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Al-Qaeda versus Boko Haram: Ideologies, Goals, and Outcomes

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Introduction

Since al-Qaeda's September 11th, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center and The Pentagon, Islam has remained at the center of the global terrorism debate. Numerous insurgency groups with ties to Islam have risen into the international spotlight, attracting media attention and stoking fear among Westerners.[1] Though an overwhelming majority of the American public expresses concern about extremism associated with Islam as a whole,[2] each Islamist jihadi group harbors its own unique goals and ideologies. This research will examine two such groups: Al-Qaeda and Boko Haram.

Although some scholars tend toward a "Nigerian al-Qaedaism"[3] definition of Boko Haram, this research will distinguish between the ideologies and goals of Boko Haram versus those of al-Qaeda. Primary documents, such as the letter sent by Ayman al-Zawahiri[4] to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi[5] in order to delineate a clear plan for "winning the jihad in Iraq"[6] are examined to identify and elaborate on these points of divergence. The work of scholars such as

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[1] As of 2017, 83% of Americans are at least somewhat concerned about Islamist terrorism globally. (Greenwood)

[2] Abdo, Geneive. "U.S. Muslims Are Concerned about Extremism in Name of Islam." Pew Research Center, Pew Research Center, 14 Aug. 2017. www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/08/14/like-most-americans-u-s-muslims-concerned-about-extremism-in-the-name-of-islam/.

[3] Jacob Zenn. "Nigerian al-Qaedaism." Current Trends in Islamist Ideology, 14 March 2014. www.hudson.org/research/10172-nigerian-alqaedaism.

[4] Zawahiri is the current leader of al-Qaeda. Zarqawi was a jihadist responsible for numerous suicide attacks within Iraq. He founded a jihadi group called Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad and he was also affiliated with al-Qaeda.

[5] Zarqawi was a jihadist originally associated with al-Qaeda. He left Jordan, his native country, to fight the American troops during the Iraq war, receiving funding from al-Qaeda to pursue its mission. However, Zarqawi and his supporters split from al-Qaeda after its leaders disapproved of Zarqawi's increasingly violent murder tactics. In 2006, Zarqawi's splinter group renamed itself to be Islamic State, and he subsequently became known as the founder of ISIS.

[6] "Zawahiri's Letter to Zarqawi Translation." 2005. Uploaded and translated by The Harmony Program, *Combating Terrorism Center*, United States Military Academy at West Point.

Alexander Thurston[7] and Shiraz Maher,[8] and government reports such as Tony Blair's "Violent Extremism in 2017," are also utilized in this research. This research argues that the ideologies and goals—and thus outcomes—of Boko Haram are staggeringly different from those of al-Qaeda, despite both groups' Salafi-Jihadist roots. Boko Haram's end-goal is much less clear than that of al-Qaeda and Boko Haram has received less attention from Western media, for example. The outcomes of each group's actions represent terrorism, but in the case of Boko Haram, it could be also argued that there is a lack of clarity in the motivation for their actions—thereby leading us to question just how much of Boko Haram's actions simply terrorize victims without an end-goal.

Understanding Salafi-Jihadism

Salafi-jihadism lies at the core of this research. In order to gain a clearer understanding of Salafi-jihadism, it is necessary to break the term into its two separate components: the Salafi ideology[9] and the jihadi call to action. Salafism is an Islamic ideology that strives to return Islam to the manner in which it was practiced by the *al-salaf al-sālihīn,* also known as the "pious predecessors."[10] *Al-salaf al-sālihīn* refers to the "first three generations of Islam,"[11] and Salafis wish to return modern Islam to a form that closely aligns with how the 'pious predecessors' practiced Islam. Each of the three aforementioned generations is split up into a specific period of

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[7] Thurston specializes in understanding Islam and politics within the context of North Africa and West Africa. He has published two books on the subject of Islamic extremism, each with a specific focus on Boko Haram and Nigerian Salafism.

[8] Maher is an analyst specializing in jihadism and the Middle Eastern conflict. He has published two books; one focusing on Salafi-Jihadism, and one focusing on the Arab Spring.

[9] Salafism encourages imitation of the Prophet's deeds, also known as *sunna,* but generally forbids *bid'a*, which translates to 'innovation.' The goal of Salafism is to recreate the religious environment in which the Prophet and his companions practiced Islam; Salafis believe that this is the ideal, and only, form of Islam.

[10] Maher, Shiraz. *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea.* pp 7. London: Penguin Random House UK, 2016.

[11] Ibid, 7

time and denotes its own unique importance, but the key takeaway is that all three generations included early Muslims thought to be either 'companions' of Muhammad, or their immediate descendants. In short, Salafism calls for "progression through regression"[12]—a return to the old order, which is thought to restore purity and perfection to Islamic life. Due to how closely Salafis align with early Islam, Salafis view themselves as the sole sect of Islam that practices the faith "the way God intended."[13] *Tawhīd,* or the oneness of God, lies at the center of the ideology; the realization of *tawhīd* is meant to lead ultimately to redemption and membership within the *al-firqa al-nājiya,* or "saved sect."[14]

If Salafism is the ideological component to the extremist groups studied in this research, jihadism is the call to action. Translated into English, *jihad* roughly means 'struggle.' The word itself does not exclusively translate to violence; it can take on various meanings within the context of practicing the Islamic faith. One could be undergoing a personal *jihad* to morally ameliorate oneself, for example. This is usually referred to as the "greater" *jihad*.[15] However, in the context of this research and in wider society the term is largely affiliated with jihadism, a concept that was inspired by Sayyid Qutb [16][17] of the Muslim Brotherhood and originally began as a "complex legal and spiritual concept."[18] *Jihad* generally refers to "warfare in the service of Islam."[19] The ideology, however, morphed into "military action and ideological extremism."[20]

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[12] Ibid, 7

[13] Ibid, 7

[14] Ibid, 7. This is the only sect perceived by Salafis to be capable of attaining salvation from God.

[15] Ibrahim, Raymond. *The Al-Qaeda Reader.* Broadway Books. New York. Pp. 16. Print. 2007.

[16] Sayyid Qutb was leader of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood during the 1950s. He was also a writer and religious theorist. Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser executed him for his alignment with jihadism; his work and martyrdom inspired other jihadists such as Zawahiri.

[17] Thurston, Alexander. Boko Haram: *The History of an African Jihadist Movement*. Princeton University Press. Princeton. Pp 20. Print. 2014.

[18] Ibid, p. 20

[19] Ibrahim, Raymond. *The Al-Qaeda Reader.* Broadway Books. New York. Pp. 16. Print. 2007.

[20] Ibid, p. 20

The result is Salafi-jihadism, which combines Salafi thought with the violent-rejectionist method of *jihad* against all enemies of Islam. The label of violent rejectionism means that the chosen method of the group is violence, while the group members reject the current international order.[21] Maher equates violent rejectionism with violent Salafi-jihadism, and for clarity purposes, this research will do the same.

Historical Background: Boko Haram

The historical background of Boko Haram is somewhat shrouded in mystery. However, a number of scholars have attempted to piece together the early years of its existence along with its rise to prominence; in this research, the rise of Boko Haram will be broken into distinct phases, which are defined within the work of Marc-Antoine Perouse de Montclos.[22]

Most scholars agree that the origins of the group can be traced to Mallam Mohammed Yusuf, an Islamic scholar hailing from Maiduguri, Nigeria. It is important to note that Yusuf's views did not originally specify violent *jihad* as his preferred method for spreading Islam. Boko Haram's movement started without Yusuf's support[23] and as a local movement against the Nigerian government, whose authority the group began to challenge around 2003.[24] Yusuf did not initially agree with hardliners, but "the hardliners played a part in convincing Yusuf to reject democracy…and Western-style schooling."[25] Before this occurred, the group grew its base in Kanamma, a rural area within the Yobe state of Nigeria. Boko Haram in its incipient phase

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[21] Maher, Shiraz. *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea.* pp 10. London: Penguin Random House UK, 2016.

[22] De Montclos is a writer specializing in diasporas of the Sub-Saharan region and in Sub-Saharan jihadism.

[23] During the early years of Boko Haram, Yusuf was not convinced that violent jihadism was the solution to the problem of injustice born from Nigerian government. Not until after Yusuf read the work of different scholars and surrounded himself with the group from Kanamma did he become completely radicalized

[24] De Montclos, Marc-Antoine Perouse. *Boko Haram: Islamism, politics, security, and the state in Nigeria.* West African Politics and Society Series. Vol. 2, pp 12. African Studies Centre. Leiden. Web. 2014.

[25] Thurston, Alexander. *Boko Haram: The History of an African Jihadist Movement.* Princeton University Press. Princeton. Pp 91. Print. 2014.

orchestrated attacks against various branches of the state: "police stations and government buildings" were among its very first targets.[26] Within another year, the group had edged toward larger political targets such as Yobe's capitol and police forces located within the Borno state.[27]

In 2004, Boko Haram was effectively halted by the Nigerian military, and in 2005 Yusuf joined forces with the members who had evaded the Nigerian military. From this point onward until the group's downfall in 2009 marks the *da'wah*[28] phase of the group's history, in which members of Boko Haram viewed themselves as part of what is referred to as the *Yusifiyya da'wah;* this refers to the precursor of the fully-formed Boko Haram.[29] The *Yusifiyya da'wah* was characterized by the "justness of [its] cause," blind "loyalty to its leader" and the idea that "only a select few who persevere and are rightly guided by Allah will make it."[30] The *da'wah* phase continued until 2009, when the group was subdued by the Nigerian military and took on what we will call its armed *jihad* phase. From then on, Boko Haram rose from the ashes and changed its methods to mimic "the tactics of global Salafi-Jihadist groups," meaning that Boko Haram turned to "targeted assassinations, suicide bombings, and hostage taking."[31] These tactics represent the fully formed version of the group.

Ideologies of Boko Haram

The ideologies of Boko Haram derive mainly from Yusuf's sermons and his only book, titled *This is Our Creed and the Method of Our Preaching* (*Hādhihi 'Aqīdatunā wa-Manhaj*

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[26] Ibid, p. 12.
[27] Ibid, p. 12.
[27] Ibid, p. 12.
[28] Da'wah is the Muslim concept of sharing the religion with others (regardless of their religion) by helping them to understand the worship of God through Muhammad.
[29] Ibid, p. 13.
[30] Ibid, p. 15.
[30] Ibid, p. 15.
[31] Ibid, p. 9.

Da'watinā). In terms of preaching, Yusuf used the work of popular Nigerian Salafis, such as

Ja'far Adam, to justify his rejection of other Islamic sects.[32] However, these scholars did not

agree with the use of armed *jihad*. This is the primary juncture at which Yusuf's ideology

splinters from those of his more moderate Salafi peers. Specifically, Yusuf's peers advocated

peaceful consultation with politicians along with "preaching nonviolently"[33] while Yusuf pushed

an extremely narrow and literalist version of Islam and offered Nigerians an ultimatum: either

agree with this interpretation of Islam, or be associated with corrupt Western practices.[34] This is

the root from which Boko Haram's final ideology grew.

In order to further explicate Boko Haram's doctrine, this research will now examine

passages from *Hādhihi 'Aqīdatunā wa-Manhaj Da'watinā.* The following passage is from the

introduction of the book:

> "I tried to show Muslims in this book the superstitions they should
> – and are – fighting by Allah's permission, such as Judaism, Parsi,
> Christianity, missionary schools, agnosticism, democracy, ruling
> according to laws other than those laid down by Allah, Jahiliyya
> rule, Naysayers, and Sufism among others. And I have
> demonstrated that we call upon the Ummah[35] to correct our
> doctrine, manners and ethics, to speak the truth, to preserve
> honour, to raise the children in a proper Islamic way, and to
> practice Jihad for the sake of Allah."[36]

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[32] Thurston, Alexander. *Boko Haram: The History of an African Jihadist Movement.* Princeton University Press. Princeton. Pp 106. Print. 2014.

[33] Ibid, p. 106.

[34] Ibid, p. 106.

[35] *Ummah* translates to 'community.' It also translates to 'nation.' In Islam, the concept of *ummah* centers on the unity of Muslims worldwide, all of whom are theoretically striving toward one goal despite differences in location or circumstance. Yusuf is referencing the use of *ummah* within the Quran, in which it refers to a group of individuals designated by the Prophet to achieve salvation.

[36] Tall, Kadya, et al. Collective Mobilisations in Africa: Enough Is Enough!, Pp. BRILL, 2015. ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/emory/detail.action?docID=2063818.

In the first pages of his book, Yusuf relays themes central to his interpretation of Islam; these opinions directly shape the ideology of Boko Haram. First and foremost, Yusuf identifies members of other religions as the enemies of Islam. This is a common theme among Salafi-jihadi groups in general, such as Islamic State of Iraq and Syria[37], a group that established a caliphate in parts of Syria and Iraq. Yusuf makes clear within the passage that he considers all Muslims aside from those who agree with his interpretation of Islam as impious unbelievers. This is yet another theme echoed by other Salafi-jihadist groups and this does not necessarily distinguish Boko Haram from related groups. He also asks Muslims to take up *jihad,* which is not a unique request among Salafi-jihadi groups. Additionally, *Jāhilīyya* is an important term to note as it is mentioned several times in the Koran and refers to the period in Arabia during which Islam did not yet exist. Simply put, it refers to a time of godlessness. The term is now used by Salafi-jihadis to describe how in places such as America, humans are governed by man-made laws rather than by the word of God. Salafis such as Yusuf use the term to remind his adversaries that only God can make rules for humans to live by. Yusuf also specifically groups Sufis in with unbelievers, illustrating his rejection of this mystical Islamic sect. Al-Qaeda rejects Sufism as well.

Furthermore, Yusuf attacks democracy and freedom, which are inherent characteristics of the West, and calls for Muslims to reject any association with such 'corrupt' practices. Though some other Salafi-jihadi groups—including al-Qaeda—also disagree with the West's method of governance, the extent to which Boko Haram centralizes this piece of its doctrine makes it unique from other Salafi-jihadist groups. Many other anti-Western Muslim scholars were

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[37] Note that ISIS has a number of different global branches, including IS of Iraq and the Levant, IS in Egypt, IS in Bangladesh, and IS in the Greater Sahara.

educated in modern institutions; Sayyid Qutb, Abu'l-Al'a Mawdudi, and Hassan al-Banna[38] represent common examples.[39] Despite that each of these scholars share a common distaste for the West, none of their movements focus as heavily on the dangers and corruption of Western *education* as Boko Haram does. Furthermore, in centralizing the topic of Western education, Yusuf defers to *fātāwāh*[40] made by "the Egyptian judge Ahmad Shakir…who had written against secularism and the Saudi Arabian scholar Bakr Abu Zayd…who had written against Western-style education."[41] Bakr Abū Zayd wrote *Global, Foreign and Colonialist Schools: Their History and Dangers (Al-Madaris al-'Alamiyya al- Ajnabiyya al-Isti'mariyya: Ta'rikhuha wa-Makhatiruha)*, which is special to the ideology of Boko Haram because Yusuf felt that he had "found a canonical authority who would legitimate his rejection of Western-style schools"[42] and thus cited the work in his own arguments. The other two works that supported Yusuf's arguments about Western education are *The Rule of Pre-Islamic Ignorance* and *Secularism*, respectively translating to *Hukm al-Jāhiliyya* and *Al-'Ilmāniyya.* Both were written by Shākir and helped Yusuf construct his arguments for Islamic government and against a secularist state.[43] These doctrines served as part of the foundation for Boko Haram's centralization of anti-democracy and anti-Western schooling sentiments. The heavy use of these texts as ideological justification set Boko Haram apart from groups like al-Qaeda. In the following passage, Yusuf elaborates on his disdain for Western education:

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[38] Founder of the Muslim Brotherhood. His writings on Islamic Government and ideas about the Quran as a governing text inspired Qutb as well as the Muslim Brotherhood.

[39] De Montclos, Marc-Antoine Perouse. *Boko Haram: Islamism, politics, security, and the state in Nigeria.* West African Politics and Society Series. Vol. 2, pp 17. African Studies Centre. Leiden. Web. 2014.

[40] This term refers to Islamic legal decisions and judgments.

[41] Thurston, Alexander. *Boko Haram: The History of an African Jihadist Movement*. Princeton University Press. Princeton. Pp 108. Print. 2014.

[42] Thurston, Alexander. *Salafism in Nigeria: Islam, Preaching, and Politics.* Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press. Pp 209. Print. 2016.

[43] Ibid, 209

"Many people have fallen in love with these schools because of their love for *Dunya* [worldly affairs], turning a blind eye to Islamic law. Sometimes they call it a necessity, at other times they differentiate between missionary and state schools. This signifies their ignorance of colonial history and the blasphemous schools, because when they began they had no teachers but the missionaries, and they were the ones arranging educational affairs. When the colonizers left, they also left Muslims with their disbelief, which they induced. Citizens taught these sciences that the colonizers came with, without any difference, neither through addition nor omission. This is Christianization in itself."[44]

It is important to note the historical underpinnings of these ideas. Colonialism under British rule has been the cause of distrust and differences between Southern Nigerians and Northern Nigerians. Southern Nigeria, under British colonialist rule, produced a class of individuals who became Western-educated. These aristocrats were able to "climb the social and economic ladder over and above their peers who had…Quranic education."[45] Thus, Western education produced feelings of resentment and fostered distrust among Nigerians. It additionally resulted in fear *of* Western education, leading to the notion that Western education was bad, un-Islamic, or anti-Islamic, and therefore, could be considered *haram*.[46]

Yusuf's ideas from this time period mark a combination between hatred of Christianity and distaste for Western education, which Western Christians forced upon Nigerians. The idea of leaving Muslims 'with their disbelief' and distrust of *dunya* places culpability for perceived religious amorality upon the West as a whole, and upon its education system, for teaching in a secular way.

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[44] Tall, Kadya, et al. Collective Mobilisations in Africa: Enough Is Enough!, BRILL, 2015. ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/emory/detail.action?docID=2063818.

[45] De Montclos, Marc-Antoine Perouse. *Boko Haram: Islamism, politics, security, and the state in Nigeria.* West African Politics and Society Series. Vol. 2, pp 11. African Studies Centre. Leiden. Web. 2014.

[46] De Montclos, Marc-Antoine Perouse. *Boko Haram: Islamism, politics, security, and the state in Nigeria.* West African Politics and Society Series. Vol. 2, pp 13. African Studies Centre. Leiden. Web. 2014.

To further understand Boko Haram's ideology, it is important to examine the group that arose from Kanamma and how its ideologies impacted Yusuf and Boko Haram's ideologies as a whole. During the year 2005, the Kanamma group expressed political ideas that were "much more severe" than those of Yusuf and they involved "[fighting] to establish an Islamic government…in Nigeria and everywhere [via taking] up arms."[47] Yusuf, in the meantime, "presented himself as a mainstream Salafi" but could not hold onto that identity for long; members of the Kanamma group and other hardliners shifted his ideology so much to the right that by 2009, he echoed the sentiments of the Kanamma group and applied them to the work in his book.

Ideological Similarities and Differences

Al-Qaeda's ideologies share some similarities with those of Boko Haram, but are largely

Theme 1: Restoration of Islamic governance as a religious obligation	Theme 2: Violent opposition to perceived enemies of Islam	Theme 3: Violent jihad as every Muslim's duty
Theme 4: Identification with a global struggle	Theme 5: Narrow interpretation of who is a 'Muslim'	Theme 6: Support for expansion of Muslim lands

different. It is appropriate to note again that both groups are classified as violent-rejectionist groups. To more broadly understand the overlap, consider the following table, taken directly from The Tony Blair Institute's 2017 Violent Islamist Extremism Report:[48]

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[47] Thurston, Alexander. *Boko Haram: The History of an African Jihadist Movement.* Princeton University Press. Princeton. Pp 97. Print. 2014.
[48] *"Violent Islamist Extremism in 2017." Global Extremism Monitor:* Tony Blair Institute for Global Change. 2017.

Global Extremism Monitor's chart shows that both Boko Haram and Al-Qaeda feature all six of these themes within their ideologies. The purpose of this chart, as included in Tony Blair's government report, is to help distinguish between the ideologies of different global jihadi groups. The report breaks up different groups by their regional base; it mentions East Asia, South Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, and so on. For each jihadi group, there is either a check mark (to denote that the respective group includes the respective theme in its ideology), or no marking (to denote the respective group does not include the respective theme in its ideology) under the respective six themes. The purpose of including the chart in this research is to quickly summarize and establish the ideological overlap between Boko Haram and al-Qaeda; both Boko Haram and al-Qaeda subscribe to all six beliefs listed within the chart.

Osama bin Laden, the former leader of al-Qaeda, explained in a letter to Saudi Arabia that offensive *jihad* should remain a central component of Islam. The letter is titled "Moderate Islam is a Prostration to the West" and is meant to reinforce "faith in Allah alone, all the prophets, and the emulation of Muhammad; upholding the doctrine of Loyalty and Enmity; repudiating all enslavement save to Allah alone, rejecting all idolatry and false worship; and [Offensive] *jihad* in the path of Allah."[49] In this excerpt from Raymond's *al-Qaeda Reader,* bin Laden seeks to reinforce the importance of *tawhīd,* the oneness of Allah, which is expressed by his repetitive mention of Allah 'alone.' In addition, he seeks to position himself—and his followers—as arbitrators of who should be considered Muslim, in line with Theme 5 of the Institute's chart. Bin Laden's mention of rejecting false worship cements this.

Similarly to Yusuf, bin Laden accepts an extremely narrow interpretation of Islam and expects that other Islamic entities accept and enforce this same ideology. He flatly calls out

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[49] Ibrahim, Raymond. *The Al-Qaeda Reader.* Broadway Books. New York. Pp. 48. Print. 2007.

dissenters as 'fake' Muslims and assumes that the faith of other Muslims must be contrived if

they do not seek to take up offensive *jihad*. This ideology is further illustrated within the

following passage, addressed to government authorities in Saudi Arabia:

> "There are only three choices in Islam: either willing submission;
> or payment of the *jizya*, thereby physical, though not spiritual,
> submission to the authority of Islam; or the sword—for it is not
> right to let him [an infidel] live. The matter is summed up for every
> person alive: either submit, or live under the suzerainty of Islam, or
> die. Thus it behooves the [Saudi] signatories to clarify this matter
> to the West—otherwise they will be like those who believe in part
> of the Book while rejecting the rest."[50]

Bin Laden definitively demarcates the three categories under which all humans must fall

in relation to Islam; in his mind, there is simply no room for other options. Being a Muslim

generally means following bin Laden's way of Islam, because bin Laden believes that any more

moderate form of Islam is a 'prostration to the West.' Bin Laden's language, such as "thus it

behooves the [Saudis]" reveals his own presentation of himself as an authority figure on how

Islam should be studied, enforced, and lived by. [51] This attitude, though on the surface similar to

Boko Haram's, is actually different because Yusuf presents "an all-or-nothing choice between

Islam and democracy,"[52] whereas bin Laden sketches out a middle ground for those who defer to

Islamic rule but do not defer to Islamic thought. In further examining the passage, it is also

important to take note that bin Laden compares—albeit in future tense—Saudi officials to the

very Muslims he perceives as unbelievers; this is the ultimate insult. Bin Laden himself hails

from Saudi Arabia and chose, unlike his siblings, to stay in Saudi and get his education there. He

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[50] Ibid, p. 43.

[51] Ibid, p 43.

[52] Thurston, Alexander. "'The Disease Is Unbelief:' Boko Haram's Religious and Political Worldview." Brookings Institute , Brookings Institute, www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Brookings-Analysis-Paper_Alex-Thurston_Final_Web.pdf.

places an insult upon the very institutions from which he hails, and this reveals the degree to which he stands by his own beliefs; he is willing to call even his own people hypocrites if their views do not fall in line with his.

Bin Laden's attitude toward the West and its "most loathsome, secular principles" also aligns with Yusuf's critique of secular *dunya* promoted by the West.[53] These lines of thought represent how the respective leaders of al-Qaeda and Boko Haram have shaped their groups' beliefs through their own personal ideologies. It is true, as previously noted, that post-2009, Boko Haram began to mimic other Salafi-Jihadi groups. In this regard, those ideological echoes reverberating within Boko Haram—such as hatred for the West and for moderate Islam—make sense because they mirror the ideas of other, more successful groups such as al-Qaeda. However, there is a sharp difference in the extent to which certain Western features are centralized within each group's ideology. While bin Laden generally rejects the West, secularism, and democracy, Yusuf places his rejection for these principles at the very core of Boko Haram's doctrine. As confirmed by Thurston, Boko Haram's two central points within its ideology are "rejection of democracy and Western-style schooling."[54] It is clear that the largest difference between the groups' ideologies stems from Boko Haram's specific focus on Western education. No other Salafi-Jihadi group centers and attacks this Western institution to the extent that Boko Haram does.

Al-Qaeda's ideologies are marked more than Boko Haram by the convergence of *global* political and religious motives, whereas Boko Haram's political strategies are more regionally confined. For example, reference Yusuf's "Open Letter to the President," which focuses only on

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[53] Ibrahim, Raymond. *The Al-Qaeda Reader.* Broadway Books. New York. Pp 50. Print. 2007.
[54] Thurston, Alexander. *Boko Haram: The History of an African Jihadist Movement.* Princeton University Press. Princeton. Pp 108. Print. 2014.

Nigerian politics. The leaders of al-Qaeda also identify what they believe to be ideological missteps of other jihadi groups, such as the Taliban. Ayman al-Zawahiri, the current head of al-Qaeda, famously wrote a letter to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi to outline "how to win the jihad in Iraq" and suggest political action within Iraq to "foster unity among al-Qaeda supporters or attract new followers."[55] The purpose of including an excerpt within this research is to highlight the bottom-up political work necessary to achieve greater spheres of influence within Iraq. Although Boko Haram exists primarily in Nigeria, and not in Iraq, the excerpt highlights the notion that al-Qaeda is goal-oriented and understands that to achieve the larger goal, smaller goals must first be met. This strategic orientation is not necessarily present within Boko Haram. The context of the letter is not the focus; rather, the focus here is on the content of the letter and the manner in which a plan is devised and articulated in light of the group's goals:

> "This is the most vital part. This authority…requires fieldwork starting now, alongside the combat and war. It would be a political endeavor in which the mujahedeen would be a nucleus around which would gather the tribes and their elders, and the people in positions, and scientists, and merchants, and people of opinion, and all the distinguished ones who were not sullied by appeasing the occupation and those who defended Islam. We don't want to repeat the mistake of the Taliban, who restricted participation in governance to the students and the people."[56]

The tone and content of this piece strike a contrast with the work of Yusuf. Zawahiri openly advocates for Muslims to rise up and make their voices heard in the government and acknowledges that the *jihad* of al-Qaeda is a political one. Further, Zawahiri even mentions scientists—a sign that al-Qaeda values the opinions of those with education. Yusuf would probably argue that science is a Western concept and that it is *haram*. At the core of its

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[55] "Al-Qaeda Constitutional Charter Translation." 2002. Uploaded and translated by The Harmony Program, *Combating Terrorism Center*, United States Military Academy at West Point.
[56] "Al-Qaeda Constitutional Charter Translation." 2002. Uploaded and translated by The Harmony Program, *Combating Terrorism Center*, United States Military Academy at West Point.

movement, al-Qaeda is also assessing the faults of other groups and seeking to strategically plan out its own success. Government participation and associated grassroots work, then, is an important arm of the movement that adds a global, political component to its ideology. Boko Haram did involve politics in its movement at the very beginning, when it began as a local struggle against political leaders in Maiduguri. However, as the movement evolved it did so bearing the notion that the secularist state should be disposed of, rather than with the idea that Muslims should have a stake in government. As mentioned previously, its ideas on governance pertain overwhelmingly to the state of Nigeria and the surrounding basin area. Despite both groups calling themselves Salafi-jihadist, al-Qaeda attaches to itself a much clearer ideology and plan for going about the execution of that ideology, whereas Boko Haram's ideology is gleaned from a niche group of scholars and refined largely through Yusuf's work as an orator.

Al-Qaeda's Goals

Al-Qaeda's goals are also clearer than those of Boko Haram. There are multiple documents that outline the goals, the structure of the organization, and the specific purpose of each person within the organization—these do not exist for Boko Haram. Examples of such documents made for al-Qaeda can be found via West Point's Harmony Program, which translates primary documents of al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups. The following is an excerpt from al-Qaeda's constitutional charter, which outlines its foremost goal:

> "Goals: The victory of the mighty religion of Allah, the
> establishment of an Islamic Regime and the restoration of the
> Islamic Caliphate, God willing."[57]

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[57] "Al-Qaeda Constitutional Charter Translation." 2002. Uploaded and translated by The Harmony Program, *Combating Terrorism Center*, United States Military Academy at West Point.

The ultimate goal of al-Qaeda is the creation of a global Islamic caliphate. This passage is simply an encapsulation of what al-Qaeda intends as its final destination. At the heart of al-Qaeda is the belief that the world should be run under Islamic law. Below is an excerpt of another primary document belonging to al-Qaeda, titled "Al-Qaeda Goals and Structure" and translated by West Point, which outlines more specifically its political and military goals:

> "**General Goals [Of the Military Committee]:**
>
> 1. Preparation of freedom fighting young men, their training, and organizing them for combat.
>
> 2. Organization and supervision for combat participation on the battlefield.
>
> 3. Preparation of programs and military procedures.
>
> 4. Offering what is needed of military mechanics for combat…
>
> **General Goals [Of the Political Committee]:**
>
> 1. Spreading the political awareness between the individuals of the operation in preparation of a fixed plan comprised of the members taking into account their level of organizational work.
>
> 2 To spread political awareness between the Islamic republics.
>
> 3. Preparation of studies and needed political reports for the operation.
>
> 4. Interaction with Jihad movements in the world by communication with them and to spread their news… etc."[58]

This excerpt from Raymond's work is very specific in its outlining of goals, and the goals outlined in this passage are aimed toward the Military Committee and Political Committees of al-Qaeda. The document subsequently lays out different goals tailored towards its other committees, such as the Informational Committee and the Administrative & Financial

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[58] "Al-Qaeda Goals and Structure Translation." 2002. Uploaded and translated by The Harmony Program, *Combating Terrorism Center*, United States Military Academy at West Point.

Committee. The placement of members into specialized committees is done in order to best utilize each member's strengths. In this sense, the group's organization takes a multi-pronged approach, tackling its objectives from multiple angles. It is these smaller goals that are meant to contribute to the group's overall goals, as described in the aforementioned passage on establishing a caliphate. It is evident from these documents that the structure of al-Qaeda was planned and outlined in a manner that represents a bureaucracy. Al-Qaeda even goes as far as to provide an employee contract outlining salaries and benefits—the group considers itself a legitimate employer. Al-Qaeda intended to structure its organization in such a way as to maximize appeal to supporters, making certain to detail the financial and religious benefits of joining, as wells as benefits that would be bestowed upon employees' families. This provides a strong incentive for impoverished or socially isolated men to join the group.

Al-Qaeda describes its men as 'freedom fighters.' By definition, this means al-Qaeda leaders see their organization as contributing to an inherently political goal against an oppressive regime. Using language such as 'battlefield' also implies that al-Qaeda is fighting a legitimate war. Furthermore, within the political section of the document, al-Qaeda's mention of communicating with other jihadi movements provides evidence for the idea that al-Qaeda wants to act as a jihadi umbrella organization. In other words, "Bin Laden's vision was to create a vanguard of elite fighters who could lead the global jihad... and bring together hundreds of small jihadi groups struggling…against their own regimes under a single umbrella."[59] Bin Laden didn't just want to participate in the fight; he wanted to lead the fight. He aimed to set an example for

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[59] Byman, Daniel L. "Comparing Al Qaeda and ISIS: Different Goals, Different Targets." Brookings.edu, The Brookings Institution, 28 July 2016, www.brookings.edu/testimonies/comparing-al-qaeda-and-isis-different-goals-different-targets/.

other jihadi groups and to be the uniting force between them all.

It is also important to note that Bin Laden's aim of perpetrating violence is directed primarily at the U.S; while al-Qaeda's final goal is a global caliphate, its primary targets for retribution are Americans. Therefore, consider the following passage in terms of the group's goals:

> "The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies—civilian and
> military—is an individual obligation incumbent upon every
> Muslim who can do it…until the Aqsa Mosque and the Holy
> Mosque are liberated from their grip, and until their armies
> withdraw from all the lands of Islam...'Fight them until there is no
> more tumult or oppression, and [all] religion belongs to Allah.
> [8:39]"[60]

Bin Laden demarcates the United States—not other Muslim countries—as the enemy to all Muslims. As mentioned within the previous section, bin Laden accepts a very narrow definition of what it means to be a Muslim, but nevertheless, he still orients his goals toward the United States rather than toward other Muslim nations. Note that this separates it ideologically and goal-wise from Boko Haram. Boko Haram orients itself toward overthrowing the Nigerian government and implementing a caliphate within the region. Boko Haram also spearheads a notion that other Muslims should be ousted—either they must accept Yusuf's ideologies, or they must be false worshippers. Even though bin Laden is intolerant of other Islamic sects, he does not usually centralize this issue in his work; instead he focuses on the common enemy to all Muslims: the United States.

In examining the aforementioned passage further, the citation of verse [8:39] at the end of the passage turns ideology into action; the ideology is literally the goal. Within the greater text,

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[60] Ibrahim, Raymond. *The Al-Qaeda Reader.* Broadway Books. New York. Pp. 37. Print. 2007.
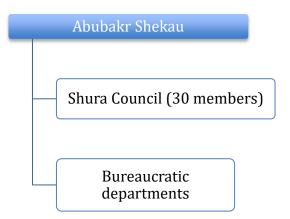
this passage follows copious mention of Allah and Allah's word, and therefore the entire passage serves not only as ideological reference, but also a call to action for every Muslim.

Al-Qaeda's goals are strategically laid out in a number of different ways and across of variety of texts. Not only are these goals strategic, but also they are clear. A person reading al-Qaeda texts need not dig too deeply to find al-Qaeda's objectives; they remain obvious on purpose. As mentioned previously, al-Qaeda wanted to lead, not to follow. The candidness with which goals are discussed is meant to attract the support of smaller jihadi groups and other Muslims, all of who could look to al-Qaeda for guidance. In sum, al-Qaeda's goals are clear and their purpose is straightforward. Boko Haram's goals, however, could hardly be described as such.

Boko Haram's goals

While Boko Haram has stated that it admires the work of al-Qaeda, it does not subscribe to the same level of bureaucratization as al-Qaeda does, despite its attempts to copy a similar structure. The current leader of Boko Haram, Abubakar Shekau, took over the reigns of Boko Haram after Yusuf's death. The flowchart below represents the basic structure of Boko Haram, and was adapted from Stratfor.[61] Included within the different bureaucratic departments are different cells aimed at recruitment, bomb-making, carrying out suicide bomb attacks, stealing

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[61] Stratfor. "Nigeria: Examining Boko Haram*." Stratfor,* Stratfor, 15 July 2014, worldview.stratfor.com/article/nigeria-examining-boko-haram.

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                    ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                    │       Abubakr Shekau         │
                    └─────────────────────────────┘
                    │
                    │   ┌──────────────────────────┐
                    ├───│  Shura Council (30 members) │
                    │   └──────────────────────────┘
                    │
                    │   ┌──────────────────────────┐
                    └───│      Bureaucratic         │
                        │      departments          │
                        └──────────────────────────┘
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cars, and kidnapping.[62]

        The Shura Council has control over individual cells and over the different bureaucratic

departments, and the Council reports to Abubakr Shekau. However, the departments within Boko

Haram's structure seem to focus more on actually orchestrating attacks than on implanting a

specific set of goals or an ideology, unlike within al-Qaeda. Boko Haram has an entire

department dedicated only to stealing cars, for example.[63] While this may seem productive in

terms of producing violence, one could easily call into question just how specific and strategic

the goals of Boko Haram are if the majority of its departments do not seem focus strongly on

isolating people's unique skills for the use toward holistic objectives of the group. Council on

Foreign Relations describes Boko Haram as "highly decentralized and diffuse in its structure and

goals" while bearing a domestic focus.[64] This is true; the group claims to desire a global

caliphate, yet it still claims its stated goal is political change in Nigeria, and finally it continues

to argue that the West is its true enemy and that Western education should be forbidden. Which

is it, or how do the group's actions contribute to any of those three goals?

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[62] Press Release - October 30, 2018. "Boko Haram." *Counter Extremism Project,*
www.counterextremism.com/threat/boko-haram.

[63] Ibid

[64] Campbell, John. "What Makes Boko Haram Run?" *Council on Foreign Relations*, Council on Foreign Relations,
5 May 2016, www.cfr.org/expert-brief/what-makes-boko-haram-run.

Meanwhile, little is known about the structure of the group aside from its loose, three-tier organization as depicted above. As mentioned in the thesis, it is clear from the evidence presented that Boko Haram's end-goal is murky; but when examining the structure of the group, this notion becomes clearer because most of its focus is simply on producing violence—terrorizing its victims with no end in sight. In addition, Boko Haram's numbers are dwindling, with the most recent count revealing a "significant [loss] in number[s] of fighters…lessening the overall capability of the organization."[65] According to the U.S. government, the number of people fighting for Boko Haram is "estimated to be several thousand."[66] Why has the same predicament not befallen al-Qaeda? The evidence presented within this research suggests that differences between the groups in strategic formulation of goals and division of military and non-military objectives/departments could be partially responsible.

Multiple sources have agreed that the goals of Boko Haram are local in nature. Despite a lack of clarity on Boko Haram's goals within its official documents, scholars and governments alike have come to the conclusion that Boko Haram has ultimate goals "of implementing Salafi-jihadism throughout the lake Chad region."[67] This conclusion can be gathered from the group's roots and history of preaching against the Nigerian state, both of which derive from local political unrest. While al-Qaeda's goals are more globally focused and the group "remains a

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[65] Press Release - October 30, 2018. "Boko Haram." Counter Extremism Project, www.counterextremism.com/threat/boko-haram
[66] "Chapter 6. Foreign Terrorist Organizations." U.S. Department of State. *U.S. Department of State,* www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2015/257523.htm.
[67] Thurston, Alexander. "'The Disease Is Unbelief:' Boko Haram's Religious and Political Worldview." Brookings Institute, www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Brookings-Analysis-Paper_Alex-Thurston_Final_Web.pdf.

threat to the U.S. homeland," Boko Haram has not even ventured outside of Africa.[68] Even still, al-Qaeda has attacked two U.S. embassies *within* Africa, and Boko Haram has never attempted such a mission, despite centering its ideology on hatred for Western education and democracy. If Boko Haram's goals were by any means similar to those of al-Qaeda, Boko Haram could have tried to orchestrate symbolic attacks like those made by al-Qaeda in 1998;[69] France, the UK, and the USA each have embassies in Lagos, and additionally within Chad and Cameroon. Why has Boko Haram not consistently[70] pursued these kinds of targets if they claim the West is their worst enemy? Such a hybrid between "demonstrative terrorism" and "destructive terrorism"[71] would have sent a clear message to the West and its allies that Boko Haram does not support its thought, actions, or governments, and in the meantime, would earn Boko Haram an opportunity to inflict harm upon 'unbelievers.' Al-Qaeda has taken the opportunity to perform demonstrative terrorism by symbolically attacking the military and economic centers of U.S. life.[72] However, al-Qaeda, ISIS, al-Shabaab, and HAMAS each have stated goals that they actively *work towards*. But Boko Haram does not have the capacity to achieve its stated goals—and thus, it primarily employs destructive terrorism as a way to coerce its adversaries: about 88% of Boko Haram's attacks inflict legitimate harm upon victims and only about 18% of its attacks are suicide

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[68] Byman, Daniel L. "Comparing Al Qaeda and ISIS: Different Goals, Different Targets." Brookings.edu, The Brookings Institution, 28 July 2016, www.brookings.edu/testimonies/comparing-al-qaeda-and-isis-different-goals-different-targets/.

[69] Attacks on US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania

[70] I wrote 'consistently' because Boko Haram *has* targeted French nationals before, kidnapping several of them from a Cameroon national park. But if they wanted to show their hatred for the West, why not raise the stakes and attack a more high-profile Western target? They cannot do so without subsequent decimation.

[71] Destructive terrorism is a concept explained by in Robert A. Pape in *Dying to Win*. It involves inflicting true harm upon subjects in an effort to coerce adversaries into supporting the movement. Demonstrative terrorism is a form of terrorism characterized by a combination of 'political theatre and violence,' and in many cases no real harm is done to the victims; it is simply a show.

[72] The Pentagon and the World Trade Center

missions, ruling out suicide terrorism as its primary mode.[73]

Boko Haram's preaching about a global caliphate is a mirage: the group clearly does not have the capacity or means to work toward such a fantasy. In reality, the group will remain nominally focused on establishing an Islamic State in Nigeria while it continues to terrorize victims for the sake of terror. To sum up, Boko Haram is not working toward its stated goal—political change in Nigeria—in any manner that would truly facilitate political change. Instead, Boko Haram stokes confusion about its goals by simply terrorizing its victims.

Outcomes of Al-Qaeda and Boko Haram

This brings the research to compare the hard outcomes of Boko Haram and al-Qaeda. How have the two groups fared differently in the struggle for accomplishing *jihad* and spreading their ideologies? Numbers tell a story of regional constraints. University of Maryland's START *Global Terrorism Database* reveals that throughout its course of existence, Boko Haram has perpetrated 2,435 attacks.[74] However, over 97% of those attacks are concentrated within Nigeria, Chad, or Cameroon.[75] Rarely is Boko Haram able to step out of this zone to commit attacks in other countries, like Niger or Mali. Thus, Boko Haram's realm of operation is confined to Sub-Saharan Africa.

Al-Qaeda, conversely, has successfully committed four attacks within the United States—with each being part of the infamous 9/11—and overall, has committed 1,756 attacks throughout its history of operation.[76] Despite the smaller number of attacks committed by al-

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[73] START. *Global Terrorism Database.* University of Maryland.
[74] START. *Global Terrorism Database.* University of Maryland.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.

Qaeda as compared with Boko Haram, the difference in global reach lies in the spread of nations impacted by al-Qaeda. Consider the following list of nations attacked by al-Qaeda: Mali, Yemen, Burkina Faso, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Niger, Ivory Coast, Algeria, France, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Libya and Iraq. There are nations still missing from this list and yet al-Qaeda has managed to span at least four continents and fourteen countries in committing its attacks.[77]

One might wonder about each group's level of influence or relevance; a strong measure of both influence and relevance is reporting in the media. In conducting an examination of the number of times al-Qaeda came up in The New York Times, CNN, or The Guardian articles over the last five years via Factiva's search engine, there were 20,565 results returned.[78] This means that 20,565 articles featured al-Qaeda, in some way, within these three sources. When conducting the same exact search for Boko Haram, only 4,814 results were returned.[79] Within Al-Jazeera, the same pattern follows. 4,362 articles focused to some degree on al-Qaeda[80] while only 1,289[81] focused to some degree on Boko Haram over the last five years. Despite that these searches are not complete because they do not include every media source globally, the numbers are telling; al-Qaeda's level of relevance easily tops that of Boko Haram, despite both groups' dream of creating a global caliphate.

Conclusion

[77] Ibid.
[78] Factiva. https://bit.ly/2Uw3Mmn
[79] Factiva. https://bit.ly/2C15Ifm
[80] Factiva. https://bit.ly/2G7yteh
[81] Factiva. https://bit.ly/2PuooYf

In summation, this research has examined the ideologies, goals, and outcomes of both al-Qaeda and Boko Haram, revealing not only similarities but also sharp differences between the groups. Despite sharing common Salafi-Jihadist roots, the groups have achieved different levels of success and have operated in different ways to achieve their goals. However, it could be argued that al-Qaeda is more goal-oriented and strategic than Boko Haram, based on primary source documents and the varying levels of organization between the two groups. Additionally, Boko Haram orients itself as an enemy to all other Muslims *and* to the West, whereas al-Qaeda orients itself as an enemy to only the West, despite its hatred of more moderate Muslims. It is very possible that this played a role in the success of the respective groups. Future research should aim to locate and study Boko Haram's splinter groups in order to better understand the movements of Boko Haram over the last decade. While much is known on al-Qaeda, Boko Haram still remains somewhat shrouded in mystery and in order to gain a deeper understanding of how to thwart violent Salafi-Jihadism, we must strive to uncover answers to these ambiguities.

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