

ELITE POLITICS AND THE EMERGENCE OF BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY IN NIGERIA

Peter Mbah, Chikodiri Nwangwu, and Herbert C. Edeh

University of Nigeria

Abstract. This study examines the role of elite politics in the emergence of *Boko Haram* insurgency in Nigeria. It argues that the struggle between political elites of northern and southern extractions over the control of state power has intensified national conflicts and insurgency in the country. Political elites are no longer divided by ideology but by economics of state power. Elite politics of who gets what, when, and how and the struggle for state power led to the formation of the sect and fuels the incessant attacks and insecurity in Nigeria. The study adopts a methodology involving re-description of history based on documentary research. It establishes that elite politics accounts for the emergence and escalation of *Boko Haram* insurgency in Nigeria. Accordingly, the study recommends that good and inclusive governance be employed as a panacea for harmonizing the fractured Nigerian state and overcoming insurgency in Nigeria.

Keywords: elite politics, *Boko Haram*, state power, terrorism, political elite, good governance

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3176/tr.2017.2.06>

1. Introduction

Political elite is undoubtedly a crucial determinant of the history and identity of a given society. It is also a vital force in politics and violence. *Boko Haram* was seen as an Islamic sect pursuing religious issues. Its attacks has not just added a new phenomenon to Africa's numerous conflicts but created a new dimension to such conflicts. Terrorism is not just an African phenomenon but a global one. It seems that the intensification of the global circuits of capital is linked to the rising tide of terrorism. Terrorism refers to "violence principally, but not exclusively, carried out by organized and unorganized non-state actors, as well as the state, designed to instil fear on victims in order to achieve political, economic, social and even religious ends" (Mbah 2007:110). Essentially, terrorism can be placed con-

textually throughout history by various sects to achieve objectives through the use of violence (Aly 2011).

Since 1997, Africa has witnessed a significant increase in the number and level of intensity of terrorist incidents. According to the incidents database of the Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism, between 1997 and 2007 Africa recorded an estimated 522 acts of terrorism, resulting in 8,477 injuries, and 2,614 fatalities. Records show that 73% of these terrorist incidents were domestic while only about 27% were transnational, qualifying Africa as a continent perpetually at war against itself. Despite the high frequency of domestic terrorism in Africa, the many terrorism cleanup initiatives on the continent primarily concern transnational terrorism, especially since the epochal events of 9/11 (Agbiboa 2013).

In modern times, manifestation of international terrorism can be seen or distinguished essentially by political and social circumstances within the international environment. *Boko Haram* exhibits similar tactics and motivation. There was an initial differentiation between *Boko Haram*, which was regarded as a kind of domestic terror group excluding it from the international network with *Al-Qaeda*. In this way, the emergence of terror groups in the countries of Africa was linked with economic deprivation and poverty. Thus, the political discourses in Nigeria were based on poor governance, economic deprivation, and elite corruption. However, religion acts as the ideological force, legitimizes and unifies the group and aims to achieve one of the three primary religious goals: establishment of a religiously pure state, establish religious governments or destruction of earth (Aly 2011). In spite of its marginality in global affairs, Nigeria appears to have been drawn into this spiral of terrorism. *Boko Haram* is predominant in the north-eastern part of Nigeria, particularly in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States. It has in the last half a decade ago become the most dangerous insurgent group in Nigeria. They are known to destructively attack innocent citizens, government institutions, security formations, telecommunications masts, banks, religious organizations, educational institutions, media houses, beer halls, markets and local communities with a kind of guerrilla warfare (Mbah and Nwangwu 2014; Mohammed 2014).

Scholars and social commentators have advanced theories or propositions to explain the emergence and activities of *Boko Haram* in the north-eastern Nigeria. The theories are divided into two broad spectrums. One views the problem essentially as internal. The other blames external forces. The former looks at socio-economic factors as well as deep-seated religious differences and animosity in the Nigerian society as the driving force. It also includes vengeance over the death of the sect's leader, Ustaz Muhammed Yussuf. For instance, Soludo (2012) posits that, although the average poverty incidence for Nigeria stands at 54% of the total population, the three regions in the north, account for a disproportionate share of that average. Olojo (2013:4) also argues that "individual and group grievances, such as poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, discrimination, and economic marginalisation, can be used as mobilising instruments by sinister groups to find support and recruits for terrorist activities". The relevance of this can be understood in terms of societal challenges that are increasingly being

conceptualised within the framework of human security. With a poverty prevalence of 72.2%, the north-east region has the highest level of poverty in Nigeria. Poverty index of there was emphasized to buttress such arguments that poverty is the driver of the emergence of *Boko Haram* sect. They argue that the sect is a reflection of desperate poverty, and, therefore, represents a kind of disillusionment and discontent in the north-eastern part of Nigeria where *Boko Haram* is based. The index highlights states that, the north-east consisting of Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe has the highest incidence of poverty ranging between 54.9% to 72.2% followed by north-west which consists of Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara and the north-central consisting of Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger and Plateau (Ojeme 2011). However, this argument cannot be sustained because *Al-Qaeda* as a terrorist group was formed and sustained by rich millionaires such as Osama bin Laden and other members who are medical doctors, businessmen *et cetera*. Again, the initial organization of *Boko Haram* sect started with graduates from the University of Maiduguri. Secondly, poor people in the north-east as far as that variable of poverty is concerned cannot afford to buy sophisticated arms, which members of the sect use in their attacks. They have recruited the poor ones as their foot soldiers but poverty is not the independent variable.

Furthermore, scholars such as Onuoha (2012), Alorziewa (2012) and Kukah (1993) strongly portray religion as the main cause of the emergence of *Boko Haram* as an Islamic sect. This is contrary to scholarly arguments that the terrorist group is part of an international terror group linked to *Al-Qaeda*, *al-Shaabab* and *Al-Qaeda* in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). They make their analysis around the issue of Islamizing the country by rejecting western education and culture. According to Huntington (1996:40–42):

of all the objective elements which define civilizations, however, the most important usually is religion. To a very large degree, the major civilizations in human history have been closely identified with the world's great religions; and people who share ethnicity and language but differ in religion may slaughter each other.

However, it is not wrong to argue from this perspective, what one should consider as the trigger of the emergence of *Boko Haram* is the contradiction between the Islamic and Western civilizations. This lies in the imposition of political and economic will on Islamic civilization by the United States and Europe through the process of globalization which emphasizes neo-liberalism, gender equality and individualism among others. On the other hand, “radical Islam sees globalization as frequently leading to destruction, social and moral crisis with individuals cast adrift in destruction with cultural and political disorientation associated with the imposition of Western values on the Islamic countries” (Mbah 2007:117). Economic and political value systems of the Western industrialized countries are being portrayed as superior to all and any other value systems. Radical Islam views this as a real threat as it tends to destroy Islamic culture. Violence therefore, becomes a legitimate tactic for preventing close relations with the West and

destructive tendencies of the Muslim culture and state. Today, in all Islamic countries, radical Islam offer their people an instrument with which to fend off frightening Western influences in order to preserve accustomed ways of life which are very important to the Muslim people. This is close to what Huntington calls the ‘clash of civilizations’.

Northern Nigeria has been a region with “a predominantly Muslim population, and has a well-documented history of militant religiosity dating back to the highly successful Holy War (jihad) fought by Sheik Othman Dan Fodio (1754–1817) in the early 19th century” (Hickey 1984:251). Othman Dan Fodio launched a jihad against what he saw as the hopelessly corrupt and apostate Hausa ruling elite of the time and established the *sharia*-governed Sokoto Caliphate – one of the largest and most powerful empires in sub-Saharan Africa – across much of northern Nigeria, although it is important to note that much of the area now known as the Middle Belt or North Central States resisted the jihadists (Agbiboa 2013). What began as a search for religious purification soon became a search for a political kingdom (Crowder 1978), with the outcome being that “Islam has remained the focal veneer for the legitimacy of the northern ruling class, and consequently, it’s politicians have always prided themselves as soldiers for the defence of the faith” (cited in Agbiboa 2013:3).

On the other hand, the external forces argument has two planks: one characterizes the problem as part of global Islamic jihad and focuses on the sect’s links with international terror groups such as *al Qaeda* or its affiliates like *al-Shabaab* or AQIM; the other views it as conspiratorial – a grand strategy to achieve the predicted disintegration of Nigeria by 2015, (*Africa in 2020 Panel Report* as cited in Alorzieuwa 2012). Within the conspiratorial thesis is the sub-theme that Nigeria is being targeted by envious and troubled neighbours. This aspect also links it to the now ‘unemployed’ war-hardened returnees from the Libyan crisis and the assorted arms streaming out from that tumult.

Conflicts in Nigeria can be differentiated in terms of their causal factors and dynamics, spatial scales on civilian populations, and consequences on politics, economy, environment, society and even development generally. Each of these dimensions could be singled out for analytical and classificatory purposes. Hence, there are no simple and easy explanations for conflict and violence in Nigeria and theories that have been advanced are quite numerous. None of the foregoing perspectives exclusively explains the problem. While they may not be completely wrong, this study seeks to offer a new explanation of the emergence and escalation of *Boko Haram* insurgency in Nigeria. Thus, analysis that focuses on the political context of the insurgency forms the main point of departure with particular reference to President Jonathan’s interest in both the 2011 and 2015 Presidential Elections.

2. Elite politics and the emergence of *Boko Haram* sect in Nigeria

The emergence and escalation of *Boko Haram* insurgency is rooted in elite politics. The term 'elite' in its general sense refers to "those positions in society which are the summits of key social structure i.e. the higher positions in government, economy, politics, religion etc" (Das-Hara and Chouldbury 1997:233). The elite constitute the superior minority with higher education, greater wealth, and possess easy access to culture, science and technology as well as embody the good qualities of a society (Nnoli 2003). Thus, they invariably take control of the political, economic and socio-cultural life of the people. The Nigerian political system relies on the wisdom of the elite, their political entrepreneurship, ideological commitments and manipulative skills in the realm of party politics and liberal democracy. However, these elite in their contestations within the political system become divided into the two non-homogeneous colonial creations of Northern and Southern Nigeria.

The struggle for political power defines elite politics in Nigeria. In this process and in many ways, the struggle for state power through elections in Nigeria is akin to war. For one thing, mobilization by the elites is always massive, akin to preparation for a major war. It entails each group, north and south assembling many people from their own region in order to win election and acquire state power. For another thing, the heat and violence associated with this struggle and elections appear like war. This is because "elections in Nigeria are a winner-takes-all situation in which the losers lose everything and the winner wins everything; akin to payment of reparations of an enemy defeated in a war" (Ibeanu and Mbah 2012:18). In any case, state power is a means of production for those who have acquired it.

The *Boko Haram* group, therefore, emerged as an instrument in the hands of the northern elite in order to ascend to national position of the presidency after the death of President Yar'Adua. Although it existed in Borno State before then, it was not used by the consensus of the northern elite but utterances and comments from captured members of the sect suggest the support of the northern political elite. The intensification of attacks of the sect after Goodluck Jonathan assumed power also lends credence to this thesis. These elite easily mobilize the youths, especially the poor and downtrodden who have been reduced to street urchins and also live with exploitative Koranic *mallams*. They are frequently deployed to kill non-Muslims and non-indigenes in the north. Currently, the youths have channelled their anger into *Boko Haram* insurgency to overthrow the ruling elite. The monsters they created seem to be loose cannons haunting all Nigerians but especially the northerners now.

In political terms, the *Boko Haram* phenomenon is perhaps more gravitating because of the specific historical context in which it is occurring. First, while other Muslims may want to dissociate themselves from its activities, *Boko Haram* remains a political Islamic movement. It is also occurring in a multi-religious political setting such as Nigeria, in which religion itself is a major factor in

determining the distribution of political power (Kukah 1993). Second, its emergence was preceded by intense political bickering between some, mainly Muslim political actors in the north and their counterparts in the south in the period leading to the electoral victory of President Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian and a southerner. In a political environment in which the power of incumbency is a major factor in determining electoral success, the fact that the victor in the contest superintended over the machinery of the state as a distributive centre for sectional interest, family members, cronies, praise singers, friends, and courtiers of government is not out of place. Most importantly, Jonathan's electoral victory came barely three years after power returned to the north, from an eight-year sojourn in the south, where the north grudgingly ceded it in 1999 following the tumult that resulted from the annulled 1993 Presidential Election, which Moshood Abiola, a southerner and a Moslem was acclaimed the winner.

Through ingenious political engineering by the Nigerian power elites, a power sharing arrangement was devised which rotates central power between the north and south. After eight years in the south *via* Olusegun Obasanjo's presidency (1999–2007), power had returned to the north in May 2007 *via* the Umaru Musa Yar'Adua's presidency and was supposed to remain there for another eight years. Despite the constitutional provision that guarantees his succession by his deputy, Goodluck Jonathan, a southerner, the north was sour for having 'lost' power again to the south by virtue of Yar'Adua's death in May 2010 barely three years into office. "The sense of loss, which ensued from Yar'Adua's death manifested in the political tension in which Nigeria was embroiled in the pre-2011 General Elections period" (Alozieuwa 2012:7). Discussions of politics in Nigeria are frequently characterized in terms of northern and southern rivalry.

3. Elite politics, the struggle for state power and *Boko Haram* insurgency in Nigeria

The transfer of power between fractions of the dominant classes in Nigeria is such a contested terrain. In the ensuing warlike struggles, different groups and individuals try to outdo one another in bending fragile rules and short-circuiting established processes. Winners and losers alike distrust the rules as well as themselves, thus further weakening the rules and procedures, and making it impossible for a stable regime of power transfer and winner to emerge. This lawlessness also explains why personalization of power and private concepts of public business are very rampant (Ibeanu and Mbah 2014).

Since the state is all-powerful and there are few safeguards on how its tremendous power is to be used in a moderate and civil manner, groups and individuals take a great stock in controlling the power of the postcolonial state. Politics is everything and everything is politics, including life and death. In Nigeria, politics is altogether a zero-sum game. The primacy of politics becomes even worse as economic resources contract or become more concentrated, usually

as a result of the persistence of the colonial economic project that supports dependence, stagnation and underdevelopment. As this happens, the social base of the postcolonial state becomes even narrower, further intensifying the primacy of politics. Arbitrariness, lack of moderating political institutions and the narrow social base of the postcolonial state lead to a general lack of faith in it by the people. Therefore, this state exhibits a very low level of legitimacy. Low legitimacy further denudes the confidence of disadvantaged groups in the capacity of the state to protect their interests. Nor are dominant groups less distrustful of the state. For dominant groups, lack of confidence in the state's impartiality strengthens their resolve not to relinquish or share power with political adversaries (Ibeanu and Mbah 2014).

Finally, because this state remains essentially the state of sectional interests rather than a representative of the collective interests of the people, there is no sense of unity of its powers. Instead, it exists as prebends parcelled out to various sectional interests, in the Nigerian case, ethnic interests in particular. Thus, politics becomes fiercely prebendal as ethnic and other sectional interests engage themselves in a fatal contest for increasing, allocating and defending their share of the powers of the state (Joseph 1987).

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that the character of the postcolonial state has heightened conflicts and the Nigerian politics is seen in the following general ways:

- Excessive premium on power converts politics into warfare rather than a process of bargaining, discussion and orderly transfer of power.
- There is a weak sense of a shared future, especially among the constituent ethnic groups. Consequently, the primacy of politics and premium on power persist. There is a dominance of exclusive rather than inclusive strategies of power.
- Absolutism and totalitarianism of the state are leading to widespread deradicalisation of politics through the so-called 'politics of consensus'. The antinomy of 'politics of consensus' is that it is pursued in a context of deepening exclusivism and lack of a sense of a shared future.
- Related to the deradicalisation of politics is the use of dubious plebiscitary and acclamatory methods like rallies, popular drafts and nominations (rather than institutionalized party or community-based competition) as means of selecting political officers and reaching decisions.
- There is an overwhelming inclination towards personalization of rule and sit-tight mentality (self-succession) among political leaders because of the limitless power and prestige conferred by the enormity of state power.
- Absence of effective institutional mechanisms for moderating political competition leads to conversion of political competition into warfare among ethnic groups, thereby elevating the military, the masters of warfare and antithesis of democracy, into a position of social pre-eminence (Ibeanu and Mbah 2014:48).

These general characteristics emerged because Nigeria as one of the peripheral capitalist formations that emerged as a product of the extensive growth of capital at its monopoly stage thrives on primitive capital accumulation and corruption (Ekekwe 1986). Because resources of the state follow so rigidly and crudely the geometry of power, the distribution rather than production of wealth is badly skewed against other ethnic members. This negative skewness can be attributed to the class character of the postcolonial state. The ruling class in postcolonial Nigeria is highly fractious and roughly corresponds to the patterns of dominance during the colonial period. This class engages in grim factional battles for the control of state power. This arises from too high premium placed on political power. Consequently, as fractions this class has their particular interests served by the state and can only be conducive to exclusion and marginalization of groups and individuals, whether they are ethnic or sectional interests. To achieve and retain power in Nigeria, ethnic appeals were made. Thus, "for the Nigerian governing class, development was synonymous with personal enrichment and the use of state power for this process has been theoretically and practically accepted by them" (Nnoli 1993:4). Once state power is achieved it is always used for personal economic enrichment of those who have achieved it and for their supporters.

The basis of politics in Nigeria is often unstable and mercurial. The critical defining factors may be clan, ethnic group, state, region or religion. However, ethnic identity remains the most politically important factor in politics. Consequently, Nigeria's approximately 250 distinct ethnic groups articulate their interests and attempt to fill them politically. Still, often ethnic identity exists in complex relationships with other factors in defining politics in Nigeria. Sometimes politics is defined along the lines of ethno-regional identity as in the case of the North, South and Middle Belt, at other times it is defined in terms of ethno-religious groupings as in the mainly Moslem North and predominantly Christian South; other defining factors include minority versus majority ethnic groups, and numerous sub-ethnic identities.

These perceptions of the North and South in Nigeria play important role in defining political positions and offices. The issue of Federal Character explains this as the major plank on which the Nigerian petty bourgeoisie has framed the discourse of national unity. Section 14 of the 1999 Constitution explains much more than sharing public offices according to 'federal character'. The concept and practice of allocation of federal government positions undermine the principle of fair play and unity as well as the objectives of the requirement. The principle seems to put zoning or geo-political affiliation ahead of performance and qualifications. It creates the impression that there is a balancing of geo-political representation at the federal level and ethnic or tribal at the state level. But the content of the character of the ruling class matters a lot.

The death of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua brought to the fore, the issue of zoning of the presidential slot within the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP). This issue divided the party. The issue raged on even when the National Executive

Committee of the party ruled that zoning principles stays but that President Jonathan has a right by the Nigerian Constitution to contest, if he so desires. This debate became highly sensitive and volatile that it later became a national security problem, going by the dangerous and reckless diatribe employed by those in support of the policy. This led one of the prominent members of the PDP – Alhaji Lawal Kaita – to state that if Jonathan runs and wins the presidential election, the North will make Nigeria ungovernable for him. In fact, the Senate former minority Chief Whip Kanti Bello described Jonathan’s ascension to power as a “slap on the face of the Northerners” (Mbah 2014:595). President Jonathan emerged as the party flag bearer for the 2011 General Elections and won. Before and after the elections, prominent Northerners such as Junaid Mohammed, Ango Abdullahi, Isa Kaita and Adamu Ciroma at different times threatened that hell would be let loose on Nigeria if Jonathan remained president of Nigeria beyond 2015. For instance, while still smarting over his loss of 2011 presidential election, General Muhammadu Buhari in May 2012 stated thus, “if what happened in 2011 (alleged rigging) should again happen in 2015, by the grace of God, the dog and the baboon will be soaked in blood” (Binniyat, *Vanguard*, May 15, 2012). This in effect means that there would be bloodshed if the 2015 elections are not conducted transparently. This threat was worrisome because, going by Buhari’s mindset, the 2015 elections cannot be adjudged by him to be transparent if he does not win. In 2013 Ango Abdullahi, who is the chairman of Northern Elders Forum, insisted that Jonathan would not be president of Nigeria in 2015. He said he was putting those behind Jonathan on notice. He even challenged them to foment trouble if they wished as, according to him, “we in the North are waiting” (*Daily Sun*, Thursday, February 5, 2015). That was Ango Abdulahi sounding the drumbeats of war. In December 2014, Junaid Mohammed, another prominent Northerner issued his own note of warning. He posited that there would be bloodshed if Jonathan stood for the 2015 elections. He further argued that the northerners whose population he puts at 85 million would rise against it. Table 1 below shows a chronology of some hate and provocative utterances credited to some megalomaniac politicians of northern extraction. It is deducible from the table that the escalation of *Boko Haram* insurgency, especially after the death of President Yar’Adua in 2010, is a by-product of the internecine conflict and contradictions between members of the Nigerian elite, especially within the PDP. The utterances constitute the fuel that did not only account for the development of the insurgency but are largely implicated in its continued sustainment.

Behind the veneer of crisis in the ruling party is the ever strident demand for power shift within and outside the party. The failure of Obasanjo’s third term gambit, the paralyzing ailment and eventual death of his successor, Musa Yar’Adua threw up fresh challenges for the party. His deputy, Goodluck Jonathan, from the South-South geo-political zone, not only completed his term in office, but contested and won elections in 2011 against the zoning principles of PDP. Then terror was unleashed on Nigeria, through armed attacks, bombing and maiming of innocent citizens and property. The sect was made an overt instrument in the

hands of the Northern elites even though it had existed covertly before then (Mbah 2014).

4. Political context of *Boko Haram* insurgency in Borno State

Although it is difficult to say precisely when the *Boko Haram* sect emerged, media reports both internal and external trace its origin to 2002 when it was radicalized by Mohammed Yusuf. Undercover reports suggested that the former governor of Borno State, Ali Modu Sherrif, used the sect in 2003 in the build up to his election as the governor of the state. There are documented bases to reach conclusions that in 2003 when Sheriff was contesting 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 was trying to win what was in a sense a mass movement to his support for electoral purposes. Of course, in Nigerian politics, ballot snatching is not exactly an exception. Second, he courted them 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 implement in 2003 after the government came to power. But the level of implementation did not go down well with the sect members.

Boko Haram thus emerged in clear political alliance with mainly All Nigeria Peoples' Party (ANPP) governors in North Eastern Nigeria. The sect leader – Muhammad Yusuf – enjoyed a close relationship with the Borno State Government under Ali Modu Sherrif. 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 States in 2003 and again regular payments were made to the sect by ANPP (Mbah 2014).

However, towards the ending of Sherrif's administration, misunderstanding between the governor and Yusuf – the sect leader – strained their relationship. Consequently, the group sought to destroy the creator that nurtured it. Hence, from 2010, the group turned into a pure terrorist group. At the same time, national politics was changing and a Christian Southerner was defying Northern intimidation and opting to contest the 2011 polls. This made the agenda of *Boko Haram* to transcend local and state politics into a national and international one. Thus, the attempted distraction by its estranged sponsors and the appropriation by new mentors and financiers, its transmutation from a locally-focused to a national political agenda as federal power went to Goodluck Jonathan, and its deployment as an instrument for undermining the credibility of the Jonathan Presidency make *Boko Haram* an instrument of national insecurity. It is very instructive to note that

the 2011 Christmas Day bomber – Kabiru Sokoto – was arrested for the first time in the official lodge of the Borno State Governor in Abuja. Eventually, he escaped in very questionable manner when he was with the police, only to be re-arrested subsequently, tried and jailed for life. It is, therefore, plausible to state that the emergence of the sect is a reflection of elite politics played with the mask of ethnicity and religion based on primordial sentiments and the North-South divide kind of politics.

Elite politics also manifests itself through political Islam. This variant of Islam has been adopted to explain the unprecedented irruption of Islamic religion into the secular domain of politics. It involves an illegitimate extension of the Islamic tradition outside the properly religious domain it has historically occupied (Hirschkind 2005). Modern politics and the forms of power it employs have become a condition for the practice of many personal activities. As for religion, to the extent that the institutions enabling the cultivation of religious virtue become subsumed within and transformed by legal and administration structures linked to the state. Hence, the traditional project of preserving those virtues will necessarily be 'political' if it is to succeed. Thus, many people wishing to promote or maintain Islamic pedagogical practices necessarily have to engage political power and as such, some forms of contemporary Islamic activism involve trying to capture state power.

The core evidence that establishes that *Boko Haram* insurgency was politically motivated is found in two statements made by Major Mustapha Jokolo (Rtd), the first in 2005 when he was the Emir of Gwandu, and the second in 2012, after he had been deposed from that high caliphate office. In response to what politicians perceived as President Obasanjo's 'menace', the caliphate Emirs on March 28, 2005 in Kaduna under the auspices of the Nigerian Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs, of which the Sultan of Sokoto is the traditional chairman, Major Jokolo complained bitterly that Northern Muslims had been marginalized by President Obasanjo. He argued that in today's Nigeria, the Northern Muslims and politicians have no banks and construction companies; that their soldiers were compulsorily retired from the army shortly after Obasanjo came to power, and that their children are being denied recruitment in the army. He concluded by saying that the emirs (the north) must decide what to do now (*Insider Weekly*, May 2, 2005, p.17). He posits that we (Muslims) have been pushed to the wall and it is time to fight and that Obasanjo is trampling on our rights and Muslims must rise and defend their rights. The more we continue to wait, the more we will continue to be marginalized (*Insider Weekly*, May 2, 2005, p.19).

For this fight (Jihad) they had to find another military instrument, hence, their adoption of *Boko Haram*. Consequently, the sect became well-funded and powerful in the mid-2005, a few months after the Emir of Gwandu, Major Jokolo called for a fight to end what the caliphate perceived as its marginalization by the Obasanjo government. Then in 2012, Jokolo again stated that Northern politicians created *Boko Haram* (<http://www.elombah.com/jndex.php-articles-main-menu/10385>). It was a few months after Jokolo's call for a fight in 2005 that

Boko Haram began to show evidence of better financing and increasing capacity. Hence, Jokolo know well whereof when he again spoke in 2012. This pretty much establishes the point that *Boko Haram* was created by the Northern elites as a means of causing mayhem in order to ascend to state power (Mbah 2014).

The deposed emir clearly confirmed the suspicion of many Nigerians that *Boko Haram* is a tool in the hands of some Northern politicians and their cronies who promised that the North is determined to make Nigeria ungovernable for President Jonathan or any other Southerner who becomes president against the prevailing zoning policy in PDP. Thus, the structure and operations of *Boko Haram* sect are not only designed to ensure the return of the office of the president to the northern region but has always been taken advantage of by northern political elites to perpetrate targeted killings and wanton destructions of the opposition or perceived enemies. In a revelation, Aliyu Tishau, a leading member of *Boko Haram* sect claimed that:

the truth is that politicians are the root cause of this Boko Haram problem.... I was contacted by a governorship candidate to kill an opponent for a fee...some politicians are now taking advantage of the conflict between Boko Haram leadership and the authorities to execute their own agenda (cited in Elaigwu 2013:16).

Boko Haram, therefore, is the consequence and manifestation of desperation of politicians to ascend to political power. In fact, the former National Security Adviser, General Andrew Owoye Azazi, shocked many Nigerians when he boldly admitted that Aliyu Mohammed Gusau, Ibrahim Babangida, Atiku Abubakar were behind *Boko Haram's* sponsorship. All these people aspired and failed to become the PDP presidential candidate in 2011. He obviously had the details surrounding *Boko Haram* as the National Security Adviser. Explicitly, General Azazi narrowed it down to the result of the PDP convention regulations, which were used to decide who could and could not run for president. Therefore, the common suspects that are presented to explain the *Boko Haram* insurgency are not only religion and poverty but also the die-hard-to-be-president factor and megalomaniac inclinations of many northern elites. The insurgency did not increase until there was a declaration by the current president that he was going to contest. This explains also why the sect's members who were captured consistently said that they had sponsors but could not mention their names even with a knife on their throats. In other words, *Boko Haram* was used as the military wing of a few power-hungry politicians from the northern parts of the country, who having failed to ascend to power at the federal level, promised to make Nigeria ungovernable and have been fulfilling their threat by sponsoring the terrorist sect. Table 2 shows some major suicide attacks carried out by members of *Boko Haram* between 2011 and 2014. It is deducible from the table that the highest suicide attacks took place in 2012 after the election of Goodluck Jonathan against the zoning arrangement in PDP. Similarly, there were increased attacks in 2014 after the seeming 2013 lull. It was a strategy adopted by the sect and its financiers to intimidate Jonathan out of the 2015 presidential race.

Terrorism remains a sinister yet poignant force in world affair. A variety of groups with political, nationalist and increasing radical ethnic and religious foci continue to embrace terrorism as a means of spreading their message and influencing political discourse (Sullivan 2014). Nowadays, terrorist groups have become more violent, with individual incidents yielding greater injury and death and there seems to be increasing tendencies to select targets. In Nigeria, their attacks are severe and widespread with international connections as well as inter-coordinated strikes against individuals and government infrastructures especially in North Eastern Nigeria where most of the attacks represented above took place.

Very significant in the campaign of violence by the *Boko Haram* is the corresponding intensity which marked the post-2011 elections in Nigeria, especially the presidential election. The Northern elite saw Jonathan as violating his party's power rotation arrangement. While many Nigerians and international election observer missions viewed the outcome of the 2011 Presidential Elections as credible, scores of core northerners did not. With the ultimatum issued by the *Boko Haram* sect in early January 2012 to southern Nigerians residing in the north to return to their region, the contention that "*Boko Haram* is out to end 1914 amalgamation," (*Saturday Sun*, Online, January 21, 2012) of the Northern and Southern Protectorates, which formally created the political entity known as Nigeria, approximates Professor Soyinka's thesis that the perpetrators are indeed anarchists who, having lost power, are bent on dismembering Nigeria.

5. Conclusion

This study drew explanation essentially from various perspectives on the origin and operations of *Boko Haram* insurgents in Nigeria. These perspectives offered insight into the problem of terrorism and the general patterns of insecurity introduced by it. However, this study addressed the elite politics and the emergence of *Boko Haram's* ongoing campaign of terror in Nigeria. The paper demonstrated that the emergence of *Boko Haram* is not *sui generis* but rather a reflection of the zero-sum character of the struggle for acquisition of state power, especially between the North and South. The emphasis on power is war-like and everything is usually mobilized including terror to actualize it. Arising from the foregoing findings, this study recommends that good governance and politics of inclusion should be upheld as the ultimate basis for bridging the North-South war-like political divide in Nigeria. Again, the penchant among Nigerian political leaders to neglect the provocative tendencies of hate and incendiary speech so long as it enables them ascend to and/or retain political power should be controlled. Thus, the Independent National Electoral Commission and other civil rights groups should identify and prosecute individuals and organizations that breach relevant laws governing electoral campaigns and public speech in Nigeria.

Addresses:

Peter Mbah
 Department of Political Science
 University of Nigeria, Nsukka
 E-mail: ombah2006@yahoo.com
 Tel.: +234 80356 05938

Chikodiri Nwangwu
 Department of Political Science
 University of Nigeria, Nsukka
 E-mail: chikodiri.nwangwu@unn.edu.ng

Herbert C. Edeh
 Department of Political Science
 University of Nigeria, Nsukka

References

- Agbibo, Daniel (2013) "Why Boko Haram exists: the relative deprivation perspective". *African Conflict and Peace Building Review* 3, 1, 146–159.
- Alozieuwa, Simeon (2012) "Contending theories on Nigeria's Security challenge in the era of Boko Haram Insurgence". *The Peace and Conflict Review* 7, 1, 1–8.
- Aly, Anne (2011) *Terrorism and global security: historical and contemporary perspectives*. South Yana, Australia: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Binniyat, Luka (2012) "2015 'll be bloody if...- Buhari". *Vanguard*, 15 June. Available online at <<http://www.vanguardngr.com/2012/05/2015-ll-be-bloody-if-buhari/>>. Accessed on 20.06.2015.
- Crowder, Michael (1978) *The story of Nigeria*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Das, Hari Hara and Chouldbury, Bhavesh (1997) *Introduction to political sociology*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House PVT LTD.
- Ekekwe, Eme (1986) *Class and state in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Longman Group Limited.
- Elaigwu, Isawa (2013) "Security and peace: the imperatives for national development". Being the text of Seventh FRCN Annual October Lecture held at Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Centre, Abuja, Thursday October 31.
- Hickey, Raymond (1984) "The 1982 Maitatsine uprisings in Nigeria: a note", *African Affairs* 83, 331, 251–256.
- Hirschkind, Charles (2005) "What is political Islam?" Available online at <<http://www.merip.org/mer/mer205/what-political-islam/>>. Accessed on 23.10.2014.
- Huntington, Samuel (1996) *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of world order*. New York: Simeon and Schuster Rockefeller Centre.
- Ibeanu, Okechukwu and Peter Mbah (2012) "The 2011 general elections and electoral violence and insecurity in Nigeria". *Nigerian Journal of International Affairs*. 38, 2, 17–43.
- Ibeanu, Okechukwu and Peter Mbah (2014) "The African Union and democracy in Africa: some preliminary observations". *Social Science Research* 2, 2, 30–54.
- Joseph, Richard (1987) *Democracy and Prebendal politics in Nigeria: the rise and fall of the Second Republic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kukah, Hassan (1993) *Religion, politics and power in northern Nigeria*. Reprint Edition. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited.
- Mbah, Peter (2007) "Africa, globalization and international terrorism: reflections on contemporary circuits of global capital and violence". *Nigerian Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 1, 1, 110–130.
- Mbah, Peter (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, Peter and Chikodiri Nwangwu (2014) "The counter-insurgency operations of the joint task force and human rights abuses in northern Nigeria, 2011–2013". *Journal of Educational and Social Research* 4, 5, 67–78. Doi:10.5901/jesr.2014.v4n5p67.
- Mohammed, Lai (2014) "Politicization of Boko Haram insurgency, bane of Nigeria's anti-terror fight". *Vanguard*. Being a paper delivered at Portcullis House, House of Commons, London by Alhaji Lai Mohammed, National Publicity Secretary, All Progressives Congress (APC) on September 10, 2014.
- Nnoli, Okwudiba (1993) "Nigeria: the failure of the neo-colonial society". In O. Nnoli, ed. *Dead-end to Nigeria development: an analysis of political economy of Nigeria, 1979–1989*. Senegal: CODESRIA.
- Nnoli, Okwudiba (2003) *Introduction to politics*. 2nd ed. Enugu: PACREP.
- Ojeme, Victoria (2011) "North has highest rate of poverty". *Vanguard*, Wednesday 30 April. Available online at <<http://www.vanguardngr.com/2011/09/north-has-highest-rate-of-poverty-report/>>. Accessed on 23.10.2014.
- Olojo, Akinola (2013) *Nigeria's troubled North: interrogating the drivers of public support for Boko Haram*. Hague: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism.
- Onuoha, Freedom (2012) "Boko Haram: Nigeria's extremist Islamic sect". Al Jazeera Centre for Studies, February 29, pp. 1–6.
- Soludo, Charles (2012) "Breaking the dynasties of poverty in Nigeria". Available online at <<http://donlaz.wordpress.com/2012/11/27/breaking-the-dynasties-of-poverty-in-nigeria-by-chukwuma-soludo/>>. Accessed on 23.10.2014.
- Sullivan, John (2014) "Transit terrorism: beyond Pelham 1-2-3". Available online at <https://www.academia.edu/8370543/Transit_Terrorism_Beyond_Pelham>. Accessed on 23.10.2014.

APPENDIX

Table 1. Showing litany of incendiary and hate statements by northern political elites

S/N	Date	Speaker(s)	The Speeches	Sources
1	2010	Shehu Sani, a Kaduna based civil rights activist	President Goodluck Jonathan should not contemplate contesting the 2011 presidential election. Any attempt by him to contest amounts to incitement and a recipe for political instability.	Anya, Victor (2012) <i>Daily Independent</i> , Jun 22, Retrieved from: http://dailyindependentnig.com/2012/06/making-nigeria-ungovernable-for-president-jonathan/
2	Oct. 2010	Alhaji Lawal Kaita, PDP chieftain and former governor of old Kaduna State	Anything short of a Northern President is tantamount to stealing our presidency. Jonathan has to go and he will go. Even if he uses the incumbency power to get his nomination on the platform of the PDP, he would be frustrated out.	<i>Tribune</i> , October 13, 2010. Retrieved from: http://www.tribune.com.ng/index.php/editorial/12020-kaitas-incendiary-outburst
3	Oct. 2010	Alhaji Lawal Kaita, PDP chieftain and former governor of old Kaduna State	The North is determined to make the country ungovernable for President Jonathan or any other Southerner who finds his way to the seat of power on the platform of the PDP against the principle of the party's zoning policy.	<i>Tribune</i> , October 13, 2010. Retrieved from: http://www.tribune.com.ng/index.php/editorial/12020-kaitas-incendiary-outburst

S/N	Date	Speaker(s)	The Speeches	Sources
4	Dec. 14, 2010	Alhaji Atiku Abubakar	Referring to the Federal Executive Council led by President Jonathan, at the National Stakeholder Conference organized by the Northern Political Leaders Forum (NPLF), Igbo Political Forum, South-South Unity Forum and the Yoruba Redemption Group, Atiku – the consensus candidate of the NPLF – stated that those who make peaceful change impossible make violent change inevitable.	Okocha, Chuks (2010) Atiku Talks Tough, Warns of ‘Violent Change’, <i>This Day</i> , Dec. 15, 2010. Retrieved from: http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/atiku-talks-tough-warns-of-violent-change-71993/
5	Dec. 14, 2010	General Ibrahim Babangida	Also at the same forum, Babangida stated that jettisoning this arrangement (i.e. zoning) regardless of the excuse that is being bandied around, endangers not only the prospects of orderly transition in the country, but also its progress towards evolving into a single individual nation.	Okocha, Chuks (2010) Atiku Talks Tough, Warns of ‘Violent Change’, <i>This Day</i> , Dec. 15, 2010. Retrieved from: http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/atiku-talks-tough-warns-of-violent-change-71993/
6	2011	General Muhammadu Buhari	There may be no Nigeria. I draw parallel with Somalia so many times (Somalisation of Nigeria). I am scared about that. Somalia, they are one ethnic group, one religion, Islam, but for 18 years, Somalia became so selfish, so corrupt, so undisciplined and they have wrecked the country.	Samu, Dandaura (n.d.). Boko Haram Tactical and Strategic Systems. Retrieved from: https://www.academia.edu/7667319/BOKO_HARAM_TACTICAL_and_STRATEGIC_SYSTEMS_SYSTEMS_THEORY_ANALYSIS
7	—	Junaid Mohammed, Ango Abdullahi and Adamu Ciroma	At different times, these northern elites threatened that hell would be let loose on Nigeria if Jonathan remained president of Nigeria beyond 2015.	Mbah, Peter (2014). Politics and the Adoption of the Policy of State of Emergency in Nigeria: Explaining the 1962 and 2013 Experiences. <i>Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences</i> , 5, 15, (July) 587–596.
8	Mar. 28, 2012	Alhaji Lawal Kaita, PDP chieftain and former governor of old Kaduna State	A Northerner must become president in 2015 or Nigeria will divide. We hear rumours all over that Jonathan is planning to contest in 2015. Well, the north is going to be prepared if the country remains one. That is, if the country remains one, we are going to fight for it. If not, everybody can go his way.	Premium Times December 8, 2013. Retrieved from: http://www.premiumtimesng.com/opinion/151053-nerve-lawal-kaita-shame-junaid-mohammed-femi-fani-kayode.html
9	Mar. 28, 2012	Mustapha Jokolo, the deposed Emir of Gwandu	Northern politicians created <i>Boko Haram</i> .	http://elombah.com/index.php/articles-mainmenu/10385-northern-politicians-created-boko-haram-mustapha-jokolo-former-emir-of-gwandu

S/N	Date	Speaker(s)	The Speeches	Sources
10	May 14, 2012	General Muhammadu Buhari	If what happened in 2011 (alleged rigging) should again happen in 2015, by the grace of God, the dog and the baboon will be soaked in blood.	Binniyat Luka (2012). <i>Vanguard</i> , May 15. Retrieved from: http://www.vanguardngr.com/2012/05/2015-ll-be-bloody-if-buhari/
11	Jun. 2, 2013	General Muhammadu Buhari	The military offensives against the <i>Boko Haram</i> insurgents are anti-north.	<i>This Day</i> , Jun 03, 2013. Retrieved from: http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/buhari-military-offensive-against-boko-haram-anti-north/
12	Aug. 22, 2013	Junaid Mohammed	Speaking with <i>Vanguard</i> in a telephone chat, Mohammed stated that: Let me say this, if without the consent of the law, they rig the election the way they rigged 2011 election, there will be mayhem in Nigeria.	<i>Vanguard</i> , Aug. 23, 2013. Retrieved from: http://www.vanguardngr.com/2013/08/there-ll-be-mayhem-if-jonathan-rigs-2015-polls-junaid-mohammed/
13	Nov. 29, 2013	Junaid Mohammed	In an exclusive interview with <i>Sunday Sun</i> from his base in Kano, the former lawmaker stated that there would be bloodshed if Jonathan stood for the 2015 elections.	<i>Sunday Sun</i> , Dec. 01, 2013. Retrieved from: http://sunnewsonline.com/new/2015-therell-bloodshed-jonathan-runs-warns-junaid-mohammed/
14	Jan. 23, 2014	Malam Nasir El-Rufai, APC chieftain	The next elections would be bloody and many people are likely to die. The only alternative left to get power is to take it by force.	<i>Punch</i> , Jan 28, 2014. Retrieved from http://www.punchng.com/news/sss-detains-el-rufai/
15	Apr. 2, 2014	General Muhammadu Buhari	During a ‘condolence’ visit to Kaura Local Government Area of Kaduna State, General Buhari reportedly said that if Nigerians would give their mandate to APC come 2015 General Elections, it will address the prolonged insecurity that has been bedevilling the country which the government of President Goodluck Jonathan has woefully failed to address.	<i>The Scoop</i> , April 3, 2014. Retrieved from http://www.thescoopng.com/buharis-convoy-involved-in-accident-in-kaduna/
16	Apr. 16, 2014	Vice Admiral Murtala Nyako (rtd.), former governor of Adamawa State	The Jonathan’s administration counter-terror operation against <i>Boko Haram</i> insurgents is tantamount to a “full-fledged genocide” against the North.	Odunsi, Wale (2014) “Full text of Nyako’s letter”, <i>Daily Post Newsletter</i> , [Online] 19 April. Retrieved from: http://dailypost.ng/2014/04/19/pdp-running-government-impunity-led-evil-minded-persons-full-text-nyakos-letter/

S/N	Date	Speaker(s)	The Speeches	Sources
17	Nov. 26, 2014	General Muhammadu Buhari	While in Asaba on Wednesday during a meeting with APC delegates from the South-South for the December 10 congress of the party, the APC presidential aspirant said that the country may be overrun by the dreaded <i>Boko Haram</i> sect in the next four years, should the PDP be allowed to continue in power.	Definitelykingsley.com. Friday, November 28, 2014. Retrieved from http://www.definitelykingsley.com/2014/11/boko-haram-will-run-over-nigeria-except.html
18	Nov. 27, 2014	Alhaji Atiku Abubakar	A vote for PDP in 2015 General Elections is a vote for continuation of insurgency.	http://www.osundefender.org/?p=187850

Source: Compiled by the authors

Table 2. Incidents of Suicide Bombings in Nigeria, June 2011 – July 2014

S/N	Year	Death Toll by Months												Death Toll	Total Number of Incidents	
		Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.			
1	2011						7		25				2	46	80	7
2	2012	180	6	10	41		92	5	3		9	50	2	398	22	22
3	2013			22										22	1	1
4	2014	30		77		47	14	90						258	18	18
Total														678	48	48

Source: Onuoha, Freedom (2014) *A Danger not to Nigeria alone: Boko Haram's Transnational Reach and Regional Responses*. Abuja: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.