

January 2016

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Recommended Citation

Alozieuwa, Simeon Onyemachi Hilary Dr.. "Beyond Political Islam: Nigeria, the Boko Haram Crisis and the Imperative of National Consensus." *Journal of Retracing Africa*: Vol. 2, Issue 1 (2015): 49-72. <https://encompass.eku.edu/jora/vol2/iss1/5>

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Beyond Political Islam: Nigeria, the Boko Haram Crisis and the Imperative of National Consensus

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Abstract: The escalation of the Boko Haram crisis in Nigeria that peaked in 2010 has led to the emergence of many theories to explain its causes. These theories focus on the socio-economic/ human needs, vengeance, the Islamic theocratic state, and political dimensions. Beside the socio-economic perspective, which harps on the pervasive poverty in the North, the theocratic state analysis seems compelling not only because it fits into the sect's mission to Islamize Northern Nigeria and carve it out as a distinct political entity, but it also resonates with political Islam, the driving ideology behind such Jihadi groups as Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM) and Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) with which the sect has been linked. While this paper identifies with the political causes perspective in offering more cogent explanation of the crisis, it goes beyond theory to underline empirical facts that have shaped the group's violence. It argues that in its current dimension, the Boko Haram crisis is squarely an outburst of a sense of exclusion by some powerful political forces from the northern part of the country. To save the country from similar crises in the future, Nigerian leaders should devise clearly-defined periodic power-sharing formulae that can enable its component parts to have a voice.

Key Words: Boko Haram, Political Islam, Global Islamic Crescent, Political Militia, National Consensus.

Introduction

This paper analyzes the nature of the current terrorism in Nigeria by situating it within the context of the country's extant democratic milieu and political experience rather than lumping it together, in Ankie Hoogvelt's terms, with the broader theme of the "current Islamist crescent."¹ It adopts the popular name Boko Haram to identify the terror group that has waged an unrelenting campaign of violence against Nigerians since 2009. Otherwise the official name of the group is *Jamatu'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'wati wal-Jihad* (People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teaching and Jihad). This clarification removes

¹Ankie Hoogvelt, *Globalization and the Postcolonial World: the New Political Economy of Development* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001).

certain ambiguities which have beclouded the sect and its activities and obviated a clearer understanding of the objective of the current violence. Such ambiguity invariably hindered to some extent the state's ability to properly diagnose the problem at the initial stage and respond appropriately. That failure on the part of the state enabled the group to metamorphose into the lethal monster it has now become.

Boko in Hausa language means book (education). Haram on the other hand means sin. Since the education common to the people of Nigeria is the western model, boko has come to generally mean, western education. Boko Haram therefore means western education is a sin. This name was given to the *Jamatu'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'wati wal-Jihad* by the Nigerian media because of the general assumption that the group's philosophy seems to resist western education. The group has however contested the misrepresentation. According to one of the sect's members, Mallam Sanni Umaru,

Boko Haram actually means "Western Civilization" is forbidden. The difference is that while the first (Boko) gives the impression that we are opposed to formal education coming from the West... which is not true, the second affirms our belief in the supremacy of Islamic culture (not education), for culture is broader. It includes education but not determined by Western Education.²

Mallam Umaru's exposition on the group has no doubt inspired the attempt to explain the group's emergence and philosophy within the clash of civilization theoretical framework. Advanced by Samuel Huntington, the theory argues that in the post-Cold War era, people's cultural and religious identities will constitute the primary source of conflicts in many countries of the world.³ Based on that theory, Ezeani E. Onyebuchi and Chilaka F. Chigozie argue that the violent extremism going on in Nigeria amidst the transformation of the country's politics could be understood as a clash of civilizations.⁴ Hence the driving force of Boko Haram is religion, with Islam violently questioning Western values. This foundation resonates with the global political Islam from which Islamist groups generally draw their inspiration.

This paper goes beyond the general theory of Boko Haram's religious origin.

²Cited in Ezeani Emmanuel Onyebuchi and Chilaka Francis Chigozie, "Islamic Fundamentalism and Problem of Insecurity in Nigeria," in *Internal Security Management in Nigeria: A Study in Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism*, eds. Ozoemenam Mbachu and Usman Bature (Kaduna: Medusa Academic Publishers Limited, 2013), 204.

³Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilization and the Remarking of the World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuter, 1996).

⁴Onyebuchi and Chigozie, 205.

While it acknowledges its religious posturing, the paper critically interrogates the sect's assumed religious background and contextualizes it within the general political milieu in the North-Eastern part of Nigeria from where its violence began and spread. In doing this, the paper attempts to draw attention to how this phenomenon actually first arose and how it has grown to acquire the life it has today. The paper emphasizes the sect's violence, which has constituted a major security challenge confronting contemporary Nigerian society. In this regard, it considers the critical junctures, first, when the sect originally known in its immediate environment as non-violent in its propagation of its Islamic messages began to acquire arms; and second, the intersection at which it jettisoned its non-violent posturing, even prior to the death of its leader, Mohammed Yusuf, before finally turning its rage against the larger Nigerian society.

Boko Haram's Early History

According to Nnaemeka C. Okereke, initially, the Boko Haram sect had no specific name as its members attracted several descriptions where they operated based on the perception of the local population.⁵ Therefore, either as Yusufuya sect, Nigerian Taliban, Jamaatul Takfur Wal Hyra Ahlus Sunna, Khawaarji, Shabaab Muslim Youth Movement, Boko Haram, or Jamaatu Alhlissunnah Lidda'awatiwal Jihad, a name of which the sect approves, the exact date which the sect manifested on the Nigerian landscape remains largely a subject of speculation. While some tendencies trace the origin to 1995, others argue that the group was founded around 2001 or 2002. Similarly, the founder of the group is also contested. It is either ascribed to one Lawan Abubakar, who left for further studies at the University of Medina in Saudi Arabia, or to an evangelical group formed by Muslim students at the University of Maiduguri, Borno state, who reportedly felt dissatisfied with Western values.⁶

Relevant to this analysis, however, is that Mustapha Modu Jon, known as Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf, was the leader of the group in 2009 when the Boko Haram stand-off with security forces gained wider national attention. Under Yusuf, the sect was said to have recruited its membership of mostly women and children, school drop-outs and unemployed university and polytechnic graduates most of who tore up their certificates.⁷ Like the origin, the sect's propensity for violence

⁵Nnaemeka C. Okereke, "Implementing the Nigerian Defence Policy: Reflections on the Boko Haram Crisis," in *Nigerian Defence and Security: Policies and Strategies*, eds. Ozoemenam Mbachou and Ahmed A. Sokoto (Kaduna: Medusa Academic Publishers Ltd, 2011).

⁶Simeon H.O. Alozieuwa, "Contending Theories on Nigeria's Security Challenges in the Era of Boko Haram Insurgency," *The Peace and Conflict Review* 7, no.1 (2012), accessed December 26, 2013, <http://review.ucepeace.org/>.

⁷Okereke, 450.

has also been a subject of controversy. Certain accounts cast Yusuf as someone whose preaching tilted towards violence. This was premised on the fact that he derived his inspiration from the works of a fourteenth century legal scholar, Ibn Taymiyya, who preached Islamic fundamentalism, and was also considered a “major theorist” for radical groups in the Middle East.⁸

There was also an account that Yusuf, a native of Girgir in the Jalasko local government area of Yobe state, received Quranic education in the Chad and Niger Republics and was imbued with radical instincts, which generated friction between him and other moderate Islamic scholars such as the late Jafa Adam, Sheik Abba Aji, and Yahaya Jingir.⁹ Remarkably, Yusuf was the son of Mallam Yusuf, a clerk at the Maiduguri office of the Kaduna State Transport Authority, who later abandoned his secular job to found an Islamiyya school where he taught the recitation of the Qur’an to *Almajiris* (street children). Yusuf Jr., a secondary school drop-out soon joined his father in his Quranic School, where his profound oratorical skills were honed. According to Simon M. Reef, it was here that Yusuf Jr. developed the effortless ability to convince people about the sincerity of his cause; his charisma also began to manifest.¹⁰ He became so popular, grew in influence, and effortlessly succeeded his father. Going by this version of Yusuf’s background, that projects him as one imbued with radical instincts, and which forced his relocation from Borno, where he grew up to Yobe his home state, he could be perceived as one with trouble-making potentials. Indeed, although he was said to have initially gone about his preaching peacefully, his views nonetheless drew attention from other Islamic preachers who saw both his preaching and interpretation of the Quran as a recipe for violence and an affront to authority.¹¹

On the other hand, despite the inspiration Yusuf drew from Ibn Taymiyya, other accounts had him as someone who was opposed to any form of violence and who insisted that it was against the teaching of Islam. He resisted some of his followers’ relentless beliefs that “an Islamic state was realizable through preaching and mobilization of the people to reject secularism, by way of taking up arms and fighting to conquer the unbelievers.”¹² Such a personality trait contrasts significantly with that of Yusuf’s successor, Abubakar Shekau, the Kanuri psychopath who “enjoys of killing anyone that God commands me to kill, the way

⁸Mohammed Aly Sergie and Toni Johnson, “Boko Haram,” accessed December 26, 2013 www.cfr.org/nigeria/boko-haram/p25739.

⁹Freedom C. Onuoha, “Countering the Financing of Boko Haram Extremism in Nigeria,” *African Journal for the Prevention and Combating of Extremism* 2, no. 1 (December 2011), 94

¹⁰Simon M. Reef, “Foi’s Neighbours Open Up on Sheriff,” *People’s Daily*, August 10-16, 2009, 6.

¹¹Okereke, 457.

¹²T. Suleiman, “The Plot to Islamize Nigeria,” *Tell*, November 30, 2009, 12.

I enjoy killing chicken and rams.”¹³ The emphasis on the personality difference between Yusuf and Shekau becomes useful for the purpose of ascertaining, as I have noted elsewhere, whether the sect’s current level of radicalization is a function of the deaths of its initial leadership and subsequent clampdown by the state, or due to the accession of its leadership of Shekau.¹⁴ It is noteworthy that before the death of Yusuf, the sect had already acquired arms and had also violently protested the killing of seventeen of its members who were on a funeral procession.

Boko Haram, Political Islam and Militant Islamic Violence

The concept of “political Islam” has generally been adopted by many scholars to identify the seemingly unprecedented irruption of Islamic religion into the secular domain of politics - an illegitimate extension of the Islamic tradition outside of the properly religious domain it has historically occupied.¹⁵ Hence, for Ibrahim Muazzam, in its contemporary forceful form, political Islam “is a modern ideological construction and not the product of a historical continuity with an essentialist Islam preserved in the hearts and minds of people. It is the result of a protracted societal crisis of multi-dimensional proportions revealing an ongoing dialectic between Muslims and their socio-economic political environment.”¹⁶

The rise of Islamist movements, Muazzam further notes, is thus, a result and a symptom of a society in crisis - the outcome of a process of development that has taken place in these countries, which includes rapid urbanization and social mobilization that has exceeded the capacity of the system. He also perceives that the activism of some of the Muslim groups as a function of the social, economic, and political context found in the various societies.¹⁷ Hoogvelt blames the crisis on colonialism and globalization, and argues that the contemporary Islamic revolt is the consequence of millions of people who do not have any prospect of being incorporated into the new global system. As she notes, “It is the failure of the national development strategies in the neocolonial period, coupled with the recent episode of globalization that drives the contemporary Islamic crescent.”¹⁸ Hoogvelt further makes the point that Islamic resurgence is best understood as a politics of identity in response to exclusion. In an attempt to remove the

¹³“Nigeria’s Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau in profile,” May 9, 2014, accessed November 16, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-18020349>.

¹⁴Alozieuwa, “Contending Theories.”

¹⁵Charles Hirschkind, “What is Political Islam,” Middle East Research and Information Project, accessed December 23, 2013, <http://merip.org/mer/mer205/what-political-islam>.

¹⁶Ibrahim Muazzam, “Security Challenges in North Africa and the Maghreb,” *African Strategic Review* 2, no. 2 (April/May, 2011):39.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Hoogvelt, 199.

pejorative edge from “political Islam,” however, Charles Hirschkind argues that despite the militant violence that has given practical meaning to the concept, it is not all forms of contemporary Islamic activism that revolve around trying to “capture the state.”¹⁹ He contends forcefully that

The vast majority of these movements involve preaching and other *da‘wa* (missionary) activities, alms giving, providing medical care, mosque building, publishing and generally promoting what is considered in the society to be public virtue through community action.²⁰

The early history of the Boko Haram in Nigeria casts the group both in Hirschkind’s idea of the political Islamic groups which try to promote public virtue through community action and Hoogvelt’s Islamists who have raised the spectra of the jihad.²¹ For instance, Yusuf’s refusal to yield to the pressure by some of his followers to take up arms as a way of realizing an Islamic state aligns the Boko Haram sect with Hirschkind’s characterization. Similarly, Sanusi Mohammed, a journalist who had studied and had interacted with some leaders of the sect prior to the outset of the crisis, insists the sect was “not founded as terrorist group as erroneously believed in some quarters.”²² Even after Yusuf’s death, given its anti-government posturing, it would have been uncharacteristic of the group to agree to mediation by former President Olusegun Obasanjo, who was seen as an unofficial envoy of the government. That meeting held on September 15, 2011 and aimed at opening a channel of dialogue between the government and the terror group, and had in attendance Yusuf’s father-in-law, Babakura Fugu, a known gun dealer who made his property at the Railway Quarters in Maiduguri available to his son-in-law for his religious activities.²³

Certain tendencies about the sect, however, project it as a jihadist group. At its earliest periods, Yusuf leveled charges of corruption and failure to preach pure Islam on the sheiks that appointed him leader after Lawan Abubakar’s departure.²⁴ Under Abubakar Shakau, the sect later declared its intention to Islamize Nigeria and truncate the country’s democracy. One of the earliest names

¹⁹Hirschkind.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹ Hoogvelt, 198.

²²“Boko Haram out to end 1914 amalgamation, install Islamic govt —Sanusi” Saturday Sun, January 21, 2012, accessed November 17, 2015, <http://www.gbooza.com/group/nigeriapolitics/forum/topics/boko-haram-out-to-end-1914-amalgamation-install-islamic-govt-sanu>.

²³Andrew Walker, “What is Boko Haram?” Special Report (USIP), accessed 17 November, 2015, <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR308.pdf>.

²⁴Emma Ujah, et al “Yar’Adua orders probe of Boko Haram leaders’ killing,” Vanguard, August 4, 2009, accessed November 17, 2015, <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2009/08/yaradua-orders-probe-of-boko-haram-leaders-killing/>.

of the sect was the Taliban; the leadership of the group also trained in Afghanistan and Pakistan, which are well-known as the Taliban's abode; and after the attack on a police station in Kanamma, Yobe state, the sect briefly flew the Taliban black flag as a gesture symbolizing commonality of cause.²⁵ Some members claim to have trained in Afghanistan. Very germane here is that the Soviet resistance, from which the Boko Haram sect in Nigeria seemed to draw its inspiration, occurred against the backdrop of the Soviet replacement of the traditional Islamic practices and social conventions in Afghanistan. The call for a jihad in Afghanistan and its day-to-day implementation were not initiated by Muslim states as such, but by transnational Islamic religious networks. Thus, to the Boko Haram sect, which is part of this network, a "defensive jihad," according to the Sharia, obliged every individual Muslim to participate.²⁶

The sect leader, "Yusuf ...embraced technology, [and] believed Western education should be 'mediated through Islamic scholarship', such as rejecting the theory of evolution and Western-style banking. He preached a doctrine of withdrawal."²⁷ And in spite of the unheeded complaints of a group of fifty Maiduguri-based Islamic clerics, who claimed to have warned and complained to "the government and security agencies about the activities of Yusuf," not until the murder of Yusuf, his father-in-law, Fungu, alleged, financier Foy, and members of the sect at a funeral procession in Maiduguri, did the Boko Haram violence scale up in the North-East.²⁸

Noteworthy is that the government had made available the sum of a N100 million blood money to the sect for the loss of some of its leadership. While the acceptance of the blood money from the government by the sect does not conform to a true jihadist movement, Boko Haram's current level of radicalization could well be a function of the ascension of Shekau. Indeed not until late August, 2011, after it had expanded the scope of its violence outside of the North-East, vis-à-vis the bombing of the United Nations House in Abuja, were there any credible links between the sect and some al-Qaeda regional affiliate groups such as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Somali's al-Shabaab.²⁹ Furthermore, the fractioning of the sect into two groups, with one focusing on local grievances, namely, the ascendancy of a Muslim to Nigeria's presidency, and the other seeking

²⁵Joseph Lengmang, "The Rise of Religious Fundamentalism: A Critical Reflection in the Light of the 'Boko Haram' Phenomenon in Northern Nigeria," in *Religion and Post Conflict Peacebuilding in Northern Nigeria*, ed. Shedrach G. Best (Ibadan: John Archers Publishers Ltd, 2011), 98.

²⁶Cited in R. Shackleford, "Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan and the Rise of the Taliban," accessed November 17, 2015, <http://voices.yahoo.com/soviet-invasion-afghanistan-rise-the-367600.html>.

²⁷Sergie and Johnson.

²⁸Okereke 455.

²⁹Sergie and Johnson.

alliance with external jihadi groups dedicated to imposing Islamist rule across the world, raises doubt about the group's genuine commitment to the global Islamist agenda from the outset. Despite reference to the establishment of an Islamic government, the revelation that the Boko Haram was out to end the 1914 amalgamation that brought together the Northern and Southern Protectorates to form the country called Nigeria³⁰ fits into the political feud theory that the Boko Haram violence revolves around Northern angst against President Jonathan for ignoring an informal power-rotation agreement that should have kept a Muslim Northerner as president this time around.³¹

The Political Origin of Boko Haram Violence

A common notion about the Boko Haram sect is that it is a fundamentalist jihadist movement bent on imposing the Sharia law on Nigeria. This perception is fostered both by its perceived philosophical and perverse spiritual underpinnings, namely, total abhorrence for Westernization and secularization. According to Joseph Lengmang, this foundation drives the group's activities, including its violence.³² The abhorrence of westernization and secularity is also perceived to have been boosted by the reintroduction of Sharia in 1999 by the then governor of Zamfara state, Ahmed Yerima. Although the re-introduction of the Sharia in Zamfara turned the abhorrence of westernization and secularity ideology into a grassroots movement in the North, despite the subsequent adoption of the Sharia by 12 northern states widespread "disillusionment" accompanied the manner in which the Sharia was implemented. That faulty implementation provided profound dissatisfaction, which the Boko Haram sect tapped into to promote the idea that an Islamic state would eliminate the inconsistencies.³³

But while the sect's emergence has generally also been attributed to the ideology of hatred for westernization and secularity, the Boko Haram phenomenon actually arose from a prevalent culture of political thuggery in Nigeria. By this culture, political gladiators establish political militias which they use in the fierce struggle for the capture and control of political power. These militia groups exist across the regions and states of the country where they assume different forms and perpetuate criminal political activities on behalf of their benefactors. In the North, Borno and Yobe states had the Ecomog, Bauchi, Sara-Suka, Gombe, Yan-Kallare, Taraba state, Banu-Isra'il, Adamawa, Yan-Shinko, Kano,

³⁰"Boko Haram out to end 1914 amalgamation, install Islamic govt —Sanusi" Saturday Sun, January 21, 2012, accessed November 17, 2015, <http://www.gbooza.com/group/nigeriapolitics/forum/topics/boko-haram-out-to-end-1914-amalgamation-install-islamic-govt-sanu>.

³¹Sergie and Johnson.

³²Lengmang, 88.

³³Sergie and Johnson.

Yan Gumurzu or Yan daba. In the South, the defunct “Bakasi Boys” operated in the East and were particularly notorious during the administration of former governor Chinwoke Mbadinuju in Anambra state.

There is also the Odua Youth Movement in the South-West, and the “Niger-Delta Defense Force” in the Niger-Delta/South-South region. They are usually drawn from jobless university graduates and street wanderers, criminals, common thugs and in the North as abandoned *Almajiri's* (street children). In most of the old Eastern part of the country, most of the youths who constitute the army of militants and kidnapers graduated from being *political* militia gangs who were recruited for criminal political activities during elections and dumped by their benefactors afterwards.

The culture of nurturing political militia gangs is however not a new phenomenon in Nigeria. It dates back to the pre-independence era. From the 1950s, instances of political violence including the formation of political militias in the course of the contest for political power had become increasingly evident.³⁴ In the North, there were the Jammiyar Maukhatar, and the Positive Action as the armed political gangs of the Northern People’s Congress (NPC), and Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), political parties respectively. In the East the National Convention of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) had the Zikist Movement, whereas the Action Group (AG) political party had the Awoists.³⁵

However, an important distinction needs to be made among these political militia groups both in terms of the eras and political geographies in which they operated and in some instances still subsist. In the pre- independence era, whereas both in the North and South, political militias were unknown to have emerged from any religious origin, those currently in the North do. Currently also whereas in the South those which drift into sundry criminal activities like kidnapping and armed robbery do not link their cause to any known religious ideology, their counterparts in the North do.

Although the Boko Haram insurgents currently espouses religious ideological orientation, most of its foundation membership were essentially made up of elements drawn from the army of political militias in some parts of the North. The point of departure however is that hitherto, political militant gangs were raised by political parties rather than individual politicians. The Boko Haram, as a violent group specifically started off as Ecomog, a band of political thugs linked

³⁴A.O. Banwo, “Political Violence and Democratization in Nigeria: An Overview,” in *Electoral Violence in Nigeria: Issues and Perspectives*, ed. B. A. Olasupo (Lagos: Frankad Publishers, 2003), 111.

³⁵See Simeon H.O. Alozieuwa, “Nigeria’s Social Groups, Power Struggle and the Political Economy of Violence” *Igbo Studies Review* 3 no. 3 (May 2014): 196.

to the former governor of Borno State, Ali Modu Sheriff, and some other politicians in the state in the struggle for the control of Government House in Maiduguri, aimed specifically at dislodging the then incumbent governor of the state, Mala Kachallah. The conditions that bred the army of recruits for both the politicians and the Boko Haram sect also clearly predate both Yusuf and Boko Haram. These conditions include general adverse socio-economic conditions, which equally bred an army of disillusioned citizenry and youths who questioned the existing socio-economic and political system in Nigeria, and the Sharia fervor in the North, which favors the imposition of the Islamic legal system as an alternative to the Western system.

In Borno state, the former governor, Ali Modu Sheriff, was said to be instrumental to the prominence of the sect. It was alleged that he was one of their financiers and supporters until the alliance broke down.³⁶ Despite Sheriff's persistent denial of any link with Boko Haram, Ali Konduga, an arrested member of the sect, confessed to the agents of the Nigerian State during interrogation that a certain politician from Borno State stepped in to sponsor Ecomog when the relationship went sour with Ali Modu Sheriff.³⁷ Then acting Minister of Defense, Labaran Maku, was therefore right when he blames politicians from the North East for the "insecurity [which] is not religious but the after-effect of violent local politics."³⁸ Thus, the killing of government functionaries in Borno and Bauchi States in the early stages of violence clearly links "the rise of Boko Haram in Maiduguri and Bauchi ... to politics."³⁹ Sheriff also views the Boko Haram violence as political and not religious.⁴⁰

Ustaz Buji Foi, the alleged financier of Yusuf, deserves further mention at this juncture. Foi's days as chairman of Kaga Local Government Council under the Kachallah administration was "unprecedented in the history of the area council" in terms of "transforming Benisheikh, the headquarters of the (Kaga) council into a paradise of administrative transparency." He was "noted for his sense of

³⁶Boko Haram out to end 1914 amalgamation, install Islamic govt —Sanusi" Saturday Sun, January 21, 2012, accessed November 17, 2015, <http://www.gbooza.com/group/nigeriapolitics/forum/topics/boko-haram-out-to-end-1914-amalgamation-install-islamic-govt-sanu/>.

³⁷"Suspected Boko Haram Suspect Fingers Ex-Gov Sheriff, Senator Ndume, Ex-Envoy As Sect Sponsors," accessed November 17, 2015, <http://ireports-ng.com/2011/11/21/suspected-boko-haram-suspect-fingers-ex-gov-sheriff-senator-ndume-ex-envoy-as-sect-sponsors/>.

³⁸"Maku Accuses North East Politicians of Creating Boko Haram," *Newsdairy*, December 31, 2013, accessed November 17, 2015, <http://newsdiaryonline.com/maku-accuses-north-east-politicians-creating-boko-haram/>.

³⁹A. Agbo, "A Game of Vultures," *Tell*, January 17, 2011, 23.

⁴⁰E. Bello, and L. Sabo, "Boko Haram Crisis Wasn't Religious," *Leadership Weekend*, August 8, 2009, 10.

fairness.”⁴¹ At the expiration of his tenure as the

Kaga Area Council chairman, Foi was appointed the caretaker committee chairman of the same area council. Described as a man of impeccable honesty, and “one of the few voices in the wilderness crying against corruption by politicians selected into public offices,”⁴² Sheriff appointed Foi as commissioner for local government affairs. He was later redeployed to the Ministry of Religious Affairs and his house according to his neighbors was always visited by politicians including Governor Sheriff.⁴³

Foi and his Boko Haram group had worked as part of the political militia that helped Sheriff win his election. In addition to a commissionership slot in the government, Sheriff was also effecting the full implementation of the Sharia as part of the pre-election deal with the group. Sheriff’s reluctance to effect this latter part of the deal obviously angered the Boko Haram sect and strained the group’s relationship with him. Thus, at the beginning of the Sheriff’s second term in office, Foi approached him with a proposal to resign his office, because according to Foi, it was the only way he could make paradise.⁴⁴

Sheriff preemptively dissolved his cabinet to forestall Foi going to town with the news that he left the cabinet.⁴⁵ The adoption of the Sharia in twelve northern states,⁴⁶ and Sheriff’s failure to adopt the Islamic legal system in Borno where it was hoped could eliminate the inconsistencies observed in the implementation of the Islamic legal system in other northern states, could have inspired Foi’s call for Sheriff’s resignation after he walked away from Sheriff’s government. Situating Foi’s grouse within another context is also necessary. Besides the issue of corruption, as commissioner for religious affairs, Sheriff’s administration had banned motorcyclists’ movement in Maiduguri after 7 p.m. His administration also imposed a law that required motorcyclists to provide helmets for themselves and their passengers as a way of protecting them against head injuries in the event of accidents. This piece of legislation affected mostly the down-trodden and Almajiris, most of whom were used as political militia during elections, thereafter abandoned, flocking around the Islamic preachers who fed them daily with religious fantasies. Ustaz Foi was known for his “sense of fairness.” On the surface, the motorcyclists’ reluctance to obey the helmet legislation may appear a protestation of their poor material conditions. In reality, however at play was resistance politics against their

⁴¹ Reef.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Bello and Sabo, 11.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Sergie and Johnson.

abandonment in the post-polls period by the Boko Haram group whose members worked as political militias as it was also against Sheriff's refusal to adopt the Sharia. The helmet legislation provided an ample opportunity for the Boko Haram leadership to mobilize its members against the government.

Governor Sheriff later relished how he set up a security outfit, "Operation Flush," to deal with Yusuf and his crowd, which included Foi:

As a governor, I had to take charge and restore some measure of order to my domain. I started creating laws. I first started by making a law regulating motorcycles, because at night, you find over one thousand motorcycles in the city. They would move from one end of the town to the other with different kinds of weapons: cutlasses, swords, etc.... And because they don't wear helmets, I insisted that they begin to do so. I asked that their members be arrested and tried.⁴⁷

Foi was killed in the aftermath of the crackdown on Yusuf's followers. Before his death however, the former commissioner had demanded to meet with governor Sheriff, a request that was reportedly turned down by the then governor. According to Okereke, "there exist [sic] a school of thought that contend [sic] that the killing of Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf and Ustaz Buji Foi was orchestrated to deny Nigerians true knowledge of the major sponsors and profiteers from the incident."⁴⁸ It was not ascertained whether Yusuf's father's low-level education and a corresponding poor material condition influenced his resignation of his secular job, as well his son's dropping out of school. But Yusuf, who had taken over from his father, whose Quranic school was receiving wards from people within and outside of the Maiduguri, became someone whose "popularity was phenomenal, making friends easily, and some politicians who sought the truth identified with his movement discreetly and assisted him tremendously."⁴⁹

Perhaps amidst his preaching which resonated anti-corruption messages and disappointment with the western system of governance, past administrations before Sheriff's had become uncomfortable with Yusuf as his influence grew in the state. Attempts to restrict him to certain sections of the state prompted his father-in-law, a known arms dealer who was also quite influential, to offer Yusuf the refuge of his large compound in the Railways Quarters in Borno State. It was at this location that Yusuf built "a movement that would ultimately unleash a phenomenal crisis which has not been seen in the history of Borno state since the Maitatsine

⁴⁷Bello and Sabo, 11.

⁴⁸Okereke, 456.

⁴⁹ Reef.

violence of 1983.”⁵⁰ Why authorities refused to revoke Yusuf’s abode despite security reports of the unwholesome activities going on there, is suggestive that either Yusuf and his father in-law had become too powerful and untouchable by the authorities, or that in certain critical quarters, the movement Yusuf had built was of immense importance to the political actors holding the reins of government. Noteworthy, however, about the man who would later lead a group that declared Western civilization as forbidden, were some of the activities that went on in his large Railways Quarters abode. It was reported that, “despite claims that Boko Haram was against western education and its leader averse to western civilization, a trip to one of Yusuf’s compounds outside of the Railways Quarters shows that he ran a nursery school that was involved in teaching English and Maths.... Yusuf had computers with internet services for communication.”⁵¹

When the security forces stormed Yusuf’s abodes, they also found a Toyota Sienna SUV, among seven cars and many motorcycles, which belonged to sect members who used them for commercial operations otherwise known as *okada*.⁵² The discovery therefore contradicts the sect’s posturing:

Available information indicates that the group emanated from an orthodox teaching slightly resembling that of the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Their school of thought considers anything western as an aberration or completely unislamic. The group viewed the western influence on Islamic society as the basis of the religion’s weakness. Hence their declaration that western education and indeed all western institution is infidel and as such must be avoided by Muslims.... It was gathered that most people sold their belongings to contribute to the coffers of fighting the cause of Allah to save Islam from the clutches of western influences and domination.⁵³

Prior to his death, Yusuf’s abode usually gave the impression of big party as the whole area of the Railway Quarters would be lined with exotic cars owned by very powerful individuals who would arrive with tinted glasses that shielded them from easy identification when visiting Yusuf.⁵⁴ It is also not known at what stage Yusuf began to use his large compound at the Railways Quarters as a training ground for militant activities. It is ironic that the same Yusuf, who a fter

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Onyebuchi and Chigozie, 210.

⁵⁴Ibid.

the shooting of his members by the men of the Operation Flush boasted that “his group would be prepared to confront all the security agencies in the State as well as government,”⁵⁵ was also the same man who earlier had been cast as resisting Islamizing Nigeria by means of violence. It is therefore safe to speculate that while Yusuf did not believe in using violence to propagate Islam, turning his abode into a training ground for militant activities as well as the weapons found with his followers, were all part of the instrumentality used in supporting Sheriff in edging out Mala Kachallah, then the Governor of the Bornu State Government House, with the understanding that Sheriff would introduce Sharia in the state. Sheriff’s failure to implement that pre-electoral understanding thus set his administration on a collision path with the sect. When Nigerian soldiers stormed their Bama camp in Borno in 2013, they found items such as used condoms which contrasted a Moslem preaching of a return to the Islam’s glorious days of great piety⁵⁶ – thus exposing the contradiction between what the sect preached and what they practiced.

Undoubtedly, this questions their pious religious posturing. Each socio-economic and political environment has its peculiar character that can easily be exploited by criminal elements. In the Southern part of Nigeria, a predominantly Christian area, religion is treated as a distinct sphere of life, and separated from socio-economic and political issues. Hence in the old Eastern states, abandoned disgruntled political militia men drift into militancy, oil pipeline vandalism, and kidnapping to make a living. In the South-West, street extortion and money hustling, otherwise known as Area Boyism hold sway.

However in the predominantly Moslem North, where the Boko Haram violence occurs, criminal elements exploit the tradition of the Islamic religion ordering of social relations among people, including legal, contractual institutions, social and political institutions, and issues of economic propriety and practice⁵⁷ to blame western values for the mismanagement of the country’s resources. In addition, the lack of Western education and high unemployment rate in the Northern region offer such group “a seemingly bottomless reservoir from which to draw disgruntled youth recruits.”⁵⁸ With the thin line between Islamic religion and other spheres of life, extremist groups like Boko Haram that appear fed up with failed promises of politicians, would easily resort to seeking spiritual solutions to what is viewed as

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶M. Mozayyan, “Glory in Defeat and Other Islamist Ideologies,” in *Pirates, Terrorists, and Warlords: The History, Influence, and Future of Armed Groups Around the World*, ed. H.J. Norwitz (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2009).

⁵⁷Hoogvelt, 200.

⁵⁸Onyebuchi and Chigozie, 212.

an insoluble problem.⁵⁹ Furthermore, coupled with some segments of the Northern Muslim population, allegedly unhappy with the compromise of state-level Sharia co-existing side by side with a secular system, these groups increasingly become radicalized and are more willing to periodically express themselves through violence. Within these groups also are elements who share the view that Western education is incapable of stimulating any meaningful development and prosperity in the region; hence their quest for the imposition of the Sharia on the country.⁶⁰

Understanding the Boko Haram Violence

In the synopsis to an essay on the security challenge posed by the Boko Haram violence, I have postulated that analyses that consider the political context of the insurgency deserve particular attention, especially in relation to President Jonathan's contestation of the 2011 presidential election and the recently concluded 2015 elections.⁶¹ Similarly, in another work, which focused on the tendency by Nigerian ethnic groups to employ violence in the struggle to capture central power, I stressed how forced co-habitation of the disparate pre-Nigerian groups in a single political economy by British imperialism engendered a socio-political environment which predisposes these social forces to intense struggle for power whose utility value is its guarantee of unfettered access to the public till. The utility of violence in the struggle for political ascendancy, was "evident in the Hausa-Fulani hegemony of the 1960s through the late 1990s via the control of the country's military, the Yoruba presidency from 1999-2007 via the violence that trailed the annulled June 12 1993 presidential election and the Ijaw presidency via the Niger Delta militancy."⁶²

Jean Herskovits has rightly argued that while the original core of the group remains active, Boko Haram has become a franchise for many criminal gangs who have adopted the name to claim responsibility for attacks when it suits them.⁶³ Although the Boko Haram sect had formed prior to the emergence of the Jonathan administration, the intensity which its violence assumed in the post-2011 general elections period, led to the inevitable conclusion that the insurgency is not only about fulfilling the pre-election threat by some Northerners of making the country

⁵⁹Lengmang, 101.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Alozieuwa, "Contending Theories."

⁶²Simeon Alozieuwa, "Violence as a Bargaining Tool for Political Ascendancy in a Multi-ethnic Society: The Nigeria Experience," in Internal Security Management in Nigeria: A Study in Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism eds. Ozoemenam Mbachu and Usman Bature (Kaduna: Medusa Academic Publishers Limited, 2013), 182.

⁶³Jean Herskovits, "In Nigeria, Boko Haram Is Not the Problem," New York Times, January 2, 2012, accessed November 17, 2015, http://nytimes.com/2012/01/02/opinion/in-nigeria-boko-haram-is-not-the-problem.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

ungovernable should Jonathan contest and win the election, but also geared towards the North's quest to reclaim power by 2015. In the period leading up to that election, some political forces from the North bitterly challenged Jonathan's moral authority to vie for the country's presidency on the premise that the North was yet to do an eight-year term in the context of North-South zoning and power rotation principles said to have been instituted by the then ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP).

Amidst the rancor surrounding his ascension to power in 2010 following his predecessor Umaru Musa Yar'Adua's death, as well as the opposition that mounted against his vying for the 2011 presidential polls, Jonathan had come up with an appeasement gesture towards the North-West region of Nigeria from where Yar'Adua hailed, namely, the choice of Namadi Sambo, the governor of North-West state of Kaduna, first as his deputy, and second as his running mate in the 2011 elections. Ishiaka Mohammed Bawa, the Chief Whip of the House of Representatives of the Nigerian National Assembly and leader of the North-East caucus in the House made a statement very significant in this analysis. According to him, "We felt that over the years, the North-Eastern region has been marginalized in all aspects of life in this country, [and] marginalization is responsible for insecurity in North-East."⁶⁴ Thus, "in the general context of Northern angst over the loss of central power, Boko Haram may be conceived of as a resurgent Northern ethnic militia or in the specific context of the Kanuri sense of marginalization, an emergent militia for that ethnic group."⁶⁵

In attempting to establish a causality between the current season of violence in Nigeria and intense contestation for federal power that marked Jonathan/Ijaw ascendancy since 2010, Nigeria's Nobel Laureate, Wole Soyinka, had played down the perspective that links the mayhem to economic factors such as unemployment, mismanagement, misplaced priorities, social marginalization, and massive corruption. According to him, "to limit oneself to these factors alone, is an evasion, intellectual and moral cowardice, and a fear of offending the ruthless caucuses that have unleashed terror on society, a refusal to stare the irrational in the face and give it its proper name – and response."⁶⁶

Former Nigeria's foreign affairs minister, Bolaji Akinyemi, conceptualizes the Nigerian army from July 1966 to May 1999 as an Hausa- Fulani ethnic militia in

⁶⁴ Ahmed Mohammed, "Nigeria: North-East Suffers Marginalization," *Sunday Trust*, February 12, 2012.

⁶⁵ Alozieuwa, "Contending Theories."

⁶⁶ Wole Soyinka, "Wole Soyinka on Nigeria's Anti-Christian Terror Sect Boko Haram." *Newsweek*, January 16, 2012, accessed November 17, 2015, <http://www.newsweek.com/wole-soyinka-nigerias-anti-christian-terror-sect-boko-haram-64153>.

the unclassical sense of the term (ethnic militia) in that although the Nigerian army is composed of representatives of many of the nationalities of Nigeria, it was only the Northern Hausa-Fulani military representatives who had a sense of collective interests to advance and protect. Hence, the first intervention by a formal ethnic militia in Nigeria's politics was in July 1966 when the counter-coup took place and the series of coups since July 1966 were designed by the North to protect the North.⁶⁷ Following the end of the ideological Cold War between the West and East, military rule generally became an aberration globally. For Nigeria, perhaps the most important effect of that development was that the Nigerian army could no longer be appropriated as an ethnic militia by any ethnic group to topple an elected government - a tendency that had existed among the Hausa-Fulani ethnic group for most of the country's political history until 1999. Indeed very significantly, in 1999, retired army captain and former military intelligence operative, Sagir Mohammed, had formed a northern militia, the Arewa People's Congress (APC) to "protect and safeguard the interest of the North wherever it is."⁶⁸ And outside of the North, the APC is perceived by some as founded for "the maintenance of [Northern] hegemonic control in national politics."⁶⁹ More so, "unlike the other ethnic militias who seek change, the Arewa People's Congress seeks the maintenance of the status quo, irrespective of its crises of marginalization."⁷⁰

Bingham Powell Jr. conceives of democracy as a strategy of government based on the gamble that the potential for participation and responsiveness that it offers will make possible a resolution of conflict without violence. Where large-scale violence or coercion does however appear, he contends, democracy is fundamentally threatened. Not only does the influence of coercion on decision-making weaken the importance of democratic resources, but failure of government to maintain order and security leads citizens to look more positively on authoritarian alternatives.⁷¹

Furthermore, from a strategic point of view, organized political violence has three very general objectives: to change the bargaining rules of the democratic game, to undermine the support enjoyed by the regime or its major parties, or to

⁶⁷Ajibola B. Akinyemi, "Ethnic Militia and the National Question in Nigeria," in *Urban Violence, Ethnic Militia and the Challenge of Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria*, ed. Tunde Babatunde (Lagos: Malthouse Press Limited, 2003), 21.

⁶⁸Kalu N. Obasi, *Ethnic Militias, Vigilantes and Separatist Groups in Nigeria* (Abuja: Third Millennium Ltd, 2002), 43.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Akinyemi.

⁷¹Bingham Powell Jr. *Contemporary Democracies: Participation, Stability and Violence* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 154.

intimidate the opposition while mobilizing.⁷² “And the association between rioting and deaths by violence was notably higher in ethnically fractionalized countries.”⁷³

There is a direct correlation among the following variables: the rejection of military intervention in politics, the North’s marginal occupation of the Nigerian presidency since the commencement of democratic governance in the country in 1999, the emergence and transformation of the Boko Haram as an ethnic militia in the context of an appropriated machinery, and the current virulent violence in Nigeria, which has resulted in thousands of deaths. The huge resources committed to the counter-insurgency war in Nigeria could have been deployed to tackling many of Nigeria’s infrastructure problems. And sustained violence and deaths have forced the Nigerian citizenry to begin to question whether the civilian (democratic) framework is capable of being secure. The Boko Haram violence in Nigeria obviously poses a real threat to the country’s young democracy. In the context of an ethnically fractionalized country, the marginal occupation of the Nigeria’s presidency by the Northern power elite since 1999 also resonates with the logic of “highly placed, highly disgruntled, and thus highly motivated individuals who, having lost out in the power stakes are determined to bring society to its knees and under a specific fundamentalist strain.”⁷⁴ Equally, the rise of the counter-terrorism outfit, the Civilian “Joint Task Force” (JTF), made up of the Borno youths in Maiduguri, the Borno state capital and the hotbed of the Boko Haram insurgency, evinces the conclusion that deadly violence is not, systematically and crossnationally, a product of patterns of citizen involvement and support, but of the strategic efforts of small groups of political elites. The Northern commoner who continually grapples with the factors of basic needs such as food, shelter, and housing is more concerned with the dilapidating effect of the insurgency on his daily life than the elite who worry about political power. This elite responds rather directly to the strains and limitations of ethnicity and lower modernization, to checks of constitutional structure, and to the policies of political opponents.⁷⁵ Are there, therefore, forces sworn to bringing back the military as Soyinka has postulated? The crux of the problem, indeed, perhaps, as Africa’s foremost political economist, the late Claude Ake, rightly noted, is the over-politicization of social life: “[W]e are intoxicated with politics: the premium on political power is so high that we are prone to take the most extreme measures to win and to maintain political

⁷²Ibid, 158.

⁷³Ibid, 157

⁷⁴Soyinka, “Wole Soyinka on Nigeria’s Anti-Christian Terror Sect Boko Haram,” *Newsweek*, January 16, 2012.

⁷⁵Powell Jr.

power.”⁷⁶ The late former National Security Adviser, General Patrick Oweye Azazi, had declared that the Boko Haram violence was all about wrangling over power rotation. Azazi died shortly afterwards in a crash in a military helicopter. In his response to a private letter made public by former President Olusegun Obasanjo, President Goodluck Jonathan was also of the view that,

At the heart of all the current troubles in our party and the larger polity is the unbridled jostling and positioning for personal or group advantage ahead of the 2015 general elections. The “bitterness, anger, mistrust, fear and deep suspicion” you wrote about all flow from this singular factor.⁷⁷

Reference needs to be made to the attempts to explain the violence within the social/human needs theoretical framework, which going by the foregoing analysis has already encountered formidable difficulties. Indeed the then ruling People’s Democratic Party, PDP, had dismissed Boko Haram as a not a product of poverty or misrule, but a local terror group.⁷⁸ Apart from among other prominent northerners like the former Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) governor⁷⁹ and the governor of Niger state, Aliyu Babangida,⁸⁰ who link the Boko Haram violence to poverty, strong voices in the North have also faulted the social/human needs perspective. Former senate president, David Mark, argues that poverty and unemployment no longer offer a cogent explanation for the insurgency as these adverse socio-economic conditions are not exclusive to the North.⁸¹ The Catholic Bishop of Sokoto Dioceses, Mathew Hassan Kukah, also adds quite an illuminating angle to the debate. According to the cleric,

the Bureau of Statistics had released a report that Sokoto State was the poorest state in Nigeria. I wasn’t prepared to join the debate, but if Sokoto is the poorest state in Nigeria and if Boko

⁷⁶Alozieuwa, “Contending Theories.”

⁷⁷“Read Jonathan’s letter to Obasanjo,” Vanguard, December 22, 2013, accessed November 17, 2015, <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2013/12/jonathans-letter-obasanjo/>.

⁷⁸Ameh Comrade Godwin, “Poverty, misrule not reason for Boko Haram insurgency – PDP,” DailyPost, January 26, 2013, accessed November 17, 2015, <http://dailypost.ng/2013/01/26/poverty-misrule-not-reason-for-boko-haram-insurgency-pdp/>.

⁷⁹“Sanusi Links Boko Haram to Derivation,” *This Day*, January 28, 2012, accessed November 17, 2015 <http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/sanusi-links-boko-haram-to-derivation/108039/>.

⁸⁰Suleiman M. Bisalla, “Nigeria: Revenue Allocation Skewed Against North - - Aliyu,” *Daily Trust*, online, February 24, 2012, accessed November 17, 2015, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201202240338.html>.

⁸¹Emma Uche, “Mark To Northern Leaders: Boko Haram May Break Nigeria,” June 26, 2012, accessed November 17, 2015, <http://www.nairaland.com/974667/mark-northern-leaders-boko-haram>.

Haram is driven by poverty, shouldn't we (Sokoto) be the most violent state in Nigeria? How is it that we are still the most peaceful? What this does is that it explodes the myth and perhaps we might have founded our analysis on a wrong premise. I don't think you can scientifically correlate violence with poverty.⁸²

Indeed hordes of beggars who line Katsina streets reflect the poverty in that North-Western state, yet it has neither bred nor harbored such a violent group.⁸³ Despite the broadening of its contacts with other Islamist groups such as al-Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM), which warranted the designation with its splinter group, Ansaru, as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) by the United States, the perspective which views the political militia strain of the Boko Haram sect as espousing a strong local concern intricately woven around the country's politics resonates very strongly. Serious consideration needs also be accorded to the impracticability of imposing the Sharia on a heterogeneously complex political community such as Nigeria. The core of the Boko Haram committed to Islamizing Nigeria remains a fringe group, which not only antagonizes mainstream Northern Muslims, but also are yet to evolve a broad coalition that will include mainstream Northern Muslims and their elite corps. The author has argued elsewhere that whereas the Mujahedeen are focused on Islam's days of glory or great piety, which to them assures the true believer of spiritual salvation and an eternally joyful existence in the world beyond, the average Nigerian Muslim political elite is most likely uninterested in the core Boko Haram's version of Islam, and may, in the words of M. Mozayyan, be more interested in a future that guarantees independent thought, social liberty, modernity, and economic remuneration in a world—progressive Islam.⁸⁴

The transformation of the violence from a Bornu affair to a national affair fits into the characterization of the group as “a local terror group” by the PDP. Thus between June and August, 2011 when it struck at the police headquarters and the United Nations building both in Abuja, Nigeria's capital and arguably safest city, the Boko Haram sect had transformed from a violent group whose campaign was initially restricted to the North East part of the country to a more formidable force. It had graduated from a hitherto presumably bunch of rag-tag inconsequential miscreants that could be summarily dealt with to a virulent violent organization capable of issuing and making good its threat.

⁸²Bolaji Ogundele, “Boko Haram Menace Beyond Poverty – Rev. Kukah,” May 8, 2013, accessed November 17, 2015, <http://universalreporters247.com/2013/05/boko-haram-menace-beyond-poverty-rev-kukah/>.

⁸³Alozieuwa, “Contending Theories.”

⁸⁴Ibid.

The attack on the police headquarters was not only a cynical response to the boast by then inspector-general of police, Hafiz Ringim, that he would crush the group in the aftermath of its attempted attack of the headquarters in Maiduguri, the capital of the North East state of Borno, it was also for “the humiliating treatment meted out to our members by security agencies in various parts of the country.”⁸⁵ The United Nations building bombing clearly, therefore, supports the PDP position that “some people are out to perpetrate acts of terrorism in Nigeria to create a semblance of insecurity.”⁸⁶

In an interview titled, “Boko Haram Menace Beyond Poverty,” Kukah raised a very pertinent question:

Can we explain why this Boko Haram is dominant in Maiduguri, Yobe and not in Sokoto or Kebbi? ... If this was about religion, and Muslims are trying to expand the frontiers of Islam, which kind of a stupid man will be fighting inside his own house and hope to conquer other people?⁸⁷

At the immediate domestic level, it is obvious the group is at war with those that armed and used them to defeat opponents in the political struggle and later abandoned them, and which explains the initial killing of politicians in Borno and Bauchi. While that local score might not have been settled, as the violence attracted national response from the federal center, some highly placed and highly disgruntled persons who lost out in the power stake began to appropriate the group for violence in the struggle for central power. This explains why while the sect makes attempts to penetrate Abuja, its campaign in the North-East persists. The factionalization of the group soon after Yusuf’s death, apart from providing explanation for the group’s current level of radicalization, also could prove that while the original group represented by the murdered Yusuf’s father in-law, Fugu, remained the core commitment to the sect’s initial ideals, the faction which actually killed him was the political armed gang determined to protest Jonathan’s vying of the 2011 presidential polls and importantly, his contesting the presidency again in 2015.

The violence however appears to pay off. While central power might have moved out of the North, the Nigerian state under the Jonathan presidency continued to make huge concessions to that part of Nigeria which perhaps would not have been the case but for the insurgency; while the North-East in the meantime may

⁸⁵Ibrahim Mshelizza, “Islamist sect Boko Haram claims Nigerian U.N. bombing,” *Reuters*, August 28, 2011, accessed November 17, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/08/29/us-nigeria-bombing-claim-idUSTRE77S3ZO20110829>.

⁸⁶Godwin, ‘Poverty, misrule not reason for Boko Haram insurgency – PDP.’

⁸⁷Ogundele. ’

not have yet occupied central power as the North-West, North-Central, South-West and now South-South, certain socio-economic and political measures have been taken to address its crisis of marginalization than had previously been the case. On the socio-economic sphere, the government created a N100 billion Green Belt de-desertification project for some frontline states in the North. No such special initiative has been designed specifically for the South-East, which is being ravaged by gully erosion but has not taken up arms against the state despite its obvious marginalization from the country's topmost political office. There is also the Almajiri education program initiated by the federal government for the entire northern region. For the North-East region specifically, a N2 billion special intervention program was ear-marked in the 2014 annual budget for the states of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa, which have been devastated by insurgency and were placed under a state of emergency at some points in time.

In the political sphere, as the military crackdown on the insurgents persists, unlike the previous state of emergencies in the country, which were in 1964 and 2003, civil political structures remained in the areas where it had been declared. The chairmanship of the ruling PDP appears to have been conceded to persons from the area as a way of giving the region a sense of inclusiveness.

Conclusion

This paper focused on the Boko Haram crisis in Nigeria beyond the general theme of the current global Islamic violence. While acknowledging Islamist violence as a factor, it however places much premium on the local contexts of the violence and argues that the local political issues, more than any other considerations, offer more cogent explanation of the problem. The paper notes the religious origin of the sect, which later transformed into a militia group for politicians, a tendency that dates back to pre-independent Nigeria. From a local Borno affair, the group became a ready tool appropriated by some elements of national politicians struggling for the control of central power. These elements were specifically dissatisfied with the return of central power to the South following the death of Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, which denied the North the opportunity to be in power for many years. Jonathan's initially speculated interest in contesting the 2015 presidential elections rallied these forces together and pitted them against his government. Although initially the violence was perceived as a general Northern protestation of its loss of central power, it however later became clearly a North-East tool for bargaining for political ascendancy. However, while the concern with the local political issues within the North-East area persists, increasing state clamp down on the sect eventually drove it into seeking alliance with international terror networks.

The Nigerian state has adopted some counter-terrorist measures to stem

the violence. Apart from the military option, some socio-economic measures have also been adopted. However, no visible political concessions have been made, especially at the national level where the political disagreement actually raised the scepter of the violence. There is, therefore, the need for a national consensus for a viable power-sharing arrangement among Nigeria's diverse ethnic groups in order to give each component

a sense of belonging in the country's power equation. The arrangement should come in the form of a constitutional legislation that provides for the rotation of power among the component parts in a pre-agreed formula.

Indeed, democracy as a government of the people for the people and by the people should be adapted within the reality of Nigeria's multi-ethnicity to ensure that no group is made to feel left out of the country's political power. Perspectives which suggest that it matters less where the political leadership at the national, state, or local government levels emanate from tend to ignore the reality that although no particular ethnic group in Nigeria can claim exclusive monopolization of pillaging the commonwealth at any point in time, politics in Africa still remains privatized by the continent's leaders. Indeed, according to former Senegalese leader, Leopold Senghor, politics in Africa is not the art of governing the state for the public welfare in the general framework of laws and regulations, but that of the politician's politics, the struggle of clans, the tendencies to place well one's self, one's relations and one's clients in the *cursum honorum*; that is the race for preferments.⁸⁸ Ensuring, therefore, that every part of the country shall occupy the highest political position in the country in a pre-determined and predictable arrangement will bring stability and peace to Nigeria. President Jonathan for instance hails from a small community in Bayelsa, if not the smallest state in Nigeria. He is of Ijaw ethnic group, a minority ethnic group in Nigeria. His ascendancy, therefore, proves that every part of the country has a "best" candidate that can be presented for Nigeria's leadership.

Acknowledgments

The author is grateful to the editorial staff of the Journal of Retracing Africa and the anonymous reviewers for their comments.

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⁸⁸Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg, "Personal Rule: Theory and Practice in Africa," in *Africa: Dilemmas of Development and Change*, ed. Peter Lewis (Colorado: Westview Press, 1998), 17.

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