Boko haram insurgency in northern Cameroon and Nigeria

Presented by Ousmanou Adama, PhD, Maroua University/Cameroon,
Visiting research Fellow, National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka/Japan

Abstract:

Northern Cameroon and Nigeria constituted a broken up territory where religious and ethnic diversities are in a constant change. There are many similarities between Northern Cameroon and Nigeria: economic issues and narrowing opportunities, resource-related conflicts (involving for instance land, territory, and water bodies), unequal access to political power and position among ethnic groups, the feeling of marginalization, issues around appointments into traditional leadership positions, all of which affect relationships between individuals and groups resulting in ever growing deep-seated suspicion and the inability to develop cooperative relationships. Due to overlap of ethnic identities with religion it often, unfortunately, finds expression in religion. Boko Haram insurgency is affecting security, economy, environment and institutional integrity of, Cameroon, Chad and Nigeria. Military and political objectives in the fight against Boko Haram trumped humanitarian concerns in the region. The concept of Islamic radicalization in Northern Cameroon gained significant currency among government officials, media practitioners, scholars and security officials in discourses on Boko haram terrorism and violent extremism. The most salient drivers of violent extremism in Northern Cameroon are gradually on the search of what would be an effective counter violent extremis policy. Research carried out so far points to a complex web of factors, including local and regional political dynamics, economic inequality and lack of opportunity, environmental degradation, and religious ideology in Northern Nigeria. The purpose of this study is to analyze changes in self-identification, grievances driven by individuals and/or group regarding domestic frustrations or disenchantment that provide a cognitive opening for radicalization in Northern Nigeria. Through a comparative approach, we intend to understand how legitimates grievances of northern Nigerian populations had garnered recruit and public sympathy to Boko Haram while discrediting Nigerian government and how to counter such similar claims to justify domestic escalation of religious based radicalization in northern Cameroon. We assume that religion is not primary driver of violent extremism in the region. Religion and ethnicity are rather of the greatest strengths of Cameroon multiculturalism.

Keywords: Boko Haram, counter radicalization, state disenchantment, popular support, Northern Cameroon and Nigeria