



RESEARCH ARTICLE

POLITICIZATION OF RELIGION AND THE RISE OF SECURITY THREAT OF BOKO HARAM TERRORISM IN NIGERIA

Ambrose Oluchukwu ABANEME

Department of Political Science, Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri, Imo State

ABSTRACT

The study sought to establish the nexus between politicization of religion and the emergence of Boko Haram terrorist group in North Eastern Nigeria at the inception of the fourth republic. Qualitative methods of content analysis using group theory of politics was adopted. The study argued that though Islam was politicized in the previous republics, the politicization in the present fourth republic has taken a heightened dimension, as some northern political actors made bold attempts to upgrade the Sharia law from its customary status to that of criminal code and jurisdiction in their desperate move to win elections. Furthermore, having recruited Sharia foot soldiers (mostly youths) to secure electoral victory; the politicians reneged on their campaign promises thereby leaving these youths to their fate without succor. This prompted the youths and their supporters to forcefully propagate Islamic extremism and occasional use of violence. A massive military crackdown by the state culminating in extra-judicial killing of the sect members drove them underground where they grew their terrorist fangs through training, weapons armaments, people's sympathy and followership to emerge a full-fledged terrorist group unleashing terror on security agents, citizens' lives and property and general insecurity in the country. The study recommends, in addition to tactical military engagement, more intelligence gathering to alter source of weapons and logistics supply, depletion of Boko Haram's popularity and recruitment prowess as well as massive economic development and employment generation.

keywords: Boko haram, politicization, religion, security threat, terrorism,

Corresponding Author

Ambrose O. ABANEME,

Email: abavanah@gmail.com/ ambrose.abaneme@alvanikoku.edu.ng. Tel: 07038446430

Received: 15/12/2024; **Revised:** 20:01/2025; **Accepted:** 20:01/2025; **Published:** 15/03/2025



1.0. INTRODUCTION

Boko Haram has remained one of the dominant security threats that confronts Nigeria. Following its resurgence in 2009, the sect has waged a war of terror on the country, exploiting ethnoreligious differences in the country to advance its brand of religious extremism. The sect has developed the capacity to threaten peace, security and political stability in Nigeria, and her neighbours. Besides the human fatalities resulting from Boko Haram's activities are disturbingly high (Badejogbin, 2013; Human Rights Watch, 2013; UK Border Agency, 2012). A recent report by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court claimed the sect's egregious "Large-scale attacks" provide a reasonable basis for believing that it has committed crimes against humanity (Office of the prosecutor, ICC, 2013). Such fatalities are not new in Nigeria. Indeed, Boko Haram merely perpetuates a long narrative of violent clashes over ethnic, regional and religious differences in Nigeria. In the early 1980s, a Muslim sect called the Yan Tatsine instigated a wave of violence that claimed several hundred lives in several states in Northern Nigeria. Like Boko Haram, Yan Tatsine was vehemently opposed to Western civilization (Lubeck, 1985). Both sects drew large followers that had one thing in common, an obsession with rigid creed. Though there are accounts of previous religious movements that bear veneer of violent uprising, none has had the capacity and the political overreach of Boko Haram to have shaken the fabric of the security architecture and spate of human casualties in the country.

Scholars and pundits have advanced reasons for the emergence of Boko Haram in North Eastern Nigeria. Some have attributed it to Islamic extremism that had existed in the North; some say it is attributable to the poor economic state of the people, particularly the youths in terms of pervading poverty and unemployment. In sum, the emergence of Boko Haram has been treated as a socio – economic protest with Islamic veneer; an ethnic revolt; a puppet of foreign jihadist or a resurgence of an earlier religious movement (Thurston, 2016). However, this paper is an attempt to identify the gap analysis in the afore stated factors which seemed insufficient in establishing the root cause of Boko Haram insurgency which has raised the bar of the hitherto existing Salafi movement from Islamic puritanical reformist group to that of a terrorist group challenging the state authorities and occupying territories within the country. The paper therefore sums up all the afore mentioned factors in the crass politicization of Sharia law by the northern political actors without genuine intention to actually propagate and put into practice the tenets of Sharia code except to garner electoral victories, thus, the paper aims at properly situate the emergence of



Boko Haram militancy by examining the interaction between structural factors of politics and ideas in the North Eastern Nigeria; how politics within this locality both reflected and diverged from broader global trends in terrorism. therefore, for a proper understanding of emergence of Boko Haram insurgency, four aspects of Nigerian politics are relevant: cutthroat elections; pervasive corruption; severe inequality; and the violence and impunity that surround approaches to conflict management. Nigeria's elections are highly contested but sometimes blatantly fraudulent. Around the country, gubernatorial elections were and are often hard fought. In addition to pouring vast sums of money into these elections, governors and other political "godfather" sometimes recruit youth and criminals to harass rivals and voters. The oligarchy in Northern Nigeria took the politicization of religion to a point where 12 Northern States came under Sharia law. Boko Haram was a pawn in a cold blooded game to control the state in Nigeria. The movement started in 2002 and exploded in the society after the death of President Yar' Adua in 2010. The pawns have now taken the violence beyond tolerable bounds and even the former sponsors of Boko Haram now denounce its violence and kidnappings (Campbell, 2014).

Thus, the 1999 and 2003 gubernatorial elections in Borno State appear to be key event in the empowerment of Muhammed Yusuf, the erstwhile leader of Boko Haram sect; this became a watershed for portraying a larger trend where political godfather recruited youths to help them take power, and then later abandon them or go after them (Princeton University, 2018). In the wake of conflict between the godfather and the sect, due to the feelings of disillusionment and abandonment by the former, the later turned insurgent group. the spate of counterinsurgent measures by the government became the beacon upon which the Boko Haram sect metamorphosed into a terrorist group on incremental basis. The paper shall address the pertinent issues raised under the following themes: general introduction; theoretical explanation; conceptual strands of emergence of Boko Haram terrorism; previous Salafi movements; politics and emergence of Boko Haram as apolitical tool, consequences and conclusion.



2.0. THEORETICAL REVIEW AND CONCEPTUALIZATIONS.

2.1. Theoretical Explanation: Group Theory of Politics

Group theory of politics was first propounded by Arthur Fisher Bentley in his work “the process of Government” (1908). The theory was further amplified and refined by David Truman in his study, Governmental process published in 1951. Bentley arranged political data in terms of groups, interests, and pressure, in other words, a given activity might be viewed as the activity of a group, the expression of an interest, or the exertion of pressure (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2018).

Both Bentley and Truman recognized the prominent political role played by interest groups in liberal democracy. They realized that giving that type of social institution a more salient position in social scientific theorizing would result in improved and more accurate analysis of the democratic political process. Truman’s fundamental declaration that politics is best understood by examining the interaction of groups resides as the cornerstone of this analytical orientation. Thus, at the heart of group theory is the recognition that politics is understood best as the action of action of groups (Bentley 1908; Truman, 1951).

The group theory is therefore couched on the premise that the pressures exercised by organized interest groups (such as political parties and Religious groups such as Boko Haram) greatly influence the activities and actions of government. as groups pursue their varied interest, they become the basis of public policy and the essence of politics. The proponents of the Group theory believe that these manifested pressures and influence should be considered as important elements in the analysis of a polity.

Drawing home the Group theory to the discourse on politicization of religion and rise of Boko Haram, it could be recalled that during the buildup to the fourth republic, political parties in Borno State, as interest groups seeking for elective positions on one hand , and Boko Haram as a Salafi (Islamic fundamentalist) group is an interest group promoting the full implementation of Sharia law in the North, on the other hand, thus knowing the popularity of the Boko Haram sect, the political actors reached out to woo the support of the former in order to win the election with the caveat that when the latter wins, they would fully implement Sharia law, the heartbeat of the Boko Haram Sect. Clash of interest arose when Boko Haram sect observed that the politicians only adopted the state Sharia law to enhance their political



interests, without ultimately delivering the promise of fully implementing the said sharia law; the state government was less than sincere in their dealings with sharia, a fact that resonated with disappointment. Consequently, Boko Haram in a show of disillusionment and disenchantment with the government distanced its group from the government and resorted to armed violent attacks against government institutions. The government on the hand unleashed counterinsurgency measures such as extra-judicial killing that drove the sect underground for a while only to emerge as a full-fledged terrorist group.

Thus the situation in Borno state has shown how groups' interests could be maximized to win elections, and how the clash of interests could resort to hostilities that influence governance as propounded by Bentley and Truman.

2.2. Conceptual Review

2. 2. 1. Contending Perceptions on the rise of Boko Haram insurgency

There are four perspectives on the factors responsible for the rise of Boko Haram. First is the notion that Boko Haram is an inevitable consequences of poverty in northern Nigeria. Evidently, over 60% of Nigerians live on less than one-dollar per day, the majority being Northern Muslims (BBC News, 2012). Yet economic deprivation alone cannot explain why violent movement grow in some places and not others, or why some movements develop particular world views (Thurston, 2016).

The second perspective has it that Boko Haram responded to perceived political marginalization of the North, particularly the Northeast. Actually, many Northerners were offended by the 2011 electoral victory of president Goodluck Jonathan, a Southern Christian who originally ascended to the presidency on the death of president Umaru Yar' Adua, yet Boko Haram was formed before Jonathan's victory initially as a puritanical Islamic group, then as a political tool in the Borno Local politics, before metamorphosing into militant group even before Jonathan's victory and has continued to exist under Buhari, a Muslim (Thurston, 2016).

The third contention maintains that the early Boko Haram was an extension of al-Qaida. This explanation suited president Jonathan who downplayed Boko Haram's political messages by characterizing the group as "an al –Qaida of West Africa" (Irish, 2014). The early Boko Haram occasionally voiced its support for al – Qacda (Vanguardngr. com 2009; Higazi, 2013; Hinshaw, 2013). but its messages mostly focused on



Nigerian politics (Eveslage, 2012). Boko Haram's eventual affiliation with the Islamic State may have represented a formal break with al-Qaida, but it is more likely that any relationship the former had with the latter was patchy, informal and marginal to its overall development (Thurston, 2016).

on the fourth note, is the perception that Boko Haram is either the second coming of Nigeria's Maitatsine and Boko Haram no doubt rejected Western technology (Lubeck, 1985), strategic withdrawal from mainstream society (Last, 2014), yet Boko Haram's theology contradicts Maitatsine's, as Nigerian Salafis denounces "Quran only" Muslims as unbelievers. Be that as it may, what little is known about Boko Haram's social base indicates that the sect has recruited from diverse groups, including recently Islamized North Eastern populations and dropouts from secondary schools and universities (Adeniyi, 2011).

Having x-rayed the various strands of perceptions on the factors responsible for the emergence of Boko Haram and having found their shortcomings and weaknesses inadequately explaining the root cause of Boko Haram, it becomes crystal clear that the sect rose to this height of insurgency by political inclinations as explained further in this study. A quick look at the previous Salafi movements is quite instructive at this juncture in order to buttress the difference between them and Boko Haram sect.

2.2.2. Previous Salafi Movement

For two centuries, present –day Northern Nigeria has been a stronghold of Sufi orders, particularly the Qadiriyya and the Tijaniyya in cities like Maiduguri and Kano. Since the 1960s, Nigerian Salafis have publicly questioned the orthodoxy of Sufism portraying themselves as a vanguard of true Muslims within a wayward society (Thurston, 2016). Although Boko Haram had borrowed the rhetorical styles of previous Salafi leaders, however; given the direct political attachments and immediate origin of the sect, many Nigerian Salafi leaders have denounced the sect.

Northern Nigerian Salafism originated with Abubakar Gumi (1924-1992) (Gumi and Tsiga, 1992; Gumi, 1972). In 1978, his followers founded Jama' atlalat al-Bid'awa-Iqamat al-Sunna (The Society for the Removal of Heretical Innovation and the Establishment of the prophet's Model). Known as Izala. This mass organization spread anti-Sufism throughout Northern Nigeria. Izala's current leader vehemently oppose Boko Haram as not an extension of Izala, but rather a result officer intra –Salafi competition for audience. Intra – Salafi competition accelerated amid generational change in the 1990s. The split in the



Izala group after Gumi's death led the returnee Izala sect from Saudi Arabia to build a following outside Izala (Thurston, 2008). It was joined by several other reform movements, including the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria (MSS), widely regarded as a platform for young radical preachers, and the Islamic Movement of Nigeria, a more radical offshoot of the MSS better known as the Muslim Brotherhood, or Zakzaky, after its leader (Zenn, 2013) and latter Mohammed Marwa, nicknamed "Maitatsine" (meaning "the one who curses" in Hausa), a young preacher from northern Cameroon, whose aggressive stance against Western influence and refusal to accept the legitimacy of secular authorities led to serious confrontation and fatal riots in some Northern states in the early 1980s (Falola and Heaton, 2008). They recruited young preachers into their network. One of them was Muhammad Yusuf, the founder of Boko Haram.

However, our point of departure is though there have been other Islamic religious fundamentalist groups with perchance for violence, none was able to withstand the state security agencies in protracted terrorist activities like the Boko Haram in terms of engaging state security agencies, bombing strategic places, sacking villages, creating internally displaced persons, refugees (UNICEF, 2016), occupying some territories within the country, kidnappings, bank robberies and looting of police and military armory as exemplified in the Metele attack in Baga around the Lake Chad (Brinkel and Ait – Hida, 2012; Badejogbon, 2013; Odunsi, 2018). Thus, the Boko Haram over reach is attributable to its political connections and linkages which are discussed in subsequent sections.

3.0. METHODOLOGY

The politicization of religion and the rise of security threat of Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria is a critical and analytical study. It is qualitative in nature and therefore relied majorly on secondary sources for data collection. Group theory was adopted as theoretical framework of analyses. The study anchored on qualitative methods of content analysis and arrived at the conclusion via inferences that the politicization of religion in Northern Nigeria to a large extent escalated the rise and sustenance of Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria.

4.0. DISCOURSES

4.1. Boko Haram as an Islamic Religious Sect



The origin of Boko Haram has been traced to the Yan Tatsine violent outburst of lawlessness close to the beginning of 1980s. It is believed that after of the Maitasine riots, a number of conservative Islamic groups began to emerge and gain popularity in Borno State. Amongst one of these was Mohammed Yusuf, a school dropout (Okoroafor and Ukpabi, 2015; Adesoji 2010). Yusuf later became the leader of a sect known as the Jama'atul Alhul Sunnah Lidda Wati Jihad which when interpreted means “those dedicated to the spread of Islam and Jihad as fashioned out by prophet Mohammed”; a radical Islamic youth who worshipped at the AlHaji Muhammadu Ndimi Mosque in Maiduguri, capital of Borno State, in the 1990s (Walker, 2012). His erstwhile mentor was Shaikh Jafaar Mahmud Adam, a prominent Islamic Scholar and preacher at the mosque (Crisis Group, 2005; Walker, 2012). Yusuf was a charismatic and popular Malam (Quranicscholar) who spoke widely throughout the north. His literal interpretation of the Quran led him to advocate that aspects of Western education he considere in contradiction to that holy book, such as evolution, the big bang theory of the universe’s development and elements of chemistry and geography, should be forbidden: in Hausa “Boko Haram” (International Crisis Group, 2014, p.7).

However, activities of Boko Haram came to lime light in Nigeria in early 2000s in Maiduguri (Reinert and Garcon 2014). The term, Boko Haram, comes from the Hausa Language. Boko means – Western education and Haram means – Sin or evil; meaning in sun that western education is evil or sin. Boko Haram sees everything western as humiliating to Muslims (Chothia, 2012). With stark hatred of western – schooling, Yusuf criticized openly the so called Islamic scholars of his day that mixed up Islamic teachings with western education. With this open condemnation of western education; Yusuf by his teaching was able to lure a lot of people into joining his group to carry out the public censure of western schooling. In addition to his criticism of western education and civilization, his fiery sermons against the misrule and corruption of political and religious elites endeared him to many more (Oriola and Akinole 2017). more so Yusuf and his followers abhorred all forms of government not based on Islamic rule hence he condemned Muslims working in government institutions not based on the Sharia ((Oyeniyi 2014). This was the stage of Boko Haram before it had contact with the political actors in fourth republic who honed, strengthened, and emboldened it via the Sharia law conundrum as discussed below.

4.2. Emergence of Boko Haram as a Political Tool



The turn of political events in the fourth republic culminated to the unintended foisting of Boko Haram terrorism on Nigeria. After the transition of 1999, Northern state governors insisted on implementing “full Sharia.” New penal which instituted corporal punishments mentioned in the Quran or derived from Islamic jurisprudence. Through this means, Northern politicians were responding to several forces: a desire for Northern self – assertion following the election of a Southern president; resentment over previous political compromises on Sharia; pressure from Muslim activists and fears among ordinary Northern Muslims that rapid social change was undermining the moral foundations of their society (Thurston, 2016). Be that as it may, beginning with Sani Yerima of Zamfara State some governors embraced Sharia while others moved reluctantly. In Borno State, in the buildup to the debate on feasibility of implementation of Sharia code, Mohammed Yusuf the late leader of the Boko Haram sect was recruited to serve on the then Governor Mala Kachalla’s Sharia implementation committee. But when Governor Mala Kachalla hesitated on Sharia Implementation, Yusuf and his group expressed disgust with it which contributed to his defeat in the 2003 elections (Thurstan, 2016). Radicals like Yusuf argued that Sharia codes were insufficient, and that only a fully Islamic system could safeguard public morality.

it was reported that the former governor of Borno State, Ali Modu Sheriff, used the sect in 2003 in the build up to his election as the governor of the state. thus in 2003 when Sheriff contested for the office of the governor of Borno state, he courted Boko Haram members (Onuoha 2012). He did this for two reasons. The first was the mass appeal the sect had based on their large membership in the state, which was estimated to be over 25,000. Hence, Sheriff wanted to win what was in a sense a mass movement to his support for electoral purposes. Second, he courted Boko Haram members for the strong arm tactics that they could bring to bear to defend his influence. Subsequently, Sheriff emerged and apart from resources being made available to the group with which weapons were bought, there was an understanding that the government would implement *sharia* which it did implementing 2003 after the government came to power. But the level of implementation did not go down well with the sect members (Mbah, Nwangwu, and Edeh, 2017). For instance, the state government allegedly provided funds to Yusuf through BujiFoi, known locally as a Yusuf disciple whom Sheriff made religious affairs commissioner when he became governor. Yusuf used the money to organize an informal micro-credit scheme that gave his disciples capital to set up businesses. The state government allegedly also gave Yusuf’s group 50 motorcycles that it used to set up taxi businesses. The motorcycles were parked at the



Boko Haram headquarters, in Markaz, at the close of day by the operators, who would hand over the 100 naira (\$1) fee. They in turn gave part of their profits as alms to the group, which began amassing arms, mostly Kalashnikovs from neighboring Chad, allegedly with Baba Fugu Yusuf's father – in – law (International Crisis Group. 2014).

Boko Haram thus emerged in clear political alliance with all Nigeria Peoples' Party (ANPP) governors in North Eastern Nigeria. To the political involvement of the Abubakar Shekau and Aminu Tashen – illimi, then known as the Yusufy ya (followers of Yusuf) and among themselves as Ahi as – Sunnahwa al – Jama' aala Minhaj as – Salaf (People of the way of the prophet and the community according to the approach of the Salaf) and having accused Yusuf as being too soft, the 200-strong splinter group went to the then governor of neighboring Yobe state, Bukar Abba Ibrahim, and requested rural land on which to live an ascetic life away from modern immorality. Ibrahim allowed them to settle in Dapchi, in the Bursari local government area, with a large dam for fishing and farming. Muhammed Yusuf on the other hand enjoyed a close relationship with the Borno State Government Ali Modu Sherrif to the extent that it was alleged that Yusuf, actually nominated a member of Sherrif's cabinet. The group also played a political role as enforcers to ensure ANPP's defence against the largely 'alien' PDP. Thus, ANPP adopted *Boko Haram's* intimidation as a political strategy against the PDP in Borno, Yobe, Bauchi and Kano State in 2003 and again regular payments were made to the sect by ANPP (Mbah 2014).

Within this period, politicians, merchants, scholars and influential people who were not only wealthy but possessed the clout to manipulate the course of politics secretly supported and donated to sustain the activities of Boko Haram. Among these people were Alhaji Buje Fai, an ex-commissioner in Bornu State, Kachiru Atiku, a Former university lecturer, Bornu Walid, a Borno – based contractor and by extension because of the involvement of one of his former commissioner, the former governor of Bornu State, Ali Modu Sheriff who supposedly, for political reasons founded the group that metamorphosed into Boko Haram (Abimbola, 2018). Yusuf's disciple Bujifoi became Sheriff's Commissioner of Religious Affairs, but Yusuf and Sheriff soon fell out. Yusuf's career began to zigzag. In 2003, breakaway followers established a base, perhaps a jihadi training camp, near Kannama, Yobe. The Kannama group, which the media labeled the "Nigeria Taliban, "clashed with Villagers and police and was crushed in early 2004. Fearing problems with authorities, "Yusuf fled to Saudi Arabia, ostensibly to study (International Crisis Group cited in Thurston, 2016, p.11). The following year, Sheriff's government invited Yusuf back to



Maiduguuri (Human Right Watch, 2012) reflecting the influence Yusuf still wielded. Yusuf reconciled with the Kannama group and “rose from a poor preacher to a wealthy cleric living in opulence and driving SUVs around the city, where he was hailed as a hero for his criticism of the government his call for sharia law” (Adeniyi, cited in Thurston, 2016, p.11). yet he was repeatedly detained in Abuja and elsewhere, which fed his emerging narrative of persecution.

For good or for bad, there are further indicators that Boko Haram insurgency was driven by political expediency. There have been confessions and counter allegations of sponsorship of Boko Haram sect. For instance, the Boko Haram group alleged that Sheriff ordered the killings of Yusuf, BujiFoi and BabaFugu to cover up his involvement with Boko Haram – a charge he staunchly rejected. After Sheriff declared Foi wanted for funding Boko Haram, he reportedly was arrested by the military in his village farm house and taken to the state police headquarters in Maiduguri, where he was killed. Two days later Yusuf was captured by troops, handed over to police and shortly thereafter extra-judicially executed at police headquarters. Fugu, who appeared voluntarily at the headquarters, also was killed (International Crisis Group, 2014). There are allegations and counter allegations by political actors which justifies the political transformation of Boko Haram from religious sect to violent insurgents. Despite the violence, controversy over alleged political links reportedly continued. for instance, on 3 November 2011, the SSS arrested Ali Sanda Umar Konduga, a purported Boko Haram spokesman who used the alias Usman al-Zawahiri. in a confession, Konduga claimed he was employed by Ali Ndume, a then –PDP senator from Borno State, who, he reportedly said, recruited him to send threatening messages to political adversaries. . Konduga’s statement also implicated Nigeria’s former ambassador to Sao Tome and Principe and former PDP chairman in Borno state, Sa’idu pindar. On 4 November 2012, Ndume was summoned by the SSS and arraigned in court, along with Konduga, on terrorism charges. He pleaded not guilty, was out on bail and still facing trial; Konduga entered into a plea bargain and was sentenced to three years in prison. However, Sources in Maiduguri described Konduga as political thug who was never religious and wondered how he could have become a Boko Haram spokesman (International Crisis Group, 2014, p.15). Such testimony and the lenient SSS treatment led many people to believe he was used to get at Ndume, who insisted that his sole contact with Boko Haram was as a member of the presidential Committee on security Challenges in the North East Zone (the Usman Galtimari committee) and a Borno Senator with a stake in the state’s security (International Crisis Group, 2014, p.15). on 20 October 2012, it was reported



that the Joint Task Force (JTF, combining the military, police and other security agencies) arrested Shuaibu mohammed Bama, a top commander of the group, in the Maiduguri home of his uncle, Ahmed Zanna, a Youth PDP senator. Zanna strongly denied that Bama was arrested there and insisted that the was actually arrested at the home of Modu Sheriff, whom he had defeated in the previous April's senatorial election. Zanna's assertion opened a flood gate of recriminations, with each accusing the other of sponsoring Boko Haram and issuing their own denials. On 21 October, the SSS interrogated and released Zanna; no charges have been filed against him or his nephew, who apparently remains in SSS custody.

The local population is convinced that politics played a role in the crisis. Even the "Civilian Joint Task Force" (CJTF), comprised of youths helping the security forces to combat Boko Haram, vented its rage at the political establishment, storming the private residence of the Borno State ANPP chairman, Alhaji Mala Othman, on 1 July 2013 and setting it ablaze, because, it alleged, he is a sponsor of Boko Haram. Subsequently, hundreds of youths tried unsuccessfully to burn sheriff's private residence. They asserted that both Sheriff and Othman supported Boko Haram and had fueled the crisis. Othman was taken into JTF custody on 6 July and detained for over a month (International Crisis Group, 2014). "After the politicians had created the monster". a former SSS officer said "they lost contro of it" (International Crisis Group, 2014, p.14)

4.3. The Clash of Interest and Buildup Militancy

As earlier stated, the Boko Haram group was primarily engaged with local politics in Borno state. As it worked to influence the application of Sharia law to civil and criminal affairs, the group interacted with prominent politicians who promised to implement Sharia law in exchange for the group's support. Some elected politicians moved to deliver on their electoral promises between 2000 and 2004 (kendhammer 2013). Twelve Muslim majority states in the North extended the jurisdiction of Sharia law to criminal matters, albeit depending on the nature of pre-existing judicial institutions in each state (Suberu 2010). However, cracks appeared in the purported Yusuf –Sheriff alliance after the latter became governor in 2003. According to Boko Haram members, he reneged on his promise to implement Sharia fully in the state, limiting its courts to social matters and refusing to allow tradition criminal punishments such as flogging for theft and fornication, amputation and stoning to death for adultery. Yusuf began to direct



sermons against Sheriff and his government, ultimately branding him an apostate. In the wake of the conflict of interest, BujiFoi resigned in 2007, as religious affairs commissioner in protest (International Crisis Group, 2014).

Following the politicians' failure to strictly abide by the tenets of Sharia law once it was adopted there was increasing violent clashes and hostilities between members of Boko Haram and the security agencies and other civilians over the former's refusal to obey state laws. From then on Yusuf experienced arrests and interrogations by the State Security Service (SSS) that caused his popularity to soar. The Maiduguri SSS reportedly sent forward eleven reports on him and the group, but none were taken seriously. On a number of occasions Yusuf was arrested, taken to the SSS Abuja headquarters, quickly released and returned to Maiduguri. The SSS halted the harassment when it became apparent his followers became more restive with each arrest. In December 2008, the Borno state government charged Yusuf with terrorism before the Federal High Court in Abuja. He was released on bail, allegedly following the intervention of people's Democratic party (PDP) members. four influential Nigerians, all Christians, reportedly signed the bail bond. This led to speculation that Yusuf had backing from Northern Muslim leaders (International crisis Group, 2014). The tension generated by this imbroglio created an atmosphere that culminated in the 2009 crackdown that led to the capture and extrajudicial murder of Yusuf (Akinola 2015). In 2009, tensions between Yusuf and the authorities escalated into confrontations. In June, Boko Haram clashed with Sheriff's highway security unit, "operation Flush." In a sermon, Yusuf denounced Sheriff and the Nigerian State (Bakur, 2011). In July, Boko Haram launched an uprising that touched five Northern States before authorities suppressed it. Over 1,100 people died, including Yusuf and Foi who were killed while in police custody (Sahara TV, 2009).

Following Yusuf's death, alongside the death of more than 700 suspected Boko Haram members during the July 2009 crackdown, one of his former lieutenants, Abubakar Shekau, assumed leadership of the group. Shekau promised to avenge Yusuf's death and to ensure the Islamization of Nigeria under a caliphate system. With their former base destroyed, Boko Haram members fled into other parts of Nigeria and neighboring states, including rural communities in Yobe, Adamawa, and Borno states (Akinola, 2017). While this relocation marked a watershed in the group's evolution, it also ended the group's attempt to influence the application of Sharia law through institutional politics. Thus, avenging the murder of Yusuf and the promise of implementing a more puritanical version of Sharia under a Caliphate



system became part of Boko Haram's priorities in post 2009 period. Given the weak presence, and in many cases the complete absence of security agencies and personnel in most rural communities in North Eastern Nigeria, Boko Haram began coordinating and attacking the pockets of scattered police outposts, military formations, and prisons where some of its members were held after the 2009 crackdown. Some of the initial post 2009 attacks occurred in and around rural communities where Boko Haram members had resettled (Akinola, 2017).

4.4. Boko Haram as a Full-Blown Terrorist Group

When it re-emerged in 2010, Boko Haram escalated its revenge mission in July into a full-scale armed insurrection targeting police headquarters, stations and officer's homes to establish an Islamic state in Maiduguri and some cities in the North including Bauchi, Potiskum and Kano (Agence France – presse, 2009). Boko Haram was bent on challenging the Nigerian state and local politicians for control of Northeastern Nigeria. Starting with a prison break in September 2010, Boko Haram waged a guerrilla campaign in the Northeast, assassinating politicians and policemen, robbing banks, raiding police stations, and breaking into prisons. Its violence rendered Maiduguria city of curfews and bombings, crippling commerce there. Boko Haram killed Christians and sought to enflame Muslim- Christian tensions.

Thus, between 2011 and 2012, Boko Haram repeatedly claimed responsibility for bombings of churches, including instances of recurring Muslim – Christian conflict such as Kaduna and plateau (CNN, 2012). After one bombing in plateau, Boko Haram's spokesman told Journalist, "Before, Christians were killing Muslims, helped by the government, so we have decided that we will continue to hunt down government agents where ever they are" (Bello, 2012). Boko Haram soon demanded that all Christians leave Northern Nigeria. Boko Haram's desire for vengeance shaped its behavior during the 2011 election campaign. The sect settled local scores, assassinating Borno politicians close to outgoing governor Sheriff (Thurston, 2016). Victims included Madu Fannami Gubio, a gubernatorial candidate, and Modu Sheriff's cousin, shot with five others outside his family house in Maiduguri on 28 January 2011; and Awana Ngala, ANPP's national vice chairman, shot in his home with a friend on 27 March 2011 (just over a month before that year's general elections). This led ANPP to accuse the rival PDP of orchestrating the killings. The "ECOMOG" thugs also become targets; most were forced underground, while others fled Maiduguri



(International Crisis Group, 2014). After the elections Boko Haram's attention turned to the national stage. Nigerian conspiracy theorists have charged that dissatisfied Northern elites sponsored Boko Haram in order to make the North ungovernable and derail Jonathan's presidency. However, the fact is that after the 2009 crackdown, Boko Haram went underground for a year before surfacing with attacks on police, their stations and military barracks to avenge the killing of Mohammed Yusuf and other comrades. The group also carried out jailbreaks to free members and demanded prosecution of Yusuf's killers, release of detained colleagues, restoration of its destroyed mosque and compensation for members killed by troops (Thurston, 2016; International Crisis Group, 2014, www.ecoi.net). Thus, Boko Haram's anger toward the federal government increased along with its capacity to strike (www.brookings.edu). Boko Haram did not parlay Northern dissatisfaction with Jonathan into broad – based recruitment. If Boko Haram nursed personal grievances against Jonathan, it was due to the escalating military campaign in the Northeast, which involved the deployment of the Nigerian Military's Joint Task Force in 2011. Boko Haram signaled its widening range of targets by conducting two suicide bombings in Abuja in summer 2011, striking the National Police Force Headquarters in June and the United Nations building in August. Its attacks expanded into North Western cities like Kano, where a raid killed nearly 200 people in early 2012. Yet even with these new areas of operations, Boko Haram remained a parochial North Eastern force with limited capacity to mount attacks elsewhere in the North. Sparingly, Boko Haram has only staged one attack, and a minor one at that, in Nigeria's commercial hub Lagos, which sits in the far South West. Boko Haram has not attacked the oil-producing Niger Delta. It is not an ever-expanding juggernaut (Thurston, 2016). As state crack downs intensified with the imposition of a state of emergency in the North Eastern states from May 2013 to November 2014, Boko Haram struck symbols of state repression in the North East. In March 2014, it overran Giwa Barracks, a prison where authorities had detained and tortured suspected militants. Having achieved this feat, Shekau bragged, "we freed over 2,000 brothers. one of them, at the gate of the barracks, took a gun and started fighting ... the world has changed" (Thurston, 2016, p.18). Again, in January 2015, Boko Haram slaughtered as many as 2,000 residents in Baga, a garrison town. Boko Haram's April 2014 Kidnapping of 276 school girls in Chibok, Borno also followed logic of retaliation thereby fulfilling Shekau's threat to avenge Nigerian authorities' detentions of sect members' (Pearson and Zenn, 2014). Boko Haram began incorporating town into a would-be state, starting with Damboa, Borno. the sect may have exercised de facto sway over parts of Borno prior to 2014, but its actions that year reflected a more systematic bid for territorial control. In August, Shekau



announced the establishment of a “state among the states of Islam” in Gwoza, Borno (Thurston, 2016). To its “state” Boko Haram soon added considerable territory in Borno and Adamawa, with some holdings in Yobe. The state included sizeable cities, such as Mubi, headquarters of Adamawa’s North senatorial district.

Furthermore, Boko Haram attacked polling places in the North Eastern states of Bauchi and Gombe. Boko Haram launched wave of suicide bombings in Northern cities like Maiduguri, Potiskum, Damaturu, Kano, Jos and Zaria. Nigerian soldiers recaptured towns before the 2015 elections. That year, Boko Haram lost ground in Maiduguri to a government backed vigilante group, the Civilian Joint Task Force or C-JTF. (The Joint Task Force was the Nigerian security force in the Northeast, though it has since been rebranded and supplemented with other units). Boko Haram strategically retreated into the country side of Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe. Shekau claimed to be imitating the prophet by massacring “unbelievers” in the North Eastern communities. Boko Haram harrassed C-JTF strong holds such as Benisheik, Borno, killing over 140 residents there in September 2013 (Human Right Watch cited in Thurston, 2016). By the time Boko Haram attacked Giwa barracks in March 2014, Shekau identified the C-JTF as a central enemy (Thurston, 2016). Partly because of the abduction of Chibok secondary school girls, Boko Haram became a major campaign issue in 2014 – 2015, president Jonathan postponed the elections from February to March 2015. Security forces launched an offensive operation, leaning on contributions from Chad, Niger, and Cameroon and quietly hiring South African mercenaries. On March 27, the eve of the presidential elections, Nigerian forces retook Gwoza, toppling the would-be state of the Boko Haram. Nigeria’s new president Buhari anticipating the total military defeat of Boko Haram launched wide scale military attacks that pushed Boko Haram out of specific territories. However, it has proved easier to recapture territory than to root out the group’s cells. in spite of the advances made in decimating Boko Haram’s capability, there have been pockets of suicide bombing in Borno State. Apart from pockets of bombings, on February 19, 2016, 110 school girls from a government – owned secondary school in Dapchi, Yobe State were abducted by the Boko Haram (Mbah, 2018; Punch. com (2018). The latest in the renewed buildup of the terror capability of Boko Haram was exhibited in the last two-three months towards the end of 2018. Boko Haram began to make daring moves with the increased use of drones against the defensive positions and infusion of foreign fighters in their ranks. Nigerian soldiers at Kulawa, Ngoshe, Kareto, Gajiram came under fire at different times within a two –week period from 2-17th November, 2018. Though each



of the incidents was successfully repelled and several Boko Haram terrorists were killed, 16 soldiers were killed while 12 were wounded (Odunsi, 2018). Furthermore, the Boko Haram insurgents attacked army base in the village of meteale in Guzama Local Government Area of Borno State, on the 18th November, 2018. During this attack, the Nigerian troops were forced to withdraw and several casualties were recorded (Odunsi, 2018; Mbah, 2018).

5. 1. Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

The paper has discussed to a large extent how predatory politics threw up the Boko Haram insurgency for the past nine years leading to the death of more than 20,000 people and displacement of over 2 million others from their homes in Nigeria (Mbah, 2018). The study utilized the group theory to examine this politicization. It also examined the previous Salafi movements to underscore the fact that none of them could muster the kind of leverage exhibited by the Boko Haram due to its political intercourse. The paper analyzed the various political connections, mutual interests and agreements reached between the political actors and Boko Haram which enabled the sect to support the ANPP to win elective positions in Borno with the hope the Boko Haram's interest of instituting a full-scale sharia law will be actualized. When it was done on the Boko Haram sect that such interest has been dashed by the government, they went haywire to attack the government and its institutions. The government wielding its big stick to check the Boko Haram's violence streak pushed the latter underground, only to re-emerge as a full-fledged terrorist group. The study further elucidated the spate of mayhem such as killings, destruction of property, displacement of people and abductions perpetrated by the Boko Haram in the bid to vent its anger on the government when it felt short changed in the game of power and interest due to the initial politicization of Sharia. The paper therefore concludes that the government should not use the youths at all cost including arming them to win elections. Besides, the government should refrain from using fake promises to win elections only to renege on such promises. Political office seekers should avoid politicizing religion so as not to further throw the nation into the kind of insecurity that Boko Haram has unleashed on the Nigerian state. The latest dimension of American and foreign involvement in the sponsorship of Boko Haram to destabilize the country for the interest of the imperialist is another critical area of investigation and therefore recommended by the study,



Competing Interest

The author had declared that no conflicting interest existed regarding this paper.

REFERENCES

- Abimbola, A.W. (2018). Terrorism in global politics and the Boko Haram uprising in Western Africa, available at <https://www.acu.edu.ng/documents/seminar/WANDE-ABIMBOLA.pdf> (Accessed 20/09/18).
- Adeniyi, O. (2011). *power politics and death: A front row account of Nigeria under the late president Umaru Musa Yar' Adua*, Lagos: Kachito Ltd.
- Adesoji, A. (2010), "The Boko Haram uprising and Islamic revivalism in Nigeria". in *Africa Spectrum*, 45 (2), pp.85-108.
- Agence France – Presse, (2009). Nigeria police fight deadly battle with Islamists, 27 July.
- Akinola, O. (2017). Beyond Maiduguri: Understanding Boko Haram's rule in rural communities of northeastern Nigeria. *project on Middle East Political Science*, Available at <https://pomeps.org/2017/09/22/beyond-maiduguri-understanding-boko-harams-rule-in-rural-communities-of-northeastern-nigeria>.
- Akinola, O. (2015). "Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria: Between Islamic fundamentalism, politics, and poverty", *African Security*, 8(1), pp.1-29.
- Badejogbin O. (2013). "Boko Haram: An enquiry into the socio-political context of Nigeria's counter-terrorism response". *Law, Democracy and Development*, (17), pp.226-252.
- Bakur, M. (2011). Muhammad Yusuf open letter to the Federal Government of Nigeria, June 12, 2009: YouTube video, February 17, 2011", Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f89pvcvWSRg> (Accessed 20/10/2018).
- BBC News. (2012). *Nigerians living in poverty rise to nearly 61%* February 13. Available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/wprld-africa-17015875> (Accessed 10/9/2018).
- Bello, B, (2012) "Nigeria's Boko Haram claims deadly plateau attacks", Reuters, July 10, 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/07/10/us-nigeria-bokoharam idUSBRE8690N020120710> (Accessed 20/11/18).
- Bentley, A.F. (1908). *The process of government: A study of social pressures*. Chicago: University of Chicago press.
- Brinkel, T and Ait-Hida, S (2012). "Boko Haram and Jihad in Nigeria". *Sciatica Militaria, South African Journal of Military Studies*, 40 (2), pp.1-21.



- Campbell, H. (2014). the menace of Boko Haram. Available <https://www.pambazuka.org/governance/menace-boko-haram-and-fundamentalism-nigeria> (Accessed 20/10/18).
- Chothia.F.(2012). “who are Nigeria’s Boko Haram Islamists?” B.B.C. News, March 14.
- CNN. (2012). “Boko Haram claims responsibility for Nigeria church bombing”. CNN News, June 18. Available at <http://www.cnn.com/2012/06/18/world/africa/nigeria-church-bombings/>(Accessed20/11/18).
- Encyclopedia Britannica. (2018). Arthur F. Bentley, American political scientist. Available at <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Arthur-F-Bentley> (Accessed20/11/18).
- Falola, T. and Heaton, M.M., (2008). A history of Nigeria. Cambridge: Cambridge University press.
- Gumi, A., and Tsiga, I. (1992). *where I stand*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books.
- Gumi, A. (1972). *Al-Aqida al-Sahiha bi- Muwafaqat al-Shari’a*. Beirut: Dar al-Arabiyya.
- Higazi, A. (2013). Les origins et la transformation del’insurrection de Boko Haram dans le Nord du Nigeria, politique Africane, no. 130/2,pp.137-164.
- Hinshaw, D. (2013). “Timbuktu training site shows terrorists’ reach”. Wall Street Journal, February 1, Available at <http://www.wsj.com/articles/s810001424127887323926104578278030474477210> (Accessed 20/10/18).
- Human Rights Watch (2012). Spiraling violence: Boko Haram attacks and security force abuses in Nigeria. October 31, Available at <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/nigeria1012webwcover-0.pdf>.(Accessed19/10/18).
- Human Right Watch (2013). World report 2013:Nigeria. Available at <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2013/country-chapters/nigeria> (Accessed 27 September 2018).
- International Crsis Group (2014). “Curbing violence in Nigeria (II): **The Boko Haram** insurgency” **Africa Report No216/3** April.
- International Crsis Group (2005). “understanding Islam”. Crisi Group Middle East/ North Africa Report No37, March 2, pp.9-14.
- Irish, J. (2014). “Nigerian president: Boko Haram is West africa’s Al – Qaeda” Reuters, May17. Available at <http://www.buesinessinsider.com/r-boko-hara-is-west-Africa’s-qaeda-saysnigerian-president-2014-17> (Accessed 22/10/12018).



- Kendhammer, B. (2013). "The sharia controversy in Northern Nigeria and the politics of Islamic law in new and uncertain democracies". *Comparative Politics*, 45(3), pp. 291-311.
- Last, M. (2014). "From dissent to dissidence: The genesis and development of reformist Islamic groups in Northern Nigeria". in AbdulRaufu, Mustapha (Ed.) *Sects and social Disorder: Muslim Identities and Conflict in Northern Nigeria*, Suffolk: James Currey, pp. 18-53.
- Lubeck, p. (1985). "Islamic protest under semi-industrial capitalism: Yam Tatsine explained". *Africa*, 55 (A), pp. 369-389.
- Mbah, F. (2018). "Nigeria's Buhari rattled by Boko Haram attacks as polls loom". *Aijazeera News*, Available at [www.aljazeera.co/news/2018/11/nigerian-buhari-rattled-boko-haram-attacks - polls-181130134916199.htm](http://www.aljazeera.co/news/2018/11/nigerian-buhari-rattled-boko-haram-attacks-polls-181130134916199.htm) (Accessed 20/11/2018).
- Mbah, p. (2014). "politics and the adoption of the policy of state of emergency in Nigeria: Explaining the 1962 and 2013 experiences". *Mediterranean Journal of Social sciences* 5, 15, 587-596. Doi: 10.5901/ mjss. 2014.v5n15p587.
- Mbah, p., Nwangwu, C. and Edeh, H.C. (2017). "Elite Politics and the emergence of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria", *Trames*, 21(71/66), 2, pp.173-190
- Odunsi, W. (2018). "Metale: Boko Haram use drones, drones, foreign fighters – Army speaks on soldiers' killing". *Daily post*, November, 29. Available at dailypost.ng/2018/11/29/metale-boko-haram-use-drones-foreign-fighters-army-speaks-soldiers-killing-/ (Accessed 20/11/2018).
- Office of the Prosecutor, International Criminal Court (2013). *Situation in Nigeria: Article 53 report*, 5 August, Available at <http://www.ice-cpi.int/iccdocs/PLDS/docs/SAS%20-20NGA%20%20Public%20version%20Article%205%20Report%20-%2005%20August%202013.PDF> (accessed 27 September 2018).
- Okoroafor, C.U. and Ukpabi, M.C. (2015). "Boko Haram insurgency and national security in Nigeria". *Journal of International Development and Management Review*, 10, pp. 251-260.
- Onuoha, Freedom (2012). "Boko Haram: Nigeria's eddies, extremist Islamic sect", *Al Jazeera Centre for Studies*, February 29, pp. 1-6.
- Oriola, T.B., and Akinola, O. (2017). *Ideational Dimensions of the Boko Haram Phenomenon*, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*. Doi:10.180/1057610x.2017.1338053



- Onyeniyi, B., A. (2014), "One voice multiple tongues: Dialoguing with Boko Haram", *Democracy and Security*, 10, pp.73-87.
- Pearson, E. and Zenn, J. (2014). "How Nigerian police also detained women and children as a weapon of war". the *Guardian*, May 6, Available at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/06/how-nigerian-police-alsodetained-womenand-childrenas-weapon-of-war> (Accessed 22/10/18).
- Princeton University. (2018). *Boko Haram: The history of an African Jihadist movement introduction*, Available at assets. Press.Princeton.edu/Chapter/i11094.pdf (Accessed 22/09/18).
- Punch.com (2018). "Dapchi girls' abduction: Some unanswered questions". March 28. Available at *Punch.com/dapchi-girls-abduction-some-unanswered-questions/* (Accessed 20/11/2018).
- Reinert, M, and Garcon, L. (2014). "Boko Haram: A chronology". in Marc-Antoine Perouse de Montclos (Ed.), *Boko Haram: Islamism, politics security and the state in Nigeria*. Leiden and Ibadan: African Studies Centre and French Institute for Research in Africa.
- Roskin, M.G. (2018). *Political Science, Encyclopedia Britannica*, Available at <https://www.britannica.com/topic/political-science> (Accessed 20/11/18).
- Saharatv, (2009); Boko Haram' leader Mohammed Yusuf interrogation before his execution by Nigerian security agents, YouTube video, August 3, 2009, Available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ePpUvFTXY7w> (Accessed 20/10/2018).
- Suberu, R. (2010). "The sharia challenge: Revisiting the travails of the secular state". in Wala Adebani and Ebenezer Obadare (Ed), *Encountering the Nigerian State*. new York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Thurston, A. (2016). The disease is unbelief: Boko Haram's religious and political worldview". The *Brooking Project on US Relations with the Islamic World, Analysis Paper*, No.22, January.
- Thurston, A (2008). "Nigeria's Ahlussunnah: A preaching network from Kano to Medina and back" in MasoodaBano and Keiko Sakurai, (Ed.) *Shaping Global Islamic Discourses: The Role of Al-Azhar, Al-Medina, and Al-Mustafa*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 93-116.
- Truman, D.B. (1951). *The government process: Political interests and public opinion*, New York; Knopf.
- UK Border Agency (2012). *Nigeria: Country of origin information (COI) Report*, COI Service Available at <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/document/policyandlaw/coi/nigeria/> (Accessed 9 September 2018).



- UNICEF (2016) Beyond Chibok: Over 1.3 million children uprooted by Boko Haram violence, Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/files/Beyond-Chibok.pdf>, (Accessed on September 14, 2018).
- Vanguardngr.com (2009). "Boko Haram resurrects, declares total jihad", August 14 Available at <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2009/08/boko-haram-resurrects-declares-total-jihad/> (Accessed 22/09/18)
- Waller, A. (2012). What is Boko Haram? U.S. Institute of peace (USIP), June.
- Zenn, J. (2013). "The Islamic movement and Iranian intelligence activities in Nigeria". CTC Sentinel, 6, (10), October, pp. 13-18.