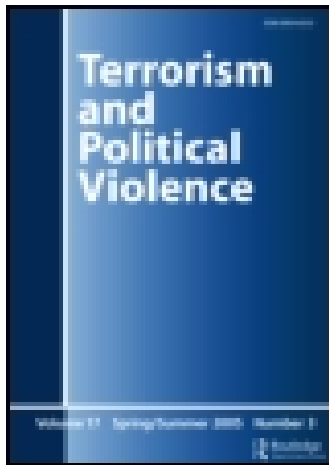


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Theorizing the Expansion of the Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria

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This research investigates the dramatic expansion of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria in the last few years. Militant activity has expanded in terms of frequency and severity of attacks, geographic scope, target selection, and strategies used. The evolution of the group and the trajectory of violence are best explained through four overlapping theoretical strands. These include the growing fragmentation of the movement, development of strategic ties with Al Qaeda affiliates, strong-armed counterterrorism operations that further radicalized the movement, and exploitation of the porous border area that separates Nigeria from its northern neighbors.

Keywords Boko Haram, insurgency, Islamists, Jihad, terrorism

This research seeks to explore and theorize the dramatic expansion of the Boko Haram insurgency in recent years. Boko Haram is a militant Islamist organization operating primarily in the northeastern parts of Nigeria. The group is often labeled as a Salafist Jihadi movement bent on purging Islam from detrimental outside influences, returning Islam to the state practiced by pious ancestors and condemning non-conformists as infidels.¹ In the Hausa language, ‘*Boko Haram*’ literally translates into “Western education is sinful/forbidden.”² Stagnant economic conditions, embedded corruption, moral and religious decadence, and police brutality have often been touted as reasons for the group’s emergence.³ The movement preaches an anti-Statist ideology, chastises the Nigerian religious and political establishment as “irredeemable,” and calls for the widespread application of Sharia law as the instrument of governance.⁴

The exact date of Boko Haram’s origin is disputed, however, it is widely acknowledged that the group has been around since 2002.⁵ While there have been sporadic bursts of violence and skirmishes with the security forces since the early days of the group, the level of violence has risen to astonishing levels in the last three years. Since early 2014, in particular, the group has exploded onto the global

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consciousness with a series of brazen maneuvers. In April 2014, Boko Haram staged a daring mass abduction of over 250 schoolgirls from a secondary school in the town of Chibok in the Borno state. From late July of 2014, the militants have captured large swaths of land across northeastern Nigeria and proclaimed an “Islamic Caliphate,” drawing disquieting parallels with the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Moreover, the group has unleashed female suicide bombers, targeted high-profile political figures, and cultivated ever-deepening ties with regional jihadists. Boko Haram-related violence has accounted for nearly 5,000 fatalities in the first seven months of 2014, underlining the growing destructiveness of the insurgency.⁶

Given this context, this research focuses on the escalation of the Boko Haram insurgency. The first section explores in detail how Boko Haram has metamorphosed from a nondescript militant organization based in northeastern Nigeria to a feared terrorist outfit presenting a formidable security challenge not only to the Nigerian state but also the wider region. It is argued here that, conceptually, the insurgency has expanded along four distinct dimensions: frequency and severity of violence, geographic scope, target selection, and tactical maneuvers.

The second section addresses the principal research question underpinning this study. What accounts for the dramatic expansion in Boko Haram’s area of operations? The surge in violence has prompted a similar surge in the academic literature on the Boko Haram phenomenon. However, many accounts are descriptive in nature and any theorizing of the violence is mitigated not only by the ongoing nature of the insurgency but also the versatility of the movement. This study argues that the complexity of violence precludes the application of a single theoretical explanation. Instead, the trajectory of violence is best explained through four overlapping theoretical strands: the growing fragmentation of the movement, development of strategic ties with Al Qaeda affiliates, strong-armed counterterrorism operations that further radicalized the movement, and exploitation of the porous border area that separates Nigeria from its northern neighbors.

Many of the findings delineated in this study were drawn from a comprehensive dataset on Boko Haram-related incidents of violence that the author created (to be discussed later). Given the relative scarcity of systematic data on militant Islamist organizations as well as on conflict-prone countries such as Nigeria, it is hoped that this dataset would be an important contribution to the study of violence in Africa and beyond.

Boko Haram: An Overview

Most accounts trace the origins of the Boko Haram movement back to the Al-Haji Muhammadu Ndimi Mosque in Maiduguri, capital of Borno state.⁷ In 2002, a faction within the mosque became disenchanted with the Nigerian religious establishment and splintered from the group. They migrated to Kanamma, a village in Yobe state, and formed an isolationist community to lead an “ascetic life away from modern immorality.”⁸ Tensions with villagers over fishing rights led to a confrontation with the security forces in late 2003. Reportedly, group members burnt down the local police station and in retaliation the army laid siege to the group’s compound, killing a large number of militants in the process.⁹ The survivors from Kanamma moved back to Maiduguri in 2004 and reintegrated with the Al-Haji Muhammadu Mosque, then under the leadership of Mohammed Yusuf.¹⁰

While the group is universally referred to as Boko Haram, the name was not chosen by the group itself. As noted, Boko Haram loosely translates as “Western education is forbidden.” The group was given this name by villagers given its frequent diatribes against Western civilization. However, some sect members reject such a designation, insisting they are not opposed to formal education emanating from the West and that they only assert the supremacy of Islamic culture over Western culture.¹¹ The group prefers to call itself “Jama’atul Alhul Sunnah Lidda’wati wal Jihad,” which means “people committed to the propagation of the Prophet’s teachings and jihad.”¹²

Boko Haram laments the moral decadence of society due to its wholehearted embrace of Western culture and calls for the destruction of modern political, social, and economic institutions. Instead, the group advocates for an educational system based on the Quran, a political system based on the application of Sharia law, and an economic system pivoting around trading and farming.¹³

The period from 2004–2009 was one of relative calm for Boko Haram, albeit punctuated by bouts of violence. The group expanded into states such as Bauchi, Yobe, and Niger from their base in Maiduguri.¹⁴ Examples of violence in this period include attacks on police stations in several locations in Borno in late 2004 and intermittent attacks in Bauchi, Yobe, and Borno states.¹⁵ The sect’s trademark *modus operandi* during this period was the use of gunmen on motorbikes.¹⁶

Mohammad Yusuf was captured and later executed in a major anti-government revolt in July 2009.¹⁷ The revolt originated in Bauchi state, encompassed five northern states in all, caused an estimated 800 fatalities, and led to thousands being internally displaced as the military cracked down brutally. In its aftermath, Boko Haram was left in disarray; its leader was dead, thousands were detained, and several other top leaders fled across the border to seek sanctuary elsewhere.¹⁸

Abubakar Shekau emerged as the group’s new leader in 2010. Though few envisioned it at the time, the violence of July 2009 was to be the precursor to the general mayhem that Nigeria would be subjected to over the next five years. This escalatory period in the evolution of Boko Haram is addressed in detail next.

Evolution of Boko Haram

The group’s expansion can be conceptualized across multiple dimensions. First, there has been a marked increase in the frequency and intensity of attacks. Second, Boko Haram has considerably broadened its attacks across a wider geographic space. Third, in terms of target selection, from a narrow focus on the security forces and various government institutions, Boko Haram has expanded its attention to include a much wider cross section of society. Fourth, the *modus operandi* of the group has evolved dramatically over the last few months. The section that follows aims to illustrate this expansion across each of the above noted dimensions.

The findings in this section are mostly drawn from a unique dataset of Boko Haram-related incidents that the author constructed. The dataset includes 932 incidents from July 2009 till early August 2014. Any incident where Boko Haram claimed responsibility or where at least two sources attributed blame to the group is included here. Reprisal attacks carried out by the security forces and vigilante groups are also included. Each incident includes information on the state and town/village of incident, the number of fatalities, type of attack, perpetrators, target type, and weapons used, amongst others. The dataset is based primarily

on Nigerian and international newspaper sources. The author also relied on the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) of the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism. Furthermore, The Nigeria Security Tracker, a project of the Council on Foreign Relations' Africa Program, and the website <http://factsnigeriaviolence.org> were also useful for the task of accurately compiling a database of incidents.¹⁹ The construction of this dataset was challenging from a methodological standpoint. Particularly in a setting such as Nigeria, press reporting of violence can often be unreliable and imprecise; different sources may contain wildly divergent accounts of the same incident. Casualty figures cited in the media are also prone to manipulation by parties with vested interests. Given such concerns, the author consulted more than one source for each incident and undertook extensive cross-referencing with GTD and other sources in an effort to maximize reliability of data.

Surge in the Frequency and Intensity of Attacks

There has been a startling rise in the number of Boko Haram-related incidents and fatalities since 2011. The escalation of the group's campaign of violence is strongly captured in the author's dataset. As seen in Figure 1, on average, over 200 incidents related to Boko Haram have been recorded annually since 2011. Of particular interest is the dramatic spike in fatalities. The increasing menace posed by Boko Haram is clearly evidenced by the fact that the first seven months of 2014 had already seen nearly 5,000 fatalities, nearly double the number of fatalities in the whole of 2013.

Figure 2 takes a disaggregated look at monthly fatalities since January 2012 and provides a more detailed view of the gradual intensification of violence. For instance, every single month since January 2014 has seen a death toll of more than 400, a number exceeded only once in the preceding 24 months. Attacks have also become more severe in nature. The average number of fatalities per each attack in the first seven months of 2014 is 22. This represents an alarming increase with the average fatality rate per incident, rising from 4.7 in 2011 to 5.7 in 2012 and 14.2 in 2013. As Figure 3 demonstrates, nearly 50% of all incidents in 2014 resulted in more than 10 fatalities, up from 12% in 2012, and underscores the increasing brutality of Boko Haram militancy.

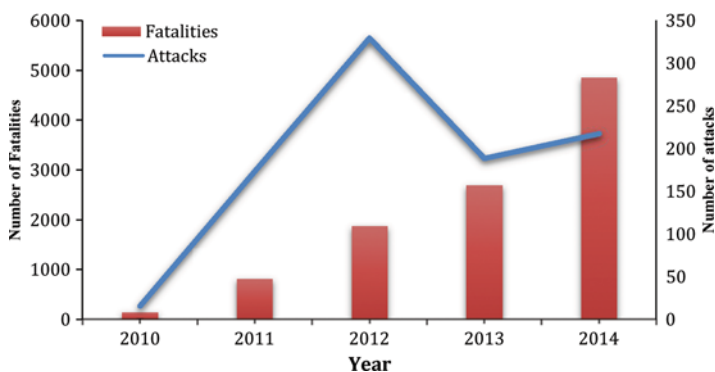


Figure 1. Boko Haram attacks and fatalities (2010–2014).

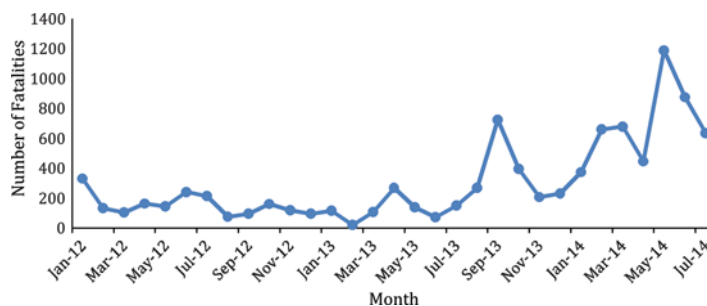


Figure 2. Fatalities by month (2012–2014).

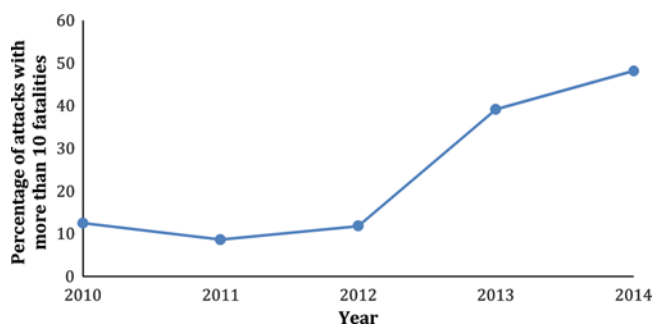


Figure 3. Percentage of attacks with more than 10 fatalities (2010–2014).

Geographic Dimensions of Boko Haram's Expansion

Rise in Violence in Rural Borno

An examination of the spatial trajectory of violence reveals fascinating insights. The state of Borno in northeast Nigeria remains the epicenter of violence, and well over 60% of all incidents from 2011 onwards were recorded in the state. A similarly skewed picture emerges in terms of fatalities, with Borno accounting for over 70% of fatalities in 2013 and just over 80% in the first seven months of 2014.²⁰

However, on closer scrutiny, there has been a remarkable transformation in the spatial distribution of violence within Borno. Over the last two years, much of the violence in Borno has shifted from the state capital of Maiduguri to other towns and villages in the state, often in rural areas. As Table 1 shows, the percentage of incidents and fatalities in Maiduguri has decreased sharply while the corresponding percentages for all other areas in Borno have shown an astonishing rise. The stacked area chart in Figure 4 shows a clear visual depiction of the geographic progression of violence in Borno and elsewhere.

Since early 2013, while Maiduguri has been relatively quiet, there has been an incessant sequence of Boko Haram-related incidents elsewhere in Borno, particularly in more rural locales. Significant incidents with mass casualties have been reported in numerous Local Government Areas (LGAs)²¹ in Borno, including Bama,

Table 1. The percentage of incidents and fatalities in Maiduguri and elsewhere in Borno state

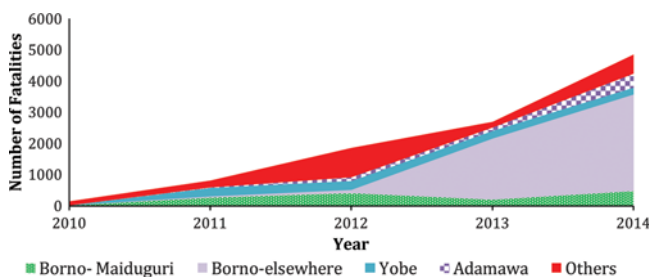
	2011	2012	2013	2014
Borno–Maiduguri incidents	91.4	75	23.8	5
Borno–elsewhere incidents	8.6	25	66.2	95
Borno–Maiduguri fatalities	89	79.4	9.6	13.3
Borno–elsewhere fatalities	11	20.6	90.4	86.7

Damboa, Gwoza, Konduga, Kukawa, and Ngala LGAs.²² In stark contrast, there were only seven reported incidents in Maiduguri over the first seven months of 2014. However, three of those incidents did lead to significantly high fatalities.²³

Expansion of Violence Beyond Northeastern Nigeria

Until recently, the brunt of Boko Haram’s campaign of violence had been confined to the northeastern states of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa. However, since late 2011, the group has significantly expanded the geographic scope of its activity, into other parts of Nigeria as well as outside of the country.²⁴ There have been numerous Boko Haram-linked attacks in states such as Bauchi, Kano, Plateau, Kaduna, and the federal capital of Abuja. Based on the author’s dataset, from 2011–2014, 29% of all incidents and nearly 20% of all fatalities connected to Boko Haram took place outside of the group’s traditional strongholds of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa. These include several high-profile attacks in the capital Abuja such as the bombing of the National Police Headquarters in June 2011 and the bombing of the United Nations building in August of the same year. Furthermore, there were at least three major explosions in Abuja between April and June of 2014.²⁵

There is a growing body of evidence that points to Boko Haram’s involvement in the conflict in northern Mali in 2012–2013. Group members travelled to Mali to fight alongside militant Islamist outfits such as Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) and Ansar-Dine.²⁶ According to some estimates, over 100 Boko Haram fighters were present in the city of Gao and were directly involved in the attack on the Algerian Consulate in Gao.²⁷ Group members were reportedly also actively engaged in fighting in Timbuktu and Konna.²⁸

**Figure 4.** Number of fatalities by state (2010–2014).

In recent months, Boko Haram has further extended its area of operations into neighboring countries, particularly along the vast and porous border region with Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. Cameroon, in particular, has seen a wave of attacks on border communities and the group has been involved in a number of skirmishes with the Cameroonian military.²⁹ It is suspected that Boko Haram uses bases in Cameroon to launch attacks on Nigerian soil.³⁰ Moreover, Cameroon has been the staging ground for kidnappings of foreigners, locals, and notably, the wife of the Vice Prime Minister of Cameroon.³¹ In a separate incident, nearly 100 young men and boys were kidnapped by suspected Boko Haram militants from a Nigerian village situated along the border with Chad and ferried into that country across Lake Chad.³²

Expansion in Target Selection

The initial phase of the militancy was mainly directed at various elements of the Nigerian security forces. Subsequently, the group has broadened its range of targets to include educational establishments, religious entities (both Muslim and Christian), politicians and traditional leaders, government infrastructure, and the broader Nigerian public in general.³³

Boko Haram has increasingly targeted educational institutions. There have been numerous attacks on schools since 2012. Amnesty International estimates nearly 50 schools were attacked in Borno alone in 2013.³⁴ Based on the author's data, 296 fatalities have resulted from school-related incidents in the last three years.³⁵ In a video statement released in July 2013, Boko Haram's leader Abubakar Shekau endorsed attacks on schools deemed "un-Islamic." The statement noted, "teachers who teach Western education, we will kill them. We would burn down the schools, if they are not Islamic schools."³⁶ In a similar vein, group members justified attacks on schools in Maiduguri in 2012 as retaliation for the arrest of Islamic teachers from traditional Quranic schools.³⁷ These incidents have led to the destruction and closure of countless schools, which in turn has led to thousands of children being forced out of school in northeastern Nigeria and teachers compelled to flee to safety. Moreover, as violence spills over into neighboring countries, Cameroon, for instance, has been forced to shut down border schools due to fears of attack.³⁸

Boko Haram has progressively turned its attention to societal actors in opposition to the group's tactics. Predictably, there have been frequent attacks on religious communities. Since 2011, nearly 1,000 people have been killed and scores of churches destroyed in attacks primarily directed at Christian communities.³⁹ Moderate Muslims and Islamic clerics not in agreement with Boko Haram's extremist worldview have also incurred the wrath of the group.⁴⁰

Furthermore, several high-profile political figures and traditional leaders have been targeted. Prominent incidents include the attempted assassination of leading opposition politician Muhammadu Buhari in Kaduna in July 2014, the murder of the Emir of Gwoza in May 2014, and the kidnapping of the wife of the Vice Prime Minister of Cameroon in late July of 2014.⁴¹ In addition, numerous other public figures such as village elders, political party leaders, and gubernatorial candidates have been in the firing line of Boko Haram.⁴²

Thus far, this section has summarized how the militants have explicitly targeted particular groups of people. While specificity in target selection has certainly been a distinguishing feature of the post-2010 violence, a detailed analysis of the data

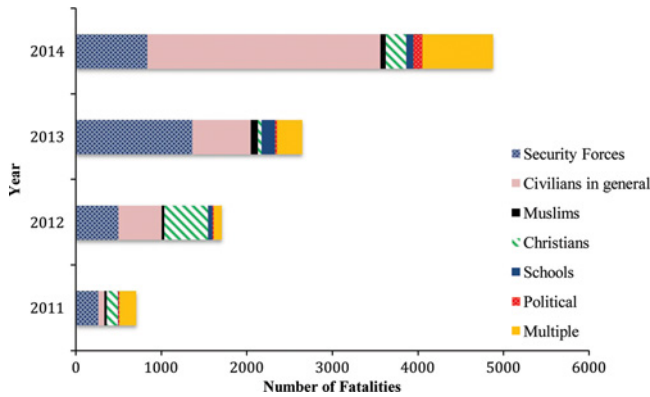


Figure 5. Boko Haram violence by target selection (2011–2014).

reveals a more generalized focus to target selection as well, especially in the last few months. As Figure 5 demonstrates, more than 70% of all fatalities in 2014 occurred in attacks aimed at civilian targets in general and also in attacks containing multiple target types.⁴³ A fairly typical example of an attack with multiple target types would be the assault on Damboa on July 4, 2014 when over 200 Boko Haram militants descended on the city, destroyed government buildings, killed civilians, and engaged in fierce clashes with the security forces.⁴⁴ Based on the patterns delineated in Figure 5, it is quite possible to conclude that Boko Haram violence has recently evolved into a third phase. While Phase 1 had a narrow emphasis on the security forces, Phase 2 widened the target base to encompass particular groups such as educational establishments, religious entities, and political figures. Phase 3 has seen a sharp rise in the brutality of violence and the Boko Haram militancy has degenerated into a generalized campaign of terror against the Nigerian public at large.

Expansion of Strategies

Seizure of Land

The most striking and dramatic manifestation of the evolution in Boko Haram's *modus operandi* has been the seizure of cities and villages in the states of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa. Since late July of 2014, Boko Haram has embarked on a sudden and relentless campaign aimed at physical occupation of territory. Thus, the group has transformed itself from a traditional hit-and-run insurgent movement into a more conventional militant outfit with territorial expansion as a core objective, and a suitable military strategy to hold on to such land gains.⁴⁵

The campaign of land seizures⁴⁶ began with the takeover of the Borno city of Damboa on July 18, 2014.⁴⁷ Subsequently, Boko Haram has captured a number of towns and villages across the northeast with the Catholic Church of Nigeria estimating that as many as 25 towns were under the group's control by September 2014. These include Gwoza and Bama in Borno, Buni Yadi in Yobe, and Madagali and Michika in Adamawa. The militants have also reportedly gained control of notable towns along the Cameroon border, such as Gamboru-Ngala and Banki.⁴⁸ In many of the areas that it has captured, the group has "formalized" its occupation by

hoisting its characteristic black flag.⁴⁹ However, it needs to be noted that wildly conflicting claims have been made by Boko Haram sources, the military, and other government agencies and as a result it is difficult to assess the precise extent of land under Boko Haram's control. According to some estimates, as of late September 2014, approximately 3 million people in northeastern Nigeria and in the border regions of Cameroon were under Boko Haram's rule. Even senior Borno state politicians conceded that "government presence and administration is minimal or nonexistent across many parts of the state."⁵⁰

Not only has Boko Haram inexorably pursued territory in recent times, it has also declared an "Islamic Caliphate" across the land under its control with the city of Gwoza designated as its headquarters.⁵¹ The timing of the formation of the caliphate and the obvious parallels with the tactics of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) have caused alarm in Nigeria and abroad.⁵² The formal proclamation of the establishment of the caliphate was made in a video released by the group shortly after the seizure of Gwoza. In the video, Boko Haram's leader Shekau declares, "We are grateful to Allah for the big victory he granted our members in Gwoza and made the town part of our Islamic caliphate." Further, the declaration includes a categorical rejection of the Nigerian state, noting, "We are an Islamic caliphate. We have nothing to do with Nigeria. We don't believe in this name."⁵³ Scholars have opined that the choice of Gwoza as the center of the caliphate makes sense given the town's inhospitable topography, proximity to Cameroon, and fertile vegetation.⁵⁴

Eyewitness accounts reveal how Boko Haram has exerted iron control over its subjects, often under a strict imposition of Sharia law. Survivors have recounted harrowing details of violence against non-compliance, wanton destruction of property, forcible conscription, and forced conversion into Islam.⁵⁵

Kidnapping as a Systematic Strategy

Since early 2013, Boko Haram has added kidnappings to its list of strategies and the number of kidnappings attributed to the group has risen sharply over the last year. The detainment of family members of suspected militants by the security forces had long irked Shekau, who made his displeasure publicly evident on several occasions, and it is possible that the strategy of kidnapping was initially devised as a retaliatory measure.⁵⁶ However, it is apparent that Boko Haram is acutely cognizant of the multiple instrumental usages of kidnapping. These include the strategy being viewed as an increasingly viable funding source (through ransom money) to pay recruits and purchase arms, an effective tool for recruitment purposes, and a valuable bargaining mechanism to secure prisoner releases.⁵⁷

The victims of kidnappings have varied widely and target selection has become more indiscriminate. Foreigners have frequently been targeted and include a seven-member French family in northern Cameroon, Chinese businessmen, and Italian missionaries. According to media accounts, substantial ransoms were paid on several occasions for the release of foreign captives.⁵⁸ Kidnapping victims also include political and traditional leaders and government officials with the most high-profile example being the recent kidnapping of the wife of the Vice Prime Minister of Cameroon.

In a recent report, Human Rights Watch estimates nearly 500 women and girls have been abducted in northeastern Nigeria in the last few years.⁵⁹ The mass

abduction of 276 schoolgirls from a secondary school in Chibok in April 2014 brought worldwide infamy to Boko Haram and unleashed a frenzied social media campaign as an outraged global public sought their release. The sluggish response of the Nigerian government and the brazen parading of the girls in a video released by the militants where Shekau threatened to sell them as sex slaves further incensed the world.⁶⁰ At the time of writing, nearly six months after their abduction, the vast majority of girls still remain missing. There is also growing evidence that several of the Chibok girls as well as other young women abducted in separate incidents have been subjected to sexual exploitation.⁶¹

Sophisticated Weaponry and Use of Suicide Bombers

Boko Haram has acquired an increasingly sophisticated arsenal of weapons over the last few years. The group has launched many attacks utilizing Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPGs). It is suspected that they may possess surface to air missiles and the military recently captured armored tanks and personnel carriers used by the militants.⁶²

Disturbingly, Boko Haram has added suicide bombings to its repertoire of violent strategies. The attack on the police headquarters in Abuja in June 2011 was the first recorded suicide bombing by Boko Haram and since then the group has been responsible for over 30 incidents of a similar nature.⁶³ Particularly worrisome is the group's recent trend of using female suicide bombers. The city of Kano experienced at least 4 suicide attacks carried out by females over the space of a few days in late July 2014.⁶⁴ The emergence of female suicide bombers presents an additional challenge to an already overburdened defense establishment, and has necessitated the employment of extra female police officers to carry out search operations in public places.⁶⁵

The preceding discussion clearly outlined the growing complexity of the insurgency in terms of geographic scope, target selection, and methods of operation. The group has adapted to this expansion by strengthening its patterns of recruitment. In a recent article on Boko Haram's recruiting patterns, Zenn cites different sources that place the group's membership at a lower estimate of 15,000 and a higher estimate of 50,000.⁶⁶ The discrepancy in membership estimates is partly definitional and may be contingent on whether only armed militants are included as opposed to also including those that proffer support to the group. The composition of Boko Haram's membership is quite diverse and includes disaffected youth, *almajiris*,⁶⁷ foreign fighters, and students as well as wealthy and influential individuals.⁶⁸ There is also an ethnic dimension to recruitment; it is believed that a significant portion of the members belong to the Kanuri tribe.⁶⁹ Moreover, forcible conscription, mostly of teenage girls and boys, has recently emerged as a favored recruitment tool of Boko Haram.⁷⁰

Explaining the Escalation of the Boko Haram Insurgency

Having described in detail how Boko Haram has evolved in multiple ways over the last few years, it is imperative to theorize the reasons behind this phenomenon. There is no master narrative or single pivotal explanatory variable that adequately accounts for the remarkable trajectory of the group's militancy. Indeed, the recent academic literature on Boko Haram alludes to a host of economic, political,

transnational, and ideological explanations as having played a contributing role in the escalation of violence. For reasons enumerated below, this research contends the following four factors can best account for the stunning expansion in Boko Haram's violence and the diversification of the group's strategies: the decentralization of the leadership structure; growing linkages with external militant groups; repercussions of the government's military crackdown on Boko Haram; and finally, the increasingly porous border region that separates northeastern Nigeria from Cameroon, Chad, and Niger.

Decentralization of Boko Haram

While Boko Haram's organizational structure had long been nebulous, the group has become increasingly more fragmented and decentralized since the execution of its previous leader, Mohammad Yusuf, in 2009. The cell-like structure of the group has facilitated greater autonomy for the various units that comprise the movement. Boko Haram now encompasses a motley array of factions ranging from Islamist fanatics to opportunistic criminals, and this fragmentation helps to explain the growing versatility of the group's methods.⁷¹ The literature on the internal organization of rebel movements sheds valuable insights that are applicable to Boko Haram. For example, some scholars argue that the internal characteristics of fighting units are critical to explaining patterns and strategies of violence.⁷² In a similar vein, others contend that the splintering of insurgents into competing factions can increase the likelihood of violence as the various factions attempt to outbid one another.⁷³

Formally, Boko Haram is led by one overall leader—Abubakar Shekau—since early 2010. The leader is complemented by a Shura Council, considered to be the highest decision making body in the group. The exact number of Council members is uncertain but is thought to be around thirty members.⁷⁴ Council members are geographically dispersed across the main cities and villages with a Boko Haram presence, and each geographic area is served with a local leader (who may or may not be a Council member).⁷⁵ Shura Councilors have limited face-to-face interaction, often choosing to communicate via mobile phone. The infrequent personal contact between Council members may allow room for local initiative but makes consensual decision making harder and creates opportunities for miscommunication and tension.⁷⁶ Reportedly, the overall leader is restrained from taking decisions without consultation with the Shura Council. However, Shekau is known to have taken several unilateral decisions, further undermining any semblance of cohesion within the group.⁷⁷

Shekau proclaimed his leadership of Boko Haram in a video statement released in April 2010, and is acknowledged as leader in public statements made by the group. It is suspected that factions within Boko Haram preferred Mamman Nur take over the leadership reins in the aftermath of Yusuf's assassination, as Nur was considered to be more moderate and open to compromise with the government. However, Shekau's ruthlessness, connections to grassroots followers in Borno, and rigid ideological orientation based on Salafi Jihadism and advocacy of Takfirism⁷⁸ appealed to many segments of the group and enabled him to prevail in the leadership tussle.⁷⁹ There is little doubt that Boko Haram has become more destructive under Shekau's stewardship. The United States Government declared Shekau as a "Specially Designated Global Terrorist" in 2012. Moreover, the 7 million-dollar bounty placed on his capture by the U.S. and increased efforts by the Nigerian military to hunt him down have forced Shekau into a clandestine existence.⁸⁰ He is seldom seen in public,

interacts only with a handful of cell leaders, and makes his presence felt through intermittent video releases. In one such release, he revealed his penchant for violence, remarking, "I enjoy killing anyone that God commands me to kill the way I enjoy killing chickens and ram."⁸¹

It is instructive to discuss the role of several other leaders in the ideological and organizational development of Boko Haram. Chief amongst these is the aforementioned Mamman Nur. He was briefly the caretaker leader of Boko Haram in late 2009 as Shekau recovered from gunshot wounds inflicted by the military. Subsequently, Nur fled to Somalia and trained with Al-Shabaab and AQIM militants. After his return to Nigeria, he spearheaded the suicide bombing of the U.N. Headquarters in Abuja in August 2011 in coordination with other militants who had trained with the AQIM in Algeria. Nur is also suspected of involvement in a suicide bombing at the Federal Police Headquarters in Abuja in June 2011.⁸² Zenn speculates that Nur's Cameroonian roots and extensive training and operational links with Al-Shabaab, AQIM, and other Al Qaeda affiliated militants may have incentivized him to regionalize Boko Haram's ideology and theatre of operations.⁸³

Khalid al-Barnawi and Adam Kamar, two other prominent leaders in Boko Haram, were designated as global terrorists by the U.S. government in 2012 (along with Shekau). After clashes with the security forces in 2009, al-Barnawi fled to Algeria and cultivated substantial links with AQIM militants. He received extensive training, subsequently ran a training camp, and was exposed to AQIM's signature tactics of kidnappings and selecting foreign targets. Al-Barnawi's influence is widely credited for the transplanting of similar strategies in Nigeria, and has been implicated in a number of kidnappings of foreigners.⁸⁴ While he was named by the Nigerian government as a most wanted member of Boko Haram's Shura Council, it is strongly suspected that al-Barnawi is closely connected to Ansaru, a breakaway faction of Boko Haram.⁸⁵ Formed in 2012, Ansaru specializes in a more internationalist outlook and has carried out a spate of kidnappings. Similarly, Kamar was trained by the AQIM, served as a link between Boko Haram and various Al Qaeda affiliates, and funded Nigerian militants in Mali to carry out attacks on Western interests in Nigeria. He was killed in a military raid in Kano in November 2012.⁸⁶

The presence of multiple leaders and factions has inevitably led to the pursuit of different agendas and strategies. This has resulted in autonomous actions from various cells without endorsement from core leaders, disagreements, infighting, and punishments of defectors. Certain factions within Boko Haram have at times favored conciliatory approaches with the government and pursued negotiation. For instance, former President Obasanjo met with members of Mohammad Yusuf's family in September 2011 and discussed possible compensation for the family. Days later, Yusuf's brother-in-law, who had been a central figure in the discussion, was assassinated by a separate faction opposed to such talks.⁸⁷ Furthermore, a Boko Haram faction unilaterally declared a ceasefire in January 2013 as a precondition for talks with the government. A second faction then qualified this statement by requesting that the government fulfill certain conditions before negotiations could begin. Shekau himself eventually responded to these back-and-forth declarations by categorically stating that no ceasefire deal was on the table and threatening vengeance on the renegades.⁸⁸ Disagreements on negotiations with the government have also led to factions betraying each other by providing critical information to the government that has enabled the security forces to capture senior leaders of the movement.⁸⁹

Boko Haram's indiscriminate killing of civilians has also caused dissension within ranks. Ansaru's emergence was partly due to its displeasure at Boko Haram's Takfiri strategy of promoting violence against other Muslims.⁹⁰ Ansaru publicly announced itself by distributing flyers that portrayed the group as the "humane alternative to Boko Haram that would target only the Nigerian government and Christians in self-defense."⁹¹ Indeed, Ansaru has attacked detention facilities, ambushed Nigerian soldiers, and kidnapped foreigners.

Opportunistic criminal elements have found Boko Haram's ferocious reputation for brutality particularly useful, and have appropriated the group's label. Herskovits observes that criminal syndicates (some comprising southern Nigerian Christians) have sent threatening messages to businesses and foreign embassies in the name of Boko Haram.⁹² Moreover, criminal gangs posing as Boko Haram militants have colluded with bank officials to stage robberies.⁹³ On a related note, feuding over the distribution of funds has similarly sparked mistrust and conflict within the group.⁹⁴

Fault lines have also emerged on the basis of ethnicity. The predominant majority of Boko Haram members belong to the Kanuri ethnicity. However, other ethnic groups such as the Hausa-Fulani are fairly well represented in the movement, particularly outside of Borno. Sources within the group have complained that Shekau favors his co-ethnic Kanuris. They note that most of those arrested are non-Kanuri, fuelling speculation of betrayal based on ethnic affiliation. Moreover, it is charged that a disproportionate number of the Muslim victims of Boko Haram are non-Kanuri while Kanuri members seldom get sent on suicide missions.⁹⁵

Deepening Linkages With Other Islamist Militant Groups

It is apparent that the rapid transformation of Boko Haram's militancy is closely connected to its ever-growing connections with militant Islamist groups in the region. Deeper ties with regional Islamists are of course partly a function of the fragmentation within the group. As discussed previously, several leaders fled Nigeria in the aftermath of Yusuf's killing and cultivated extensive connections with various Al Qaeda affiliates in the region. This in turn led to an infusion of finances and training opportunities for Boko Haram and influenced the adoption of operational strategies such as kidnappings and suicide bombings—hitherto unknown in the Nigerian theatre.

The strengthening nexus between Boko Haram and regional Islamist groups is evidenced by numerous public declarations, made by leaders on both sides, professing encouragement for one another. On the Boko Haram side, a statement released by an interim leader soon after Yusuf's killing in 2009 noted, "Boko Haram is just a version of Al Qaeda which we align with and respect. We support Osama bin Laden, we shall carry out his commands in Nigeria until the country is totally Islamized."⁹⁶ Subsequently, Shekau issued several statements proclaiming solidarity with Al Qaeda militants and denouncing the West as "crusaders."⁹⁷ He has also published a manifesto unequivocally linking Boko Haram's struggle with the global jihad.⁹⁸ In a more recent video in July 2014, Shekau offered public support to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of ISIS; however, it is not yet clear what kind of linkages may exist between Boko Haram and ISIS.⁹⁹ Regional Islamist leaders have also offered reciprocal pledges of support to Boko Haram. For instance, in an *Al Jazeera* interview, Abdelmalek Droukdel, the leader of AQIM, claimed that his group would provide appropriate support to Boko Haram to defend Muslims in Nigeria and extract revenge for the killing of Yusuf.¹⁰⁰

A strategic partnership between a locally based Islamist group such as Boko Haram and a broader transnational Islamist movement is appealing to both parties as it could confer multiple mutual benefits. Numerous scholars have extensively discussed the symbiotic nature of such a relationship.¹⁰¹ In the Nigerian context, Boko Haram militants have profited from such links through the provision of financial and logistical support and the training of combatants. Sect leaders and members have trained with groups such as AQIM, Ansar Dine and MUJAO in Algeria and northern Mali, Al-Shabaab in Somalia, and various militant groups in Afghanistan. In such training camps, Boko Haram militants have been immersed in tactics of guerrilla warfare, exposed to sophisticated weaponry, and gained expertise in bomb-making skills.¹⁰² Boko Haram's transition from the use of knives, machetes, and bows and arrows to vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices and suicide bombings is suggestive of the impact of such training. The group has been the recipient of substantial financial donations from various militant Islamist benefactors. For instance, AQIM militants provided a monetary contribution in excess of \$250,000 to facilitate the acquisition of expertise in kidnapping that would allow Boko Haram to capture white expatriates in Nigeria and transfer them to hideouts in Algeria.¹⁰³ Further, AQIM granted Boko Haram access to its media arm—Al-Andalus—to launch propaganda campaigns.¹⁰⁴

Links with other groups afford Boko Haram militants an opportunity to seek sanctuary from counter-terrorist operations. As the Nigerian security forces advanced on Shekau's hideout in Damaturu in September 2012, it is believed that a wounded Shekau was spirited to Gao in Mali and given refuge by militant Islamist groups in control there.¹⁰⁵ As documented earlier, numerous insurgents, including prominent leaders such as Nur and al-Barnawi, have found refuge in militant training camps across the region.

Militant Islamists also gain significant benefits from a tactical alliance with Boko Haram, thus underscoring the symbiotic nature of the relationship. Ties with Boko Haram allow external groups to export its pan-Islamic ideology of waging a holy jihad against all perceived enemies of Islam to the most populous Muslim country in Africa. Indeed, Shekau's more internationalist messaging calling for jihad against not only Nigeria, but also the United States and other Western allies, was welcomed by regional Islamists.¹⁰⁶ Sect members have also participated in the conflict in northern Mali, thereby providing useful operational support to the likes of MUJAO and AQIM.¹⁰⁷

Ansaru's relationship with Boko Haram provides another example of the symbiotic nature of the partnership. The French intervention in Mali in early 2013 led to the severance of key contacts between Ansaru and Islamist groups in the Sahel. The relative weakening of its transnational network, the death of key leaders, and the lack of a specific base region from which to operate have all contributed to Ansaru becoming more dependent on Boko Haram. In return, Shekau benefits from Ansaru's access to weapons, expertise in kidnapping, diverse membership, and the still considerable international connections.¹⁰⁸

It is entirely plausible that Boko Haram's dramatic recent strategy of seizing territory was influenced to a large extent by the actions of ISIS. While concrete links between the groups have not yet been uncovered, Boko Haram's maneuvers have been eerily reminiscent of ISIS. These include the declaration of an Islamic Caliphate, the hoisting of the group's distinctive flag over seized territory, the abduction of women and girls, and the release of videos showing grisly executions.¹⁰⁹

Military Response to Boko Haram and Its Repercussions

In order to thoroughly understand the evolution of the militancy, it is imperative to analyze the government's response to the crisis. The Nigerian government has adopted an increasingly security-driven approach to neutralize Boko Haram's threat. In response to the escalating violence, President Goodluck Jonathan imposed a state of emergency in some LGAs in northeastern Nigeria in late 2011 and subsequently expanded it in May 2013 to encompass the whole of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states.¹¹⁰ The government launched a concerted effort to hunt militants and formed a Joint Task Force (JTF) comprised of specialized formations of military, police, and intelligence units.¹¹¹ The formation of the Task Force has resulted in a massive deployment of personnel to the northeast.¹¹² The President enhanced the capacity of the security forces by investing significant resources in improving training, equipment, and coordination. Further, Jonathan has strengthened anti-terrorism legislation, designated Boko Haram and Ansaru as proscribed organizations, and arrested and detained hundreds of suspected militants.¹¹³

Since June 2013, vigilante groups called the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) have complemented military operations. The vigilantes, mostly made up of young men, have been active in cities, especially Maiduguri, patrolling the city streets in search of suspected militants. The CJTF has engaged Boko Haram members in combat and worked in conjunction with the JTF, often turning over apprehended suspects to the JTF. Most vigilantes are volunteers while some now receive a stipend from the state as well as training.¹¹⁴

As the anti-insurgency campaign intensified, so too have clashes between the military/vigilantes and Boko Haram militants, with mounting casualties on both sides. While the overall level of violence has clearly escalated over the last year, the crackdown has been responsible for transforming the spatial trajectory of violence within Borno. As noted earlier, the state capital of Maiduguri has witnessed a sharp decline in violence while the death toll has spiraled alarmingly in rural Borno. It appears that the CJTF has been largely instrumental in driving insurgents out of Maiduguri with the Borno Governor heralding the vigilante groups as a "game changer."¹¹⁵ However, the effectiveness of the CJTF has been tempered due to insufficient access to appropriate weapons and by the fact that retreating Boko Haram members have fled deep into rural Borno from where they have launched an incessant string of devastating attacks. In keeping with Salehyan's argument on transnational rebels in general, the broad security sweeps have also compelled sect members to seek refuge outside of Nigeria, thereby unwittingly creating a conducive environment for cultivating transnational ties.¹¹⁶

The military crackdown has been plagued by numerous allegations of horrific human rights violations against suspected Boko Haram militants. Human rights organizations have slammed military reprisals as disproportionate, indiscriminate, and carried out with impunity.¹¹⁷ Amnesty International estimates that 950 suspected militants died in military custody over the first six months of 2013, and that figure has continued to climb in 2014. In one incident alone, nearly 600 suspected militants were extra-judicially executed following an attack on the Giwa Barracks in Maiduguri in March 2014.¹¹⁸ A growing body of scholarly literature contends that state repression/military excesses can be counter-productive at times and can exacerbate the radicalization of militants.¹¹⁹ Indeed, the heavy-handed nature of the military campaign in Nigeria has had the inadvertent effect of further radicalizing Boko

Haram. Further, Boko Haram militants still harbor resentment at the extra-judicial assassination of their erstwhile leader Mohammed Yusuf, and it is believed that martyrdom videos of the July 2009 revolt are used to radicalize recruits.¹²⁰ Vigilante forces have also been accused of arbitrary detention and using excessive force. Predictably, vigilante operations have incited more reprisal attacks against them by the insurgents.¹²¹ Clashes have also taken place between rival vigilante groups as they jostle for influence with the JTF.¹²²

Porous Boundaries

Another factor that has contributed to the growth of the insurgency is the increasingly porous boundaries between Nigeria and its neighbors Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. The often uncompromising terrain, the length of borders, and weak government capacity make these frontiers hard to safeguard and vulnerable to infiltration.¹²³ According to a disclosure made by the Nigerian Interior Minister, there are a staggering 1499 illegal entry points into Nigeria. This compares with 84 legal entry routes and underlines the porosity of boundaries.¹²⁴

Porous boundaries have helped Boko Haram in several ways. To evade advancing security forces, militants have frequently fled across borders into neighboring countries where they have sought refuge, established bases, and encouraged recruitment amongst the native population. The constant flow of fighters moving back and forth allows for cross-border hit-and-run attacks. Cameroonian security has confirmed the presence of trans-border operations and observed that Boko Haram uses the border area to “regroup after attacks in Nigeria.” There is strong evidence that Boko Haram has established rear bases in Cameroon and Niger.¹²⁵ Moreover, Shekau has released several videos from his hideout, allegedly located somewhere in northern Cameroon, and other leaders have gone into hiding in Diffa, Niger.¹²⁶ Recruitment of militants has been particularly active in Cameroon. Similar demographic characteristics, namely, the presence of a Muslim majority north with strong perceptions of relative deprivation and a shared Kanuri ethnic identity make Cameroon a fertile recruitment ground.¹²⁷ Indeed, the Cameroonian President has voiced his concern about “Islamic extremists infiltrating his country through mosques.”¹²⁸

The easily penetrable nature of most northern boundaries has facilitated arms smuggling and Boko Haram has benefited from the wide availability of weapons trafficked into Nigeria. Oftedal notes that many of the weapons used by group members are of foreign origin and most can be traced back to those used in the Libyan uprising. The Nigerian authorities have arrested arms suppliers from Chad and Cameroon and raided hideouts, recovering a sophisticated arsenal of weapons.¹²⁹ Boko Haram has also staged attacks on border posts in order to create a diversion to smuggle weapons through other nearby border areas.¹³⁰

Alternative Arguments

The burgeoning academic literature on Boko Haram has posited several alternative theoretical explanations for the dramatic expansion of militancy, and such arguments warrant consideration here. First, several scholars point to economic arguments based on poverty, unemployment, and poor delivery of public goods.¹³¹ Boko Haram has certainly exploited the failure of the Nigerian government to provide adequate standards of living and as Piazza observes, it is plausible that relative

economic deprivation may fuel domestic terrorism.¹³² Economic and social development indicators are considerably poorer in the northeast where Boko Haram is active. Most scholars use the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) data on poverty, which shows that from a zonal viewpoint, the northeast zone has the highest poverty rate, with the southern zones reporting a much lower incidence. Similarly, UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI) data shows that the northeast zone lags considerably behind the others.¹³³ However, such data should be interpreted with caution given that the poverty data is from the Nigeria Poverty Profile Report of 2010 and the HDI data is from 2008–2009. As the purpose of this study is to theorize the post-2010 escalation of violence, such data is of limited utility. Also, as yearly zonal level data on poverty, HDI, and other relevant indicators do not exist or are hard to track down, it is difficult to evaluate the extent to which notions of economic deprivation in the northeast fuelled militant excesses in the last few years. Moreover, it is worthwhile noting that according to the aforementioned Poverty Profile Report of 2010, there was hardly any difference in the zonal poverty rates between the northeast and the northwest. The northwest zone includes states such as Kebbi, Katsina, Zamfara, and Sokoto, where Boko Haram presence and violence has been significantly lower than in the northeast zone.¹³⁴

In addition to the aforementioned economic arguments, the general weakness of the Nigerian state forms the backdrop of many explanatory accounts of Boko Haram-related violence. Indeed, the nexus between state failure and the rise of militancy has been extensively explored in the conflict literature.¹³⁵ Many scholars argue that decaying infrastructure, deteriorating democratic accountability, and inadequate capacity of the security forces (amongst others) are emblematic of the pervasive failures of successive Nigerian governments and have facilitated Boko Haram's cooptation of disaffected youth.¹³⁶ A quick survey of the Failed States Index compiled by the Fund for Peace reveals that Nigeria has been classified in the top 20 most failed states every year since 2007. However, the country's ranking has hovered between 14 and 18 (1 being the worst) and the degree of state failure has varied only marginally throughout the period under investigation in this study.¹³⁷

Growing public discontent about endemic corruption amongst Nigeria's elite features prominently in narratives about Boko Haram's violence. The militants often blame corrupt "Western-oriented officials" for the relative economic deprivation of northern Muslims.¹³⁸ Perversely, it can also be argued that Boko Haram benefited from corruption as there have been several instances of corrupt officials colluding with militants.¹³⁹ Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI) shows that Nigeria's country ranking has risen slightly over the last three years, indicating a marginal increase in the perceived levels of corruption in the country.¹⁴⁰ However, Boko Haram's ideological notions regarding moral decadence in society and the irredeemably corrupt nature of most politicians had long been established since Mohammed Yusuf became leader back in 2004. Therefore, it is not entirely clear how resentment at corrupt officials influenced the escalation of the militancy, particularly given the slight variations in the CPI scores over the last few years. Further, reliance on broad perceptions of corruption does not satisfactorily explain the spatial variations in violence within the northeast and elsewhere.

Many scholars assert that several northern Nigerian politicians as well as various elements of the security forces have cultivated linkages with members of Boko Haram. It is alleged that such linkages have contributed to the growing escalation of the militancy. Borno-based politicians such as former Governor, Ali Modu

Sheriff, former Commissioner, Alhaji Buji Foi, and Senator, Mohammed Ali Ndume are alleged to have provided financial and logistical assistance to Boko Haram.¹⁴¹ Similarly, former Governors of Kano and Bauchi states purportedly offered monthly bribes to Boko Haram in exchange for immunity from attacks.¹⁴² Moreover, the debatable circumstances under which Goodluck Jonathan ascended to the Nigerian presidency have also contributed to the growing disillusionment of some northern political elites. Jonathan, a Christian from Nigeria's south, became President following the sudden death of Umaru Yar' Adua, a northern Muslim, in 2010. Many northern Nigerians complain that Jonathan's ascendancy violated the informal "zoning" arrangement observed by the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) wherein the presidency would be rotated between the north and the south.¹⁴³ It is suggested that the Boko Haram militancy is tacitly supported by disgruntled northern political elite who seek to destabilize a regime they perceive as illegitimate. Indeed, Jonathan and his coterie of advisors frequently charge that aggrieved northern politicians often exploit Boko Haram's Islamist and anti-Christian agenda for their own political gains.¹⁴⁴

While allegations of complicity between segments of the political elite and Boko Haram are indeed very likely, given little hard evidence and frequent denials by the accused parties, it is difficult to gauge to what extent such accusations are genuine.¹⁴⁵ Further, the charges against Sheriff and Buji Foi date back to the pre-2009 period when Boko Haram was under Yusuf's leadership, and it is unlikely that such political linkages influenced the rapid escalation of the militancy in the last few years. Similarly, the alleged bribery payments made by the governors of Kano and Bauchi states long preceded the recent spiraling of violence. It is also instructive to observe that the initial military onslaught against Boko Haram in July 2009 was spearheaded by Yar' Adua, a northern Muslim.¹⁴⁶

Some argue that ideological/religious extremism of the group is largely responsible for its increasing militancy. Boko Haram brands itself as a Salafist Jihadi organization and often denounces non-conformists as apostates. However, the fragmentation of the group into largely autonomous cells has undermined any ideological coherence within the movement. For instance, Ansaru's defection from Boko Haram was partly motivated by an aversion to the latter's tactics of targeting fellow Muslims and unarmed civilians. It is also clear that criminal factions that carry out acts of violence in Boko Haram's name are not motivated by ideological concerns. Further, while Shekau's internationalist messaging and support for global jihad has been welcomed, it appears that ties with other groups are mostly operational in nature, rather than ideological. For all of Shekau's grandstanding, the vast majority of Boko Haram's operations have been in Nigeria and directed at local targets. A recent opinion poll conducted by Gallup suggests ideological incongruence with Boko Haram amongst the majority of those surveyed in the group's heartland in the northeast. Nearly 70% in the northeast suggested that contact with the West was beneficial and almost 40% insisted Sharia law should not be used at all as a form of governance.¹⁴⁷ Similarly, the Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project conducted a survey in July 2014 that showed nearly 80% of Nigerians held an extremely unfavorable view of Boko Haram.¹⁴⁸

Conclusion

This research has investigated in detail the myriad ways in which the Boko Haram insurgency has intensified in Nigeria in the last few years. Moreover, it has attempted

to theorize this expansion. At a conceptual level, Boko Haram has expanded its activities across multiple different dimensions. To begin with, the frequency and intensity of violence has sharply spiked. From a geographic standpoint, while Borno still remains the epicenter of militant activity, much of the violence has moved away from the state capital Maiduguri into the more rural areas in the state. Violence has also spread to several other states as well as the border region with Cameroon. Target selection has widened to include schools, religious clergy, and political leaders amongst others. At the same time, target selection has become more indiscriminate as well with numerous attacks targeting the general public at large. Finally, the *modus operandi* of the group has evolved dramatically and militant strategies now range from the seizure of land to mass abductions.

The study contends that there is no simple explanation for this multi-faceted expansion in militant activities. It is argued that an interaction of four different variables best explains the patterns of violence. First, the increasing fragmentation of the group has led to different agendas, operational theatres, and strategies used. The cell-like structure of the group has often facilitated autonomous actions. Second, Boko Haram's cultivation of stronger links with regional Islamists is also critical in theorizing the group's expansion. It is clear that a strategic alliance exists between Boko Haram and other Jihadi groups, as both parties stand to mutually benefit from such linkages. Third, the forceful military response to the insurgency has forced Boko Haram to adapt, fuelled resentment at perceived military excesses, and further radicalized sections of the movement. Fourth, the porous border area in the north has been conducive for trans-border operations, provided sanctuary for fleeing militants, broadened the recruitment base, and facilitated the smuggling of weapons.

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Notes

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8. See International Crisis Group (ICG), *Curbing Violence in Nigeria (II): The Boko Haram Insurgency* (Dakar: ICG, April 3, 2014).
9. Emilie Oftedal, "Boko Haram—an Overview," *FFI Rapport* 1680 (2013): 16.
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18. For more details on the July 2009 revolt, see Daniel E. Agbiboa, "(Sp)oilng Domestic Terrorism? Boko Haram and State Response," *Peace Review* 25, no. 3 (2013): 431–438.
19. Global Terrorism Database (GTD) of the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism is headquartered at the University of Maryland. The database can be sorted by perpetrator and the author cross-referenced all Boko Haram-related incidents in the GTD. The database can be accessed at the following link: <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?search=Boko+Haram&sa.x=0&sa.y=0&sa=Search>. The Nigeria Security Tracker, a project of the Council on Foreign Relations' Africa Program (<http://www.cfr.org/nigeAia/nigeria-security-tracker/p29483>) provides a wealth of quantitative data on acts of violence carried out by Boko Haram and other actors in Nigeria.
20. Based on the author's calculations.
21. Each state in Nigeria is sub-divided into Local Government Areas. For example, Borno state is divided into 27 LGAs.
22. Detailed analysis of the dataset shows that each of these LGAs experienced at least one major attack linked to Boko Haram, with most experiencing multiple attacks.
23. While Maiduguri has witnessed much less violence than earlier, there were at least three significant incidents in the early months of 2014. For example, see Ndahi Marama, "Boko Haram Bombs Maiduguri – Over 100 Feared Dead," *Vanguard (Lagos)*, March 2, 2014.
24. See Anyadike, "Boko Haram and National Security Challenges" (note 4 above); Bagaji et al., "Boko Haram and the Recurring" (see note 4 above).
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36. Amnesty International, *Keep Away from Schools* (see note 34 above), 6.
37. Walker, *What is Boko Haram?* (see note 3 above).
38. “Cameroon Closes Border Schools Over Boko Haram Threat,” *The Sun (Nigeria)*, September 8, 2014.
39. The author’s data estimates that 958 people have been killed since 2011 in attacks focused on Christian churches, religious leaders, and communities, in general.
40. Boko Haram is alleged to be responsible for the murders or attempted assassinations of several prominent Islamic clerics who had publicly criticized the group for the spread of violence. See, Freedom C. Onuoha, “The Audacity of the Boko Haram: Background, Analysis and Emerging Trend,” *Security Journal* 25, no. 2 (2012): 134–151; and U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security, *Boko Haram: Growing Threat to the US Homeland*, September 13, 2013, <http://homeland.house.gov/sites/homeland.house.gov/files/documents/09-13-13-Boko-Haram-Report.pdf>.
41. For more information on these incidents, refer to “Boko Haram’s Relentless Killing Continues, Kills First Class Emir,” *This Day (Lagos)*, May 31, 2014; and Adam Nossiter, “Boko Haram Targets Political Figures in String of Attacks,” *The New York Times*, July 29, 2014.
42. International Crisis Group, *Curbing Violence* (see note 8 above).
43. Based on the data, 2724 people were killed in 2014 in attacks aimed at general civilian targets while a further 825 lost their lives in incidents with multiple identifiable target groups.
44. Michael Olugbode, “Boko Haram Attacks Damboa, Loses 50, Kills 20,” *This Day (Lagos)*, July 5, 2014, <http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/boko-haram-attacks-dambo-loses-50-kills-20/182746/>.
45. Charlotte Florance, “Group that Kidnapped Nigerian Schoolgirls Makes Alliance of Convenience with ISIS,” 2014, <http://dailysignal.com/2014/08/28/group-kidnapped-nigerian-schoolgirls-makes-alliance-convenience-isis/>.
46. It is instructive to note that while the recent spate of land seizures began with the takeover of Damboa in July 2014, Boko Haram had exerted considerable control over various areas as early as 2013, albeit on a much smaller scale. Indeed, part of the reason President Jonathan extended the state of emergency to cover the whole of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states in May 2013 (as discussed in detail later) was to re-establish control over territory where the government’s hold had become increasingly tenuous.
47. Adam Nossiter, “Boko Haram Rebels Seize a Town in Nigeria,” *The New York Times*, July 22, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/22/world/africa/boko-haram-rebels-seize-a-town-in-nigeria.html?_r=0.
48. Michael Olugbode, “25 Towns Under Boko Haram’s Control, Says Catholic Church,” *This Day (Lagos)*, September 17, 2014.
49. “Boko Haram Seizes More Border Towns,” *Edmonton Journal (Alberta)*, September 8, 2014.
50. Gwynne Dyer, “Two New ‘Islamic States,’” *Orange County Register (California)*, September 21, 2014.
51. The town of Gwoza is the headquarters of the Gwoza LGA. The estimated population of Gwoza town is about 50,000. However, given the absence of recent official data at the town level and the continuing exodus of refugees from Gwoza town (as well as the entire LGA), it is hard to pinpoint precise population data. For more information, see Ed Adamczyk, “Boko Haram Overruns Nigerian Police Academy,” August 21, 2014, http://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2014/08/21/Boko-Haram-overruns-Nigerian-police-academy/9671408632578/.

52. Cahal Milmo and Tom Witherow, "Boko Haram Sets Up African Caliphate with Blessing of Isis," *The Independent (London)*, September 9, 2014.

53. Timothy Olanrewaju, "Boko Haram Declares Gwoza New Caliphate," *The Sun (Nigeria)*, August 25, 2014, <http://sunnewsonline.com/new/?p=78625>.

54. The conflict literature notes that insurgent movements often favor rugged terrain. For example see, James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 1 (2003): 75–90; and Halvard Buhaug, Scott Gates, and Päivi Lujala, "Geography, Rebel Capability, and the Duration of Civil Conflict," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53, no. 4 (2009): 544–569. The mountainous terrain in Gwoza makes the city a relatively impenetrable target for any counter-insurgency campaign. The relative proximity to Cameroon through a vast expanse of porous boundaries also makes the city an attractive proposition. See Hamza Idris and Kabiru Anwar, "Boko Haram: How New 'Caliphate' Emerged," *Daily Trust (Abuja)*, August 30, 2014, <http://www.dailytrust.com.ng/weekly/index.php/top-stories/17517-how-boko-haram-s-islamic-caliphate-compromises-nigeria-s-sovereignty>.

55. "Trail of Death, Destruction as Boko Haram Carves Out a Caliphate," *Cape Argus (South Africa)*, September 10, 2014.

56. Shekau had released several video statements in 2012 and 2013 where he had criticized the security forces for the arbitrary arrests and detention of Boko Haram family members. After an incident in May, 2013, when 12 women and children were kidnapped from a police barracks in Bama, Shekau appeared in a video release claiming responsibility for the attack on behalf of the group. See Jacob Zenn, "Boko Haram's Evolving Tactics and Alliances in Nigeria," *West Point (USMA): CTC Sentinel* 6, no. 6 (2013): 10–16; Jacob Zenn and Elizabeth Pearson, "Women, Gender and the Evolving Tactics of Boko Haram," *Journal of Terrorism Research* 5, no. 1 (2014): 46–57.

57. See Benjamin Maiangwa and Daniel Agbiboa, "Why Boko Haram Kidnaps Women and Young Girls in North-Eastern Nigeria," *Conflict Trends*, no. 3 (2014): 51–56; and "Boko Haram: Coffers and Coffins; A Pandora's Box – Vast Financing Options for Boko Haram," Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium, September 30, 2014, <http://www.trackingterrorism.org/article/new-financing-options-boko-haram/kidnappings>.

58. Zenn, "Boko Haram's Evolving Tactics" (see note 56 above).

59. Human Rights Watch, *Those Terrible Weeks in Their Camp: Boko Haram Violence Against Women and Girls in Northeast Nigeria*, October 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/nigeria1014web.pdf>.

60. Maiangwa and Agbiboa, "Why Boko Haram Kidnaps" (see note 57 above).

61. Human Rights Watch, *Those Terrible Weeks* (see note 59 above).

62. Zenn, "Boko Haram's International" (see note 30 above); "Nigerian Troops Capture Monstrous Armored Tank from Boko Haram Insurgents," 2014, <http://saharareporters.com/2014/09/27/nigerian-troops-capture-monstrous-armored-tank-boko-haram-insurgents>.

63. Based on the dataset, until the end of July 2014, Boko Haram was responsible for 33 suicide attacks.

64. "Stark Encounters with Teen Female Suicide Bombers," *Daily Trust (Abuja)*, August 3, 2014.

65. "Nigeria Deploys Female Police Officers in Boko Haram Crackdown," *BBC Monitoring Africa – Political Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, August 1, 2014.

66. Jacob Zenn, "Boko Haram: Recruitment, Finance and Arms Trafficking in the Lake Chad Region," *West Point (USMA): CTC Sentinel* 7, no. 10 (2014): 5–10.

67. The term *almajiri* refers to destitute street children who migrate from rural villages and study under the guidance of renowned Islamic teachers in large cities in northern Nigeria.

68. Bagaji et al., "Boko Haram and the Recurring" (see note 4 above); Oftedal, "Boko Haram – an Overview" (see note 9 above); Oviasogie, "State Failure" (see note 2 above).

69. Agbiboa, "(Sp)oilng Domestic" (see note 18 above).

70. Zenn, "Boko Haram: Recruitment" (see note 66 above).

71. J. Peter Pham, *Boko Haram's Evolving Threat* (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2012); Hansen and Musa, "Fanon, the Wretched" (see note 17 above).

72. Jeremy M. Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Macartan Humphreys and Jeremy M. Weinstein,

“Handling and Manhandling Civilians in Civil War,” *American Political Science Review* 100, no. 3 (2006): 429–447.

73. Mia M. Bloom, “Palestinian Suicide Bombing: Public Support, Market Share, and Outbidding,” *Political Science Quarterly* 119, no. 1 (2004): 61–88.

74. Most accounts place the Shura membership at 30. However, the recent report by the International Crisis Group noted that Shura membership had risen to 37. It is possible that the periodic killings and capture of top leaders by the military led to an expansion of the Shura Council.

75. International Crisis Group, *Curbing Violence* (see note 8 above), 18–19.

76. U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security, *Boko Haram: Growing Threat* (see note 40 above).

77. Walker, *What is Boko Haram?* (see note 3 above).

78. Takfirism, in essence, classifies all non-conforming Muslims as ‘infidels.’ For further discussion, see Onuoha, “Jama’Atu Ansarul” (see note 1 above).

79. Oftedal, “Boko Haram – an Overview” (see note 9 above).

80. U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security, *Boko Haram: Growing Threat* (see note 40 above).

81. Oftedal, “Boko Haram – an Overview” (see note 9 above).

82. Jacob Zenn, “Leadership Analysis of Boko Haram and Ansaru in Nigeria,” *West Point (USMA): CTC Sentinel* 7, no. 2 (2014): 23–29.

83. Ibid.

84. U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security, *Boko Haram: Growing Threat* (see note 40 above).

85. Jacob Zenn, “A Brief Look at Ansaru’s Khalid Al-Barnawi: AQIM’s Bridge into Northern Nigeria,” *Militant Leadership Monitor* 4, no. 3 (2013): 3–4.

86. Zenn, “Leadership Analysis” (see note 82 above).

87. Hansen and Musa, “Fanon, the Wretched” (see note 17 above).

88. Onuoha, “Jama’Atu Ansarul” (see note 1 above).

89. See Zenn, “A Brief Look” (see note 85 above).

90. Zachary Elkaim, *Boko Haram: The Rise, Success, and Continued Efficacy of the Insurgency in Nigeria* (International Institute for Counter Terrorism (ICT), 2012).

91. Zenn, “Leadership Analysis” (see note 82 above).

92. Jean Herskovits, “In Nigeria, Boko Haram Is Not the Problem,” *The New York Times*, January 2, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/02/opinion/in-nigeria-boko-haram-is-not-the-problem.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

93. Mohammed Usman, “Religion and Violence in Nigeria: 1980–2012,” *Nazrul Islam* 10, no. 2 (2013): 41–51.

94. Zenn, “Leadership Analysis” (see note 82 above).

95. See U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security, *Boko Haram: Growing Threat* (note 40 above); Zenn et al., “The Ideological Evolution” (see note 28 above); Zenn, “Leadership Analysis” (see note 82 above).

96. Cited in Onapajo et al., “Boko Haram Terrorism” (see note 13 above).

97. Oftedal, “Boko Haram: A Transnational” (see note 27 above).

98. Elkaim, *Boko Haram* (see note 90 above).

99. Milmo and Witherow, “Boko Haram Sets Up” (see note 52 above).

100. Elkaim, *Boko Haram* (see note 90 above).

101. For a detailed discussion on the mutually beneficial relationship between local and transnational Islamists, see Jean-Luc Marret, “Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb: A ‘Glocal’ Organization,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no. 6 (2008): 541–552; Daniel L. Byman, *Breaking the Bonds between Al-Qaeda and its Affiliate Organizations* (Brookings Institution, 2012); Bruce Hoffman, “Al Qaeda’s Uncertain Future,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 36, no. 8 (2013): 635–653.

102. Pham, *Boko Haram’s Evolving* (see note 71 above); Oftedal, “Boko Haram: A Transnational” (see note 27 above), 70–74; International Crisis Group, *Curbing Violence* (see note 8 above), 24.

103. Zenn et al., “The Ideological Evolution” (see note 28 above).

104. Pham, *Boko Haram’s Evolving* (see note 71 above).

105. International Crisis Group, *Curbing Violence* (see note 8 above), 20.

106. Zenn et al., "The Ideological Evolution" (see note 28 above).
107. National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), *Boko Haram Recent Attacks*, May, 2014, http://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/STARTBackgroundReport_BokoHaramRecentAttacks_May2014_0.pdf.
108. Zenn et al., "The Ideological Evolution" (see note 28 above); Zenn, "Boko Haram's Evolving Tactics" (see note 56 above); Zenn, "Leadership Analysis" (see note 82 above).
109. Timothy Spangler, "ISIS 2.0 in Nigeria," *Orange County Register (California)*, September 21, 2014.
110. Benjamin Maiangwa, Ufo Okeke Uzodike, Ayo Whetho, and Hakeem Onapajo, "Baptism by Fire": Boko Haram and the Reign of Terror in Nigeria," *Africa Today* 59, no. 2 (2012): 40–57.
111. The Joint Task Force deployed to the northeast is very similar in nature to the one that had been established in the Niger River Delta several years ago to contain the insurgency in that region.
112. International Crisis Group, *Curbing Violence* (see note 8 above), 34.
113. Idowu, "Security Laws" (see note 15 above).
114. International Crisis Group, *Curbing Violence* (see note 8 above), 34–35.
115. Lauren Ploch, *Nigeria: Current Issues and US Policy* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2013).
116. Salehyan argues that rebel groups often organize transnationally in order to evade state repression. See Idean Salehyan, "Transnational Rebels: Neighboring States as Sanctuary for Rebel Groups," *World Politics* 59, no. 2 (2007): 217–242.
117. Daniel Egiegba Agbiboa, "The Nigerian Burden: Religious Identity, Conflict and the Current Terrorism of Boko Haram," *Conflict, Security & Development* 13, no. 1 (2013): 1–29; A. Carl LeVan, "Sectarian Rebellions in Post-Transition Nigeria Compared," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 7, no. 3 (2013): 335–352.
118. Amnesty International, *Nigeria: More than 1500 Killed in Armed Conflict in Northeastern Nigeria in Early 2014* (London: Amnesty International Publications, 2014).
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122. Hamza Idris, "Five Killed as Rival Vigilantes Clash in Borno," *Daily Trust (Abuja)*, August 5, 2013.
123. Solomon Hussein, "Counter-Terrorism in Nigeria: Responding to Boko Haram," *The RUSI Journal* 157, no. 4 (2012): 6–11.
124. Freedom C. Onuoha, "Porous Borders and Boko Haram's Arms Smuggling Operations in Nigeria," (Doha, Qatar: Al Jazeera Centre for Studies, 2013).
125. International Crisis Group, *Curbing Violence* (see note 8 above).
126. Karmon, "Boko Haram's International Reach" (see note 26 above).
127. Zenn, "Boko Haram's International" (see note 30 above).
128. Oftedal, "Boko Haram: A Transnational" (see note 30 above), 55.
129. *Ibid.*, 42–44.
130. Zenn, "Boko Haram's International" (see note 30 above).
131. Adetoro Rasheed Adenrele, "Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria as a Symptom of Poverty and Political Alienation," *Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 3, no. 5 (2012): 21–26.
132. James A. Piazza, "Poverty, Minority Economic Discrimination, and Domestic Terrorism," *Journal of Peace Research* 48, no. 3 (2011): 339–353.
133. Cited in Agbiboa, "The Nigerian Burden" (see note 117 above), 20–21.
134. LeVan, "Sectarian Rebellions" (see note 117 above), 345.

135. For further discussion, see Fearon and Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency” (note 54 above); Robert I. Rotberg, *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003); Jack A. Goldstone, Robert H. Bates, David L. Epstein, Ted Robert Gurr, Michael B. Lustik, Monty G. Marshall, Jay Ulfelder, and Mark Woodward, “A Global Model for Forecasting Political Instability,” *American Journal of Political Science* 54, no. 1 (2010): 190–208; Bridget L. Coggins, “Does State Failure Cause Terrorism? An Empirical Analysis (1999–2008),” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, doi:10.1177/0022002713515403.

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137. Fund for Peace, Failed States Index (2014), <http://ffp.statesindex.org/>.

138. Maiangwa et al., “‘Baptism by Fire’” (see note 110 above).

139. Adenrele, “Boko Haram Insurgency” (see note 131 above).

140. Nigeria’s Corruption Perception Index country ranking was 130 in 2008 and increased to 144 in 2013.

141. Oftedal, “Boko Haram: A Transnational” (see note 27 above); International Crisis Group, *Curbing Violence* (see note 8 above).

142. U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security, *Boko Haram: Growing Threat* (see note 40 above).

143. According to the informal agreement, a northern politician should have been President till 2015; however, following Yar’ Adua’s unexpected demise, Vice President Jonathan took over, in accordance with the succession policy outlined in the Nigerian constitution. The following year, Jonathan announced fresh presidential elections and managed to secure nomination from the ruling PDP amidst much protestations from the north. Jonathan’s subsequent victory in the 2011 election was accompanied by allegations of pervasive electoral malpractice and an explosion of violence. For further discussion, see Oftedal, “Boko Haram – an Overview” (see note 9 above).

144. Adenrele, “Boko Haram Insurgency” (see note 131 above); Walker, *What is Boko Haram?* (see note 3 above).

145. Oftedal, “Boko Haram – an Overview” (see note 9 above).

146. Yusuf, “Harvest of Violence” (see note 136 above).

147. Magali Rheault and Bob Tortora, “Northern Nigerians’ Views Not in Line with Boko Haram’s,” 2012, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/152780/northern-nigerians-views-not-line-boko-haram.aspx>.

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