# Table of Contents

Executive Summary ........................................................................................................... 3
Background ......................................................................................................................... 6
Part I: Background Look at al-Shabaab and Boko Haram ................................................. 7
Part II: Factors behind the Rise of al-Shabaab and Boko Haram .................................... 14
Part III: Policy Approaches .............................................................................................. 18
Conclusion ......................................................................................................................... 20
Endnotes ............................................................................................................................ 22
References ......................................................................................................................... 25
About CfPAR

The Center for Policy Analysis & Research (CfPAR) is an independent, non-partisan, non-profit Somali-American think tank organization. CfPAR was founded in 2011, and it is currently based in the United States.

CfPAR’s mission is to foster greater public understanding of internal and external policies that impact Somalia, and cultivate alternative ideas for sustainable peace, development and good governance.

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Executive Summary

- Over the last two decades, the narrative that has been dispersed by the media and the overall public discourses on Somalia were not gorgeous. For these trouble years, the images that have been attached to Somalia were civil war, starvation, piracy and extremism. However, the most two items that have been getting the media attention during these years were the piracy off the coast of Somalia and extremism.

- After the fall of the last Somali central government in 1991, and the warlords failed to produce any governance system, the power vacuum enabled Islamic Courts to assume informal authorities in some parts of south-central Somalia. In 2006, Islamic Courts leaders defeated the warlords, but they were also eventually crashed by the Ethiopian forces who invaded Somalia for “a national security grounds.”

- The date and place of the formation of al-Shabaab is contested. There are four accounts that provide different timings about the formation of al-Shabaab. The first source asserts that al-Shabaab was founded in 2004, and was formally designated as a terrorist organization by the U.S. Government on February 29th, 2008. The second account suggests that the name al-Shabaab was not widely used until 2007, although the group was formally incorporated in 2003 at an Al-Itihad al-Islami (AIAI) conference in Las Anod, which is a city in northern Somalia. The third source states that al-Shabaab was created in 1998 by Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aways. The second view asserts that al-Shabaab was created in mid-2006 by an Aweys protégé, Adam Hashi Ayro as part of a special unit of the courts’ militia to carry out “dirty wars” and later to spearhead the insurgency against the Ethiopian and Somali government forces. The fourth account claims that the Somali militia al-Shabaab emerged in 2004 and 2005 in Camp Al-Huda in Bakool region, southern Somalia.

- Since its official inception, the group has had four “amiirs” or leaders. The first leader was Adam Hashi Ayro. The second leader was Sheikh Mukhtar Robow. The third leader was Ahmed Godane, and the fourth leader of the group is Abu Ubeid Ahmed Omar, who became the successor of Godane on September 6, 2014. Due to some internal disputes on philosophy and direction, high profile leaders, such as Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys, Mohamed Said (Atom) and Zakariye Ismail Hersi, have defected from the group and surrendered themselves to the Somali government.

- In addition to its twisted interpretation of Islam that isolates everyone who does not agree their philosophy, one of the main factors that push al-Shabaab to thrive and recruit followers is the unilateral interventions of Kenya and Ethiopia in Somalia. The bilateral move of Kenya and Ethiopia to create buffer zones inside Somalia will only be a justification for al-Shabaab’s cause, and as a result, the group will be able to recruit more followers and sympathizers.
The date Boko Haram was formed is also contested. There are three different accounts that give different timings on when Boko Haram was formed. The first account reports that Boko Haram has existed since 1995 under the name of Ahlulsunnawal’jama’ahhipra. The second account suggests that Boko Haram (Jama’atu Ahlis-Sunna Lidda’awah Wal-Jihad/People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet’s Teachings and Jihad [was] founded by Mohammed Yusuf in Maiduguri in 2002. The third account asserts that the Jamaatul Alissunna lid da’awah Wal Jihad, otherwise known as Boko Haram rebellion started in Bauchi State on July 26, 2009.

Boko Haram’s core agenda is that western education is forbidden, and no one is allowed to collaborate with a government that its laws are not based on the Shari’a law.

The rise of Boko Haram is mainly influenced by three factors. First, the weak, but not state failure, of the Nigerian security apparatus. Second, the low socio-economic status in northern Nigeria, and third, corruption and elite competition in the Nigerian politics.

Policy Recommendations for Somalia

- The drone attacks by the United States are only useful for short term purposes. The long term solution is to put more emphasis on the rebuilding of a disciplined and strong Somalia's National Army that is capable of dealing with al-Shabaab. Showing disciplined and inclusive Somalia national forces is the only condition that the U.N. Security Council will use as a measure to lift the arms embargo that has been on Somalia since 1991.
- The amnesty that is offered by the Somali government is a good approach that needs to be kept with deep caution as there must be a full rehabilitation process for the defectors who willingly reject the violent interpretation that the group uses for its agenda.
- The unilateral approaches that are used by Ethiopia and Kenya to deal with al-Shabaab are quite problematic. These approaches cannot help the eradication of al-Shabaab, but contrary, they will boost al-Shabaab’s narrative, morale and ability to bring more local and foreign jihadists to their membership ranks.

Policy Recommendations for Nigeria

- Nigerian government must reassess the professionalism and performance of its security forces. The weakness of the Nigerian national security forces is what gives Boko Haram the opportunity to carry out its heinous attacks in northern Nigeria.
- To tackle the threat of Boko Haram is to wage war against poverty and the sense of alienation that Boko Haram has masterfully exploited for furthering its agenda.
- The Nigerian government needs to efficiently empower state governments in the north to lead the charge and be the focus of the fight against Boko Haram; creating a Ministry of
Northern Affairs—just like the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs—will help to address the numerous challenges in the north

- The Nigerian government needs to conduct speedy and fair trials of those found to be Boko Harm activists or funders
Background

Since the decolonization in 1960s, African nations have been under trials and tribulations that still keep the continent behind to develop its political, social and economic conditions. In this 21st century, the sub-Saharan Africa is the poorest part of the world in terms of three indicators of human development index: life expectancy, education and income. Political instability was the norm in many parts of the African nations that newly joined the nation-state system. After almost a half a century, most sub-Saharan African nations do not have adequate institutions that can safeguard the state system and the individual rights. Ethnic conflicts have been one of the main sources of the instability that a number of African countries have gone through.

Furthermore, theorists and practitioners of Africa’s political and social affairs have been articulating and interpreting the factors behind ethnic conflicts among African communities. For some, ethnic conflicts in African states are due to the absence of strong institutions and mechanisms for power and resource sharing. For others, the whole concept of conflicts is part of the colonial legacy, because the social systems that are just based on ethnic lines were the divisions that had been invented by the colonial powers for divide and rule purposes. Most of the African countries, including South Sudan, the youngest nation in the sub-Saharan Africa, have gone or are now going through ethnic conflicts. Some of the African countries that have tested the bitter of ethnic conflicts are Rwanda, Nigeria, Ivory Cost and Kenya's recent ethnic clashes after the election of 2007. However, despite all these conflicting interpretations, the fact that can be stated here is that ethnic-based conflicts have been part of the lives of some of the post-independent African nation-states.

Moreover, in addition to ethnic conflicts, post-Cold War world system that began after the fall of the former Soviet Union has brought another challenge to some African countries. This is the challenge of religious-based violence and extremism that mainly comes from a tiny minority group that is found within the Muslim communities around the world. Since the horrific terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, al-Qaeda has been the main organizations that fostered the violent and twisted interpretation of Islam to justify its agenda. However, not only has al-Qaeda established itself, but it has influenced the creation of two “allied branches” named, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and al-Qaeda in the Lands of Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), which are mainly, according to the National Counterterrorism Center, located in Yemen, Mali and Algeria. The so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Sham/Levant (ISIS or ISIL), which nowadays carries out heinous activities that appear from its media propaganda, is another ultra-extremist group that is emerging from Iraq.

Furthermore, in the African countries, what is now known so far is the spread of al-Qaeda affiliates as it is shown by the presence of AQIM as this report will examine on whether IQIM
has any impact on Boko Haram in Nigeria. However, the fact is that this new religious extremism that has recently been exposed to African countries created its base, directly or indirectly, in some parts of the sub-Saharan African countries. The directly affected sub-Saharan countries with violent extremism are Mali, Somalia and Nigeria. The purpose of this policy review is to provide a comparative analysis on both al-Shabaab and Boko Haram, the two groups that are designated as terrorist organizations in Somalia and Nigeria. Moreover, one of the main research questions that the report attempts to deal with is whether or not state failure is the factor for the rise of both al-Shabaab and Boko Haram. The report is divided into three parts. Part I covers a background look at both al-Shabaab and Boko Haram: when the two groups were born, what is the leadership, and connection with al-Qaeda, and how they operate. In Part II, the report will attempt to briefly critique the theory that links the rise of al-Shabaab and Boko Haram to state failure. In the case of Nigeria, it is clear that state failure is not the case. Some of the factors that help Boko Haram to continue its violence against the Nigerian people are the poor socio-economic condition that exists in northern Nigeria, corruption and the weakness of the Nigerian security forces to confront the threat of Boko Haram. In the case of Somalia, on the other hand, the unilateral political and military interventions in Somalia by Ethiopia and Kenya are part of the factors that help al-Shabaab to recruit more followers, and sell its objectives to the Somalis and other foreign jihadists. Finally, in Part III, the report will examine the policy approaches that are now being pursued from the local and international levels in both Somalia and Nigeria. The report will contribute some policy approaches that can lead to meet the desired outcome in the struggle against al-Shabaab and Boko Harm in Somalia and Nigeria.

**Part I: Background Look at al-Shabaab and Boko Haram**

Over the last two decades, the narrative that has been dispersed by the media and the overall public discourses on Somalia were not gorgeous. For these trouble years, the images that have been attached to Somalia were civil war, starvation, piracy and extremism. The most two items that have been getting the media attention during these years were the piracy off the coast of Somalia and extremism. As the warlords who organized the clan militias who overthrew the last central government in Somalia in 1991 have failed to collectively come up with a meaningful governance system for the country, a movement of Islamic Courts officially filled the vacuum and assumed an informal authority in the south-central Somalia in the mid and late 1990s. What has sparked the leaders to establish Islamic Courts in Somalia? In the early years of the post-colonial Somalia, two main competing thoughts that pushed the revival of the “dormant conscious” were established in Somalia. The emergence of a modern political Islamic consciousness began to gather the momentum in the 1960s, with the formation of the Wahdat al-Shabaab al-Islamiyya (the Islamic Youth Union) and al-Jama’a al-Islamiyya (the Islamic Group) both of which were inspired by Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood. These two entities were one part that represented the environment of political Islam in Somalia. Moreover, the second thought was exposed to more conservative Salafi ideas that the militant undercurrents later associated with the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan. As a result of these two thoughts, Somalia has witnessed the birth of Islamic movements that inspired the revival of the “dormant conscious” of
Muslims. However, the orientation of Salafism was aggressively promoted by wealthy local and Gulf groups.³

By late January 1991, a group of clan-based militias with no cohesive vision and agenda for alternative governance overthrew the last central government in Somalia, and captured Mogadishu, the capital of the country. As the socialist-based system of governance was very suppressive to any ideology that contradicts with its own, the removal of the suppressive regime was a relief to many including the Islamists, who mostly returned from the Arab world irrespective of the philosophies or thoughts that they imported back to the country. Moreover, even though Sufism and the Shafi’i jurisprudence was the most widespread Islamic tradition in Somalia, the activities of Wahhabism have surpassed the other thoughts in Somalia in the early 1990s. There are three reasons why this was the case. First, its reformist zeal could be harnessed for revolutionary change. Second, it has a strong anti-clerical tendency, something which Islamist leaders—largely without any formal theological training—found advantageous. Third, maintaining Wahhabism meant official and non-official Saudi funding was guaranteed.⁴

Even though the Court system started during 1990s, the number has kept progressing. As hybrid entities with little coordination among them at the beginning, the leaders of the Islamic Courts have eventually branded their organization as the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) in early 2006. Al-Shabaab or the youth, in this stage were just the foot soldiers of the ICU, and not officially an entity by themselves. However, there are different accounts that provide some dates about the formation of al-Shabaab as an organization. There is a claim that asserts al-Shabaab was founded in 2004, and was formally designated as a terrorist organization by the U.S. Government on February 29th, 2008.⁵ Even though the designation date of al-Shabaab as a terrorist group by the U.S. Government was, in fact, on March 19, 2008⁶, the issue that can be contested here is the date of the formation of the group as an official entity. Moreover, another account suggests that the name al-Shabaab was not widely used until 2007, although the group was formally incorporated in 2003 at an Al-Itihad al-Islami (AIAI) conference in Las Anod⁷, which is a city in northern Somalia.

There are three more views about the formation of al-Shabaab. The first view claims that al-Shabaab was created in 1998 by Islamist leader Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys[who will later on become one of the top leaders of the ICU] as a crack military unit of Islamic Courts. The second view asserts that al-Shabaab was created in mid-2006 by an Aweys protégé, Adam Hashi Ayro [he was later killed by a U.S. airstrike in March 2008] as part of a special unit of the courts’ militia to carry out “dirty wars” and later to spearhead the insurgency against the Ethiopian and Somali government forces.⁸ The third view states that the Somali militia al-Shabaab emerged in 2004 and 2005 in Camp Al-Huda in Bakool region, southern Somalia.⁹

Despite these four contradicting accounts about the timing of the formation of al-Shabaab, one fact that can be underlined here is that the group was informally working under the ICU leadership led by the former Somali President, Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed until the Ethiopian
forces invaded Somalia in late 2006, because prior to the Ethiopian invasion, the ICU leaders and the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) led by Col. Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed were in negotiations sponsored by the government of Sudan. In this case, al-Shabaab appeared to the public in 2007, which is after the Ethiopian invasion in Somalia. However, the group was most likely informally founded in either late 2005 or the late 2006, because the first suicide that the group carried out was in the fall of 2006 as its target was the TFG leaders in Baidoa, a city in south-western Somalia.

Furthermore, in al-Shabaab’s leadership, up to now from its inception, there has been four “Amir” or leaders. Al-Shabaab was run by Aden Hashi Farah “Ayro,” who was appointed by Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys at the time of the organization’s founding. Ayro continued his leadership until he was killed by the U.S. airstrike in 2008. Moreover, after the death of Ayro, al-Shabaab released propaganda materials that claimed Ayro became fond of the way of al-Qaeda worked and admired its doctrine, its strategy to change the Islamic world, and its call for jihad against Christians. It was also reported that Ayro met many mujahedeen brothers in various positions within the organization as he met Shaykh Usama Bin Laden. Without further explanation, Ayro’s visit to Afghanistan and his meeting with Bin Laden clearly indicate the relationship between al-Shabaab and al-Qaeda. However, after Ayro’s death, Sheikh Mukhtar Robow (known as Abu Mansur) became the successor. Mukhtar Robow stated that al-Qaeda is the mother of the holy war in Somalia…we are negotiating how we can unite into one…we will take our orders from Sheikh Osama bin Laden, because we are his students. It was during the leadership of Mukhtar Robow when the deliberation of joining al-Qaeda was officially made, and later on the merger was announced on February 2012. The third leader for al-Shabaab is Mokhtar Ali Zuberyr (Godane), who is also known as “Ahmed Abdi Godane,” and he was killed by another U.S. airstrike that was carried out on September 1, 2014. After the loss of Godane, it did not take a week for the group to appoint a successor, and the group selected Abu Ubeid Ahmed Omar as the successor of Godane on September 6, 2014.

In addition to the leadership loses, al-Shabaab has also suffered from internal leadership crisis. Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys, one of the hard-line ideologues and a top leadership of the ICU, Mohamed Said (Atom), who used to fight for al-Shabaab in the mountainous northeastern Somalia and Zakariye Ismail Hersi, who had a $3 million bounty on his head, have defected from the group. The defection of these three leaders was mainly about clashes that they had with Godane, who is described as a ruthless leader or the core philosophy and the overall direction of the group. The differences among the internal leadership of al-Shabaab were mainly based on two contradicting views. The objective of Godane and his allies (local and foreign mujahedeen) is transnational as they aspire to creating a new global Islamic Caliphate, with undefined geographical boundaries. However, Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys and his associates, on the other hand, are considered nationalist and strong advocates of the creation of a greater Somalia, which incorporates all the Somali inhabited regions into one state. Even though Sheikh Aweys had closely worked with Sheikh Sharif during the ICU in the early 2006 after they defeated the notorious Mogadishu warlords, when Sheikh Sharif was elected as President in the Djibouti
Conference in 2009, Sheikh Aweys and the leaders of al-Shabaab dismissed him as a Western puppet.  

How al-Shabaab operates is mainly based on its “Islamic” doctrine that separates them from other groups. Apostasy, which means judging those who oppose their ideology as “infidels”, is the doctrine that the group adheres to. The way the group operates is to conduct assassinations, suicide and roadside bombings by using improvised explosive devises. The first suicide terrorism by al-Shabaab militants in Somalia was on 18 September 2006, and from that date to December 2009, a total of 13 suicide attacks took place; two in 2006, four in 2007, two in 2008 and five in 2009. As the objective of the group is to get rid of a system that they consider as “apostasy,” and to establish a system that is based on the way they want the Shari’a to be implemented, they reach out young Somalis in the diaspora to join the “call for jihad.” In January 2008, the American mujahid, Abu Mansoor al-Amriki wrote a document entitled “A Message to the Mujahedeen in Particular and Muslims in General” that rapidly made its way around the jihadist web. In his message to the mujahedeen, Amriki reiterated the need to establish Shari’a, citing Sayyid Qutb and Maududi as examples of those who refused to accept entering into the kaafir [infidel governments as a solution]. Even though there are no accurate numbers that are confirmed, in Britain, the number of the “mujahedeen,” who [went] to Somalia during 2008-09 to join al-Shabaab was in between 50-70. In the United States, there are reports on recruitments of the young Somalis to join the “call for jihad” in Somalia. By mid-2009, more than twenty young Somalis, most of them from Minnesota, joined al-Shabaab in Somalia. In its internal mechanisms for “discipline,” the group does not tolerate anyone found in espionage as those alleged spies for the [federal] government or for Ethiopia are beheaded with blunt knives. However, the recent high profile targets of al-Shabaab were the UN compound in Mogadishu, the Vila Somalia, which is the seat of the Somali government, members of the Somali Parliament and other government officials. In addition to the suicide bombing tactics that the group uses to achieve its objectives, they aggressively collect funds for their operations. In their internal financial management, al-Shabaab has given the impression of being financially competent and less corrupt than the central and local authorities it opposes, and not only that, the group pays its soldiers and operatives well as it provides for its veterans and the families of its martyrs.  

The formation of Boko Haram in Nigeria has some similarities with the one of al-Shabaab in Somalia. However, following after Nigeria’s independence, the first major experience of organized religious militancy came with the Maitatsine uprisings in northern Nigeria, which some scholars have connected to the jihad of Usman Dan Fodio in the late 19th century. What is known for Usman Dan Fodio is the establishment of the powerful Sokoto Caliphate from 1804-1903, which ruled under the supreme law of Sharia. Moreover, another similar account asserts that religious fundamentalism and the politicization thereof in Nigeria began in the late 1970, but really became an upward trend in the 1980s, correlating with the Maitatsine Salafist uprisings,
which occurred in Kano, Kaduna, Bulumkutu, Yola and Bauchi states under the control of a Kano resident of Cameroon-origins named Muhammadu-Marwa. These early historical background accounts can, in fact, be interpreted as to what led the establishment of Boko Haram in northern Nigeria. However, what is notable here is that unlike Somalia’s early Islamic movements which had solely been ran by native Somalis, non-Nigerian elements involved in the awakening of “the dormant conscious” in northern Nigeria.

As there are conflicting accounts on the exact date of the formation of al-Shabaab, the same is true for Boko Haram. As a result, the exact date of the emergence of the Boko Haram sect is mired in controversy, especially if one relies on media accounts. However, it is reported that the sect has existed since 1995 under the name of Ahlulsunnawal’jama’ahhijra. The connection that can be made here is that as AIAI was the principle foundation for the formation of al-Shabaab in Somalia, Ahlulsunnawal’jamahhijra has played the same role for Boko Haram in Nigeria. One point that needs to be questioned here is whether the formation of Boko Haram as an official entity had existed in the 1990s or it is Ahlulsunnawal’jamahhijrat that is branded as the origin name of Boko Haram. Furthermore, another element that is not clear here is whether Ahlulsunnawal’jamahhijra is directly connected with Maitatsine Salafi uprisings in the late 1970s. However, Nigerian researchers report that Ahlulsunnawal’jamahhijra has subsequently flourished under various names like the Nigerian Taliban, Yusufiyyah sect, and Boko Haram.

Moreover, there are two more accounts that report the formation of Boko Haram. One account suggests that the Sunni terrorist group Boko Haram (Jama’atu Ahlis-Sunnah Lidda’wah Wal-Jihad/People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet’s Teachings and Jihad [was] founded by Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf in Maiduguri in 2002. The second account asserts that the Jamaatul Ahlis-Sunna Lidda’wah Wal Jihad, otherwise known as Boko Haram rebellion started in Bauchi State on July 26, 2009. Even though the widespread name for the group is Boko Haram, the official name that the group calls itself is Jama’at Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda’wah Wal Jihad. However, the way Boko Haram was formed can be summarized that despite the fact that different names have been used by the militant group, and radical activities have been carried out, the group was officially founded in 2002, but was exposed its operations to the public by the media around 2009 under its popular name Boko Haram.

In 2002 before the official name of Boko Haram was circulated in the media, and the group was acting under the “Nigerian Taliban” name, its founder Mohammed Yusuf was the group’s leader. The main agenda, on which Mohammed Yusuf and Abubakar Sheikhu, who will become his successor, have been pushing as the philosophy of Boko Haram is based on two signatures. First, western education is forbidden, and no dealings with the government that its system is based on “western principles.” Moreover, the logic that the leadership of Boko Haram presents is that European colonialists introduced modern secular education into Islamic societies as an elaborately planned and camouflaged conspiracy to maintain colonialist hegemony over Muslim societies. What was the objective of the European colonialists? The leadership of Boko Haram states that the objective of the European colonialists was to corrupt the pure Islamic morals with
Western liberal norms, especially to replace proper gender roles with permissive sexual mores, and to undermine solid Islamic individual and communal identities built on Salafi notions of piety and righteousness. This strong opinion against the Western education held by Boko Haram is not clearly visible in al-Shabaab’s core principles. For the local nationalist al-Shabaab members, the agenda is the application of a strict Shari’a law in Somalia. On the other hand, for the trans-nationalist group of al-Shabaab, which combines foreign and local mujahedeen, the objective is the return of an Islamic Caliphate at the global level.

The second signature that the leadership of Boko Harm pushes is that it is also haram to accept employment in the government of the modern state of Nigeria. For Mohammed Yusuf, the rejection of working for the state of Nigeria is based on the principle that the basis of laws that the modern state of Nigeria follows is not Shari’a. For the leadership of Boko Haram, not only do they oppose these two issues, but they physically fight against until they establish “an Islamic education system” and a state system that its principles are based on the way they want the Shari’a law to be implemented in Nigeria. For the purpose of comparison, al-Shabaab is clearly in line with Boko Haram on the second objective as it was clearly manifested in two ways in Somalia. First, engaging in a war against the Somali government, which in the eyes of al-Shabaab, its system is not based on Shari’a law. Second, al-Shabaab continues its target against civil servants, because of their association with the government. However, Mohammed Yusuf draws distinction between working for the government by stating that in the areas of legislation, judiciary, and law enforcement….are totally forbidden, because only God’s law is valid. Moreover, the Boko Haram leader did not stop there, but he follows up ruling that any type of work for any non-Islamic government [is] haram. The concept of looking at those who do not hold the same views of al-Shabaab and Boko Haram as “infidels” is “the core Takfiri doctrine that contends the modern day Muslim community has lapsed into a state of kufr (apostasy)”.

Furthermore, unlike Somalia, which has almost 100% Muslim population, the case of Shari’a implementation has its own challenges in Nigeria in general. Even though the majority of the population in northern Nigeria is Muslim, there is a wide controversy on the implementation of Shari’a in Nigeria. The movement for Shari’a in….Nigeria began on September 19, 1999 when Ahmed Sani Yerima of Zamfara State, announced he would fulfill a campaign promise to implement Shari’a through the state’s legislative process. Yerima’s call for Shari’a implementation has created tensions. Even though the majority of the population in the north welcomed the call for Shari’a by Yerima, the responses from southern Nigeria, where ethnicity and religion are heterogeneous, were extremely negative. In northern Nigeria, rallies for and against Shari’a in divided communities precipitated communal riots, particularly in religiously divided Kaduna State, in the early 2000s. Moreover, another concern was that non-Muslims in Shari’a states feared that they would be forced into Shari’a courts and harassed by Shari’a police or by social regulations mandating new school uniforms, mandatory prayer times for state employees, banning on alcohol sales and consumption, and restriction on women’s access to public transportation would impact them.
Moreover, the objective behind the implementation of the Shari’a law in northern Nigeria was purely interpreted as an agenda that was used by politicians for political purposes. Calling for Shari’a implementation in Nigeria, according to Nigerian legal experts, is a clear violation of section 10 of the Constitution.\textsuperscript{35} Despite those controversies on Shari’a that may still exist in northern Nigeria, Boko Haram will remain headless to it. However, in terms of tactics of how Boko Haram militant group conducts its warfare campaigns, Mohammed Yusuf had a preference for massed guerrilla attacks while his successor Abu Bakr bin Muhammed (Shekau), has a preference for cellular terrorist raids.\textsuperscript{36} On the other hand, as in the case of al-Shabaab in Somalia, Boko Haram is not immune from “deviations” from its members. Boko Haram is not a monolithic group, and it has been speculated that the members are splintered into two factions. One faction of the sect distorts the true teaching of Islam, while the other faction is a band of criminals who are out to destroy the country for selfish reasons.\textsuperscript{37} The connection of Boko Haram with either the regional al-Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM) and al-Shabaab is well documented. Boko Haram has more and more involved with al-Qaeda [as] several fighters from [the group] have been given military trainings by al-Shabaab in Somalia. Moreover, the connection between AQIM, al-Shabaab and Boko Haram is buttressed by documentation that verbal communications have been made between AQIM and Boko Haram. Mamman Nur, the Boko Haram member responsible for the United Nations bombing executed the attack after arriving home from Somalia.\textsuperscript{38}

The way Boko Haram operates in Nigeria is not different that on which al-Shabaab operates in Somalia. In the early years after its establishment, Boko Haram has carried out some attacks in some town in Yobe State. It is reported that the first time Boko Haram took up arms against state security forces was on 24 December 2003 as its targets were police stations and public buildings in the towns of Geiam and Kanamama in Yobe State.\textsuperscript{39} Moreover, a recent survey about Boko Haram’s modes of operandi used three statements about how the group conducts its operations. The first statement states that Boko Haram’s operations are direct attacks. The second statement is Boko Haram’s modus operandi is on dialogue, and the third statement is the group’s operation is sensitization, in other words, they need to aggravate the authority or the public. However, the percentage of respondents that agreed with the first statement was 94%.\textsuperscript{40} This is provable by the group’s activities that their operations are direct attacks on the security forces, such as police stations and other public places such as mosques and churches. In addition, as it has widely been distributed on media outlets recently, Boko Haram has abducted more than 200 schoolgirls in the city of Chibok, which is in the northeastern state of Borno. However, there are four main states that the operations of Boko Haram take place. These states are Kano, Bauchi, Yobe and Borno. As of 2012, it is reported that Boko Haram was able to attract more than 280,000 members across northern Nigeria as well as in Chad and Niger Republic as these two countries are where the founder of the group, Mohammed Yusuf, went to study the Quran.\textsuperscript{41}
Part II: Factors behind the Rise of al-Shabaab and Boko Haram

When the issue of terrorist groups is raised, one thing that some may suddenly conclude is to connect terrorist groups with state failure. Even though there are many literatures that connect terrorism/security challenges with state failure, this report briefly presents the claim that connects terrorism with state failure, and critiques these links. The claim of those who make the connection states that in today’s increasingly interconnected world, weak and failed states pose an acute risk to U.S. and global security. However, the above argument that came after the U.S. invasion of Iraq, and the internal crisis that were caused by the war in Iraq, was about to articulate the process for state rebuilding. Furthermore, there are some key and technical and policy suggestions on how to contain the global crisis. By addressing the leaders in the Congress, the then Bush administration and the non-governmental communities, the theorists that connect terrorism with state failure assert that conflict prevention must be the routine element of policymaking, and urges that energies must be devoted to stabilizing the vulnerable regions of the world. As it is clear from the framing, there is a combination of both “weak” and “failed states” and they are characterized as where the challenges of the global security come from.

The second literature that connects state failure with terrorism/security challenges states that failed states pose security threats to their citizens, to neighboring states, and to the international system. The argument connects the concept of state failure with Somalia as a safe haven country that inspires images of violence, chaos, disorder and abject poverty. Having these arguments in mind, however, state failure is not the cause of the rise of al-Shabaab and Boko Haram in Somalia and Nigeria. In addition to the twisted interpretation of Islam, one of the main factors that push the rise of al-Shabaab in Somalia is the political and military interventions of Ethiopia and Kenya in Somalia. On the other hand, the rise of Boko Haram in Nigeria is mainly driven by the poor socio-economic condition that exists in northern Nigeria, corruption and elite class competition among Nigerian politicians.

The political and military interventions by Ethiopia and Kenya in Somalia have been in place since 1990s. Mostly, during 1990s up to the early 2000s, Somali warlords were clients to both Kenya and Ethiopia as both countries were the main source for the warlords politically and militarily. Both Ethiopia and Kenya have played a role in perpetuating the Somali conflict in one way or another. Ethiopia, for example, has been intimately involved in setting Somali clans against one another by arming clan warlords. Moreover, Somalia’s neighboring states are deeply involved in the fracturing of the country. More specifically, the example that can be cited here is Kenya’s political meddling in the current political process in Somalia especially in the formation of the regional government of Juba. In fact, Kenya has unabashedly given resources to the leader who controls the Juba region using Kenyan defense forces. Another move that clearly spells out Kenya’s involvement on Somalia’s internal politics is that “Kenya has endorsed the latest regional state in Somalia.” This latest regional state is the southwest region of Somalia. This action, which is clearly opposite to the norms of international relations, is just a means that
Kenya is using to create its Somali proxies in order to weaken the power and the authority of Somalia’s central government.

As the Somali warlords failed to pacify Somalia, they have finally been defeated by the ICU forces. As the result of the defeat of Mogadishu warlords, it was at the beginning of 2006 when Mogadishu has, for the first time, felt a sense of peace and security after fifteen years of chaos and conflict that was caused by the warlords. This sense of peace and security was brought by the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) then led by Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, who will later become the Somali President in 2009. However, instead of supporting the peace and security that was emerging from Somalia, in December 2006, Ethiopia invaded Somalia under the pretext that the ICU was a “threat” to its national security. The main arguments for this claim were based on two things. One, Eritrea, which has been a rival against Ethiopia “was supporting the ICU,” and two, Ethiopia has perceived that there were foreign jihadists fighting alongside with ICU in Somalia. Here is how the flaws of these two claims are summarized:

It was only in spring of 2007, as the situation in central and south Somalia deteriorated, the United States started monitoring Eritrea as a major player in the Somali arena. No assessment has yet been made of Asmara’s political influence on the Islamic Courts in the second semester of 2006…..While Ethiopia justified its intervention in Somalia by reference to the hundreds of foreign jihadist who it claimed were threatening its territory, the reality that emerged after January 2007 was more modest. Not only were the Courts so quickly defeated that it became difficult to believe that they ever posed a serious threat, but most of the foreign passport-holders arrested by Ethiopian army happened to be of Somali or Ethiopian origin.

Even though no one can deny that there were some elements that were leaning toward extremism ideologies in the ICU camp, it can be argued that most of them were nationalists, and the main agenda for them was to pacify Somalia. Many members of the ICU joined the negotiations with the TFG and participated in the reconciliation conference that was held in Djibouti in 2008. The Djibouti conference created the TFG government led by Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, who was the chairman of the ICU. However, Ethiopian invasion had enabled radical elements within the Courts to effectively mobilize and recruit more followers and sympathizers. Most importantly, Ethiopian invasion in Somalia in the late 2006 has played a key role for the official formation of al-Shabaab and its ability to recruit more fighters.

Moreover, in the fall 2011, Kenya invaded southern Somalia and the justifications that Kenya used for its invasion was to respond several kidnappings of foreign tourists and several other shootings along the Kenyan border with Somalia presumably carried out by al-Shabaab. However, Kenya’s unilateral decision to invade Somalia was not welcomed by Somalia as it was considered as a violation of Somalia’s territorial integrity. In fact, Kenya’s invasion was denounced by the then President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed even though Kenyans claimed that they crossed the border only at the invitation of the Somali
Kenya’s invasion has, in fact, served al-Shabaab’s agenda to justify its mission, and in fact, al-Shabaab is erroneously used Kenya’s invasion in southern Somalia as a legitimating factor…and we may see renewed support for al-Shabaab as happened during the Ethiopian invasion in 2006.51

Even though both Ethiopia and Kenya are part of the AMISOM forces, the African Union peacekeeping mission in Somalia, the neutrality of both countries on Somalia internal political system is questioned. Somali authorities are reported saying that Kenyan forces, deployed in Somalia as part of an African peacekeeping force, were taking sides and should leave the country. As it was reported recently, the objective of both Ethiopia and Kenya to create buffer zones inside the Somali territory is not a secrete issue. The claim that Ethiopia and Kenya used to justify for the creation of the buffer zone inside Somalia along the borders is to deter al-Shabaab attacks.52 Kenya and Ethiopia’s bilateral steps to create a buffer zone inside Somalia can be interpreted as a practical follow up of annexation call that was made by a Kenyan pundit in 2008. Here is the main summary of the argument that was put forward for Ethiopia and Kenya to annex Somalia:

Kenya and Ethiopia must and ought to dismember Somalia and divide it between themselves along the 4 degrees latitude, each taking all the land below and above the line. The division will make both countries extend their territories by roughly 300,000 sq km and additional population of about five million. Once Kenya and Ethiopia have sent their combined army to Somalia and declared the annexation, we will present the world a fait accompli. The time to annex and dismember Somalia is now; Washington and Moscow will be grateful.54

If Kenyan and Ethiopian leaders are just fulfilling the call to annex Somalia, it is an extreme case that not only will push the agenda of al-Shabaab, but Somali nationalists will be given the justification to pick up arms to defend the territorial integrity of their country. Regardless of the objectives, the buffer zones that Kenya and Ethiopia are pursuing will just serve al-Shabaab’s agenda to continue its havoc in Somalia and the Horn of Africa region by inspiring more followers and jihadist from Somalia and other parts of the world. As Kenya unilaterally invaded Somalia in 2011 in order to “deter al-Shabaab,” the fact is that the threat of al-Shabaab has increased as this was, in many times, manifested by al-Shabaab’s terror activities inside Kenya. Even though there are routine attacks that al-Shabaab carries out inside Kenya, the most high profile attack that the group has recently carried out was on Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi on September 2013, which left 63 deaths and 175 injuries. Despite the fact that al-Shabaab is driven by a radical ideology that is contrary to the teachings of Islam, and despite the fact that they pose a greater threat to Somalia and its neighboring countries, another way that the group is mostly motivated is the neighboring countries’ military and political interventions in Somalia.

The theory of “state failure” does not hold weigh as a factor for the rise of Boko Haram in Nigeria. Even though the claim of “state failure” in Somalia is true despite it is not the factor for
the rise of al-Shabaab, this claim is extremely not the case in Nigeria. In fact, Nigeria is a functioning state with all its own governance and security institutions. However, there are three factors that help the rise of Boko Haram in Nigeria. These factors are the poor socio-economic condition that exists in northern Nigeria, corruption and the weak, but suppressive Nigerian security forces. The economic condition, which affects the socio-economic status of the poor, has helped the rise of extremist groups in Nigeria in the past. The Maitatsine group emerged at the beginning of Nigeria’s economic recession in the early 1980s, and like its forerunner, Boko Haram surfaced at a time of a major economic recession in Nigeria.\(^\text{55}\) How has the economic recession affected the people in the northern states of Nigeria? A survey that was conducted in 2004 in the north-east and north-west of Nigeria found that 72% of the population lives below the poverty line. Moreover, the level of literacy rate was surveyed in 2004, and the finding was a literacy rate of 32.51%, which was the lowest in the country.\(^\text{56}\) Moreover, another survey about what motivates Boko Haram for carrying out its terror activities presented four statements, and asked participants to mark the statement that they agree. Among the statements, there was a statement that reads the motivation of Boko Haram is to alleviate poverty. However, the percentage of participants that agreed this statement as true was 72%. Moreover, another statement in the survey was how to effectively respond to the uprising of Boko Haram, and the percentage of participants whom their responses were through poverty alleviation was 90%.\(^\text{57}\) Furthermore, educational institutions in northern Nigeria are poorly funded and even so secular schools are scarce in the north-east of the country. As a result, many children are sent to Qur’anic school where they often beg for alms on the streets in the context of widespread poverty and social decay.\(^\text{58}\) This socio-economic status is one of the factors that lead Boko Haram to thrive in northern Nigeria. The opportunity that the group has is just to target the young almajirai/pupils/students\(^\text{59}\) who beg on the streets to join their movement by giving them some incentives.

The second factor that makes Boko Haram to rise in Nigeria is the widespread corruption that exists at the government level. Corruption in the Nigerian state is looked at through a government malpractice, especially in northern Nigeria. As a result, Nigeria, as in much of sub-Saharan Africa, accounts of the historical emergence of corruption tend to locate it at the start of significant African party politics, which also touched off a very damaging form of ethnic politics.\(^\text{60}\) Historically, corruption was based on monetary relationship between native administration servants and their immediate superiors. The issue of the widespread corruption, among others, in contemporary Nigerian society constitutes major sources of grievances harbored by the Boko Haram.\(^\text{61}\) Moreover, two years ago, KPMG, a global audit firm, named Nigeria as the most fraud-prone country in Africa.\(^\text{62}\) As the country is dealing with corruption, it is hard for Nigerian leaders to focus on how to defeat Boko Haram.

The third and the final factor that pushes Boko Haram to continue its havoc in northern Nigeria is the weak, but oppressive Nigerian security forces. There was a survey that was conducted in 2012, and when the participants were asked how to respond effectively to the uprising of Boko Haram, 76% of the respondents responded that the effective way is to increase security
operations. However, instead of enhancing the security operations, former Borno State governor Sheriff allegedly paid the sum of 100 million (Nigerian currency) to mollify the anger of the sect when their leaders was executed in 2009. Furthermore, there are some concerns about the behavior of security forces that are reported by some analysts, and these concerns were summarized as follows:

The security agencies became abusive, brutal, suppressive and repressive instruments that were used against the opposition, activists, protestors and citizens. Individuals and groups that dare to criticize against the government or support opposition elements were visited with excessive and indiscriminate force. Particularly, as state officials lost support as a result of increasing corruption, ineffective governance, economic decline and faced growing legitimacy crises, state violence became instruments to suppress dissent, challenges and resistance.

As a matter of fact, there have been some disappointments on the way the Nigerian security forces have been acting. Some experts stated that it is unfortunate that Nigerian State and its security institutions have not lived up to their bidding in handling security challenges. The issue of Boko Haram, according to the authors, was considered as a Northern problem, and this attitude unwittingly slipped into the policymaking realm and the overall lackluster response to Boko Haram until it got out of control. Furthermore, the Nigerian government is scathingly criticized on the way it handles security threats especially in the Borno State government. It is reported that the government paid deaf ears to the 21security threats and reports by State Security Services (SSS) for two years purely out of complicity, and sympathy for the fundamental objectives of the Boko Haram sect, but only reacted when government felt its own security was threatened. Nigeria’s oppressive security forces have also shown weaknesses in its professional security performances, and they might not be able to defeat the threat that Nigerians feel from Boko Haram militants.

Part III: Policy Approaches

As al-Shabaab and Boko Haram pose great threats that are local and transnational, the question that comes to mind is how to deal with these two entities. However, in order to defeat al-Shabaab, there have been four policy approaches that are in place now in Somalia. First, AMISOM troops and Somali National Army (SNA) have been battling with the group. By the tremendous work of AMISOM and SNA, al-Shabaab is almost defeated as they lost their strategic strongholds. Second, in addition to the ground work that is taking place, drone attacks have been also used mainly targeting the group’s leadership. Third, Somali government has offered amnesty to al-Shabaab members who disassociate themselves from the group and reject violence. Fourth, as the report indicated, Kenya and Ethiopia have been applying their unilateral way to deal with al-Shabaab. Fifth, and most importantly, moderate religious scholars in Somalia have done a great job by explaining the ungodliness of the group’s motives and activities to the Somali people in Somalia.
The AMISOM forces that operate in Somalia consist of Burundi, Djibouti Ethiopia, Kenya, Sierra Leone and Uganda. The AMISOM forces, as part of AU mission in Somalia, have a mandate from the UN Security Council. However, even though those forces from these countries have sacrificed and are indebted by Somalis, they do not provide a long term solution for Somalia’s quest for peace and security. As Somalia needs to depend itself as a sovereign nation, what needs to be done by the international community is to effectively help the process of rebuilding the Somali National Army. In fact, the European Union has been providing some training course for the Somali forces. However, the agenda of rebuilding effective Somali national forces is a task that must be carried out by the Somali government.

The U.S. drone attacks have been instrumental for minimizing the impact of al-Shabaab in Somalia. As this report noted, drones targeted Adam Hashi Ayro in 2008; and Ahmed Godane on the first day of September 2014. However, the drone attacks do not provide a long term solution, because whenever the group loses a leader, they will select another one that continues the work from there. Also, the group is driven by an ideology, not individuals. Moreover, the amnesty that is offered by the Somali government is a good approach that needs to be kept with deep caution as there must be a full rehabilitation process for the defectors who willingly reject the violent interpretation that the group uses for its agenda.

The unilateral approaches that are used by Ethiopia and Kenya to deal with al-Shabaab are quite problematic. These approaches will never help the eradication of al-Shabaab, but contrary, they will boost al-Shabaab’s narrative, morale and ability to bring more local and foreign jihadists to their membership ranks. The current steps that both Ethiopia and Kenya are taking to create a buffer zone inside Somalia’s territory are a threat to Somalia territorial integrity, and it will only encourage al-Shabaab to use it as a justification for its terror activities. As members of the AMISOM forces, both Ethiopia and Kenya also need to be neutral on the process of the Somali politics, and show respect the political sovereignty of Somalia. Secure and safe Somalia must be the interest of both Ethiopia and Kenya.

The Somali religious scholars have been actively rejecting the agenda of al-Shabaab, and this is a policy that needs to be supported and continued inside Somalia and in the Diaspora. The phenomenon of religious extremism and the culture of suicide are alien to the Somali culture, and the moderate religious scholars need to collaborate effectively to uproot this new phenomenon, and gain the hearts and mind of the young Somalis who may have passion for their faith, but somehow manipulated by those with sinister agendas. As the overwhelming majority of Somalis understand Islam as a faith that is based on peace, the message of al-Shabaab will sooner or later disappear from Somalia.

Dealing with Boko Haram of Nigeria is not different from the way to deal with al-Shabaab in Somalia. Most of the authors that this report referenced for the case of Nigeria are, in fact, from Nigeria, and they contribute policies and recommendations that the Nigerian government has to
consult with. However, there are long term and short term solutions to confront the threat of Boko Haram. For the long term, the way to tackle the threat of Boko Haram is to wage war against poverty and the sense of alienation that Boko Haram has masterfully exploited for furthering its agenda. The way to wage war against poverty is to create employment opportunities for the young Nigerian Muslims who may join Boko Haram for economic reasons. Moreover, there are three main important short term solutions that need to be carried out by the Nigerian government. One is empowering state governments in the north to lead the charge and be the focus of the fight against Boko Haram; two, creating a Ministry of Northern Affairs—just like the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs—to help address the numerous challenges in the north; three, conducting speedy and fair trials, under Islamic laws, of those found to be Boko Harm activists or funders.  

Moreover, the implications of increasing violence inspired by religious extremism are all the time assessed by multiple policy researchers. One assessment on Boko Haram notes that the Nigerian government security forces have proved totally incapable of containing the violence or even identifying those involved. This assessment is, in fact, a tip for the Nigerian government to reassess the professionalism and performance of its security forces. The weakness, not state failure, of the Nigerian national security forces is what gives Boko Haram the opportunity to carry out its heinous attacks in northern Nigeria. Also, like the moderate Somali religious scholars, it is the duty of the moderate Nigerian religious scholars to reject the agenda and the motives of Boko Haram, and educate the young Nigerians about the authentic interpretation of Islam.

Conclusion

Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram pose a greater threat, not only to Somalia and Nigeria, but beyond. However, this report has attempted to clearly address the specific challenges that both groups pose to Somalia and Nigeria. The report has covered the formations of the two groups, their leadership, the connection that they have with al-Qaeda. The factors behind the rise of al-Shabaab and Boko Haram are not “state failure.” In Somalia, the rise of al-Shabaab is directly influenced by the unilateral political and military interventions by Ethiopia and Kenya. The unilateral intervention by Ethiopia in the late 2006, among others, is the main trigger that motivated the formation of al-Shabaab in Somalia. Moreover, the current policy by both Ethiopia and Kenya of creating buffer zones inside Somalia, as the report noted, will only be a push for al-Shabaab to recruit more jihadists and followers. In addition, even though AMISOM forces are greatly helping Somalia, the long term security solution lies on the shoulders of Somalis. The only way that al-Shabaab can be defeated in Somalia is to rebuild disciplined and strong national forces that are also capable of protecting the territorial integrity of the country. Even though the European Union has been providing some training for the Somali forces, it is the task of the sitting Somali government to effectively push the agenda of rebuilding disciplined and strong Somali security forces.
In the case of Nigeria, the rise of Boko Haram is not influenced by “state failure” either. The fact of is that Nigeria is a functioning state. However, the group is inspired by the widespread poverty and alienation that exists in northern Nigeria. Moreover, there is a scarce of funding in secular schools in northern Nigeria, and the poor socio-economic condition is what in the long term helps Boko Harm to continue its mayhem and terror in northern Nigeria. The Nigerian security forces are failing to meet their professional responsibility to confront the threat of Boko Haram. Due to the security threat posed by Boko Haram, Nigerian government decided to postpone the national elections.

Moreover, historically, corruption has always been associated with the Nigerian state, and this is among the factors that lead Boko Haram to thrive in northern Nigeria. As long as there is the elite corruption, failure of the security forces to perform their job in efficient way, and the dysfunctional social condition that exists in northern Nigeria is not adequately addressed by the Nigerian Federal Government, the threat of Boko Harm will continue in Nigeria.
Endnotes

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