



Today Nigeria is under the leadership of President Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian from the South who presides over what many Nigerians and outsiders consider a corrupt government.

Analysts argue that Boko Haram will continue to thrive as long as the Nigerian government, military, and police continue with corrupt policies that cripple economic growth and cause regional and ethnic tensions. Since 1970 Nigeria has produced in excess of \$400 billion in oil revenue, but elites have used this money for personal and political gain rather than investing the revenue in national or regional infrastructure. This volatile political system has hampered Nigeria's ability to address critical domestic issues such as civil strife and poverty (around 70% of the population lives on \$1.25/day or less). A lack of education for northern Nigerians is of considerable concern, but is unlikely to improve until the Nigerian government works with Muslims in the north to establish a school system that is not perceived as in opposition to Islamic teachings. Northern Nigerians who pursue a western education, meanwhile, repeatedly find themselves in harms way. The April abduction is just one of several Boko Haram attacks against schoolchildren, and threatens these youth with forced entry into slavery. Child slavery is well entrenched in Africa, where children work in mines, plantations, or are sometimes sold as wives. Around 80 million children live in exploited situations akin to slavery throughout Africa (an estimated total of 250 million children worldwide suffer under these conditions, the majority in Asia). In addition to these challenges, many Nigerians distrust, if not fear, their police force because the police are seen as seldom acting in the interest of the community. While the north is frequently in the news headlines today, the oil region of the Niger delta has seen its fair share of conflict and protest against a state that has been criticized for allowing oil exploitation to take priority over the environment, local economies, and community welfare.

Boko Haram's strength – its widespread appeal among disillusioned, poor, northern Nigerians – is also what makes it such a challenge to contain. Peace negotiations are hampered by the fact that Boko Haram operates on a cell-like structure, making it unlikely that any single person could speak, or negotiate, for all Boko Haram members. A national assembly member from the North estimated that 95% of youth in Borno have a connection to Boko Haram, a state where locals acknowledge that Boko Haram is better armed and better motivated than government troops. And even in states where Boko Haram holds less sway, citizens are afraid to collaborate with Nigerian security forces out of fear of violent reprisals from Boko Haram fighters. Meanwhile, the abducted schoolgirls wait in captivity while Boko Haram demands release of its members held in Nigerian prisons.

*-Shelley Brooks, Ph.D., CHSSP Statewide Office**

In April 2014, the Muslim extremist group Boko Haram abducted more than 200 Nigerian girls from a boarding school in the northeastern state of Borno. Boko Haram can be translated as “western education is forbidden;” its opposition to western education is only part of its larger goal, however, which is to create in Nigeria an Islamic state, ruled by the Koran's Shari'a law. In 2002 Mohammed Yusuf established the group that would become known as Boko Haram in the state of Borno, under the name “People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad.” Yusuf called for withdrawal from what he perceived as a corrupted society, and attracted many youth in this impoverished region through outreach programs like job training and direct aid. As violent clashes between Muslims and Christians intensified, while the government pursued harsh reprisals – including extrajudicial killings – against Boko Haram members, the group turned to a more radical separatist agenda. In 2009, Boko Haram began a campaign of violence; their assassinations, bombings, and kidnappings have become so widespread that Nigeria's president declared a state of emergency in early 2013. It is estimated that close to 2000 people have died in 2014 alone as a result of these attacks.

Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, contains over 250 ethno-linguistic groups, whose religious affiliations are predominantly regional, divided between Christianity (in the South) and Islam (in the North). This religious division influences the nation's politics, with the North and the South registering distinct majorities in the most recent presidential election (see map). The region's history helps explain this division. The former Muslim Sokoto Caliphate in the North predated British imperial rule, and made the region resistant to Christianity, while southern communities that coalesced around councils of elders – reflecting the value of community consensus and ancestor worship – were more receptive to British missionaries (and their schools and hospitals). Despite these differences, the British fought to control the disparate regions as a single colony, under imperial rule until 1960. Following independence, Nigeria experienced a number of political coups as well as several popular elections.



2002 - Mohammed Yusuf establishes a separatist Islamic group in northern Nigeria, soon to be known as Boko Haram.

2004 - State of emergency declared in central Plateau State after Christians kill 200 Muslims; counter-attacks follow.

2008 - Muslims and Christians clash in central town of Jos, leading to 200 deaths. One of many such clashes in the city of Jos over the coming years.

2009 - A clash with police over motorbike helmet law, leads to violence between Boko Haram and police, including an armed uprising in the north that is suppressed by the Nigerian army, leaving 800 dead. Following this event, Boko Haram begins violent attacks on Nigerian police, military, and civilians.

2010 - Vice-president Goodluck Jonathan (a southern Christian) succeeds President Yar'Adua (a northern Muslim) after Yar'Adua's death. Jonathan is elected in 2011, thereby upsetting the tradition of power sharing between North and South by alternating between a northern and southern president after every two four-year terms.

2011 - Boko Haram claims responsibility for suicide attack at the UN headquarters in the capital city, Abuja. 23 people die. To date, this is the only Boko Haram attack that was focused on an international target.

2012 - President of Chad asks countries bordering northern Nigeria to establish a joint military force to oppose Boko Haram, out of fear for ongoing regional instability.

2013 - President Jonathan declares state of emergency in the face of Boko Haram's recent murder of hundreds of drivers throughout the north, as well as the group's attacks on students.

2013 - U.S. labels Boko Haram a terrorist organization.

2013 - Amnesty International reported that in the first half of 2013 close to 1000 people, mostly Islamist militants, died in military custody.

April 2014 - Boko Haram kidnaps more than 200 school girls, many of whom are still missing.

1804 - Islamic revolution establishes the Sokoto Caliphate in northern Nigeria, spreading Islam.

1846 - Church Missionary Society establishes mission in Abeokuta, spreading Christianity in southern Nigeria.

1861 - British annexes Lagos as Crown Colony, and forms protectorates throughout other regions of Nigeria over the next five decades.

1898 - 1909 - Ekumeku resistance movement against British colonial rule and the Royal Niger Company of the British Empire.

1914 - Nigeria established as a country, under the rule of the British Empire.

1944 - The National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) forms as a pro-independence political party.

1956 - Petroleum discovered in the Niger delta.

1960 - Nigerian independence from Britain.

1963 - Nigeria becomes a republic, with a president as head of state.

1966 - First of several military coups.

1971 - Nigeria joins Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and rising oil prices give the Nigerian government the bulk of its revenue, enriching political elites at the expense of the average citizen.

1993 - Military coup led by General Sani Abacha who leads the country until 1998, known for his violent repression of dissent.

2000 - Several northern Nigerian states adopt the Koran's Sharia law, leading to violent clashes between Muslims and Christians.

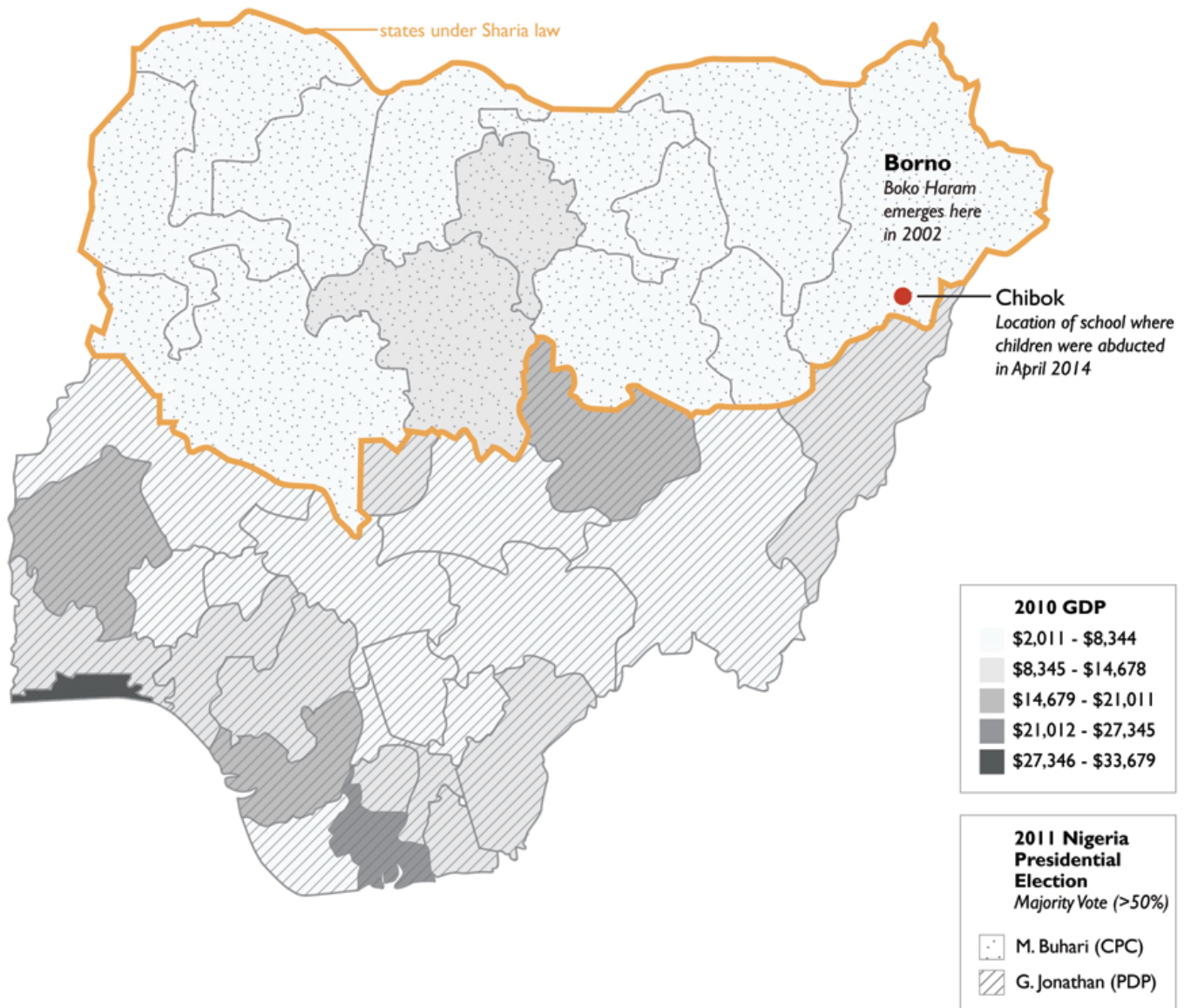


CURRENT CONTEXT

BOKO HARAM/ NIGERIA

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Nigeria



Map created by Kevin Tsukamoto, CHSSP Statewide Office.



BOKO HARAM/ NIGERIA

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Additional Resources**

Background Materials:

- *U.S. Institute of Peace*: www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR308.pdf
- *BBC News*: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13809501>
- *PBS News*: <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/boko-haram/>
- *CIA World Factbook*: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html>
- *Federal Ministry of Information, Nigeria*: <http://www.nigeria.gov.ng/2012-10-29-11-05-46/history-of-nigeria>
- *The Global Awareness Initiative*: <http://www.globalawarenessmap.org/CountryDetail.aspx?id=85>
- *The Wall Street Journal*: <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702303749904579578583009927934>

Maps:

- *Business Day*: <http://businessdayonline.com/2014/05/maps-of-boko-haram-activity-show-groups-evolution-ihs/#.U4T2KS9RaUc>
- *Vox*: <http://www.vox.com/2014/5/13/5710484/boko-haram-maps-charts-nigeria>

Timeline of events:

- *BBC News*: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13951696>

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**The resources listed above are provided for further research and do not imply an endorsement by the California History-Social Science Project or the University of California.