

# HOW BOKO HARAM BECAME THE ISLAMIC STATE'S WEST AFRICA PROVINCE

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Even before it burst into the headlines with its brazen April 2014 abduction of nearly three hundred schoolgirls from the town of Chibok in Nigeria's northeastern Borno State, sparking an unprecedented amount of social media communication in the process, the Nigerian militant group Boko Haram had already distinguished itself as one of the fastest evolving of its kind, undergoing several major transformations in just over half a decade. In a very short period of time, the group went from being a small militant band focused on localized concerns and using relatively low levels of violence to a significant terrorist organization with a clearer *jihadist* ideology to a major insurgency seizing and holding large swathes of territory that was dubbed “the most deadly terrorist group in the world” by the Institute for Economics and Peace, based on the sheer number of deaths it caused in 2014.<sup>1</sup> More recently, Boko Haram underwent another evolution with its early 2015 pledge of allegiance to the Islamic State and its subsequent rebranding as the “Islamic State West Africa Province” (ISWAP).

The ideological, rhetorical, and operational choices made by Boko shifted considerably in each of these iterations, as did its tactics. Indeed the nexus between these three elements—ideology, rhetoric, and operations—is the key to correctly interpreting Boko Haram's strategic objectives at each stage in its evolution, and to eventually countering its pursuit of these goals.

## **Boko Haram 1.0**

The emergence of the militant group that would become known as Boko Haram cannot be understood without reference to the social, religious, economic, and political milieu of



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northern Nigeria.<sup>2</sup> While it is murky, some accounts link the group's origins back to the *Maitatsine* uprisings of the early 1980s, which left thousands dead and cut a path of destruction across five north-eastern Nigerian states that, three decades later, would bear the brunt of Boko Haram attacks. Certainly there are comparisons to be drawn between Boko Haram and the earlier movement in terms of ideology, objectives, and *modus operandi*.

According to most accounts, the name *Boko Haram* is itself derived from the combination of the Hausa word for “book” (as in “book learning”), *boko*, and the Arabic term *haram*, which designates those things that are ungodly or sinful. Thus “Boko Haram” is not only the group's common name,<sup>3</sup> but also its slogan to the effect that “Western education (and such product that arises from it) is sacrilege.”<sup>4</sup> The group's founder, *Ustaz* Mohammed Yusuf, once described the cosmological view that resulted from such an ideology in a 2009 interview with the BBC: “Western-style education is mixed with issues that run contrary to our beliefs in Islam. Like rain. We believe it is a creation of God rather than an evaporation caused by the sun that condenses and becomes rain. Like saying the world is a sphere. If it runs contrary to the teachings of Allah, we reject it. We also reject the theory of Darwinism.”<sup>5</sup>

Notwithstanding these rather eccentric beliefs, the group proved a useful instrument for the worldly ambitions of certain politicians in northeastern Nigeria, including Ali Modu Sheriff, who availed himself of the support of the group's leaders and their organization in his successful 2003 bid for the governorship of Borno State. A victorious Sheriff subsequently appointed a prominent Boko Haram member, *Alhaji* Buji Foi, to his cabinet as state commissioner of religious affairs during his first term, thus giving the sect access to not inconsiderable public resources. During this period,

Mohammed Yusuf was even able to establish a mosque—tellingly named for the thirteenth-century forefather of contemporary salafism Ibn Taymiyyah—as well as a school in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State.

As the group's relations with state and local authorities soured after 2007, what little regard it had for Nigeria's traditional Muslim hierarchy also declined. The introduction of Islamic law (*sharia*) in the twelve northern Nigerian states since 1999 was deemed insufficient by Mohammed Yusuf and his followers, who argued that the country's ruling class as a whole was marred by corruption and even Muslim northern leaders were irredeemably tainted by “Western-style” ambitions. Instead, the followers of Boko Haram envisaged a “pure” *shari'a* state that would ostensibly be both more transparent and just than the existing order. In fact, as early as 2004, even as the group was enjoying the favor of allies like the newly ensconced governor of Borno, it was simultaneously withdrawing into isolation, setting up a settlement near Kanamma, Yobe State, known locally as “Afghanistan,” from whence its members launched occasional “Taliban-like” sorties against those local (largely Muslim) elites whom they viewed as corrupt.

During this period, the group launched small-scale attacks against people engaged in activities viewed as *haram*, including gambling, drinking alcohol, and prostitution. The assaults were fairly simple operations, with the attackers often arriving on motorcycles or even local three-wheel taxis, shooting their targets or tossing bombs at them before quickly driving away.

Nevertheless, an uneasy truce—punctured by occasional skirmishes with police and other local authorities with which Boko Haram was increasingly at odds—prevailed until June 2009, when an altercation during a funeral procession quickly escalated into a full-fledged riot

during which more than a dozen people were injured.<sup>6</sup> A month later, a police raid on a Boko Haram safe house in neighboring Bauchi State led to reprisal attacks on police and five days of subsequent rioting. Escalating clashes then spread from Bauchi to other northern states, including Kano, Yobe, and Borno. In response, security forces besieged and stormed the group's mosque compound in Maiduguri. The violence finally petered out after Mohammed Yusuf was captured, beaten, interrogated, and finally shot—supposedly while attempting to escape—but not before more than 700 people were killed and numerous public buildings, including government offices, police stations, schools, and churches, were destroyed. With most of its leaders as well as several prominent adherents, including Buji Foi, the former Borno State religious affairs commissioner, dead, the group receded from public view, leading many to conclude that it was hopelessly fractured, if not altogether finished.

## **Boko Haram 2.0**

Far from being dead, however, the group underwent a dramatic transformation. The first sign of this change, in hindsight, was a June 2010 *Al Jazeera* interview with Abu Musab Abdel Wadoud, a.k.a. Abdelmalek Droukdel, the emir of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). The head of al-Qaeda's North African franchise stated that his group would provide Boko Haram with weapons, training, and other support in order to expand its own reach into sub-Saharan Africa as a way of gaining "strategic depth," "defend[ing] Muslims in Nigeria and stop[ping] the advance of a minority of Crusaders."<sup>7</sup> At the time, this claim was widely dismissed, both because Droukdel was known for his outsized ambitions and because he was known to be having internal difficulties with the more dynamic southern commanders within AQIM itself.<sup>8</sup>

Shortly afterward, however, Mohammed Yusuf's former deputy, Abubakar bin Muhammad Shekau, who was thought to have been killed during the 2009 uprising, surfaced in a video that might be described as "classic al-Qaeda." Wearing a headdress and framed by an AK-47 and a stack of religious books, Shekau proclaimed himself the new head of Boko Haram and promised vengeance: "Do not think *jihād* is over. Rather *jihād* has just begun."<sup>9</sup> Significantly, he threatened attacks not only against the Nigerian state, but also against "outposts of Western culture." In a published manifesto, Shekau linked the *jihād* being fought by Boko Haram with *jihād*ist efforts globally, especially those of "the soldiers of Allah in the Islamic State of Iraq."

Two months later, in September 2010, Boko Haram fighters dramatically broke into a federal prison in Bauchi State and freed more than one hundred of their fellow members who had been awaiting trial since the previous year's uprising. During the course of the assault, which involved bombs and automatic weapons, the militants also set free more than 750 other prisoners and scattered leaflets warning of further violence.

The latter was not long in coming. On Christmas Eve 2010, the group set off a string of seven improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in Jos, Plateau State. The bombings, which targeted the town's Christian communities, left 80 dead and scores of others wounded. The group subsequently carried out a number of other attacks—mainly small IEDs thrown from moving vehicles or planted near targets in Maiduguri and Bauchi—aimed primarily at candidates in the 2011 elections it had denounced.

Those elections, now considered by Boko Haram's leadership to be a forbidden "innovation" (*bid'ah*) imposed by the West, were already contentious in that a significant number of Muslims, espe-

cially in the country's Northeast, deeply resented the candidacy of President Goodluck Jonathan, a southern Christian. Jonathan had succeeded President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, a northern Muslim, after the latter's unexpected death in 2010, and his decision to seek a full term upset the informal compact within the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP), whereby the presidency alternated every eight years between Christians, who make up the overwhelming majority of the population in the southern part of the country, and Muslims, who traditionally dominate the North.

On June 16, 2011, Boko Haram demonstrated a very significant and ominous tactical and operational upgrade in its capabilities when it launched a suicide attack using a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED). Believed to be the first suicide attack to take place in Nigeria, the operation targeted the Inspector-General of the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) in an attack that killed two and destroyed several dozen police vehicles. It showed that, far from being a spent force, Boko Haram had adopted one of the deadliest instruments in the *jihadist* arsenal. Moreover, it also demonstrated that the militant group was capable of carrying out attacks far from its usual areas of operation. Interestingly, just two days prior, the group had issued a statement in which it boasted ominously for the first time of ties to *jihadists* in Somalia. "Very soon," the statement said, "we will wage *jihad*... Our *jihadists* have arrived in Nigeria from Somalia where they received real training on warfare from our brethren who made that country ungovernable."<sup>10</sup>

Two months later, on August 26—after more than a half-dozen smaller attacks on government officials, establishments that serve alcohol, and churches—Boko Haram carried out another major attack, sending a suicide bomber in an explosives-laden car into

the UN offices in Abuja. Twenty-five people were killed and at least 80 were wounded in the attack, the first by the group against an international target. The group subsequently released a video of the bomber offering praise to slain al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden and referring to the UN as a "forum of all global evil,"<sup>11</sup> putting it squarely in the ranks of terrorists who have specifically targeted UN agencies in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Algeria.

In the wake of the UN attack, there was little letup in the violence. Boko Haram carried out a number of complex operations, including: the November 4, 2011, assault on Damaturu, capital of Yobe State, involving suicide attacks on various police stations followed by a massacre in the Christian quarter of the city, which left 150 people dead; the 2011 Christmas morning bombing outside the Catholic church in Madalla, near Abuja, which killed at least 32 people as they exited Mass, and the four other explosions that went off that day across Nigeria; and the coordinated January 20, 2012, attacks in Kano, Nigeria's second-largest metropolis and the Muslim North's economic, political, and cultural hub, which left more than 185 people dead. The attacks in Damaturu and Madalla were consistent with the ultimatum the group had issued demanding that Christians leave northern Nigeria.

### **Boko Haram 3.0**

The year 2012 proved to be another significant milestone in Boko Haram's ongoing evolution. While foreign links were a critical part of Boko Haram's ideological and operational shift from "version 1.0" to the far more lethal "version 2.0," the takeover of northern Mali by various AQIM-linked Islamist militant groups at the end of March 2012 provided a whole new set of opportunities, as well as the impetus for the emergence of "version 3.0."

In fact, evidence has emerged that during the nearly ten months in which AQIM and its various allies—including Ansar Dine and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO)—held sway over northern Mali, Boko Haram was able to set up a number of bases in the territory where hundreds of its recruits received ideological instruction, weapons and other training. This cadre subsequently raised the tactical sophistication and operational tempo of Boko Haram's attacks in Nigeria, elevating the group to the level of a full-fledged insurgency. Following the French-led Operation Serval intervention in Mali, the Nigerian militants, possibly accompanied by a few foreign nationals, returned to northern Nigeria not only with training and some combat experience in desert warfare, but also with vehicles and heavy weapons, including shoulder-fired missiles. Within weeks, Boko Haram fighters were raiding military barracks for even more weapons, staging increasingly bold prison breaks, destroying numerous schools, hospitals, and other government buildings, engaging the Nigerian military in pitched open battles, and, in some cases, totally overrunning border towns. By the middle of 2013, the militants had effectively evicted Nigerian government troops and officials from at least ten local government areas along the borders of Niger, Chad, and Cameroon and set themselves up as the *de facto* authority in the region, replacing Nigerian flags with their own banner, taxing and otherwise ordering citizens about, and creating a large area within which they could operate with even greater impunity.<sup>12</sup>

The influence of foreign elements, especially AQIM, has also been witnessed in the proliferation of kidnappings-for-ransom in Nigeria—the abductions being almost a signature of AQIM over the years. The catalogue of kidnapping victims has now come to include not only the

schoolgirls from Chibok, but, previously, a French family of seven (subsequently freed after the payment of a reported \$3 million ransom and the release from Cameroonian prisons of some sixteen Boko Haram members)<sup>13</sup>; a French priest, two Italian priests, and a Canadian nun, all of whom have likewise been freed; and ten Chinese citizens abducted from a worksite in northern Cameroon in May 2014 and likewise subsequently freed upon payment of ransom.<sup>14</sup>

But kidnappings for ransom—not only of higher-profile foreign nationals, but of hundreds, if not thousands, of Nigerians whose families have had to offer more modest payments, with most on the order of \$10,000 to \$20,000—represented only a part of the group's rather diverse funding stream. As previously noted, Boko Haram enjoyed a partnership with state and local politicians as recently as six or seven years ago and, thanks to well-placed members, appears to have benefited from public resources. There is reason to believe that, even after the uprising and suppression of the group in 2009, some political actors funneled resources to it. Some cells have also been accused of carrying out bank robberies and other crimes, although exactly how pervasive this activity has been is the subject of some debate. Two key aspects to bear in mind are that Boko Haram developed a very diversified and resilient model of supporting itself and that, as it increasingly took on the character of an insurgency, it was able to essentially “live off the land” with very modest additional resources required. Both factors have rendered efforts to cut off its funding challenging. On the other hand, in a region where more than two-thirds of the population lives on less than one U.S. dollar a day, the funding, no matter how modest, can go very far. For example, it is widely known that Boko Haram leaders pay *al-majiri* youth<sup>15</sup> literally pennies a day to

track and report on troop movements as well as to transport weapons and other supplies for the militants.

In any event, it was clear that, by mid-2014, Boko Haram had more than sufficient resources to go on the offensive. On August 6, fighters captured the town of Gwoza, on Nigeria's border with Cameroon. On August 25, having destroyed the bridge linking the town to the Borno State capital of Maiduguri some 120 kilometers to the southwest, the group attacked and destroyed army barracks in the town of Ngala, just south of Lake Chad, and then proceeded to take the town of Gamboru, a few kilometers away. The seizure of the twin towns gave Boko Haram control of a local government area with a population of roughly a quarter of a million people. A week later, on September 1, Boko Haram fighters swung clockwise to overrun their biggest prize yet: Bama, a city with a population of nearly 300,000 just 60 kilometers southeast of Maiduguri.

While Boko Haram never seemed to have the wherewithal to seize Maiduguri, an urban sprawl with more than a million inhabitants and almost as many internally displaced persons (IDPs), territory it did hold formed a pincer around the city and positioned the group to launch regular probing attacks that added to the misery of those caught inside. Meanwhile, militant forces went on the offensive beyond long-suffering Borno State to take over towns and local government areas in neighboring regions.

Wherever it took control, Boko Haram, like the so-called Islamic State in the territories it has captured in Syria and Iraq, raised the black *jihadi* flag over public buildings and brutalized those who failed to adhere to its extremist Islamist strictures. In Yobe State, people caught smoking cigarettes were summarily executed.<sup>16</sup> In Borno State, the spokesman for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Maiduguri told journalists that the insur-

gents were beheading men who refused to convert to Islam and forcing their widows to convert and marry militants.<sup>17</sup> According to a tally by Open Doors, a Netherlands-based non-denominational international organization that advocates for Christian victims of religious persecution, more than 178 churches were destroyed by Boko Haram in the month of August 2014 alone.<sup>18</sup> Muslims who do not share Boko Haram's extremist ideology were likewise targeted: in May 2014, the Emir of Gwoza, Shehu Mustapha Idrissa Timta, was killed by Boko Haram a few weeks after he gave a speech denouncing the group's methods, while in early September the Islamists executed the most senior Muslim cleric in Gamboru Ngala shortly after overrunning the district.<sup>19</sup>

As troubling as the humanitarian challenge was, even more ominous were the growing ambitions of Boko Haram's leader, Abubakar Shekau, who proclaimed a "caliphate" in northern Nigeria in an hour-long video released on August 24. "Thanks be to Allah who gave victory to our brethren in Gwoza and made it part of the Islamic caliphate," the statement said. "We did not do it on our own. Allah used us to capture Gwoza; Allah is going to use Islam to rule Gwoza, Nigeria and the whole world." In reporting the rambling message, *Al Jazeera* noted that while the Boko Haram chief had previously voiced support for ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, there was no indication in the new video that the former was still associating himself with the latter and "as such, it was not clear if Shekau was declaring himself to be a part of Baghdadi's call or if he was referring to a separate Nigerian caliphate."<sup>20</sup> At least, not yet.

## **Boko Haram 4.0**

Throughout the last months of 2014, evidence emerged of an increasing convergence between the Nigerian militants and their ISIL counterparts, not only in

terms of symbolism and ideology but also in insurgency doctrine. Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau first expressed “support” for the Islamic State’s caliph, Abu Bakr al-Bagdadi, earlier in the year, but the pace of at least virtual exchange between the two groups quickened over the months that followed. Boko Haram began adding the *jihadist* black banner (*rayat al-uqab*) to its previous crossed-guns-and-Koran logo, and including the Islamic State’s de facto anthem, “My Umma, Dawn has Arrived,” in the musical repertoire on its videos. In one video released in November, Shekau was even shown appearing in a mosque to declare that he was establishing his own “Islamic Caliphate” and sending his greetings to the “brothers” in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen, as well as to “the Caliphate in Iraq and Syria.” In case anyone missed the intended parallelism of the messaging, the high-quality video cuts to a clip of al-Bagdadi proclaiming his own caliphate in Mosul in June.

Meanwhile, ISIL’s official English-language magazine, *Dabiq*, cited Boko Haram’s kidnapping of the Chibok schoolgirls as precedent for its enslavement and sexual abuse of Yazidi women and girls in Iraq. In turn, Boko Haram apparently took a cue from ISIL and began to stoke sectarian conflict between Muslims in Nigeria with its attacks on the country’s small minority of adherents to Shi’a Islam. Both groups shed their previous hit-and-run guerrilla tactics in favor of seizing and holding increasingly large chunks of territory. As one of the most astute observers of the region, former U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria John Campbell, noted at the time, “Boko Haram’s focus appears now to be on the acquisition of territory... It also appears to be moving in the direction of providing services, especially security for the residents in the territories it controls.”<sup>21</sup>

At the beginning of 2015, in a stunning humiliation to the Nigerian army,

Boko Haram stormed Baga on the shores of Lake Chad, one of the last urban centers in the region remaining in government hands. Even more importantly, the town was supposed host the multinational joint task force set up by Nigeria and its neighbors—Cameroon, Chad, and Niger—to combat the militants. The other African forces had not yet arrived on post when Boko Haram overwhelmed the Nigerian troops, many of whom reportedly threw down their weapons and fled, and took control of the military base that was to serve as the command center for the regional effort to combat the insurgency. The death toll from the attack was reported to be as high as 2,000 people, while thousands of others were forced to flee to other parts of Nigeria or into Chad. And, as satellite images subsequently released by Amnesty International so graphically illustrated, the insurgents literally wiped large portions of Baga and several nearby towns off the face of the map, burning homes, schools, businesses, and clinics.<sup>22</sup>

While a major assault on Maiduguri by Boko Haram on January 25 was repulsed,<sup>23</sup> it appears the strategic objective of that attack was as much to storm the city as to underscore a political message, given that it came the day after the Nigerian president campaigned there amid heavy security and sought to reassure citizens that the insurgency would be defeated. On the other hand, the group’s simultaneous attack on Monguno, about 135 kilometers away near the borders with Chad and Cameroon, was successful, resulting in the capture of the city with its population of more than 110,000, as well as the overrunning of a large military base nearby. The seizure of Monguno, which sits at the intersection of three major roads, removed one of the key buffers protecting Maiduguri and the two million people who reside or have taken refuge there from complete encirclement by Boko Haram forces.

Moreover, Boko Haram took to using the territory it held or cleared as a base from which to launch a campaign of terrorist attacks reaching other Nigerian states as well as into neighboring countries—some of which, like Niger, are already under pressure from militants linked to al-Qaeda’s North African affiliate, as well as the spillover of the continuing disintegration of Libya. Niger’s President Mahamadou Issoufou was subsequently quoted as lamenting that “the Islamic State is at our door.”<sup>24</sup>

In fact, exactly two months after the Nigerian head of state’s comments were published, an audio recording purportedly from Boko Haram’s leader, Abubakar Shekau, hailed Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as “caliph” and declared: “We announce our allegiance to the Caliph... and will hear and obey in times of difficulty and prosperity.”<sup>25</sup> The oath of fealty (*bay’ah*) was quickly accepted by the group within days.<sup>26</sup> The timing was not without its strategic logic; notwithstanding its string of victories through the beginning of 2015, Boko Haram subsequently suffered a series of military defeats at the hands of the Nigerian armed forces, apparently reinforced by military contractors from South Africa and other countries,<sup>27</sup> as well as a multinational force from neighboring countries (including Niger, Chad, and Cameroon). For the first time since the insurgents began seizing territory nearly two years earlier, the Nigerian government and its regional allies began pushing back and systematically retaking towns. Likewise, the Islamic State had seen its rampage through Syria and Iraq stall, and the group was increasingly put on the defensive by operations like the massive Iranian-backed Iraqi offensive to retake Tikrit. The formal link-up between the two *jihadist* groups thus gave both a much-needed propaganda fillip.

## Ties that bind

Boko Haram’s merger with the so-called Islamic State does not appear have much immediate impact on the battlefield. The different social and political contexts in which each operates and the vast geographical distance separating the two groups meant that each will have to face its foes with little more than moral support from the other, notwithstanding some evidence of collaboration in cyberspace and in terms of media production. In fact, in the two weeks after it was accepted into the Islamic State’s fold, Boko Haram, or “Islamic State West Africa Province” (ISWAP), as it has started to style itself, lost control of most of the towns and other areas that it was holding in the face of pressure from Nigerian troops.<sup>28</sup>

Still, Boko Haram’s affiliation with the Islamic State is strategically significant, insofar as it could lead to the internationalization of a threat that has up to now largely been confined geographically. There is a risk that fighters from North Africa and other areas, finding it harder to migrate to the self-proclaimed caliphate’s territory in the Levant, could well choose to move to the Boko Haram emirate instead. IS spokesman Abu Mohammad al-Adnani, in his communiqué accepting the Nigerian group’s allegiance on behalf of his leader, said as much, telling Muslims who could not get to Syria or Iraq that “a new door for you to migrate to the land of Islam and fight” had opened in Africa.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, support for the multinational African anti-Boko Haram force from the United States, which in October 2015 announced the deployment of about three hundred soldiers to Cameroon to provide intelligence and other assistance,<sup>30</sup> could render the Nigerian militants’ fight all the more attractive to aspiring foreign *jihadists*. On the other hand, Boko Haram’s success as a local movement could be diluted if it becomes merely another “province”



of a far-flung “Islamic State” focused on a broader *jihadi* agenda.

Another possible course of evolution for Boko Haram has also been hinted at by the Islamic State's *Dabiq* publication. In its special issue heralding the allegiance of the Nigerian group, the journal highlighted that “Christians” were being “terrorized” and “captured and enslaved” by Boko Haram and allegations that Nigeria's “large population of hostile crusaders” had “not shied away from massacring the Muslims of West Africa”<sup>31</sup>—rhetoric aimed at stoking conflict along sectarian lines and promising stepped-up terrorist attacks, ostensibly in reprisal. It certainly points to a possible new operational emphasis for a militarily weakened but still operationally effective militant group—an interpretation that finds confirmation in a string of attacks that the group has carried out in subsequent months across Chad, Niger, and Cameroon, as well as Nigeria.

It remains to be seen whether the potential benefits of affiliation with the Islamic State—including possible new streams of recruits, funding, and media and other support—and the ideological and operational evolution that comes with the link-up will offset Boko Haram's early 2015 battlefield losses or outweigh the damage that it will incur as a result. What is clear, however, is that Boko Haram has shown once again that it remains one of the fastest-evolving *jihadi* groups, and one that bears close watching not only for its challenge to the security of Africa's most populous country and its biggest economy, but also for its not insignificant threat to the wider region.



1. See *Global Terrorism Index 2015: Measuring and Understanding the Impact of Terrorism* (Sydney: Institute for Economics and Peace, 2015), [http://static.visionofhumanity.org/sites/default/files/2015%20Global%20Terrorism%20Index%20Report\\_0\\_0.pdf](http://static.visionofhumanity.org/sites/default/files/2015%20Global%20Terrorism%20Index%20Report_0_0.pdf). According to the data sets compiled by the report's authors, Boko Haram caused 6,644 deaths in 2014, while the Islamic State was responsible for 6,073 deaths.
2. See J. Peter Pham, *Boko Haram's Evolving Threat*, African Security Brief 20 (Washington: Africa Center for Strategic Studies, National Defense University, 2012).
3. The group's formal name is *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad* (“Congregation of the People of the Tradition [of the Prophet] for Proselytism and Jihad”). See Freedom C. Onuoha, “The Islamist Challenge: Nigeria's Boko Haram Crisis Explained,” *African Security Review* 19, no. 1 (2010), 54-67.
4. Abimbola Adesoji, “The Boko Haram Uprising and Islamic Revivalism in Nigeria,” *African Spectrum* 45, no. 2 (2010), 100.
5. Joe Boyle, “Nigeria's ‘Taliban’ Enigma,” BBC, July 31, 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8172270.stm>
6. See Uri Friedman, “The Bike-Helmet Law That Helped Trigger an Insurgency in Nigeria,” *Atlantic*, May 22, 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/05/the-bike-helmet-law-that-triggered-an-insurgency-in-nigeria/371301/>
7. “Al Qaeda Makes Move on Troubled Nigeria,” UPI, June 17, 2010, [http://www.upi.com/Top\\_News/Special/2010/06/17/Al-Qaida-makes-a-move-on-troubled-Nigeria/79021276792262/](http://www.upi.com/Top_News/Special/2010/06/17/Al-Qaida-makes-a-move-on-troubled-Nigeria/79021276792262/)
8. J. Peter Pham, “Foreign Influences and Shifting Horizons: The Ongoing Evolution of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb,” *Orbis* 55, no. 2 (Spring 2011), 240-254. See also J. Peter Pham, “The Dangerous ‘Pragmatism’ of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb,” *Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 2, no. 1 (January-June 2011), 15-29.
9. Nick Tattersall and William Maclean, “Nigerian Sect Leader Praises al-Qaeda, Warns U.S.,” Reuters, July 13, 2010, accessed November 1, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/07/13/us-nigeria-sect-idUSTRE66C5PK20100713>
10. “Nigerian Islamists Vow ‘Fiercer’ Attacks,” Agence France-Presse, June 15, 2011, accessed November 1, 2015, <http://www.modernghana.com/news/334668/1/nigerian-islamists-vow-fiercer-attacks.html>
11. “Nigeria UN Bomb: Video of ‘Boko Haram Bomber’ Released,” BBC, September 18, 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14964554>
12. See Yusuf Alli, “Tension as Boko Haram Grounds 10 LGs in Borno,” *Nation*, April 20, 2013, <http://thenationonlineng.net/new/tension->

- as-boko-haram-grounds-10-lgs-in-borno-2/. The ten local government areas overrun at the time of this writing—Marte, Magumeri, Mobbar, Gubio, Guzamala, Abadam, Kukawa, Kaga, Nganzai, and Monguno—have a combined area of nearly 33,500 square kilometers, slightly larger than that of Belgium and Luxembourg combined, and a population of some 1.5 million people.
13. "Nigeria's Boko Haram 'Got \$3m Ransom' to Free Hostages," BBC, April 26, 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-22320077>
  14. Another favorite AQIM tactic—one which the North African group's *kata'ib* have used to deadly effect for years in Nigeria—is to dress up in stolen or purchased military uniforms and slaughter civilians. Boko Haram militants apparently used the tactic in several attacks in the Gwoza district of Borno State last week, which resulted in a death toll as high as 400 to 500 people.
  15. Derived from the Arabic for "migrants," the term refers millions of boys in northern Nigeria who beg alms for their Islamic teachers in return for shelter and Quranic lessons.
  16. See "Boko Haram Seizes Another Nigerian Town," *Al Jazeera* (Doha), August 21, 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2014/08/boko-haram-seizes-another-nigerian-town-2014821151552714624.html>
  17. See Taiwo George, "Boko Haram 'Beheading Christians' in Gwoza," *Cable* (Nigeria), August 28, 2014, <http://www.thecable.ng/boko-haram-beheading-christians-in-gwoza>
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