

Terrorizing Schooling: The Evolving Education Politics of Boko Haram

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Abstract: *Boko Haram is the most notorious African terrorist organization of the 21st century. However, the roots of its violence are widely misunderstood and require a deeper, more cross-disciplinary analysis. What emerges from a more historicized interrogation of the group's evolution is that a complicated politics of education has undergirded the organization since its creation. Whereas military confrontation has been viewed as the central antidote to Boko Haram, a more appropriate response would instead focus on greater educational opportunity and income equality in Northern Nigeria. Only by dismantling the historical inequities of colonialism and post-colonial injustice can a nonviolent path be paved for Borno state.*

Introduction

In the last decade, and especially since the 2010 ascension of Abubakar Shekau, Boko Haram has captured global attention in a way that no other African terrorist organization has since American military involvement in Somalia during the early 1990s.¹² This is even more surprising given the domestic emphasis of Boko Haram, which has consistently focused its efforts in northern Nigeria. Viewed this way, the now infamous April 2014 kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls from the town of Chibok is less surprising as an act of terror than as a catalyzing object of external concern for the lives of sub-Saharan Africans from a surprising range of figures, ranging from Michelle Obama to Mel Gibson, all protesting Boko Haram's actions.³ However, neither the pressure exerted by American celebrities nor the 1.2 million USD the Nigerian government spent on retaining a Washington, D.C. public relations firm to handle the international fallout of the kidnappings seem likely to meaningfully hinder Boko Haram or the thousands of people it has killed and displaced.⁴

Like other radical Salafist groups across the globe, Boko Haram has justified its violence as a campaign against Western influence and insufficiently rigorous Islamic practice by local Muslims. Similarly, while Nigerian military forces have pushed Boko Haram back from their 2014 heights when it seemed possible that they might take the Borno state capital of Maiduguri, they have failed to defeat the organization or even push it out of Borno despite President

¹ Reinert, Manuel, and Lou Garçon. "Boko Haram: A chronology." *Islamism, politics, security and the state in Nigeria* (2014): 237.

² Mermin, Jonathan. "Television news and American intervention in Somalia: The myth of a media-driven foreign policy." *Political science quarterly* 112, no. 3 (1997): 385-403.

³ Alexander Smith, "Nigeria's Chibok Girls: Boko Haram Holds Thousands of Other Abductees," NBCNews.com, May 08, 2017, , <https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/missing-nigeria-schoolgirls/nigeria-s-chibok-girls-boko-haram-holds-thousands-other-abductees-n756186>

⁴ Megan R. Wilso, "Nigeria hires PR for Boko Haram fallout," TheHill, February 04, 2016, 2017, <http://thehill.com/business-a-lobbying/210635-nigeria-hires-pr-for-boko-haram-fallout>.

Buhari's assertions of a "technical" victory.⁵ Effectively combating Boko Haram, or the Islamic State in West Africa as it renamed itself in 2015, requires understanding terrorism and counter terrorist efforts as more than competing military campaigns.⁶ Responding to the ideological and social roots of Boko Haram is just as important. This includes understanding and responding to Boko Haram's relationship with education. In this context, education serves as a historical form of social separation, a fundamental right that is under attack, and a possible vector for counter-terrorism efforts. This paper will attempt to illuminate the importance of education politics in Boko Haram's ideological history, ongoing destruction, and possible defeat.

The Context of Boko Haram

To understand the importance of Boko Haram, it is first important to understand the context in which Boko Haram exists. Politically, Boko Haram is to some extent a representation of the paradoxical ideological flexibility of modern Salafism, far right modern Islamist ideology.⁷ This changing status can be seen both its operation and its ideology, as its international alliances have shifted from al-Qaeda to ISIS and its stated religious aims often veer into incoherence.⁸ Geographically, while Boko Haram has attacked and established bases in a number of West African countries, it is primarily a Nigerian terror organization. Its ventures into territory in Niger, Chad, and Cameroon have primarily been strategic retreats from the Nigerian army rather than targeted and systematic campaigns.⁹ This is not to deny that Boko Haram's work has been internationally devastating, or that the troops combatting it represent a regional coalition, but simply to note that Boko Haram's primary aims, camps, and targets are all Nigerian.¹⁰ This is an important distinction because the problems that have allowed Boko Haram to flourish, especially education, are in a sense distinctly Nigerian.

As a regional power, Nigeria is notable for being the largest African economy north of the Sahara as well as being the most populated African country. Internationally, its domestic politics are often perceived as simply ethnic conflicts or religious squabbles. This makes some intuitive sense, given that over 400 ethnic groups reside in Nigeria, and that the country is traditionally bifurcated between the Muslim North and Christian South.¹¹ However, such analysis, while popular, is often deeply simplistic and allows for Nigeria's problems to be dismissed as intractable. Other important factors include the fact that the country's political past has been characterized by a revolving series of coups and military juntas.¹² This has been enabled by an extractive petroleum-based economy, which fuels a deeply unequal economy where the poor receive little compensation or environmental protection and the rich grow extravagantly wealthy.¹³ These more material realities have played as large a role, if not a

⁵ "Nigeria Boko Haram: Militants 'technically defeated' - Buhari," BBC News, December 24, 2015, accessed December 3, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-35173618>.

⁶ Pham, J. Peter. "Boko Haram's evolving threat." *Africa security briefs* 20 (2012): 1

⁷ Egerton, Frazer. *Jihad in the West: The Rise of Militant Salafism*. Cambridge University Press, 2011.

⁸ Karmon, Ely. "Islamic State and al-Qaeda Competing for Hearts & Minds." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9, no. 2 (2015): 71-79.

⁹ Comolli, Virginia. *Boko Haram: Nigeria's Islamist insurgency*. Oxford University Press, 2015

¹⁰ Comolli, Virginia. *Boko Haram: Nigeria's Islamist insurgency*. Oxford University Press, 2015

¹¹ Salawu, Beshiru. "Ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria: Causal analysis and proposals for new management strategies." *European journal of social sciences* 13, no. 3 (2010): 345-353.

¹² Agbese, Pita Ogaba. "WITH FINGERS ON THE TRIGGER: THE MILITARY AS A CUSTODIAN OF DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA." *Journal of Third World Studies* 9, no. 2 (1992): 220.

¹³ Collier, Paul. *Oil and inequality in rural Nigeria. Rural Employment Policy Research Programme*. 1981.

significantly larger one, than any sectarian differences, and are not as easily waved away as inevitable problems of diversity.

The Limitations of Military Analysis for Understanding Boko Haram

To some extent, a military lens is helpful for understanding the scope of Boko Haram's destruction. Certainly, numbers like the fact that over 5,000 Nigerian Catholics alone were killed by Boko Haram before 2015 help demonstrate the sheer scale of the threat.¹⁴ Similarly, explicitly combat-oriented metrics, like whether or not the organization controls key cities like Bama or Gwoza, are important.¹⁵ However, relying on a simple laundry list of campaign defeats and damages is not a substitute for analysis. In terms of successful control of territory, Boko Haram has likely peaked, but that singular military objective does not directly relate to their ongoing ability to do harm. So far in 2018, for example, Boko Haram was still able to launch dozens of attacks, including kidnapping over 100 schoolgirls in a single instance, while the government spends hundreds of millions of USD to fight them.¹⁶ Further, a combat-oriented approach does not take into account the damage the rampant brutality and violence that civilians face from police and the army in the nominal fight against terrorism.¹⁷ Finally, and probably most importantly, any militarized approach treats terrorism as simply an exercise in force. As such, it lacks the nuance and political acuity to address the systemic issues from which terrorist groups might draw supporters. A more expansive and historically grounded approach allows for deeper insights and more effective changes.

The Meaning of "Boko Haram"

Terrorist groups do not spontaneously appear, and for Boko Haram part of the socially fertile ground that spawned the group was existing cultural, financial, and pedagogical frustrations with Nigeria's education system. These frustrations include concern about the lack of success the education system has had in creating an equitable economy in Nigeria and the perceptions that cultural imperialism is implicit in the Nigerian curriculum. The complexity of this concern about education as a form of cultural imperialism can even be seen in the etymology of Boko Haram itself. Boko Haram's formal name is currently the Islamic State in West Africa and used to be Jama'atu Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda'Awati Wal Jiha, in line with the naming conventions of other West African Salafist groups.¹⁸ However, they have always been colloquially known as Boko Haram. Haram is a common Arabic word meaning forbidden, but Boko is a Hausa word with a slightly more complicated background.¹⁹ Often translated as "Western Education", or even more erroneously understood as a derivation of the English word book, in European and American media, in this context Boko most accurately translates as Western Civilization and represents the perceived coercive spread of Westernized knowledge

¹⁴ Lodge, Carey. "Nigeria: at least 5,000 Catholics killed by Boko Haram", *Christian Today*, 13 May 2015.

¹⁵ Weeraratne, Suranjan. "Theorizing the expansion of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria." *Terrorism and political violence* 29, no. 4 (2017): 610-634.

¹⁶ Marho, Precious. "We must not fail the stolen Dapchi girls." *Eureka Street* 28, no. 5 (2018): 37.

¹⁷ Agbiboa, Daniel E. "Peace at Daggers Drawn? Boko Haram and the state of emergency in Nigeria." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 37, no. 1 (2014): 41-67.

¹⁸ Newman, Paul (2013) The Etymology of Hausa boko. <http://www.megatchad.net/publications/Newman-2013-Etymology-of-Hausa-boko.pdf>

¹⁹ Ibid.

systems and Western civilization within Nigeria.²⁰ Even this translation fails to capture the evolution of the word Boko, originally meaning sham, as a pejorative description for the translation of Hausa into a Roman script and the rejection of traditional Islamic schools by the British.²¹ In this sense “Boko Haram” is meant to convey that the spread of western practice, including schooling, is forbidden. As such, a central part of Boko Haram’s thesis is that Nigeria’s education system insufficiently embraces Islam while catering to western needs and values. Education here is not the entire story, but remains an important cornerstone.

A History of Educational Failure

These etiological roots are just one manifestation of broader history of Nigerian frustration with education, both as religiously insufficient and practically underperforming, that helped create the popularity of Boko Haram. This is not to universally dismiss the Nigerian education system, but to locate it in a history of cultural and economic exploitation. Across sub-Saharan Africa colonial governments declined to create universal education systems. This was particularly true of the British, who did not endeavor to create the same expansive civil states necessary for localized control that the French or Portuguese did.²² However, they did set up a basic framework of education and the disparities between the Northern and Southern regions from that era still reverberate. Starting as early as 1842, Christian missionaries created formal primary schools in the Southern part of Nigeria, which has a distinct cultural and historical heritage from the North, in order to improve the power of their proselytizing, spreading literacy and more technical knowledge as an almost accidental afterthought.²³ In the North, traditional Qur’anic schools remained dominant and defined knowledge as necessarily founded in Islam.

Even when the Northern and Southern protectorates were merged into a single territory in 1914, these early Western educational structures did not permeate the North.²⁴ There they were explicitly restricted in order to appease Northern Islamic leaders, in particular the Caliph of Sokoto, who understandably saw missionary education and schools ideologically descendent from missionary education as culturally intrusive.²⁵ When a federal education system was introduced to the state, most of the funding went to the Western-oriented schools in the South, while the existing tradition of Qur’anic schools, which had existed in the South but were primarily located in the North, were tolerated for political reasons but denied funding given their divergent curricula that ignored the British’s workforce-oriented goals.²⁶ The newly formalized Western education was used by the British to create a basic network of civil servants, and largely ignored existing cultural traditions, often alienating those who attended the schools from their own communities.²⁷ Through the beginning of independence, the gaps between the North and South in attainment of Western education and, just as crucially, interest in Western education,

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Newman.

²² Clignet, Remi P., and Philip J. Foster. "French and British colonial education in Africa." *Comparative Education Review* 8, no. 2 (1964): 191-198.

²³ Imam, Hauwa. "Educational policy in Nigeria from the colonial era to the post-independence period." *Italian Journal of sociology of education* 4, no. 1 (2012).

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Afigbo, Adiele E. "The Consolidation of British imperial administration in Nigeria: 1900-1918." *Civilisations* 21, no. 4 (1971): 436-459.

continued to grow. By 1957, both the Eastern and Western Southern regions had introduced early attempts at Universal Primary Education, but in the North parents saw little reason to send their children to the Western schools, preferring instead to have them work or attend Qur'anic schools.²⁸

In the years following independence, which was achieved in 1960, education practices were effectively the same as they had been before, though there was greater criticism of the failure of the education system to be culturally responsive and to give Nigerians the skills they wanted.²⁹ Major shifts occurred in 1969 when the government established federal accountability and authority for the entire education system, and in 1976 the government launched Universal Primary Education (UPE) in order to make Western primary education free and accessible, though importantly not compulsory, for all Nigerians.³⁰ Qur'anic schools remained popular in the North, and by 1981, due to falling oil revenue, the government rolled back UPE and tried to offload education expenses onto state and local governments. Despite the passage of universal basic education (UBE) in 1999, meant as a replacement for UPE, a funded, compulsory, and universal primary education system was not passed until 2004.³¹ Even now the Nigerian literacy rate hovers near 51.1%, and significant criticism exists about the actual scope and quality of Western education.³² In contrast, throughout independence, Qur'anic schools have remained popular, particularly in the North, and still largely ignore the workforce and English literacy-oriented education of the primary education system. While there are certainly students in the South who attend Qur'anic schools, and government schools exist throughout the North, there still remains a large gap in where Southern and Northern students get their education.

Systems of Inequality

As the education system has continued to both develop and struggle after independence, Nigeria has experienced a variety of regime changes and coups, almost all of which have resulted in a deeply unequal economy. Despite the fact the fact that education in Nigeria has always been rooted in creating members of a workforce that could satisfy the foreign, particularly Western, need for commodities like oil, up to 21.5% of Nigerian youths were unemployed as of 2016.³³ While education was successful at culturally normalizing and spreading what might be called westernization by some—everything from financial markets and consumer goods to secular laws—it has not succeeded at fulfilling a promise of universal empowerment. When there has been economic growth, it has been divided in deeply unequal ways. Between 2004 and 2010 alone, the number of people living in poverty in Nigeria rose from 69 million to 112 million, despite the fact that GDP grew by 7% and the number of millionaires in the country increased by 44%.³⁴ This inequality is both regionally amplified and gendered. The North is not universally

²⁸ Imam.

²⁹ Weaver, Edward K. "What Nigerian Independence Means." *Phylon* (1960-) 22, no. 2 (1961): 146-159

³⁰ Imam.

³¹ Ibid.

³² "Statistics for Nigeria." UNICEF. December 27, 2013. Accessed December 2, 2017.

https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/nigeria_statistics.html

³³ "Nigeria: extreme inequality in numbers." Nigeria: extreme inequality in numbers | Oxfam International. Accessed December 1, 2017. <https://www.oxfam.org/en/even-it-nigeria/nigeria-extreme-inequality-numbers>.

³⁴ Emmanuel Akinwotu, "'Shameful' Nigeria: a country that doesn't care about inequality," *The Guardian*, July 18, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/2017/jul/18/shameful-nigeria-doesnt-care-about-inequality-corruption>.

poor, and claims that the disparity is the result of ethnic tension should be met with skepticism, but the North is both poorer and significantly less educated than the South, on top of already dealing with massive internal inequality.³⁵ Borno, the state in which Boko Haram has been most active, has a literacy rate as low as 14.5%, and as much as 74% of the population lives in deep poverty.³⁶ This economic inequality is reflected back into education, as the children of the elite are often able to attend expensive Western universities, like Cambridge or Harvard, while millions lack the ability to read.³⁷

These modern disparities and historical antecedents in education serve as powerful tools in partially explaining the rise of Boko Haram and validating aspects of their ideological critiques. Since Boko Haram's inception, it has claimed that the government's system of formal education reflects western indoctrination and ignores the importance and precedence of Islam. This taps into an existing tradition in Northern Nigeria, where education has been consistently viewed as Western ideological imperialism and an act of cultural and religious erasure. Given the facts that the Nigerian education system has been the cumulative development of a system originally intended to enable British resource exploitation, started as a Christian project, and has been a part of spreading cultural Western values, this has a degree of historical validity. Similarly, while the Nigerian curriculum allows for some religious instruction, there are limited options for similar classes in secondary education. Qur'anic schools are available, but they do not teach any of the public education curriculum, which risks alienating students from the general populace further. Without the desired workforce skills, many of those with high levels of Qu'ranic instruction become only more disillusioned from the Nigerian state as they both engage in a form of separation from the government system and in training that forgoes workforce-oriented skills.³⁸ This all plays into a broader disillusionment felt by many poor Nigerians after decades of broken promises from the government. These particularly overlapping populations in North Nigeria, where individuals are significantly more likely to question the Westernization of the state, lack education, and face poverty, creates an unsurprising resentment that provides both recruits and supporters for Salafist movements, a textual literalist strain of Islam that expects stringent practice across the faith. They have long existed in the area, and while for the most part their critique of complaints have been nonviolent and civil, they provided a fertile ground for the development of Boko Haram's more violent interpretations.³⁹

Moving Beyond Boko Haram

However, despite the legitimacy of part of Boko Haram's historical analysis, and the validity of frustration and disgust with the inequality and corruption allowed by the Nigerian state, the response and ideal world they posit can only serve to exacerbate Nigeria's worst problems. The death and destruction caused by Boko Haram is perhaps reason enough to disregard their entire ideological framework, but even further the way in which Boko Haram has conceptualized what education should be implemented, as part of their imagined West Africa

³⁵ Umar, Habibu Mohammed, Russayani Ismail, and Roslan Abdul-Hakim. "Regional Inequality of Educational Attainment in Nigeria." *British Journal of Economics, Management and Trade* 4, no. 3 (2014): 420-30.

³⁶ Suleiman, Mohammed Nuruddeen, and Mohammed Aminul Karim. "Cycle of bad governance and corruption: The rise of Boko Haram in Nigeria." *SAGE Open* 5, no. 1 (2015): 2158244015576053.

³⁷ Maxwell, Claire, and Peter Aggleton, eds. *Elite education: international perspectives*. Routledge, 2015.

³⁸ Umar, Muhammad Sani. "The popular discourses of Salafi radicalism and Salafi counter-radicalism in Nigeria: a case study of Boko Haram." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 42, no. 2 (2012): 118-144

³⁹ Ibid.

Islamic State, only further exacerbates the social injustices that provide the basis for Northern Nigeria's problems.⁴⁰ This starts with their argument that Western education should be forbidden, rather than molded to fit the needs of Muslim Northern Nigerians or integrated into Qur'anic instruction to make graduates more employable while still grounding them in religious instruction. Here, they differ from the larger Nigerian Salafist movement's most prominent leaders, like Ja'afar Mahmud Adam, who argue that western education is compatible with religious teaching and often a boon.⁴¹

The position Boko Haram holds is both practically destructive of further material development and theoretically hypocritical. Given Nigeria's existing unemployment and poverty, a further divestment from education would only result in worse health, economic, and social outcomes. The theoretical hypocrisy stems from Boko Haram's original leader, and the primary author of most of the group's foundational ideology, Mohammed Yusuf. He routinely argued that modern science went against Islamic teaching because it propagated un-Islamic lies, like the chemical principle that energy cannot be created or destroyed or the geographic understanding of rain as precipitation, but frequently indulged in both Western consumerist culture and modern scientific knowledge in the form of modern conveniences, like his Mercedes or YouTube account.⁴² This was part of a larger inability to locate the theological foundation of the inadmissibility of non-Qu'ranic education outside of a handful of other extremist Salafist writers.⁴³ Manifestations of intellectual and theological incoherence that undermine even the internal logic of Boko Haram have only increased under the leadership of the deranged Abubakar Shekau, who has eschewed the more scholarly approach of Yusuf.⁴⁴

Gendered Terrorism

Beyond the theoretical inconsistencies of Boko Haram's ontology, their gendered analysis of education and violent mechanism for change are actively destroying the education of thousands, even disaggregated from the general devastation that they have spread. The kidnapping of schoolgirls from Chibok serves as a representative manifestation of both of these tendencies, but in truth only serves as small part of the fullness of either. The opposition of Boko Haram to the education of women is threefold. There is a basic concern that the majority of girls and women being educated in Nigeria are being taught in public non-Islamic schools, and this is significantly supplemented by a belief that women and men should be taught in separate schools.⁴⁵ Finally, and perhaps most importantly, they believe that women's education should be subservient to the education of men in boys to an even greater extent than already exists in the notably patriarchal Nigeria, where male pupils outnumber female pupils by ratios of up to 3 to 1 because of their greater perceived economic value.⁴⁶ This mentality has serious harmful impacts

⁴⁰ Cook, David. "Boko Haram: A New Islamic State in Nigeria." *James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy* 11 (2014)

⁴¹ Peters, Michael A. "'Western education is sinful': Boko Haram and the abduction of Chibok schoolgirls." (2014): 186-190.

⁴² Umar.

Joe Boyle, "Nigeria's 'Taliban' enigma," BBC News, July 31, 2009, , accessed December 1, 2017, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8172270.stm>.

⁴³ Umar.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Umar.

⁴⁶ "Girls' Education: Nigeria Country Office", UNICEF September 2007

on the educational attainment of women. Even interpreted optimistically, this denies an autonomy of educational choice or attainment for women while undermining universal claims to education. Such an outcome also undermines the education of men. One of the most important developmental lessons of the past few decades has been that the education and economic development of men is almost always deeply benefited by the education and economic development of women.⁴⁷ As actualized by Boko Haram, this ideology is not merely a failure to grant rights, but also a vicious and sustained violent campaign to suppress them.

This gendered dimension of Boko Haram's attacks exists on a truly horrific scale. The number of women targeted for kidnapping alone is likely in the thousands, and while not all were targeted because of their schooling like the girls from Chibok, all are or were denied access to education and most other forms of personal autonomy. This group is separate from the number of people killed by Boko Haram's campaign of terror, which has also disproportionately included non-combatant women.⁴⁸ This compounds Nigeria's existing gendered education disparities in an explicit sense, lowering the number of women in Nigerian schools. Because female enrollment in Nigerian education is also highly determined by opportunity cost, Boko Haram also increases incentives for women and girls to refrain from enrolling in education in the North East under the threat of violence to both them and their families.⁴⁹ This is amplified by the preexisting understanding of women's education as a secondary concern, but a similar mechanism of threats of violence has also undermined the larger education system in Northern Nigeria, particularly in Borno.

Destroying Education

The threat of violence dampens participation in school, and undermines the right to education guaranteed to children in Nigeria by everything from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to the Nigerian Federal Constitution.⁵⁰ This starts with the traditional ways in which schooling is disrupted by conflict, including the shutdown of government operations, the accidental destruction of school buildings or supplies, the diversion of education to military spending, and the long term psychological and learning disabilities often created by early exposure to trauma, like terrorist operations.⁵¹ However, given the explicit anti-education politics of Boko Haram, the violence caused by their action has even more forcefully denigrated education in Nigeria. In Borno alone 512 schools have been destroyed, and in the entire nation, over 1.4 million children have displaced by Boko Haram's bombings, assassinations, and strategic attacks.⁵² When schoolhouses are destroyed it is not only impossible to spontaneously rebuild them, particularly in country with as much poverty as Nigeria, but the expensive school supplies and irreplaceable children's education records held in the schools are also destroyed.

⁴⁷ Blumberg, Rae Lesser. "Toward a feminist theory of development." *Feminism and sociological theory* (1989): 161-99

⁴⁸ Sheridan, Mary Beth, and Kevin Uhrmacher. "The brutal toll of Boko Haram's attacks on civilians." *The Washington Post*. Accessed April 13, 2016. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/world/nigeria-boko-haram/>.

⁴⁹ Lincove, Jane Arnold. "Determinants of schooling for boys and girls in Nigeria under a policy of free primary education." *Economics of Education Review* 28, no. 4 (2009): 474-484.

⁵⁰ Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).

Section 18(3) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended) (CFRN 1999).

⁵¹ Isokpan, Aisosa Jennifer, and Ebenezer Durojaye. "Impact of the Boko Haram insurgency on the child's right to education in Nigeria." *PER: Potchefstroomse Elektroniese Regsblad* 19, no. 1 (2016): 1-43.

⁵² *Ibid.*

Similarly, introducing displaced refugees back to their homes, let alone reintroducing them to an education environment, is a process that take years after a conflicts ends, which in this case still has yet to happen. Teachers are also among the refugees and casualties of Boko Haram. 600 teachers have been killed and over 19,000 more have fled their posts.⁵³ Already short on educated teachers, Northern Nigeria has no way of replacing those who leave, and the shortage is continually growing more dangerous. To cap all of these problems, the international aid that has buoyed the region for years has also been withdrawn over concerns about safety.⁵⁴ In this sense Boko Haram is fulfilling the most classical conception of terrorism. It is accomplishing through violence and intimidation what it would never be able accomplish in the public sphere. An area that has never had adequate funding, infrastructure, or support for public education is losing more of all three. Public education is being set back for decades.

Changing Course

In order to prevent the resurgence of Boko Haram and the further deterioration of North Nigeria, a more holistic and balanced approach to fighting the group is needed. If Boko Haram's history and presence point to real problems with the current social reality in Nigeria, then their actions have misdiagnosed those problems and has exacerbated them to a breaking point. Turning back Boko Haram includes beginning to address poverty, inequality, instability and cultural divisions in addition to the military threat posed. Such efforts are already being undertaken by the Nigerian government, but they follow years of military focus and are still too narrow in their approach. Existing programs that pay moderate imams and clerics to broadcast over the radio or that seek to alleviate the poverty of families considered at particular risk of radicalization are not enough.⁵⁵ Similarly, the patchwork funding provided by Western philanthropists fails to fulfill the local need.⁵⁶

Wholesale social investment in a revitalized Northern Nigeria is needed. This is not to suggest, as some have, that social services can completely remove the need for security forces or that peace in area can feasibly be predicated on total regional equality or localized development. However, it is to suggest that it is both feasible and necessary to incorporate a development lens to the counterterror efforts in Nigeria. This necessarily includes culturally sensitive education efforts both because education is a consistent boon to anti-terror efforts broadly and because its utilization in this case would rebuild a much needed sector, the destruction of which is the ideological aim of Boko Haram. Without these efforts, it is likely that it will be, in the words of Borno state governor Kashim Shettim, "absolutely impossible for us to defeat Boko Haram."⁵⁷

⁵³ "Is Education Boko Haram's Biggest Victim?" *Africa News Service*, 9 Dec. 2015. *Infotrac Newsstand*, http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/A436877191/STND?u=unc_main&sid=STND&xid=dd338087.

⁵⁴ Sampson, I. T. (2016). The dilemmas of counter-bokoharamism: Debating state responses to boko haram terrorism in northern nigeria. *Security Journal*, 29(2), 122-146.
doi:<http://dx.doi.org.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/10.1057/sj.2013.2>

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶ "African American Business Tycoon Financing Education of Women Kidnapped by Boko Haram." *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education (Online)* (Jan 04, 2017).

⁵⁷ Tim Cocks, "Nigeria Islamists better armed, motivated than army: governor," Reuters, February 17, 2014, , accessed December 14, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nigeria-violence/nigeria-islamists-better-armed-motivated-than-army-governor-idUSBREA1G1AO20140217>.

Why Education

The generalizable benefits to increasing education spending are primarily the reduction of a population's vulnerability to being coopted by terrorist organizations and investment in terror reduction for the future. Illiterate populations and those without any formal schooling are particularly susceptible to terror recruiting.⁵⁸ They both often are mired in poverty and lack material incentives to maintain peaceful stability. Further, they are less likely to have the formal frameworks to reject the fabulist narratives of terror organizations.⁵⁹ There are many recruits who do not fit these demographic profiles, but reducing these susceptibilities makes recruiting more difficult for terrorist organizations in the short term. In the long term, investing in education not only creates citizens better equipped to avoid terrorism, but also fosters a responsive relationship between the polis and the government. The government is conditioned to provide goods and services to the populace while the populace comes to view traditional venues of expression as legitimate methods for expressing discontent or anger.⁶⁰ A culture of knowledge, cooperation, and a shared educational national identity is fostered and hopefully thrives in this context. Cohesive education systems undermine terrorism with a degree of immediacy and serve as preventive measures.

The particular counter terror value of education expansion in Nigeria would depend significantly on the structure of the expansion, but regardless of the exact implementation would rebuke Boko Haram's ontological framing. By funding education, the Nigerian government would begin creating a meaningful counter proposal to the injustices that Boko Haram's existence highlights. It would also be rebuking the idea that education must be tied to a politics of the elite, wealthy, or Western. Education is also uniquely located in Nigeria along fault lines of regional, religious, and class conflict. If policies were implemented to expand the existing curricular room for religious instruction or public skill-oriented coursework to supplement Qur'anic education was launched, these programs might begin to ameliorate the historical tensions that predate Boko Haram and give it modern saliency. These are not guaranteed solutions, and even among peaceful Salafists might be as unpopular as early government attempts to exploit the community for security purposes.⁶¹ Nonetheless, they are unique opportunities for the peaceful resolution of traditionally explosive frictions.

Conclusion

Education cannot serve the function of all social welfare, and social welfare cannot serve the solitary function of preventing terrorism, nor should it. However, Boko Haram is a regressive movement rooted in education conflicts of the past and interested in attacking education in the modern day. A Nigerian counter terror effort that fails to recognize this fundamentally fails to fully understand the problem of Boko Haram. Nigeria's current strategy of military engagement has failed to create a lasting victory, and disillusioned Northern Nigerians have suffered both the violence of Boko Haram and the violence of the state response, which in some cases has been

⁵⁸ Bakare, Ilesanmi Abiodun. "Soft power as a means of fighting international terrorism: a case study of Nigeria's "Boko Haram"." *Vestnik RUDN. International Relations* 16, no. 2 (2016): 285-295.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Toni Johnson and Mohammed Sergie, "Boko Haram," Council on Foreign Relations, March 1, 2015, , <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/boko-haram>.

worse.⁶² More must be expected of Nigeria and its allies in investing in marginalized communities before violent uprising and the murder of innocents become the prevalent methods of voicing dissent. Beyond education, this includes everything from new anti-corruption campaigns, the previous failures of which have been part of Nigeria's cyclical violence since independence, to health care reform.⁶³ If Americans, and the West broadly, are interested in Nigerian lives, they must more rigorously invest in development instead of sending 80 soldiers to save 200 girls, only after thousands have already died.⁶⁴ As some security analysts worry that Boko Haram is slowly splitting into a domestic terror group and an ISIS affiliate interested in international violence, it is important to remember that the most important members of Boko Haram are not the leaders.⁶⁵ Abubakar Shekau might be too unstable and cruel an actor to effectively negotiate with, but every other member of Boko Haram or prospective participant should be given every reason to leave the group, including the promise of a better life in Northern Nigeria through education.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³ Suleiman, Mohammed Nuruddeen, and Mohammed Aminul Karim. "Cycle of bad governance and corruption: The rise of Boko Haram in Nigeria." *SAGE Open* 5, no. 1 (2015): 2158244015576053.

⁶⁴ Senator Mikulski, "Mikulski calls for continued action to bring to justice book haram terrorists and ensure access to education for women and girls," YouTube Video, January 26, 2014, <https://youtu.be/acEMYXzn4PU>.

⁶⁵ Johnson and Sergie.

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