

## The Boko Haram Paradox: Ethnicity, Religion, and Historical Memory in Pursuit of a Caliphate

Zacharias P. Pieri & Jacob Zenn

To cite this article: Zacharias P. Pieri & Jacob Zenn (2016) The Boko Haram Paradox: Ethnicity, Religion, and Historical Memory in Pursuit of a Caliphate, *African Security*, 9:1, 66-88, DOI: [10.1080/19392206.2016.1132906](https://doi.org/10.1080/19392206.2016.1132906)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19392206.2016.1132906>



Published online: 01 Mar 2016.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 34



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

## The Boko Haram Paradox: Ethnicity, Religion, and Historical Memory in Pursuit of a Caliphate

Zacharias P. Pieri<sup>a</sup> and Jacob Zenn<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Global Initiative on Civil Society and Conflict, University of South Florida Tampa, Florida, USA; <sup>b</sup>The Jamestown Foundation, Washington, DC, USA

### ABSTRACT

To Boko Haram, Nigeria is a colonial construct, lacking Islamic legitimacy and destined to lead society in a downward spiral of Western immorality. The only way to regain northern Nigeria's former glory is through a repudiation of democracy, constitutionalism, and Western values and a return to Islamic governance on the model of the historic caliphates. We argue that Boko Haram's leaders draw their inspiration and legitimacy from Usman Dan Fodio's 1804 Fulani-led jihad and his subsequent establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate in northern Nigeria but seek to implement this style of caliphate in the Kanuri homelands of the former Kanem-Borno Empire.

### KEYWORDS

Boko Haram; terrorism;  
Nigeria; Kanuri; Caliphate

### Introduction

In August 2014, Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau announced the creation of an Islamic state, a so-called caliphate, in areas of northeast Nigeria under the control of Boko Haram. This was consistent with Muhammad Yusuf's (Shekau's predecessor and founder of Boko Haram) long-standing call for the creation of an Islamic state in the region: "We do not have any agenda than working to establish an Islamic kingdom like during the time of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) no matter what will happen to us."<sup>1</sup> Thus, Shekau's announcement of an Islamic state marked the achievement of a long-term goal of the movement. After the announcement, Boko Haram continued to annex dozens of towns in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa States into its caliphate.

By November 2014, the deputy governor of Borno State commented that if Boko Haram continues at its current pace, it will only be a short time before "the three Northeastern states will no longer be in existence."<sup>2</sup> Such predictions did not come true. A multinational force including Chadian and Nigerien troops to support Nigerian troops in Borno broke Boko Haram's momentum in the run-up to Nigeria's presidential elections in February 2015

**CONTACT** Zacharias P. Pieri ✉ [zpieri@usf.edu](mailto:zpieri@usf.edu) 🏠 Research Fellow, Global Initiative on Civil Society and Conflict, University of South Florida, 4202 E. Fowler Avenue, CPR107, Tampa, FL 33620, USA.

Color versions of one or more of the figures in the article can be found online at [www.tandfonline.com/uafs](http://www.tandfonline.com/uafs).

© 2016 Taylor & Francis

and rolled back Boko Haram's territorial gains.<sup>3</sup> But Shekau's declaration of an Islamic State and his *bayah* to the Islamic State (in Syria and Iraq) in March 2015 amid the military offensive already demonstrated to followers the seriousness of Boko Haram's message. Not only was the militant group prepared to preach and fight for Islamic State but to also formally establish one in northeast Nigeria.<sup>4</sup>

Boko Haram (popularly translated as "Western education is sin") calls itself *Jamaat Ahl as-Sunnah Lid dawh wa al-Jihad* (Sunni Group for Proselytization and Jihad), and since April 2015 rebranded itself Islamic State's West African Province. It is an extremist movement operating primarily in Nigeria's northeast region extending into the border areas of the neighboring West African states of Chad, Cameroon, and Niger but in July 2015 also attacked Chad's capital of N'djamena with three suicide bombings as well as interior cities of Cameroon, such as Maroua, with female suicide bombings and mass kidnappings. Boko Haram's members are predominantly Kanuri, and it is an extremist Islamist and irredentist movement that has married its jihad with the pursuit of creating a caliphate. This caliphate starts in Borno State, northeast Nigeria, and follows a trajectory that would eventually cover the areas of the former Kanuri led Kanem-Borno Empire, which was a powerful historic Islamic entity that included tracts of land in present-day Western Chad, northwest Cameroon, and southeast Niger.<sup>5</sup> By January 2015, Boko Haram was in control of 20,000 square miles of territory in northeast Nigeria (land amassing to the size of Belgium) while also penetrating into northern Cameroon and launching attacks in southeast Niger and southwest Chad and in July 2015 in N'djamena itself.<sup>6</sup>

Boko Haram's founder, Muhammad Yusuf (1970–2009), and current leader Abubakr Shekau, made their expansionary goals clear in sermons and speeches as early as the mid-2000s. This was nearly a decade before Shekau declared the "jihad" against the Nigerian government and the United States in July 2010, and Boko Haram launched its first coordinated attacks in September 2010.<sup>7</sup> Though the goal of an "Islamic State," or caliphate, only gained international attention in late 2014, a review of primary source Boko Haram sermons establishes that this goal was evident in the group's ideology and rhetoric since Yusuf became leader in 2002.

Shekau turned the vision of a caliphate in Boko Haram's ideology into reality. Specifically, on August 14, 2014, he declared areas under Boko Haram's control in northeast Nigeria as "part of an Islamic State that has nothing to do with Nigeria anymore."<sup>8</sup> His message came in a video in which Islamic State's signature *nasheed* called "My Umma, Dawn Has Arrived" played in the background. In subsequent videos, Shekau further announced his support for Islamic State Caliph Abubakr al-Baghdadi. In October 2014 Boko Haram began to display the Islamic State's flag with the *rayat al-uqab* insignia and edited its own logo to include that flag and began copying the

choreography of Islamic State's mass killings in Boko Haram's own video releases. The Islamic State, for its part, confirmed that it received a pledge of loyalty from the "Nigerian mujahidin" in its official magazine *Dabiq* in November 2014. The October 2014 edition of *Dabiq*<sup>9</sup> also cited Boko Haram's kidnapping of more than 250 schoolgirls (mostly Christians) in Chibok, Nigeria, as justification for its own enslavement of hundreds of non-Muslim Yazidi women in northern Iraq.<sup>10</sup> The formalization of the relationship would take place only several months later with Shekau's *bayah* and al-Baghdadi's acceptance in March 2015.

Shekau's declaration of a caliphate was not simply an opportunistic call for attention from Islamic State, the global jihadist community, or international media. Rather, there is a deeply rooted historical precedent and resonance for a caliphate in Nigeria and neighboring countries, the legacy of which Boko Haram seeks to appropriate. Two precolonial empires in present-day northern Nigeria serve as models for Boko Haram. These are the ethnic Fulani and Hausa-led caliphate of Usman Dan Fodio (1804–1903) in present-day northwest Nigeria and the ethnic Kanuri-led Kanem-Borno Empire (700–1900). Boko Haram is seeking to create its caliphate based on the Islamic revivalist ideology of Dan Fodio and, like Dan Fodio, combat symbols of corruption, poverty, nepotism, and bad governance and restore moral order, including ending the mixing of Islam with "impure" concepts of democracy, secularism, and liberalism.

However, Boko Haram's expansion is almost fully within the boundaries of the historic Kanem-Borno Empire, which is the traditional homeland of the Kanuri. To demonstrate this point, see [Figure 1](#), which shows the territories controlled by Boko Haram at the height of its caliphate in 2015 and compared to the boundaries of the Kanem-Borno Empire. Dan Fodio's heartland of Sokoto, in contrast, has remained largely outside of Boko Haram's orbit. This represents the main paradox of Boko Haram: it seeks legitimacy and inspiration from Dan Fodio, the Fulani founder of the Sokoto Caliphate, in order to create its own caliphate, but its leaders and members are predominantly Kanuri operating in the areas of the former Kanuri-led Kanem-Borno Empire.

This is not to say that Boko Haram is a "Kanuri Movement" or that it self-identifies as "Kanuri." In fact, the Kanuri foundation of Boko Haram is but one of several factors that contributes to its ideology and appeal (alongside Salafism and anti-Western influence) and membership composition (alongside other Bornoan Muslim minorities, such as Baburs, and Sunni Muslims in Nigeria more generally). To understand Boko Haram and its trajectory—and especially why it has succeeded in winning recruits in specific areas of Borno State and the Lake Chad region—it is also necessary to understand how the relationship between Boko Haram's Kanuri leaders and Kanuri members bind the movement to border region communities and how its

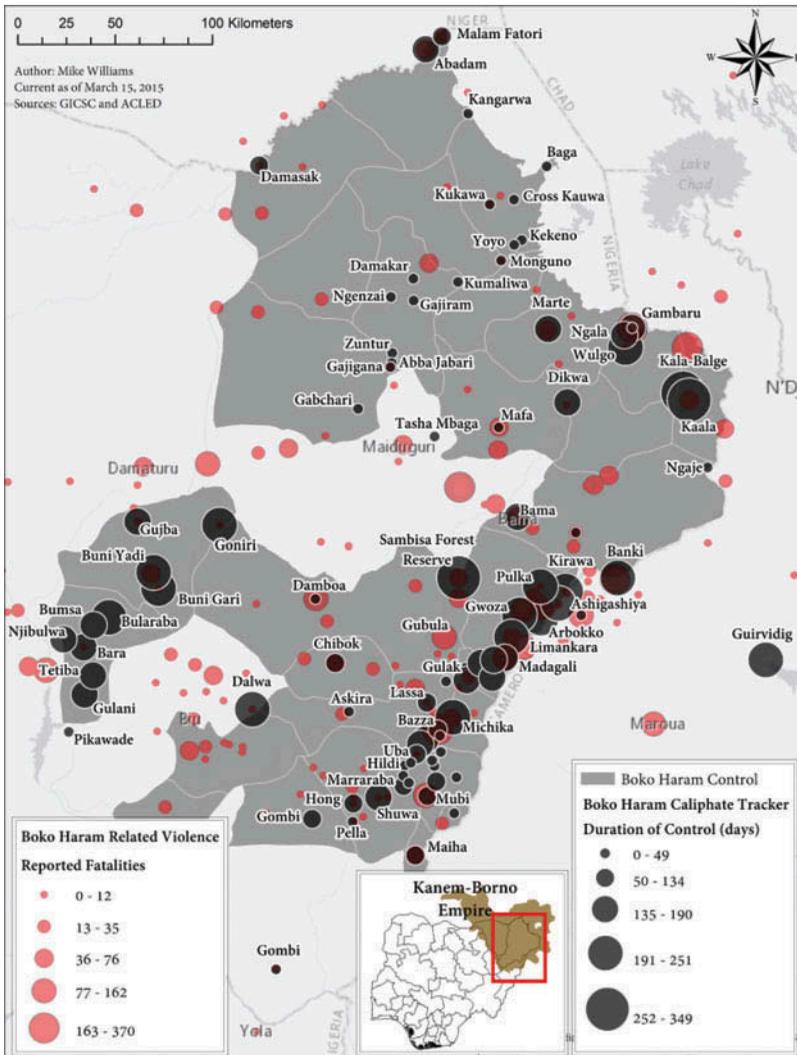


Figure 1. Boko Haram's 2014 related violence and caliphate tracker.<sup>11</sup>

historical narratives and grievances resonate particularly with that Kanuri population. For this reason, this article contributes to previous studies of religious and historical aspects of Boko Haram because it is the first one to specifically address the Kanuri aspect of Boko Haram's origins, rise, and expansion.

This article explains why reviving a caliphate in the West African context is important to Boko Haram and why it has in particular found operational space in Kanuri heartlands. We examine how Boko Haram manipulates and reconciles the history and identities of northwest and northeast Nigeria to advance the goal of creating a caliphate based on Dan Fodio's "Northwestern model" but in the ethnic heartlands of the Kanuri in northeast Nigeria. The

article provides new information to better understand how Boko Haram leverages ethnic Kanuri ties and business associations in northeast Nigeria and neighboring countries to achieve the goal of carving out its Islamic state.

## Methodology

Mixed methods were used for both data collection and analysis. Most important to our understanding of the way in which Boko Haram leaders see the trajectory of the establishment of a caliphate have been the speeches, sermons, writings, and videos emerging from Boko Haram itself. These forms of discourse were translated, cataloged, and coded. In total we examined fifty items of Boko Haram discourse covering the period January 2007 to November 2014. Several master-frames emerged from these transcripts and statements, which show how Boko Haram leaders prioritize and organize the directions of the movement. Resonant master-frames include those of “salvation,” “governance issues,” “anti-constitution,” and “anti-West.” In particular, however, there is a strong emphasis on the prime importance of the belief that creating a caliphate will act as the solution to the ills of society in northern Nigeria. Furthermore, specific references were made to the successful jihad carried out by Dan Fodio in 1804 and that this very same pattern should be followed as the model for Boko Haram’s own caliphate.

The article draws on archival research from British archives in London and Oxford and Nigerian archives in Ibadan and Abuja. Data sources emerging from the archives include accounts of European explorers who traveled to both the Kanem-Borno Empire and the Sokoto Caliphate, precolonial chronicles of Borno and other cities in northern Nigeria, British colonial reports on the region, as well as the letters, writings, and biographies of different traditional and religious rulers of the region. In addition to these, we consulted the Cohen Archives at the University of Florida in Gainesville. The anthropologist, Ronald Cohen, conducted extensive ethnographic research among the Kanuri of Borno in the late 1950s. From these sources we gained a contextual understanding of the two caliphates operating broadly in the region that has now come to be called northern Nigeria, as a means of better comprehending how Boko Haram’s own version of history and historical memory is constructed and reconstructed.

Given the tense security situation, the state of emergency enforced in northeast Nigeria since 2013, and restrictions on travel to the region, we were not able to conduct primary field research in Borno, Yobe, or Adamawa states. However, time was spent conducting primary qualitative research in other parts of Nigeria. During Pieri’s time in Abuja (January 2014), interviews were conducted with participants who had recently fled to Abuja from Borno and Yobe, escaping Boko Haram fighting and persecution. Interviews were also conducted with religious leaders, government and military officials,

and with NGO and civil society activists. The purpose of the interviews were to gain a better understanding of how the concept of a caliphate is articulated by Boko Haram as well as of the level of traction it has among local populations. Zenn also spent time researching these issues in Nigeria in three visits in 2014, in Niger in March 2015 and in Cameroon and Chad in July 2015.

## Boko Haram

Boko Haram was established in Maiduguri, the capital of the northeast Nigerian state of Borno, in 2002 by Muhammad Yusuf. Yusuf was an Islamic theologian trained in the Salafi strand of Islam. He was also of Kanuri ethnicity—that is the group of people who make up the majority of the population in Borno State in northeast Nigeria as well as some parts of the neighboring West African states of Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. This factor is important in explaining the geographical scope of the movement's activities as well as how it recruits members. There are a number of different variations of how Boko Haram started.<sup>12</sup> One version recounted by numerous participants in our interviews, including Nigerian academics, nongovernmental organization leaders, and people present in Borno at the time of Boko Haram's emergence, state that Ali Modu Sheriff, a prominent ethnic Kanuri, did much to support and help expand the movement.

The assertion is that Sheriff cut a deal with Yusuf, whose large youth following was a significant electoral bloc. Yusuf is said to have promised his support to Sheriff in his bid to become governor in the state in exchange for Sheriff implementing sharia law if he won the elections and to give Boko Haram positions in his administration.<sup>13</sup> Sheriff became governor of Borno State in 2003 and proceeded to grant permission for Boko Haram to build their mosque and Ibn Tamiyya headquarters in Maiduguri next to the train station, and allowed Yusuf to operate his microfinancing schemes, which attracted the young and unemployed, including women. It is a matter of record that Yusuf gave support for Sheriff—in lectures, sermons, and publications. On winning the elections, Sheriff gave the position of religious affairs commissioner to Alhaji Buji Foi, a person with close financial connections to Yusuf and to Boko Haram.<sup>14</sup> Yusuf, however, started to become impatient with Sheriff as he did not go as far in his implementation of sharia as Yusuf wanted. This led to Foi resigning in protest from Sheriff's cabinet. It also marked the point at which Sheriff could no longer manage the movement, and crackdowns were to happen soon after.<sup>15</sup>

In terms of ideology, Boko Haram seeks a return to the fundamental tenets of Islam as existed during the time of the Prophet Mohammad and the subsequent early generations of Muslims (the *salafs*), though many Muslims disagree with its interpretation of the past. The time of the

Prophet is seen as a golden age when all aspects of life were governed by Islam and Allah's blessings bestowed upon the *ummah* (Muslim community). Boko Haram is further rooted in Salafism and declares itself as such. After the kidnapping of more than 250 schoolgirls in Chibok in April 2014, Shekau stated, "Either you are with us, I mean real Muslims who are following Salafism. Or you are with Obama, Françoise Hollande, George Bush and Clinton."<sup>16</sup> Before Yusuf's extrajudicial killing at the hands of the Nigerian police in 2009, he also told his followers:

We follow the ideology of the salafists and any fatwa issued by a salafist Islamic scholar, on it we stand. No matter how important an Islamic scholar is, we need to know if he is guided by salafist principles before we accept such a scholar. We will accept scholars who preach and follow the Qur'an, the Sunna and the hadiths . . . . Every teaching of a scholar must be supported by the writings and teachings of salafist scholars.<sup>17</sup>

Yusuf learned Salafism in prominent cities of the former Sokoto Caliphate in Kaduna and Kano in northwest Nigeria from Hausa scholars, such as Shaykh Ja'afar Adam. But Yusuf fell out with his mentors for becoming too extreme, in particular with his calls on a complete ban on Western sciences and education and service in the "infidel" Nigerian government in any capacity, and he shifted to his base in Kanuri areas of northeast Nigeria. All the while he and his deputies, such as the Cameroonian Mamman Nur, venerated Dan Fodio and the Sokoto Jihad of 1804, which they saw as having united Muslims from Nigeria in a caliphate.

Yusuf was deeply concerned with the level of corruption and poor governance in Nigeria and set about to create a society organized according to the sharia. Through establishing microfinancing programs he would loan small amounts of money to individuals and attracted a large following of youths who were loyal to him. These young men would establish small ventures—shoe-shining businesses, market stalls, rickshaws—and would give a certain amount of the profits back to Yusuf. Women were also instrumental in the early workings of the movement benefitting from Yusuf's largess, while he called for all women to be educated in a basic Islamic education.

As their spiritual leader, Yusuf's followers would pay their portion of zakat—that is, the charitable donation that is proscribed in Islam—to Yusuf. At the same time, Yusuf strove to teach his followers that Nigeria was a deeply sinful society, that rulers had veered from the correct path of Islam, that democracy had ushered in Westernization and all the ills that come with secularism's rejection of a society completely devoted to Islam.<sup>18</sup> Shekau was to continue this theme in denouncing Western education as anti-Islamic and as a process that would uproot children from their historical, cultural, and Islamic backgrounds:

It is those who have obtained western education that are seen as educated, civilized and polished . . . true! The rest are illiterates. In fact, it is exactly the same thing that the white man wrote in his book, stating clearly that all those who cannot read and write are illiterates. Therefore, in the contemporary world, if you cannot speak English, anything you say is fundamentally stupid and unintelligent. This in essence is what the beneficiaries of western education believe and they use such thinking to treat us disdainfully . . . This is the area by which education is a source of destruction for our children, our friends, our daughters and our brothers. This source of destruction is inscribed in the white man's philosophy of writing and the faith of its implementation. Followers of western education have usurped our hearts with a philosophy and method of thinking that is contrary to the demands of Allah. They have destroyed our style of life with a system that has not been instructed to us by the Prophet of Allah. They have imposed upon us laws that are not of Allah. Have you understood the trap they have set for us?<sup>19</sup>

Yusuf was equally dismissive of local African cultures. His understanding was that Islam is not culturally embedded but rather applicable across all times and for all people in its pure and unadulterated form. It is in this shape that Islam acts as a powerful social force. Yusuf criticized the notion of large dowries for Islamic marriage and authenticated the practice of simple contractual marriages. This is highly important in a society where boys are not viewed as men until they are married (which ironically has roots in many traditional/animistic cultures of Africa). Interviewees recounted that the large costs of marrying meant that many young men felt emasculated and not viewed as worthy in the eyes of society. Yusuf's version of Islam gave these young men status and empowerment.

Yusuf also called for politicians to enact the sharia. When this failed, Yusuf turned his attention to preparing for a jihad that would oust rulers, implement an Islamic state, and overcome the issues of corruption and government brutality:

How can you be elected only to embezzle money and accumulate only for yourselves, and in addition bring in to the town a group of mad people [JTF] in the name of security? Soldiers are deployed here, torturing and exhorting money from people. What the Governor should have said was "my people who elected me should not be treated this way by soldiers". Yet the Governor continues to engage in acts of corruption. It is not fair to cheat and accumulate at the expense of ordinary people . . . If you cheat you will never get blessings from Allah.<sup>20</sup>

Respondents from our fieldwork in Nigeria agreed that Yusuf's initial vision was popular in northeast Nigeria. There was recognition that Yusuf thought his microfinancing schemes and attempts to provide different forms of welfare to his large band of followers was filling the state's void. People in the northeast feel disenfranchised from the government, they saw corruption and nepotism as rampant, and as such it was easy for Yusuf to sell his brand of Islam as the solution. Respondents also commented that even after Boko Haram turned violent there was support for the movement. Attacking

politicians and government institutions was not seen as highly problematic, particularly when Boko Haram combined such attacks with rhetoric against the Hausa-Fulani elites, such as the sultan of Sokoto, or against the local Kanuri traditional rulers who had “sold out” Islam, thus demonstrating how Kanuri identity is intertwined with Islamic identity. Many followers did not have affinity to the government and sympathized with even a violent program of change.<sup>21</sup> The acceptance of Boko Haram’s methods was to change, however, once Boko Haram started to target Christians and Muslims who did not agree with its vision or version of Islam.

In 2009 the Nigerian government launched an investigation into Boko Haram’s activities following reports that its members were arming themselves. In reality, however, another reason for the investigation and subsequent crackdown was that Yusuf turned against the politicians he had once supported and called for their downfall. Clashes with security forces in July 2009 in Maiduguri led to the deaths of several hundred people.<sup>22</sup> Yusuf was arrested and subsequently extrajudicially killed by police. The incident was filmed and leaked on the Internet and cell phone videos. It served to radicalize his followers and convince them of the need to establish a caliphate via jihad.

### **Reclaiming Dan Fodio and seizing the mantle of jihad: Boko Haram looks to the past to create the future**

The central idea of Dan Fodio’s movement for jihad was the establishment of the sharia and Islam as the basis of government. His purpose was to “revive the Sunna and annihilate animistic innovations that had crept into the social fabric.” In short, Dan Fodio aimed to establish a society that approximated as closely as possible the original prophetic community.<sup>23</sup>

Dan Fodio’s main concern was that Muslims were failing to live by the standards of Islam and that as a consequence society had degenerated into a state of decay and frivolous immorality. In this sense his concern was the moral transformation of the individual and that through rebuilding Islam at the grassroots level, the potential would be there to reform the wider society. Dan Fodio was similar to other reformists and revivers of Islam—for example, Shah Waliullah of Delhi (d. 1762), who saw social, political, and economic decay around him and Islam as the solution. Dan Fodio’s vision was to reinvigorate the spirit of Islam and reform and renew the society in which he was living. This was eventually to lead to a jihad that would overthrow the existing system.<sup>24</sup>

Much like other reformers of his time, and those to follow, Dan Fodio’s main charge was that Islam was on the whole being ignored. Islam was not the cause of Muslim society developing a state of decay but rather was its solution. He wrote that the rulers had gone astray from the path of Allah and

raised the flag of worldliness above the flag of Islam. Because of this, he argued that such rulers were tantamount to unbelievers (*kufar*).<sup>25</sup> Dan Fodio held the rulers responsible for what he deemed un-Islamic practices. These practices included “earning a living from talismans, obtaining the post of a *qadi* through bribery, misappropriating the zakat, and the complete neglect of Qur’anic studies.”<sup>26</sup> Dan Fodio also rallied against what he perceived as the immodest behavior of women, lack of Islamic education for women, gambling, and fraudulent practices in the market.<sup>27</sup>

Ibraheem Sulaiman argues that through his preaching, Dan Fodio became a symbol for the revival of Islam in Hausaland as well as a voice for the people and for justice. For Sulaiman, what Dan Fodio sought to do was to create an intellectual and moral leadership “that would eventually displace the present rulers, to forge a new community . . . who would embody the spirit of reinvigorated Islam, and establish an alternative society with definite goals and aspirations of his own.”<sup>28</sup> Over a period of twenty years, Dan Fodio managed to gather a large following of people—both those who believed in the sociopolitical transformations that he wanted to make from a religious perspective as well as those who were disgruntled with the political system but were not necessarily of the same religious fervor. Dan Fodio met with the rulers of Gobir (the area where he was living in present-day Nigeria) on a number of occasions, seeking to instruct them in Islam and to engender their compliance in a proper implementation of the sharia. With each attempt, Dan Fodio became ever more forceful in his demands, with his followers growing, to the point where the rulers of Gobir felt that Dan Fodio and his movement had become a threat.<sup>29</sup>

After an attempt on his life by the ruler of Gobir, Dan Fodio decided that the time had come for an armed jihad to be implemented. Before this took place, he called for his followers to join him in hijra (or emigration). The decision to go on hijra further points to Dan Fodio’s role in building up the community’s warlike resolve. Hijra out of a territory of a ruler was traditionally a way of showing withdrawal of allegiance and such action by a sizeable community was tantamount to a declaration of war.<sup>30</sup> There are remarkable similarities between Dan Fodio’s hijra and subsequent armed jihad to the actions taken by Boko Haram’s own hijra from Maiduguri to rural Northern Yobe State in 2003 and ensuing violent actions several years later.<sup>31</sup> From this it is apparent that Boko Haram leaders who deeply admire Dan Fodio see history repeating itself and that Dan Fodio’s actions and lessons still bear important resonance for them and their followers in modern-day Nigeria.

Almost two hundred years after Dan Fodio, Muhammad Yusuf shared Dan Fodio’s same concerns. His criticism of the sultan of Sokoto—one of Dan Fodio’s heirs—was significant in that it attempted to seize Dan Fodio’s legacy and to pass the legacy of Dan Fodio’s jihad to Boko Haram. The

clearest example of this came in comments from Yusuf stressing that the Sultan of Sokoto does “not follow the Islamic system of government, and therefore should not use the title *Sarkin Musulmi* [Ruler of Muslims].” Rather, the Sultan should simply be called Sarkin Sokoto [Ruler of Sokoto].<sup>32</sup>

In January 2012, Boko Haram would later threaten the sultan with a critical open letter and in August 2012 with suicide attacks on a police barracks in Sokoto. Boko Haram under Shekau continues to want “to reduce the powers of the Sultan to traditional rulership functions, vested with [Boko Haram’s] leader to be based in Yobe,” and threatens that “any ruler that would obstruct [Boko Haram’s] plans would regret his action.”<sup>33</sup> In December 2014, Shekau showed that he continued this legacy of non-recognition of Nigeria’s traditional leaders when in a video after Boko Haram attacks on the Emir’s Grand Mosque in Kano he referred to the emir of Kano, Lamido Sanusi, as the “King of Kano,” refusing to grant him the Islamic emir status.<sup>34</sup>

The similarities between Dan Fodio’s movement for *jihad* and Boko Haram, at least in its early phases, are striking. Both were motivated by seeing the establishment of an Islamic system as a means to bettering the condition of society. Both also saw a huge impetus in religion as a social force and of Islam’s ability to transform and bring huge benefits where implemented properly. Boko Haram leaders, and indeed much of the Muslim population of northern Nigeria, are deeply familiar with Dan Fodio’s *jihad*. Looking at society today in Nigeria, Boko Haram sees the exact same situation that Dan Fodio encountered: corruption, nepotism, fraudulent practices, poor governance, and immorality. For Boko Haram the solution is clear—religion is the most powerful force available. That Dan Fodio was successful in establishing a caliphate and in imposing an Islamic moral order is inspirational and shows that the goal is achievable. According to Yusuf:

In those days, it was the *Shari’a* that was practiced in this country. Dan Fodio and other Islamic scholars carried out the *jihad* and ensured that Qur’anic law was implemented. Allah did not interfere with this situation until when our Muslim leaders accepted from the Europeans secular constitution. Since that time, Allah took away the comfort and peace Muslims used to enjoy, replaced it with suffering and poverty.<sup>35</sup>

It is clear from this that for Dan Fodio, as for Boko Haram today, Islam is the antidote. Also of interest is that Boko Haram perceives that while the Sokoto Caliphate was in place, Allah bestowed bounties on the Muslims who lived there, but as soon as Muslim leaders gave into colonial powers who brought the caliphate to an end, the Muslims of northern Nigeria have seen only poverty and suffering.<sup>36</sup> The key points here are that, first, traditional Muslim leaders are to blame for the poor situation in the north because they abandoned their allegiance to Allah by accepting secularism, democracy, and

western education, and, second, that Boko Haram, through trying to revive a caliphate, overtook the traditional Muslim leaders' mantle of Islamic legitimacy, with Boko Haram's actions set to usher in a new period of prosperity and justice.

It is significant that Boko Haram draws on the history of Sokoto for their inspiration and not on the Kanuri-led Kanem Borno Empire. For Boko Haram, the grandeur and Islamic integrity of the Kanem-Borno Empire needs to be revived, and the way to do this is through Dan Fodio's model of harnessing the power of Islam.

### **Ties that bind: The Kanuri factor**

Boko Haram has been adept at manipulating history and especially Nigeria's Islamic history in order to galvanize support for the idea of a caliphate based in Kanuri territory. Following the imposition of Western colonialism in Africa, many of the tribes and ethnic groups that once had transregional ties (such as the Fulani and Kanuri) were forced into new national identities, which continued with the establishment of nation states in the postcolonial period. This caused feelings of irredentism. It is partly this imposition of nation state boundaries by colonial powers that did not take into account preexisting governing structures or ethnoreligious groupings that drives Boko Haram's desire to recreate a caliphate across the historic borders of the Kanem-Borno Empire. This rationale is clearly seen in an early Boko Haram sermon:

Their [the Mai of Borno] commitment to Islam penetrated into Niger, Chad and other neighboring countries. However, Europeans divided the countries, cutting off Niger and Chad. They amalgamated us [northern Nigeria, perhaps Borno Province] to infidels and unbelievers. Then they left Niger on their own, knowing that Niger is very poor and poverty will pose no threat. As of Chad, Europeans created ethnic problems, amalgamated them to other infidels and unbelievers and established a rotational system of political authority between the tribes. This led to political instability in Chad since the time of Tumbal Mai and as a result, the country has remained inseparable from conflict. In the case of Sudan, the country was forcefully amalgamated with south Sudan.<sup>37</sup>

Since Nigerian independence in 1960, the country has seen a disempowerment of northeast Nigeria, compared to northwest Nigeria and predominantly Christian southern Nigeria. This feeds the desire for a return to a former time of perceived grandeur and Islamic integrity in the form of the Kanem-Borno Empire and the belief that this can only be achieved through a Salafist agenda as interpreted by Boko Haram and as inspired by Dan Fodio.<sup>38</sup> The dismantling of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and restoration of a caliphate in northeast Nigeria would, according to Boko Haram, eliminate the causes for northeast Nigeria's deprivation. This would lead to a

strong Islamic state integrating the Muslims of northeast Nigeria and neighboring countries.

The fortunes of Boko Haram are pinned, at least in part, with those of a people—the Kanuri—who Boko Haram sees as being of paramount importance in their attempts to carve out ideological and operational spaces in the Lake Chad region. Just as the Fulani at the time of Dan Fodio, according to Adeleye, were conscious of their “separate identity,” so today are the Kanuri.<sup>39</sup> Yet it is not just the Kanuri who are important to Boko Haram’s success. Just as with the 1804 jihad, the drive of religious violence becomes popular with wider ethnic groups as well as those who are less religiously inclined because the “the evils of society against which the reforming Muslims raved were significant even for the non-Muslims who felt oppression keenly.”<sup>40</sup> In this sense, the similar move today toward greater Islamization in Nigeria may have found increased popularity due to the failure of more secular models, coupled with the sheer corruption of the Nigerian state and local governments. The level of grievance further increases in areas such as the northeast because of the inability of the Nigerian state to make up for losses faced by people who feel that their lot has declined—whether actual or perceived.

It is unquestionable that the Kanuri have enjoyed a long and established relationship with Islam, and Kanuri records are able to demonstrate this. Kanuri claim that they and their leaders have been taking part in the annual hajj since the eleventh century, where a Kanuri Mai (or king) is supposed to have died in Egypt on his way to Mecca.<sup>41</sup> By the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the Kanuri-led Empire of Kanem became a well-known state in the Islamic world. According to Cohen, trans-Saharan commerce was completely established with the Hafsid rulers of Tunis, and by the mid-thirteenth century a travelers’ house for pilgrims from Kanem was constructed in Cairo.<sup>42</sup> In addition, a British colonial report from 1947 notes that “the Shehu of Borno is the Caliph of the East” and that “Darfur and Fashr in Sudan recognize his authority.”<sup>43</sup> The Kanuri as such have just cause to be proud of their history and in being the gateway of Islam to Nigeria.

Cohen argues that of central importance to the Kanuri is the belief in Islam as a superior form of belief to others. This does not mean that the Kanuri were literalist in their beliefs, but, rather, from the Kanuri perspective, Islam provided the most complete system for living life that they knew. Although the Kanuri are staunchly Muslim, it is clear from Cohen’s observations that there was a noticeable level of non-Islamic practice occurring among the Kanuri in Borno. Cohen’s field notes talk of superstitions among the Kanuri, the use of amulets and charms, and the belief in magic often intermingled with a belief in Islam:

Many people know that if you raise a jet-black goat in your compound and he grows up, he may be used to harm or kill your enemies. You put him in a hole in the ground which covers everything but his head. Then make a north-south, east-west cross over the covered body, recite some verses of the Koran and keep the goat in the ground until the person bewitched shows signs of failing in health.<sup>44</sup>

This would suggest that for at least a part of the Kanuri population, identities were more fluid than being purely Muslim, with some degree of personal flexibility in borrowing from outside of Islam in order to conduct one's affairs. Even though such practices may be condemned under Islam, they function according to Cohen in the same areas, satisfying the same practical desires, only more graphically and more dramatically than Islam.

Boko Haram—despite claiming the mantle of Salafism—in practice has members that continue animist rituals and traditions even while carrying out attacks for Boko Haram.<sup>45</sup> Leading Boko Haram members, such as Ibrahim Tada Ngalyike, who was known for kidnapping young Christian women in the area around Chibok, where more than 250 schoolgirls were kidnapped in April 2014, was also known for “using traditional charms that make him disappear.”<sup>46</sup> The security forces, as a result, reportedly did not go near anywhere where he is believed to have hid in the mountains around Gwoza.

Moreover, when around 50 Boko Haram members were arrested by the security forces in Yobe, the security forces reported that “among the recent finds are rifles, double barrel guns, various charms and amulets, machine guns as well as pairs of camouflage uniforms, bows and quiver and assorted rifle magazine.”<sup>47</sup> Other captured Boko Haram members have revealed under interrogation that commanders force militants to drink the blood of their victims and, in some cases, resort to cannibalism, which are both animist forms of ritual.<sup>48</sup> The charms, amulets, and other animistic practices are against what Salafists would deem acceptable. But what they reflect are the continued mystic ways of many Boko Haram members, which are deeply entrenched in the religious landscape of northern Nigeria, though with a Salafist ideological veneer.

That the Kanuri factor is important to Boko Haram is increasingly apparent. It is the Kanuri who have held the key positions of leadership within Boko Haram, including Yusuf and Shekau, and it is from Kanuri heartland that the movement was launched in Maiduguri, Borno State. A Nigerian government investigation into Boko Haram estimated that 80 percent of the movement's members are Kanuri, a figure substantiated also by international observers, including the head of the British High Commission.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, Baca notes, “The Kanuri, Borno's most populous ethnicity, serve as the chief protagonist of this internecine war, dominating both Boko Haram as well as the regional political establishment that largely opposes it.”<sup>50</sup> In Diffa, a town on the border of Niger and Nigeria, Boko Haram, according to Jochen Stahnke, recruits young men mainly from the Kanuri population. Boko

Haram pays new recruits 300,000 Francs-CFA (\$500) plus a motorbike and the promise of a bride. He quotes Colonel Major Moussa Salaou Barmou, the zone commander for Diffa province, as saying, “Most Boko Haram fighters are Kanuri, the major ethnicity in this region. Boko Haram is a Kanuri thing as well.”<sup>51</sup>

Boko Haram clearly benefits from its ability to navigate the sociocultural and linguistic landscape of Kanuri territories—this is where it has achieved maximum operational capacity. Yet it is not solely a Kanuri movement. Boko Haram is a complex organization and a melting pot for a range of identities and ideologies, which the movement has become adept at drawing from depending on its target audience. As an Islamist organization with established links to Islamic State, it now asserts its primary identity as that of ultra-orthodox Salafi Islam. For Boko Haram in the current climate, Islam transcends ethnicity, and in order to appeal to Muslims from outside of the Kanuri ethnic group it must appear to be a broader effort than just a movement for Kanuris (similar to how Islamic State has transcended the Sunni Arab identity, which is at its core, to welcome Iraq’s Sunni Turkomen, including al-Baghdadi’s deputy, as well as thousands of foreign fighters). Indeed, as Colonel Barmou notes, “In northern Nigeria there were a lot of bandits and gangs that fought for politicians—in return for money they intimidated political opponents. Upon assuming power, these politicians forgot their fighters and now they demand their share.”<sup>52</sup> Boko Haram has become an increasingly attractive vehicle for such people.

Hausa may be the lingua franca in northern Nigeria and even between many of Boko Haram’s members, but Yusuf and Shekau have long provided special post-sermon summaries in Kanuri of their Hausa sermons. This is their attempt to carve out a special audience for Kanuri followers and prospective Kanuri recruits, including from neighboring countries of Chad, Cameroon, and Niger, who neither speak Borno’s other minority languages, Hausa nor English, and also because of the value Yusuf and Shekau place on Kanuri identity. Their main sermons, however, have had to be in Hausa because, among Nigerian members, this is the only language that all listeners can understand (Kanuris usually know Hausa, while Hausas usually do not know Kanuri). In the context of Shekau’s “jihad” after 2010, it has also been necessary for him to use Hausa so that his propaganda videos—and especially threats against Abuja and religious elites—are able to be mass distributed in the media and understood by Hausa listeners in Nigeria, including the Hausa-speaking religious leaders, such as the sultan of Sokoto. However, in the run-up the *bayah* to al-Baghdadi, Arabic videos were not necessary to convey Boko Haram’s message to the international audience that was soon to embrace Boko Haram as the Islamic State’s West Africa Province.

## Fusing ethnicity, religion, and historical memory

Indeed the central grievance of Kanuri identity being separated from Islam stems back a long time to the rule of Al-Kanemi, who forced the traditional Kanuri Muslim kings out of power under the guise of protecting Borno from Dan Fodio's jihad:

Kanemi was not the one that brought Islam to this land [Borno province]. Indeed he was the one that destroyed Islam in Borno province. When he came and conquered Borno, he subjugated everyone and allowed his slaves to rule over Borno towns and villages. He appointed judges and banned Muslims from embracing Islamic education. He excluded Kanuri language to be used in the Islamic religious instructions, claiming that the language was too "heavy". Everything was left to the slaves. Those who sincerely practiced Islam were those called "Mai", like Mai Idris Aloma and the rest. Their commitment to Islam penetrated into Niger, Chad and other neighbouring countries.<sup>53</sup>

This is an exceptionally important point because it demonstrates how Boko Haram bridges the histories of the two precolonial Islamic states in northern Nigeria. Boko Haram leaders are clearly in awe of the achievements of the Kanem-Borno Empire and are proud of its Kanuri history and heritage. They highlight the Mai, who were the original rulers of Kanem-Borno, as those who "sincerely practiced Islam" and for their commitment penetrating in to the "neighboring West African countries." Yet Boko Haram also venerate Dan Fodio, whose jihad threatened to overthrow the Kanem-Borno Empire. As a way of negotiating these seemingly contradictory positions, Boko Haram focuses on the personage of Muhammad Al-Kanemi (d. 1837), a religious scholar of Kanembu and Arab extraction, who rose to rule over Borno displacing the Mais but who is also regarded as the savior of Borno against Dan Fodio's jihad. Historians such as Louis Brenner note Al-Kanemi as a religious scholar as well as an astute political leader, one who was able to justify Kanem-Borno as an Islamic entity and Dan Fodio's jihad into Borno territory as unlawful.<sup>54</sup> It is interesting that Boko Haram leaders have a negative view of Al Kanemi, and it's revealing that mixed into their criticisms of him are that he excluded the Kanuri language. Instead what Boko Haram regards as a more legitimate path would have been the continuation of rule by the Mai as well as seeing the same reforms enacted within the Kanem-Borno Empire as those Dan Fodio was implementing within the Sokoto Caliphate. It is important to remember here that Dan Fodio was far more active in pursuing a rigorous program of moral renewal, while Al-Kanemi's attitude to moral reform was a far more tolerant one.<sup>55</sup>

Boko Haram believes that it has reunited the Kanuri with Islam and that together with other Salafi Muslims this will empower them to achieve former glories. The importance of Kanuri is seen in several video sermons released by Boko Haram. In one, after announcing that he was still alive and refuting

the Nigerian army's claims that he was dead, on September 27, 2013, Shekau concluded a speech saying, "Everything I have said is in Hausa. If they are right may Allah reward us, and if they are wrong may Allah forgive us. I will translate and conclude in Kanuri even if it's for a minute."<sup>56</sup>

Boko Haram's key financiers have traditionally also been Kanuri. Alhaji Buji Foi was the first financier when Muhammad Yusuf was still alive. Since then, the leading businessmen organizing food transport into Borno from Niger's Diffa region have also been Kanuri, including Elhadj Bakoulou Harouna. In northern Cameroon, the leading negotiator for Boko Haram in the kidnapping of the French Moulin-Fournier family of seven and a French priest was Alhaji Abdallah, a Kanuri vehicle exporter with operations as far ranging as Libya.<sup>57</sup> In Boko Haram's demands for the release of these hostages, it asked for Kanuri weapons traffickers imprisoned in Cameroon to be released. The arms are reportedly sent to Nigeria from Kanuri based in Cairo, while receipts of travel from Libya found in Boko Haram camps in Cameroon suggest the weapons may be funneled all the way from North Africa on traditional Kanuri empire routes down to Boko Haram and that there is a Kanuri-based network of operations surrounding the insurgency.<sup>58</sup>

Boko Haram was quick to ensure that in their caliphate, Salafi oriented emirs replaced those who reject the movement's interpretation of Islam. From January to March 2015, the borders of Boko Haram's caliphate were defined by the ethnic patchwork of northern Nigeria. Shekau was confident of retaining territory in which Kanuri formed the largest segment of the population, but his control was looser in areas where Kanuri did not form the majority. As Blair noted, Shekau "withdrew from a string of towns in Adamawa state, perhaps because they were inhabited by non-Kanuris. Despite all this firepower [Boko Haram's arsenal of weapons], the invisible borders of ethnicity may still be a brake on its expansion."<sup>59</sup> Nonetheless, the new al-Baghdadi-led Islamic State, which created a new West African province centred around Kanuri strongholds, provides Kanuris in Boko Haram with the most realistic and direct opportunity for carving out an Islamic entity in a part of West Africa that was once the former Kanem-Borno Empire. The union with the Islamic State and other West African militant groups, such as MUJAO in Mali, which pledged *bayah* to the Islamic State, will require Boko Haram to represent areas beyond the historical Kanem-Borno Empire. Nonetheless, as in Borno, Boko Haram has shown the capability to accommodate Kanuri identity with the identities of other Bornoan Muslim minorities and has accepted Hausas into its ranks. Thus, Boko Haram has shown that while Kanuri identity, kinship ties, and history play a critical role in the movement, they do not preclude Boko Haram from embracing Salafist, "West African," or other identities. As such, so long as the Kanuri aspirations of Boko Haram—namely an Islamic State in the traditional Kanuri homeland—are met through the relationship with Islamic State

and its provinces in West Africa, the movement will likely adapt to the alliances that have come about as a result of the Shekau *bayah* to al-Baghdadi.

## Conclusion

Boko Haram leaders articulated the goal of establishing an Islamic state in northern Nigeria as early 2002, almost a decade before the current leader, Abubakar Shekau, declared jihad in July 2010 and the ensuing insurgency in September 2010. This Islamic state or caliphate, however, is not a new concept introduced by Boko Haram into mainstream discourse, especially when considered in the historical and religious contexts of northern Nigeria. In 1804, Islamic scholar Usman Dan Fodio mobilized his Fulani ethnic group to fight against the existing “infidel” (predominantly Hausa) Muslim power structures of the region in order to implement his vision of an Islamic State. He sought to extend his caliphate to include the Muslim and ethnic Kanuri-led Kanem-Borno Empire; that is, the territory that Boko Haram controls today and the ethnic group to which most of its leaders and members belong.

Dan Fodio ultimately succeeded in toppling the Hausa Muslims states of northern Nigeria (though not Borno itself) and in their place established the Sokoto Caliphate. This caliphate existed for one hundred years until the British imposed colonial rule over northern Nigeria. The present-day sultans and emirs in the areas of the former Sokoto Caliphate, who are the descendants of Dan Fodio and his emirs, have maintained their status as traditional religious rulers but in most cases no longer have formal political or military authority.

The concept of a caliphate *with* political and military authority has, however, continued to resonate with Nigerian Islamists in contemporary times. This desire for a new caliphate is most effectively being harnessed and promoted by Boko Haram, whose ideology, militant successes, and declaration of caliphate in 2014 are perhaps the closest Nigerian Muslims have come to reviving an Islamic state since the end of the Sokoto Caliphate.<sup>60</sup>

This article has shown that Boko Haram leaders are inspired and motivated by Dan Fodio’s jihad. Boko Haram sermons, publications, and statements make it clear that their aim is to (re)create that caliphate with “Boko Haram-approved” leaders replacing the current “infidel” Muslim traditional leaders, who are guilty of mixing Islam with Western notions of democracy, secularism, and education. However, this article shows that unlike Dan Fodio, whose jihad emanated from the Fulani lands in northwest Nigeria, Boko Haram’s jihad is emanating from the traditional Kanuri homelands.

This view is further buttressed by Idayat Hassan, director of the Centre for Democracy and Development in Abuja. In an interview she commented:

On 5 May 2014, in a video statement, Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau stated that “we are together with Usman Dan Fodio” as well as recalling past instances of Muslim–Christian violence. Recent surveys of armed militants operating alongside Boko Haram in Borno and Northern Cameroon reveal that the militants’ goal is to “knock out” Nigeria and then “create a Sahelo-Saharan Islamic Empire that mirrors the boundaries of the pre-colonial Kanem-Borno Empire, which extended from Borno through Cameroon, Chad and Niger to southern Libya and Sudan.”<sup>61</sup>

Government surveys and interviews of kidnapping victims who escaped or were released from Boko Haram camps also attest to that fact that most Boko Haram members speak Kanuri language, which is indigenous to the main areas where Boko Haram operates in northeast Nigeria and the Lake Chad region. More directly, Sambo Dasuki, Nigeria’s national security adviser, noted that an estimated “70% to 80% of Boko Haram fighters were from the Kanuri.”<sup>62</sup>

This ethnoregional religious dynamic is not only important for demonstrating that Boko Haram is willing to wage a war to impose their vision of Islam in northeast Nigeria (and, increasingly, neighbors such as Cameroon) but also because of the wider implications and alliances being formed in the region as a result of Boko Haram’s jihad. As Hassan puts it, to such militants “the battle with France in Northern Mali in 2013 was a ‘prep’ for the real battle, which is to take place in Nigeria and which is facilitated by Kanuri sense of grievance for their lost empire and inspired by the ideal that an Islamic state is possible—as represented by Iran’s ‘Islamic Revolution’ in 1979.”<sup>63</sup>

It is in this context that Boko Haram is a present-day manifestation of Dan Fodio’s jihad, using the same core arguments as Dan Fodio to attack rival Islamic leaders, albeit in the heartlands of Kanuri territories. Shekau has realigned Boko Haram with the most visible jihadist trends of this era—Abubakar al-Baghdadi’s Islamic State—which has seemingly led to more emboldened Boko Haram attacks, including occupying and holding territory, and new rhetoric about the caliphate in Nigeria consonant with al-Baghdadi’s caliphate in Iraq and Syria.

Boko Haram is not an aberration in Nigerian history or in present-day global circumstances. The tendency to write off the movement as a one-hit wonder that will easily be dismissed in the annals of Nigerian history are likely incorrect. Rather, Boko Haram has the necessary ethnohistorical and religious underpinning to become a long-lasting movement whose impact on Nigerian and African security can only be rolled back and countered once the strength of the bases for its existence are recognized and appropriate strategies to meet the reality of the threats developed.

## Notes

1. This statement was made by Abu Qaqa, Boko Haram's spokesman at the time, and originally posted by *SaharaReporters* on July 11, 2014. The statement subsequently appeared in Jude Owuamanam, "We're behind Plateau Mass Killings—Book Haram says Christians Should Accept Islam If They Want Peace," *Punch*, July 11, 2012, <http://www.punchng.com/news/were-behind-plateau-mass-killings-boko-haram-says-christians-should-accept-islam-if-they-want-peace>, accessed May 13, 2015. GICSC, "Security Review: A Turning Point in the Insurgency?," <http://www.usfglobalinitiative.org/newsletter/security-insurgency-turning-point/> (March 2015, Global Initiative on Civil Society and Conflict, University of South Florida, Tampa, USA).
2. Austin Ajai, "Borno Govt. Raises Alarms, Says Boko Haram May Capture Entire Three North-East States in Days," *Premium Times*, November 3, 2014, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/170534-borno-govt-raises-alarm-says-boko-haram-may-capture-entire-three-north-east-states-in-days.html>, accessed October 5, 2014.
3. Global Initiative on Civil Society and Conflict, "Security Review: A Turning Point in the Insurgency?" *Nigeria and Boko Haram Tracker*, GICSC University of South Florida, March 19, 2015, <http://www.usfglobalinitiative.org/newsletter/security-insurgency-turning-point>, accessed April 1, 2015.
4. Based on videos that Boko Haram released depicting their caliphate, it becomes clear that their version of an Islamic state is one with the trappings typical of other present-day attempts to establish "Islamic states," such as those of Islamic State and the Taliban. This included the full implementation of sharia punishments, taxing or expulsion of Christians and non-Muslims, and slavery.
5. See the full text of Shekau's speech from January 22, 2015, <http://nigeriapulse.com/full-transcript-of-shekaus-speech>, accessed January 27, 2015.
6. David Blair, "Boko Haram Is Now a Mini-Islamic State, with Its Own Territory," *The Telegraph*, January 10, 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandin-dianocean/nigeria/11337722/Boko-Haram-is-now-a-mini-Islamic-State-with-its-own-territory.html>, accessed January 15, 2015. In addition, West Africa's first major attack in Chad was June 15, 2015, when two purportedly Chadian militants simultaneously launched suicide bombings at the police academy and police headquarters in N'djamena, killing more than 30 people. For the first time, the Islamic State's centralized media team claimed these suicide attacks on its official Al-Bayan Radio News Bulletin and on Twitter, where it showed "martyrdom" photos of the two Chadian suicide bombers.
7. Jacob Zenn, "Boko Haram: Recruiting, Financing and Arms Trafficking in the Lake Chad Region," *CTC Sentinel* 7, no. 10 (2014): 5.
8. Jacob Zenn, "Boko Haram: The Islamic State of West Africa?" *Tony Blair Faith Foundation*, September 23, 2014, <http://tonyblairfaithfoundation.org/religion-geopolitics/commentaries/opinion/boko-haram-islamic-state-west-africa>, accessed December 10, 2014.
9. These are available from the Clarion Project, <http://www.clarionproject.org/news/islamic-state-isis-isil-propaganda-magazine-dabiq>, accessed December 3, 2014.
10. Jacob Zenn, "Boko Haram Is Acting Increasingly Like the Islamic State. Why Don't We Treat It that Way?" *The Washington Post*, November 13, 2014, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/11/13/boko-haram-is-acting-increasingly-like-the-islamic-state-why-dont-we-treat-it-that-way>, accessed December 9, 2014.
11. We are grateful to Mike Williams, who authored the map, and to David Jacobson, founding director at the Global Initiative on Civil Society and Conflict at the University

- of South Florida, for allowing us to use this map. The map originally appeared in Volume 1 of the Nigeria and Boko Haram Tracker, <http://us10.campaign-archive1.com/?u=159bbc5eda7b2830eb0752019&id=bd6d6df5b6>, March 19, 2015, accessed March 20, 2015.
12. A number of prominent versions as to how the movement started are captured in Virginia Comolli, *Boko Haram: Nigeria's Islamist Insurgency* (London: Hurst, 2015).
  13. Author interview with Y. E., an electrical engineer and civil society activist in Maiduguri. He and his family fled increasing violence in Borno state to Abuja in 2013. January 16, 2014.
  14. Emmanuel Ojo, "Boko Haram: Nigeria's Extrajudicial Stat," *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa* 12, no. 2 (2010): 45–62.
  15. Freedom Onuoha, "Boko Haram and the Evolving Salafi Jihadist Threat in Nigeria," in *Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria*, ed. Marc Antoine Perouse de Montclos (Leiden and Zaria: French Institute for Research in Africa, African Studies Centre, 2014), 166; Zacharias Pieri and Rafael Serrano, "Insurgency Prolonged: Nigeria's Lack of Strategic Adaptation and the Rising Boko Haram Death Toll," *West Africa Insight* 4 no. 2, (2014): 13.
  16. Video accessed December 9, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/video/2014/may/06/boko-haram-sell-girls-market-video>.
  17. Mohammad Yusuf, "Guzurin Mujahidai [Foundations of Jihad]," [http://www.YouTube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=VWCdqwGU\\_m#t=2690](http://www.YouTube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=VWCdqwGU_m#t=2690), accessed December 10, 2014.
  18. This is clear in several sermons given by senior Boko Haram members, including Mohammad Yusuf, who in his 2009 "The Foundation of the Jihadists" sermon said, "Do not expect to enjoy the support of Allah when you neglect the words of the *Qur'an* and then compete with any of Allah's servants. Do not expect the support of Allah when you pray the *salat* constantly, yet live a wicked and deceitful life. You can only expect the support of Allah when you follow in the footsteps of his heart."
  19. A link to the original sermon as posted on YouTube may be found here, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQY4GLtzLdU>, accessed January 13, 2015.
  20. Mohammad Yusuf's sermon from 2009 can be found at <http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=cUot3BrT0FE>, accessed January 10, 2014.
  21. Author interview with Idayat Hassan, Centre for Democracy and Development, Abjua, January 18, 2014.
  22. Rafael Serrano and Zacharias Pieri, "By the Numbers: The Nigerian State's Efforts to Counter Boko Haram," *Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria*, ed. Marc-Antoine Perouse de Montclos (Leiden and Zaria: French Institute for Research in Africa and African Studies Centre, 2014), 203–204.
  23. Ibraheem Suliman, *The African Caliphate: The Life, Works and Teaching of Shaykh Usman Dan Fodio (1754–1817)* (London, UK: The Diwan Press, 2009), 115.
  24. Murray Last, *The Sokoto Caliphate*, (Bristol, UK: Longmans, Green and Co., 1967), 29–45.
  25. R. A. Adeleye, *Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria 1904–1906: The Sokoto Caliphate and its Enemies* (London, UK: Longman, 1971).
  26. M. Nur-Awaleh, "The Fulani Jihad and the Rise to Power in Hausaland in the 19th Century," in *The Histories, Languages, and Cultures Of West Africa: Interdisciplinary Essays*, ed. A. Sarr (New York, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2006), 95–114.
  27. *Ibid.*, 95–114.
  28. Ibraheem Suliman, *The African Caliphate: The Life, Works and Teaching of Shaykh Usman Dan Fodio (1754–1817)* (London, UK: The Diwan Press, 2009).

29. Elizabeth Isichei, *History of West Africa Since 1800* (New York, NY: Africana Publishing Company, 1997), 20.
30. Mervyn Hiskett, *The Sword of Truth: The Life and Times of the Shehu Usman Dan Fodio* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1994), 69.
31. Rafael Serrano and Zacharias Pieri, *By the Numbers: The Nigerian State's Efforts to Counter Boko Haram* (Leiden and Zaria, Netherlands: French Institute for Research in Africa and African Studies Centre, 2014), 199.
32. Anonymous, "The Popular Discourses of Salafi Radicalism and Salafi Counter-radicalism in Nigeria: A Case Study of Boko Haram," *Journal of Religion on Africa* 42 (2012): 127.
33. Abonyi Ike, "Our Plans to Islamize the Country—Qaqa, Sokoto," *This Day*, March 8, 2012.
34. See the following, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWGGDg6DTnQ#t=32>, accessed December 20, 2014.
35. Sermon by Muhammad Nur, 2009.
36. Mohammad Yusuf, "Sermon," October 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cUot3BrT0FE>, accessed April 21, 2015.
37. Mohammad Yusuf. "Tahrin Musulmai [History of Muslims]," 2007.
38. Author interview with Osaro Odemwingie, senior political advisor, British High Commission, Abuja, January 15, 2014.
39. R.A. Adeleye, *Power and Diplomacy in Northern Nigeria 1904–1906: The Sokoto Caliphate and its Enemies* (London, UK: Longman, 1971), 19.
40. *Ibid.*, 21.
41. M. Nur Akali, "Some Contributions to the Study of the Pilgrimage Tradition in Nigeria," *Annals of Borno* 2 (1985): 128.
42. Ronald Cohen, *The Kanuri of Borno* (New York, NY: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1967), 14.
43. C. R. Niven, *Report on Bornu Province* (Lord Lugard Papers, Oxford, UK: University of Oxford, 1947), CO 108/38.
44. Ronald Cohen, *Notes from March 19* (Cohen Archives, University of Florida, 1957).
45. Drew Hinshaw, "Nigerian Violence Spawns Homemade Responses," *The Wall Street Journal*, June 25, 2014, [http://www.wsj.com/news/article\\_email/nigerian-violence-spawns-homemade-responses-1403725272-1MyQjAxMTA0MDIwNjEyNDYyWj](http://www.wsj.com/news/article_email/nigerian-violence-spawns-homemade-responses-1403725272-1MyQjAxMTA0MDIwNjEyNDYyWj), accessed December 4, 2014.
46. Jacob Zenn, "Boko Haram and the Kidnapping of the Chibok Schoolgirls," *CTC Sentinel*, May 29, 2014, <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/boko-haram-and-the-kidnapping-of-the-chibok-schoolgirls>, accessed January 14, 2015.
47. Gbade Ogunwale, "Nigerian Troops Arrest Boko Haram Recruiter," *SaharaReporters*, June 5, 2013, <http://saharareporters.com/2013/06/05/nigerian-troops-arrest-boko-haram-recruiter-nab-49-suspected-terrorists-yobe-nation>, accessed December 4, 2014.
48. Full details may be found here, <http://abusidiqu.com/interview-boko-haram-member-plus-video>, accessed January 15, 2014.
49. See Strategy Page for more details, <https://www.strategypage.com/qnd/nigeria/articles/20130628.aspx>, accessed, January 15, 2015. See also Blair, David, "Boko Haram is now a mini state, with its own territory", *Daily Telegraph*, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/nigeria/11337722/Boko-Haram-is-now-a-mini-Islamic-State-with-its-own-territory.html>, accessed January 10, 2015
50. Michael Baca, "The Tragedy of Borno State: Local Dimensions of Boko Haram's Insurgency," *African Arguments*, December 19, 2014, <http://africanarguments.org/>

- 2014/12/19/the-tragedy-of-borno-state-local-dimensions-of-boko-harams-insurgency-by-michael-baca, accessed January 12, 2015.
51. Jochen Stahnke, "Guest Post: An Account from Diffa, Niger about the War with Boko Haram," *Sahel Blog*, July 16, 2015, <https://sahelblog.wordpress.com/2015/07/16/guest-post-an-account-from-diffa-niger-about-the-war-with-boko-haram>, accessed July 20, 2015.
  52. Ibid.
  53. Mohammad Yusuf, "Tahrin Musulmai [History of Muslims]," 2007.
  54. Louis Brenner, *The Shehus of Kukawa: A History of the Al-Kanemi Dynasty of Bornu* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1973), 40–42.
  55. Ibid., 40–41, 45.
  56. See the following, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sl-m7w7yJZ0>, accessed September 30, 2014.
  57. Jacob Zenn, "How Boko Haram Recruits Members and Finances Its Operations," *Nigerian Tribune*, December 6, 2014, <http://www.tribune.com.ng/quicklinkss/politics/item/23408-how-boko-haram-recruits-members-and-finances-its-operations/23408-how-boko-haram-recruits-members-and-finances-its-operations>, accessed January 15, 2015.
  58. Jacob Zenn, "Boko Haram: Recruiting, Financing and Arms Trafficking in the Lake Chad Region," *CTC Sentinel* 7, no. 10 (2014), 9.
  59. Blair, "Boko Haram Is Now a Mini-Islamic State."
  60. Zacharias Pieri, "Boko Haram's Caliphate is Becoming a Reality in Northeastern Nigeria," *Global Initiative on Civil Society and Conflict*, September 17, 2014, <http://www.usfglobalinitiative.org/boko-harams-islamic-caliphate-is-becoming-a-reality-in-northeastern-nigeria>, accessed September 20, 2014.
  61. Author interview with Idayat Hassan, Centre for Democracy and Development, Abjua, May 23, 2014.
  62. Julian Borger, "Top Security Adviser Calls Soldiers Cowards after Boko Haram Attacks," *The Guardian*, January 22, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/22/nigeria-soldiers-cowards-boko-haram>, accessed January 22, 2015.
  63. Author interview with Idayat Hassan, Centre for Democracy and Development, Abjua, May 23, 2014.