

IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS

Insecurity in context: The rise of Boko Haram in Nigeria

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Abstract

As the Boko Haram terrorist group wages war on a widening range of targets in Nigeria, the inefficiency of the country's government has been starkly revealed – along with the urgent need for deep-cutting political and socio-economic reforms to counter a growing sense of insecurity. The north has been particularly hard-hit, with poor governance, omnipresent corruption and worsening social indicators compounding the security problem.

Boko Haram, originally a peaceful Islamist movement, has moved progressively towards militant extremism since 2009, regularly attacking Nigerians and foreigners, Christians and Muslims, northerners and even residents of the capital, troops and civilians, in an effort to destabilise the state. For a number of years the group was treated as an internal Nigerian problem. However, Boko Haram's illicit and armed activities increasingly take place across the country's borders. When more than 200 girls were kidnapped in the town of Chibok in April 2014, it was clear that neighbouring countries and the international community would need to coordinate their efforts.

In addition to launching a direct response to the security threat, the Nigerian government must address a wide range of grievances to eliminate the root causes of the insurgency in the long term. This has proved a daunting task in the past, and the issue is currently politically delicate: the country is readying itself for the 2015 presidential elections, which are expected to be fiercely contested.

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1 European Union-Nigeria: Milestones

July 2014	The EP adopts resolution 0024/2014 on the recent attacks by Boko Haram.
July 2013 – June 2014	The EU High Representative and the EEAS periodically condemn attacks by Boko Haram in Nigeria, including the attack on the Abuja shopping centre (June 2014), the abduction of schoolgirls in Chibok (Borno state – April 2014), the killing of students in Nui Yadi (Yobe state – February 2014), terrorist attacks in Abuja (September 2013) and the massacre of students in Mamudo (Yobe state – July 2013).
June 2014	The European Commission and the Government of Nigeria sign the National Indicative Programme (NIP) for the 2014-2020 period under the European Development Fund, covering three priority areas: health and nutrition, sustainable energy and electricity, and governance.
May 2014	Designating Boko Haram as a terrorist organisation, the EU transposes the relevant UN decision and adds Boko Haram to its list of entities subject to the regulation freezing funds and financial resources.
May 2014	The Foreign Affairs Council's conclusions condemn the abduction of the schoolgirls in Chibok and offer the support of the EU and its Member States.
2-3 April 2014	Fourth EU-Africa summit in Brussels. The summit declaration underscores the importance of peace and security and commits to pursuing the African Peace and Security Architecture and strengthening the fight international terrorism.
31 March –1 April 2014	EP-Pan African Parliament (PAP) Summit in Brussels. The joint declaration confirms the priority of peace and security in the development agenda.
24 March 2014	The EU and the government of Nigeria sign a programme to the value of EUR 10 million to promote women's engagement in peace and security in northern Nigeria.
17 March 2014	The Council adopts an EU strategy on the Gulf of Guinea to address maritime insecurity and organised crime.
13 March 2014	The EP adopts a resolution on launching consultations regarding the suspension of Uganda and Nigeria from the Cotonou Agreement in view of their legislation further criminalising homosexuality. The resolution deplores the Nigerian law and calls on the president of Nigeria to repeal it.
July 2013	The regional meeting of the ACP–EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly in Abuja welcomes the comprehensive approach adopted by the Nigerian authorities to fighting the terrorist activities perpetrated by Boko Haram.
June 2009	The Nigeria-EU Joint Way Forward framework is adopted to intensify high-level political dialogue and cooperation.

2 Boko Haram – From peaceful origins to militant extremism

Boko Haram came to global attention when the group abducted more than 200 girls in April 2014.

The Nigerian government faces an overwhelming need to address both the effects and the root causes of the Boko Haram insurgency.

The European Union needs to actively engage with Nigeria - a strategic trade and geopolitical partner in the region- in order to address the threat.

The abduction in April 2014 of more than 200 young girls in the small town of Chibok in a remote part of northern Nigeria has become the symbol of the security crisis in the country. The result has been a massive response from both the domestic and the international community, be it through the tweeting of the phrase #BringBackOurDaughters or statements by [Commissioner Andreas Piebalgs](#) and Sakharov Prize winner Malala Yousafzai: pressure has been increasing on the government of Goodluck Jonathan to find the girls and, above all, to address the deteriorating crisis situation in Nigeria effectively and systematically. Yet, the task seems overwhelming, as attacks continue to claim lives on a daily basis at the hands of Boko Haram, the latest embodiment of jihadist terrorism in sub-Saharan Africa that has grown out of the reformist Islamic tradition, dissatisfaction with a corrupt Nigerian state and poor socio-economic conditions in northern Nigeria.

The Boko Haram threat has had severe implications, not only for the Nigerian civilian population but also for the country's economy and political stability. As Nigeria represents a strategically important partner for the European Union, both economically, due to oil-based trade links, and geostrategically, as the largest economy and most populous nation of the African continent, it is in the EU's interest to provide comprehensive support to the Nigerian government and its people. Moreover, the spillover effects of the crisis across the region, including humanitarian crises and terrorism and other criminal activities, make a well-targeted and holistic engagement of the European Union critical.

2.1 (Peaceful) origins: Islamist movement under Mohammed Yusuf

Boko Haram seeks to overthrow the Nigerian government and establish an Islamic state.

Boko Haram is the name commonly used to refer to the organisation '*Ahlisunnah Lidda'awati wa'l-Jihad*', or the 'People Committed for the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad'. Boko Haram is a Hausa phrase meaning 'Western education is forbidden' or 'Western education is sinful'. This name was given to the movement in the early 2000s by the local population in Maiduguri, the capital of the northern Nigerian state of Borno where the movement originated. Although now widely used and popularised by the media, the name does not necessarily capture the full objective of the movement, which is to overthrow the Nigerian government, which is perceived as corrupt, and establish an Islamic state with Sharia law and get rid of western influences such as universities. The movement rejects western civilisation at large, including scientific theories of evolution or the big bang theory, and preaches the superiority of Muslim civilisation. In its

earlier forms, Boko Haram was also known as the Nigerian Taliban or Yusufiyya.¹

The origins of Boko Haram are connected to Mohammed Yusuf, a *Malam* (Islamic scholar) who led a wing of radical youth scholars in the 1990s in Maiduguri, giving roots to the movement. However, its origins are most commonly dated to 2002, when Yusuf and his followers, in protest against the corruption of Nigerian society, left Maiduguri for the neighbouring Yobe state. The movement tried to establish a 'state within a state' – its own community where true Muslim values could be pursued, with morality police and a welfare system (hence the resemblance to the Afghan Taliban). Following a conflict with the local community in 2003, the remaining followers of the movement regrouped in Maiduguri in 2004.²

Yusuf's movement builds on a tradition of Islamic schools of thought in northern Nigeria which tried to reform society, such as the moderate *Yan Izala* school and the radical and militant movement *Maitasine*. The tensions between moderate and radical strands of Islamic thought in northern Nigeria have continued to this day. Some similarities between Boko Haram and other Islamic movements of the 20th century, primarily *Maitasine*, include:

Appeal to the young, unemployed and underprivileged. Boko Haram has targeted young students of Islam called '*almajiri*' (a Hausa word for emigrant child; also sometimes referred to as 'street children'³). Boys aged as young as six are traditionally sent away by their parents to travel between various teachers, only to end up living in poverty and appalling conditions, begging in the streets or working as child labourers. According to the Nigerian Ministry of Education, the estimated number of *almajiris* in 2010 was 9.5 million, concentrated primarily in the northern states. Due to their socio-economic circumstances, they are particularly vulnerable to indoctrination and radicalisation by religious fanaticism.⁴

Dissatisfaction with the state. With its appeal similarly grounded in the regional socio-political situation, Boko Haram won public support owing to people's dissatisfaction with the state (for example with police corruption). As the movement started targeting the state security forces and critiqued the state's impunity and incapability, it was able to gain some support among the public, which has, however, been diminishing following the heightened radicalisation under Abubaker Shekau (see section 2).

Use of preachers for recruitment. Although officially not representing the movement, travelling preachers and speechmakers recruited numerous followers for Boko Haram. Yusuf himself was a very charismatic speaker, who produced recordings and tapes that became both a source of revenue for the

¹ Loimeier, R. 'Boko Haram: The Development of a Militant Religious Movement in Nigeria.' *Africa Spectrum*. 47/2-3. 2012.

² Ibid.

³ Onuoha, F. [Boko Haram: Nigeria's Extremist Islamic Sect](#). Al Jazeera report. 2012.

⁴ Goodluck, I. and Juliana, J. *European Scientific Journal* 8/15. 'Provision of Formal Education to Almajiris: Role of Libraries.'

The organisation's founder, Mohammed Yusuf, was an Islamic scholar in Maiduguri, the capital of Nigeria's Borno state.

Islamic reformism, both moderate and radical, has a long tradition in northern Nigeria.

Boko Haram appeals to the young and poor. The group at one point garnered public support for criticising the dysfunctional Nigerian state.

movement and a means of spreading the organisation’s vision. Much of Boko Haram’s recruitment is now being carried out in the neighbouring countries.

Military confrontations. There have been numerous deadly clashes between Islamic movements and the Nigerian military and police, including in 1980 when 6 000 members of the *Maitasine* movement were killed. The military reaction to Boko Haram culminated in 2009 when the government cracked down on the group, taking Yusuf into custody and killing him in an ‘extrajudicial execution’. According to some estimates, around 1000 Boko Haram members may have been killed and imprisoned in the first half of 2009. The harsh responses of the Nigerian security forces have unquestionably helped fuel the group’s violence.

The Nigerian security and police forces have a history of deadly clashes with Islamic movements.

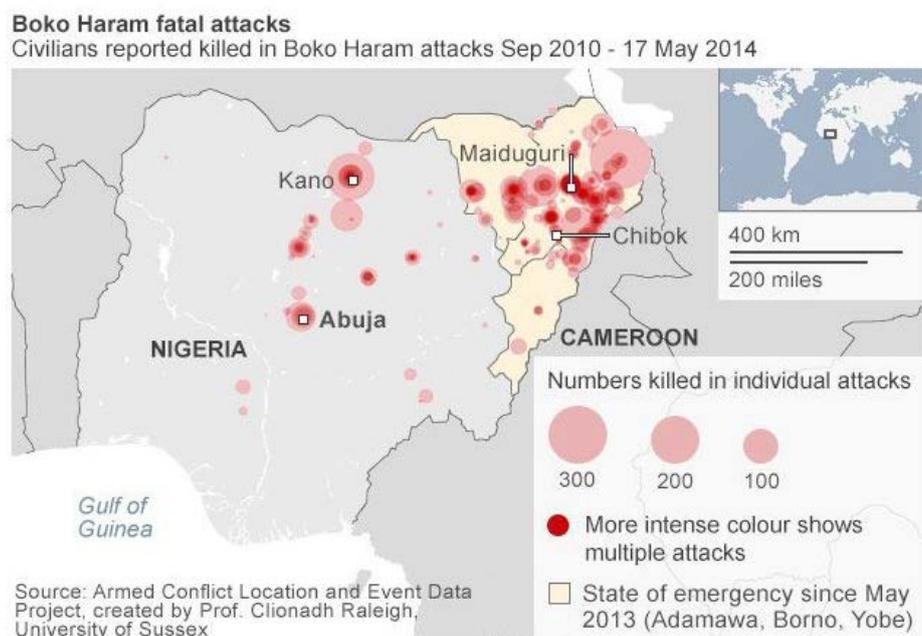
2.2 Militant extremism since 2009

Following the death of Mohammed Yusuf in 2009, the movement’s radicalisation and extremism were accentuated under the leadership of [Abubaker Shekau](#), who took over as head of the organisation’s core faction. Since Boko Haram re-emerged in 2010, its attacks have grown in intensity and scope, and the organisation has also strengthened its international linkages. Although [the government claimed that Shekau might have died](#) in July or August 2013, there is no evidence of his death. On the contrary, numerous videos have appeared since then featuring Shekau, although their authenticity is disputed. Most of the videos relating to Boko Haram have been released through the French press agency AFP.

Since 2009, when Abubaker Shekau became Boko Haram’s leader, the group has become more extremist.

2.3 Targets, techniques and geographical reach

Figure 1:
Map of attacks attributed to Boko Haram



Source: Armed Conflict Location and Event Data

Boko Haram has expanded its targets from the police and military and the state, to Western ones, including the UN headquarters in Abuja, attacked in 2011.

The organisation has also increased its geographical reach beyond the northern states and its stronghold in Borno state.

Boko Haram is also known to have kidnapped foreign nationals, killed defectors, indiscriminately killed civilians and targeted places of education.

Under the leadership of Muhammad Yusuf in the years between 2003 and 2009, Boko Haram concentrated its attacks mostly on the security forces and the police, and attacks against those targets, as well as against politicians, chiefs and other representatives of the state, continue to characterise the group's focus. Since 2010, state installations have been targeted on a large-scale basis in, for instance, the [December 2013 attack on an air force base in Maiduguri](#), in which two helicopters were burnt down, and that on [Yobe prison in June 2012 freeing 40 inmates](#).

Boko Haram has also attacked Western institutions, most notably the UN headquarters in Abuja in August 2011. This attack, which killed 21 people, was the organisation's first suicide bombing, using vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs). The growing sophistication of the attacks suggested assistance from international networks, especially al-Shabaab (which operates in the Horn of Africa) and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).⁵

Terrorist attacks perpetrated in Abuja also demonstrated the increasing geographical reach of the organisation. Fanning out from its stronghold in Maiduguri and Borno state, over the last five years Boko Haram has also carried out attacks in the north-eastern states of Kano, Yobe, Adamawa and Bauchi. There is ongoing debate as to whether the movement has ambitions to increase its activities outside of Nigeria, as its attacks on western targets such as the UN and activities in neighbouring countries would suggest.

Kidnappings of western nationals for ransom have also been attributed to Boko Haram. Some cases include the [kidnapping of a French priest, Georges Vandebeusch, in November 2013](#) as well as that of a seven-member French family, which is believed to have produced a ransom of USD 3 million. Both of these kidnappings took place in Cameroon.

Since 2010, Boko Haram has also carried out raids on banks and money convoys in order to swell its own coffers. Targets have included newspaper, media and telecommunications towers, as well as opponents and even collaborators and informants. Consequently, negotiations with it have proven difficult. Some activists and political figures [had called on the government to initiate dialogue](#) with Boko Haram, and even suggest the offer of an amnesty for its fighters, and in May 2014 the government confirmed its readiness to negotiate. However, the threat to potential collaborators and defectors from the movement, as well as its fragmentation, make dialogue difficult.

Although religious fault-lines are clearly instrumentalised by both Boko Haram and the government, in reality the group is indiscriminately targeting both Muslim and Christian civilians, including through attacks on mosques and churches ([Christmas day bombings in Jos and Abuja, 2011](#)), as

⁵ Zenn, J., 'Leadership Analysis of Boko Haram and Anasaru in Nigeria'. CTC Sentinel, special issue, Volume 7/2, February 2014.

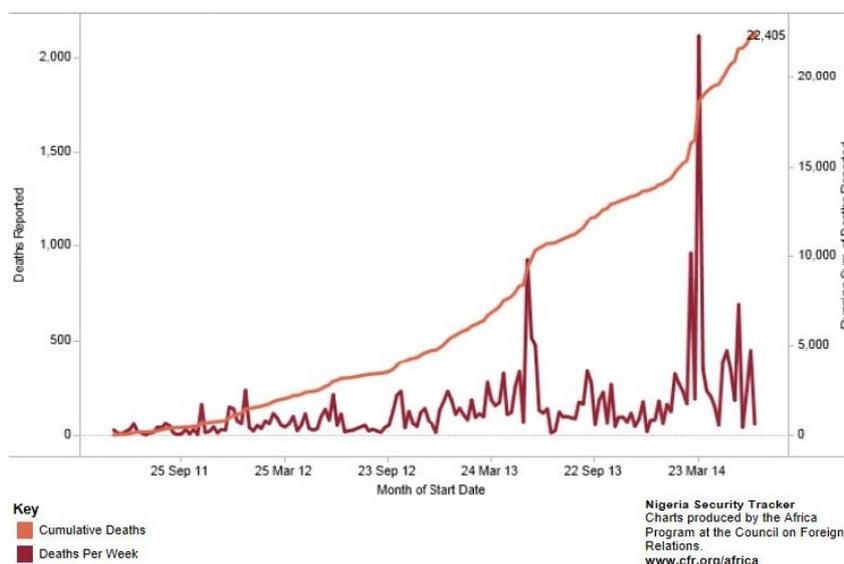
A conservative estimate of deaths attributed to Boko Haram has exceeded 20 000.

well as public spaces such as markets and bus stations (in Abuja, a [bus terminal](#) was targeted in April, and a [shopping centre](#) in June). It has also attacked schools and universities ([the massacre of sleeping students in dormitories](#) in Yoruba state in February 2014 and the [kidnapping of schoolgirls](#) in Chibok). The deaths of innocent Muslims have been a point of contestation within the movement, and are cited as one of the reasons for the official creation of the splinter group known as Ansaru (or in full: *Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis Sudan* or the 'Vanguards for the Protection of Muslims in Black Africa').

In July 2014, [Boko Haram was reported for the first time to have taken control over a city](#) - Damboa in Borno state - setting up road blocks and checkpoints in what would represent a major strategic victory over the military. More than 15 000 people fled as a consequence of the attack, increasing the number of internally displaced people (IDP) which is estimated to have surpassed 3.3 million since 2010. In fact, Nigeria has one of the highest IDP populations in the world, a pressing challenge that requires immediate response, [warned UN Human Rights experts](#).

On a conservative estimate, the death toll arising from Boko Haram's activities between July 2009 and July 2014 is over 22 000. This includes 2 000 deaths in 2014.

Figure 2
Number of deaths caused by Boko Haram



Source: Council on Foreign Relations

2.4 Factions and defections

Boko Haram is believed to be led by a council of between 30 and 37 members⁶, who oversee individual operational cells covering either

⁶ International Crisis Group. [Curbing Violence in Nigeria \(II\): the Boko Haram Insurgency](#). Africa Report 216, April 2014.

Organised in cells, Boko Haram has an estimated 6 000 members, including paid criminals.

The Ansaru group split off from Boko Haram, distancing itself from killings of innocent Muslims.

Internal mistrust and defections have meant that Boko Haram is not unified.

geographical areas or particular functions.⁷ The estimated size of the network is 6 000 fighters,⁸ but further recruitment is becoming difficult with diminishing public support. As a result, the terrorist network is also paying [thugs and criminals, who do not share the organisation's views as such](#) and only join for the money.

Some leading members of the organisation include Mohammed Nur, who is portrayed as the main leadership competitor to Shekau. He is believed to be the main ideological leader of Ansaru, the splinter group that split off in 2012 presenting itself as a more 'humane' version of Boko Haram (the difference between the two has been compared to that between the Taliban and al-Qaeda). Ansaru is seeking the reinstatement of the caliphate across northern Nigeria, Cameroon, and Niger,⁹ and while some claim it is a cell of Boko Haram, others depict it as a separate organisation because, although it pursues similar objectives, it does not condone the killing of innocent Muslims (which it sees as un-Islamic). Ansaru has instead targeted Western nationals (kidnappings), Christians and the government. It is active in the northern states, primarily Kano, Katsina, Yobe, Bauchi and Borno. The existence of tactics similar to those of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has led some to suggest that another potential leader of the organisation is Khalid al-Barnawi, who was a member of AQIM and trained in Algeria and might be the link between the two organisations.¹⁰

Internal dissent and defections are also caused by Shekau's preference to recruit members from the Kanuri ethnic group (which represents only 4 % of the Nigerian population). There are additional reports of ethnic divides within the movement that suggest the use of certain groups for attacks, fuelling mistrust and hindering any negotiations.

2.5 Funds, training and safe havens – Regional context for Boko Haram

The organisation's finances are complex and their sources largely unknown, making it extremely difficult to trace or intercept funds.

Although Boko Haram's main objective is to destabilise the state and bring down the Nigerian government, the aforementioned internal divisions, targeting of Westerners, international jihadist/terrorist links and activities in neighbouring countries [mean that enormous concern has been raised regarding the potential regional and international impact](#) of Boko Haram's activities. The organisation has a long history of linkages to international Islamic scholarship and extremist movements. For example, Mohammed Yusuf was a great proponent of the Taliban and Osama bin Laden, and following his death his supporters spread across the region, receiving

⁷ US House of Representatives, Committee on Homeland Security. [Boko Haram a Growing Threat to US Homeland](#), 2013.

⁸ Canadian Security Intelligence Service Conference. [World Watch: Expert Notes series, publication No 2014-04-01](#) April 2014.

⁹Cumming, R. [Nigeria: What Do We Know About Ansaru?](#) Think Africa Press. January 2014.

¹⁰ US House of Representatives: Committee on Homeland Security, 2013.

training from other terrorist organisations and establishing important connections.¹¹ Shekau spent considerable time in Gao, Mali and in 2010 officially linked Boko Haram to Al-Qaeda and the international jihadi movement. Some of Shekau's speeches and sermons which include threats against the US are believed to have been written directly by Al-Qaeda.¹²

The funding sources and operational links of Boko Haram are not well documented, and are assumed to exist by experts and journalists; they are hard to discern, which makes the efforts of the Nigerian government to cut off Boko Haram's funding difficult. The funds are [assumed to come from various sources](#) and, according to unverified information presented by a retired US general of Nigerian descent to the Nigerian media, [between 2006 and 2011 the organisation secured a total of USD 70 million](#).

Boko Haram receives considerable financial, military, and training support from AQIM and its splinter organisation, the [Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa \(MUJAO\)](#). It also generates funds through drug trafficking (West Africa is a transit region for cocaine and heroin from South America to Europe), weapons trafficking (especially from Libya and Chad), smuggling, kidnappings and begging. Some of the funding, which is used variously for personal enrichment, payments to members, purchase of arms and information, communication and protection, is also believed to come from 'government blackmail'. In addition, some politicians are reportedly supporting the organisation directly (*see section 3.1 for more information on the politicisation of the crisis*). The organisation may also have been supported by foreign NGOs: the most [notable \(so far unconfirmed\) allegation concerned the UK-based Al-Muntada Trust Fund](#) in 2012 and several Middle East-based organisations.¹³

Operating in northeast Nigeria, Boko Haram also has strongholds and camps in Cameroon (far north region) and Niger (southern region, around the city of Diffa), where it is [conducting recruitment campaigns](#). Cameroonian officials report difficulties with prosecuting recruiters and are often forced to let them go, while the Nigerian leadership has forbidden the establishment of refugee camps in southern parts of the country to prevent the harbouring of extremists; however, it is assumed that local hospitals have been unknowingly treating Boko Haram fighters. In Cameroon, Boko Haram has for [years infiltrated communities and businesses](#) and expanded its illicit activities and networks across the border. It has also carried out attacks – one in May involving the killing of a Chinese worker and the kidnapping of another 10 - which have triggered numerous [clashes between Boko Haram](#) and the Cameroonian police and army. In May 2014,

Boko Haram has international connections to al-Shabaab in Somalia and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Both provide it with financial support, training and equipment.

The neighbouring countries of Chad, Cameroon and Niger have been increasingly drawn into the conflict.

¹¹ Loimeier 2012.

¹² Zenn, J. [Nigeria: Boko Haram goes further down Al Qaeda path \(analysis\)](#). African Arguments, May 2014.

¹³ See: Afokpa, V. J. [Regional Profits: The Rise of Hybrid Terrorism in West Africa Post 9/11](#) Center for International Security and Cooperation, Stanford University, 2013; and Financial Action Task Force (TAFT) Report: [Terrorist Financing in West Africa](#), October 2013.

Chad and Cameroon agreed to deploy thousands of soldiers to their borders to work together with the Nigerian army, which is regarded as having lost control of the situation. In the case of Niger, porous borders, cross-border family ties and migration, and the conflict in Mali further facilitate the potential regional overspill of the organisation.¹⁴

The spread of terror across northern Nigeria has resulted in tens of thousands of refugees and internally displaced people.

The regional aspect is further characterised by the increasingly difficult situation of refugee-hosting communities in the border areas. Niger and Cameroon have become recipients of large groups of Nigerians fleeing what they regard as [acts of extreme and arbitrary violence](#), with Reuters claiming that there are 40 000 people in this situation in Niger alone. The [UNHCR reported 22,000 Nigerian refugees](#) already in May, a number that has since grown. The majority of the refugees are reported to be living in various villages in family houses, as owing to security concerns no camps are currently being built. [The Sahel region is a frequent scene of humanitarian crises](#) due to food and water shortages linked e.g. to recurring drought, putting even greater strain in terms of resources on the already vulnerable recipient communities.

3 The government response

The Government of Nigeria has found it extremely difficult to handle the crisis, and has focused on a military response.

The Government of Nigeria under the leadership of President Goodluck Jonathan has been accused of failing to effectively address both the security element of the crisis as well as the underlying socio-economic problems. Despite the overall attempt at a balanced ‘carrot and stick’ approach, the military/security response — albeit inadequate and inappropriate — has dominated so far. The Joint Task Force, which was established in 2004 in response to the terrorist insurgencies in the Niger Delta, led the first phase of the counter-insurgency operations, but [transferred the command to a newly established division of the Nigerian Army](#) in August 2013.

3.1 Brutal and counterproductive military response

The military is at the centre of an ongoing struggle for political power in Nigeria, which is intensifying in anticipation of the 2015 elections.

The military response to Boko Haram so far has been criticised on three main fronts. There is a major ongoing **power struggle and political interplay** affecting the leadership of the security forces. In [January 2014, the President sacked](#) all three armed forces commanders. This was interpreted by some as a power gesture affirming control in the face of rising criticism of the government. In March 2014, the President [appointed a new Minister of Defence: Aliyu Gusau](#), formerly security adviser to ex-President Obasanjo (1999-2007). Gusau has a track record of cooperation with intelligence agencies abroad and is expected to outline a plan for dealing with Boko Haram. However, in the context of the upcoming elections, his appointment creates a delicate scenario as Gusau was

¹⁴ Lewis, D. [Niger fears contagion from Nigeria's Boko Haram Islamists](#). Reuters. March 2014.

involved in the ousting of General Buhari (target of a terrorist attack on 23 July 2014), who is expected to run in the upcoming presidential elections in 2015 for the main opposition party, the All Progressives Congress (APC). The APC could perceive this as a move to secure control over the security forces, preventing it from taking power if successful in the elections.

Secondly, the crisis in the north has starkly revealed the weakness of the Nigerian army, long regarded as one of the most powerful in the continent. Today, the Nigerian security forces are deemed **incapable (technically and operationally) of dealing with the insurgents**. For example, the governor of Borno state, Kashim Shettima, claimed that [Boko Haram are better equipped and more motivated than the soldiers](#). There are also reports of [soldiers fleeing](#) from encounters with Boko Haram. In May 2014, soldiers of the 7th Division [fired at their own commander](#) following the deaths of several soldiers who had been sent to Maiduguri from Chibok despite warnings of high chances of ambush. Following the announced cuts in the military budget (from USD 2.3 billion in 2013 to USD 2.1 billion in 2014, the first cut in military spending in the last decade), concern has increased regarding the military's diminishing capacities. In response, in [April 2014 the Minister of Finance, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, announced additional funding](#) for counter-insurgency activities.

The military has also been accused of inability to gather sufficient intelligence to identify Boko Haram members. As a result, the army's approach has been to round up massive numbers of suspects and hold them without charge. It must also be noted that [the military is recognised to have had a degree of success in repelling Boko Haram attacks](#), for example in the case of the 2014 attack on the Maiduguri barracks.

The biggest concern to the international community is the large number of **violations of human rights and international law** that the military has perpetrated in its fight against Boko Haram and which have largely been denied. The military is accused of massive retaliations and brutality, including burning down villages and conducting extrajudicial killings. In the case of the 2014 attack on the Maiduguri barracks, Amnesty International reported over 600 detainees killed. Due to the lack of intelligence, the military tends to enter hide-outs 'all guns blazing', killing civilians in crossfire.¹⁵ Other allegations include torture, extortion and corruption.

The military seems technically and operationally unable to face the insurgency.

Nigerian soldiers have carried out mass incarcerations and detentions, as well as extrajudicial killings and other human rights violations.

3.2 Civilian vigilante groups

Following the declaration of a state of emergency by the President in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states in May 2013,¹⁶ the Civilian Joint Task

¹⁵ Walker, A. 'What is Boko Haram?'. United States Institute of Peace. Special Report 30, June 2012.

¹⁶ Originally only intended to last only six months the state of emergency is extended until November 2014 and if it remains in force until the upcoming elections in 2015, it could restrict people's ability to participate, skew results and cause further clashes and dispute.

With the perceived lack of progress by the military, civilian vigilante groups have developed, utilising their knowledge of the local environment.

Yet vigilantes may also perpetuate the conflict and are known to have committed unlawful killings themselves.

Force (CJTF) emerged in Borno state (it now also exists in Yobe). The rationale behind the CJTF was the fact of a strong knowledge of the local environment, which would allow the local population to arrest Boko Haram members. This has been a crucial advantage against the military JTF, which brought military personnel from around the country who were not familiar with the local context or even local languages. CJTF has been viewed favourably by many. For example, Senator Ali Ndume [claimed at a recent rally in May 2014 that the CJTF has accomplished more than the Nigerian military.](#)

However, there are also growing concerns on the effects of arming vigilante groups, which often attract ‘thugs’ and youth involved in urban crime. There have been several reports of abuses by CJTF members, including lynchings of Boko Haram members. Boko Haram has also threatened CJTF, which is interpreted as a sign that they are perpetuating the violence. Lastly, it can be argued that the CJTF serves only to exacerbate the already challenged presence of the state in the region, undermining its role and weakening its connection to the people.¹⁷

3.3 Political rhetoric with little content

A development-focused response to the dire situation – a ‘Marshall plan for the north’ – was announced only in April 2014.

Levels of poverty and unemployment in northern Nigeria are considerably higher than in the oil-rich south.

The socio-economic response to the Boko Haram crisis has for long received little attention from the government. In March 2013, [Nigeria’s National Security Adviser, Mohammad Sambo Dasuki, announced a new strategy of the federal government](#) focusing on the ‘soft’ aspect of counter-insurgency, which aims to prevent further radicalisation of the local population through wide-ranging cooperation with faith-based organisations, local government bodies and traditional government structures. Following the strong public reaction to the kidnapping of schoolgirls in [April 2014, the Minister of Finance, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, announced](#) the government’s new financial stimulus to the counter-insurgency effort, which now includes a ‘Marshall plan’ for northern Nigeria, in addition to more funding and recruitment of soldiers, and international efforts to cut off Boko Haram’s funding. The international community in particular has stressed the importance of a non-military solution to the situation in the north.

Although Nigeria has arguably become the largest economy on the continent and the government points to economic growth as a success story, this growth (averaging around 7 % annually over the last ten years) is highly inequitable, does not create jobs and fails to transform into poverty reduction throughout the country (and in the north and rural areas in particular). Poverty levels are above 70 % in the northern region and, despite lower figures in the south, overall poverty figures have risen since 2010 from 54 % to 60 %. The service sector is growing at the fastest rate and

¹⁷ See: Zenn, J., [Nigeria’s Civilian Joint Task Force](#), CFR Blog, July 2013; Mahmood, O., [Youth Vigilantes Stand Up to Boko Haram, but at a Cost](#), Think Africa Press, February 2014.

the oil and gas sectors remain, as traditionally, the main sources of revenue. Both of these sectors are located mainly in the southern parts of the country. Conversely, the northern economy is dominated by agricultural production which is not modernised. The north is also experiencing deindustrialisation affecting the textile, food and beverage, and other light industries, owing inter alia to energy shortages and the deterioration of infrastructure.¹⁸

Political responses to the security crisis in Nigeria have included a proscription notice against Boko Haram. Terrorism charges have been brought only against a very small number of suspected Boko Haram members.

The Nigerian government has also adopted a number of legal measures in the wake of Boko Haram's terrorist activities, including the 2013 proscription notice, which officially declared the acts of Boko Haram and Ansaru illegal and labelled them acts of terrorism. It also makes any support for the organisation (material and financial assistance, incitement, or information-sharing) subject to criminal proceedings under the Terrorism Prevention Act of 2011 which could carry a sentence of at least 20 years. For the Nigerian judicial system, terrorism is a relatively recent concept. The case of Edmund Ebiware, a member of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), who was responsible for the 2010 October twin bombing, was one of the first instances of a trial for terrorism. Ebiware received a life sentence in January 2013.¹⁹ To date, no members of Boko Haram have been sentenced under the Terrorism Act; however, [the military recommended more than 500 suspects for trial in 2013](#), and [three suspected members of the organisation](#), who have been in custody since October 2013, have already been charged with recruiting and obtaining arms for Boko Haram. The trials were expected to commence by the end of May 2014.

Drawing on its experience with the Niger Delta insurgency, the government had considered an amnesty programme for Boko Haram.

The Nigerian government is drawing numerous parallels as regards its approach to Boko Haram with its earlier approach to MEND, including the use of amnesty. In April 2013 President Jonathan set up a [special committee, officially titled the Committee on Dialogue and Peaceful Resolution of Security Challenges in the North](#). Its recommendations included the establishment of an advisory group for dialogue with Boko Haram and a victims' support fund.²⁰ The latter recommendation was subsequently [rejected by President Jonathan](#) in November 2013. The amnesty plan for Boko Haram, officially refused by the organisation itself, has not been politically resolved. Many authors argue that an amnesty would not be appropriate for the case of Boko Haram as it was in the case of MEND (whose effectiveness is in itself disputed), as Boko Haram seeks the

¹⁸ Usman, Z. '[Nigeria: The economic transition reveals deep structural distortions \(analysis\)](#)', Norwegian Council for Africa, May 2014.

¹⁹ Ewi, M, '[Why Nigeria needs a criminal tribunal and not amnesty for Boko Haram](#)', Institute for Security Studies, June 2013.

²⁰ Nwankpa, M. 'The Politics of Amnesty in Nigeria: A Comparative Analysis of the Boko Haram and Niger Delta Insurgencies', *Journal of Terrorism Research* 5/1 (special issue), February 2014.

establishment of an Islamic state, while MEND's objective was purely socio-economic.²¹

3.4 #BringBackOurGirls

The Chibok girls' abduction in April 2014 highlighted Boko Haram's anti-education stand.

Girls' school attendance in the north is extremely low as a result of cultural and structural obstacles, which are further exacerbated by security concerns.

The Nigerian government and military have not managed to free the girls and are perceived as unable to handle the situation.

On 14 April 2014, following the attack on a bus terminal in Abuja (the deadliest attack in the city's history), the abduction of more than 200 young girls from a school in Chibok made Boko Haram international headline news. Since then, attacks have continued and more women and girls have been kidnapped, including 8 in May and more than 60 in June. While some have managed to escape, many are still missing as of July 2014. Jacob Zenn and Elizabeth Pearson, analysts on Boko Haram, suggested that the [abduction can be seen as a retaliation against the military's capture and detention of families](#) of Boko Haram members.

Beyond the Boko Haram attacks that sow fear and terror amongst the local population, girls' education is already facing many social and economic constraints in northern Nigeria, resulting in low attendance and high drop-out rates. According to a 2013 study for the UN Special Envoy for Global Education, 37 % of girls are out of school in the northeast and 'gender disparities are almost exclusively concentrated in the rural North'²² In the face of raging poverty, parents often take girls out of school to work, preferring to educate their sons. Early (child) marriage and pregnancy are also common, and inadequate hard and soft infrastructure (including teacher qualifications) further exacerbate the problem. Overall, the number of children out of school in north-eastern Nigeria is 30 times higher than in the country's south-east. With the frequent [attacks on schools](#) by Boko Haram and this case of abduction of female pupils, there are rising fears of further deterioration of the already dire state of girls' education in the region.

The domestic response to the abductions and the wider Boko Haram threat has been very strong. The girls' parents and members of the public took to the streets of Abuja, calling on the government to step up its efforts to rescue the girls. The domestic and international media attention pushed the government to show results, but instead of facilitating a solution it added to the perception that neither the government nor the military were able to handle the situation properly and efficiently. The credibility of the Nigerian government in the face of this crisis was further damaged by claims of its inaction despite its alleged knowledge of the threat, the fact that the President did not hold a strategic meeting until 4 May and the military advisory committee met only on 6 May and, finally, the fact that the police had to offer a [USD 300 000 reward for information and assistance](#) that could lead to the girls' rescue. As the weeks drag on, commentators have voiced concerns that those of the girls who are still in captivity have

²¹ Ewi 2013; Nwankpa, 2014.

²² Steer, L. et al., [Accelerating Progress to 2015: Nigeria](#), April 2013.

little chance of being freed.

4 Additional considerations: North-south/Muslim-Christian identities

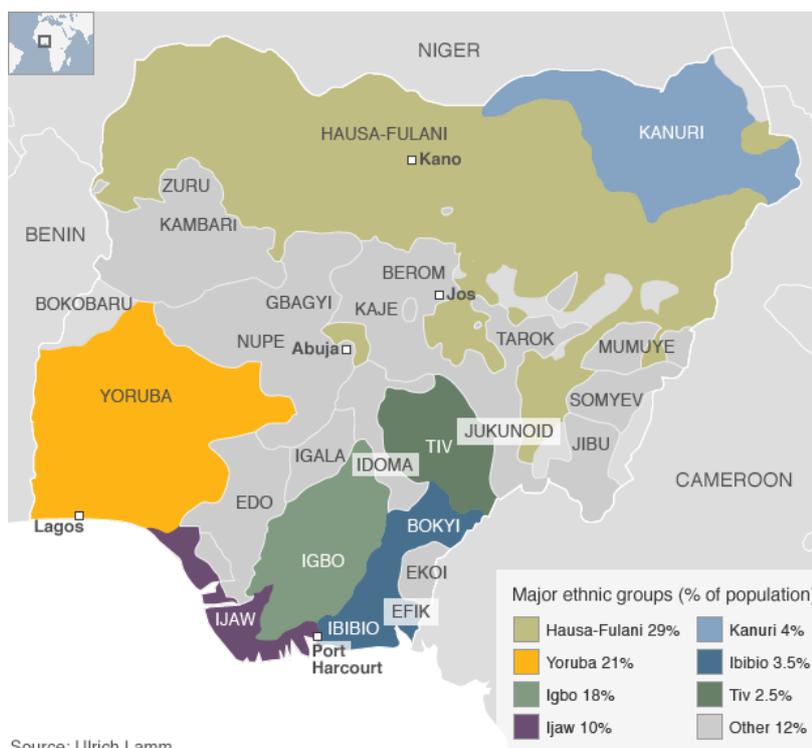
The Boko Haram insurgency must be understood within the broader socio-economic and political context of the country.

Nigeria is extremely diverse, with numerous geographically clustered ethnic and religious identities.

The rise of Boko Haram has been contextualised by most analysts within the socio-economic situation of north-eastern Nigeria and factors such as high levels of poverty, pervasive corruption at all levels and regional terrorist linkages. Nevertheless, it is equally important to understand the larger geopolitical context of Nigeria as a whole — including the long history of political use and violent manifestations of ethnic and religious identities — as it provides further insight into the security crisis.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria, consisting of 36 states, is often portrayed as a product of British colonialism that forcibly joined several culturally and religiously different regions into one state. Nigeria is very diverse, with 250 ethnic groups and 450 spoken languages. The dominant identities, constituting 68 % of the population, are Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo and are spatially concentrated in the north-west, south-west and south-east, respectively. Religious identities are equally geographically polarised, with Muslims accounting for 50 % of the population and concentrated in the north, and Christians forming roughly 40 % of the population and concentrated in the south.

Figure 3
Map of major ethnic groups in Nigeria



Source: Ulrich Lamm

Since the end of the dictatorship in 1999, southern and northern

Religious and ethnic identities have been integrated into – but are instrumentalised from time to time in the context of – political and economic relations in the country. In the democratic era, following the end

presidents have alternated.

of military dictatorship in 1999, there has been an unwritten rule within the People's Democratic Party (PDP), which has been in power since 1999, that the presidency should rotate between representatives of the two main religious groups/regions. Goodluck Jonathan is a Christian who took office in 2010 following the death of Umaru Yar'Adua (a Muslim northerner) and won the subsequent 2011 elections against Muhammadu Buhari (those elections being seen by some as breaching the unwritten rule).²³

The presidency of Goodluck Jonathan is perceived by some as a breach of this tradition, and his candidacy for 2015 elections is expected to be highly contentious.

The next elections are scheduled for February 2015 and it is expected that Goodluck Jonathan will run again. His decision will undoubtedly bear upon both the attitude of northern Muslims within and outside of the PDP and on the political and strategic moves of the president and his cabinet. The National Conference on Nigeria's Future, which started in March 2014 and will conclude in July, is considered by some to be such a political move. Bringing together around 500 delegates to discuss the country's future, the conference is seen by some as a platform for the PDP to iron out its internal disputes, rather than a genuine country-wide consultation. It is expected that the issues discussed at the conference will include [wealth-sharing arrangements between the oil-rich south and the poorer north](#), with the south wanting to retain a greater share of profits for local communities.

Boko Haram's indiscriminate killings of Muslims and Christians alike have, to an extent served as an opportunity for cross-religious cooperation. In April 2014, the President, together with all state governors, [issued a statement](#) confirming their shared understanding that the fight against Boko Haram is not a religious fight, but a matter of protection of all Nigerians.

The Boko Haram crisis has been politicised, and this will only intensify with the elections.

Nevertheless, the politicisation of the security crisis has been rampant and is expected to intensify in the run-up to the elections. On one hand, northern politicians and leading businessmen have been accused of sponsoring the organisation with the objective of destabilising the government, while the latter is blamed for neglecting and mishandling the crisis in order to weaken the northern states ahead of the 2015 elections²⁴.

Several leading northern politicians have been accused of supporting

President Goodluck Jonathan proclaimed as early as 2012 that Boko Haram has [infiltrated the Nigerian government](#), and several leading politicians, most notably [Senator Ali Ndume](#), were accused of being supporters of the group. Senator Ndume was a member of the President's Task Force responsible for the initiation of dialogue with the organisation, and represents the Borno North District. He was charged in 2012, being released on bail in 2013 following the recommendation of the Federal High Court. He has since resumed his political duties and his trial is still expected. Other allegations targeted the now deceased former Ambassador to Sao Tome and Principe, Saidu Pindar; the [governors of northern states](#) such as Isa Yuguda (Bauchi) and Ibrahim Shekarau (Kano), for paying protection money to the organisation to leave their states alone; and the recently dismissed

²³ DG EXPO/B/PolDep/Note/2011_76.

²⁴ Adibe, J. ['Explaining the Emergence of Boko Haram'](#). Brookings Institution, May 2014.

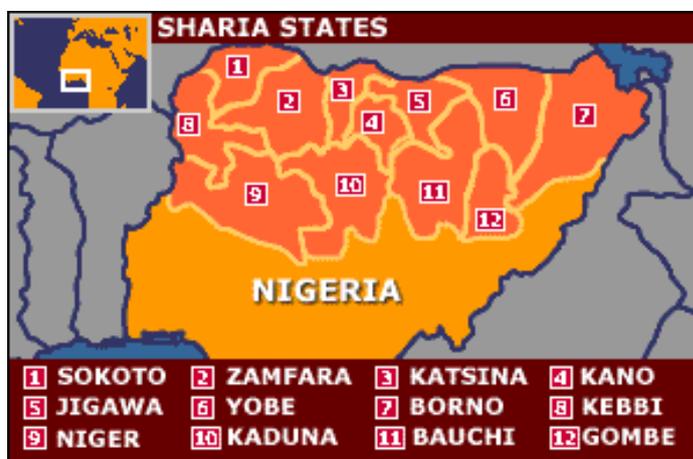
the group, while southerners and the government are accused of failing to deal with the crisis in order to reap political gain.

governor of the Central Bank (and newly chosen *emir* or traditional Muslim leader of Kano), Lamido Sanusi, who brought into the open a corruption scandal involving millions of dollars' worth of missing oil revenues.

In return, the Governor of Adamawa State, [Admiral Nyako, has several times accused the federal government](#) of sponsoring the crisis. Numerous deaths of political figures from the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) in the north have been used as evidence for these accusations made by northern politicians; however, some commentators explain these deaths as the result of the withdrawal of the political backing those politicians used to provide to Yusuf and his movement in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The main opposition party, the APC,²⁵ also warned that [the government might try to exploit its fight against Boko Haram for political gains](#). However, it is argued that since the counter-insurgency against Boko Haram is cross-religious it does not follow that a northern president would necessarily be better suited to address the security crisis.

One of the most notable manifestations of the political differences between northern and southern states relates to the adoption of Sharia law in 12 states since 1999.

Figure 4
Map of Nigerian states with Sharia Law



Source: BBC

The north-south divide in Nigerian politics is also visible in the acceptance of Sharia (Islamic) law, which functions alongside secular law in 12 states.

Sharia is implemented alongside secular laws and imposes different, often more severe punishments for offences. Islamic customary law had previously been followed in private but entered the legal system in these states and has posed many concerns, not the least because Nigeria is a secular state under its Constitution and has obligations for the protection of human rights.²⁶ Following the adoption of sharia, a number of deadly riots, conflicts and acts of retribution took place between the two main religious groups, including protests against the 2002 Miss World beauty contest in

²⁵ APC emerged before the 2011 elections as an opposition party bringing together four opposition entities from the North and the South of the country.

²⁶ Nmehielle, V. [Sharia Law in the Northern States of Nigeria: To Implement or Not to Implement, the Constitutionality is the Question](#). Human Rights Quarterly, 26/3, August 2004

Kaduna, and massacres in 2004 in Jos of hundreds of Christians and Muslims.²⁷

Some who support sharia argue that its implementation has been incomplete.

Special committees which were consulted in the process of introducing sharia in many states argued in favour of its adoption due to, amongst others, the prevalence of corruption within the state and the lack of administrative competences. The implementation of the law is evaluated by some as incomplete and lacking in meaning, as it is not effectively dealing with the underlying issues, such as state corruption or poverty.²⁸ The lack of linkages between a social welfare system and the establishment of the sharia law in the northern states is cited as a potential reason for Yusuf's discontent with the introduction of sharia in 1999 – or, more broadly, the Islamic law introduced did not meet his standards.²⁹

Others raise concerns about potential human rights violations, including against the LGBTI community.

The human rights concerns centre primarily on the potentially negative implications for women and for marginalised groups such as the LGBTI community. For example, Sharia criminalises 'consensual homosexual conduct', which can even be punished by death by stoning. Several men have faced prison sentences in northern states for sodomy or other sexual acts under Sharia courts.³⁰ In 2014 the anti-LGBTI sentiment became embedded in the secular legal system as well when President Jonathan signed the Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Bill into law. The adoption of this law was criticised by the European Parliament (resolution [2014/2634 \(RSP\)](#)) and received with concern by the European Union ([as expressed by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton](#)).

5 International response since April 2014

The European Union has a strong partnership with Nigeria. Member States pledged support to locate the kidnapped Chibok girls.

The international response, including by the European Union and its individual Member States, to the security crisis in Nigeria has intensified following the Chibok abductions. Recent support actions build on an extensive engagement with Nigeria, seen as a strategic political and economic player in the region.

In direct response to the most recent rise in Boko Haram's activities, countries such as the US, China, Israel, the UK and France have provided assistance with locating the kidnapped girls. The US in particular [dispatched a team to provide military, law enforcement and intelligence assistance](#) at the beginning of May 2014, as well as manned and unmanned aircraft. In Europe, several conferences and summits have been held, including in Paris on 17 May and in London on 12 June, under the auspices respectively of President

²⁷ Afeno, O. [The Boko Haram Uprising and Insecurity in Nigeria: Intelligence Failure or Bad Governance](#). Conflict Trends.

²⁸ Badamasiuy, J. and Okene, A. 'Shari'ah Implementation in Democratic Nigeria: historical Background and The Quest for Developmental Legality.' Canadian Center of Science and Education, 4/2, September 2011.

²⁹ Abimbola, A. 'The Boko Haram Uprising and Islamic Revivalism in Nigeria.' Africa Spectrum, 45/2, 2010.

³⁰ Human Rights Watch. 2013 Report: [Nigeria](#).

Two summits with regional heads of state were also held in Paris and London.

Boko Haram's activities have been condemned internationally, and it has been designated a terrorist organisation.

François Hollande and Prime Minister David Cameron. The summits brought together the heads of state of Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger and other regional players with a vested interest in addressing the security threat. The Paris summit's outcome was a joint declaration of war on Boko Haram, as well as plans for better information-sharing and cross-border cooperation. This declared cooperation advanced further in July 2014, when Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon committed 700 troops each to create for the first time a [joint regional force](#) to tackle the crisis.

The [African Union](#) (AU) condemned the activities of Boko Haram and the regional bodies, namely the [Economic Community of West African States](#) (ECOWAS) spoke out against the organisation condemning its activities and called for greater regional cooperation, especially information-sharing, to effectively fight the terrorist group. The increasing interest of the neighbouring states in particular reflects the spillover effect that has become increasingly visible in the wake of the cross-border population movements.

The international community has also branded Boko Haram as a terrorist organisation. The [US designated both Boko Haram and Ansaru as terrorist organisations](#) in November 2013, and Boko Haram was [proscribed under the UK terrorism law](#) in 2013. The Nigerian government secured the UN Security Council's blacklisting of Boko Haram on 23 May: this led to travel bans, freezing of assets and other measures. Similarly, the European Union, under Regulation No 583/2014 (entering into force on 29 May 2014), '[added Boko Haram to the lists of persons, groups and entities covered by the freezing of funds and economic resources](#)'.

The European Parliament in its newly elected 8th legislature took a strong stance against Boko Haram and the overall insecurity crisis in Nigeria. In [resolution 0024/2014](#), which was adopted in July 2014, Parliament not only condemns the attacks and killings, but urges the government of Nigeria to address the root causes of the insurgency, including the lack of efficient and impartial judiciary. Moreover, it urges the EEAS, the member states and other international actors to cut funding channels for the group and to assist with the rescue of the Chibok girls.

6 EU engagement and policy options

The EU has assisted Nigeria through various funding instruments, including the European Development Fund (EDF) and the Instrument for Stability (IfS).

Within the wider scope of the insecurity and development nexus in Nigeria, the European Union has been supporting the government of Nigeria through several programmes and financing instruments. As a signatory to the Cotonou Agreement, Nigeria receives funding through the [European Development Fund](#) (EDF), totalling EUR 700 million between 2009 and 2013. Financing under the [National Indicative Programme for the 2014-2020](#) period (11th EDF), signed in June 2014, amounts to EUR 512 million. The programme will focus on the following areas: health, nutrition and resilience; sustainable energy and access to energy; and the rule of law, governance and democracy.

Other funds include the Instrument for Stability (IfS), which has provided EUR

An EU counter-terrorism package under the IfS supports the Nigerian authorities since May 2014. EU delegations on the ground have stepped up their coordination.

EU-Nigeria relations are framed by several bilateral and regional strategic documents, including the Nigeria-EU Joint Way Forward.

The EU has provided electoral support to Nigeria and has closely followed the preparations for the 2015 elections.

Sakharov Prize laureate Hauwa Ibrahim was appointed a member of the fact-finding committee on the Chibok girls' abduction.

9.9 million under a counter-terrorism package for Nigeria to support the country's authorities in their fight against terrorism while fostering approaches that respect human rights and international law. The focus of this initiative, implemented as of May 2014, lies in technical assistance to Nigeria's National Security Adviser, the objectives being to promote counter- and de-radicalisation, operationalise counter-terrorism legislation and strategy, and improve strategic communication. Other, less extensive measures have also been adopted to help fight the Boko Haram threat in neighbouring countries. Another component focuses on improving the effectiveness of the Nigerian criminal justice system, including investigations and prosecutions.

The IfS has also been supporting other measures in Nigeria, covering such areas as peace-building, mediation and anti-trafficking, thus targeting additional security threats such as community clashes in the Middle Belt region or insurgency in the Niger Delta. Other forms of direct response by the EU concern the facilitation of relations and cooperation between Nigeria and the neighbouring countries, most notably Chad and Cameroon, and increased coordination activities on the ground among all relevant EU delegations across the region.

The wider framework for political cooperation is largely guided by the joint strategy [Nigeria-EU Joint Way Forward](#) of 2009, which established a dialogue structure at ministerial level. The latest ministerial meeting took place in [May 2013](#) and the next one is anticipated for autumn 2014. Other strategic documents impacting on EU-Nigeria relations include the [Gulf of Guinea Strategy](#), which was adopted in March 2014 and targets piracy, trafficking and illegal fishing along the West African coast. On the economic front, the EU has been negotiating an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the ECOWAS member states, including Nigeria, who after several months of maintaining reservations against the EPA, [agreed to sign it on 10 July 2014](#).

The European Union has also provided extensive election support to Nigeria, including an election observation mission in 2011. This mission was led by chief observer Alojz Peterle and [made specific recommendations](#) for improving the electoral process in the run-up to 14 February 2015, the date of the next presidential elections. The follow-up mission, headed by the chief observer in spring 2014, found a number of weaknesses in the preparations of the elections, among them their speed of progress and the last-minute efforts to put relevant legislation in place, prepare the electoral arrangements, provide sufficient voter education, and, especially, prepare the northern states where voting is expected to take place in a highly insecure context. The EU has increased election-related financial support and is expected to be invited by the Nigerian government to observe the upcoming elections.

The 2005 laureate of the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize, [Hauwa Ibrahim, was appointed a member of the Presidential Committee](#) on the rescue of the Chibok girls in May 2014. This fact-finding committee was tasked to liaise with the relevant authorities and the parents of the missing girls and investigate the circumstances of the girls' abduction. The committee

handed in its report to the President on 27 June.

Considering the worsening security situation, the expansion of the reach of Boko Haram operations and the highly complex pre-election context, the European Union should encourage and further support the Nigerian government in its efforts to put in place measures that not only respond to current threats but contribute to eradicating the root causes of radicalisation. This should include measures that:

- put an end to the culture of entrenched impunity and human rights abuses, inter alia by pursuing vigorous reforms of the judicial system, and ensuring the protection of civilian populations, and improve the capacities of law enforcement;
- improve the gathering, processing and effective use of intelligence within Nigeria and beyond its borders;
- actively engage in addressing the governance deficit and system-wide corruption at all levels, from the local up to the federal, improve the transparency of political decisions and actions, and improve the identification of and response to potential triggers that could further destabilise, especially, the northern region before or after the elections;
- step up measures to reverse negative socio-economic trends such as widening of inequalities and increasing poverty rates, and in particular make every effort to reduce youth unemployment;
- encourage and facilitate dialogue across all Nigerian states and ethnic and religious groups, and intensify dialogue on a national basis between federal and state governments with a view to embarking on a comprehensive decentralisation reform process.