

Boko Haram and Islamic Fundamentalism in Nigeria

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Abstract

In 2009, it was assumed that Boko Haram was a spent force having suffered critical losses in its leadership. However, Boko Haram not only reemerged as a threat to Nigeria, but its activities also placed it on the radar of international terrorism watchers with a series of daring and successful attacks. Boko Haram's marked increase in its capabilities in a very short period of time has led to speculation that it has joined forces with al Qaeda groups in Africa. That is likely the case, but up to now the groups seem to be sharing tactics, but not goals, as Boko Haram's focus seems fixed on Nigeria and its capabilities have yet to exceed that of a regional militant group. Moreover, a recent government crackdown seems to have diminished the group's activities, but not completely wiped it out. So, in an attempt to understand Boko Haram and Islamic militancy in Nigeria this paper will examine historical, societal, and economic forces that preceded its emergence and the reasons for the government to address its grievances.

Key Words: Boko Haram, Nigeria, International Terrorism, al Qaeda

Introduction

The Nigerian militant Islamist group Boko Haram (translation: Western Education is Forbidden), as it is popularly referred to, or as it calls itself, Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-jihad (translation: People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad), is causing a stir among experts concerned with transnational terrorism (Chothia, 2012). After a period of dormancy, it reappeared, marking its debut with an extraordinary attack on international interests ("Terrorism in Nigeria", 2011). Boko Haram's increased militant capability comes on the heels of Nigerian Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab's attempt to explode a bomb in a civilian airliner on Christmas Day in 2009 en route from Amsterdam to the Detroit, Michigan. This has led to the increased speculation that Nigeria might be the next exporter of global fundamentalist Islamic extremism and that the influence of al Qaeda is spreading from the Horn of Africa and from the African Maghreb to West Africa (Johnson, 2011). In fact, the United States National Strategy for Counter Terrorism states specifically that al Qaeda in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has provided training to Boko Haram (The White House, 2011).

To date, Boko Haram's attacks have become increasingly daring and lethal, from sporadic skirmishes with police and sectarian violence prior to 2009 to attacks on well guarded and heavily fortified targets such as the United Nations compound in the Nigerian capitol city Abuja in the summer of 2011, killing over 20 people ("Terrorism in Nigeria", 2011), and a Nigerian military base in Kaduna in February 2012. In the case of the latter, the suicide bomber very nearly made it to the heart of the installation and the headquarters building, but was shot and only managed to detonate his bomb near the barracks of the 1st Mechanized Division of the Nigerian Army ("Nigeria: Boko Haram", 2012). As evidence of the growing alarm, in January at the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa, leaders of African Union countries voiced concern to U.S. Deputy Secretary of State William J. Burns that this group was becoming a threat to regional stability (Burns, 2012).

Is current state of Islamic fundamentalism in Nigeria as it is manifested in Boko Haram a product of Nigerian societal and economic problems and regional history, or is it tied to the broader Islamic revival as marked by the rise of al Qaeda and its derivative groups? Perhaps as it often is with complex societal insurgencies, it is a combination of all of these factors. An analysis of existing literature exposes many familiar themes: the presence of oil, corrupt government officials, a history of Islamic prominence; a colonial legacy, including drawing borders with little importance given to ethnic or religious history; and a rejecting of Western influence. This essay will explore a brief history and legacy of Islam and colonialism in Nigeria, and the current social and the economic conditions that gave rise to Boko Haram's agenda. It will examine the evolution of Boko Haram itself from Islamic separatist sect using clubs and machetes to Islamic terrorist group, using explosives against international targets, and it will examine its links to al Qaeda derivative groups. Last of all, this paper will analyze this group's potential to become a transnational terrorist group in view of goals and capabilities.

The Sokoto Caliphate

Formed through jihad as a response to corruption and despotism between 1804 and 1808, the Sokoto Caliphate eventually covered northern Nigeria, parts of southern Nigeria, Niger, Benin, and Cameroon. Once established, it soon instituted Shari'a law (International Crisis Group, 2010). From a nostalgic perspective, it was more than an empire -- it was a religious community, distinguished by its faithfulness, and its leader, the Sultan of Sokoto, claimed descent from the Prophet Mohammed (Hill, 2010). This and the system of powerful Islamic caliphates of prior centuries constituted the apex for high Muslim civilization (Cook, 2011). Thus, the Sokoto Caliphate remains a not-so-very distant and important reference point for Nigeria's Muslims and represents the powerful role that jihad and Shari'a law

played in uniting a region, rejecting corruption, and creating prosperity under Islam. But, as with most fond memories of times past, this was hardly utopia. There were revolts as well as rivalry between competing Sufi brotherhoods (Hill, 2010).

The Sokoto Caliphate remained West Africa's most powerful state until it fell under British colonial rule around 1903. Even though the British chose indirect rule, it made significant judicial, political, and cultural changes. While the British left elements of Shari'a law in place, it mitigated aspects it considered to be too extreme. This was viewed by Muslim northerners as an elevation of Christian jurisprudence over its Islamic judicial heritage. In 1960, the south of Nigeria (predominantly Christian) was federated with the north, (predominantly Muslim), a secular constitution was created, and it was granted independence. By this time, the power of the sultan was diminished to that of a figure head (International Crisis Group, 2010; Cook, 2011).

Post-Colonial Sectarian Impulse

The British left behind a country of 350 ethnic groups that speak 250 languages. The country is 50% Muslim, 40% Christian, and 10% animist with the north remaining principally Muslim and the south – Christian and animist (Johnson, 2011). Religion is a potent political tool even in the most benign situations, and it was and continues to be a prominent identifying feature in the lives of most Nigerians (Adesoji, 2011). Thus, since independence, there has been a strong impulse toward regionalism based on ethnicity and religion versus nationalism (Johnson, 2011). As evidence, within a few years of independence, civil war erupted over the succession of Biafra, which declared independence owing to religious and ethnic differences. Within three bloody and brutal years, Biafra lost its bid for independence and was forcibly reabsorbed into Nigeria (Youngblood-Coleman, 2012).

Violence within and between ethnic and religious groups is a familiar feature of life in Nigeria, even through nearly 4 decades of flip-flopping military-to-civilian rule (1960-1999) and a over a decade of civilian rule (1999 to present). Every election during periods of civilian rule has featured violence from political assassinations to voter intimidation as groups vie for control of Nigeria (Onwudiwe and Berwind-Dart, 2010).

Nigeria's critical national resource adds to the violence as groups such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) seek to have total control over the country's most prized natural resource and use violence and sabotage as tools ("Nigeria's Shadowy Oil Rebels", 2006). That the presence of significant oil reserves is concentrated in the south has exacerbated divisions. Even though oil revenues predominantly benefit the elite

of the country, it has given the south a certain status that has resulted in lower unemployment and higher levels of education attainment in comparison to the north (Zachary, 2011). Draconian regional laws that grant the indigenous privileges, from employment preference to lower school fees, over nonindigenous settlers further enhance divisions (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 2010).

Oil and Its Effect on Nigeria's Economy

The United States considers Nigeria to be an important ally on many fronts. As the continent's most populous country, it is a powerful actor in African politics, it has played a role in resolving African disputes, and it ranks 4th among contributors to United Nations' Peacekeeping missions (Ploch, 2011). Nigeria is also an important source of high quality, sweet, light crude and the world's twelfth largest producer. The United States has increasingly turned toward Africa in order to diversify its sources away from the Middle East, and Nigeria ranks as its largest African exporter and in the top five of its suppliers (Asuni, 2009).

Currently, Nigeria depends almost exclusively on its oil sector for revenues – approximately 85% of total gross domestic product. It reportedly earns nearly \$60 billion annually from its oil and gas (Ploch, 2011). As with many nations that come to rely on one commodity for the majority of its revenues, it has become a rentier state. In addition, as is often the case with rentier states, economic growth and innovation in other sectors atrophy. Because the country is flooded with foreign currency, imports are cheaper for the newly rich, so the collapse of traditional ways of life from agriculture and fishing to manufacturing has caused mass migration to the cities where there are few jobs to go around. The economy of the north has been particularly affected. As agriculture and manufacturing collapsed, so did the mainstay of the north's economy: cotton farming and textiles production (Hill, 2010; International Crisis Group, 2010). Through the oil boom of the 1970s to today, human trafficking, prostitution, kidnapping, and criminality in general have flourished in alongside continued high unemployment (International Crisis Group, 2010).

Because the oil wealth flows to the powerful and elite, social services, public safety programs, and education are of very low quality or nonexistent and Nigeria ranks among the world's poorest populations, with 75% of the population living on \$1.25 per day. The poverty rate in the Muslim north is 72%, in the Christian south – 27%; and in the Niger Delta – 35% (Johnson, 2011). For the majority outside of the establishment, there is no continuous access to safe drinking water, shelter, or employment (Omede, 2011) and life expectancy stands at 46.5 years of age (Bureau of African Affairs, 2012). Another predicament is that two thirds of Nigeria's population is under the age of 30. A country with a so-called “youth

bulge,” combined with high unemployment is at risk for increased societal unrest. Its disease load is equally problematic. Nigeria has the second highest AIDS/HIV burden in Africa and the highest tuberculosis burden in the world (Ploch, 2011). In addition to not providing basic services to its citizens, the government has been cited by Amnesty International for extreme corruption, graft, human rights violation, extrajudicial killings, torture, and police abuses of citizens (“Killing at Will”, 2009). All of this misery occurs in the third largest economy in Africa in which over 6% economic growth forecasted in 2012 (Hinshaw, Moore, and McGroarty, 2012).

Into the midst of this morass, Muslims turn to Islam with the belief that it can provide a banner under which Muslims can unify as they have in the past and which can again provide a path toward enlightenment and prosperity (Hill, 2010). However, a small number seem to be coming to the conclusion that the mystical Sufi tradition of Africa is not equal to the burden that northern Nigerians have to bear. The more radical and political form of Islam, begun by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in the early 20th century that is spreading across the Muslim world community, is appearing to be a more effective catalyst for change.

Islam as Antidote

In an effort to solve complex problems with simple answers, soon after the shift from military to civilian rule in 1999, twelve Muslim majority states of Nigeria instituted Shari’a law in order to adjudicate criminal and civil matters for Muslims (for non-Muslims, Shari’a courts are elective) (Ploch, 2011).

The difficult circumstances, economic problems, and lawlessness often faced by Nigerians convinced parents that their children were better off attending Koranic schools where the focus would be on moral teachings. It was here that the founder of Boko Haram, Mohammed Yusuf comes into focus. Yusuf founded Boko Haram in 2002. He set up a religious complex in Maiduguri in the state of Borno with a mosque and an Islamic school. His school attracted not just the region’s poor, but even Muslims from nearby countries (Francis, 2011; Chothia, 2012). Yusuf himself was reportedly educated in Salafist tradition, under the influence of the blossoming Islamic fundamentalist movement in Nigeria (Adesoji, 2011).

Nevertheless, since its implementation, the Shari’a system and its draconian punishments have failed to mitigate criminality or government corruption as hoped. Over the course of the decade, as weaponry and training allowed groups to provide their own security, it appears that the government of Nigeria began to lose control of its northern corner.

The Sufi Tradition versus Rising Salafist Militancy

Sufism has been the predominant form of Islam in Africa even today as Salafist-orientation, most closely connected with radical Islam, is on the rise. Sufism is considered to be more mystical and esoteric, focusing on the nurturing of the soul over social actions; internal spirituality and contemplation is stressed over strict interpretation and adherence to Islamic teaching and text. Nonetheless, there is increasing support even among moderate African Sufis for a greater role for Islam in public and political life, but in the Sufi tradition (Hill, 2010).

Salafist beliefs stand in direct opposition to Sufism. Salafist Islam rejects the West and Western culture and adheres to a very strict reading of the Koran. It believes in direct action to both purify Islam of false believers and to reinstate Islam across the world Islamic community (Hill, 2010). While an estimated 90% of Nigerian Muslims tend toward Sufism, there is growing sense that it is not enough to cure difficult and long-standing social problems and inequalities and that a more radical means are called for. Moreover, Nigerian Muslims see themselves as part of the pan-Islamic community and have voiced support for popular Arab positions, for example, they favor the Arab position on the Israel-Palestinian conflict (International Crisis Group, 2010). Interestingly, according to a 2010 Pew Research poll, al Qaeda and bin Laden enjoyed more support among Nigeria's Muslims (49% approval) than in the rest of the Islamic world ("Osama bin Laden Largely Discredited", 2011).

Toward the Salafist Tradition in Nigeria

Some scholars maintain that Boko Haram was an outgrowth of the Maitatsine movement and riots of the 1980s during which the first major uprisings of fundamentalist Islam in Nigeria appear. Maitatsine stated goal was the purification of Islam (Adesoji, 2011). Boko Haram's founder, Mohammed Yusuf, described as a charismatic young leader and a product of madrasa education, preached the doctrine of withdrawal. He believed that Western education should be moderated through Islamic scholarship and thus began by setting up an Islamic complex with a mosque and school (Campbell, 2011; Johnson, 2011). As is characteristic of most Islamic fundamentalist groups, Boko Haram rejected all Western culture and influence as well as science and it sought the imposition of Shari'a law across the whole of Nigeria. Its membership drew not only from the educated and employed, but also from poorest: criminals, drug addicts, and drifters (Adesoji, 2011). The tie that bound this disparate people together was desire to overthrow the secular government. Its modus

operandi during the early years was using simply constructed weapons that required no advanced training against easily accessible targets (Stewart, 2012).

By 2009, increased sectarian fights and clashes with the police culminated in a storming of one of the group's hideouts (Cook, 2011). Nine members were arrested and bomb-making materials and weapons were confiscated (Adesoji, 2011). This set off four days of riots across four states which were finally quelled by the arrest of Yusuf. In what is called an extrajudicial killing, Yusuf, his father-in-law, and several others were killed by the police while in custody and hundreds of followers were jailed (Johnson, 2011). It was thought at this point in 2009 that Boko Haram as a group was devastated. Several hundred people died in the uprising (Office of Coordinator for Counterterrorism, 2011).

But, the 2010 Office of Coordinator for Counterterrorism report on terrorism (2011) asserts that the remnants of Boko Haram fled to neighboring countries to recruit, regroup and train. Moreover, a little more than a year later during Ramadan, the group resurfaced with a daring and successful attack on a prison which freed several hundred inmates, along with 100 sect members, while killing seven guards and bystanders. Since the beginning of 2011, Boko Haram has claimed responsibility for several bombings, attacks, and assassinations which have come with increasing regularity against the United Nations, citizens drinking alcohol and playing cards at beer gardens, government offices, and churches (Youngblood-Coleman, 2012). In Boko Haram strongholds, murders occur on a daily basis (Hinshaw, Moore, and McGroarty, 2012). Reportedly, the group has killed far more Muslims in its purification campaign than Christians. Targets of its assassinations include political figures, secular opposition figures, prominent clerics, and preachers (Youngblood-Coleman, 2012).

Grassroots Insurgency or National Political Tool?

In this brief analysis of the historical Islamic precedent, sectarian tendencies, and social and economic conditions that encouraged grassroots jihad in Nigeria, there is a piece missing: resources and political cover. To be sure, it cannot be a coincidence that Islamic fundamentalism in Nigeria grew alongside and drew inspiration from the global movement. But, at the same time, the ascendancy of the elite south over the elite north in terms of economics and culture made Boko Haram and such groups useful political tools at home. Politicians use such groups for political or economic ends, only to discard them when they have served their purpose or overstep their charter. Certainly a conspiracy theorist could view Yusuf's killing in this light. There is also the accusation that such groups have been deliberately created through the madrassa education system, manipulating religious beliefs in order to create a population that can help achieve the political goals of the north over the south (Soyinka, 2012). In keeping with this, attacks have become more deadly and more frequent since the informal agreement to rotate the presidency between the Muslim north and

the Christian south seems to have been broken. President Umaru Yar'Adua, a Muslim, died in office and his Christian vice president, Goodluck Jonathon, finished out that term and proceeded to run for a second term, and won (Onwudiwe and Berwind-Dart, 2010). This has been perceived by some elements of society, especially in the north, as a broken agreement that benefits the south. Even so, it is hardly precedent setting that political powers will attempt to harness grassroots movements for political and economic gain. But in a country that is counted as one of the most religious in the world and in which violence has a long tradition, such manipulations can have tragic consequences.

Still, this is speculation in light of the fact that Boko Haram's sources of political cover and resources are not necessarily well known. It had known ties to a former, now deceased, state commissioner (Adesoji, 2011) and it funded itself for a time through bank robberies (Campbell, 2012). Other sources claim that it currently is struggling for funding because two primary sources of funding have dried up. The first was former Libyan leader Qaddafi. The second was protection money paid by northern governors who have stopped paying in light of increased violence (Hinshaw, 2012). Recently, unconfirmed reports abounded in the Nigerian press that Boko Haram has been able to tap into funding from al Qaeda –linked organizations in the Middle East and England, as well as Saudi businessmen (“Investigators Track Boko Haram Funding”, 2012). This would certainly draw the attention and perhaps resources of Western governments.

The Global Islamic Insurgency Connection

Until the latest outbreak of violence in 2011, some analysts believed that Boko Haram only received inspiration from the global jihadist movement, and even eschewed closer patronage to al Qaeda because of its historical Sufi tradition (Szrom and Harnisch, 2011). Yet, without confirmation, evidence points to Boko Haram gaining outside assistance to exact retribution and achieve its goals. Many of the tactics used are al Qaeda signature formulas that began to occur after Boko Haram's reported destruction or dispersion to neighboring countries: suicide bombings, coordinated multi-location bombings, and release of martyrdom videos made by suicide bombers. The only insurgent groups in Africa that have used suicide attacks are al Qaeda in the Lands of the Mahgreb and Somalia's al Shebaab (Cook, 2011). Moreover, several facts are quite startling: the sophistication of its capabilities which now include vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs), its success rate, and its operations tempo, have shown marked improvement in just over a year's time (Stewart, 2012). Further, with its attack on a military installation, albeit unsuccessful, in February, it seemed to be trying to make a shift from soft targets to heavily fortified targets (Francis, 2011).

As previously stated, AQIM and al Shebaab are the most likely sources. In the case of AQIM, counterterrorism efforts have forced it from its traditional home in Algeria into the Sahara-Sahel region of Mali, Mauritania, and Niger and it shifted its focus to transnational jihad in conjunction with al Qaeda in order to sustain itself. The upheaval in Libya with its store houses of weapons, and ties with Boko Haram may provide AQIM with expansion opportunities. To date, ties between the two groups seem to be limited to training and possibly resources (Thornberry and Levy, 2011).

Allegedly, a Boko Haram member trained with al Shebaab in Somalia before returning to Nigeria to oversee the successful attack on the United Nations headquarters. But, because of the pressure of Kenyan armed forces and African Union peacekeeping forces in Somalia, al Shebaab will likely remain boxed in locally for the near future and unable to engage in cross-border actions (Felbab-Brown and Forest, 2012; “Terrorism in Nigeria”, 2011). To this point, interaction seems to be limited to training.

It has to be said that proving an operational connection between Boko Haram and an al Qaeda derivative group might bring both the notice and the counterterrorism assistance of the United States and other concerned nations. It is also a simple matter to cross reference the attempted Christmas Day bombing of the civilian airliner in 2009 with rising Islamic militancy in a region of Nigeria. It is much more difficult to find deep international terrorist connections between them. Abdulmutallab was radicalized outside of the country in Yemen and al Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula provided the logistical support for his failed terrorist act. Further, the young man’s father attempted to warn authorities of his son’s radicalization (International Crisis Group, 2010). This seems too far a leap from Boko Haram’s sectarian “campaign of terror” in the corner of Nigeria. On the other hand, it might simply speak to the deteriorating situation in Nigeria.

Boko Haram Today

Perhaps learning from its experience in 2009, Boko Haram keeps its membership diffuse, it does not publish its hierarchy, its structure, or manifesto (Campbell, 2012). One explanation is that it lacks organization and that a loose alliance of young militants comprises the group. Yet, a series of bombing attacks across several cities over a four-day period in January of this year speaks to more than a bunch of angry unemployed young men – at the very least it has competent bomb makers and members who are willing to become suicide bombers. Some experts hold the opinion that the deep local roots of its grievances will likely keep it focused on issues it cares profoundly about in Nigeria (Felbab-Brown and Forest, 2012).

However, the inclusion of an international entity in its choice of targets does hint at a desire to push the issue to the international level and this may indicate it is on a trajectory to be the next Islamic jihadist group to transcend borders. It has also tried, unsuccessfully it is true, to prove increased capability by attacking hard targets (Stewart, 2012). Still, since its attack on the U. N. compound, it has turned back to more local and regional targets, which leads to speculation that it was not fully in charge of carrying out the U.N. attack and that outside help facilitated this successful attack (Office of Coordinator for Counterterrorism, 2011).

Also, the fact remains that it has yet to carry out attacks outside of its strong holds in the north and central regions of Nigeria. Attack in regions where a group has sympathy and support from the local population and where the targets are familiar and accessible are not indicators of transnational capability. An operational leap to transnational capability takes experience, expertise, and ability to operate undetected in less familiar and more hostile environments (Stewart, 2012).

Its connections to AQIM and al Shebaab still only speak to shared tactics versus shared goals. Currently it appears that Boko Haram may use international links to sustain its operations inside Nigeria. Also, in Nigeria, radical Islam does remain a nominal regional movement that might simply act as a cloak for economic and tribal grievances (Szrom and Harnisch, 2011).

However, one phenomenon that seems missing is a declaration of independence or a declaration to secede as Biafra did over 40 years ago. Allowing a little speculation, there are a few likely reasons. First, it does not have enough of a broad base of support in its corner of Nigeria. Second, leaving the fold means that it would lose the potential to have access to oil revenues. Third, organizationally, it remains underdeveloped.

All issues considered, for the present moment, Boko Haram's focus is on Nigeria and capabilities remain regional. However, it must be considered that that larger global Islamic insurgency may have the power to both provide manpower and resources if it believes that the Nigerian cause is one that should be supported in a more direct way.

The Government's Response is Key

It is possible to point to the killing of Mohammed Yusuf at the hands of the police as the moment that Boko Haram became truly radicalized. The group's actions can hardly be called benign prior to that, but the evolution in lethality in the years since certainly mark it as a turning point. For the moment, it seems the time has passed to use minor policy changes to

alleviate the group's grievances, and bringing significant issues to the negotiating table will likely be necessary. For a time early this year, Boko Haram seemed to have the upper hand, even after the government instituted curfews and began a crackdown. After a very deadly January in which around 200 people were reportedly killed, the government's actions appeared to be reaping results as attacks became fewer, less sophisticated, and less deadly ("Nigeria: Progress in the Crackdown", 2012). However, by the end of April, Boko Haram was suspected, owing to previous threats, of coordinated VBIED attacks on two offices of one of Nigeria's most popular newspapers in different cities. But, one attack was allegedly nearly foiled by bystanders as they pulled him from the car before he could fully complete his mission ("Nigeria's ThisDay Newspaper Hit by Blasts", 2012).

The government's reaction to rely solely on force is probably a mistake, even if understandable – its heavy-handed reactions of the past have exacerbated the situation and may have even pushed Boko Haram to enhance its capabilities. Further, as often is the case with insurgencies, portions of the local population is apt to sympathize more with insurgents when the government reacts harshly. This is critical since sympathy may manifest in additional manpower and resources. In addition, Boko Haram likely has connections to resources and training it did not have even three years ago.

The government was able to co-opt MEND by agreeing to an amnesty deal and greater sharing of oil revenues for the peoples of the area (Campbell, 2012). The government has offered to negotiate, but there seems little middle ground between the resulting demands of Boko Haram and what the secular government would willingly allow, considering that agreeing to those demands include the entirety of Nigeria coming under Islamic law (Hinshaw, 2012). But, as a former U.S. ambassador to Nigeria has written in an op-ed in the New York Times, whether the central government wants it or not, it may be forced to consider some review fundamental political and economic issues at stake and undertake considerable change (Campbell, 2012).

Conclusion

Transnational terrorist alarms began sounding when Boko Haram successfully carried out a sophisticated attack against an international organization. It has left the government of Nigeria wrong-footed after it believed it destroyed the group two years prior. A young Nigerian man who was willing to die in the name of Islam on an airplane as it headed for the United States caused a fair number to wonder if Nigeria was the next hotbed of extremist global terrorism. But delving into available analysis of Boko Haram indicates a different picture, one that is often seen in countries where Islamic militancy has taken hold. The global

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Islamic insurgency may provide an umbrella, but the reason it exists is bound up with local and regional culture and issues.

It is too simplistic to simply say that Boko Haram is a product of the global Islamic insurgency, that it was only created by economic and political conditions, that it is a product of colonial past, or that it is a continuation of its Islamic history. Elements of all of these issues play a role in the group it has become. And its complex *raison d'être* also means that resolving the conflict between it and the government will also be difficult and complex and not one that will be easily mitigated.

This is not to say that other events might not cause this group to shift focus to transborder terrorism. But currently, its grievances remain local, as do its capabilities.

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