


# Cycle of Bad Governance and Corruption: The Rise of Boko Haram in Nigeria

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## Abstract

This article argues that bad governance and corruption particularly in the Northern part of Nigeria have been responsible for the persistent rise in the activities of *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad* (JASLWJ), Arabic for “people committed to the propagation of the tradition and jihad.” It is also known as “Boko Haram,” commonly translated as “Western education is sin.” Based on qualitative data obtained through interviews with Nigerians, this article explicates how poor governance in the country has created a vicious cycle of corruption, poverty, and unemployment, leading to violence. Although JASLWJ avows a religious purpose in its activities, it takes full advantage of the social and economic deprivation to recruit new members. For any viable short- or long-term solution, this article concludes that the country must go all-out with its anti-corruption crusade. This will enable the revival of other critical sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing, likely ensuring more employment. Should the country fail to stamp out corruption, it will continue to witness an upsurge in the activities of JASLWJ, and perhaps even the emergence of other violent groups. The spillover effects may be felt not only across Nigeria but also within the entire West African region.

## Keywords

Nigeria, governance, corruption, militancy, Boko Haram, democracy

## Introduction

One of the vexing issues bedeviling Nigeria in recent years has been the violent militancy in some corners of the country. The emergence of many of these militant groups such as the Odua People's Congress (OPC) and the Niger Delta militants is the result of poor governance by the various military juntas that reigned for decades in Nigeria. The coercive nature of their military rule opened channels for abuse, including the abuse of office, corruption, human right violations, and gross disregard for laws by the military leaders; hence, the emergence of militant groups as a force intended to check the excesses of the military. However, militancy has taken on a full-blown violent dimension since the return of democratic governance in the country in 1999. And the return of democracy after a long period of military rule has emboldened the chain of corruption in the country. This is evident from the arrests of numerous top state and federal government officials for diverting wealth derived from crude oil revenue. State governors and ministers have been arrested; some were convicted whereas others are being prosecuted in court for diverting, mismanaging, or outright theft of the wealth intended for projects to aid the people. However, militancy is due to variety of factors, such as ethno-nationalism, religious extremism, and separatist movement, and each group has its

own desired objectives and methods. This article endeavors only to describe how poor governance has exacerbated the activities of Islamist violent militant group in northern Nigeria.

The absence of projects and other basic needs have been responsible for the increase in economic and social gaps between the rich and the poor, and has led to a massive vacuum in infrastructural development. The result has been a continued level of poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment within the ranks of average Nigerians, thus creating the perfect arena for breeding violent militancy in Nigeria. Rotberg (2004) observed that there is a link between poverty, poor governance, and state failure, and this combination provides a perfect breeding ground for militancy and subsequent instability. One of the militant groups that emerged in northern Nigeria is the *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad* (JASLWJ), also known as Boko Haram, led by Mohammed Yusuf. The JASLWJ leader was closely related

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to some renowned figures in the Izala sect,<sup>1</sup> as he was a former brilliant student of the late Sheik Ja'afar Mahmud Adam (Sani, 2011a). Ja'afar was an influential Izala-salafi adherent; he was assassinated by unknown gunmen in 2007 during prayers. Evidence suggests that Ja'afar and Yusuf parted ways before 2007 due to irreconcilable difference concerning their ideology toward teaching the tenets of Islam. Ja'afar had on several occasions in Nigeria and Saudi Arabia tried to admonish Yusuf to recant and reevaluate his stance,<sup>2</sup> but Yusuf always refused to come to an understanding based on his principles, this subsequently led to the assassination of Ja'afar.

This JASLWJ holds a puritanical view in adhering to Islamic injunctions and tends to have strong disdain for Western institutions due to the perceived belief that they support the inequitable political and economic system in Nigeria.<sup>3</sup> This trend was amplified by the perception that the ruling elites perpetrated social injustice through the mismanagement of the collective wealth of the nation. The JASLWJ took the opportunity to propagate its doctrines in the heart of the teeming disgruntled population. At the same time, the JASLWJ was categorical in condemning democracy and its institutions in Nigeria, because they believed it was in direct variance with and contradicted the teachings of Islam. They blamed all the ills of the nation as consequences of deviating from the teachings of Islam. The President of the Civil Rights Congress in Nigeria categorically sums up the intricacies following the rise of the group, and suggests that

Yusuf took advantage of poor quality of our educational system, the incessant strikes, and cult activities. . . . the irresponsible leadership at all levels of government, unemployment, poverty, corruption and insecurity. And as he pointed out such failures, citing verses of Quran and the saying of the prophet, the youths saw him as the leader who will indeed deliver them from malevolence to the Promised Land. (Sani, 2011a)

Mockaitis (2011) observed that ideology has the strong capability to create social mobilization, and the group behind the mobilization can effectively exploit the frustrations in a society to promote its beliefs. The JASLWJ strategy of using the holy Quran to captivate the mind of its followers (Walker, 2012), and attributing the ills faced by the nation to the influences of Western civilization, has created an army of supporters. Nonetheless, this radical sect metamorphosed into a bloody violent group in 2009 after a confrontation with Nigerian security. This led to the death of about 800 members of the group (Cook, 2011), and the arrest of some of the group members, including their leader. The Nigerian police took the sect leader into custody; however, he died some few hours later under mysterious circumstances. Observers believed that he was extra-judicially executed as reported by the media ("Islamist Leader Killed in Nigeria," 2009). When Yusuf was killed, Abubakar Shekau became the new leader of the JASLWJ, and he is considered to be more aggressive

than the late leader Yusuf (Zenn, 2011), and equally far less knowledgeable. The consolidation of Shekau as the new leader of the group widens the parameter of the group's radicalism. The two qualities of the new leader being more radical and intellectually inferior played a major role in radicalizing the movement after the death of Yusuf. From 2009 onward, the country has been beset with internal war against a known but faceless group that has grown steadily more formidable. This group introduced a new dimension to its tactics by using suicide bombings to attack its targets. One of the first targets of the group was the Nigerian Inspector General of Police; he narrowly escaped when a suicide bomber targeted his vehicle within the premises of his office, a place previously considered to be one of the safest places in the country. This was followed by another suicide attack on the United Nations headquarters in Nigeria. Since then, the casualties of these hostilities have been in the hundreds, from civilians to combatants, as well as people across all ethnic and religious sectors of the country. Furthermore, although the JASLWJ originated in North Eastern Nigeria, it has enjoyed widespread support attracting members from across the Northern region of the country. Many young girls from this region were indoctrinated using verses of the Holy Quran, and were used as suicide bombers. A case in particular, in 2014 an indoctrinated father of a 13-year-old girl volunteered his daughter for a suicide mission ("Girl Says Father Gave Her to Boko Haram," 2014), but she recanted few moment toward the target, while her colleagues blew themselves off killing several people. Islam is indeed the vehicle used by the JASLWJ for indoctrination, but this article has demonstrated how bad governance which has created myriad of problems such as unemployment is fueling the activities of the group. The absence of employment opportunities created by bad governance has increased the level of poverty and it has become more pervasive. Some JASLWJ members were arrested for attacking Ekkizivar Yan'uwa Nigeria (EYN) Church, and they revealed that they were paid about US\$70 to carry out the attack (Ola, 2012). This demonstrate the level of poverty, and the possibility of this is reflected in the very statistics mentioned in (Appendix A), which indicate that about 73% of the population in northern Nigeria is living in absolute poverty. In acknowledging this very fact, the then Chairman of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), the ruling party, Bamanga Tukur, lamented to the upsurge of the activities of the JASLWJ, and he posit that "people feel aggrieved. They are angry because they are hungry. Unless we remove the hunger, we too may not be able to rest" (Fabiya, 2012).

## Method and Data

The source of the data in this research was taken from a PhD research work. The study is based on semi-structured interviews with 50 stakeholders, who include two former Nigerian presidents, ministers, governors, lawyers, non-governmental

organizations, senior lecturers, and journalists. The face-to-face interviews were conducted in Nigeria between December 2011 and March 2012 in Abuja, Port Harcourt, Sokoto, Bayelsa, Kano, and Kaduna, whereas additional phone interviews were conducted in 2014 with some participants from Gombe, Yobe, and Maiduguri. The participants represented various religious and ethnic groups. The average recording time for each interview was 45 min; they were voice recorded and eventually transcribed verbatim. Documents were also obtained from major anti-corruption agencies such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit, and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission. For the secondary data, the study relies solely on reports from national and international newspapers and journals.

### *Literature Review*

The literature covering militancy in the northern part of Nigeria dwelled mostly on the origin and activities of the groups through their radicalization on a religious platform (Aguwa, 1997; Ibrahim, 1991; Isichei, 1987; Smith, 2010; Winters, 1987). These studies gave the historical account and described the increasing level of sect rivalry among the various sects within the Muslims of northern Nigeria, as well as how the level of intolerance of other faiths in the northern region has heightened tension. Furthermore, while there is quite a bit of literature specifically on the current insurgent movement of JASLWJ in the northern part of Nigeria, there is a dearth of studies that tried to determine the extent to which poor governance and corruption has exacerbated the activities of the militant groups. Most of the analyses in this literature were based on the emergence of the group through a religious prism. Although Aghedo and Osumah (2012) passively tried to relate the Boko Haram insurgency with the failure of leadership to provide basic needs, their study concentrated more on the radical ideology of the group, noting the excessive killings of non-Muslims as well as the attempt to impose shari'a, Islamic law, in the country. However, the group's radical approach has led to the death of both innocent Muslims and Christians by suicide bombings and direct gun attacks.

In his study, Adesoji (2010) gave a chronological overview of radical Islamic sects and their quest to implement the Islamic justice system in secular countries such as Nigeria. The study noted the strong correlation between inequality, poverty, and continued uprisings, be they religious, regional, or ethnic. Another study by Onuoha (2010) gave a general historical account of the emergence of Boko Haram and its subsequent confrontation with the Nigerian government. It also suggested that the bloody and violent confrontation with government signified a link between the group and international terrorist organizations like Al-Qaida. Although this study cited Nigerian system decay as a pivotal reason for the escalation of violence, it did not provide empirical evidence

to support the theory. In another related study, Waldek and Jayasekara (2011) tried to unveil the historical evolution of Boko Haram's leadership, its operational strategy, and its hierarchical structure. It also attempted to evaluate the group's connection with other radical groups within the regional and international borders.

Cook's (2011) study about Boko Haram started by analyzing the evolution of radical Islam in Nigeria, as well as the numerous Muslim sects in Northern Nigeria and the rivalry that existed among them. The study attempted to draw a major inference that the period of democratization of Nigeria starting in 1999 rekindled the quest by many Muslims to adopt the shari'a legal system in the northern part of the country. This gave Boko Haram the impetus to propagate its puritanical views about the doctrines of Islam, and provided a platform for the group to recruit the huge population of Islamic adherents. The study noted that one of the main reasons for the upsurge in membership of Boko Haram was the extra-judicial killing of the leader of the group, Mohammed Yusuf, by the Nigerian police.

Other studies on Boko Haram (Onapajo & Uzodike, 2012; Onapajo, Uzodike, & Whetho, 2012) suggested multidimensional reasons for the emergence of the group. The major impetus proffered by these studies was the antagonist stand toward Western civilization. Coupled with the failure of the government to improve the lives of Nigerian citizens, this aggravated the abhorrence of Western institutions, although these studies took only a cursory look at the widespread poverty as a reason for the emergence of Boko Haram. The study depended wholly on secondary sources of data for its analysis, but our study has augmented these with primary sources of data to elicit more concise findings on the phenomenon.

Another study (Salaam, 2012) suggests that the history of Boko Haram is synchronized with the lag in Western education in northern Nigeria. The disparity between the northern and southern regions in their attainment of Western education has played a major role in the rise of militant groups. Both before and after Nigeria gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1960, the northern region remained backward in Western education. This was because, in northern region, Western education was perceived as an alien philosophy, and was considered a tool used by the Christian missionaries. This attitude continues to the modern day, and the gap grows wider as the population increases. The study pointed out the important role of poverty and unemployment in the region as a major trigger for the group's activities; this is also in line with our argument in this research. However, we have delved further to expound how this is related to poor governance, as well as to the threats to the Nigerian state from the two major violent groups.

Another related study (Loimeir, 2007, pp. 24-27) endeavored to analyze radical militancy in Northern Nigeria from a historical prism of colonialism. The fusion of Western civilization into the semi-feudalistic society of Northern Nigeria during the colonial era brought about sudden change. As to

be expected, many people were resistant to the change; this led to the emergence of several sects, all professing Islam but opposed to each other. The study suggested that Boko Haram is an extension of the numerous sects that emerged in northern Nigeria following independence.

## Conceptual Framework

In trying to understand how poor governance fueled the unrest and provided an enabling environment for the JASLWJ to recruit members, it is necessary to contextualize the concept of governance. In conceptualizing governance, Kaufmann (2005) illustrated its three main elements: political, economic, and institutional dimensions, thus defining governance as follows:

The traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised for the common good . . . the government capacity to effectively manage its resources and implement sound policies, and the respect of citizens and the state for the country's institutions. (pp. 41-43)

Rotberg (2009) posited that "governance is the delivery of high quality political goods to citizens by government of all kinds . . . political goods are security and safety, rule of law, participation and human rights, sustainable economic opportunity and human development" (pp. 113-116). Hence, the ability of the government to provide its people with the basic needs and satisfaction remains the paramount objective of government. Rotberg (2004) further stressed that when sovereign countries are battered by continuous internal unrest and failure to deliver the basic needs to the populace, the nation tends to fail. Burgoon (2006) described how social welfare policies such as social security, provision of health care, education, and employment would go a long way in reducing poverty, general insecurity, political and religious extremism, thereby reducing the tendency for violent militancy in a society. Good governance is essential for maintaining and sustaining the legitimacy of authority; its absence becomes poor governance, allowing poverty, crimes, and corruption to mushroom, affecting the performance of authority and weakening its legitimacy.

Hence, this article uses some sections of Ted Robert Gurr's Relative Deprivation (RD) theory. Gurr (1970) defined RD as

actors' perception of discrepancy between their value expectations and their value capabilities. Value expectations are the goods and conditions of life to which people believe they are rightfully entitled. Value capabilities are the goods and conditions they think they are capable of getting and keeping . . . and value position is the amount or level of value actually attained.

These values are multidimensional and are comprised of those things humans struggle to have for their sustenance.

Gurr categorizes the values into three groups: welfare values (economic and self-actualization), power values (participation in society and security), and interpersonal (relationships and place in society).

The theory suggests that the larger the discrepancy between the expectations and the capabilities of people, the greater the depth of discontent. In a society with inequitable distribution of social and economic goods, when people compare their current value position with that of others within their society who are better off, and they know they hold the same legitimate right and privilege to have what those others have, it triggers an atmosphere of tension that leads to violence (Bowen, 1977). This theory explains how deprivation of social and economic goods leads to frustration, aggression, and ultimately to collective violence. When people are denied the basic needs of life, especially when those in charge of the distribution of social and economic goods live flamboyant lives, it creates an atmosphere of tension that often leads to a combustible violence. Hence, this theory is suitable to explain how corruption and bad governance by the Nigerian elite widened the population's social and economic gap, thus creating an atmosphere of discontent and protest, and resulting in violence. The return of democracy to the Nigeria in 1999, after 30 years of military rule, created high expectations of a rewarding future for the people of the country under a transparent and accountable government. However, the tenets of democracy were compromised by the ruling elites, causing grievances and radicalization. This article uses the RD theory to explore how poor governance led to RD and consequently fueled militancy, particularly after the return of democracy to Nigeria. The RD theory illustrates how deprivation of social and economic goods leads to frustration, aggression, and violence. The escalation of poverty and unemployment in northern Nigeria has drastically increased the potential for recruitment by militant groups in the region. It is with this backdrop that we hypothesize that poor governance in Nigeria has been equally responsible for the upsurge in activity of the insurgent group JASLWJ.

## Findings

Northern Nigeria, which was once a separate colony, contains the vast majority of poor people in the country (see Appendix A). The pervasive backwardness of Northern Nigeria was ignored by its longest serving military ruling elites before they handed over power to a democratic government in 1999. For instance, in 1998, at the eve of the return of democracy to the country, the basic primary education enrollment in the northern region was below 60% and even below 20% in some states within the region (Okobia, 2002). As such, there is a wide difference in the literacy level between the northern and southern parts of the country. Borno, a state in the northern part, has a 14.5% literacy level, whereas Lagos, a state in the south, achieved 92.0% (United



**Table 1.** Comparisons Between Yobe State and Ekiti State.

States	Population	Number of primary class rooms 2004-2008	Total number of teachers	Total number of teachers qualified to teach (%)	Total pupil enrolment		
					2004	2005	2008
Yobe	2,321,339	533-533	7,405	22	460,162	491,321	531,699
Ekiti	2,398,957	5,305-7,086	8,670	90	188,761	188,295	219,712

Source. National Bureau of Statistics (2009, pp. 59, 85, 271). Compiled by authors.

**Table 2.** Unemployment Rates in Some Selected Northern States.

States	Year									
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Adamawa	12	11.90	16.65	21.40	17.70	21.5	29.4	29.4	22.8	33.8
Bauchi	10.40	20.50	25.10	29.70	23.90	20.5	37.2	37.2	27	41
Benue	8.20	4.80	11.70	18.60	10.8	7.9	7.8	8.5	6	14.2
Borno	6.40	0.80	3.55	6.30	5.80	12.5	11.8	27.7	26.7	29.1
Gombe	13.40	7.60	15.20	22.80	15.60	10.50	32.1	32.1	27.2	38.7
Taraba	16.80	23.80	13.60	3.40	14.00	15.2	19.9	26.8	24.7	12.7
Yobe	15.00	12.10	10.65	8.00	13.60	27.0	12.8	27.3	26.2	35.6
Jigawa	6.10	20.50	19.80	19.10	21.60	27.3	26.5	26.5	14.3	35.9
Kano	12.80	25.90	22.50	19.10	19.40	12.70	27.70	27.6	14.7	27.3

Source. National Bureau of Statistics (NBS; 2012a, p. 41) and NBS (2009, p. 238). Compiled by authors.

Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2012). Furthermore, even in the democratic era, the states in the region did nothing to mitigate the issue, for instance, since the return of democracy, Yobe has consistently allocated an average of 16% of its total budget to education, whereas the health sector is allocated 6% (Chinedu & Olabimtan, 2010). However, even with such rates of allocation, the education sector remains in poor condition (see Table 1). For instance, between 2004 and 2008, Ekiti, which is in the south of the country, was able to build more primary schools, as well as improve the teaching capability of the teachers, whereas in Yobe, the teaching skills of the majority of the teachers continue to deteriorate. Essentially, while some of the state budget for education pays the salaries of unqualified teachers, other funds drain into the funnel of corruption.

In addition, in the northeast region, the health situation has worsened (see Appendix C), and also the level of maternal and child health has been retrogressing. About 139 deaths occur in every 1,000 children, compared with only about 32 in 1,000 in the southern states. This is a result of a lack of medical services (Doctor, Bairagi, Findley, Helleringer, & Dahiru, 2011). Informants interviewed in this study believe that the reoccurring uprising by JASLWJ in northern Nigeria, though purporting to be religious, has been triggered mainly by government corruption that escalated the level of poverty, unemployment, and lack of basic needs for the people, which in turn generated the radicalization of unemployed youth.

Although there are studies (such as Abadie, 2004; Krueger & Maleckova, 2002, 2003; Pape, 2005) suggesting that poverty and lack of education do not necessarily lead people to acts of terrorism, other studies (such as Blomberg, Hess, & Weerapana, 2004; Burgoon, 2006; Freytag, Krüger, Meierrieks, & Schneider, 2009; Zaidi, 2010) have shown how the reduction of poverty could reduce terrorism acts. In the context of Nigeria, and particularly in the case of the JASLWJ, the high level of corruption by public officials, which has occasioned the persistent level of unemployment and poverty, has created an environment of social tension, resulting in an increased recruitment of youths to the ranks of militancy.

In the northern region, Kano has been the commercial nerve state from the pre-colonial era to modern northern Nigeria, and remains the industrial hub of the region. However, this is fast becoming a mirage, as the economic potential of the region has been crumbling due to a multitude of reasons: in particular, the collapse of agriculture, dependency on oil rents, and the near total absence of electricity supplied to industries in the last decade. These issues have significantly affected the socio-economic health of the region, resulting in unemployment and poverty. The rate of unemployment (see Table 2) has significantly increased in northern states where the JASLWJ has attracted followers. Even though the statistics provided by the government are often highly underestimated, the published rates of unemployment are alarming.

The JASLWJ is largely perceived to be an Islamic movement where radical elements are trying to impose Islamic laws, and in the process killing non-Muslims. However, recently, the victims of the JASLWJ activities have been members of all faiths existing within the country. In November 2014, suicide bombers killed several people in a mosque where Emir Muhammadu Sanusi II had previously castigated the movement of the group as un-Islamic, and he called on all Nigerians to protect themselves against the group ("Emir of Kano, Sanusi, Urges Nigerians to Defend Selves Against Boko Haram," 2014). The group is no respecter of any faith; even though they profess to champion Islam, their activities revealed the contrary by the wanton killings of innocent lives as well as forced conversion of their captives to Islam.<sup>4</sup>

However, the vast majority of these victims have been average Nigerians who rely on the government for social and physical security. In this regard, one informant suggests that

[F]or me it is about poverty, forget about religion because religion has very little to do with it. It is poverty and the people just rose against those who lead them in the way that have led to their being in the kinds of condition they are. There is a complete disconnect between those who are in power in Nigeria and the people of Nigeria for variety of reasons . . . Nigerian state has become a criminal enterprise; that is what it is, let's be honest with ourselves . . . The governors collect significant part of the budget, called it security votes and put it in their pockets. (Informant 27, personal interview, February 26, 2012)

The JASLWJ claims it wants to eradicate the perceived social injustice in the country, and they believe this can only be achieved through the establishment of and adherence to strict Islamic shari'a, a belief shared by numerous Muslims (Falola, 1998). In fact, the call for the establishment of shari'a law as the formal state law did not start with the JASLWJ; after the return of democracy in 1999, many northern political elites felt the application of shari'a law would cleanse the corrupt society and ensure social justice, so they implemented the shari'a law in some northern states (Mustapha, 2010). However, the implementation of shari'a law by 12 state governors in northern Nigeria did nothing to prevent corruption by political elites (Brulliard, 2009); the ruling elites continued with what some Muslims from northern Nigeria consider abhorrent to shari'a. For example, a Muslim governor from the enclave of the JASLWJ was caught on videotape giving money to an Arab prostitute in a club in Dubai (Kperogi, 2012). This confirmed the perception in the north that the law has become a political instrument for achieving political gains by the elites.

Consequently, the failure of the ruling elites, coupled with the politicization of shari'a law in northern Nigeria, has deepened the mistrust of government by the governed. The apparent disregard of shari'a by the political elites contributed to the radicalization of JASLWJ members, because the group felt the law should be implemented to its extreme.

Instead, the political elites were using it to further their personal agendas. JASLWJ seized the opportunity to uphold and radically expand the elements of shari'a law. As articulated by the group's purported spokesperson, Abu Qaqa, "We have been motivated by the stark injustice in the land . . . Poor people are tired of the injustice, people are crying for saviors, and they know the messiahs are Boko Haram" (Monica, 2012). This is consistent with the assertion of another informant who averred,

I said that whether it is in the Niger Delta or in Maiduguri or in Jos there is always, always an initial cry for justice which is ignored and it is the ignominy that you give to that leads to frustrations, that lead to violence. I am one of those who believe that clearly the social condition, though not excusable, but create a ripe environment for these sorts of activities to strive . . . (Informant 20, personal interview, February 21, 2012)

Furthermore, the strategic approach of citing social injustice to recruit members into the movement is evidently working. The young, unemployed Nigerians, who rarely eat more than one meal a day, swiftly join the group due to the perceived social injustice by the ruling elite. The Nigerian Secret Service revealed that some communities are shielding members of Boko Haram (Yemi, 2012), which inevitably makes it very difficult for law enforcement to curtail the group's activities. People who are aggrieved about the unabated nature of the elites' corrupt behavior are easily recruited to act against the system, particularly when such calls are made on the platform of religion. Another informant reiterates the role of corruption and poverty, suggesting that

people who are poor, who can't afford three square meals, are prone and easy to be persuaded by people who could promise them anything . . . poverty which is as a result of massive corruption in the country has direct correlation with radicalization in certain element in our society. Because somebody who is gainfully employed, who could afford three square meals, who has a family, who has a decent accommodation will hardly want to be a suicide bomber. (Informant 11, personal interview, March 12, 2012)

Available statistics from the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS) have shown the social and economic disparities in northern Nigeria, particularly in the northeastern section where the activities of JASLWJ have been severe. According to the NBS (2012) report, an average of 74% of the total population in each of the northern states lives in absolute poverty (see Appendix A); it is implicit from this that the majority of the youths there are out of a job, and they form unrestrained groups that roam the streets of the communities. One informant concludes,

It is not surprising that this Boko Haram insurgency started and has largely been a northeastern phenomenon. The roots of all these problems are poverty and lack of opportunity, those are the roots of all these problems . . . when you look, you will see it is

young people between the ages of 18 and 30 that are engaged in most of these activities and it is because of lack of opportunity . . . Boko Haram started from the Northeast because of poverty. It is the fundamental issue and I think unless you address that, you will continue to have this kind of problem all over the place. (Informant 29, personal interview, January 28, 2012)

The northern Nigerian region comprises 19 states. The economy of the region has been based in the past on agriculture and mining of natural resources. However, these sectors have been in abysmal disarray for more than four decades, because of two particular developments, that is, the disbandment of regional governments, concentrating power in the central government; and almost total dependency on crude oil revenue. Thus, overdependence on crude oil revenue by the northern Nigerian ruling elites has blurred the economic potency of the region and subjected the citizens to artificial hardship. The population of northern Nigeria is mostly engaged in agriculture as a profession, but overemphasis of government revenue projections has focused on seeking crude oil rents from other regions, jeopardizing the potential of the agricultural sector of northern Nigeria. The overdependence on crude oil revenue by northern political elites has created tension with the crude oil producing areas in the southern states. The culture of crude oil dependence was further strengthened by all the 19 state governors with the return of democracy in 1999; producing crude oil is an easy money-making venture, which the Nigerian Constitution guarantees to all federating states, so the states neglected other sources for revenue. The political elites have created culture in Nigeria that is characterized by a lack of accountability and transparency in governance (Aluko, 2002), as such public wealth is highly secretive and controlled by public officers. This diverts the wealth meant for people-oriented projects to private pockets. The overreliance on crude oil rents by the northern state governors has drastically marginalized the labor force, destabilized the region's productive economy, and has bred corruption in the management of public wealth.

In addition to the vast arable land in northern Nigeria, each of the 19 states in the region has large quantity of unexploited solid mineral resources; for example, the Federal Government Report mentions indicates large deposits of gold as well as other solid mineral resources in the states of Kaduna, Zamfara, Kogi, and Kebbi (Ministry of Mines and Steel Development, 2010). The lack of attention to the mining sector has been detrimental to the economy of northern Nigeria. Olokesusi (2010) observed that the persistent inflow of migrants from West African countries has increased the level of illegal mining in Nigeria, thereby causing the government to lose about US\$30 million yearly. One of the major reasons for this lack of attention to other potential revenue sectors in northern Nigeria has been the timely reimbursement of the state governments' accounts with crude oil rents. Solid mineral mining requires capital and long-term investment; and political elites always prefer to invest in a

short-term project that will yield a political profit, not necessarily as a dividend of democracy for the people.

Furthermore, the Federal Government acknowledged that "the growth, prosperity and national security of any country are critically dependent upon adequacy of its electricity supply industry" (Presidential Action Committee on Power and Presidential Task Force on Power, 2010). However, from 1999 to 2007, about US\$16 billion was spent to revive the power sector with no positive improvement, as revealed by the investigative panel of the National Assembly. The panel accused the former president Olusegun Obasanjo with complicity and corrupt practices in the matter ("Obasanjo Denies Power Corruption," 2008). No effective action has been taken to prosecute those involved, but money continues to be channeled into the sector without commensurate results, and the country is still struggling with insufficient power. The lack of electricity for industries in Nigeria, who use it as their major source of energy, has caused a number of industries and factories to collapse; in northern Nigeria, many industries have closed down due to power outages. This has reduced the availability of jobs in northern Nigeria, increasing unemployment, and adversely affecting the socio-economic structure of the region. This informant revealed that

the level of poverty and unemployment in the north has links to the violence in the region . . . I personally have a factory, a furniture factory for the last 25 years and when we started 1988 at Sharada industrial estate . . . I had more than 200 people working for me at that time. Now if you go to that same industrial area where I still have my factory there, first of all my factory is closed . . . from staff strength of 200 staff to probably now 5 . . . So where are those people now? They must be somewhere and they must feed themselves. (Informant 12, personal interview, January 28, 2012)

When large industries shut down, their now unemployed workers have no money to buy goods, which causes smaller businesses to fail. This eventually results in an increase in the number of alms seekers in the street. A vivid statistic in an official report states that Kano, only 1 of the 19 northern States in Nigeria, had more than three million beggars in 2006 (Ndagi, 2012). Such a large number of alms beggars on the street of an otherwise wealthy nation portend serious danger; Awofeso, Ritchie, and Degeling (2003) concluded that the potential for recruiting hungry children into the ranks of militant groups is very possible.

Pinstrup-Andersen and Shimokawa (2008) argued that "poverty, hunger and food insecurity, together with a very unequal distribution of income and other material goods, generate anger, hopelessness, and a sense of unfairness and lack of social justice," and this creates an atmosphere of tension that leads to violence (p. 513). The northeast part of the country where the JASLWJ emerged was particularly backward, and has suffered from various forms of inequality. For instance, Langer, Mustapha, and Stewart (2007)

found horizontal inequality in the northeast: Maternal mortality was 939% greater than the level found in the Southwest. Moreover, the northeast is the region where in every state an average of 74% of the population lives in absolute poverty (see Appendix A). These types of inequalities trigger violence and insurgency (Murshed & Gates, 2003). Furthermore, other forms of horizontal inequities are evident in almost every social and economic aspect of the region (see Appendix B: Tables B1-B5). All these inequities have been the result of bad governance that originated in the military era, and continues unabated in the democratic era.

## Conclusion

As the ongoing level of corruption in the domain of governance in Nigeria increases, the gap between the governed and the leaders widens. There are several former state governors currently facing corruption charges for squandering public funds. In 2013, only two governors were convicted through a plea bargain deal with the federal investigators. Others escape justice, like Peter Odili, the former governor of Rivers state from southern Nigeria, to whom a court granted a perpetual injunction, which remains in effect, to avoid his arrest and investigation. Hence, the complete disconnect in the constitutional norms of governance, which is indicative of the retrogressive attitude of the political leadership in various strata of the Nigerian society. This disconnect and the total absence of social and economic services create a feeling of disorientation in the average citizen of the country, more especially the vulnerable ones that barely have enough to eat. This environment facilitated the recruitment of youths by a group that promises to bring change and solve their problems through adherence to puritanical religious doctrines.

This article has argued that poor governance in Nigeria has changed the internal dynamics of the socio-political and economic systems of the country. Political leaders, particularly in northern Nigeria, are receiving revenue from sales of crude oil every month, thereby jeopardizing other potentially productive sectors of economic development in the region. The near total absence of basic infrastructure, coupled with dependence on crude oil revenue, has centralized the wealth of the northern states in the hands of ruling elites. This has caused pervasive corruption in public governance, thus negating the primary objective of adhering to the basic attributes of good governance as enshrined in the Nigerian constitution.

Although JASLWJ has been known for its fundamentalist doctrine, this article concludes that a major reason for its surge of activity has not been religious fervor, but the level of

social injustice that gave rise to poverty and unemployment in the country. Curtailing the activities of the group would require the political elites to address one deep-seated issue: pervasive corruption. Furthermore, until and unless the leaders recognize crude oil as a secondary source of revenue and revitalize other existing sources of income, social and economic justice and a sustainable economy in Nigeria will in all probability continue to be dwarfed by corruption.

## Appendix A

### Comparison Between North and South Poverty

S/N	10 states with population in absolute poverty (northern states)		10 states with population in absolute poverty (southern states)	
		%		%
1	Jigawa	74.1	Bayelsa	47.0
2	Kebbi	72.0	Akwa-Ibom	53.7
3	Adamawa	74.2	Cross Rivers	52.9
4	Plateau	74.1	Anambra	56.8
5	Yobe	73.8	Imo	50.5
6	Zamfara	70.8	Ekiti	52.4
7	Gombe	74.2	Oyo	51.8
8	Bauchi	73.0	Osun	37.9
9	Sokoto	81.2	Lagos	48.6
10	Borno	55.1	Ondo	45.7

Source. National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2012b).

Note. The table is compiled by author.

## Appendix B

(Tables B1-B5: Some comparison on the provision of some social services between some selected states the JASLWJ attracted its membership, with other states in Nigeria)

**Table B1.** Type of Electricity Supply, 2007.

Northern states	PHCN only (gov. company) (1)	Rural electrification		Other states	1	2	3
		only (2)	None (3)				
Adamawa	22.2	0.0	71.4	Edo	80.7	0.0	16.9
Bauchi	38.7	0.0	58.5	Ogun	71.3	0.4	27.1
Borno	19.4	4.6	64.5	Imo	68.5	1.4	20.8
Gombe	50.	00	49.3	Osun	67.6	1.6	29.0
Taraba	3.7	0.7	91.0	Delta	62.7	0.0	30.2
Yobe	16.2	0.4	82.9	Ondo	58.0	0.0	29.0

Source. National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2009, p. 46). Compiled by authors. Note. PHCN = Power Holding Company of Nigeria.



**Table B2.** Health Care Facilities Population Ratio by State 2004.

Northern states	Population (1)	Total health facility (2)	Ratio of pop. to HF (3)	Other states	1	2	3
Adamawa	3,013,043	333	9,048	Osun	3,280,267	853	3,846
Borno	3,806,316	454	8,384	Imo	3,783,043	905	4,180
Gombe	2,152,197	247	8,713	Abia	2,751,156	748	3,678
Taraba	2,258,552	611	3,696	Kwara	2,330,089	566	4,117
Yobe	2,277,687	265	8,595	Cross river	2845682	544	5,231

Source. National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2009, p. 185). Compiled by authors.  
Note. pop. = population; HF = health facility.

**Table B3.** Number of Medical Doctors by State.

Northern states	Year		Other states	Year	
	2010	2011		2010	2011
Adamawa	58	6	Lagos	2,029	2,575
Bauchi	31	4	Edo	603	722
Borno	154	168	Oyo	517	602
Gombe	76	81	Platue	354	368
Taraba	8	66	Rivers	587	604
Yobe	34	2	Kwara	348	379
Jigawa	48	6	Kaduna	488	323
Katsina	21	8	Osun	345	463

Source. National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2012a, p. 34). Compiled by authors.

**Table B4.** Births by Type of Birth Attendant (Distribution in Percentage).

Northern states	Doctor	Trained nurse/ midwife	Traditional birth attendant	Other states	Doctor	Trained nurse/ midwife	Traditional birth attendant
Adamawa	4.8	22.2	42.9	Osun	47.2	47.2	5.6
Bauchi	11.0	39.0	34.1	Imo	31.6	57.9	Nil
Borno	Nil	10	20	Lagos	48.1	38.5	7.7
Gombe	7.0	14.0	65.1	Abuja	33.9	51.6	9.7
Yobe	6.5	32.3	41.9	Delta	34.8	56.5	8.7
Jigawa	10.2	11.2	53.1	Edo	34.7	42.9	10.2
Kano	7.8	5.9	58.2	Anambra	30.3	54.5	Nil
Kasina	3.0	17.9	58.2	Nasarawa	29.4	55.3	7.1

Source. National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2012a, p. 31). Compiled by authors.

**Table B5.** Postal Services (NIPOST) indicating employment opportunities.

Northern states	Departmental post offices (1)	Sub-post offices (2)	Postal agencies (3)	Other states	1	2	3
Adamawa	19	1	14	Abia	32	3	102
Bauchi	26	Nil	12	Anambra	86	16	113
Kastina	Nil	Nil	12	Enugu	31	25	153
Borno	17	Nil	Nil	Imo	64	27	74
Gombe	Nil	Nil	Nil	Ondo	73	2	75
Taraba	12	Nil	Nil	Osun	49	7	87
Yobe	4	Nil	1	Oyo	29	Nil	87

Source. National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2012c, p. 19). Compiled by authors.  
Note. NIPOST = Nigeria Postal Service.

## Appendix C

### Former Northern State Governors With Pending Corruption Cases

S/N	Name	Office
1	Saminu Turaki	Former Governor, JigawaState
2	Danjuma Goje	Former Governor, GombeState
3	Adamu Abdullahi	Former Governor, NasarawaState
4	Juashu Dariye	Former Governor, PlateauState
5	Attahiru Bafarawa	Former Governor, SokotoState
6	Jolly Nyeme	Former Governor, TarabaState
7	Michael Botmang	Former Governor, PlatueState
8	Abubakar Audu	Former Governor, KogiState
9	Murtala Nyako*	Former Governor of AdamawaState. Impeached from office due to corruption allegation*

Source. EFCC Zero Tolerance Magazine: August 2008, February, July 2009, May, October 2010, and Punch Newspaper, 15 July 2014.

Note. The table is compiled by the author. EFCC = Economic and Financial Crimes Commission. Compiled by authors.

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### Notes

1. The sect preaches the removal of innovation in Islam and it advocates for the strict entrenchment of the teaching of Prophet Mohammed in practicing Islam. More on the history of the sect can be seen in Amara (2012).
2. The interview with Ja'afar was in Hausa, a local dialect in northern Nigeria, he revealed that Yusuf acknowledged his mistakes and promised to correct (see "Sheik Mahmud Ja'afar Adam Kan Mohammed Yusuf," 2011).
3. Yusuf has always voiced out his feelings about Nigerian government in this respect. In June 2009, just few weeks before he was killed, he delivered a sermon in Hausa language to his followers with the title *Budeddiyar wasika zuwaga Gomnatin Tarrayyar Nigeria* (open letter to the government of Nigeria). In it, he castigated the government and its institutions.
4. Senior Islamic scholars in Nigeria such as Sheik Dahiru Bauchi and Shiek Ahmad Gumi have voiced out their disapproval of the *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad* (JASLWJ) approach. This is in line with the Islamic injunctions in the holy Qur'an, which states, "There shall be no compulsion in the religion" (Qur'an Chapter 2, verse 256). And also, "But whoever kills a believer intentionally—his recompense is Hell, wherein he will abide eternally, and Allah has become angry with him and has cursed him and has prepared for him a great punishment" (Qur'an Chapter 4, verse 93).

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