics that are central for Danish defence and security policy, both currently and in the long term. The design and the conclusions of the research are entirely independent. Conclusions do not reflect the views of the ministries involved or any other government agency, nor do they constitute an official DIIS position. Additional information about DIIS and our Defence and Security Studies can be found at www.diis.dk.