

Terrorism in west africa, boko haram's evolution, strategy and affiliations

[Society](#), [Terrorism](#)



Since the emergence of Boko-Haram as a significant local terrorist group in the West African state of Nigeria, its operational reach has brought about one of the most daunting challenges for the regional security of this area. The effectiveness of their capability to operate and hit targets in a country that is said to be one of Africa's security powers remains to be a security nightmare for anti-terrorism experts. Amid a large number of bombings, kidnappings and assassinations, several variations around the group's ideology, strategies, techniques and linkages have brought challenges to the region.

In North Africa Al-Qaida is operating in smaller groups, the linking of the two group's poses a significant challenge in the area. This paper will discuss the ideology, strategies and methods links Boko Haram and their affiliation to Al-Qaeda.

History and Background of Boko Haram

Onuoha (2010) attributes the new space for Islamists extremism in Nigeria with the return of democracy in 1999. The return of democracy also brought a rise in kidnapping, militancy, robberies and religious conflicts. Religious violence increased in the wake of challenges to human security and internal discourse. Estimates of deaths due to religious violence between 1999-2003 are more than 10, 000 (Onuoha, 2010).

Government leadership failure has also played a role in the Boko Haram crisis. Factors that lead to Boko Haram and its current issues are the Nigeria's forms of justice. Nigeria has two forms of justice; legal and jungle. Legal justice condemns illegal practices and extra-judicial killings. Jungle

justice detains a suspect and executes the individual without a formal trial (Onuoha, 2010). After a governmental sweep in 2009, many members of Boko Haram were not tried for their crimes, but were executed. This triggered criticism of the Nigerian government because there was not a fair and legal process to justice (Onuoha, 2010).

The origin date to the formation of the Boko Haram is 2002, but the group was not formally known as Boko Haram but as a youth group (David, 2013). The group's origins are based in an Islamic youth group. In 2004, the United States' State Department investigated the group but did not find them to be a threat.

The organization attracted community support and membership by providing community aid. The organization is alleged to have received outside funding (Onuoha, 2010). In 2007, Sheik Ja'afar Mahmoud Adam was assassinated during prayer; he had publicly objected to the radical ideology of the group (Mark, 2013). Damagun the group's leader was arrested on three counts; being a member of the " Nigerian Taliban", as it was dubbed; receiving a total of \$300, 000 from al- Qaeda to train and recruit Nigerians as terrorist; and participating in acts of terrorism. Yusef, another group leader was accused of 5 counts; one of which included receiving money from Pakistani operatives belonging to al- Qaeda (Onuoha, 2010). After this, many members went into hiding.

By mid-2010, Boko Haram was again at the Nigerian forefront. With members having potentially received training while in hiding, the organization returned with a new vigor (Davis, 2013). The group's return

includes a campaign of assassinations and attacking police check points. A notorious event includes Christmas Eve in 2010; the group detonated more than half a dozen bombs near churches and markets. Several people were killed in the attacks. A few days later, on New Year's Eve, a bomb is detonated in a popular market area; killing 10 people (Davis, 2013).

Since the beginning, Boko Haram has transitioned from a group of insurgents using poisoned arrows to coordinated car bombing. In the 2011, the Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence Committee on Homeland Security found Boko Haram to be a threat to U. S. interest and homeland security. The committee also found the organizations to be similar to that of Al Qaeda (Social Science, 2011). Listed as one of the twenty most active terrorist groups in 2011, Boko Haram has propelled itself on the transnational terrorism scene (Social Science, 2011). Ideology

The organization attributes the campaign of ethnic cleansing of Hausa and Fulani people in the region to plateau governor Jonah Jang (Glickman, 2013). Boko Haram believes that the government of Northern Nigeria has been infiltrated by false and corrupt Muslims. Their ideological mission is to overthrow the Nigerian government and impose strict Sharia law (Glickman, 2013).

With 12 Northern states already operating under Sharia Law, there is suspected support coming from Northern Nigerian politicians, such as the People Democratic Party and the All Nigerian Peoples Party (Glickman, 2013). Leaders of these parties support the ideology of the state operating under Sharia Law. Targets

The group also began to launch attacks on the National Police Headquarters and the United Nations. The organization claimed responsibility for the August 2011 bombing of the United Nations compound in Abuja. This propelled the group onto the global scene, attracting international attention (Glickman, 2013). By the latter half of 2011, attacks by the group in churches and public venues were almost weekly. There has been a noticeable speed in the group's ability to train and enlist individuals. There has also been increased speed in the group's bomb making ability; suggesting external support (Glickman, 2013).

In 2012, the group began burning schools, disrupting education for more than 10, 000 students (Glickman, 2013). Another tactic that has been reported more frequently is the public beheading of individuals by members of Boko Haram. It seems likely that the group will continue to target civilians, expanding from police and official targets, as part of its campaign in Nigeria (Glickman, 2013).

With the ideological component linking Boko Haram to Al-Qaeda, it is no historical accident to see a common approach in strategy and technique between the two groups. In general terms, Boko Haram and Al-Qaeda have used Bombings, targeted assassinations and arson attacks against perceived enemies. On several occasions, the operations of both groups have been attributed to the use of car and suicide bombs. For example, Al-Qaeda's first World Trade Center Attempt in 1993 was through a car bomb attack. Similarly, in an attempt to undermine US efforts in Iraq, Al-Qaeda has

claimed responsibility for several car bomb attacks between the years 2003 to 2009.

The same was true for Boko-Haram, when it used car bombings in both the August, 2011 attack on the UN compound in Abuja, and the November 2012 attack on the St. Andrew Military Protestant Church at the Jaji barracks in Kaduna state. In the same vein Al-Qaeda has also used suicide bombings to hit targets across Europe, Afghanistan and Iraq, as Boko- Haram continues to utilize suicide bombings on Nigerian security checkpoints and churches.

The use of kidnapping is another basic strategy for both Al-Qaeda and Boko-Haram. Over the years, both Al-Qaeda and Boko-Haram carried out kidnappings in demand for ransoms, either in the form of money or a political change. The (Associated Press, 2011) noted that pressured by increase scrutiny of terrorist money sources and strikes aimed at its financiers, AL-Qaeda in Pakistan has turned to kidnapping for ransom to offset dwindling cash flow. Its affiliate group Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb has long used the kidnapping of diplomats and tourists for ransoms totaling an estimated \$80million since 2008 (Onuoha, 2010).

For the first time, Boko Haram has similarly carried out kidnappings demanding ransom for the release of all its members or it will execute all the French citizens. A Nigerian government report noted that the “ Islamist militant group Boko Haram was paid more than \$3m before releasing a French family of seven” (Onuoha, 2010). With the French led military operations against Al-Qaeda affiliate groups that occupied Northern Mali, Boko Haram's receipt of a ransom and release of release of the French family

of seven brings to light the much contested strong linkages to Al-Qaeda. In a video released to the Press and You Tube, a spokesperson for the group said the kidnapping was due to the French military intervention in northern Mali, where its troops were fighting with Malian soldiers against Islamic extremists, and religious groups (Onuoha, 2010).

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the efforts, evolution and strategies of Boko Haram, and looked at the parallels between the locally based terror group to mainstream organizations such as Al-Qaeda. A weak Nigerian government and access to training in adjoining countries has aided Boko Haram to transport people, guns and goods across their borders. The organization continues to grow in size and strength. Even more importantly, their strategies of the organization have progressed in several areas in which have made them more powerful.

With the similarities in strategies, techniques and operations to mainstream global terror groups, it is evident that Boko- Haram is linked to Al- Qaeda on ideological issues of Islam. Although their ideology of extremism is rooted in Nigeria, with the intentions of implementing Sharia Law, the organization has gained international attention. The group has transitioned from utilizing poisoned arrows to adopting Al-Qaeda's tactics of kidnapping, coordinated car bombing and assassinations. The United States is now considering Boko Haram to be a threat to national security.