



Boko Haram: Anatomy of an Islamist Revolt

Executive Summary

The Boko Haram insurgency and its seeming intractability have continued to vex local, national and international audiences worried about the costs of the escalating violence in northern Nigeria. The emergence of factions within Boko Haram has added a new dimension to the discourse. In order to understand this new dimension, this research examined 1) the nature of the factions including their ideological and operational properties; 2) the theories that explain the emergence of the factions broadly framed in terms of “split” and “strategic repositioning” theories and; 3) the forms that the factions are likely to take in the near future. A focus on these yielded the following findings:

- a. Several factions have formed from Boko Haram. Although these factions appear to focus on purely different issues, they appear to maintain common ideological and operational resources.
- b. Following the “split theory,” the close ideological and operational connections between the factions suggest that the only real differences between the factions may be territoriality and ethnicity. While Boko Haram is based primarily in the North East, Ansaru (and to lesser extent YIM) operates out of the North West. Also, while Boko Haram is primarily composed of ethnic Kanuri, Ansaru is composed primarily of ethnic Hausa-Fulani and YIM by a mix of non-Kanuri ethnicities including the Ebira. Thus, the need to resolve potentially debilitating ethno-sectarian differences within Boko Haram may have led to the split.
- c. Based on the “strategic repositioning theory,” the development of factions is a pragmatic tactical maneuver to obfuscate and confuse intelligence about the group’s operations, secure direly needed resource support from global jihadists through its ideological and strategic repositioning, and resolve internal contradictions. In this sense, “factionalization” is a metonymic device for “operational decentralization.”

Based on these findings, particularly the persisting strong ideological (and even operational) connection between the factions, this paper concludes that more will be gained from addressing the insurgency as “one insurgency” instead of “several insurgencies” and to emphasize continuities instead of discontinuities among the factions.

Introduction

The Boko Haram insurgency has entered its fifth year and remains fully engaged in its stated mission to Islamize northern Nigeria and replace its political and religious authority. However, beginning in 2011, factions have emerged that lay claim to the same Salafist ideology that gave birth to Boko Haram, but distance themselves from the excesses or “evil” of Boko Haram. The first faction, Jama’u Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis-Sudan (JAMBS), or *Ansaru*, has aligned itself with Boko Haram’s neo-salafist ideology but has criticized Boko Haram for indiscriminately targeting civilians and fellow Muslims. In contrast to what is seen as Boko Haram’s “northernization agenda,” Ansaru vows to internationalize the Boko Haram campaign and has claimed the kidnapping and killing of foreigners in northern Nigeria. The second faction, the Yusufiya Islamic Movement (YIM), which like Boko Haram draws lineage from the Yusufiyya sect, appears to have severed ties with Boko Haram over what it claims are the activities of “people with evil motives” that propagate a false holy war. While there appears to be clear evidence of factions within Boko Haram, this analysis contends that the internal division of Boko Haram is not deep-rooted and the groups continue to share ideology, inspiration, situational awareness, and resources.

The emergence of multiple terror sects in a region already devastated by the Boko Haram insurgency has multiple implications for Nigeria and the international community. First, it threatens to escalate the conflict beyond northern Nigeria as has been indicated by the kidnapping of foreigners in neighboring Cameroon and the reported killing of seven kidnapped foreign workers by Ansaru. Second, the movement has the potential to create complex emergencies in neighboring fragile states that are already vulnerable to conflict because of geo-ethnic and religious affiliations to Nigeria, internal economic pressures, and political instability. Third, expansion of the conflict to the south may provoke retaliation as witnessed in Edo state in 2012 and escalate political and social tensions that might lead to another civil war. Already, the *Movement for the Defense of the Niger Delta* (MEND), the Niger Delta militant organization blamed for the October 2010 Independence day bombing in Abuja, has threatened to carry out *Operation Barbarossa*, which is a code word for reprisal attacks against Mosques and Muslim clerics “that propagate doctrines of hate” beginning on May 31, 2012.¹ All of these factors suggest that the risk for region-wide sociopolitical breakdown and chaos is elevated with the proliferation of terror groups in northern Nigeria in the presence of comorbid social, political, economic, cultural, environmental, ethnic, and religious forces.

If indeed Boko Haram is internally fractured, it is critical to understand the factors responsible and how the factions link to one another and possibly to other extremist groups across the Sahel and elsewhere. With regards to the factions that have formed, it is important to understand their ideological orientation, operational focus, ethnic configuration, and possible region-wide geopolitical alignments. If on the other hand, the emergence of factions reflects the strategic repositioning of Boko Haram to make it more effective while eluding the spreading security dragnet, then, it is critical to understand the ends and aims of this decentralization agenda as well

¹ See Okhomina, O. 2013. “Nigeria: MEND Threatens to Attack Mosques, Islamic Clerics, Others.” Available at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201304150045.html>.

as the forces that enable (and maintain) the coalescing of multiple elements under Boko Haram and ultimately, its internal cohesion. This will enable the analysis to disaggregate Boko Haram and identify its constituent parts. This last point is crucial for identifying appropriate interventions that might help to reduce the scale of the problem, significantly. As Lund suggests, the application of interventions based on faulty conceptualization, even if timely, may be worse than taking no action at all.² Focus on the fracturing (or otherwise) of Boko Haram, therefore, has become a categorical imperative.

This paper is divided into 5 sections. Section I discusses the historical trajectory of Boko Haram and its metamorphosis from a religion inspired separatist sect existing on the margin of society to a full-fledged neo-Salafist terror movement with global visibility. Section 2 focuses on Ansaru, an emergent Boko Haram faction that within relatively short compass has attracted national and global attention. Section 3 focuses on YIM as an emergent Boko Haram faction and traces the formation of the group to the early activities of Mohammed Yusuf. Each of the first three sections concludes with a description of the types of individuals likely to be motivated to join the faction as well as a projection of the future of each group. Section 4 discusses two strands of ideas about how to understand divisions within Boko Haram: the split theory and the strategic repositioning theory. The split theory is given its theoretical power by Tilly and Rule's³ suggestion that insurgent coalitions, like Boko Haram's, are likely to fragment because:

- a) The larger coalition required to begin the insurgency is not needed to maintain or sustain it;
- b) Differences in the objectives and interests of the coalesced elements are likely to become more salient and more serious after the initial staging of violence;
- c) Those elements that mobilized rapidly in support of the group because of short-term crisis, but which interests are not necessarily the interests of the core elements in the insurgency, are also likely to demobilize more rapidly than other elements.

However, the section is dominated by the discussion of the strategic repositioning thesis, which is framed by the theory of moral re-imagination. The brief focus on the strategic repositioning thesis is simply to anticipate broader questions about the "split" that were not accommodated within the main body of the paper. Finally, Section V presents the conclusion of the paper that because of the continuities (ideological, operational, etc) between Boko Haram, Ansaru, and YIM, the insurgency must be addressed as "one insurgency" instead of "several insurgencies." Ideologically, Boko Haram is still a unified group and operationally all three factions continue to receive their directives from the same 30-man Shura council led by Abubakar Shekau, which composition has not changed since 2010.

Methods

This research utilized the grounded theory methodology to conduct a cross-disciplinary content analysis of academic literature on the broad topics of socio-political and ethno-religious conflicts. The data yielded a vast body of work within and outside of Africa, which were sorted into

² Lund, M.S. 2009. "Conflict Prevention: Theory in Pursuit of Policy and Practice" pages 287-308 in *The Sage Handbook of Conflict Resolution*" edited by J. Bercovitch, V. Kremenyuk, and I.W. Zartman. New York: Sage.

³ See Tilly, C. and Rule, J. 1973. *Political Process in Revolutionary France, 1830-1832.*"CRSO Working Paper #87

relevant theoretical and analytical domains using the NVivo data analytic software. This methodology was also utilized to conduct content analysis of non-academic literature including newspaper, magazine, and journal articles as well as YouTube videos, Facebook postings, and blogs specific to the Boko Haram insurgency. Data analysis followed a theoretical approach to understand the data as part of a process of induction. Through an inductive coding process, the research identified a set of interpretive frames and narrative structures that pertain to Boko Haram and the sects that have split from it and their distinct properties.

Section I: Contextualizing Boko Haram

This section discusses Boko Haram within two time periods 1) the evolution of Boko Haram from 2002 when the sect began to form up to 2009 when its charismatic leader Mohammed Yusuf was killed, and 2) the period beginning in 2010 when Abubakar Shekau assumed leadership of the sect and repositioned it as a potentially global terrorist franchise with possible links to Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). The discourse of the post-2010 phase of Boko Haram opens into the larger question of splits and focus on two emergent movements – Ansaru and YIM.

Mohammed Yusuf's Boko Haram

Jama'atu Ahlis Sunnah Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad (People for the Propagation of the Teachings of the Prophet and Jihad), or Boko Haram, has been described as a traditionalist, exclusivist, millenarian, fanatically theocratic and fundamentalist terrorist sect that "proffers religious authoritarianism as an alternative to democracy."^{4 5} Its conception of the future ideal society is a return to an entirely imagined, 7th century (CE) desert Arab theocracy. At the same time, it is an entirely logical and unsurprising consequence of, and response to, the same post-colonial social conditions that helped form and shape many other revolutions in Africa, including the Algerian Revolution. The sect is neo-salafist, which means that it has an ultra-conservative understanding of the *Koran* or the *Hadith*. Its guidelines for a Muslim life are conservative and rigid, implying that only a small percentage of the primarily Sufi north may be motivated to join the sect.

The roots of the movement have been traced to the *Sahaba* group, formed in 1995 under the leadership of Abubakar Lawan. When Lawan left to study at the University of Medina, leadership of the group transferred to the young firebrand cleric, Muhammad Yusuf. On assumption of leadership, Yusuf immediately commenced the ideological transformation of the group from its primary concern with spiritual issues to the intersection of spirituality and the routine issues of social organization including the economy, politics, westernization, the state, poverty, and corruption.

At the time the group was known as the Yusufiyya sect. Yusuf maintained a contentious relationship with the popular Islamic cleric, and his teacher, Sheikh Ja'afar Mohmoud Adam.

⁴ Hansen, W.W. and Musa, U.A. 2013. "Fanon, the Wretched and Boko Haram." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 0(0): 1-16. Hansen, W.W. and Musa, U.A. 2013. "Fanon, the Wretched and Boko Haram."

⁵ Kenhammer, B. 2012. "The Sharia Controversy in Northern Nigeria and the Politics of Islamic Law in New and Uncertain Democracies." *Journal of Comparative Politics*.

Adam had taken a special interest in Yusuf because of his “brilliance.”⁶ Yusuf fell out with Sheikh Adam over his increasingly radical anti-western outlook and incendiary preaching about the Nigerian state. Several attempts were made to reconcile Yusuf with Sheikh Adam, all of which failed. Yusuf continued to insist that his group was not militant but organized to uphold the teachings of Prophet Mohammed. According to Shehu Sani, Yusuf “warned that they will rather die than to succumb to the present corrupt system in the country. That they vowed to continue to fight the authorities and their accomplices until they succeed or die in the process.”⁷ On April 13, 2007, Sheikh Ja’afar Mahmoud Adam was assassinated by gunmen believed to be loyalists of Mohammed Yusuf while leading the dawn prayers in his Ndimi mosque in Maiduguri.⁸

Yusuf established the group’s mosque, the Ibn Taimiyyah Masjid, in Maiduguri built on land owned by Yusuf’s father-in-law, Baba Fugu Mohammed, himself killed in the violent suppression of the sect in 2009. The naming of the mosque after the 13th century Islamic scholar, Ibn Taimiyyah, reflects Yusuf’s preoccupation with defending Islam through the “strict adherence to the Qu’ran and authentic sunna (practices) of the Prophet Muhammad.”⁹ At the early stages of the development of the new group, Boko Haram, the sect established a “state within a state” with its own cabinet, police, and farm and attracted followers by offering “welfare handouts, food, and shelter.”¹⁰ The group’s source of funding at this time appeared to be “Salafist contacts” Yusuf established during two hajj trips dating to the period as well as influential businessmen¹¹ and politicians such as Boji Foi. Within a short span of time, the sect established bases in the North East states of Bornu, Yobe, Bauchi, and Gombe before spreading to the North West states of Kano, Katsina, and Kaduna states.

Yusuf may have been motivated by the hardships and struggles of ordinary Muslims in northern Nigeria. Considering the massive wealth that is created daily from Nigeria’s crude oil assets and the incredibly lavish lifestyles of leaders (north and south), ordinary northerners continue to face hardships brought on by the shrinking economic space, which is exacerbated by a shrinking political space.¹² Yusuf believed that the constriction of these spaces also meant the tightening of the cultural space and the resultant inability of northern Muslims to practice “true” Islam. He was particularly resentful of the corrupt and venal Hausa-Fulani political elite for colluding with the south to foist the socio-economic and political dominance of the south over the north. He considered these elite as products of western secular democracy, and therefore, apostate. For Boko Haram, the prevailing socio-political system that permits and enables thieving bands of politicians to despoil the nation’s commonwealth contains the seeds for the physical and spiritual destruction of northern Nigeria Muslims and must be resisted.

The perceived failure of the northern political and religious order created two general conditions

⁶ Sani, S. 2011. “Boko Haram: The Northern Nigeria (Hausaland) (2).”

⁷ Sani, S. 2011. “Boko Haram: The Northern Nigeria (Hausaland) (2).”

⁸ See Walker, A. 2012. “What is Boko Haram?” Also see Dearn, M. 2011. “Boko Haram: Nigeria’s Terrorist Insurgency Evolves.” Think Africa Press, available at <http://thinkafricapress.com/nigeria/boko-haram>.

⁹ Salkida, A. 2012. “Another look at the Boko Haram Philosophy.” *Premium Times*, Available at <http://premiumtimesng.com/opinion/106108-another-look-at-the-boko-haram-philosophy-by-ahmad-salkida.html>.

¹⁰ Walker, A. 2012. “What is Boko Haram?”

¹¹ Walker, A. 2012. “What is Boko Haram?”

¹² See Mazrui, A.A. 2001 “Shariacracy.”

in northern Nigeria. The first is what Charles Tilly calls a *revolutionary situation*, which allowed marginal groups like Boko Haram to believe that conflict with the state (and traditional authority) is necessary and feasible and the second is *dual sovereignty*, which Tilly argues is symbolized by the “appearance of contenders or coalitions of contenders, advancing exclusive alternative claims to the control over the government ...; commitment to those claims by a significant segment of the subject population ...; the incapacity or unwillingness of the government or its agents to suppress the challenger coalition.”¹³

The leadership of Boko Haram sees their brand of theocracy as an alternative paradigm of good governance and religious purity that is itself based in ancestry. In this case, there is only one ancestry, the sharia, a body of ancient history rooted in scriptures. The sharia is God’s law but in Nigeria, it was under severe persecution by the forces of materialism, secularism, westernization, globalization, and ungodliness¹⁴ and it was the responsibility of “true” Muslims in northern Nigeria, under the institutional guidance of Boko Haram, to rise in defense of Islam (and sharia). It was also their responsibility to save the north from economic strangulation and eternal damnation. As Mazrui argues, if Nigeria as a whole was a periphery of western capital, northern Nigeria was economically and socially a periphery of the periphery. Yet, the economic and social marginalization of the north was for many years obscured by the fact that the Hausa-Fulani elite within it controlled federal power, until Obasanjo (from the south) took the presidency in 1999. Subsequently, the political decline of the north exposed more mercilessly the north’s economic marginality. The sharia movement and ultimately Boko Haram’s cerebral religious hygiene was activated partly as protest against the north’s economic marginalization and partly as defense against unwanted cultural globalization.

From a systemic viewpoint, Boko Haram’s insurgency, at this time, appears to contain two broad moments: (1) a concern with mundane problems that can be solved through practical revolutionary activity and (2) religious, sacred and transcendental interest in the soul of the northern Muslim. Far from being contradictory, these two motions conduces Boko Haram’s commitment to replace the “infidel” secular state with a theocratic state. For them, this is entirely feasible considering what was achieved in Iran and Afghanistan and longstanding agitation for the imposition of sharia in northern Nigeria.

According to Dr. Aliyu Tilde, the crucial element in Boko Haram’s insurgency is its desire to recreate northern Nigeria to resemble that of the first three generations of Islam.¹⁵ This conservative romanticism ignores the caveat that once lost, the past, even in peoples’ minds, is difficult to recreate in any form. More difficult is the attempt to transform a secular state to a theocratic state without the resources, knowledge, and religious legitimacy to accomplish the task. As daunting as the challenge was, leaders of the sect had carefully developed both a plan and a method to accomplish their goal.

¹³ Tilly (1978: 200)

¹⁴ See Mazrui, A.A. 2001 “Shariacracy.”

¹⁵ Tilde, A. 2009. “We are Boko Haram.” *Discourse #26*. Available at <http://fridaydiscourse.blogspot.com/2010/05/discourse-261-by-dr.html>

Mohammed Yusuf's initial plan was to capitalize on the north's disenchantment with the political process and longstanding economic grievances to create a new spiritual and moral order that would form the nucleus of a new northern political movement. Public disenchantment with the political and economic estate of the north could be transformed into some form of cultural rearmament where, through religion, the north would renegotiate the political and economic contract with the rest of Nigeria. To achieve this plan, Yusuf adopted a simple method, which was to create spiritual enclaves within the territorial space of northern Nigeria where the model of the future theocratic state would be built with its own financial institutions, security (police) forces, educational institutions, farms, and markets. The success of this venture would win the much needed religious (and to some extent political) legitimacy to execute the larger project of Islamizing northern Nigeria and supplanting its religious and political fiefs. Yusuf built his "Ibn Taimiyya Masjid" mosque on property provided by his father-in-law, Baba Fugu Mohammed and "with his hard-line top lieutenant Abubakar Shekau alias 'Darul Tauhid,' began to build his imaginary state within a state" complete with:

Laginas (departments), they had a cabinet, the Shura, the Hisbah, the brigade of guards, a military wing, a large farm, an effective micro finance scheme, and late Yusuf played the role of a judge in settling disputes, each state had an Amir (leader) including amirs in Chad and Niger that gave accounts of their stewardship to Yusuf directly.¹⁶

Capitalizing on the thousands of Madrassahs in Borno State and the thousands of poor, beggarly children in attendance, Mohammed Yusuf began to target his increasingly radical teachings at the material conditions of these people. Two factors contributed to his success. Firstly, the dire economic conditions created a need for more responsive institutions and secondly, the northern political elite, over the years, carefully developed and nurtured youths who had no formal education except for a narrow religious education comprised of Qu'ranic memorization and recitation. Mohammed Yusuf was able to, within a relatively short time, attract thousands of followers "most of them *almajirais*, school dropouts, renegade civil servants and parliamentary staff" with a message centered on the rigid implementation of the sharia.¹⁷ This interpretation differed from the "political" or "elite" sharia instituted by the northern political elite from 1999 to 2001.

The events of 26-30 July 2009 dramatically altered Boko Haram's goals as well as its operational trajectory. The extra-judicial killing of Mohammed Yusuf and hundreds of his members, and the brutal suppression of the sect by the agents of the state, created a new dynamic for the organization. Influential members of the group including Abubakar Shekau went underground but resurfaced a year later, emboldened by possible support from radical Islamic groups in the Middle East, to launch a series of devastating attacks in northeast Nigeria. Thus, following Johnson's model of revolutionary change, the Boko Haram insurgency follows a homeostatic process, in which pre-existing conditions of growing disequilibrium produces the climactic events of

¹⁶ See Salkida, A. (N.D.) "Genesis and Consequences of Boko Haram Crisis." Available at <http://kanoonline.com/smf/index.php?topic=5429.0;wap2>.

¹⁷ Salkida, A. *The Role of Good Governance in the Prevention of Conflicts*.

violence, followed by concerted state efforts to contain the violence and bring society back to equilibrium.¹⁸ The dire economic conditions of the north and its eroding political and cultural influence unsettled northern society and Yusuf latched onto the reverberations to implement his own long-standing religious agenda, using violence. The efforts by the state to contain the sect must be interpreted as efforts to re-establish the social equilibrium.

Abubakar Shekau's Boko Haram: New Leadership ... Old or New War?

After the killing of Mohammed Yusuf and the reemergence of the group in 2010, Abu-Muhammad ibn Abubakar Shekau, an ethnic Kanuri from Shekau Village, Yobe State in Nigeria's North East region, began to lead the more radical wing of Boko Haram. Shekau's age is undetermined but may be between 35 and 45 years. Without a family of his own, Shekau is believed to have married one of Mohammed Yusuf's four wives and adopted their children as a way to maintain the sect's internal cohesion and preserve its "purity."

The nature of Boko Haram's organizational structure under Shekau has remained very murky. According to Walker, the cell-like structure of Boko Haram encourages its constituent elements to take independent actions that are consequential for the whole organization.¹⁹ This is often seen as evidence that the organization itself is fractured and that the development of factions follows ideological and ethnic disagreements as well as conflict over strategy amongst its top leadership. It is entirely plausible, however, that following the death of Mohammed Yusuf several strains of Boko Haram may have developed independently of each other with each pursuing a different agenda. Thus, rather than group fracture, sub-cells, units, or factions may have formed from the same parent stock with each complementing the other in meaningful ways. The parent, Boko Haram and its top leadership including Imam Shekau, exists to give broad signification to an ethnically diverse, operationally dynamic, decentralized organization.

Shekau initially presided over a 30-man *Shura* council that "continued a course of escalation" begun in 2009.²⁰ Although an extremist by every definition and considered more dangerous than Yusuf, Shekau kept a low profile as the reclusive second in command under Yusuf leadership. This changed in July 2010 when Shekau announced his leadership of Boko Haram in a videotaped interview. Shekau's re-introduction as the *de facto* leader of Boko Haram shocked Nigerian security officials who believed he had been killed in the 2009 security crackdown that killed Yusuf and hundreds of his followers. One of his first acts as leader of Boko Haram was to change its name from *Ahl Al-sunna Wa-l-jama'a Wa-l-Hijra* (the people of the Sunna [of the prophet] and the community [of Muslims] as well as [those who accept the obligation] to emigrate [from the land of unbelievers])" to *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunnah Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad* (People for the Propagation of the Teachings of the Prophet and Jihad). As Loimeier observes, with the former name:

¹⁸ Johnson, C. 1968. *Revolutionary Change*. Boston: Little, Brown.

¹⁹ Walker, A. 2012. "What is Boko Haram?" *Special Report #308*, United States Institute for Peace, Washington DC.

²⁰ Loimeier, R. 2012. "Boko Haram: The Development of a Militant Religious Movement in Nigeria." *Africa Spectrum*, 47, 2-3:137-155.

Boko Haram clearly claimed to be the supreme authority on the concept of Sunna as well as the question of who could be regarded as a member of the community of Muslims. The additional reference to the term “*hijra*,” by analogy declared the Nigerian state a heathen state that had to be left by way of emigration, as the prophet had done in 622, when he migrated from heathen Mecca to Medina.²¹

With the new name, Boko Haram clearly signaled its radical shift from merely creating spiritual enclaves within Nigeria into which members could emigrate to expelling Nigerian Christians out of the North through jihad according to the method of *Salaf*, which is the kind of armed struggle that followers of the prophet fought against Meccan and Arab unbelievers. As Mazrui argues, “if fulfilled this program would be a kind of sectarian displacement, otherwise known as ethnic cleansing.”²² As events show, Boko Haram has moved decidedly beyond merely expelling Christians; it has included within its vision, a broader jihadist concern with global issues including the Israel/Palestine rift, the United States, and support for insurgents in Mali.

Since its change of name, the strategic and operational focus of Boko Haram has changed dramatically. When it first made its resurgence in 2010, its primary targets were members of the state’s security forces, including the police, the army, and Christians. Its main operational strategy at that time was surprise attacks using machetes, small arms, and Molotov cocktails. By late 2010, it had added simple improvised explosive devices (IEDs) to its repertoire. It deployed IEDs in the planned attack on a church in Jos, Plateau State, on December 24. As of early 2011, Boko Haram continued to use small arms and IEDs that consisted of “improvised hand grenades constructed by filling soft drink cans with explosives – which were frequently thrown from motorcycles – or slightly larger devices left at the target.”²³

By mid-June 2011, this low intensity, low-level attack pattern changed dramatically. On June 16, 2011, Boko Haram launched a suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) attack on the Nigerian Police Headquarters in Abuja. Although the carnage was limited to the suicide bomber and parked vehicles, the successful activation of a large VBIED by a suicide bomber, the first of its kind in Nigeria signaled a radical change in Boko Haram’s strategy and capabilities. The swift transition from small arms and Molotov cocktails to large VBIEDs led analysts to suggest that Boko Haram had aligned with more entrenched terror forces in the Sahel. According to Stewart:

A group would be expected to employ medium-sized IEDs before it employed large VBIEDs. That it skipped a step prompted us to believe reports of Boko Haram members receiving training from al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb in northern Africa or from al Shabaab in Somalia or some other outside group.²⁴

The success of that attack was followed by Boko Haram’s most ambitious project yet, the suicide VBIED attack on the United Nations office in Abuja on August 26, 2011. This attack more than

²¹ See Loimeier, R. 2012. “Boko Haram: The Development of a Militant Religious Movement in Nigeria.”

²² Mazrui, A.A. 2012. “Nigeria: From Shari’a Movement to Boko Haram.”

²³ Stewart, S. 2012. “Nigeria’s Boko Haram Militants remain a Regional Threat.”

²⁴ Stewart, S. 2012. “Nigeria’s Boko Haram Militants remain a Regional Threat.”

anything else, signaled Boko Haram's evolution from a disorganized group into a sophisticated terror movement in the mould of al-Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula, the Yemen-based al-Qaeda franchise group.

Boko Haram's attacks have become ever more sophisticated, leading the Nigerian Joint Task Force (JTF), a crack team of army and police officers deployed to restore order in the region, to place a 290 million Naira (about \$2 million) reward for information on leader Abubakar Shekau and 18 others, in November 2012. The fact that most of the people on this list are still at large, suggests that Boko Haram is still operationally strong.

Persons Likely to remain with/or be Attracted to Imam Shekau's Faction

Boko Haram is committed to a neo-Salafist agenda of Islamizing Nigeria through sharia. Its central message of instituting radical Islamic theocracy is appealing to certain elements within northern Nigeria that have over the years clamored for the imposition of strict sharia in the region. These elements, some of which are proximate to the political state, may continue to provide the motivation (and legitimation) for Boko Haram to continue its campaign of violence in northern Nigeria. Within Boko Haram, the more radical and less educated elements that believe that the implementation of "pure" sharia in northern Nigeria can only be accomplished through jihad will continue to support Abubakar Shekau.

Other elements within Boko Haram that are disenchanted with the political state and prefer to focus on the political arrangements within Nigeria and forgo the internationalization of the group's agenda may also continue to support Shekau. They believe that the Nigerian political system is immoral and that the presidency of Goodluck Jonathan is illegitimate. From their perspective, the corrupt political system permitted President Jonathan to impose himself on the presidency, effectively sabotaging the carefully worked zoning arrangement and usurping a presidential term reserved for the north. These elements want the complete overthrow of the Jonathan presidency and its replacement with a northern presidency, preferably led by radical Islamists committed to the ideology of Abubakar Shekau. Similarly, local northern politicians within the ruling party that have fallen out of favor with the entrenched "god fathers" (a small group of very influential politicians that constitutes an unofficial selection committee for recruiting, appointing, and replacing political office holders) as well as opposition politicians that want to upstage the party in power, may join Shekau's faction in the hope of using its violence capital to their political advantage. These elements may join strident calls for the federal government to grant amnesty (or legitimation) to members of Boko Haram and to use this moment to establish credibility in their political bases. If amnesty is granted, these elements are likely to accept it even if the more extremist elements like Shekau reject it.

Those elements within Boko Haram that have had relatives killed or arrested by the state may continue to support Shekau. Added to the reason(s) they joined the insurgency is their perception that they were unjustifiably targeted and victimized by the JTF, which becomes a new grievance that unlocks or activates new forms of hostility against the state or its proxies. These elements, along with others like them in the larger society that have experienced losses as a result of the state's counterinsurgency efforts, particularly the impunity with which the JTF has acted without

any type of executive or legislative restraints, are more likely to support Shekau.

Also, Boko Haram will remain attractive to young men and women on the streets commonly referred to as *almajirai*. Many of these young people are poor, stay on the streets begging for alms, and live at the mercy of the elements and the benevolence of the public. This category of the northern population was the recruitment base for Boko Haram when it started in Maiduguri, and has always been vulnerable to the antics of religious zealots including the Maitatsine in northern Nigeria. Their economic vulnerability is heightened by their religious (or spiritual) immaturity, which is also a function of their lack of formal education as well as the cultural requirement to show uncompromising loyalty to members of the community who through the practice of *zakat* or religious piety become benefactors and mentors of the *almajirai*. As long as this social context remains, Boko Haram may continue to offer culturally prescribed incentives that tie these youths to insurgency in northern Nigeria.

Finally, Boko Haram will continue to draw its primary support from ethnic Kanuri. Mohammed Yusuf, Shekau, and some of the top commanders of Boko Haram belong to this ethnic group, which is dominant in Borno State as well as parts of Yobe State in North East Nigeria. Boko Haram's dominance by Kanuris is blamed primarily for the group's fracture and this reinforces the historical rivalry between Kanuris and Hausa-Fulanis in northern Nigeria. Given this history, ethnic Kanuri especially that segment that is vulnerable to Boko Haram's framing of the violence, may see Boko Haram as a homegrown movement asserting and defending the Kanuri-Muslim identity and connect with it.

The Future of Imam Shekau's Boko Haram

The nature of the Boko Haram insurgency as well as the range of forces that helped form and shape the insurgency have given the violence a measure of intractability. Despite the growing coalition of resistance against the movement, there is reason to believe that Boko Haram has gained a measure of permanence – that it will continue to exist in one form or the other and has the capability to periodically unleash its venom on society with potentially devastating effects. There are several reasons for this, including the fact that the conditions that gave rise to the insurgency i.e. the “revolutionary situation” still exist in northern Nigeria. Poverty, unemployment, corruption, fear of southern political and cultural domination, local dissatisfaction with the political and religious leadership of the north, etc. still have salience in northern Nigeria. This continues to fuel resentment among the youths many of who are vulnerable (or susceptible) to the antics of Boko Haram and its leaders.

Secondly, the state's response to the insurgency has been contradictory and in turn has had contradictory effects on the insurgency. For example, the state initially blamed the opposition politicians ruing their loss of political power for the conflict. Thus, instead of acting quickly and decisively to curtail the group, its wasted time on frivolities, which gave Boko Haram the opportunity to form and gain confidence. Then, the president announced that Boko Haram had taken over his government, implying that Boko Haram was no longer “just the opposition parties” but was in fact, an identifiable and pervasive northern movement. And finally, the president initially announced that the government will not grant amnesty to “ghosts,” suggesting that Boko

Haram was faceless, and then, that the government hastily set up a committee to work out the feasibility of amnesty for Boko Haram. All of these conflicting signals have informed the state's inchoate response to the insurgency. This is further worsened by the indiscriminate arrest and killing of innocent civilians by the JTF, which continues to erode support for the government and the military and strengthens the Boko Haram narrative of a Western conspiracy against northern Muslims. This situation may generate some goodwill for Boko Haram and help it win some new recruits in the future.

Third, the insurgency, to a large extent, has been politicized. Should the south retain the presidency in 2015, the likelihood of major insurgent activities will increase exponentially. Already, barbs have started flying from northern youths under the aegis of the *Arewa Youths Forum* (AYF), who insist that, "no Nigerian President can be sworn in thrice in his lifetime."²⁵ Statements like this have heated the polity in the past and led to post-election violence including the violence that followed the 2011 presidential election.

Fourth, there is strong possibility, in the absence of outright extermination of Boko Haram, that the declaration of amnesty for members of the sect may produce mixed results. The more radical elements including those loyal to Shekau may reject amnesty because they remain suspicious of the motives of the federal government. The less ideological elements especially those that joined the sect for political reasons, may accept amnesty. If the negotiated settlement succeeds, key members of the sect may gain enough political legitimacy to occupy key peace infrastructures that provide legitimacy for members of the sect. In this sense, key leaders of Boko Haram may be integrated into the formal political process and will seek to change culture through their proximity to the political state. If at a later stage the settlement fails, elements within Boko Haram will always be able to reactivate its latent command structure to provoke violence. Moreover, the decision to grant amnesty may produce further divisions within the group as the pressure to accept may clash with the motion to reject. Irrespective of whether they accept or reject amnesty, the state's offer may give Boko Haram the type of credibility that it has lacked among the population even as Shekau's faction continues to pose the greatest long-term threat to peace in northern Nigeria.

Section II: Jama'atu Ansarul Musilimina Fi Biladis Sudan (Ansaru)

On 20 January, 2012, Boko Haram staged a major attack in Kano, the most populous state in northern Nigeria. The attack, a complex operation involving the synchronized deployment of bombs and small arms fire, produced over 180 fatalities with the majority of victims being ethnic Hausa-Fulani Muslims. This event produced significant backlash against Boko Haram from Hausa-Fulani communities across northern Nigeria. It also produced the first noticeable crack on its unified exterior. Immediately after the Kano attacks, the group *Jama'atu Ansarul Musilimina Fi Biladis Sudan*, or *Ansaru*, (Vanguards for the protection of Muslims in Black Africa), announced that it had splintered from Boko Haram. However, the group's formation is suspected to have begun earlier in relation to two events. The first involved the May 2011 kidnapping (and

²⁵ See Reporters247, 2013. "No Nigerian President can be Sworn in Three Times – Arewa Youths tell Jonathan," available at <http://ireporters247.blogspot.com/2013/03/2015-no-nigerian-president-can-be-sworn.html>.

later killing) of two engineers – a British and an Italian – by a group claiming to be *Al-Qaeda in the Land Beyond the Sahel* and a faction of Boko Haram, in Birnin Kebbi. The group, in a video sent to Agence Nouakchott d'information on December 1, 2011, demanded a 5 million-euro ransom for the release of the hostages. The second involved the January 2012 kidnapping of a German engineer in Kano by Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. During attempted rescue operations by German forces, the jihadists killed the hostage.

It was not until 2 June, 2012, following the publication of a video by its self-identified leader Abu Usmatul Al-Ansari (sometimes written 'Abu Ussamata al-Ansary') that the group began to receive interest from the local and international media and members of the intelligence community. In his introductory statements in January, Abu Usmatul Al-Ansari strongly criticized Boko Haram's operational strategy of indiscriminately attacking Muslim and non-Muslim targets as "inhuman to the Muslim Ummah" and vowed to restore "the lost dignity of Muslims in black Africa." In a move probably meant to win the sympathy and support of the dominant Hausa-Fulani Muslims, Ansaru vowed to help reclaim the lost glory of the Sokoto Caliphate, founded by Othman Dan Fodio in 1804. The Sokoto Caliphate has been the singular most cohesive socio-cultural and political force in northern Nigeria. Through the influence of the Caliphate, the north was able to consolidate its hold on power from 1960 until 1999 when Nigeria's fourth Republic was inaugurated with Olusegun Obasanjo (a southerner) as president. Ansaru's interest in preserving, protecting, and promoting the Caliphate appears to run counter to Boko Haram's professed determination to supplant that leadership. This suggests that Ansaru may be primarily motivated by ethnic tensions between Kanuris and Hausa-Fulanis. In this sense, Ansaru may have been formed as a Hausa-Fulani jihadist capability to represent the interests of non-Kanuri's within the Boko Haram sect.

In a second video in June 2012, Ansaru provided what appears to be its manifesto or *raison d'être*. According to Al-Ansari, Ansaru would not kill innocent non-Muslims and security officials, except in self-defense. More importantly, Ansaru vowed to defend the interests of Islam and Muslims in the whole of Africa. This suggests the expansion of the conflict landscape beyond northern Nigeria and raised questions regarding the group's ability and willingness to target western interests within and outside Nigeria. This fear is heightened by suggestions that Abu Usamatul Ansari, its self-proclaimed leader, is actually Khalid al-Barnawi, the erstwhile Boko Haram spiritual leader and financier allegedly "killed in action" on December 3, 2012. There are indications that Khalid al-Barnawi trained with AQIM in Algeria in the mid-2000s and participated in series of AQIM-planned events in Niger. Because of his active connection to AQIM and for providing Boko Haram with spiritual and operational support, Khalid al-Barnawi, along with Abubakar Shekau and Abubakar Adam Kamar, were designated as global terrorists by the US State Department in June 2012.

There appears to be very clear ideological and operational discontinuities between Boko Haram and Ansaru, which further exacerbate concerns that the violence is escalating beyond the original intent of the terror groups and for that reason has continued to confound local security forces. For example, in its June video, Ansaru appears to have deviated radically from Boko Haram's commitment to wage jihad against non-combat Christians, "infidel" Muslims in northern Nigeria,

and Nigeria's security forces. Al-Ansari says Ansaru sees everyone irrespective of ethnicity or nationality that accept the *Khalimatush shahada* as a Muslim who must not be killed, except for acts punishable by death as stated in the holy Qur'an. According to Al-Ansari, "Islam forbids killing of innocent people including non-Muslims. This is our belief and we stand for it."²⁶ Similarly, al-Ansari suggested that the sect would not attempt to supplant the political state, but instead, expects the government to allow members of the sect to freely practice their religion and to always be just to the people. All of these factors, including Ansaru's determination to broaden the scope of insurgency to include targets outside of Nigeria, directly contrast with Boko Haram's goal of supplanting traditional and political authority, forcefully imposing sharia in Nigeria (particularly in the north), forcefully expelling Christians from northern Nigeria, attacking Muslim non-members that it considers kafirs, indiscriminately attacking members of Nigeria's security forces, and preoccupation with domestic issues.

Ansaru's stated commitment to "defend Islam and Muslims" in black Africa and not to marginalize Muslims who do not fit their own conception of piousness is in agreement with AQIM's rules of engagement. In a letter to affiliate Islamist groups in Azawad, Mali, the AQIM leader Abdelmalek Droukdel (Abu Musab Abdel-Wudoud) stated that AQIM affiliates at early formative stages of their rebellion,

Should avoid issues of *Takfir*, (accusing Muslims of being infidels), and the issue of sects and other issues that the mind of the youth cannot understand. The general logo at this stage should be defending Muslims from those who want to victimize them, and this means that you should limit the circle of confrontation of your enemies to the maximum.²⁷

This has further strengthened the theory that Ansaru is closely affiliated to AQIM and shares its global Islamist ideology. Ansaru's decision not to confront Boko Haram or its leadership over the killing or brutal suppression of Boko Haram members who defect to Ansaru, which some equate to internal cleansing, may be in line with Emir Droukdel's instructions not to engage in fractious internal warfare that potentially diminishes the ability of the sect to achieve its goals. This may also explain Ansaru's increasing fixation with the same western targets that AQIM has labeled enemies of Islam and Muslims all over the globe.

The nature and sophistication of Ansaru's operations have also decidedly shifted from Boko Haram's, which is crudely non-discriminatory and appears to be designed to shock and awe. For example, in attacking Kano and Sokoto, Boko Haram appeared to be sending the message that no one is spared from its wrath, potentially forcing huge payouts from intimidated politicians and the affluent. In contrast, Ansaru appears to be more selective of its targets and lays emphasis on specific targets such as westerners. Its first major operation was the November 16, 2012 attack on the Special Anti-robbery Squad's detention facility in Abuja, where it freed its members and other detainees. In a populist message after the attack, Ansaru criticized the security agencies for

²⁶ Mamu, T. 2012. "Another Islamic Sect emerges ... to counter Boko Haram?" *Desert Herald* available at <http://desertherald.com/world-exclusive-another-islamic-sect-emerges-to-counter-boko-haram/#more>.

²⁷ See Callimachi, R. 2013. "In Timbuktu, Al-Qaida Left Behind A Manifesto." *Associated Press* available at <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/timbuktu-al-qaida-left-behind-strategic-plans>.

indiscriminately detaining Muslim women and children in Langtang, Yelwan, Shandam, etc. While vowing to forcefully secure their freedom, it extended an open invitation to Muslim youths to join the sect and its campaign of violence, which he said is a noble duty. Its populist message fits neatly with its condemnation of Boko Haram's indiscriminate targeting, offering an empathetic, rational, precise and well-intentioned alternative to the ultra-conservative, indiscriminately violent, and emotionless operations of Boko Haram.

In its second major attack on December 19, 2012, Ansaru kidnapped Francis Colump, a French citizen working on a contract for the French energy company, Vergnet, in Katsina State. This attack signaled its commitment to escalate the conflict beyond northern Nigeria as well as its alignment to the global terrorist goals of AQIM. In line with its manifesto, Ansaru said in its statement claiming responsibility for the attack that it kidnapped Colump because of France's hostility to Muslims, particularly its operations against jihadists in Mali. It promised to continue to attack French interests until France ended its ban on the Islamic veil for women and ended its planned operations in Mali. This was the sect's first attack against a western target in the region since the August 2011 bombing of the United Nations building in Abuja, which was Boko Haram's first transnational operation. Similarly, Ansaru claimed responsibility for the brazen attack on the Mali-bound convoy of Nigerian soldiers in Okene, Kogi State on January 19, 2013, which killed two soldiers and injured five others. In a statement after the attack, Ansaru claimed that it attacked the soldiers in solidarity with insurgents in Mali because the soldiers were carrying out Western instructions to destroy the "Islamic Empire of Mali." This attack, in what is the geographical boundary between northern and southern Nigeria, suggested that Ansaru had the capability to carry out attacks in southern Nigeria.

In its fourth major operation on February 16, 2013, Ansaru attacked a prison (possibly as a diversion) before kidnapping seven foreign workers from a construction site in Bauchi State. Ansaru claimed responsibility for the attacks and warned against any attempts to rescue the hostages, which it claimed were being held in retaliation for the western intervention in Afghanistan and northern Mali. In an online statement on March 9, 2013, Ansaru announced that it had killed the seven hostages in response to preparations by British and Nigerian security forces to forcefully secure their release. This confirms the adoption of a strategy to summarily execute hostages once there is a hint of efforts by security forces to secure their release.

Persons Likely to Gravitate towards Ansaru

The nature of Ansaru, especially its focus on global terrorism in the mould of AQIM, makes it an attractive organization for Muslims with morbid fear and hatred of the west, particularly the

For frustrated, deeply religious youths, Ansaru's messaging, which supports a neo-salafist ideology, may become the bases for joining global jihadist Islamist movements.

United States. Anti-western sentiments run high among university educated religious zealots in Nigeria who build their anti-western sentiments around the relics of the Cold War or the communism-capitalism debates of the 80s, and more recently around the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan and the belligerence of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in Iran. As the northern economy

continues its steady decline, more university-educated youths frustrated by their inability to find gainful employment, may become more receptive to the messaging of Ansaru. This is crucial since most of the theoretical analysis of poverty, unemployment, political development, urbanization, and complex other social issues that emanates from Nigerian universities are decidedly skewed towards conflict (or Marxism). For frustrated, deeply religious youths, this messaging, which support the neo-salafist ideology of Ansaru, may become the basis for joining global jihadist Islamist movements.

Also, Ansaru's preoccupation with kidnapping for ransom may be attractive to marginal criminal elements in northern Nigeria that are more concerned with material gains than with challenging local political and religious authority. With the dynamic nature of the sect, warlords may emerge who will preside over territories in the north organized around kidnapping for ransom, armed robbery, and other forms of extortion. Moreover, as the pool of potential foreign targets shrinks (due to awareness and greater security measures) Ansaru may expand into illegal activities including extortion, blackmail, paid assassination, drug and human trafficking, etc. This means that Ansaru may open up to criminal elements (many dot the northern social landscape) motivated not by religion or dislike for the west but by the desire to benefit clandestinely from the violence.

Although Ansaru claims that its mission is to defend Islam and Muslims in black Africa, there is every reason to believe that as pressure is brought to bear on Boko Haram, AQIM, and other terrorist groups in the region, it may transition from an exclusive focus on the global to domestic issues including politics. As the 2015 elections draw near, it is likely there will be greater clamor by northern politicians for "amnesty" for members of Ansaru as a way to strengthen their political assets. Pardoned (and possibly rehabilitated) members may then be co-opted into political structures and used to intimidate voters in 2015. There is precedent for this in the south where the pardoned and rehabilitated Niger Delta insurgents were not integrated into the military but into political parties and shadowy criminal enterprises. During the 2011 national elections, for example, rehabilitated Niger Delta insurgents were implicated in complex voter irregularities in the Niger Delta. Moreover, these "former" insurgents continued to operate within latent command structures that were supposedly deactivated when they accepted amnesty.

Within Boko Haram, those more likely to gravitate towards Ansaru may include the segment that is highly critical of, and opposed to, Abubakar Shekau. This would include the more moderate elements of the sect as well as those who are more educated. Shekau, for example, is believed to

speak only Hausa, Arabic, and Kanuri. While this may endear him to the sect's base comprising uneducated (more appropriately, Qur'an educated) youths, those with more formal education are likely to gravitate towards Ansaru and other splinter groups. Similarly, sect members that are unhappy with the inflexible leadership style of Shekau, especially his brutal suppression of internal dissent, as well as those committed to protecting Yusuf's legacy, may join splinter groups. Finally, non-Kanuri members of the sect may be persuaded by longstanding schisms between rival ethnicities to pull out of Boko Haram. Within the larger society, non-Kanuri populations especially the Hausa-Fulani that are sympathetic to the Boko Haram mission but dislike its Kanuri leadership may be persuaded to join Ansaru.

The Future of Ansaru

Within the short span of its formation, Ansaru has displayed remarkable ability to position itself as an effective faction capable of sustained engagements in Nigeria's sprawling conflict landscape. It is able to do this because of its ability to re-imagine the conflict landscape and to take strategic actions such as the forging of ideological and operational ties with more established global terrorist organizations like AQIM. This reflexivity encouraged Ansaru to distance itself from Boko Haram's neo-salafist ideology that considers Muslims who do not belong to the sect as *kafirs* that should be targeted. Although it was this policy that enabled Boko Haram to form in 2002 and 2003, the rigorous implementation of the policy in a rapidly changing conflict climate meant that support for Boko Haram among northern Muslims would continue to atrophy. Without a base, Boko Haram could not achieve permanence and its long-term goal of providing spiritual and political leadership for the entire north would remain critically impoverished. It was similar concerns in Algeria in the 1990s that persuaded AQIM's leadership to break away from the *Armed Islamic Group* (GIA).

Moreover, following more aggressive military campaigns against the sect and the rapidly diminishing support from local populations including some of the populations that helped it form in the first place, Boko Haram's funding sources appears to be drying up. In order to retain any hope of surviving the onslaught, Boko Haram needed to externalize the conflict and open up new vistas of funding including kidnapping for ransom. This would have helped to fund the sect's operations and blunt some of the sharp attacks against the sect. Thus, while AQIM's support helped Boko Haram evolve into a full-fledged jihadist movement, the group's refusal to adapt to changing realities helped shift AQIM's support towards Ansaru. Also, Ansaru's location in the north western city of Kano, a city with more global visibility than Maiduguri, made it more attractive to AQIM, which is always in search of big opportunities to showcase its capability and to win power, and its specialization on western targets meant that Ansaru and Boko Haram would not squabble over fractious territories or over operational funding from AQIM.

Thus, it is likely that Ansaru will continue to seek out vulnerable western targets even if its ability to collaborate with AQIM is imperiled by French and AFISMA operations in Mali. Its connections to AQIM implies that it is capable of forging and consolidating alliances with other jihadists in the Sahel, especially in areas of training, weapons acquisition and transportation, and funding. Its dynamic structure and ideological and operational flexibility will enable it forge and maintain these alliances and help redefine and prioritize its global targets.

Ansaru and Boko Haram will continue to collaborate on matters of mutual interests, such as the forceful release of members detained by Nigerian security forces and the targeting of local elements that directly threaten the operations of either group. Considering the groups' capacity for self-introspection and or self-evaluation vis-à-vis the changing conflict landscape, Ansaru, if the conditions warrant, may be amenable to attacking non-combatant civilian Muslim targets. Its populist stance notwithstanding, if its ability to attack western targets diminishes drastically, it may look inwards and attack affluent non-Muslims in its areas of influence in the north, specifically the north-west, as well as members of the Hausa-Fulani political elite whose behavior initially helped rally support for Boko Haram in Bornu and Yobe states. Along this line, Ansaru may employ some of the more effective tactics of Boko Haram, including targeted assassination, motorcycle-based drive by shooting, and armed attacks on banks. This means that because of its training, ideology, and operational strategy, Ansaru is potentially the most potent threat to foreign interests in Nigeria.

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Section III: Yusufiyya Islamic Movement

Mohammed Yusuf, the extra-judicially murdered founder of Boko Haram, is believed to have formed the Yusufiyya Islamic Movement. Following a series of coordinated attacks on police stations, military barracks and churches in 2009 and the brutal suppression of Boko Haram by a combination of the police and army in which Mohammed Yusuf and hundreds of his supporters were killed, some members of the sect, including those who considered themselves core loyalists of Mohammed Yusuf, went underground. These loyalists martyred Yusuf and were part of the coalition that resurfaced in 2010 as Boko Haram. These loyalists were not as concerned with supplanting the political and religious authority in northern Nigeria as with canonizing Mohammed Yusuf. Many of these people had been personally victimized by the brutal suppression of the sect in 2009 and lost personal friends, associates and relatives. Their principal motivation for joining the insurgency was to avenge the death of Yusuf and his followers, as well as to ensure that the movement that he founded and his teachings are preserved.

On April 20, 2011, these loyalists who were previously accommodated within Boko Haram, announced their split from Boko Haram. The new group called itself the *Yusufiyya Islamic Movement* (YIM), which is named after Mohammed Yusuf. In leaflets that announced its formation, the group criticized Boko Haram's indiscriminate targeting of civilians. It called this strategy "evil," declaring that "people with evil motives have infiltrated our genuine struggle." Reference to "genuine struggle" likely suggests Yusuf's avowed commitment to instituting "pure sharia" in northern Nigeria as well as his focus on issues of governance, including corruption, the politicization of religion, the Christianization of education (or western education) and the spread of poverty among northern populations. Considering the near impossibility of supplanting

traditional and political authority in northern Nigeria, the YIM may have adapted Yusuf's original strategy of creating religious enclaves in which members could practice some type of Islamic hygiene, instead of continuing to rely on violence, which had consumed too many people, including Yusuf. This does not mean that if the opportunity presented, members of the YIM would not attack individuals that they believed contributed to the brutal killing of Yusuf, including known associates of former Governor Sheriff, the JTF, and some Christian groups.

In the unsigned leaflets, which were distributed in Maiduguri and environs, the YIM outlined its objectives and the motivation for splitting from Boko Haram. According to the group "the Yusufiyya Movement has come to mean different things to different people in the last few months. This confusion and misinterpretation have made it necessary for us to come out publicly with the clear truth with regards to our concept, struggle, aim and ultimate objective." This clarification was necessary in order to distinguish the group from "the various labels ascribed to us, as the Boko Haram" and in consideration of "the mass suffering of innocent Nigerians caught in the crossfire between our members and the Nigerian troops." The group suggested that it was not amenable to negotiations with the Nigerian state when it observed that "this concern has again brought to the fore, the daunting issue of reconciliation through dialogue with the Nigerian authorities and individual leaders involved in the naked abuse of our birthright to the peaceful propagation and practice of our religion as we understand it." Instead, the group would "wage a struggle" against injustice, falsehood, and wrong and for the "blood of our founder Mohammed Yusuf and other leaders who were slain in cold blood by Ali Modu Sheriff, the former Bornu Commissioner of Police and the late Umaru Musa Yar'adua."

Persons Likely to Gravitate towards YIM

Because of its focus on the sharia and the spirituality of the northern Muslim, the YIM may be attractive to individuals genuinely frustrated by the level of moral depravity in northern Nigeria including the close interaction between the established Sufi religious order and the corrupt political state as well as the spiraling violence. These elements dot the northern religious landscape and have historically provided support and followership to reformist movements like the *Izala Movement*, the anti-sufi Islamic movement established in Jos in 1978 by Sheikh Ismaila Idris. The movement primarily aims to fight *bid'a*, or the innovations of the Sufis, and advocates for a return to a purer form of Islam through the establishment of the *sunna* of the Prophet. By emphasizing a return to the Prophetic tradition, the Izala appeared to have developed what Kane (2003) and Loimeier (1997) called the "modernization project," which aimed to "correct" the Muslim faith and to win new converts to Islam. Marginal elements within the Izala Movement as well as members of anti-Sufi sects in northern Nigeria such as the *Kala Kato* (Maitatsine) and *Darul Islam* may also be attracted to the YIM.

The Darul Islam sect, for example, shares many of the characteristics of Boko Haram. An orthodox Sunni imam of Hausa-Fulani ethnicity, who wished to establish a pious community that was isolated from the rest of the sinful world, founded the sect in 1993 in Niger State. The sect, like Boko Haram, started small but grew to over four thousand people, and inhabited space around Mokwa in Niger State, where members farmed and traded and were governed by a strict *Maliki sharia* code in all civil and criminal matters. In cases of serious infraction, errant members

were either excommunicated or referred to the police. The sect never administered the harsh punishment prescribed by the sharia. They had their own *qadi* (judge), schools and hospitals but unlike Boko Haram did not reject western education; instead, they created and administered their own schools. Following the 2009 Boko Haram violence, the Niger State Government took actions against the sect and its members in 2009. Sect members were arrested and detained for long periods before their gradual repatriation to other states and neighboring countries. Their forced exile as well as the uncompensated disruption of their local economies may render remnants of the sect, spread across the entire north, susceptible to the radical messaging of YIM.

Finally, non-Kanuri elements both within Boko Haram and outside of it, motivated by the prevailing rivalry amongst ethnicities in the north as well as the need to target the violence to only those elements that were involved in the extra-judicial killing of Yusuf and his members, may be persuaded to join YIM.

Future of YIM

YIM may attract support from many of the forces (or their remnants) that have historically clamored for the re-institution of sharia in northern Nigeria but were disappointed by the type of “political sharia” that was introduced in 2000 and 2001. Since sharia sentiments remain strong in northern Nigeria and many northern Muslims, though apprehensive of the indiscriminate violence of Boko Haram or its intense radicalization, are looking to join less combative groups that are committed to the sharia project, YIM may become an attractive option. These elements, within the very diverse north, may be more receptive to the pseudo-revolutionary narrative framing of the YIM vision.

Section IV: Discussion

The emergence of factions out of Boko Haram has been well documented and continues to generate local and international interest. In the midst of apprehension about the implications of the split for the people of Nigeria and its allies, several theories have emerged to explain the split. The more nuanced of these theories is that Boko Haram is internally fractured and the fracture is the result of myriad forces, including personality differences, ideological differences, operational and logistical difficulties, ethno-sectarian differences, and political reaction to the insurgency. Put differently, the division reflects the presence of multiple sovereignties within and outside of Boko Haram, each pursuing its own agenda. It is this theory that foregrounds this analysis and does not need further elaboration.

The other theory about the split, which has received very little attention from the research and intelligence community, is that there is no split within Boko Haram. Imam Shekau, the spiritual and operational leader of Boko Haram, alludes to this when he observed that “the brotherhood remains one indivisible entity. There is no split and there is no splinter group.”²⁸ Raufu Mustapha of Oxford University’s Department for International Development argues that Boko Haram is the

²⁸ See the Boko Haram affiliate undated blog post titled “A Call to Service” available at <http://yusufislamicbrothers.blogspot.com>.

only group operating in northern Nigeria and anyone who doubts this fact is “in denial.” The reason for the confusion about Boko Haram is that the group has “constantly morphed and changed its nature as it has gone through various incarnations,” making it extremely difficult to “pin down the organization and define it.”²⁹ Ahmad Salkida, a journalist with access to the top leadership of Boko Haram, agrees. According to him, the:

Reality sadly, is that there has hardly at anytime been a sincere interest to engage the sect in spite of what is publicly declared by officials of government. What instead has featured prominently in the minds of officials and security players is a fixation to create the impression that there exists a faction in the sect. Nothing has been spared by security agencies to build on that theory. Where and what constitute the evidence, you want to ask. Nothing, just that pecuniary desires are better fed if you create such a bubble and feed it consistently.³⁰

The suggestion of continued ideological and operational collaboration between Boko Haram and the factions necessitates a different type of analysis than the “split theory.” This analysis situates Boko Haram and the factions within a continuum, with each activated as a specific reaction to a particular moment based on latent capabilities. This does not mean that tensions and disagreements do not exist within Boko Haram. Like any social group, such tensions can be expected. However, the tensions and disagreements are not sufficient to create the type of divisions that have been theorized: acrimonious splits that result in the emergence of parallel factions pursuing antithetical interests. If that were the case, the factions would be expected to engage each other in some type of fratricidal war as happened in the Niger Delta where disagreements between leaders of insurgent groups led to splits that produced violent outcomes. That has not happened; instead, Shekau’s “faction” has staged several “beheadings” of members suspected of “defecting” to other factions without any form of reprisal from those factions. In Nigeria where cults (including campus cults) always carry out reprisals for attacks on members, this silence is odd. Moreover, the sects’ 30-member Shura council has remained unchanged since 2010 except for two members that were arrested by the police, despite the theory of “split.”

All of these suggest that the hypothesized internal fracture of Boko Haram is nothing more than the functional repositioning of the sect. In fact, this repositioning may be explained with the

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theory of moral re-imagination modeled after the theory of “moral imagination.”³¹ Lederach (2005: ix) defines the moral imagination of peace as “the capacity to imagine something rooted in the challenges of the real world yet capable of giving birth to that which does not yet exist; the potential to find a way to transcend, and to move beyond what exists while still living in it.” Using the principle

components of this theory, this paper sees the repositioning of Boko Haram as the “capacity to re-

²⁹ Walker, A. 2012. “What is Boko Haram?” Special Report 308 of the *United States Institute for Peace*.

³⁰ Salkida, A. 2013. “Ceasefire? Do not be fooled Nigerians.” *Premium Times*. Available at <http://premiumtimesng.com/opinion/118322-ceasefire-do-not-be-fooled-nigerians-by-ahmad-salkida.html>.

³¹ Lederach, J.P. 2005. *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace*. Oxford: University Press.

imagine its ability to bring about its desired end state, from the tensions of public resistance and rapid state response to the rebellion; the capacity and motivation to transcend, and to move beyond the state's response in meaningful ways that facilitates the attainment of the desired end state."

The moral re-imagination of the Boko Haram insurgency is the ability by its leadership to conceive innovative ways to provoke violence while obscuring or confusing concerted efforts to thwart it that ultimately provides some type of legitimacy for the group. Legitimizing the insurgency can take many forms including the granting of "amnesty" to members of the sect. In this sense, the moral re-imagination has two essential qualities (a) transcendence and (b) creativity. The capacity to re-imagine terror involves breaking out "into new territory" and assuming different forms, each form intended by the other and an extension of the other. Ultimately, it is the presence of these multiple forms and their interactions that creates a sense of inviolability for Boko Haram (and the intractability of its violence) and creates urgency for the state to react other than by violence including the offer of amnesty.

Section V: Conclusion

The Boko Haram insurgency including the sect's strategic alignment to global forces of terror such as AQIM poses an ongoing threat to non-Muslim populations in northern Nigeria as well as non-Muslim foreigners. Attempts by the state to manage the conflict have yielded limited results although there are new indications of attempts by the state to form terms of a truce agreement through the granting of amnesty to members of Boko Haram. The prevailing narrative about "amnesty" from the Nigerian government and even the media is that Boko Haram and such "splinter" groups as Ansaru and YIM are still ideologically and operationally linked. This is because the government's reference for a possible truce has always been (and still is) Boko Haram. This suggests that much as Ansaru's (and YIM's) split from Boko Haram are well documented and articulated, the split should be seen as the strategic re-ordering of forces rather than a deep-rooted one. Although this appears to negate Tilly and Rules's theory that structural forces within insurgent movements such as differences in personal objectives, ethnic and class consciousness, imbalances in power relations between core members, etc. always lead to the disintegration of insurgent groups, there are clear indicators that factions have formed.

Ansaru and YIM are two of the factions that have formed and both were necessitated by what appears to be the non-discriminatory nature of Boko Haram's attacks, which have victimized northern Muslims as much as (or even more than) other populations in the north. They also appear to be incensed by Boko Haram's insensate policy of internal cleansing where members suspected of defecting are brutally killed. Yet, despite the beheadings, which are believed to be directed at members who defect to Ansaru and YIM, there has not been any reported reprisal attack by Ansaru or YIM. In fact, Ansaru and YIM continue to subscribe to the same foundational ideas of Boko Haram and have avoided speaking directly against Boko Haram or its leader Shekau. They continue to share ideology, inspiration, situational awareness, and resources although they may not often plan specific missions together.

This means that there are strong continuities between Boko Haram and the other factions that belie its internal fracture. The idea of internal fracture or division may be a calculated attempt to dissipate the resources of the state and confuse active intelligence about the group and its activities. This means that more will be gained from addressing "one insurgency" instead of

“several insurgencies” and to emphasize continuities among the factions instead of discontinuities. Ideologically, Boko Haram is still a unified group under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau. Moreover, Shekau’s latest message suggests that Boko Haram has broadened its scope to include global concerns, just like Ansaru. According to Shekau “I have a mission of establishing sharia in this country and the rest of the world,”³² suggesting a more global outlook than Boko Haram is given credit for. All of these leads to the conclusion that the fracture of Boko Haram may not be root deep; the factions remain ideologically (and even operationally) linked in what appears to be a new strategy to “divide” and “conquer.”

This analysis suggests that Boko Haram and its factions are products of the material and ideological conditions of northern Nigeria. For decades, the Hausa-Fulani elite, which controls political and cultural power in northern Nigeria, masked these conditions through the use of their cultural capital, or what Gramsci³³ calls hegemony, which results from the ideological bonding between the Hausa-Fulani elite and poor northern folks. Ideology, according to Giddens refers to “shared ideas or belief, which serves to justify the interests of dominant groups.”³⁴ Thus, the Hausa-Fulani elite used its control of the ideological space to legitimize both its power and the material conditions of the mass. In this analysis hegemony refers to the complete permeation of northern society by the elite’s system of values, beliefs, attitudes and morality that not only supports the status quo but also obtains the consent (and participation) of the poor folks in their own socio-economic marginalization.

For this reason, the north’s poor are victims of a “triple whammy.” First, they are victimized (ideologically and materially) by the mean conditions of northern Nigeria, which were created by the Hausa-Fulani elite. Second, they are victimized by Boko Haram’s violence, which kills them disproportionately. And finally, they are victimized by the JTF, which appears to carry out “reprisal-like” attacks against peasants whenever a soldier is killed in the violence. The nature of the challenge it faces in what is becoming an increasingly treacherous environment, may have the unintended consequence of transforming the northern Muslim peasant from victim to active participant in the violence. As participants, northern Muslim peasants may choose to fight alongside the JTF or to align with Boko Haram and engage the JTF. Still, and this should pose the greatest worry, they may develop the consciousness that the mean conditions that have activated both Boko Haram and JTF results from the northern political class and engage these elements. This may usher in a popular revolt just like the “Arab Spring” with devastating consequences.

In order to forestall the second and third scenarios, the government must respond humanely to the conditions of Nigeria’s northern populations. Their communities, institutions, belief systems, and systems of social regeneration must be revisited. The religious authority of the Caliphate must be used to promote the public good and correct any unfairness. Agriculture, which for a long time was northern Nigeria’s mainstay, must be revived. Other avenues to create wealth must also be contemplated including the adoption of zero-tolerance for corruption, which has been the bane of the north and indeed, Nigeria. Finally, the JTF must humanize their war on terror by providing citizens the incentives to collaborate with it. Citizens unjustifiably victimized by the JTF’s brutal reaction to the insurgency constitute a growing pool of recruits for Boko Haram. For example, Salkida reports that a woman approached him with a simple quest:

³² See Audu, O. 2013. “Boko Haram threatens JTF spokesperson, demands prisoners exchange for French nationals.” *Premium Times*, available at <http://premiumtimesng.com/news/125659-boko-haram-threatens-jtf-spokesperson-demands-prisoners-exchange-for-french-nationals.html>.

³³ See Gramsci, A. 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

³⁴ See Giddens, A. 1997. *Sociology*. 3rd ed. Cambridge: Polity Press, p583.

I was told that you have access to Boko Haram, please take my telephone number and give it to them. I lost my husband and two of his brothers in the hands of some soldiers' right before my eyes and the trauma made me to have a miscarriage. I want to kill as many soldiers as possible before they kill me.³⁵

The JTF must give their war on terror a “human face,” “human heart,” and some “milk of kindness.”

³⁵ See Salkida, A. 2012. “Reporting Terrorism in Africa: A Personal Experience with Boko Haram.” *Sahara Reporter*, available at <http://saharareporters.com/article/reporting-terrorism-africaa-personal-experience-boko-haram-ahmad-salkida>.