

**LIST OF ACRONYMS USED IN THE THESIS**

AC	Area Commander
ANPP	All Nigeria People's Party
APC	All Progressives Congress
AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
BH	Boko Haram
CP	Commissioner of Police
DSP	Directorate of Student Funding
GI	<i>Gama'a Islamiyya</i>
GIA	<i>Groupe Islamique Armé</i>
GSPC	Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat ( <i>The Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat</i> )
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IS	Islamic state
ISIS	Islamic state in Iraq and Syria
ISWAP	Islamic State's West African province
JTF	Joint Task Force
MEND	Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta
MNJTF	Multi-National Joint Task Force
NPC	Northern People's Congress
NCNC	National Convention of Nigerian Citizens
PDP	People's Democratic Party
SC	Squadron Commander

SMT	Social Movement Theory
SOMO	Salafi-Oriented Movement Organisations
UC	Unit commander
UN	United Nations
ZC	Zonal Commander

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

The last five decades (1970-2018) have seen the rise of Salafi-Oriented Movement Organisations (SOMOs) (Teplesky, 2016), and an increasing adoption and use of violent activism by such groups (Esposito, 2015; Juergensmeyer, 2003; 2008; Moghadam, 2008). The case of al-Qaeda, al-Shabaab, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Islamic State in Iraq and Levante (which has now changed its name to Islamic State) and BH in the Northern Nigeria are all prominent examples. In an effort to achieve certain objectives, these kinds of organisations have all developed and used violent strategies to attack different segments of the society, which they construe as “threats” or “stumbling blocks” to achieve their goals (Ansari, 1984; Appleby, 2000; Franks, 2006; Gunning, 2009; M, 2014; Solomon, 2017; Wiktorowicz, 2004). Using such strategies, they have attacked individuals, state institutions, political establishments, and even fellow Islamic organisations and institutions. In some cases, they have gone as far as using tactics such as executions, throat slitting, decapitation, be-heading, rape, kidnapping, drive-by shootings, ramming innocent civilians in public places using trucks/cars, and suicide bombings (Drevon, 2017). From their point of view, they hope that such strategies would eventually lead to the acquiescence of their political/religious demands by their host governments or the international communities.

However, violent activism is not unique to the SOMOs. In the past, organisations with major religious backgrounds such as Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, as well as from other traditions of Islam have all used violent activism as a strategy for goal attainment (Juergensmeyer, 2003; 2008; Hall, 2003; Gregg, 2014). In fact, before the 1970s, there was not much use of violence in modern Islamic-oriented movement organisations (particularly, those with Salafi backgrounds). Most of the organisations known to have used such strategies were those with roots in Christianity and other world major religious traditions (Hall, 2003). It was not until after the 1970s that such organisations particularly those with Salafi backgrounds, began to increasingly evolve and adopt different forms of violent activism, as a strategy for goal attainment within the

socio-political environment where they operated. Given that Salafi traditions<sup>1</sup> are infused with histories and narratives, which theologically legitimise such strategies in different and specific historic epochs of this tradition, activists with such backgrounds have appropriated and embraced violent ideologies and political identities (Hall, 2003; Juergensmeyer, 2008). Faced with difficult and often complicated socio-political terrains, they have relied on these identities and ideologies to justify the violent strategies they adopt.

Salafism is a key element for understanding the adoption of these forms of activism, since it provides the theological background upon which such organisations evolved and used violence. They can also produce images of cosmic warfare, as well as socio-political and religio-political worldview, which make activists believe that they are waging not merely physical battles, but also spiritual ones. Yet, this does not mean that Salafism ‘causes’ violence, or that violent expressions within SOMOs cannot be justified by some means other than Salafism. Generations of scholars from different social science disciplines have shown that violent activism by different social movement organisations (including SOMOs often referred (Teplecky, 2016) to as “Salafi-jihadis”<sup>2</sup>) have also surfaced. Such organisations have often adopted violent strategies, not simply as an ideological imperative that emanated from the Quran or texts generated within the Salafi traditions, but from psychological, historical, socio-political, and cultural interpretations of religious actors’ interests and identities, within the contexts upon which such particular SOMOs identify (Crenshaw, 1992; Franks, 2005; Gunning, 2007; Gunning *et. al.*, 2009; Gunning and Baron, 2013; Horgan, 2006; Jenkins, 1994; Laqueur, 2001; Wiktorowicz, 2004).

Social Movement Theory (SMT) inspired studies such as Gunning (2007), Gunning *et. al* (2009), Gunning and Baron (2013:1-60), M (2014), and Wiktorowicz (2004) show that different forms of activism (be it violent or not) in such organisations are often influenced by diverse access to resources, changing ideological or political attitudes towards violence and other types of protests -what Sydney Tarrow (1994) calls “protests circles”. These “political opportunity structures” as

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<sup>1</sup> A detailed description of Salafism is provided below in 1.7.5 (Clarification of key terms, *Salafism*).

<sup>2</sup> I have intentionally avoided using this term (Salafi-jihadism). I acknowledge that the term has in the last few years been used by scholars mainly within the religious studies field, to refer to the Salafi-oriented groups who subscribe to violent activism, because it points to a more precise ideological representation of such groups. However, it also connotes an exceptionalisation of one form of activism within such group-namely "jihadi violence". Ipso facto, such categorisation downplays not only the temporal nature of such violent tactics; it also diminishes the significance of other forms of activism that evolves within such organisations.

they are referred to in some SMT scholarship, which were produced by Wiktorowicz (2004) and Guning (2009:156-176), provide the window of “political opportunity” for the different forms of violent activism to evolve within such organisations. The reality is that, no single element, be it religious, political, psychological, or cultural, is the sole motivator in itself for the use of violence in such organisations. Given the right conditions, any social movement organisation, Salafi-oriented or not, can draw legitimacy from the mores and traditions within their religious traditions or from their peculiar context-based situations they identify with; they do this to justify the use of violent activism within their environment. Salafism could be significant, but it is more meaningful when interpreted in the context of how it interacts with other political opportunity structures to provide a conducive environment for SOMOs to adopt violent activism as a strategy for goal attainment. Within such interpretations, it becomes one among other possible resources, which provide mobilisation for the inception and development of violent activism by a SOMO.

It is within this theoretical background that this study uses BH (a Salafi-oriented organisation that first evolved in Northern Nigeria but has in the last five years expanded to other neighbouring West and Central African countries such as Cameroon, Niger and Chad) as a case study, to investigate the use of violence by SOMOs. For this, the study investigates the evolution of the group, contextualising it to the conditions in the region, where the organisation first emerged. Taking off from there, it identifies how the group evolved from a mere anti-state activist group, to a group that now fully uses and justifies different forms of violent strategies, such as lone professional assassinations, suicide bombings, kidnappings for ransom, bank robberies, and guerrilla warfare. Using these different forms of violent strategies, the organisation has attacked the Nigerian security forces, Nigerian government officials, politicians, as well as ordinary civilians in different parts of the region.

Largely, drawing from the SMT’s theoretical paradigm, the study acknowledges that different ideological concepts within Salafism may be very key in understanding the evolution and justification of violence in the group; however, such thesis alone seems insufficient to explain the justification and continuity of the sophisticated forms of violent activism that have now ensued in the group. To explain these developments, the study attributes the evolution of BH and the use of violence within it, to the Northern Nigerian socio-political contexts and the internal dynamics within the organisation. Besides the various concepts that have been generated within Salafism,

these conditions provide a better explanation for both the evolution of such strategies and the fluidity that characterises them within such organisations.

Semi-structured interviews were employed to collect data from people who have in-depth knowledge about both the region and possible inner working of BH in the region. Such people include security personnel, Salafi religious clerics, politicians and victims of BH violence. In addition, the study also draws from documentary sources, such as recorded videos and audio sermons of BH's founding member; his manifesto, *Hadhihi 'Aqidatuna wa-Manhaj Da 'watina* (This Is Our Creed and the Method of Our Preaching) and some internal documents as well as the correspondence between the current BH and AQIM leaders. This dataset shows a striking structural and ideological continuity regarding Boko Haram's activism, from the time it started, until the end of 2016. It also contains quality ethnographic data, which contextualises both the evolution of the group and the development of violent activism in the group in Northern Nigeria.

## **1.2 A Brief Profile of Boko Haram**

As a SOMO, BH is believed to have evolved from a group of Salafi youths, who left Northern Nigerian city centres in 2002 in search of a more austere Salafi religious life style in Kanama (Amaechi, 2016; 2017; Brigaglia, 2012a; 2012b; 2015; Comolli, 2015; Loimeier 2012; Harnischfeger, 2015; Hentz and Solomon, 2017; Thurston, 2016; Williams and Guttschuss, 2012; Zenn, 2018). Kanama by the way is a remote village close to the Nigerian border with Niger Republic. Initially led by one Ali Mohammed (Kassim, 2018; Zenn, 2018), the group launched violent attacks on several parts of the Nigerian community. However, they were quickly dismantled by the Nigerian security authorities in a series of violent confrontations that left many of the group members dead (including Ali, the leader of the Kanama group). Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf (one of the spiritual leaders of the group) fled to Saudi Arabia, in fear of the Nigerian authorities. He was only allowed back into the country after an intervention by the then (2005) deputy governor of Borno state Alhaji Dibal and other Salafi actors in the region, after he had promised not to be involved in any form of violence in the region (Williams and Guttschuss, 2012; Zenn, 2018).

Upon his return, Yusuf re-established the group in Maiduguri, the capital of Bornu state, (a state still in the north-eastern part of Nigeria). In earnest, he re-united with the Kanama group (Amaechi, 2017; Kassim, 2018), and in disregard of his promise started to criticise the states in the region for their lack of seriousness in the implementation of the Sharia, which were newly established in the region. In identification with the group's Salafi background, he took the name *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awatiwal-jihad* (People committed to the propagation of the Prophet's teachings and jihad). The new group's activism at this time was built around Yusuf's conviction that the Western-based democratic system is *haram* (sinful/prohibited). The BH leader argued that despite having adopted Sharia as their state's penal codes, different states in the region still had what he regarded to be "religious weaknesses, moral decadence and socio-economic disadvantage" (Amaechi, 2013). According to the BH leader, this situation was bestowed by the European colonisation and subsequent introduction of Western values (*boko*). In addition, Yusuf constantly criticised the region's politicians, whom he likened as "*yan boko*", literally translated as "child of the book", and most of whom occupied major political positions. For him, such individuals are the products of Western democracy, imposed on the region by the British colonialists. If such a system and its concomitant products remained in place in the country, he believed, the country would never be able to attain its potential. The only way the region (and the country by extension) could do this is only if they returned to *al-Shari'a*<sup>3</sup>, and Qur'anic dictates, which governed it before the colonial era. In Yusuf's estimation, this is the only way to restore the region back to its rightful religious, political, social and moral path (Amaechi, 2016). This was, however, problematic.

Although agitation for change at the time and hatred for the region's politicians was a feeling that was shared by most people in the region (Amaechi, 2013), the idea of a strict Salafist lifestyle was not very popular (Brigaglia, 2015). So, in rejection of this extreme lifestyle that Yusuf and his organisation championed, the Northern Nigerian public started referring to Yusuf and his group as the "Boko Haram people". In fact, the name "Boko Haram" was a derogatory name given to the group to denigrate what was considered to be extreme and austere lifestyle by the group's leadership. And despite repeated efforts by the group to explain that this name did not really

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<sup>3</sup> *Al-Sharia* is an Islamic-based theocratic or a legal system built from Sharia law. The system entails a unification of political authority with religious authority in an Islamic state (Falola, 2009).

represent what the group stood for (Onuoha, 2015), the name "Boko Haram"<sup>4</sup> had persisted. The name has also found its way into both the local and Western media, largely because it captured “all the stereotypes that have daily currency in Islamo-phobic discourses”-obscurantism, primitivism, and archaic Islamic lifestyle according to Andrea Brigaglia (2012a:38).

From 2005 to early 2007, BH operated as a social movement organisation, more like a “moderate activist group that attempted to implement social change” in the region (Amaechi, 2016; 2017). The wave of violent activism only started in 2009, after a confrontation with the Borno<sup>5</sup> state's highway security unit known as "Operation Flush". At that time the group was not well established in the region (Amaechi, 2016). This confrontation later led to an escalated violent interaction with other segments of the Nigerian security forces, sent from Abuja to help the Borno state government to deal with the BH crisis. By July the same year, Yusuf and his group had also launched a series of minor violent attacks that included schools, beer parlours and local police stations, using mostly the region's known well-known traditional knives, bows and arrows, as well as few AK 47s. However, within a few days, the Nigerian security forces was able to overpower the group, and an estimated 1,100 people, including Yusuf himself were killed (Comolli, 2015; Smith, 2015).

In the aftermath of the 2009 revolt, the group went underground, only to re-surface in early 2010, more emboldened in a sophisticated manner that took both the Nigerian population and the international community by surprise. From then onwards, BH has grown from a local organisation that attacked different parts of the region with this traditional bows and arrows, to a more coordinated and sophisticated organisation, which was capable of carrying out attacks inside and outside the region. In the last nine years (2009–2018) the group has also metamorphosed from this minor activist group that operated only in north-eastern Nigeria to a group which now carries out violent attacks within and beyond the Nigerian borders; in countries such as Cameroon, Niger, and Chad. Under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau (who became the leader of the organisation in 2009, after the death of Yusuf), the group has attacked security personnel, state institutions, international institutions, churches, mosques, media houses, religious leaders, politicians and ordinary civilians both within and outside the region. From the use of locally made knives, bows and arrows, BH has also gradually improved its attacks with advanced military equipment such as

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<sup>4</sup> For the sake of uniformity, I will throughout the study use this name “Boko Haram” to refer to the organisation.

<sup>5</sup> Borno State is one of the 6 states in the North-eastern Nigeria, where BH first established and evolved (?).

sophisticated car explosives, and suicide bombings<sup>6</sup>. While different governments (Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger) are increasing security to subdue the group, the group has continued to develop more sophisticated means to continue to carry out their attacks in these countries.

### 1.3 Statement of the Problem

When I first started researching about BH in early 2010 for my Masters' thesis<sup>7</sup>, not many academic papers had been written about the group. In fact, very few researchers paid attention to a marginal Salafi organisation known as "the Boko Haram people" in the north-eastern Nigeria. Although, the group had already begun to use different forms of armed violence to terrorise the different parts of Northern Nigeria; comprehensive potential violence from the group was neither adequately recognised, nor anticipated in the academic circle. However, with the group's increased string of armed violent attacks, especially after two major attacks on the UN building and Nigerian Police Head Quarters in Abuja in 2011 (Amaechi, 2016; Onuoha, 2015), BH has become a very significant topic in both local and international scholarship. This is not only because of its significance regarding the global intellectual Salafi discourse, but for the empirical implications on regional security. In the last eight years, SOMO has become one of the "most deadly" groups around the world (Global Terrorism Index, 2015)<sup>8</sup>. The organisation's use of armed violence has in many ways surpassed its jihadi counterparts, AQIM in Algeria and al-Shabaab in Somalia, in terms of tactical sophistication and regularity of its attacks (Zenn, 2018: iii).

Currently, BH could be estimated to have killed over 16,000 people, including women and children. It's activism and violent interactions with security forces in the region have disrupted governance and caused severe humanitarian crises in both Nigeria and the surrounding countries

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<sup>6</sup> A detailed explanation of how the group were able to develop this will be provided in the coming chapters 5 and 6).

<sup>7</sup> My Masters' degree thesis was based on a comparative study of Boko Haram and Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger-Delta (MEND). MEND itself is not a SOMO, but its use of violence is like that of BH. It is a social movement organisation that is based in the Southern part of Nigeria, working to localise the control of Nigeria's oil and to secure reparations from the federal government for pollution caused by the oil industry.

<sup>8</sup> A more significant analysis of how BH had become deadlier than many similar organisations can be found in a *New York Times* article of November 18, 2015 by Searcey, D. & M. Santora. The article titled "Boko Haram Ranked Ahead of ISIS for Deadliest Terror Group" is available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/19/world/africa/boko-haram-ranked-ahead-of-isis-for-deadliest-terror-group.html>.

(Amaechi, 2017; Brigaglia, 2015; Comolli, 2015; Thurston, 2016; Zenn, 2018). From a minor Salafi group that operated only in the Northern Nigeria, the organisation has become a very formidable organisation capable of carrying out attacks in major cities of the region and beyond. To carry out these attacks, the group's leadership has consistently used violent Salafi rhetoric (Amaechi, 2016; 2017; Onuoha, 2015) that is drawn from the region's Islamic history (Amaechi, 2017; Zenn, 2018) to justify the group's use of armed violence. They have also consistently used an extremely narrow criteria to define who counts as potential victims (Kassim, 2018; Thurston, 2016), whom they regard as “not-true Muslims”.

In a bid to defeat BH, the Nigerian government used military force from the beginning. With a formation of a Joint Task Force (JTF) of the Military and Police, they have continued to mount pressure on the organisation. In 2014, the Nigerian government had also joined forces with the neighbouring countries (Niger, Chad, Cameroon), leading to the dismantling of the group's ad hoc Islamic Caliphate and reclaiming of some of the major towns originally taken by the group in 2014. However, the success of these forces has not been enough to eradicate the security threats posed by BH. The organisation's continued attacks, including kidnapping of the widely reported Chibok girls (2014) and the kidnappings of other schoolgirls in Dapchi (2018), shows that the battle against Boko Haram is far from over. The organisation has in the last years continued more sophisticated forms of armed violence to attack Nigeria and its neighbouring countries (Amaechi, 2017). Joint military efforts by Nigeria and its neighbours have failed to stop these attacks. It is unlikely that these attacks would stop unless there is a more deepened understanding of BH and a resultant change on how the organisation is approached. Both policy makers and the public need to have holistic understanding of BH in the region as a social movement organisation. They need to understand how the religious, social and political legitimation for armed violence in the organisation is influenced and sustained by the availability of different resources and political opportunities within both the organisation and the northern Nigerian contexts where the organisation identifies. This is what this study hopes to provide. This will be done through a systematic study of the group as fluid and responsive to the conditions and changes in the specific northern Nigerian socio-political opportunities and availability of resources in the organisation.

To be fair, previous studies (Anonymous, 2012; Brigaglia, 2012a; 2012b; 2015; Comolli, 2015; Hentz & Solomon, 2017; Kassim 2015; Kassim & Nwankpa, 2018; Marlatt 2014; Pérouse de

Montclos, 2015; Thurston, 2015; Zenn, 2018) about BH in the last few years have tried to address this problem. The Anonymous scholar (2012) and Andrei Brigaglia (2015) particularly passionately discuss the religious and theological justifications upon which ideologies in Salafism influence the evolution of armed violence in the group. For these studies, the fact that the organisation subscribes to Salafi-jihadism, where violence against secular rulers are justified makes the group inherently susceptible to the use armed struggle against a political state such as Nigeria. Implicitly, violence was bound to be used by the group, because of this Salafist ideological perspective. Other studies (Comolli, 2015; Walker, 2016) who do not subscribe to this religious argument on the other hand have de-emphasised the role of Salafism or Islam. Instead, they analyse a unique set of elements like the socio-psychological, environmental, and economic factors within the Northern Nigerian region as the basis for the overall advent of armed violence in the group. Generally, the adoption and the use of armed violence are regarded as a natural avenue or means within which these activists respond or express their frustrations or dissatisfaction towards on their political oppositions. Hence, violence provides the needed ideological, symbolic, strategic and tactical tool upon which the organisation tries to achieve certain goals within the Nigerian political environment.

Indeed, these kinds of explanations are important. However, they do not adequately account for the 'fluidity' that characterises the emergence and proliferation of different forms of violence in the organisation. While exclusivists Salafi ideology or socio-economic factors may represent integral issues, which motivate the forceful conditions for activist groups to adopt violence; an analysis of such factors do not explain the timing and decision of the group to adopt the different forms of violent activism that evolves within the group. Like most collective activist groups, SOMOs such as BH, are constantly influenced by contextual and social movement organisational dynamics within both the organisation and the political environment they identify with (Gunning, 2007; 2009; Wiktorowicz, 2004). This means, they are influenced by the dynamics of interactions between prevailing political situations, state practices and socio-economic changes; and not just one or two ideological or socio-political factors. Hence, conceiving one of these elements as the sole element(s) which necessitates violent activism is grossly inadequate, and obscures the fluidity that characterises how these elements interact with each other to influence the development of

different forms of violent activism. Hence, they may not provide a comprehensive explanation on the use of violence in the group.

In this light, this study therefore introduces SMT paradigms into the analysis of how BH evolved and why the different forms of violent activism evolved within the group, on different intervals in the organisation. Within the SMT scholarship, the evolution of movement organisations, as well as the different forms of activism within them, are conceptualised as "fluid and responsive" to the availability of material and ideological resources, contextual conditions and changes in both the organisations and environments in which such movement organisations identify with (Gunning, 2009; Gunning and Baron, 2013; Wiktorowicz, 2004). These socio-political conditions provide the window of political opportunity upon which social movement actors establish organisations and develop the different forms of activism that they regard as useful for the attainment of their goals. Using this theoretical paradigm on the Northern Nigerian-born SOMO, the study will conceptualise the group as an activist "movement organisation"<sup>9</sup>.

While acknowledging its Salafi orientation, the study analyses the evolution of the group as emanating from political opportunities, evolving from the specific socio-political structures around the region. Such political opportunity structures include: The Northern Nigerian history of religious activism, the Nigerian colonial legacy, the *al-Sharia* advocacy in the dawn of democracy in 1999, the conflictual relationship between Mohammed Yusuf and actors within the main Salafi networks in the region and finally, the relationship between al-Qaeda and the initial founder of the group at Kanama. Similarly, the evolution of violence in the group is also analysed not merely as an ideological imperative or tactical choice to intimidate or terrorise, but as a result of capitalisation of political opportunities by the group's leadership actors. These political opportunities largely evolved as a result of BH's involvement with the region's *al-Shari'a* politics; the group's volatile interactions with the security forces; the availability of material and mobilising resources from both local sponsorships and the mutual cooperation with similar international Salafi-oriented organisations; and the internal competitions between the different factional actors within the organisation. Significantly, the analysis would not exceptionalise one or more of these conditions as the only element (s) responsible for the development of violent activism. Rather, it will see them as interrelated. Together, these interrelated conditions create conducive "political opportunities",

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<sup>9</sup> A detailed description of social movement organisations is provided below in 1.7.2

upon which activists establish groups, as well as develop the different forms of activism they construe as relevant for goal attainment.

#### **1.4 Research Objectives**

The main objective of the research is to use BH as a case study to explore the use of violent activism in SOMOs.

Specifically, the study aims to;

- Shed light on the socio-political and religious background upon which such groups evolve;
- Identify under what conditions such organisations use armed violence as a strategy for their goal attainments;
- Explore how these types of violent methods are used and sustained by such groups.

#### **1.5 Research Questions**

In the light of the above listed objectives, the study specifically formulates a few key questions:

- Under what conditions did BH evolve in the Northern-Nigeria?
- At what stage, and under what conditions did the group begin to use armed violence as a strategy for goal attainment?
- What specific forms of armed violence does the group use; and how are such strategies sustained in the group?

#### **1.6 The Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study is two-fold: theoretical and empirical. Theoretically, the study adopted SMT to conceptualise of the interaction of political structures and organisational dynamics as re-occurring elements for the development and sustenance of activism within movement organisations. Unlike traditional analysis of economic induced grievances and religious symbols

as the primary proponents of violence, SMT-inspired research analyse how mobilisation of resources for violence within movement organisations, particularly in the Middle-East and North Africa are linked to factors such as material resources, cooperation between such groups and similar brother networks, changes in political situations and framing of activism to socio-political realities of potential activists (Della Porta, 2009; Gunning, 2009; 2013; Wiktorowicz, 2004). This study would replicate such kinds of analysis to the Northern Nigerian-born SOMO group. Thus, looking beyond Salafist ideologies or socio-political factors as elements which necessitate such violent activism, the study evaluates how such conditions interact with other organisational and contextual dynamics to influence the support for various forms of violent activism that are used in the Nigerian group. My assumption is that operating within a particular historically extended social and political context, BH is influenced not only by the violent rhetoric within Salafism or socio-economic grievances in the region, but also by other internal organisational dynamics and political opportunities which evolve as they navigate their specific socio-political terrain. This kind of analysis is important in the sense that, using the social movement theory the study will give an insight on how violence is developed, as well as provide a new testing ground for social movement theory building; a perspective that has been concentrated on movement organisations, which operate in the West and Middle East.

Empirically, the study also offers opportunity for new insights on how a SOMO like BH, could develop and sustain violent activism that evolve within an organisation. My understanding from the literature is that although the organisation is contextually unique; these kinds of developments are not unique to BH, they run across many organisations with similar ideological orientation.

### **1.7 Clarification of Key Terms**

For clarity and contextualisation, the following key terms used in the thesis are discussed below: Violence, Political Opportunities, Resources, Social Movement Organisations, Salafism and Salafi-Oriented Movement Organisations.

### ***1.7.1 Violence***

The understanding of violence in the thesis has been drawn from SMT literature. In the SMT scholarship, violence is often conceived as intentional destruction of property or the injuring/killing of people in an effort to achieve a purpose, either by an individual, a group of people or a state (Gunning, 2009; Rucht, 2003; Neidhardt, 1986; Wiktorowicz, 2004). This kind of understanding of violence is broad and accommodates all varieties of contentions that are perpetrated by either individuals or groups of peoples within either a group or outside the group; as such individuals seek to promote a particular social, religious or political agenda(s). Here, all forms of intentional use of power, force or action against oneself, another person or a group of individuals (communities), which either results in or has a likelihood of resulting to discomfort, injury, harm (either psychological or physically), death, mal-development or deprivation to the target is categorised as “violent”. If such actions are meant to inflict pain either psychologically or socially to others, or to oneself, they should be considered as violence.

Some obvious examples of such actions may include but are not limited to verbal threats, physical assaults, knife attacks, gun attacks, guerrilla warfare, bomb explosions, kidnappings, armed robberies, assassinations, suicide bombings. This definition undermines the conventional tendency to assume that violence is always physical and deviant. It acknowledges that violence can take many forms including psychological, cultural, social and even spiritual. In as much as such actions cause pain either to oneself or to another, it is considered as violence.

This kind of broadening of the understanding of violence is important because it makes it easier to analyse issues such as threats (in any form), isolation, silent treatments, and symbolic exhibitions and brandishing of weapons as part of violent behaviours. Even though such actions are not in the same level with physical actual violent attacks, adopting them is in this sense considered as violent. Using such actions, organisations often put pressure on either the state or individuals within their host communities, to either negotiate or address some of the issues raised by the organisations (Wiktorowicz, 2004).

Another important aspect of this conceptualisation of violence is the inclusion of State actions as a form of violence. By broadly conceiving all forms of intentional use of power, force or action to inflict harm or pain as violence, such State actions are regarded as violence. When states engage

in activities, which aims to inflict pain and harm on others, either legally or not, such actions could also be equally considered as a violent action. In SMT scholarship, state actions have often been included in the analysis of violence in movement groups. Scholars such as Jeroen Gunning (2007), and Donatella Della Porta (1995; 2009) among others, discussed how the violent actions of the Israeli and Italian governments affected the escalation of violent activism in Palestinian and Italian movement groups. The emphasis of state actions has generally stemmed from the political process model, where a state's action is often seen as one of the external constraints that limits, and at times encourages the emergence of anti-system ideologies in movement organisations. Although conclusions regarding the effect of such practices vary; many studies concur that such state practices are part and parcel of violence. Such actions also impact on the social movement's behaviours and should be considered in the analysis of how organisations develop, and justify the use of violence, other than other forms of activism.

### ***1.7.2 Social Movement Organisation***

Like violence, the idea of "social movement organisation" is drawn from SMT literature. In that regard, the term is often used interchangeably with "social movements", as a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals or groups of individuals, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of shared collective identity (Diani, 1992; Furseth, 1999; M, 2014; Rucht, 2003). The assumption of earliest social movement scholars was that social movements emanates from "a collective attempt to further a common interest or secure a common goal through collective action outside the sphere of established institutions" (Giddens, 1989:19). The concept was first used in sociology in the early 1960s, mainly by American and European scholars to designate collective efforts by relatively non-governmental groups, who use extra-institutional means to promote or resist social change" (Furseth and Repstad, 2006). Most of these groups had foundation on issues related to political, religious, cultural, economic, ethnic and sexual identities.

Some of the most studied groups during this period include: The Pro-life & Pro-Choice group, the National Rifle Association & Handgun Control, the American Civil Rights Movement Groups, Black Panther and the Ku Klux Klan. All these groups were regarded as "social movement organisations" because they engaged in collective activist behaviours, with the hope for a change or advancement of specific goals of the movement. Following the emergence of groups with more

specific environmental, religious based, peace/anti-war, human rights, social justice, consumer protection, animal liberation objectives in the 1980s, the understanding of movement organisations has broadened (Bevington and Dixon, 2007). Most studies now consider three main characteristics as very important aspects of social movement organisation: (a) organisation, (b) a clear set of goals and (c) an action plan.

For an organisation to be classified as a social movement organisation, it must be organised. This is to say, the group of individuals involved in such groups are not just any group of people, rather, they should have a clearly defined membership, a charter or statutes, binding agendas, and in most cases, a hierarchical leadership structure. Secondly, a social movement organisation must have a set of clear goals and objectives. It is the effort to achieve these goals that drive different forms of activism that a particular movement organisation adopts. Finally, a social movement organisation must have an action plan and the potential ability to carry out collective actions in such a way that it aims at accomplishing its defined goals (Rucht, 2003: 369). As long as an organisation has a set of defined goals and is able to mobilise resources to conduct collective actions, hoping to achieve their respective goals, it could be classified as a movement organisation.

On this basis, many of the so-called Salafi-jihadi organisations have been categorised as movement organisations and have hence become the object of study by a new generation of social movement scholars. Such groups include Hamas (Gunning, 2007; 2009), the Muslim Brotherhood, (Munson, 2001), *Gama'a Islamiyya* (GI) (Hafez and Mohammed, 2004), and al-Qaeda (M, 2014). Given that these groups have organisational features, goals, leadership structures, and action plan, which can be described as social movement organisations, it has become sensible for these organisations to be studied as social movement organisations.

It is on this ground that the present study has also conceived a group like BH as a “social movement organisation”. The understanding of this type of organisation is that it is an organisation that consists of any group of individuals who use collective activism to promote or resist ‘change’ or promote a set(s) of objectives in socio-political environments upon which they are associated with, in spite of what constitutes such change or objectives. Such changes could be social, economic, religious, cultural, political, or ethnic. What is important is such organisation’s leaders involved

can unite such objectives into one unified collective identity, and thus pre-dispose individuals within the organisation for a collective effort to achieve these identified goals.

### ***1.7.3 Resources***

By resource I refer to the tangible and material components or means by which social movement actors mobilise and accomplish activities within movement organisations. These resources are often financial, but can include other less tangible elements, such as ideology, military or organisational expertise, mobilisation tactics, time and dense social networks (Gunning, 2009:159). The assumption is that the acquisition of and access to such resources is crucial for a social movement organisation's success and vitality. Because of the mobilisation potential of such resources, they can help in the shaping of movement behaviours and the different forms of activism that develop within movement organisations.

The idea of "resources" came from the SMT model known as "resource mobilisation". The resource mobilisation model first evolved in social movement studies in the late 1960s, as a part of a shift from previous SMT paradigms, which saw the evolution of movement organisations as emerging from system disequilibrium and psychological "pathologies". Rather than continue to view social movement organisations as such, proponents of this new model (Jenkins, 1983; McCarthy and Zald, 1973; Oberschall, 1973; 1993) re-conceptualised movement organisations as rational organised manifestations of collective action. Scholars argue that the evolution of the new American and European movement organisations, and the subsequent evolution of new types of movement activities within such groups were results of more flexible schedules for activists involved in the group, instead of an increase in grievances and resentments against the system. Such flexible work schedules, for example, facilitated movement participation and provided the activists with opportunities to come up with new movement activities. In this regard, an increase in resources is considered as the ultimate cause of organisational viability, professionalisation (such as having professional staff, membership registrations, bureaucratic structures), which enables different organisations to engage in new organisational behaviours.

Given the striking similarities of the role of these kinds of elements in movement organisations like BH, the study appropriated this idea to understand different organisational dynamics that evolve in the Northern Nigerian-born SOMO (particularly violence). The organisation's seemingly professional structures (Onuoha, 2015), the availability of financial resources, the group's Salafist ideology and the mutual corporations between the groups and the similar international Salafi networks such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Meghreb (AQIM) are here considered as important resources. The assumption is that the availability of these resources could provide vital information on conducive channels for micro-mobilisation for collective action, and intense activism (violent and otherwise), developed and sustained within a group. Rational decisions to adopt one form of activism or another are weighed along the availability of material resources for the group to carry out designated form of activism.<sup>10</sup>

#### ***1.7.4 Political Opportunity Structures***

Political opportunity structure is a term widely used within social movement theory studies to refer to the ideological, social, economic and political conditions which encourage political opportunities for the emergence and sustenance of several dynamics within movement organisations (Gamson and Meyer, 1996; Gunning 2009; Gunning & Baron, 2013; McAdam, 1982; 1996; McAdam *et. al.* 1996; Wiktorowicz, 2004). The main assumption here is that, social actors do not operate in a vacuum: they act within a broader social milieu characterised by shifting and fluid configurations of 'enablements' and constraints, provided by political opportunity structures (Wiktorowicz, 2004; Gunning, 2009; 2013). It is these conditions or contexts that help shape and determine the different dynamics that evolve in a movement organisation. They provide an opportunity where social movement actors adopt different kinds of strategies, which evolve within organisations. In other words, social actors adopt different dynamics (including violence) in situations where there is availability of resources, and when there is an enabling socio-political environment to act. These political opportunities also empower, determine and often define the social viability of a strategy, actions, and choices, which individuals adopt within a particular

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<sup>10</sup> This is only a brief introduction of the resource mobilisation model. A detailed theoretical discussion of this model, and the role of resources in the mobilisation of movement behaviours will be presented in the Literature Review chapter (Chapter 2).

political context. Without the availability of resources such as money to purchase weapons, for example, movement organisation actors would largely limit their violent activism to verbal threats or protests, even in the face of increased state violence or other ideological violence.

### **1.7.5 Salafism**

Salafism is a small but influential tradition within Sunni Islam, from the 18th-century Wahhabi movement<sup>11</sup> that originated in the Najd region of the modern day Saudi Arabia (Beutel *et al.*, 2017; Esposito, 2003). Its method (*manhaj*) is characterized by strict and sharp emphasis on theological purity and identification with the practices of Islam's first "devout ancestors" (the first three generations of the early Muslim community, also known as *Salaf as-salih*). Adherents of Salafism often reference and identify these immediate predecessors of Prophet Mohammed, as the epitome of Islamic practice. For them, the Islam that was practiced by these first three generations was pure, unadulterated, and as the ultimate authority for the interpretation of the Sunnah. According to their understanding, it is only by emulating every detail of the prophetic practice, the manner he pursued governance and the lifestyle that these *salafs* displayed can Muslims truly live an authentic Islamic-life (Beutel *et. al.*, 2017).

Working with this theological foundation, Salafis often reject any role of human speculative philosophy (*kalam*) in the re-interpretation of the Qur'an and in the development of the Islamic creed. For them, these are all foreign imports from the Greek philosophy, which are alien to the

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<sup>11</sup> Wahabism was a movement within the Sunni tradition, which was first founded by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (DeLong-Bas, 2004; Wiktorowicz, 2006). Adherents of this movement were known for their more emphasis on the ultraconservative, fundamentalists, austere and puritanical way of life, much more than the recent modern day Salafis. The movement began in the 18th century when the Nejd (in the Arabia Peninsula)-born religious scholar started his advocacy for a purge of the widespread Sunni practices, which he considered "idolatrous impurities and innovations in Islam (bid'a) (Esposito, 2003: 333). He and his followers would eventually form a pact with a local leader, Muhammad bin Saud (From the Saudi Royal family), through whose sponsorship and endorsement the movement was gradually established. With the eventual proclamation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932, this alliance would prove to be a very useful resource for the spread of this tradition to other parts of the Islamic world. Today, some of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's teachings have remained the official, state-sponsored form of Sunni Islam in Saudi Arabia. With the Saudi government's influence, Wahhabism has also continued to generate worldwide influence in the Islamic world, especially within the Sunni tradition. In the recent time, the gap between Wahhabis and Salafis has also narrowed. Adherents of this school often reject the term; preferring instead to be called Salafis or *Muwahhid* (DeLong-Bas, 2004: 123-124; Commins, 2009: ix; Wiktorowicz, 2006: 235). However, majority of Sunni and Shia Muslims worldwide disagree with the interpretation of Wahhabism. Many do denounce them as a faction or a "vile sect" (Simon, 2015: 16).

original practice of Islam (DeLong-Bas, 2004: 123). As they see it, it is only the Qur'an, the Hadith and the consensus (*ijima*) of the approved scholarship (*ulama*), along with the understanding of the *salaf us-salih*, that is sufficient guidance for every true Muslim; nothing much, nothing less (Beutel *et. al*, 2017). It is only by adhering to these principles that people can keep their human animistic desires in check as well as prevent evil and oppression from spreading in the world. Contemporary Salafis also believe that they constitute the historical embodiment of the 'saved sect' (*al-firqa al-nājiya*). Hence, they often criticise and reject some of the practices and innovations of other Sunni traditions, categorising them as spurious (*bid'a*) or as outright scepticism (*kufir*) (Beutel *et. al.*, 2017).

In the modern era, this emulation has also extended beyond the individual's private religious belief, to the rejection of all other forms of human innovations both within the Islamic religious tradition and in the public sphere. A typical example of this is the rejection of democratic system of government, which they often anchor on the principle of *Tawhid*<sup>12</sup>. To arrive at this conclusion, Salafis often argue that democracy is at odds with God's sovereignty (Anjum, 2016). For them, democracy's ability to create alternative human-made laws puts it at odds with God's laws. God's sovereignty in their assumptions is made to manifest only through the implementation of His will in the Shari'a<sup>13</sup>. Any system that goes contrary to the dictates of such wills is guilty of ascribing sovereignty to something other than God; hence, it should be prohibited. In place of democracy, Salafis, therefore, advocate for the adoption of a theocratic system<sup>14</sup> that involves the implementation of Shari'a; that is, ruling in accordance with Allah's will. As long as innovations are not constructed from the Qur'an or Hadith, they are more often than not interpreted by Salafis as *haram*.

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<sup>12</sup> *Tawhid* refers to God's absolute unity and indivisibility and is frequently translated as "monotheism." For Salafis, *tawhid* implies that only God alone has the right to be worshipped.

<sup>13</sup> Shari'a is the ideal body of law in Islam which encapsulates God's will for humankind. It is derived from the religious traditions and practices of Islam, particularly the Qur'an and Hadith.

<sup>14</sup> I will elaborate a bit more on this in the Chapter two (literature review)

### ***1.7.6 Salafi-Oriented Movement Organisations***

Instead of Salafi-jihadism as often used in most discussions of these kinds of organisations, this study has purposefully appropriated "Salafi-Oriented Movement Organisation" (SOMO) as a more theoretical appropriate term for groups such as BH. By SOMO, the study refers to activist groups within the Salafi tradition, who use ideologies within Salafism, to propagate or implement what could be regarded as political, social or religious activism within the context of modern nation-state. Often political agendas intended are inherently political, but not necessarily associated with political violence. They include a broad repertoire of social movement activisms such as protests, campaigns, seminars, general *da'wa* (religious proselytising), preaching, partisan political involvements, rendering of social and welfare services, publications and political violence (including suicide bombing). Typical examples of such organisations include Al-Qaeda, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, Al-Shabaab, Islamic State and of course BH.

## **1.8 Chapter Outline of the Thesis**

This thesis comprises of seven chapters. This chapter (**Chapter one**) serves as the general introduction of the study, explaining the rationale, justification and the scientific background upon which the research is based. Therefore, it begins with a general background of the study, brief profile of the group, the significance of the study, the research objectives, the corresponding research questions and the definitions of key terms and concepts, in a contextualised manner.

**Chapter two** focuses on literature review and the theoretical framework that guided the study. Here, significant literature on the subject of research, as well as similar social movement theories and social movement-inspired studies are reviewed.

**Chapter three** provides the components and the philosophical assumptions upon which the research was conducted. Some of the important research components include: the research approach, the research design, sampling techniques, the study area, the study population, data collection procedure, ethical considerations and data analysis. Through a detailed discussion of these elements, the chapter presents the subject studied, the data involved, the instruments used, the procedures followed and how such procedures were followed in the data analysis.

**Chapter four** focuses on the analysis of socio-political, ideological and the organisational background upon which BH evolved in northern Nigeria. It does this through the analyses of six main political opportunity structures: The Northern Nigerian culture of Islamic activism evolving from the history of Islam in the region; the Northern Nigerian Colonial legacy; Northern people's Congress; Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999; the intra-ideological dispute between the two main Salafi-networks (Izala, and Ahlus Sunna); and mobilization of resources from corporation with al-Qaeda, particularly Osama Bin Laden. The central argument in the chapter will be that these main structures/conditions provided political opportunities upon which Ali Mohammed (2002, Kanama) and later Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf (2005, Maiduguri) established the group in the region.

In **Chapter five**, the thesis discusses the evolution of violence in the organisation. It explains how violence emerged in the organisation despite Yusuf's initial insurances on non-violence. It also shows how the internal logic and the decision to use violence in 2009 was influenced by the organisation's involvement with the Borno State's local politics and the State's violent interactions with the group. As a result, Yusuf was able to capitalise on the opportunity provided by these interrelated conditions to adopt violence as means for goal attainment, against both the Nigerian State-supported security forces and the Borno State government.

**Chapter six** will identify some of the significant forms of violence (professional hit and run attacks, guerrilla warfare, suicide bombing, kidnapping and armed robbery) which have evolved in the organisations. The chapter explained how the evolution and sustenance of these forms of violence are rooted in the organisation's mutual cooperation and interactions with similar international Salafi networks, as well as the internal competitions between the different factional leaders of the group. The organisation's dependency on the similar international Salafi networks meant that the evolution of specific form of violence within those similar networks directly impacted the mobilisation and adoption of similar forms of violence, in the face of increased violent interaction with both the Nigerian Joint Task Force (JTF) and regional Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF).

**Chapter seven**, the last chapter will conclude the thesis. The chapter will be divided into two parts. While the first part will provide a summary of all the research findings and their implications

in relation to previous research; the second part will give a brief discussion on the limitations of the research and the general conclusions, based on the findings.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the conceptual and theoretical framework of the study. It prefaces the discussion with a synopsis of significant literature on the use of violence in SOMOs, especially as discussed in Religious Studies and Sociology of Religion. Through this, it identifies significant gaps in the literature, and provides the rationale behind the research questions of the study. Furthermore, the chapter will also present a detailed discussion of social movement theories, (particularly resource mobilisation, political opportunity process and framing process models), arguing that the theoretical paradigms of these models, are better suited for analysing and addressing the gaps in the literature and the concomitant research questions formulated for the study.

### 2.2 Religion and Violence (Conceptualising the Use of Violence in Salafi-Oriented Movement Organisations)

Discussions about the use of violence in SOMOs has for years engaged scholarly attention from a variety of disciplines (Caschetta, 2015; Elster, 2006; Franks, 2006; Juergensmeyer, 2003). In the wake of increasing evolution and use of violence in such groups, scholars have focused on unravelling how groups with ideological foundation in a religious tradition containing binding proscription such as “thou shalt not kill”<sup>15</sup> are associated with life-ending strategies? How could a religion such as Islam with a name cognate to ‘*salam*’ (the Arabic word for ‘peace’) be associated with brutal activism? Mark Juergensmeyer (2008:30) has, for example, asked: Is there a connection between Salafism (or religion in general) and violence? Amaechi (2016), Caschetta (2015), Elster (2006), Franks (2006) have also asked: What are the motivates of the evolution of such groups in a given socio-political environment? (Gunning, 2007; M, 2014; Wiktorowicz, 2004). Given that these kinds of groups have continued to evolve and have continued to use these strategies in recent times, answers to these kinds of questions remain important. Answers to such questions not only

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<sup>15</sup> The Qur’an, 5:32.

help provide insight into the ideological foundation upon which such groups use and adopt violent strategies, they can also help identify the socio-political contexts under which such groups evolve.

The reviewed literature is mostly about the use of violence in SOMOs. In reviewing the literature, the discussions are categorised into two loosely interpreted positions: those that see violence as primarily connected to Salafism (or religion in general), and those that see it as having little or no connection to Salafism. The chapter mostly focused on literature within the religious studies and the sociology of religion, the point of which is to situate the study to these particular fields of social sciences.

### ***2.2.1 Salafism as the Driver of Violence***

Salafism has been discussed in many studies as the main element, which drives the evolution of violence in SOMOs (Caschetta, 2015; Hafez, 2000; Jansen, 1986; Onuoha, 2015). Scholars have analysed different Salafism doctrines, as the ideological platform upon which such groups adopt violence, as a strategy for goal attainment. Often, the Islamic tradition's immutable sources of knowledge — the Qur'an and the Hadith (that is, the canonical collections of Muhammad's sayings and actions) are conceived as the main elements, which inform decisions about the evolution of violence. Given that these sacred scriptures contain historical traditions and ideological elements, which are fused with violent activism, they provide ideological and moral imperative for justifying the evolution and development of violent activism in such groups. In this case, SOMOs who resort to violence do so on the basis of the theological justification Salafism provides. Under certain conditions or circumstances that meet specific religiously sanctioned criteria, such groups easily evolve and readily rely on these sources to develop and justify violent strategies against state opposition, or other groups regarded as legitimate targets.

This kind of understanding was first promoted in religious studies and sociology of religion by scholars within the so called "fundamentalism literature". In analysing the origin of the religious-motivated violent groups (referred to as 'fundamentalists'), scholars on fundamentalism argued that, such groups are often driven from "an intolerant self-righteous and narrowly dogmatic religious literalism" (Umar, 1983: 23). For such studies, the evolution of such groups is not just a social imperative, but a feature which always flows from "religious radicalism", when the society

departs from the desired ideal, or divine-intended religious situation (Appleby 2000; Bruce 2008; Martin *et al.*, 1996). Disgusted by undesirable societal situations, religious groups, therefore, evolve and draw violent strategies from ideologies within their religious traditions, to correct the ills of the society. In other words, the evolution of violent activism in such groups is a natural response that emanates from the groups' religious ideological sources.

Samuel Huntington's (1993; 1997) "clash of civilisations" exacerbated this idea. Leaning on the literature concerned with the notion of fundamentalism, the American scholar believes that religious identities would be the main driver of international conflict in the new world order following the end of the Cold war between the US and Russia. According to him, although Nation States would remain the most powerful actors in the international arena, the 'clash of civilisations' would be the new force fuelling international conflicts. Huntington (1993) first categorised the world into nine different civilisations, mostly based on religious lines and cultural constructs. He contends that, conflicts occur either on a religious ideological level within States with groups belonging to different civilizations, or on global level between and among States that belong to different religious civilizations ("core-state conflicts"). Although these civilisations bring with them different, and sometimes contradictory violent ideologies, religions create the possibilities for violent clashes among the different countries that are identified with them. While I acknowledge with many other scholars (Asad, 2007; Silvestri and Mayall, 2015) this argument cannot account for how religions become intertwined with other factors, and as such it is difficult to separate it from other political, economic and social factors (which might give better explanations for conflict dynamics inside and between neighbouring countries). Thus, Huntington (2003) gives credence to the idea that religious ideologies (civilisations) drives violence. Following his reasoning, it is possible to infer therefore that international conflicts and violence could evolve not necessarily because of historical or socio-economic factors, but also because of the religious ideologies, which form part of these civilisations.

On the same note, Bruce (2008: 42) regards religion as the main driver of violence for "fundamentalist groups". In "Islamist fundamentalist's movements", he noted two main features within religion: lack of a clear division between the spiritual and religious power, and the centrality of the law. As he rightly observed, Islam, unlike Christianity and most of the other monotheistic religious traditions, achieved its political power in the lifetime of its founder, Prophet Mohammed.

Partly for this, the British sociologist of religion argues that the original Muslim community did not develop an image of faith that is isolated from secular powers. It also did not develop an idea of faith, which is separated from politics. For that, the religion is very much susceptible to be used for mobilisation of violent activism. Under an undesirable context, for example, it is easier for a religious leader in 'Islamic fundamentalist group' to draw on these historical narratives and religious ideologies within the religion, to mobilise violent activism against the perceived enemies of the religion. Violence within such situation is not something that is rooted in environmental factors, but rather something that can be drawn from the religious sources and traditions within the Islamic religion.

It is from this background that many recent scholars (Hafez, 2000; Moghadam, 2009; Onuoha, 2015) have connected the use of arm struggle to the violent ideologies within Salafism. In the analysis of the use of suicide violence in al-Qaeda for example, Assaf Moghadam (2008/2009) particularly identifies religious exclusivist ideologies within Salafism as the main justifications for the group's use of this form of violence. Tracing the evolution of al-Qaeda itself, this scholar describes how this form of violence had been justified and made popular by the group leadership's framing of 'jihad' as key element in the battle between true Muslims and the West. Within the boundaries of such framing, he argues al-Qaeda's leadership is able to elevate violent attack, (specifically suicide violence) against the West and its allies as within the realm of the "five pillars of Islam"<sup>16</sup>. They were also able to appropriate the idea of *takfir* (the process of labelling fellow Muslims as infidels), within which they are able to support and justify the use of violence as representing "the ultimate form of devotion to God and the optimal way to wage jihad" (Moghadam, 2009:62). Inferably, al-Qaeda activists who commit suicide violence against identified targets, operate with a conviction that "he/she does not kill him/herself for personal reasons, but sacrifices him/herself for God. He/she is therefore not committing suicide, but achieving martyrdom" (Moghadam, 2009:62). Although this is theologically unsound and quite debatable, since the idea of suicide is a disapproved practiced among most Salafi Islamic scholars; however, it helps make the case that religious ideologies within Salafism play a very important

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<sup>16</sup> "Five Pillars of Islam" represent the main framework of correct spiritual life in Islamic traditional religion. The framework includes: Testimony of faith, prayer, giving *zakat* (charity to the needy), abstinence and fasting during the month of Ramadan, and making pilgrimage to Makkah once in a lifetime for those who are able to do. A reference will be useful.

role in the use of violence within SOMO. By helping reduce the suicide attacker's reservations to perpetrate the acts of violence and killing of him/herself, helps him or her justify violent actions against identified targets.

Arguably, this kind of analysis was set in motion by Wiktorowicz's (2006) categorisation of Salafis, in his *Anatomy of the Salafi Movement*. Wiktorowicz divided groups within Salafism into three categories:

- the quietist-those who focus on 'nonviolent methods of propagation, purification, and education'. These kinds of actors discourage their followers from political activism, sticking to the classical, Sunni principle which entails total obedience to the Muslim ruler;
- the jihadi-those who call for 'violence and revolution' to overthrow the governments of their countries; and
- finally, the politicos-those who emphasise application of the Salafi creed in the political arena and allow the formation of Islamist parties. These people are mostly not interested in arm struggle.

In Wiktorowicz's categorisation, Salafism is far from monolithic. While Salafis in general agree on most points of religious belief and socio-political end goals (creating an Islamic political community governed by their interpretation of Shari'a), he argues, the difference between them lies in the means to achieve these goals. For him, the "Quietists" and "Politicos" within Salafism eschew the use of violence whatsoever (they rather focus on bottom-up "education and purification" of society, or non-violent political activism that tend to reject democratic means of engagement respectively). It is mostly the "Jihadis", who believe in the revolutionary overthrow of existing state structures through armed struggle. For this set of Salafis, such systems need to be replaced by theocracies that implement a strict interpretation of the Shari'a. Their jihadi interpretation of the two concepts of *al-hukm bi-ghayr mā anzala Allāh* (judgements, other than what God has revealed) and *al-walā' wa'l-barā'* (loyalty to Islam and disavowal of everything else) is also more rigid or extreme than that of the ones advocated by the quietists and the politicos.

SOMOs who use violence fall within the trend of Salafi-jihadists. Following their interpretations and convictions on the use of this strategy for goal attainment, they would not hesitate to adopt arm struggle or violence against their host communities, in order to achieve their goals. This

means, the use of violence is bound to evolve in such groups; it is only a matter of “when”. Thus, the evolution of violence in such organisations is a religio-political response emanating from the ideological imperative that exists within their Salafi ideological tradition.

This kind of analysis dominated recent scholarly discussions about the use of violence in BH (Anonymous, 2012; Brigaglia, 2012a; 2012b; 2015; Kassim, 2015; 2018; Thurston, 2016). Writing in the *Journal of Religion in Africa*, an Anonymous (2012) scholar logically identified BH’s Salafist ideology and the resultant violent activism in the group to the second trend (the jihadist) in the global Salafi discourse, which favours the use of violence. In analysing how the Northern Nigerian-born SOMO adopted violence against the Nigerian state, the Anonymous (2012:139) author contrasts Yusuf’s position (what he called “Salafi Radicalism”) with that of the other established Salafi networks (“counter Salafi Radicalism”), in the Northern Nigeria. These positions championed violent and non-violent approach respectively (Anonymous, 2012:139).

Both positions are dependent on key Salafi doctrines, and hence agree on the desirability of a struggle to establish an ‘Islamic’ form of government in Nigeria. However, the former’s answer to the question of *how* Muslims should establish the desired government, the author argued, led him to break away from the main Salafi establishments in the region (*Ahlus Sunna and Izala*<sup>17</sup>), and later to his group’s declaration of jihad and “violent confrontation with the Nigerian government” (Anonymous, 2012: 139). Thus, while Yusuf and his group adopted a violent approach for the establishment of a theocratic *al-Shari’a* state, other established Salafi networks in the region followed the non-radical path. They tactically accepted the necessity of working within the Nigerian non-Islamic government to achieve incremental improvement with the already existing state (albeit an imperfect one), pending the establishment of an Islamic one<sup>18</sup>. Instead of using the Salafi narrative to urge Muslims to remove their oppressors forcefully, as Yusuf championed, they invoked the narrative to warn Muslims against confrontation with Nigerian government because they didn’t think they could win.

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<sup>17</sup> An elaborate discussion of the *Ahlus Sunna* and the *Izala* will be provided in the Chapter four.

<sup>18</sup> Brigaglia, (2015) and later Kassim, (2018) have in the light of new evidence shown that it was actually the old Salafi establishments in the region who took a doctrinal shift, and not Yusuf. I will elaborate more on this in the preceding section and in Chapter 4.

Thurston (2016) would modify this argument a bit. In identifying the significance of the global radical Salafi discourse in the development of armed struggle in Yusuf's group; he recognised the debates between Boko Haram and the established Salafi networks in the region as identical to the local manifestation of a tension existing between global quietist and Salafi-jihadi trends within Salafism. For him, BH is the purest representation of the Salafi-jihadi trend in Nigeria. Being able to internalise Salafi-jihadi ideas, Thurston (2016) infers that these thoughts were the main intellectual influence upon which Yusuf and BH activists developed an "exclusivist worldview", within which the group's leadership were able to mobilise their followers for armed struggle against the Nigerian state. The militant call in the group, as he saw it, was based on a more rigid application of the principle of *takfīr* (excommunication) of the Muslim ruler who rules and issues judgements, other than what God has revealed (*al-ḥukm bi-ghayr mā anzala Allāh*). Also, the associated principle of *al-walā' wa'l-barā'* (loyalty to Islam and disavowal of everything else), which implies that a deficiency shown in one's loyalty to the laws of Islam, or in the disavowal of non-Islamic systems constitutes an act of unbelief (*kufīr*) in itself. It also puts the one (in this case, the Muslim ruler) who commits it, out of the fold of Islam (Brigaglia, 2015). This disposition made it possible for Yusuf, and later Shekau, to demand their audience to "choose between Islam and a set of allegedly anti-Islamic practices: democracy, constitutionalism, alliances with non-Muslims, and Western-style education", and possibly resort to violence, as their message was not accorded positive reception by the Nigerian government. This doctrinal theology, albeit being the fundamental ingredient for armed violence, Thurston (2016:5) will further add was also possible to motivate violence in BH because it is combined with the group's "politics of victimhood", fiercely propagated by the group's leadership at the time.

Other scholars such as Andrea Brigaglia (2015) have also promoted this ideological significance of Salafism in the use of violence in BH. Building on his previous research (Brigaglia, 2012a; 2012b) on the group, Brigaglia (2015) shed more light on how BH's exclusivist ideology created the conditions for hybridisation and subsequent evolution of the group and the use of violent strategy against the Nigerian state. Subtly critical of Wiktorowicz's (2005) categorisation upon which most of the previous scholars (Anonymous, 2012; Thurston, 2015) deduced their categorisation of Salafists, he (Brigaglia, 2015) presented the intra-Salafi debates between Mohammed Yusuf and the mainstream Salafis "as a gradual process that probably involved

complex strategic considerations as well as local and global negotiations” (Brigaglia, 2015:193). His thesis challenges Thurston’s (2015) and the Anonymous scholar’s position which seem to portray that it was Mohammed Yusuf and his followers who made a gradual movement towards jihadism, away from the mainstream Salafis. On the contrary, Brigaglia (2015) correctly explained that it was indeed the mainstream Salafi networks in Nigeria who withdrew from their initial flirtation with the “jihadi project”. Hence, he argued that Yusuf and his followers should not be regarded as the actors who abandoned the quietist strategy for a jihadi one. To prove this, he traced Yusuf’s violent inclinations to both the Salafi sources within the region before 2003, particularly the theological sources that emanated from the different religious concepts (including the concept of excommunication). These sources, he correctly explained were learnt from the writings of Bakr b’Abdallāh Abū Zayd<sup>19</sup> and from the global Salafi discourse. Before Yusuf’s BH, most actors within the Ahlus Sunna and the Izala had supported armed struggle against the Nigerian state. However, for some reasons they (particularly Ja’far Mahmoud Adamu, who had begun to work with the Nigerian government) stepped away from the jihadi position, stressing instead the need to work with the Nigerian state. It was probably for this reason, that they rejected Yusuf’s position and rather encouraged their followers to avoid confrontations with the Nigerian authorities. Yusuf, on the other hand, remained faithful to the jihadi project. Brigaglia (2015) further explained that it was Yusuf’s steadfastness to this idea that finally pushed Yusuf and his group into confrontation with the Nigerian government. On that basis, the group’s ideology was already “geared toward the preparation of a cataclysmic confrontation with the secular authorities in Nigeria” (Brigaglia, 2015: 187). Once the group had moved towards this radical jihadi position, violent activism was bound to happen.

This kind of ideological explanations of violence heightens the significance of religious ideology and theological sources for structuring violent behaviours within SOMOs. However, I would slightly hesitate to use such explanation for the analysis of the development of violence in Boko Haram for several reasons. Firstly, such explanation readily assumes that there is a direct relationship between a given ideology and the chosen action repertoire. Research shows that this is not necessarily and empirically correct in most situations (Gunning and Baron, 2013; Della

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<sup>19</sup> Bakr b. ‘Abdallāh Abū Zaa is a well-placed scholar in the Saudi Arabian religious establishment. It is likely that Yusuf had come in contact with his writings during some of his visits to the Kingdom.

Porta, 1995; Gunning, 2009; Wiktorowicz 2004). The reality is that ideology either as a religious tradition or as cultural imperative does not necessarily entail collective actions, especially violence. There are multiple Salafi networks around the world, in conflictual relationships with the host communities as well as other networks with different ideologies which favours violence; yet such organisations have remained “non-violent” (Gunning, 2009).

Even a cursory review of the history of other Salafist groups that have operated within the Izala and Ahlus Sunna in Nigeria (Falola, 1998), reveals that there is no evidence that this link (Salafism and violence) is inevitable, and thus it needs more investigation. In the past, actors have engaged with the Nigerian state since the formation of the Izala and have been profoundly radical; yet they have remained non-violent (Falola, 1998). Certainly, Salafi-jihadist trends could through a repertoire of ideas encourage a resort to a more violent activism, but that cannot prove that Salafi-jihadism is inherently violent. At most, this demonstrates as Wiktorowicz (2004:94) rightly points out “the tactical ability of such religious ideologies to be used to frame violence in Islamic terms, which is possible thanks to a gradual erosion of critical constraints.” The evolution of SOMOs who use violence and their justification of such activism often include other sociological elements (mobilisation of resources for examples), which are not just based on the interaction of ideological elements of such movements. Without identifying such elements, it is difficult to have a clear understanding of how violence is used and sustained within such groups.

Secondly, ideological explanations do not carry nuanced categories for understanding and explaining how such strategies escalate after they have evolved. Fundamentalism particularly does not carry much socio-political meaning, other than a mono-causal broad description, for explaining why violence appeals to activists within “fundamentalist groups”. Such explanations not only over-emphasise the significance of religious beliefs, they also downplay other diverse angles involved in the evolution of such strategies in SOMOs. In the light of this inadequacy, social movement scholars have found the evolution of such groups and the development of violence within them to be connected to debates and discussions between the movement actors, their fluid interests and more broadly, the contexts such movement organisations identify with. The development of Hamas in Palestine, for example, has been found to be a product of long standing debates within the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood and the violent rivalry with the Nationalist movement over the utility of violent resistance, in response to an increasing desperate economic and security

situation in the Palestine occupied territories and the opening of political opportunities within the other Middle East states (Gunning, 2007; 2009); not necessarily an Islamic response to the Palestinian situation.

Similarly, the provisional violence within the Algerian Islamic Army has also among other things been analysed to have emerged from drawn out contestations between the original non-violent Bouyali Group and the Military-backed Algerian government, as well as a response to the social and political situations that existed within the Algerian society as at the time the group evolved (Hafez, 2004:37-60). It was these structures within these societies that provided the political opportunity for activists to justify and began to use violence. Hence, it is difficult to come to a satisfactory explanation of these kinds of activism by explaining only the religious beliefs and practices within such religious traditions upon which such groups evolve. Of course, there can be situations where violent actions could be motivated by ideological beliefs of activists, but this does not mean that there is automatic mechanism that can be identified whereby fundamentalism or exclusivist Salafi ideology entails violence. Such causal explanations and justifications of violence are inadequate and would exclude the other social, economic and political dynamics that are involved in the use of violence in SOMO.

### ***2.2.2 Violence as Dependent on the Environment and Other Socio-Political Factors***

Other than ideological or religious explanations, other studies have privileged external factors as elements responsible for the evolution and development of violence within SOMOs (Ansari, 1984; Comolli, 2015; Ibrahim, 1980; 1996; Walker, 2016; Williams & Guttschuss, 2012). Within this perspective, research concentrated on the socio-economic and psychological dispositions of activists within religious groups (Ansari, 1984; Ibrahim, 1980; 1996). In studying the rise of “militant Islamist organisations” in Egypt, for example, Hamied Ansari (1984) analysed the relevance of socio-economic background of activists. His underlying assumption was that the socio-economic and biographical roots of individuals tell us something about the religious disposition of activists who become part of such groups. In his assumptions, the activists within these organisations had high levels of education and had recently migrated to urban areas from rural areas in search of greener pastures. Because they were cut off from their rural roots and family backgrounds, they suffered a sense of social alienation and lack of the usual social or ethical

standards, which make them vulnerable to the religious message and susceptible to accept violence. Living in a new urban environment with different values, ushered in a sense of alienation and isolation, which was only satisfied because activists become active within religious organisations. Hence, motivation for violence did not emanate from religious ideology within such groups, but from the interaction of the psychological disposition of the activists and the other socio-environmental elements at play before the activists joined the movement organisations.

The main merit of this kind of explanation is that it recognises the importance of the socio-political contexts in the understanding of how disposition for violence evolves amongst activists in such movement organisations. By looking at the interaction of the psychological disposition of activists and the socio-political environment such analysis of violence provides answers to how socio-economic roots of individuals tell us something about grievances, and why such grievances could draw activists to religious violent groups. Being part of a violent activism in this sense becomes among other things, a platform upon which such activists enjoy a sense of belonging and express their grievances about their socio-political environment.

However, as significant as this kind of analysis is, it has in the last decades been met with severe criticisms. One apparent criticism is that socio-economic roots of violent activists do not necessarily tell us much about violence or the patterns of violence. Several empirical researches confirm that violent activists within Salafism, or other religious traditions seem to share similar levels of exposure including, education and economic affluence (Roy, 2004; Wiktorowicz, 2004; Gunning and Baron, 2013). In some cases, violent activists from SOMOs tend to be well educated, and this is a factor that seem to be common in social movement groups around the world, whether violent or not (Hafez and Wiktorowicz, 2004:65). There is no causal or procedural relationship that shows that one can predict a would-be radical violent SOMO, or how their path to radicalisation and use of violence could be known from just the biographical and socio-economic backgrounds of its activists.

In the wake of this criticism, many scholars have thus put aside socio-economic profiling of individuals to focus on how individuals in privileged/elite positions within SOMOs and communities 'use' religion to facilitate the evolution of violence within such groups (Comolli, 2015; De Juan, 2015; Toft et. al., 2011; Toft, 2007; Williams and Guttschuss, 2012). For such scholars, it is not religious ideology or grievances of activists themselves that bred violence; rather

it is how such ideologies and grievances are manipulated by opportunist and power-thirsty (religious or political) leaders who adopt religious languages and phrases for their own personal gains (Toft, 2007; De Juan, 2015).

Alexander De Juan's (2015) analysis of the role of elites in group and intra-state conflicts makes a very good example of such cases. Using case studies from Thailand, Iraq and the Philippines; the American German-based scholar argues that "competing religious elites try to mobilise their followers against their rivals in order to establish their predominance within their religious community" (De Juan, 2015:765). Besides providing the "quotidian norm setting in their religious communities", he argues, religious elites "communicate specific narratives, which shape the political self-perception of the believers" (De Juan, 2015:764), in a way that is crucial to the 'constitution of radical conflict interpretations'. For him, religious differences rarely directly lead to violence. Rather, the apparent religious dimensions of many violent conflicts are more of a consequence of successful religious framings by religious or political leaders. In the societal competition "for material and dogmatic supremacy", religious and political actors become inclined to promote violence, by offering religious interpretations that are designed to legitimise the use of force and to mobilise believers to violent action (De Juan, 2015:762). Such framing processes easily become successful, depending inter alia on the coherence and appropriateness of the frames on the existence of persuasive master frames and on the availability of communication infrastructures that allow for effective dissemination of religious frames and mobilisation. Implicitly, religion here is not the cause of the conflict, instead the mobilisation power lies in the ability of these elites to aggregate and mobilise activists within such groups towards the desired violent behaviours. It is these political elites that provide such religious groups with the appropriate motivational structure with which to shape conflictual interactions that involves violence.

It is in this sense that many scholars with expertise in Indian and Pakistani sub-continent (Bhatt, 2001; Mayall & Srinivasan, 2009; Talbot, 2007; Waseem, 2010) have used similar analysis to argue for more nuanced interpretations of the ever present inter and intra-state "religious violence" among religious communities within India and Pakistan. Here, taking into account the role of competitions between ethnic, religious and political leaders, political realities within the countries, the staggering state of the countries' economic situations, the historical legacy (from both during and before the colonial era) of the countries' nationalist projects, and the interactions between

these groups and state institutions, these scholars exonerate religion as the cause of violent activism existing in the communities in the borders of the two countries. Instead, they argue that these factors interact with one another to influence the development of the morality that sanctions violence in these countries. Thus, under such conditions, religion is not the cause of violence, but rather a product of these multiple factors at play within the socio-political environment within which the groups operate.

As much as I acknowledge the significance of the role of political elites and these other multiple factors in understanding the evolution of violence, I would point out that the separation of these factors from religion is quite problematic. Firstly, it is impossible to separate what is 'religious' from what is 'economical' and 'political', in such a way that religious ideas are innocent of violence. How could one, for example, separate religion from politics in Islam, when Islam itself makes no such distinctions? Secondly, it is difficult to clearly separate people's actions from their religious beliefs, when religion is implicated in their actions. How do we absolve Islam of responsibility in the action of a Muslim activist for example, when clearly Islam is not primarily a set of doctrines, but lived historical experience embodied and shaped by the empirically observable actions of both religious traditions? Given certain conditions, Islam, or other faith traditions can, and do contribute to violence (Cavanaugh, 2007; 2009). The idea of separating economic, political from religious factors, as elements which motivate violence in groups is not only problematic and incoherent it is also unsustainable under the recent use and development of violence within SOMOs. In most cases, religions do intertwine with political, socio-economic, and even psychological conditions, to affect how activists within religious-oriented groups adopt and develop the zeal for violence (Amaechi, 2016; Juergensmeyer, 2003; 2008; Gunning, 2009).

In the light of this criticism, several recent scholars from a variety of disciplines (Asad, 2007; Canetti et. al., 2010; Juergensmeyer, 2003; 2008; Piazza, 2009; 2011) agree that religion gets intertwined with other factors when it comes to motivation of violence. Analysing how such well-known groups around the world developed the use of political violence, Mark Juergensmeyer (2003), for example, argued that although religion is not the embodiment of the entire picture, it cannot be separated from the other factors at play. Rather than make such separation, the American scholar saw violence within such groups as arising from a combination of a deep-seated cosmological, political, cultural, and symbolic traditions within the religious traditions upon which

such groups identify, as they navigate their socio-political environments. For him, the September 11th 2001 US attack and other similar Al-Qaeda alleged attacks around the world, the Baruch Goldstein attacks at the tomb of the Patriarchs and the assassination of the former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, the assassinations of Indira Gandhi and Beant Singh in Sikhism in India, and the subway gas attacks of the Aum Shinrikyo's group in Japan by the different groups who perpetrated them, were all direct culminations of the culture of violence and the historical narratives that emanate from the several different religions in which the perpetrators of these acts of violence identify.

Obviously, religion within these traditions are crucial for the development of these kinds of actions, in the sense that "it gives the moral justification for the killings and provides images of cosmic war that allow activists" (Juergensmeyer, 2003: xi); however, they do not provide a comprehensive picture of why these elements evolve, as these kinds of violence can, and do as well happen outside religious contexts. To understand these incidents, one must collectively look at the history, the culture of violence, and the economic and political contexts in which these organisations operate. Such acts of violence are the functions of not one factor (religious or non-religious), but the history and the culture of violence, as well as the social interaction between the groups in question and the society where such groups operate. By tapping into these narratives, religious movement organisations such as BH appropriate cosmological paradigms and political identities within which they justify such violent activism within their groups.

Asad (2007) also echoes a similar thought when he critiqued the legitimacy of the traditional academic discourse surrounding "suicide violence", (an idea he believes has been coloured by previous religious and non-religious categorisations, emanating from the Western ideas in international politics). Rather than ask what motivates such violence in SOMOs, the Saudi Arabian-born scholar rhetorically queries if there is "a crucial difference between someone who kills in order to die, and someone who dies in order to kill." "If there is", Asad (2007:40) continues, "what makes its motivations religious or not?" Hence, the scholar sees no difference between the two: that is, the one who kills to die (a Salafi suicide violent activist for example), or the one who dies to kill (a soldier who gives his life in a secular war). For him, both are violent activists. There is no fundamental difference in terms of goal between them. Whether as a form of self-sacrifice by soldiers in war or as martyr activists in a SOMO, this kind of violent activism (like every other

violent activism within such organisations) is simply the same. They differ only in terms of scale, made possible because of the state's capability and a combination of cruelty and compassion that sophisticated social institutions enable and encourage (Asad, 2007:3).

Following Asad's reasoning therefore, activists within a SOMO, which use violence, could be likened to modern Western traditional armed combatants, who are committed to violent activism, probably in defence of their political community. Whether within an Islamic activist organisation or in a battlefield during an international conflict, such activists are affected by similar goals and conditions that happen around the group or political community upon which such organisations or the individuals belong. Much like self-sacrifice in "legitimate" warfare situations, actors who engage in such violence within SOMOs are better understood as activists whose choices and strategic decisions are influenced and embedded in the political communities where they identify. Thus, there is nothing unique about SOMO's use of violence that cannot be located along a continuum of violence that includes actions and interactions of the organisation around the society where they operate.

Many recent studies of the evolution of violence in BH have analysed how the interaction of socio-economic and causal factors within the Northern Nigeria underlie the overall emergence of violent insurgency in the group (Comolli, 2015; Mohammed, 2015; Pérouse de Montclos, 2015; Onuoha, 2015; Serrano & Pieri, 2015; Williams and Guttschuss, 2012). Here, scholars have discussed factors such as the Nigerian military crack-down on previous similar groups and the brutal suppression of the organisation at the early stage of their emergence (Comolli 2015; Serrano and Pieri, 2015; Walker 2012); a mixture of poverty, grievance, marginalization, corruption and previous inter-communal violence within the region (Harnischfeger 2015: 33-62; Williams and Guttschuss, 2012); and demographic pressures, the residual effects of colonialism, the Nigerian government's violent repression; as well as the historical interpretation of Islam in the region (Comolli 2015:45-152).

Virginia Comolli (2015:158-192) particularly combines an analysis of the complexity of the group's international identification with other Salafi networks and that of historical sense of grievance and marginalisation that arose after the Nigerian government has embarked on excessive brutal repression against the group. Writing from the experience of her fieldwork in the region, the scholar explained how these factors led the group's adoption of violence in 2009 and has continued

to be the major source of motivation for violence in the group in its current form. Comolli believes that the group continued to develop more sophisticated forms of violence, mainly because of the Nigerian government's inability to build legitimacy, to deliver public goods, to strengthen moderate Islam, or implement robust programmes that could counter the ideological support for extremism and violent activism. Hence, BH has remained resilient, and has continued to draw strength from these factors to recruit and radicalise young activists in the region, for violent activism against the Nigerian state.

No doubt these kinds of analysis of the use of violence in such groups maximises the significance of socio-political factors in influencing the evolution of violence within movement organisations. However, the over-emphasis on such factors can diminish the importance of many other aspects, particularly the organisational and individual relational dimensions, which give a clearer understanding of how such groups evolves, and how the individuals within such groups accept violent activism as a strategy for the group's goal attainment. Many social movement and organisation-focussed studies on similar groups have shown that often the use of violence is often not just about the influence of socio-political factors within the area where the group operates. It can also be inspired by the social movement dynamism surrounding both the individual actors within the group and the social movement organisations in general (Hafez, 2004: 37-60; Gunning, 2007; 2009; Gunning & Baron, 2013; Wiktorowicz, 2004). Often, the disposition to violence may or may not exist prior to experience of activism, and group participation of the individual actors. Instead, such strategies develop as an outcome of dynamic social processes. It is a result of the interactions of many evolving repertoires of social movement dynamics involving the individuals and the different group dynamics within the group. Even in cases when violent activism is carried out by individuals outside the groups, they are also not simply a result of a cultural or cosmological imperative that emanates from the individual's interaction with the political environment but the product of social debates within the movements, and the functional power struggles that is motivated and encouraged by different access to resources and competing interactions of members' interests and identities, Without an inclusion of such organisational aspects, it is possible to miss very significant aspects of how violent activism evolve.

Furthermore, most previous research (Comolli, 2015; Mohammed, 2015; Pérouse de Montclos, 2015; Onuoha, 2015; Serrano & Pieri, 2015; Williams and Guttschuss, 2012) on the use of violence

in BH in general, has not been able to connect the different levels of analysis; the macro (environment), the meso (group) and the micro (individual). As a result, they have not been able to adequately explain the fluidity that characterises the emergence and proliferation of this element as strategy for goal attainment within the organisation. While certain elements (be it socio-political, organisational, or ideological) may represent constituent categories, which motivate the general intense conditions for such organisation to adopt violent strategy, an analysis of one, or a combination of such factors in themselves alone does not adequately explain the decision and the timing to adopt such strategy. Socio-political factors for example could explain the systemic imbalance (Harnischfeger, 2015; Williams & Guttschuss, 2012; Walker, 2012), which as some of previous study rightly explain can contribute to frustrations and inclinations towards radical activism; but this hardly tells us much how such frustrations could be articulated as collective activism. A macro functionalist explanation which focuses on the Northern Nigerian and social-political structures may similarly explain why an organisation like BH may want to decide to use armed violence against the Nigerian state; yet, such explanations can hardly give insight into why such elements could provide the justifications for the organisation to move from lower risk violent activism to higher-risk activism such as suicide bombing. Why would a BH activists choose to adopt this form of violence (suicide bombing), when there are other less-riskier ones? What leads to shifts in repertoires of such violent contentions, so that these forms of violent strategies become an accepted instrument of collective action within the SOMO? Without an additional inter-related analysis on the organisational and individual levels, it is impossible to explain these developments in such an individual in such an organisation.

It is also difficult to explain how such elements could trigger violence in one SOMO and not in another within the same socio-political context. Assuming we accept that the evolution of a group such as BH to be a response from intense peculiar socio-political factors alone, or a result of an ideological imperative within Salafi-jihadist ideology as traditional studies often portray, how do we explain the ‘timing’ of the different forms of violent activism in the group? How come the different forms of violent activism in the group did not evolve at the initial stages when the group first emerged in the Northern Nigerian society, where they first operated? To accept that the Nigerian SOMO would be inherently violent because they possess violent-jihadi ideologies, or

that they are violent because of general socio-political factors for example, obscures multiple other environmental and social movement dynamics that inform the development of such strategies.

For a clearer understanding of this element, an analysis of the evolution of this group, and how violence is used and sustained within it, we need to include a discussion of how the motivations from religious ideology and socio-political situations are influenced by changes in organisational dynamics and the psychological experiences within the individual activists. Thus, there are three important levels of analysis here: The environmental, the ideological and the organisational levels. Actions of individual Salafi activists are not just products of their socio-political environment, or an ideological imperative that emanates from their religious beliefs, but a rational choice that dynamically flow from their psychological dispositions, based on their multiple other previous experiences both within and outside their group (Gunning, 2009). The individual is not just a mere religio-political activist, but an individual that is dependent on the association he identifies with, his or her psychological make-up and the socio-political environment he operates in. I believe that it is only by accommodating these different levels of explanation in structuring movement and individual choices, can an analysis adequately explain the evolution of the group and the choice of violent activism, both in terms of fluidity and the temporality of such strategy, and in terms of how it is influenced, and how it emerges from, and metamorphoses into other sophisticated forms within the organisation.

One way to do this is to employ social movement theory (SMT) paradigms. SMT paradigms do not just provide a framework for integrating the three levels of explanations, it also offers a platform within which we can investigate the impact these three different levels have on each other, in the development of violence. In its most comprehensive form, SMT paradigms can conceptualise the evolution of all dynamics within movement organisations, including violent strategies, as “fluid and responsive” to individual and contextual changes within the movements and the environments in which such movements identify. In this sense, rather than investigate how one element (ideology, environment or socio-psychologic) can motivate the evolution of violence within a SOMO, an SMT inspired research could encourage an adoption of a more resolutely empirical analysis that sees these conditions as “socially inter-related”, in influencing the development of such groups and the different violent strategies that evolve as the group navigates its socio-political environment. Also, rather than investigate, for example, why Salafi-jihadist

ideology influenced the development of violence, such analysis could look at what stage a group like BH began to adopt violent activism as a strategy for goal attainment. It could also investigate under “what conditions” such groups started to use different jihadist ideology to justify its violent activism. Even though such groups may have from the time it evolved become disposed to violent activism, how do the interactions of the socio-political, environmental, individual and organisational dynamics influence the group to begin to see the Nigerian state as a legitimate target for such activism? And how do these interactions influence the group to move from one less radical violent activism such as threats, to the next more radical one, such as suicide violence? Within such discussions, it becomes necessary to understand how the group first evolved, the contexts in which it did so and the different forms of socio-political structures that influenced this evolution. Such trajectories are also manifest in the evolution of the different forms of activism that the group adopts (including violence).

These kinds of investigations have several implications. First, it restores fluidity to the idea of what motivates violence, both in terms of how it is influenced and how it emerges from and metamorphoses into other sophisticated forms within the organisation (Gunning, 2009:161). Second, it helps to relocate Salafist political ideology and other resources in their broader social contexts, as part of what forms the contentions within and around the wider movement organisation to adopt violent strategy. Finally, it also enables an investigation into the choice to adopt violence as dynamic - an element that is often affected by the experience of activism and the impact of participation in the movement organisation’s structures- rather than simply as a static, individual disposition prior to movement participation.

In the literature, Thurston’s (2016) study seem to be one of the best studies that came closest to advocating for an integrated approach; by combining a focus on the interaction of the so called Salafi-jihadism within the global Salafi discourse, the specific Northern Nigerian socio-cultural structures and an analysis of the group’s interactions with other main Salafi establishments in the region. But even these approaches still lack the detailed social movement (resource availability, political opportunity and conditioned based) multi-level explanation that characterises the evolution of such strategy. Without such detailed additional approach that focusses on how socio-political factors are affected by the availability of violent resources from these similar networks, the peculiar dynamisms within the movement, and the psychological dispositions of the individuals

in question, it is impossible to explain why justification and legitimation- that arises due to repression from the Nigerian security forces approach, or due to the Salafi-jihadi ideology in the group, could trigger certain violent activism in one case or how they can make activists in this group, move from one form of this strategy to another, while the presence of the same elements would not do so in another group with relatively same ideology in the same area.

### **2.3 Social Movement Theories: An Overview**

SMT is not a theory in a strict sense of the phrase. It is a set of inter-disciplinary models within the social sciences (especially Sociology), with a broad set of analytical frameworks for explaining collective mobilisations in mostly non-violent movement organisations. These models explain why such mobilisations occur, the forms such mobilisations follow and the potential social, cultural and political consequences of such mobilisation in movement organisations. Some of the most popular models here include relative deprivation, resource mobilisation, political process and framing process.

#### ***2.3.1 Relative Deprivation***

The relative deprivation model first became popular in the 1960s as one of the major sociological explanations for analysing the evolution of social movement organisations (Furseth, 1999:41; Wiktorowicz, 2004:6-9). The main argument within this model is that people experience deprivations through meeting obstacles and economic deprivations; and as such search for alternative goals in social movements as compensations (Glock and Stack, 1965; Smelser, 1962). The starting point of this model is that 'equilibrium' in social systems is a natural societal condition. Human societies organically generate institutional infrastructures which regulate the balance between inputs and outputs in the political systems to keep them in place (Wiktorowicz, 2004:6). Social movement organisations according to the proponents of this model only arise when there is an imbalance between these inputs and outputs ('diss-equilibriums'). This is often because of lack of socio-economic needs. These economic needs often produce grievances and feelings of socio-psychological deprivations, which erode societal and institutional capacities. When these societal and institutional capacities can no longer accommodate these newly mobilised demands within the society, the result is social frustrations that lead to the formation of social movements.

Ted Gurr (1970) was one of the first social movement scholars to apply this model to the study of the evolution of “violent movement organisations”. In analysing the wave of political violence in rebellious movement organisations in mainly post-colonial Africa and South-East Asian countries, the American scholar proposes that the primary source for the human capacity for violence is the frustration-aggression mechanism. According to him, the evolution of such is driven not by any other element, but by frustration, which evolved from systemic inequalities. This is not to be misunderstood to mean that all frustrations lead to rebellious movement organisations. For social discontent to transform into violent movement activism Gurr quickly clarifies, the people involved must “feel that they deserve, or have a right to more”, be it resources, power or status, than they already had. And often, they must also conclude that they would not attain their satisfactions through other conventional methods (Gurr, 1970:24). Thus, the only viable option left would be “collective violent activism”, by which such activists believe they can bring about systemic change. Implicitly, the choice for violence is not dependent on just the structural lack of resources within the society, but on the psychological mechanism that produces aggression and violence. In other words, frustration eventually would lead to violence, especially when there is a discrepancy between what people think they deserve and what they get. In the face of such tense situations, people would become aggressive and eventually form groups that engage in collective violent behaviours.

This line of thought dominated much of SMT-inspired scholarship about “religious-oriented groups who used adopted violence in the 1970s and 1980s, (especially those within Islamic traditions). On movement organisations in the Middle East particularly, scholars here were often quick to point-out that the “frustrations and feelings of deserving more” that emanated from structural changes within those societies were the result of both the evolution of such groups and the appeal for the adoption of violent contentions that evolved within the groups. The assumption was that the fundamental motivation for violent movement activist groups was the psychological feelings of deprivations that were produced by the failure of secular modernisation projects (Dekmejian, 1995; Faksh, 1997; Haddad, 1992; Hoffman, 1995; Waltz, 1986). At the pinnacle of modernisation, the political elites in these communities had adopted Western models with the hope that it would promote economic development. However, when such policies did not generate the expected wealth among the citizens, it created a deep-seated sense of alienation and deprivation

among the people that made it possible for the rise and formation of radical Islamic movement organisations.

This was particularly Haddad's (1992), argument to be the case in Palestine where the ruling and educated elites adopted the western-modelled development project, including a preference of English language over the local Arabic language. Again, the economic policies from both Israeli government and the local Palestinian government themselves concentrated wealth among only the Westernised elite, state bourgeoisie and corrupt state officials, leading to cluster and mass migration of people from the rural to the urban Gaza areas. Thus, as these policies did not create the much for hoped economic development, the lack of adequate municipal infrastructure could not accommodate the influx of these rural-urban migrants seeking employment. This served as catalyst for societal introspection, and in time mobilisation for the evolution of violent Islamist activist groups (Haddad 1992).

Many other scholars like L. J. Esposito (1998) and N. R. Keddie (1994), whose analyses do not conform exactly to this conceptualisation did favour political-deprivation explanations. In discussing the evolution of movement groups in the Islamic world, Keddie (1994) particularly believes that in authoritarian regimes, the masses' lack of formal political access to state institutions deepens the adverse effects of modernisation projects. According to him, the situation is often made worse in the face of security service repression and administrative processes that attempted to de-politicise civil societies. With few open channels for political recourse under such circumstances, the result becomes societal frustration and a sense of alienation that leads to violent contention, under religious guise. Under such situations, Islamist violent activism becomes a natural medium for the deprived individuals to articulate their frustrations and feelings of deprivations.

As interesting as these kinds of analyses are, the model has in the last decades been met with a lot of criticisms, especially by social movement scholars themselves. Besides not capturing the relevance of organisational dynamics in the understanding of the evolution of violence within movement organisations, recent SMT scholars have pointed out that grievances or the feeling of "deserving more", do not necessarily lead to movement organisations, or violent activism with religious organisations (Gunning, 2009; Gunning and Baron, 2013). If engaging in movement activism means death or severe punishment for example, potential activists would often think

twice before engaging in such, especially if the desired result is not guaranteed. Further, if opposition groups are regularly suppressed, constrained or co-opted, as Gunning and Baron (2013:12) rightly put it, “it is difficult to build a protest momentum, let alone a protest narrative that identifies the problem, classifies it as remediable injustice and proposes an action plan”, as it is often the case in SOMOs. Under an unfavourable organisational situation, there is more likelihood that actors would accept the oppressive regimes and its claims to legitimacy, however grudgingly. Hence, for feelings of “deserving more” to produce violent activism, it needs to be interpreted as a ‘lack’, and there also need to be resources available to galvanise and facilitate the success of such activism (Wiktorowicz, 2004:10).

The above-mentioned point would be the starting point for the more recent social movement models: resource mobilisation, political opportunity and framing process. Through these later models, SMT scholars now look at how resources such as finance, cooperation with other organised network groups, political alliances etc, interact with the political structures within political environment, to influence activists to interpret strains as unjust, and mobilise violent activism and other dynamics that evolves within religious-oriented movement organisations.

### ***2.3.2 Resource Mobilisation***

The main assumption of this model is that although grievances and discontentment are ubiquitous, movement organisations or activities (including violence) within such organisations are not. Grievance and discontentment may be behind most, or even all social movement’s dynamics, yet these grievances and discontentment do not necessarily transform into collective actions (Wiktorowicz, 2004:10). For grievance and discontentment to lead to collective action either in the form of violent contention or other forms of contention within movement organisations, there must be intermediary variables (resources and mobilising structures), which transform these elements into organised contention. These intermediaries are needed to collectivise what would otherwise remain individual frustrations. Thus, rather than view movement activists as psychologically deprived irrational individuals, who are compelled to join movement organisations or adopt dynamics within their organisations because of economic deprivation, resource mobilisation scholars re-conceptualise movement activist groups as comprising of rational actors, who get mobilised when resources and creative mobilisatory structures are available. Ipso

facto, the different dynamics that evolve within such movement organisations are a result of access to these resources, (which could be: finance, moral support, dense social networks, political elite support, ideology), innovations and mobilisatory movement tactics (Gunning, 2009; Oberschal, 1993; Scott, 1990). These resources also determine both the form and the intensity of any strategy that evolves within the movement organisations.

Following this kind of conceptualisation, the value of resources and the organisational characteristics of movement organisations have become very significant. To adopt strategies movement organisation leaders, use different resources available to them to create crucibles for mobilisation. The availability of certain resources entails ability to adopt certain strategies which such resources incorporate (Della Porta, 2009). For example, to adopt violent strategy against a state opposition, resources such as skills on how to use ammunitions (training), money, political sponsorships, alliances may be needed to mobilise and embolden activists (incentives), to gather intelligence, to plan, to coordinate and to carry out significant forms of this strategy. Availability of such strategies impacts on both the willingness and the ability of activists to mobilise strategies with which they can maximise impacts and efficaciousness of their groups' goals (Oberschall, 1993; Amaechi 2013, Gunning & Baron 2013). Thus, sharply contrasting the psychological-deprivation conceptualisation of activists from the earlier models, the ability to adopt such strategy in this sense depends no longer on the structural strain or psychological characteristics of activists, but on the availability of such resources, and how such resources are influenced by the internal debates within the group.

A typical example of this is depicted in Jeroen Gunning's (2007) analysis of the evolution of sophisticated military-style attacks and suicide bombings that evolved in Hamas in the early 2000. Here, the social movement scholar first explained how the Israeli government's military brutality had pushed activists within Palestine into the justification of violent activism against the Israeli state. Further, he explained how in the face of this continued militarisation and brutal repression, the Palestinian activists were further forced to seek for assistance from both the Syrian and Iranian regimes. With these alliances, these regimes became Hamas' main financial sponsors. As such, they were able to mobilise more sophisticated forms of violent strategies such as military guerrilla attacks and suicide violence. Tactical decisions for the use of these sophisticated forms of violent strategy within the group were much influenced by the financial, intelligent and military resources

made available to the group through its association with those regimes. Neither religious ideology, nor the political environment within the constituencies in the Palestinian occupied territories (from which Hamas derives its power and legitimacy) according to him, had much influence in the development of these forms of violence. Having these institutional ties and sponsorships meant that the internal debates about what kind of strategy to be used in the Hamas were affected by the relationship with those regimes. Given this relationship, the decision for the adoption of the different forms of violence to be use included the option for the use of the types of violent strategies present in both the para-military wings of the Syrian and Iranian regimes. Having these kinds of military techniques available in those regimes, meant that it was only natural that these forms of violence soon become part of the strategy used by the group against their Israeli targets. Access to such resources meant enablement and opening-up of opportunity for the organisation's internal debate for the use of such improved forms of violence.

This kind of analysis is particularly significant for an underground SOMO such as BH. Although the group is not known to have ties and connections to regimes like Iran and Syria, it is known to have connections to similar well-known international networks such as al-Qaeda, AQIM, al-Shabaab and IS (Kassim, 2018; Zenn, 2018). The analyses of these ties would provide more information why the different forms of violence such as suicide bombing, kidnappings, or guerrilla warfare developed and escalated within the group. First, the groups are ideologically similar to BH (Amaechi, 2017; Brigaglia 2015). Also, the kinds of armed violence used within them are also similar with those used by BH. These would make cooperation between them and BH more likely. Aligning with such groups would mean that faced with similar situation in Nigeria, the organisation could tap into the technical know-how, the material support and the experience from these similar groups to adopt, carry-out and sustain these more advanced forms of violence, without exposing themselves to much external danger. Here, possession of military skills, training and material resources from such alliances could become a very useful asset (resource) that influences the development of these kinds of violent activisms.

This was clearly the case in the Italian Red Brigades that operated in the 1970s (although the organisation here is not a SOMO, the analysis is applicable), as was analysed by Della Porta (1995; 2009). Here, as the Italian social movement scholar rightly explained, the possession of military skills was a big resource which moulded the adoption of certain kinds of violence when the

organisation went underground (Della Porta, 1995; 2009). At this stage of the group's existence, the group through some of their activists' possession of certain military skills was able to conduct bank robberies, kidnappings, hostage takings and a series of similar violent activities against the state opposition because of its underground existence. Within its situation, having such military experience and skills was a very significant asset (resource) which influenced the group's decision to adopt those kinds of violent activities. These kinds of violent activism technically arose from the experience of those activists who had most skills in the use of sophisticated violence and military skills (Della Porta, 2009:14). Accessibility of such violent skills produces a specific dynamic of violent contention which the group used to achieve the kind of goals their underground status entailed at that time. Thus, in the face of accessibility to certain resources, such social movement organisations are empowered and emboldened to mobilise themselves to adopt the kinds of violent activism that such resources enabled. The adoption of violence and its escalation into different forms is not just about the willingness, it is also dependent on what kind of resources that is available. The kind of resources available to the group helps shape conversation within such group about what strategies to adopt. Without such analysis, it could be difficult for movement organisations to mobilise or adopt violence as a strategy, even amid violent ideology. Or in a face of excessive repression that favours retaliatory violence. While the need and justification for violence may arise due to frustrations and deprivations, the availability of these resources facilitates and structures movement conversation and proclivity to accept certain strategies that the organisations adopt.

### ***2.3.3 Political Process***

Other than resources, social movement scholars have also used the concept of "political opportunity structures" within the political process model to analyse both the evolution of movement organisations and the use of different forms of violence within them. Political process model concurs with the resource mobilisation's critique of relative deprivation theory (structural and socio-psychological explanations of movement organisations), as well as its emphasis on the importance of resources, as the main elements that capture the myriad conditions for the gradual evolution of different contentions in movement organisations. However, more than resources, the political process also emphasises the importance of the changing exogenous factors within both

organisations and environment they identify (Gunning, 2009; Gunning and Baron, 2013; Wiktorowicz, 2004). The main assumption here is that “social movements do not operate in vacuum: they belong to a broader social milieu and context that is characterised by shifting and fluid configurations of capacity and constraints that structure the movement dynamics” (Wiktorowicz, 2004:13). Hence, social movement organisations, as well as their different forms of contentions are not just a manifestation of resources, but also a function of pre-existing networks, which develop in interaction with the existing political system, state practices towards groups, political alliances, and prevailing socio-political conditions (Gunning, 2009:158). In other words, regardless of the level of grievances or resource availability, contentions within movement organisations are empowered by contextual exogenous factors, which often define movement’s viability and the menu of tactics, actions and choices within the movements. These political opportunity structures create the appropriate opportunities or constraints, which make it possible for movement actors to acquire and develop strategies for the mobilisation of the different modes of contention in their movement organisations.

Political process scholars do not necessarily share a common delineation of what constitutes the most important political opportunity structure, as these structures could be anything (ranging from political conditions, socio-political changes, or even religious ideology). What most scholarship here focus on, is how these elements or conditions create the ‘opening’ and closing of political space and opportunity for different strategies to evolve and develop, for goal attainment (Della Porta, 1995; 2009; Iwara *et. al.*, 2018; Gamson and Meyer, 1996; Gunning, 2007). Some of the most analysed elements include the nature of state repression (Amaechi, 2016; Della Porta, 2009; Hafez, 2004; Gunning and Baron, 2013; Tilly, 1978; 2003; 2004), the level of group’s formal and informal access to institutionalised political institutions and decision-making institutions (Gunning & Baron 2013; Wiktorowicz 2004) and the availability of similar elite networks (Tarrow, 1994). The understanding here is that these elements do dynamically impact social movement organisations by either closing or opening up “political opportunities” for movement activists to establish their groups or adopt certain appropriate types of activism they deem necessary for the achievement of goals within their organisations.

Mohammed Hafez’s (2004) analysis of the evolution of the SOMO, *Groupe Islamique Armé* (GIA) that used violence against the Algerian state theoretically represents this kind of analysis. In

Algeria during the 1990s, the GIA was responsible for a series of civilian massacres. In the middle of the night on several occasions, members of the GIA ambushed villagers, killing indiscriminately (children, women, the elderly and the sick), using mainly machetes. They also maimed and burned peoples' houses. To explain how this happened, the social movement scholar showed how the adoption of such a violent strategy was unlikely to occur without the opening of political opportunity for violent contention created by the Algerian state's excessive repression of the group, and the group's access to significant resources. Violence emerged in the group when the political environment where the group operated became characterised by excessive repression. This, according to Hafez (2004: 41-42), created a political environment of "bifurcation and brutality" (opportunity), which enhanced a sense of injustice. Given that the movement had at this time developed organisational resources and mobilisation capacity through its long years of operation, this repression forced the group into clandestine organisation that become increasingly isolated from the rest of the society. This in time legitimised calls to arms and the need to carry out radical violent attacks on state institutions, or on civilian population that had sympathy for the state (Hafez, 2004:31-60). SOMOs are very likely to adopt and justify the use of violence when material resources are available. The interaction of this state's excessive violent approach with the availability of resources provided the group's activists with the 'appropriate' political opportunity to justify violence in the group. In face of excessive government repression, the group's leadership were able to mobilise a corresponding retaliatory violent activism against the state. Without these conditions, such unconventional means of activism may not appear desirable or obtainable even in the face of heightened repression from the state.

In another similar study, Hafez and Wiktorowicz (2004) also arrive at a similar conclusion. Analysing the evolution of violence in the *Gama'a Islamiyya* (GI) in Egypt in the 1990s, the two social movement scholars argue that the group's use of violent strategy against the government and later on the civilian population, did not emerge (except one particular incident in the city of Luxor in 1997) until later, in the face of political opportunity that came with the Egyptian government's violent approach on the group. Like in the Algerian group, the government repression had a similar effect: a political opportunity that gave credibility for a call to arms within the group. However, in addition to this, Hafez and Wiktorowicz contend for a more specific understanding of this kind of repression that breaks it down into relevant dimensions. They argue

that repression here likely engendered a violent response because movements were excluded from institutional politics, and because the activists suffered indiscriminate and reactive state repression (as opposed to selective, pre-emptive repression)<sup>20</sup>. Political exclusion is likely to provide credibility for those in SOMO's leadership to argue for the use of violence because it limits the number of reasonable tactical options, especially those related to system reform. In this case, given that the regime's repression was indiscriminate and targeted non-activists, including GI's families and supportive bystanders, it lent credence to the justification within the group that the system could only be changed through violent activism, even if it entailed civilian deaths. Having the appropriate resources, the existence of such political opportunity made it easier for movements to mobilise its activists around such activism.

Notably, the fact that this model focuses on ways in which structural conditions shape social movement dynamics does not imply that there is a fundamental ontological disagreement between it and the previous resource mobilisation model. Despite the micro differences, both models share an underlying assumption that social movement contention derives from rationality rather than psychological deviance. Rather than ontological difference, the political process model only reflects differences in emphasis, and represents an additive piece to the overall understanding of the relevance of organisational dynamics in the understanding of strategies such as violence within movement organisations. Movement entrepreneurs here (as much as in resource mobilisation model), also participate in activism within movement organisations not because of irrationality, but because of variety of incentives (resources) and goals, whether for individual preferences or for movement goals. Once in the movement organisations, activists respond both on the personal level and on the group level, to the available opportunities and threats within their political environment to maximise their goals.

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<sup>20</sup> Hafez and Wiktorowicz (2004:67-71) make the distinction between pre-emptive/selective targeting and reactive/indiscriminate targeting. Repression is considered as pre-emptive and selective when it is applied before the opposition movement has gathered momentum and is targeted at the certain individuals within the group. In contrast, it is reactive and indiscriminate when it is applied in the ascendant phase of the protest cycle –that is after the activists have gained organisational momentum. Here, the targeting is random and not selective.

### ***2.3.4 Framing Process***

This model represents another additive piece to the relevance of organisational dynamics in the understanding of the evolution and the use of violence within movement organisations, particularly in terms of its different forms and patterns of development.

Initially social movement scholars had kept the focus of analysis of activism in movement organisations on micro-mobilisation and environmental political opportunities. However, because of the “cultural turn” that ‘engulfed’ the social sciences in the 1970s, emphasis shifted on how these elements are impacted by ideologies and cultures (Benford & Snow, 2000; Bosi, 2007; Wickham, 2004). The idea here is not to see ideologies and cultures as the carriers of the imperative for violence as most traditional studies do, but on how these elements interact with the political environment and resources to be re-interpreted, bridged and amplified to confer identity on activists, and thus mobilise the kind of violent action repertoires that movement organisations adopt. The assumption here is that the need for violence and the further development of violent strategies that evolve within movement organisations constantly change as the groups navigate their political environment. This is to say, to be able to mobilise such strategies, movement organisation leaders constantly frame their activism in such a way that it resonates with current situations of activists, and the potential activists the movement organisation targets.

One important dimension of the framing process for the mobilisation of activism within movement organisation is the “frame resonance” (Benford and Snow, 2000; Wickham, 2004; Wiktorowicz, 2004). For framing process scholars, a movement organisation’s ability to transform a mobilisation potential into an actual mobilisation of a movement behaviour is contingent upon the capacity of the movement to frame the activism; the group’s goals, the interaction between the group and the political environment, in such a way that it resonates with the culture and the identity around movement participants (Wiktorowicz, 2004:16). Hence, a specific type of violent activism is more likely to reverberate with constituents, and enhance mobilisation if a movement organisation’s leaderships, frames and draw upon indigenous cultural symbols, languages and historical narratives that relate with individual activist’s identities (Benford and Snow, 2000:619-622). Such reverberations permeate along the personal salience of the frame for potential participants, the consistency of the frame, and the frame’s practical credibility in real life of the activists. Once a narrative is developed, it can sustain the movement very effectively. This is exemplified in the

case of ISIL as found by D. W. Lee (2016). While the genesis of ISIL is uniquely rooted in the Iraqi-Sunni and Shite politics, its information operations have adopted the narrative of the far enemy and vilification of the West to justify why foreigners should do whatever it takes to join the Caliphate and mobilise themselves to commit lone-wolf attacks on civilian targets in the West.

Carrie R Wickham (2004) also made a good example of this when she analysed how violent activism evolved and was used by the Islamic groups that operated in the Cairo Suburbs during the 1990s, among the urban educated youths. In this Egyptian case, the social movement scholar argued that the success of mobilisation for suicidal violence did not depend on just the resources or political opportunities from the political environment, but rather, on how this strategy was framed to resonate with the activist's life experience, ideology and the culture, which has already been impacted by the experience within the groups. What she termed as "its close fit with the life experience and beliefs of those graduates targeted for recruitment" (Wickham, 2004:232). Ideology impacted movement behaviours indirectly, through the constraints and opportunities that the group's interaction with the Egyptian state imposed on the activists. The excessive state repression on the activists, she contends, meant that the group had to be cut off from their support base. This, in time, encouraged the development of a closed inward looking and an exclusive resentment-filled ideology. Such an ideology would help justify the kind of corresponding violent strategy that the group needed in order to defend itself in such an extremely hostile environment. Implicitly, the development of the exclusivist ideology, within which violent activism was evolved not necessarily from an innate composition of Islamist ideas, but from the experiences of violence from the socio-political contexts. Thus, repressive political contexts not only increase the need and proclivity for enhanced violence, it also provides the opportunity upon which such exclusivist ideologies make sense within activist groups.

About suicide violence particularly, Wickham, however, contends that this was not enough. Even though the need for more advanced form of violence was enhanced by the experiences around the group she argues, the educated activists in the Egyptian case needed more, to progress to the eventual riskier, more overtly spiritual and political form of Islamic activism. To make this progression, the group leadership had to frame the group's activism as "a sort of moral obligation that demanded self-sacrifice and unflinching support to the cause of religious transformation" (Wickham, 2004: 232). Among Egyptian educated activists with the knowledge of the country's

culture and long history of Islamic religious activism that does not distinguish religion from politics, such framings resonated perfectly. The “framing success helped set the groundwork for riskier political contention” (Wickham 2004:232). It encouraged the activists to view their participations in such political activism as a form of religious duty. Under such condition, higher-risk activism became necessary no matter the cost.

The fact that ideas and ideology cannot totally be separated from either their carriers, or from the social setting upon which they are disseminated gives this kind of analysis more credibility. Often ideologies are construed upon histories and realities within the environments in which actors operate. Social movement actors often interpret these ideologies through changing set of frames: “from injustice frames, to diagnosis and protest frames; to prognosis, action and motivational frames” (McAdam et. al., 2001:28). Through mechanisms such as attribution of opportunities, social appropriations and framings of the interactions in the political environment, movement actors seek to mobilise strategies available to the movements, in such a way that they satisfy the goals within the groups. And when they are developed, they are also spread through the networks that make up the movement organisations.

Following this, it can be argued that more than other elements, it could be the experience at this level (inside organisations) that further shapes an activist’s dispositions and participation in the different forms of violence (including violence) that a movement organisation adopts. The activism experience of activists and how the organisation’s leadership frame their activism has much larger influence on whether actors would participate in higher-risk activism (such as suicide violence) than religious ideology. This is why organisations such as Tamil Tigers and the Japanese Aum Shinrikyo (Juergensmeyer, 2003) which have very little religious orientation, activists had all used suicide bombing as a strategy for goal attainment. In these organisations, religious ideology had little or no role in the motivation of activists to sacrifice themselves for the organisation’s cause.

In SOMOs, the main transformations in individual motivations could begin with the activists’ Salafi ideology. However, this disposition is further re-negotiated and re-enforced within the individuals through experience and participation in the social movement organisations’ activism. What Della Porta (2009:15) describes in her analysis of the Italian case as “affective focusing and cognitive closures.” Through participation in the group and interactions with their political environment, activists are conferred with certain kinds of identity and activism that correspond

with the group's goals. By participating in the movement's activism, activists are also likely going to have investments in terms of their own identity and in terms of their emotions that tend to create very strong connection with the goals of the group and the individuals within the group. Hence, they acquire certain values and lose others, thereby forming certain identities that are consistent with other individuals and goals within the group. Over long periods of participation in this network, these linkages, political commitments and this sort of "comradisation" with the individuals and goals of the group would likely grow and overlap. Within such situations, the goal of the group and that of the individual could become much narrowed over time, making it possible for framing of the activism to resonate and to be easily justified by the individuals within the group. In this sense, the disposition to this strategy does not exist prior to experience of activism and group participation. Instead, they are affected by the experience of activism and the phase of violent circle, within which such activism takes place within such groups.

## **2.4 Theorising the Use and Development of Violence in Salafi-oriented Movement Organisations: A Synthesized Social Movement Theory Approach**

In the light of the above discussions, this study will be analysing the use of violence by BH along the following three main hypotheses. These hypotheses are based on the three main research questions: (a) Under what conditions did BH evolve in the Northern-Nigeria? (b) at what stage, and under what conditions did the group begin to use violence as a strategy for goal attainment? (c) what specific forms of violence does the group use; and how are such forms of violence sustained in the group?

### **2.4.1 The Evolution of BH in Northern Nigeria**

Following the above discussions and the study's theoretical foundation, the first step towards understanding the use violence by BH is to understand its background. Namely, the specific religious and socio-political context the SOMO evolved in Northern-Nigeria. Following the literature and the discussions from the social movement theory it seems that the evolution of such a group would be better understood when considered against specific environmental, socio-political and ideological structures within the region (Northern Nigeria). My assumption is that despite its Salafist orientation, BH is like every other social movement organisation. As such, it does not evolve in a vacuum; its birth and success are sensitive to the specific political opportunity

structures in the environment within which the group operates/identifies. It is these unique socio-political opportunity structures that provide activists with the window of opportunity and the conducive atmosphere to establish the organisation at the time it was established. It is also the backgrounds upon which the organisation was established that set the contexts for the kinds of activism that developed in it.

#### ***2.4.2 The Evolution of Violence***

My assumption about the adoption of violence in the organisation flows from various movement dynamics and internal debate within the movement. Like other movement behaviours, this strategy involves organisational structuring and normative framing that requires the mobilisation of resources (such as: money, military skills, and possibly a compelling framing of Salafi ideology from the group's leadership). Cognitive processes to adopt this activism mediate between these resources and experiences of the activists inside both the movement organisations, and around the political environments they identify. In other words, how movement actors' structure and re-structure their organisation's behaviour depends on the availability of resources and the level of opportunities and constraints within the organisation's peculiar political environments.

I agree that repression and frustrations may motivate grievance. However, these do not necessarily transform to violent contentions in the form of collective action. For such to happen, there must be the existence of other resources in the form of intermediary variables (money, mobilisation networks, political support from either within or outside the movement organisation and the existence of dense network in the form of similar associations), which influence the internal debate within the movement to encourage the transformation of these individualised discontents into collective contention. Without these elements, it is impossible to transform grievances and frustrations into violent contention

Contrary to the popular perception that individuals within groups are irrational, crazy and religiously myopic, activists within religious-oriented movement organisations are as rational as activists within broad-based social movement organisations. SOMOs' activists, just like their social movement counter-parts are individuals who under political opportunities and constraints seek to acquire and allocate resources to maximise the goals within their movement organisations.

The opportunities and constraints made possible by the presence of resources both within the group and within the political environment enter the rational calculus of these movement actors and help shape intra-movement debates over the efficacy of different strategies, including violence. Within such dynamics, violent activism becomes easily appropriated and framed as an appropriate tool by the social movement actors to achieve certain specific goals within the group.

### ***2.4.3 Further Development of Violent Strategy***

Violence having evolved, how do we explain its development into different forms? Why would a SOMO like BH higher-risk form of violence such as suicide bombing for example, rather than other seemingly lower-risk ones like hit and run guerrilla? How do such groups justify and sustain such forms of higher-risk forms of violence? Answers to these questions are rooted strongly, I believe, in the availability and mobilisation of resources. Here, I will look at the ideas within the social movement theories. Much like in the case of the development of violence in general, I believe that such developments do not appear out of nowhere. They dynamically emerge as a movement navigates through the available resources and political opportunities within the environment where they operate. Usually, there is a history of contestation that interacts with increasing political opportunity and the availability of resources to make these forms of violent activism become an option for the group, before such an activism becomes the norm. To mobilise activists to embrace such activism (practically moving from lower-risk to higher-risk), social movement activists leaders often draw on the organisations existing ideologies; from individual's experiences within the movement, and from the culture and the practical interaction between organisation and political environment, to construe activism to resonate with social movement activists. Thus, in contrast to popular perceptions, this choice and the decision for such activism is often influenced by the experience of participation inside the movement organisations, rather than by static or ideological dispositions that exist prior to participation in such organisations. I believe that a mono-causal, or similarly limited causal explanations for the evolution of violence within such a SOMO as often construed by traditional research are inadequate. Certain rational interests, political structures and ideologies within the environment where they operate may tell us something about evolution of such elements, but none of these elements alone can explain violent activism's relative weight shift over time. At best these elements may explain why movements or

individuals would employ violent activism, since it provides several tactical benefits; but such explanations cannot explain why the group or activists here would move from a low to high risk aspects of this element without increase in benefits. To understand this, there is a need to look at how these activisms are framed, to resonate with the realities around the individuals within the movement organisations.

## **2.5 Summary**

This chapter has presented a conceptual and theoretical framework of the study. It started by presenting some of the significant literature in the topic; discussing them in terms of the main research gaps and how these have not been adequately dealt with in the previous literature. Further, it introduced and presented a detailed theoretical discussion of social movement theories, particularly resource mobilisation, political opportunity process and framing process models as more suitable for answering some of the questions raised. It argued that although paradigms within these models were initially developed for understanding dynamics within non-violent and non-religious movement organisations, they are as much suitable to provide the appropriate analytic framework for addressing some of the gaps within the previous literature, as well as the issues raised in the study. Even though the orientation of movements or the kind of activism within them may differ, SOMOs exhibit similar tendencies and characteristics. Like their social counterparts, SOMOs who use violence are heavily dependent on resources, prevailing political systems, state practices, socio-economic changes and compelling ideological justifications within which the many strategies (including violence) which develop within them evolve. It concluded by providing three main hypotheses along which the study's research questions would be addressed.

## **CHAPTER THREE: DATA AND METHODS**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the methodology employed for the study. It provides detailed information on the specific steps taken in conducting the study. Some of these steps include sampling techniques used in collection of the data; the data collection procedures; the identification of the population of the study; the ethical considerations involved; and the description of the methods used in the analysis of the data.

### **3.2 Research Approach (Philosophy of the Research)**

This study has mainly employed a qualitative case study approach. Qualitative approach in general is a process of research which explores in-depth understanding of social phenomena within their natural setting (Cresswell, 1998). The approach seeks to understand a wide array of realities on a particular subject of enquiry; its peculiarities and nuances within the contexts within which such realities exist. Rather than by logical and statistical procedures (as most quantitative researchers do), qualitative researchers often use multiple systems of inquiry for the study of human phenomena including biography, case study, historical analysis, discourse analysis, ethnography, grounded theory and phenomenology. The common assumption is that knowledge is subjective rather than objective, and that the researcher learns from the participants in order to grasp the social phenomenon he/she seeks to unravel.

Given that the study seeks to explore the use of violence by the Nigerian SOMO, I find this approach most appropriate for the research. Three main features of the qualitative method guided the enquiry;

- an acceptance of an inductive view of the relationship between theory and research, whereby the former is generated out of the latter;
- an assumption of an interpretive epistemological position, which stresses the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants;

- finally, an adoption of the constructivist position, which sees social properties as outcomes of the interactions between individuals, rather than phenomena “out there”, separate from those involved in its construction (Bryman, 2010:366).

In general, these features also constitute the basic theoretical, epistemological and the ontological assumptions of what qualitative researchers (Bryman, 2010; Silverman, 2013) consider acceptable knowledge in most social science enquiry.

### ***3.2.1 Inductive View on the Relationship between Theory and Research***

Inductive view refers to an analytic approach which aims at the generation or improvement of theories from data, rather than just testing of previous theories. My assumption is that research processes should not stop at testing theories or concepts but should also provide new or improved old theories. Gathering ideas from existing theories and literature, the qualitative researcher is always encouraged to improve on the theories and possibly build new ones in relation to the data collected.

Thus, in analysing the emergence of BH and the use of violence by the organisation, I have taken an approach that tended to be more inductive than deductive: the theory was for me something that should evolve from the collection and analysis of the data, and not vice versa. The initial adoption of SMT was a sort of aid to gather analytic tools for the data. From the SMT and the reviewed literature on the topic, I was able to assemble themes, ideas and concepts about the subject. From here, I proceeded to the data collection. As I collected the data, I have generated more themes and concepts, which helped me subject the data to a critical rational scrutiny. These themes were then fed back into the stock of the research questions and findings, to generate and build a possible new empirical based SMT theory on the research problem.

### ***3.2.2 Epistemological Position***

Epistemologically, I have adopted an interpretive approach. Different from positivism (quantifiable observable data that leads to statistical analysis), interpretivism is a term that denotes an alternative approach to the positivist orthodoxy that held influence in academia for decades.

This position holds that true knowledge is generated through focusing on the way people “interpret and make sense of their experiences” in their social world (Bryman, 2010:15). On the contrary, positivists (and by extension, quantitative-oriented researchers) believe that the attainment of knowledge should be done in a way that is value free (objective). For them, even though phenomena and knowledge, which can be intellectually confirmed, can genuinely be warranted as knowledge, they have to be arrived at only through gathering of facts that provide the basis for laws (Bryman, 2010:15). The purpose is to generate theories or hypotheses which can allow explanations of laws to be assessed. Other than this, knowledge ascertained may not be regarded as “authentic scientific knowledge”. Interpretivist researchers also aim to generate theories; however, the fundamental difference lies in the method used to arrive at the knowledge.

One of the first main intellectual traditions that influenced interpretivism was phenomenology, a word that was etymologically derived from the Greek word *phainómenon* (that which appears) and *lógos* (study). As a philosophical movement, phenomenology was founded in the early years of the 20th century by Edmund Husserl, and was later developed upon by a circle of his followers at the universities of Göttingen and Munich in Germany (Bryman, 2010). It then spread to France, the United States, and other parts of the world, often in contexts far removed from Husserl’s early work. But before this, the initial application of phenomenological ideas to the social sciences was in the work of Alfred Schutz (1899-1959), whose work did not come to light for English-speaking social scientists until the translation of his major works to German in the 1960s, twenty years after they had been written. Schutz’s interpretivist position is well captured in his famous quote:

The world of nature as explored by the natural scientists does not mean anything to molecules, atoms and electrons. But the observation field of the social scientists - social reality - has a specific meaning and relevance structure for the being living, acting and thinking within it. By a series of common-sense constructs, they have pre-selected and pre-interpreted this world, which they experience as the reality of their daily lives. It is these thought objects which determine their behaviour by motivating it. The thought objects constructed by the social scientists, in order to grasp this social reality has to be founded upon the thought objects constructed by the common sense thinking of men (and women), living their daily life within the social world (Schutz, 1962:59).

Schutz's point is that there is a fundamental difference between the subject matter of natural sciences and that of the social sciences. He also meant that a different epistemological strategy required to grasp this social reality, must reflect and capitalise on this difference. In fact, social realities have meaning to human beings, and they (human beings) relate to these realities based on their own interpretations and that of others around them. Having this kind of understanding, the researcher (particularly a philosopher) can 'bracket-out' the preconceptions in experiences, while making sense of the world around the individuals or phenomenon being studied.

In the last decades this kind of understanding has formed epistemological backgrounds for many social scientists who would subscribe to the interpretivist view. Having this assumption, scholars now affirm that the subject matter of the social sciences (that is, people and their social world) does differ from the subject matter of the natural sciences (Bryman, 2010:16). The object of analysis of the natural sciences; social sciences (atoms, molecules, gasses, chemicals, metals etc.) cannot attribute meaning to events and to their environments, but people can. Taking an interpretivist stance, therefore, the social scientist can view human activities, in terms of how people interpret their world, to give meaning to the activities they are involved in. The social reality is interpreted from the perspective of people being studied, rather than the subject being studied. These subjects are not capable of their own reflections, but people do.

In studying the emergence of BH in Northern Nigeria, the use and escalation the use of violence by the organisation, the study incorporated the epistemological approach that reflected BH's activisms (violent or non-violent) as activities of people. That is to say, these activities have greater meaning, within the interpretations of the actors around which the activities took place. In order to grasp the meaning of the activities, I adopted an outlook that saw these activities from the point of view of the people related to the social realities (the BH activists themselves or people around which the activism campaigns were carried out). I tried to "participate in the mind of the people around which the activities took place" (in sociological terms, take the role of the other), to acquire knowledge on the social reality (Lofland and Lofland, 1995:16). It is my assumption that these individuals give 'meaning' to the subject of enquiry.

This interpretivist understanding of social reality is for me the key to attaining scientific knowledge. Given that the subject matter of the social sciences (people and their institutions) are fundamentally different from that of the natural sciences (Bryman 2010:16), I believe that the

study of the social world requires a different logic of research procedure that reflects the distinctiveness of humans, as against the natural scientific objects. Emphasis was placed on understanding the use of violence by BH, in the examination of the interpretation of the world by the people around which these forms of activism evolved. The use of violence by BH members must be interpreted from the perspective of people within which the social reality occurred. I believe that the meaning of these social activities cannot be adequately grasped without looking at them from the eyes of the people involved. It is through the understanding and interpretations of the experiences of such individuals that one can understand how the group emerged and why the activists at a time began to conceive violent activism as an appropriate strategy to achieve their purpose in Northern Nigeria, where they operate/identify.

### ***3.2.3 Ontological Orientation***

The issue of ontology goes back to the question of:

- whether social phenomenon can and should be considered objective entities that have reality external to social actors (objectivism); or
- whether they can and should be considered as social constructions that are built up from the perceptions and actions of social actors (constructivism) (Bryman 2010:18).

Ontologically, my position is constructionist. This position is closely connected to the interpretivism. The basic assumption is that social phenomena and their meanings are continually constructed by social actors. Their meanings are not just “out there”, separate from those involved in their constructions. Instead, they are dependent on constant reflections and experiences of the actors and the actors’ interactions with others (Bryman, 2010:366). In other words, their meanings are developed in coordination with others, through constant interaction.

Transposing this understanding to the use of violence in an organisation like BH, I have not conceptualised the use of violence as an external independent reality that has meaning, outside the interpretation of the people around which the violence was used. My assumption is that such knowledge has to be accessed through a thorough scientific interpretation of individuals’ experiences, within which violence was used: How the individuals within and around the group see it, interpret it, and justify it, provide meaning to the social phenomenon. This means, I take the

use of violence by BH to be an emergent reality in a continuous state of construction and re-construction within the group. The understanding of such social reality is continuously re-defined and re-constructed in accordance to the experiences and dispositions of individuals within the organisation. The order and pattern it follow in the organisation must be product of agreed upon patterns of action either in the minds of the individual group's leadership or with other activists who sanctions such activisms within the group.

All these theoretical, epistemological and ontological assumptions and commitments were applied while addressing the research question. The questions have been formulated in such a way that the instability of the organisation and the different forms of activism within the organisation, as less-objective categories are emphasised. Hence, emphasis is on the active involvement of activists in the understanding of social reality, and in seeing the role of these participants in the construction of the social reality.

### **3.3 The Study's Population**

In this study, population refers to “the collection of well-defined individuals or objects known to have similar characteristics” (Bryman, 2010:168). From the general population/unit the researcher can select a ‘sample’ from which he/she investigates the identified problem (Bryman, 2010:168). The term ‘units’ is purposefully used; here it is not necessarily people who are being sampled. All kinds of phenomena can be sampled and researched for research purposes: building design, documents, music lyrics or TV advertisements (Silverman, 2013:146). Using these sets of units (often in the form of actual specified group of variables), the researcher draws a set of data to investigate the research problem. These units give the researcher the opportunity to generate data needed to investigate the research problem.

In investigating the use of violence in SOMOs, I have used individuals with in-depth knowledge about both the inner functions of the organisation, as well as the socio-political basis upon which BH operates in the region. These individuals include:

- security personnel working within the area (members of the recently formed Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF), members of the Nigerian Joint Task Force, and ordinary policemen and women working in the area),

- politicians, particularly those within the three main north-eastern states of Nigeria,
- religious clerics from the *Izala* and *Ahlus Sunna*, and
- victims of Boko Haram violence.

The restriction of the study's sample to this sample size was not predetermined before the commencement of the study. Initially, I had included self-proclaimed active or former members of the group, who were (as of 2015) incarcerated in different Nigerian prisons as possible participants for the study. The idea was that such set of individuals would give the study access to unique primary data about the emergence of the group, development and use of violence within the organisation. None of the previous researchers (as of 2017) have been able to interview such actors or studied the group from the activists' point of view. The two scholars that have closely attempted such interviews were Victoria Comolli (2015) and Mike Smith (2015). While Comolli (2015) spoke to some of the suspected BH activists during a court hearing, and Mike Smith (2015) was able to speak to a self-identified former BH activist in a hotel room in Maiduguri in 2014. However, none of these interviews were sufficient to provide these scholars with an in-depth data to analyse the activities of the group from the activist's point of view. As enumerated previously, it was necessary to draw from the experience of such individuals to analyse the organisation's decision to adopt and use violence.

Firstly, I had (through an academic colleague of mine, from a Nigerian University) contacted the Governor of a Nigerian maximum-security prison, where some of the suspected members were believed to be held. Understandably (for security concern and the sensitivity of the case), the Governor had initially refused, but upon realising that my enquiry was for research purposes; he explained to me that I had to officially write an "application letter" to the General Commander of Nigerian JTF. However, the application letter would have to go through the Police Unit commander (UC) in my state of origin, who would forward it to the Squadron Commander (SC), and then to the Area Commander (AC). The AC would then forward it to my state's Commissioner of Police (CP) and finally to the Zonal Commander (ZC), who would then decide if my application would be forwarded to the JTF or not. This was the only way I could be granted access to the BH inmates. Even though I found this unnecessarily rigorous and discouraging, I had to write the letter. By early 2016, I had subsequently submitted the letter to Unit commander. For eight months I

waited to get feedback on my application. After a series of calls to the prison Governor's office and to Unit Commander, it soon became clear that I would not be getting the clearance for the interview. The UC finally told me on the phone that the JTF is not willing to grant access to outsiders (researchers) like me to members of BH, due to the sensitivity and the security situation surrounding the organisation in the country, at that period. Although disappointed at first, I understood the situation. He explained to me that access to BH inmates remains very difficult, even for most 'connected' people within the Nigerian security forces. Only those on top of JTF and working directly with the organisation had access to the suspected BH members. So, I was not able to get the security clearance for the interviews.

Thus, my participants were limited. Although the latter participants are not members of the group, they all had personal contacts with the group. Hence, they have significant information about the origin of the group, the kinds of activisms that had developed within the group, when the activisms developed and how they evolved. They also know factors within and outside the group, which enhanced the developments of different forms of such violent activisms and at the time they evolved. From their personal experiences with the members of the group, they had a meaningful understanding of how the organisation operates in the region. These were what I needed to make a meaningful construction of the use of violence in BH.

### **3.4 The Study Samples**

A "sample" is simply a subset of the population (Bryman, 2010). Having identified the study population, the researcher would have to further decide on the number of people to be used from the population. From the set of population, he/she has to select (sample) a smaller set of the population.

In my case, I have intentionally used purposive and snowball sampling technique to select participants from the afore-mentioned individuals. Using these sampling techniques, I was able to identify, and make initial contacts with some of the first group of participants. Such participants would further refer me to other participants for the study.

Below is demographic representation of the participants

**Table 1: General demographic representation of interview participants**

<b>1</b>	<b>Total number of participants</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Category of participants</b>	
	(a) Politicians	4
	(b) Religious clerics	4
	(c) Security personnel	24
	(d) Victims of BH's violence	13
<b>3</b>	<b>Gender</b>	
	Female	16
	Male	24
<b>4</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	
	Hausa	14
	Fulani	2
	Kanuri	22
	Shuwa	3
	Igbo	2

<b>5 Religious affiliations of participants</b>	
Izala	6
Ahlu Sunna	3
Sunni	20
Christianity	14
<b>6 Level of formal education</b>	
Attended university	12
Attended secondary school	40
Attended primary school	41
Did not attend any form of formal education	2

The issue of these samples not being ‘representative’ of the population is not a critical issue, since they can be theoretically categorised as part of the study’s population. Within the idea of theoretical sampling, samples do not necessarily need to be members of the population group themselves (Bryman, 2010; Glasser and Strauss, 1967; Silverman, 2013). What is important is that the selected samples are theoretically representative of the population upon which this study is based; and they thus possess appropriate in-dept knowledge about the research problem. The participants do not necessarily have to be BH members. What is important is that they have the right information about both the evolution of BH and the use of violence within them.

A total of forty-three individuals were interviewed: four Salafi clerics, including one who had worked as an Imam in one of the Salafi mosques in Maiduguri when BH first emerged; four politicians representing some of the affected areas within the region; twenty four members from three segments of the Nigerian security operatives; ten members of the Nigerian Joint Task Force

(JTF); ten members of the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) (of which three were women) and four members of the Nigerian Police. The last thirteen (women) were victims of BH violence. While the religious leaders and the two politicians interviewed still work in some part of the area where BH has its stronghold, only one among all the security personnel interviewed still works in the area. The rest now work in other parts of the country.

### **3.5 Methods of Data Collection**

Since understanding the use of violence in BH entailed understanding the nuances and peculiarities upon which the social phenomenon evolved, two main methods were used to collect primary data, semi-structure one-on-one interviews and focus group interviews were employed. In addition to this, the study also used other primary sources such as videos, audio records, court transcripts and letters between BH members and those of AQIM to support the analysis of the primary data collected from the interviews.

#### ***3.5.1 One-on-One Semi-Structured Interviews***

In general, this method of data collection (like other forms of interviews) entails an administration of a series of questions to the participants, in a form of interaction. However, unlike most other forms of interview, the researcher has the possibility “to vary the sequence of questions” (Bryman, 2010:196) to probe for specific answers. In some cases, this method is also referred as open-ended, because the questioning is formulated in such a way that the respondent is able to respond freely and ask follow-up questions. This makes it easier for the researcher to access the “real perceptions” of respondents on a given topic.

Below is a demographic representation of participants of all the semi-structured interviews

<b>1</b>	<b>Total number of participants</b>	<b>4</b>
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<b>2</b>	<b>Age range</b>	
	40-50 years	1
	50-60 years	2
	60-70 years	1
<b>3</b>	<b>Religious affiliations</b>	
	Izala	0
	Ahlu Sunna	0
	Sunni	4
	Christianity	0
<b>4</b>	<b>Level of formal education</b>	
	Attended university	4
	Attended secondary school	4
	Attended primary school	4
	Did not attend any form of formal education	0
<b>5</b>	<b>Number of years in the public service</b>	
	4-8 years	1
	8-12 years	1
	More than 12 years	2

<b>6</b>	<b>Level of political representation</b>	
	Federal government level	3
	State government level	1
	Local government level	0

<b>Table 3: Religious Clerics</b>		
<b>1</b>	<b>Total number of participants</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Age range</b>	
	40-50 years	1
	50-60 years	3
	60-70 years	0
<b>3</b>	<b>Religious affiliations</b>	
	Izala	2
	Ahlu Sunna	2
<b>4</b>	<b>Level of formal education</b>	
	Attended university	2
	Attended secondary school	4

	Attended primary school	4
	Did not attend any form of formal education	0
<b>5</b>	<b>Number of years in religious service</b>	
	More than 15 years	3
	10-15 years	1
<b>6</b>	<b>State of origin</b>	
	Yobe	1
	Kano	2
	Borno	1

**Table 4: Security Personnel**

<b>1</b>	<b>Total number of participants</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Age range</b>	
	30-40 years	8
	40-50 years	10
	50-60 years	6
<b>3</b>	<b>Level of contact with BH activists</b>	

	Face to face contact	18
	Telephone contact	2
	No contact	4
<b>4</b>	<b>Religious affiliations</b>	
	Izala	0
	Ahlu Sunna	0
	Sunni	17
	Christianity	7
<b>5</b>	<b>Level of formal education</b>	
	Attended university	10
	Attended secondary school	24
	Attended primary school	24
	Did not attend any form of formal education	0
<b>6</b>	<b>Number of years in the security service</b>	
	Less than 8 years	9
	More than 8 years	13
<b>7</b>	<b>State of origin</b>	3
	Yobe	4

Kano Borno	6
Kaduna	1
Adamawa	8
Other	2

### ***3.5.2 Focus Group Interviews***

This method of data collection was mainly used to collect data from victims of BH violence. I opted for this method here because I was interested in understanding the people as a group interpreted the violent activism of BH. I wanted to understand their interpretation of the dynamics of evolution of violence in the group over the years, and not only as individuals. Analysing interviews from the initial participants, I felt that there was a need to understand the group's conceptualisation of the dynamics that necessitated the use of violent activism within the group. I wanted to see how these individuals respond to each other's view and refine their ideas out of the interactions that take place within themselves. My understanding is that meanings are not only formed on the individual level, but also collectively. When individuals interpret their common experiences in the midst of fellow victims, there is always an unconscious effort to relate these experiences to that of victims within the same group (Bryman, 2010:473). Such interpretations are not necessarily "correct or incorrect", in terms of how it relates to the facts, but they help broaden the researcher's analytic themes for the research problem. Through the several arguments and the challenges with each other, people are forced to reflect more critically and revise their views on different experiences.

Below is a demographic representation of participants of focus group interviews

<b>Table 5: Victims of BH violence</b>		
<b>1</b>	<b>Total number of participants</b>	<b>13</b>

<b>2</b>	<b>Gender</b>	
	Female	13
	Male	0
<b>3</b>	<b>Religious affiliations</b>	
	Christianity	6
	Islam	7
<b>4</b>	<b>Age range</b>	
	20-30 years	7
	30-40 years	5
	40-50 years	1
<b>5</b>	<b>Level of formal education</b>	
	Attended university	0
	Attended secondary school	8
	Attended primary school	10
	Did not attend any form of formal education	2

<b>6</b>	<b>State of origin</b>	
	Yobe	3
	Adamawa	3
	Borno	5
	Other	2

### 3.5.3 Secondary Sources

In addition to the use of one-on-one semi-structured and focus group interviews, I have also used other secondary sources, such as the second edition of Yusuf's (2008/2009) Manifesto, *Hadhihi 'Aqidatuna wa-Manhaj Da'watina* (This Is Our Creed and the Method of Our Preaching), recorded videos and audios of his sermons from mostly the YouTube, court transcripts and internal letters<sup>21</sup> between some of the leading figures in BH and in the al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). These sources reveal not only the internal functions of BH, but also the organisational continuity among Boko Haram's leaders from 2002 to the present. Most of the translations for these videos were done by my anonymous research assistant.

The letters in particular provide information about motivations and justifications for fighters, such as Mohammed Shekau (who took over the group's leadership after the first founder died in 2009); Mamman Nur (the acclaimed master mind of BH's suicide operations); Khalid al-Barnawi (another leading figure in BH, who broke away from Shekau to form a new group, *Jama'at Ansar al-Muslimin fi Bilad al-Sudan* in 2011, after consulting with AQIM), Tariq ibn Ziyad brigade (the Nigerian co-ordinator of AQIM's activities in the group). The fact that these letters were initially intended for internal consumption between the groups makes them more credible than other primary sources such as government statements, propaganda messages and videos often released

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<sup>21</sup> I have relied mostly on English translations of these letters from my anonymous research assistant and from a newly edited *Boko Haram Reader* by Abdulbasit Kassim and Michael Nwankpa (2018).

by the group, or the biographies and histories of fighters often seen in similar groups' propaganda magazines.

### **3.6 Preparing for the Data Collection**

The preparations for the field started way back in August 2015, when the research proposal was approved by the University of South Africa (Unisa). Following this approval, I had to apply for an ethical clearance, from the Unisa Ethical Committee (a basic minimum requirement for a Unisa PhD thesis), through the University's College of Human Sciences. The research was approved in August 2016.

Next, I began the process of identifying and finding the participants. I knew that finding the would-be participants for the study was not going to be easy. This is mainly because BH remains a very security sensitive subject. As such, it was unlikely that people would be willing to discuss their experiences and encounter with the group. In the past, the group had targeted and successfully killed people whom they suspected to have talked to journalists or security personnel (Comolli, 2015). Also, I needed to figure out how to navigate the Northern Nigerian environment (which I assumed would be hostile, because of my Southern-Nigerian background). Even though I am a Nigerian and have lived in the region sometime in the past, I was not sure I would get a very good reception, because of my origin (Igbo). Chiefly, because of the Nigerian-Biafran war that still creates some sort of tension between people from the Northern and Southern parts of Nigeria, particularly when conducting a sensitive topic like this. I was not going to ignore that. In addition to this, I have been away from the region for a very long time. The last time I visited the region was in 2004. So, I did not feel that I would understand all the little intra-regional political intrigues that bedevil the region's political environment. I needed someone - some sort of a guide/research assistant. Such a guide should know the environment very well and should be able to help me get access to my proposed interview participants.

I got in contact with a suitable guide, a police officer who worked as member of the Nigerian JTF from 2009 until 2015. My 'guide' is very fluent in both Hausa and Kanuri languages (the two most common languages spoken in the north-eastern part of the region). He is also from Adamawa state (one of three main states with a huge BH presence). By the time I was introduced to him, he was having two years "study leave" to finish his post-graduate diploma studies in the University of

Abuja. Through his contacts, we were able to arrange two interviews with two politicians within the region, as well as three high profile members of the JTF. Like in most snowball cases, I was convinced that these few initial respondents would be a gateway for me to get to other necessary participants for the study. This would turn out to be the case eventually.

However, some of the respondents (especially victims of BH violence) were women and not fluent in English, hence, we used the services of an interpreter (a female from the Kanuri ethnic group). I also made arrangements through my research assistant to have one more interpreter, to help me throughout the interviews. I recruited the services of one post-graduate student from the same University of Abuja, as my research assistant. I specifically wanted a female assistant from the Kanuri ethnic group because of the social-cultural and religious sensitivity of the tribe and gender in the region. In a region, where animosity among different ethnic groups abounds, and separation of gender in public places is still very rampant because of the implementation of Shari'a. Gender and ethnic differences between the translators and respondents could have affected the interview responses. I also wanted the participants to feel very comfortable or less pressured to discuss some of the issues because of reasons related to ethnic and gender orientations.

Within a few days, I recruited the female assistant. I was able to speak to her on the phone before I arrived in Nigeria, just to make sure she was the right person for the job. She never disappointed. She was not only fluent in Kanuri; she was very familiar with qualitative research and the topic in general. She proved to be a good addition to my team, which created a less tense atmosphere, where interviewees participated freely.

### **3.7 Arriving in Nigeria for the Interviews (Data Collection)**

On January 8th, 2017, I left South Africa for Nigeria. I stayed for about four months (January 2017 - April 2017), collecting data for the research. Firstly, I stayed briefly in Asaba (a city in the Southern part of the country). From there, I travelled to Abuja and the Northern part of the country for the interviews. I started with two politicians whose interviews were arranged before I arrived in Nigeria. Through their assistance, I was able to arrange two more interviews with other two politicians who still represented some of the geopolitical zones in the north-eastern part of the region, where BH first emerged. All these interviews were held in Abuja. From these interviews,

I wanted to understand from their own reflections how they interpreted the emergence of the group and the development of different types of violent activism at the time they evolved.

Other interviews were conducted in the different cities and other parts of the region. At some point, I had to go and stay for one month in Kaduna, one of the major cities in the north. This was in one of the Christian dominated neighbourhoods in the city. The city of Kaduna is virtually divided into two parts: the Christian and Muslim neighbourhoods. My assistant had strongly recommended that I stay around the Christian areas. From there, I was able to go to some of my interview appointments, especially with members of the Nigerian security forces. Three of the interviews were held in the office of one of the police officers at Kaduna Police College. Others were held at the houses of some of the participants. Contrary to my initial expectations, the participants were very willing to share their experiences, including self-criticism of how specific approaches of the Nigerian security forces catalysed BH's decision to adopt violence in 2009. The interviews were also informative to me, realising how these respondents reflected on the social processes that facilitated the emergence of different forms of violent strategy that are used in the group.

The interviews with the Salafi religious clerics were held in Kano (the biggest city in the region), in one of the main Salafi institutions. Through the help of one of the JTF respondents, who had a personal relationship with one of the clerics, I was able to arrange for these interviews. The respondents were able to shed more light on the Salafi theological bases of BH activism, especially at the early stage of the group's activism as well as how and why the group saw the Nigerian state and its state security apparatus as a legitimate target for political violence. The clerics also referred me to some of important audio documents involving Yusuf and some of the previous leadership members of the Ahlus Sunna.

My last interviews were with the victims and eye witnesses of BH violence. This set of participants were significant because they helped me understand how they conceptualised and made sense of their experiences of BH violent activism, as well as how they interpreted the activist behaviours during the attacks. As witnesses, they were able to reflect on the behaviours of BH activists during the attacks. Although at times it felt that their thoughts were clearly coloured by their religious affiliations, they still proved to be an important part of the research.

What turned out to be my biggest challenge was arranging the interviews. Initially, I wanted to interview people living in the camp of BH's Internally Displaced People (IDP) in two cities in the region. Unfortunately, I could not get access to both camps. This was because our interview schedule coincided with a suicide bombing attack at one IDP camp, by two women who were disguised as victims of BH violence (10<sup>th</sup> February 2017). As a result, the camp's Director justifiably cancelled the interview. Consequently, I and my team were informed that the camp could not continue with our previous arrangement for the interviews. I understood the situation; yet was very disappointed. The next step, therefore, was to follow up the interview with the second camp. With the help of a staff member of *Nurture My Future* (a Christian non-profit organisation dedicated to giving hope to the dream of children from displaced homes), we were able to set a date for the interviews in the second camp, on the 27 and 28th of March.

The interviews went quite well. I was able to have two focus group interviews, involving 10 Christian women participants in one group, and another group with eight Muslim women participants. While I introduced the discussion points in Nigerian Pidgin English<sup>22</sup>, my assistants translated this to the respondents in Kanuri and Hausa and related their discussions back to me in English. All the participants had witnessed BH's violent activism first hand. They had lived and witnessed the emergence of BH in the region. Most of them had virtually lost everything, including family members (husbands and children), and possessions, due to the escalations of violence between the BH and the Nigerian security. Initially, some of them were reluctant to participate in the conversations, but as time went on, they felt relaxed and started speaking freely. They all wanted their stories to be heard. They had a slightly different expectation from me. I was impressed with how they related their different encounters with BH, how they interpreted the emergence of the group and the violent activism that emerged and how, different factors including Islam (Salafism) shaped the violent disputes in the group. As an observer, I was also able to dissect how presuppositions from the participants' religious affiliations influence their interpretations of how the different forms of violence in BH evolved.

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<sup>22</sup> Pidgin English is an English-based Pidgin and Creole language spoken as *lingua franca* across Nigeria. It is also commonly referred to as Broken-English. It is a combination of English and other local Nigerian languages, distinguished from other Creole languages. Almost everybody in Nigeria understands and speaks Pidgin English, although with little semantic variations.

The arrangement for the IDP camp interviews were done by the director of the camp and his assistants, because of the security and adverse emotional/psychological effects or reactions such interviews could have on the respondents. Any form of publicity of such interviews could be misinterpreted and may attract future reprisal attacks from BH. The staff members know those living in the camp, and as such were in good position to know who among them were emotionally and psychologically inclined to share their experiences. At the camp there were police and security personnel who guarded the camp on a daily basis. I intentionally avoided including any additional security personnel, to avoid attracting unnecessary attention. The interviews were secretly held in the office of the camp's director reported. Only those who participated were informed of the interviews, where only the director, one of his assistants, my two research assistants and myself were present.

### **3.8 My Role (and My Assistant's) During the Interviews**

My role and that of my assistants were defined throughout the interviews, especially in focus group interviews. While my assistants were mostly translators, the researcher was more of a moderator. Throughout the interviews, I avoided being too intrusive or too structured. I believe that it was important that the participants spoke and conversed freely on the subject, without thinking that their views were influenced by my opinions, or that of my assistants on the subject. This meant I was very careful not to 'tele-guide' the participants' views, such that in most cases, I used few general questions to guide the sessions, but they were merely to introduce the topics.

I also did the same during the semi-structured one-on-one interviews. The research assistants (translators) were excellent throughout the interviews. From the beginning, I had made sure that they maintained a level of professionalism. Their roles were explained to them before the research from time to time. To avoid situations whereby they could take a more active part in the interview, or become too intrusive during the interviews, I made it a rule to properly brief them on what their roles were, before embarking on the interviews. These practices were also repeated occasionally during the interviews in the presence of the respondents.

### **3.9 Trustworthiness and Authenticity of the Data**

Bearing in mind the significance of ‘trustworthiness’ and ‘authenticity’ in evaluating the quality of data and ensuring credibility in qualitative research, there were a few practices that I have maintained throughout the research. The first practice was corroboration of information from my sources. To ensure the credibility from the respondents’ responses, I made it a practice to corroborate my respondents’ “stories” with responses from others. On their descriptions of violent attacks by either BH or the Nigerian security forces particularly, I have not accepted my respondents’ accounts at face value<sup>23</sup>. Instead, I have corroborated the claims by either comparing them with other eyewitnesses’ accounts from the interviews, or by assessing the activities of BH at specific periods of time referred to be the respondents.

The second important practice was “respondent validation”. Respondent validation also called “member validation” is a process whereby a researcher gives participants an account of his/her findings (Bryman, 2010:377). Often the goal is to seek confirmation that the researcher’s account and impressions are congruent with the views of those among whom the research was conducted and seek out areas in which there is lack of correspondence and the reasons behind it. I have maintained this practice throughout the research. I have transcribed and sent back the transcriptions to my respondents, at most two weeks after each of the interviews, to make sure that I have not misrepresented their thoughts during the interviews.

Finally, I have also made sure that the research was carried-out in accordance with the canons of good practice that kept my own biasness towards BH and the Nigerian security forces to its barest minimum. I have maintained a decent level of actions that shows that I have not overtly allowed personal values or theoretical inclinations to sway the conduct and findings from the data. For example, I have provided a comprehensive description that provides a good basis for making judgments, about possible transferability of the research findings to other milieus. This auditing approach details a complete account of all phases of the research processes, which make the data and research more credible.

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<sup>23</sup> Activists’ groups such as BH often release propaganda materials and make attack claims that are of themselves not necessarily accurate. The same can also be said about the Nigerian government. Often, they connect BH with violent attacks that were not necessarily carried out by the group, just to justify their use of certain forms of violence against the group. So, it was important to corroborate such attacks.

I use the terms trustworthiness and authenticity in place of validity and reliability, because I do not believe that qualitative research should be evaluated with the same criteria as quantitative research. My view is reinforced by the fact that quantitative reliability and validity standards presuppose that a single absolute account of social reality is feasible in social research (Bryman, 2010:377). This has not been my position throughout the study. I believe that there can be more than one, and possible several accounts, of one social reality, and it is the task of the social scientists to show the accounts.

### **3.10 Ethical Considerations**

Discussions about ethical considerations in social research revolve around three main questions:

- How should a researcher conduct himself / herself throughout the research?
- How should he/she treat the people with whom he/she conducts the research?
- Are there activities in which he/she should or should not engage in his/her relations with them?

In dealing with these questions, I will break down the ethical considerations in conducting this research into three main areas:

- Avoidance of harm to participants,
- Informed consent,
- Avoidance of deception and invasion of privacy.

#### ***3.10.1 Avoidance of Harm to Participants***

One of the ways I evaded attracting harm (both physically and psychologically) to the participants was the protection of the anonymity of all the participants. As a rule, I made sure that I maintained the anonymity and confidentiality of both my respondents and my research assistants. I gave them a letter about participating in the study as well as repeating its contents before the commencement of every interview. I had figured that this was particularly important due to the security sensitivity of the research. Divulging sensitive information about the group, especially sensitive information that the group perceives to be negative, could put respondents in a very risky and dangerous position. So, I had to avoid putting the respondents in such positions.

In transcribing the interviews, I have used pseudonyms in presenting the participants' responses. I also converted the responses into digital formats, storing them in a computer, with an encrypted password. To be more cautious, I did not save these responses and the participants' contact information in the same domain. I had also intentionally altered or avoided mentioning specific details that could identify the participants', such as the specific addresses, where the interviews were conducted, or other details such as offices or institutions to which the participants referred. However, these alterations have not changed the meaning of the participants' responses.

I have also protected the information about my assistants. I kept their identity anonymous throughout the write-up of research report. I also made sure that they understood the sensitivity and security implications of the interviews with the respondents before the interviews. I made them sign a binding document that prohibits them from divulging any part or aspects of the interviews.

### ***3.10.2 Informed Consent***

I acquired informed consent for the research from the participants and maintained it throughout the research. This is important from two main fronts. First, it gave the participants the opportunity to be fully informed of both the nature and the implications of their participation from the outset. Second, it protected me (the researcher) from any subsequent legal issues that may be raised by the participants or others, regarding the research.

So, from the onset, I had drafted an informed consent letter/form. This form among other things

- provided honest information about the purposes of the research and its background;
- explained the study in a language that the participants understood;
- made the respondents understand that participation in the study was completely voluntary (the participants could withdraw their participation or their data at any stage of the interview, even after the interviews);
- explained that the interview would be recorded (other than the issue of consent, the necessity of recording the interview was to help me revisit, understand and represent the ideas of the respondents in a reliable manner);

- provided an estimated amount of time for the interview.

At the beginning of every interview, I requested the participants sign this document. I also made sure that the respondents understood the purpose for which the informed consent was necessary. In some cases, I went as far as explaining that no one except me or my supervisors may listen to the recorded interviews, unless if some of the interview excerpts would be used for other study purposes, and in such cases, additional consent or permission would be sought.

### ***3.10.3 Avoidance of Deception and Invasion of Privacy***

This is very much linked to the informed consent. The degree to which a participants' consent is given is based on their understanding of what his/her participation or involvement entails. Providing informed consent entails that he/she properly understands his/her involvement and yet agrees to be part of the study. If otherwise, the participant had not given an informed consent even if he/she signs an informed consent form.

In addition to this, I have also always believed that the right to privacy and to know the truth is a tenet that most of us hold dear. Hence, transgression of these rights even in the name of research should not be accepted. Under no circumstances should the right to privacy or to the truth about the research be jeopardised in the research.

In line with this conviction, I have maintained this value throughout the research. As a rule, I made sure that I did not hide anything related to the research, to acquire certain information from the participants. Before the interviews, I had given letters to the participants explaining the purpose and objectives of the research. I also made sure that I took time to repeat this in a language my participants understood before the commencement of the interviews.

## **3.11 Data Analysis**

In analysing the data, I have employed a thematic analysis model that is built on grounded theory<sup>24</sup>. Thematic analysis is simply the process of identifying important and significant patterns in a

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<sup>24</sup> Grounded theory was originally developed by two sociologists, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). These sociologists were critical of the way in which existing theories dominated sociological

qualitative data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Here, the goal is not just to arrange the data in themes and patterns, but rather to use them to address the identified research problems (Braun & Clarke 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2013). This is not the same as simply summarising the data. A good thematic analysis should also interpret and make sense of the data.

The analysis has partly followed the six-phase<sup>25</sup> thematic analysis model first enumerated by Braun & Clarke (2006). However, instead of the six steps, I have modified the steps in this study into four main steps to suit my grounded theory's epistemological and ontological assumptions. These steps include:

- familiarisation with the data and generation of initial codes,
- organisation of codes into themes
- review of themes and
- write-up.

I did not follow these steps linearly. In most cases, I moved back and forth between the steps, in more of an iterative and recursive way. Such back and forth is often normal, when one is dealing with a lot of complex data (Bryman, 2010; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). For me, what was important was that the analysis and interpretations depicted a true representation of the data-set.

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research. They argued that researchers needed a method that would allow them to move from data to theory, so that new theories could be deduced. Such theories would be specific to the context in which they had been developed (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). That is to say, they had to be 'grounded' in the data from which they had emerged rather than on analytical constructs, categories or variables from the pre-existing ones.

In grounded theory, the researcher acts more like a witness, who makes sense of the data (Bryman, 2010). The main aim is often to develop theories that do not go beyond the data. His/her role is to use his/her analytic skills to represent the data in both systematic and accessible fashion; as such that it represents a clear picture of what "happened". He/she must be careful not to import his/her own assumptions and expectations into the analysis. It is the researcher's skills and abilities to collect and analyse the data that determines the outcome of the research.

<sup>25</sup> Braun & Clarke (2006) provide six main steps for thematic analysis. These include: Step (1) Become familiar with the data; Step (2) Generate initial codes; Step (3) Search for themes; Step (4) Review themes; Step (5) Define themes; Step 6: Write-up.

### ***3.11.1 Familiarisation with the Data and Generation of Initial Codes***

I began by familiarising myself with the data corpus, first with the secondary materials (videos and letters between BH and AQIM leadership) that I had first collected over the course of reviewing previous literature on BH. Here, I did a thorough reading, and re-reading of the letters from the organisation's leaders. I repeatedly watched the video materials of the different BH leaders, particularly those I felt were significant for the research problem. In examining these materials, I carefully made notes<sup>26</sup> of some of the important quotes and materials that spoke to me about the research problem. Such important materials included quotes explaining how the different BH leaders (particularly, Yusuf and Shekau) had framed the group's activism and use of violence against the Nigerian state. I tried to find connections between such quotes and the ideas from the theory (resource mobilisation, political process and framing process. I also kept notes on some of the different elements (material resources) that influenced BH's use of violence. All these elements I kept as initial codes<sup>27</sup>. From here, I collated these codes into an initial theme which I called "political opportunity structures". I developed and modified these codes as I worked through the coding process. By the time I wanted to start the conduction of the interviews, I had a clear picture of what more I was looking for, from the study participants – (a) the socio-political foundations upon which BH evolved in the Northern Nigeria and (b) the different forms of resources propitious for the development and further sustenance of violence in the Northern Nigerian-based SOMO.

Next was the primary data. With the first one-on-one interviews and focus group interviews conducted and transcribed, I began the process of familiarising myself with the data. Like in the case of the secondary data, I also repeatedly listened to the tapes and re-read the transcripts, to make sure that I have a very good understanding of my participants' perceptions and understanding

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<sup>26</sup> I have also used this note throughout the research process. Keeping such notes as a sort of memo was one important element that helped keep me in check throughout the analytic process. With the notes, I was also able to jot down some important observations, crystallise my ideas and not lose track of my thinking on the various topics. In general, it also served as reminder and building blocks for a certain amount of reflection, both during the interviews and in the whole analysis process.

<sup>27</sup> It is important to note that the understanding of "initial codes" here for me is different from coding in quantitative research. While in most quantitative research (where codes are often thought as fixed) codes are often seen squarely as a way of managing data; for me, and indeed in most approaches to qualitative data analysis, initial codes are part of the "important first steps to the generation of theories" (Bryman, 2010:542). They are also as Charmaz (1983:186) puts it, "shorthand devices to label, separate, compile and organise data". They were the potential indicators of concepts, which are constantly compared to each other to see their significance to building theories for the research problem. Thus, it is one of the most important processes in building or modifying theories in a research such as this. Using it, the researcher is able to review and give labels (names or themes) to components that seem to be theoretically significant and appear to be particularly salient within the social worlds of those being studied.

of the subject under investigation. I repeatedly looked through the interview data to see how the participants' views connected with the previously examined secondary data. From here, I highlighted and jotted-down some of the important elements and quotes that jumped-out as either the socio-political foundations upon which the organisation evolved in the Northern Nigeria, or the forms of resources that influenced the development and further sustenance of violence in the Northern Nigerian-based SOMO. Both elements were coded as "socio-political conditions". All these were done by hand, working through hard copies of the transcripts with pens and highlighters. Given that I already knew what I was looking for from the data, I did not code every piece of the text from the data. I only coded those segments of the data that were relevant or captured something significant for what I was looking for. In other words, this was a theoretical coding, rather than an inductive one.

It is important to point-out that I did not wait until the last interviews before I began the coding process. In fact, the generation of initial codes started with the first interviews. The generation of these initial codes served as the basics and guide for subsequent interviews. Identifying elements like the Northern Nigerian colonial legacy and culture of religio-political activism as parts of "socio-political conditions", for example, suggested and pointed to a new line of who and what more to look for when conducting subsequent interviews. This helped save me a lot of time and resources.

### ***3.11.2 Organising the Codes into Themes***

With all the data coded, I began the process of searching and organising the codes into themes. In general, there are no hard and fast rules about what makes a theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A theme in simple terms is a pattern that captures something significant or interesting about the data and/or research question. It is characterised by its significance to the research problems. In most qualitative analysis, the researcher allocates themes based on its significance to the research problems.

With this in mind, I have allocated themes to the codes in line with the research questions. I organised the codes in such a way that they fit together into themes that addressed the three main research questions in the thesis. For example, I separated those codes that are related to the socio-

political foundations upon which BH evolved in Northern Nigeria, from those that explain the resources and conditions upon which the use of violence was developed and sustained within the organisation. While the former I named “political opportunity structures for the evolution of BH”, the latter I named “conditions for violence” and “resources for use and sustenance of violence” respectively. From here, I generated sub-themes such as “culture of Islamic activism”, “colonial legacy”, “perceptions of marginalisation”, “Nigerian return to democracy in 1999”, “*al-Shari’a* activism”, “Salafi in-fighting” and “material resources”. These particular sub-themes were considered most relevant to the question of the emergence of the group in the region. Some of them, I also later modified to fit into more precise names that fit properly into the analytic narrative I have employed for the thesis.

For the second and third research questions, I similarly developed sub-themes such as “involvement in institutionalised political system”, “method of policing”, “mobilisatory resources”; and “exclusivist ideology”, “collaborations with similar organisations”, “intra-factional competitions, from the themes “conditions for violence” and “resources for use and sustenance of violence” respectively. Essentially, these sub-themes were the product of recurring motifs and codes from both the interview transcripts and the documentary data. Separating them into the specific sub-themes helped organise the data into chunks of meaning, for analysis. At the end of this step, the codes had been organised into broader themes that seemed to say something specific about the different research questions.

### ***3.11.3 Reviewing the Themes***

After the identification of the different themes and sub-themes in step 3, the next important step was to review and modify the themes into descriptive categories for the analysis. I began by gathering together all sub-themes that are relevant to each of the themes. I captured them into a simple Microsoft Word document and simply used the “cut and paste” function, to organise them in their different columns, using the themes as the headings. I colour-coded each of the themes; the idea was to make them easier for me to identify in the different columns.

Further, I read the data associated with each theme and considered whether they really did support the themes and sub-themes. I also reflected around questions such as: do the themes make sense

in the context of the entire data-set (the one-on-one interviews, focus group interviews and the secondary data)? Did I try to fit-in too much into a particular theme? Do the themes overlap, and if they do, are they really separate themes? Are there other themes within the data? I also looked whether the codes did support the themes? These questions are also very useful for not only the analysis, but also for the validity and credibility of the data. For example, I felt that the preliminary theme, “political opportunity structures” was too broad for the entire codes about both the evolution of BH and the use violence in the group. Despite being SMT specific, I felt that it did not represent the different resources and conditions under which the organisation evolved. Thus, I modified it and designated it for only describing the socio-political conditions upon which the organisations evolved. I also removed the sub-theme “Nigerian return to democracy in 1999”. Examining the data, I felt that there was not enough data to support this. Besides, it also overlapped with the sub-theme, “*al-Shari’a* activism”. Hence, it was not necessary holding onto it. All these changes helped improve the final result.

From these new refinements, I again re-examined the themes and sub-themes. I further in the words of Braun & Clarke (2006: 92), “identified the ‘essence’ of what each theme is about.” I reflected on what the themes and the sub-themes were saying in terms of the research questions. I also tried to understand how the sub-themes interacted and related to each other and to the main themes. For example, how do the different listed socio-political sub-themes connect to the evolution of the organisation in the region? Also, how do the mutual relationships and interactions with similar networks such AQIM and al-Shabaab’s influence on the development of more sophisticated forms of violence in BH?

Both the study participants and the secondary data (particularly the letters between BH leaders and AQIM) were clear and consistent about how these elements connect. In these cases, it was therefore interesting to see that the participants’ experiences and descriptions of these different elements are connected to the evolution of BH in the Northern Nigeria. The themes seemed to align with each other. Also, the inextricable link between the different sub-themes became a key stimulus and focus for my conceptualisation of the evolution of the group and the development of how the different forms of activism evolved within BH. From these, I was able to form opinion on both how the group evolved in Northern Nigeria and how they have been able to use and develop the different forms of sophisticated violence in the SOMO.

#### **3.11.4 Writing-up**

This step was the last part of the analysis, which bore the report. To make a good sense of the data, I have presented the analysis in narrative and semi-chronological pattern in chapters 4, 5 and 6, according the three research questions. In some cases, there were constant references to events in previous chapters to illustrate significant points about both the research questions and the generation of theories. Relationships between the different themes were also explored in such a way that hypotheses about connections between them emerged in the chapters.

In general, I have not generated a separate discussion as regards the findings for this thesis. Instead, I have included the discussions as part of the presentation and interpretations of the data. In most cases, I have started the discussions with what is already known about the subject in discussion, blending them with information from the data. Here, I have also used the findings from previous literature to support some of my conclusions about the different research questions.

#### **3.12 Summary**

This chapter has discussed both the method and the data used in the study. In discussing these, it explained that the research was based on a qualitative method that was largely oriented in an inductive, interpretive and constructive approach. It detailed that the study has used primary documentary sources such as videos of activities of different leaders of the group; Yusuf's recorded sermons and manifesto, as well as recently released letters between leaders of BH and AQIM. It also explained that the study in addition has drawn from individuals with knowledge about the origin and the inner functions of the group before and after the group began to use violence. The main methods of extracting data from these sources were through secondary analysis and interview methods (semi-structured face to face and focus-group interviews) respectively. The chapter also explained the specific steps taken both for collecting these data and in ensuring trustworthiness of these data. In conclusion, the chapter presented a discussion of the specific steps (thematic analysis) used in the analysis of the data.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: CONTEXTUALISING THE EMERGENCE OF BOKO HARAM IN NORTHERN-NIGERIA**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This is the first data analysis chapter. The chapter contextualises the emergence of BH in Northern Nigeria. It will provide the socio-political and ideological background of the group when it first evolved and operated in the region. It will do this through an analysis of six main political structures: The Northern Nigerian culture of Islamic activism; the Northern Nigerian colonial legacy; the emergence of the Northern People's Congress (NPC); the Nigerian return to democracy in 1999; the intra-ideological dispute between the two main Salafi-networks (Izala and Ahlus Sunna); and finally, the mobilisation of resources from co-operation with al-Qaeda. The data shows that these "political opportunity structures" created the appropriate window of opportunities for the evolution and formation of BH, at the time it emerged in the region.

### **4.2 The Northern Nigerian Culture of Islamic Activism**

The use of violence as a means for goal attainment in Northern Nigeria did not start with BH. In fact, Muslim tradition itself in the region arguably was partly founded on violent activism. Islam came into the region in two phases. First, through trade relations in the twelfth century, when Muslim scholars and North African trade merchants made in-roads in the trade routes of the Sahara Desert (Comolli, 2015:13; Smith, 2015:31). By the 16<sup>th</sup> Century when the majority of the region's population practiced some sort of African traditional religion, the religion had become a prerogative for the Hausa rulers and the political elites, who controlled the trade routes. Given Islam's influence, the Hausa political elite were able to cement trade and diplomatic alliances with the North African trade merchants, as well as the Arab traders that flocked into the region (Insoll, 2003; Robinson, 2004). The second phase, and perhaps more relevant for our study, came in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century when Shaikh, Usman dan-Fodio, a famous Fulani<sup>28</sup> preacher propagated what is still regarded in the region as a "great jihad against infidels" (Comolli, 2015; Smith, 2015) in the region.

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<sup>28</sup> Fulani or Fula is believed to be one of the largest ethnic groups dispersed in the Sahel and West Africa, especially in Nigeria, Cameroon, Ghana, Senegal, Gambia and Guinea. The group is known mostly for their political sagacity and nomadic lifestyle. The biggest population of the Fulanis now live in Northern Nigeria and Senegal. Any reference?

Built on removal of the original Habe leaderships of the Hausa states<sup>29</sup>, this ‘jihad’ would establish Islam as the main dominant religious tradition across communities in Northern Nigeria. A brief recap of this great jihad is necessary here to help contextualise Islam’s role in socio-political activism in the region.

Prior to the jihad, dan Fodio himself was simply a Muslim preacher from the Sunni tradition. Born in 1754 in Gobir (the most prominent of the seven Hausa states in the region), the Toronkowa<sup>30</sup> Sheikh was right from his childhood devoted to Islamic religious life. As early as 9, he was exposed to the teachings of one of the key preachers of the eighteenth century, El Hadj Jibril B. Umar<sup>31</sup>, in the Arab world. The Fulani scholar’s encounter with this famous Sunni cleric would also later in his life expose the young Sheikh to the legal system of Shari’a within the Maliki school (Comolli 2015:13). Growing up under the wing of Umar, he also became much influenced by Wahhabi teachings (Comolli, 2015), while remaining within the Sunni Maliki school of Jurisprudence. Through this philosophical and religious school of thought, he established his profile as a respected theologian and scholar in the region.

By the time dan Fodio was twenty, the cleric had started touring and preaching in the different Hausa states, subtly advocating for a change in the way people saw Islamic faith in the Kingdoms. By the early 1780s, he had gained so much trust that he was occasionally invited to the Gobir court. There he had the opportunity to question King Bawa (the traditional ruler of Gobir) about his

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<sup>29</sup> The Hausa city states represent a group of neighbouring pre-colonial autonomous states that dominated the present-day northern Nigeria. They laid above the confluence of the rivers Niger and Benue (in the present-day Northern Nigeria), between the Songhai empire in the west and that of the Kanem-Bornu, or Bornu, in the east. Among the most prominent state here were; Biram, Daura, Gobir, Kano, Katsina, Rano, and Zaria. Prior to the jihad of Usman dan Fodio and subsequent domination of Islam, these city states had lived side by side and were interconnected in the mid-14th century by loose alliances. It was until the jihad of Usman Dan Fodio that some of these states were united under one Caliphate known as the ‘Sokoto Caliphate’. For more on the history of the seven Hausa states see T.C. McCaskie and John D. Fage, *Western Africa: The early kingdoms and empires of the western Sudan* in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* at: <https://www.britannica.com/place/western-Africa>.

<sup>30</sup> Toronkowa is a clan of the Fulani nomadic ethnic group believed to have moved to the Hausa states from the present-day Senegal in the 1740s. Once in contact with Islamic education and culture in Northern Nigeria, the Toronkows quickly assimilated Islam, and were among the first ethnic groups to reach influential positions in the courts of local Hausa Kings (Comoli, 2015; Loimeier, 2012).

<sup>31</sup> El Hadj Jibril B. Umar was a North African Muslim scholar who gave his apprentice a broader perspective of Muslim reformist ideas in other parts of the Muslim world. He was known as an uncompromising opponent of corrupt practices and a staunch proponent of Jihad (Comolli, 2015:14; Insoll, 2003).

treatment of Muslims, and his administration of taxes on his Islamic subjects. Throughout the King's reign and that of his immediate successor Yunfa, dan Fodio continued his condemnation of the court's laxity and pushed for a reduction in taxation. He argued that it did not follow the Islamic Shari'a system (Comolli 2015:14). Within a few years, he managed to obtain a reduction in taxation and the freedom to preach to people of all ethnic groups (Comolli, 2015:14). As a result, dan Fodio established himself, not only as a legitimate advocate for social justice, but also as a genuine fighter for the religion in the kingdom.

More opportunity for dan Fodio to grow his influence in the kingdom came when the new king of Gobir, King Yunfa, who had been a pupil of the Fulani cleric increased restrictions and taxations on the people in 1801. The people mostly affected by this were dan Fodio's ethnic group, the Fulanis. Hence, dan Fodio came into conflict with the royalty and his consequent criticism of the court's practices took a turn for the worse. Later, he refined his criticisms to include condemnation of the king's new taxation policy, as well as what he conceived the "excessive immoral attitude at the Gobir court" (Smith, 2015:15). This brought him more popularity.

In response, King Yunfa tried in several ways to undermine dan Fodio, including an attempted assassination on his life. This led dan Fodio and his followers to flee and set up their first ethnic/religious home in Gudu, in the present-day Nigerian Sokoto state (still in the Northern Nigeria), near the eastern border of Gobir. The community attracted a lot of new members including non-Fulanis, who came to represent a real opposition to King Yunfa. It was at this time, that dan-Fodio was officially elected as *Amir al-Muminin* (the commander of the faithful) (Insoll, 2003). He could now raise an army and become its commander, with which he could declare and pursue a jihad against the Hausa kings. However, the army was largely composed of the Fulanis, who already held a powerful military advantage because of their cavalry culture (Insoll, 2003). He was also widely supported by the Hausa peasantry, who felt over-taxed and oppressed by their rulers. Using his new raised army, dan Fodio was able to engage in an armed struggle against the Hausa Kings. Within a few years, the Sheikh was able to raise an army that used jihad against the Hausa kings in the different Hausa city states. In a series of well-calculated strikes, he and his Islamic army were able to sweep all the Hausa tribal local rulers off their thrones in the cities across the entire region (Comolli, 2015:15). Due to this victory, he was also able to bring all the Hausa communities together as a united Islamic-based Sokoto Caliphate, based on Islamic

theocratic *al-Shari'a* system. He would become the Caliphate's first Sultan. The Caliphate extended not just to the present-day Northern Nigeria but to other areas now in the present-day Cameroon, Niger Republic and Chad. The only serious check to dan Fodio's conquest in the region was in Bornu (areas that form part of the present day Borno and Yobe State, still in Northern Nigeria), where the caliphate army's repeated efforts to access these communities were not successful<sup>32</sup>. However, this did not derail dan Fodio's mission in the other areas of the Caliphate. By 1820, the Caliphate had become very much established within the region. In the different areas of the Caliphate, administratively he set-up many Emirs. He and his group of Emirs bestowed on the Caliphate an Islamic identity, customs and cultures that tried to connect it with the early umma established by Prophet Mohammed in Medina. They also propagated Islamic structures that preserved what is still regarded in the region as the "purity of Islam" and a universal dominance of Islam. By the late 19th century, life in the region had very much become influenced by Islam and the enforcement of Shari'a, especially in the urban areas. Islam had become the official religion of the region<sup>33</sup>.

It is important to note that one major factor that contributed to dan Fodio's success was his ability to use Islam to frame his socio-political activism against the Hausa Kings. Capitalising on the growing resentment among the population, the cleric was able to frame opposition against the Hausa kings as a sort of 'jihad', within which participation was a sort of moral and religious duty incumbent on all Muslims within the newly founded Islamic community. The Hausa rulers, particularly Yunfa, according to dan Fodio, were simply "apostates", who had moved away from the principles of Islam. Hence, they are legitimate targets for jihad. Amidst such shared frustrations and grievances, this framing of religious zeal and socio-political criticism against such apostate rulers would prove effective and would result in a wide range of support among many Islamic adherents within both the Fulani nomadic communities and beyond.

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<sup>32</sup> One main resistance against dan Fodio's jihad came from the old Kanem-Bornu Empire. The communities within this empire had their own clerical class and tradition. In the later days of the Caliphate, there arose King Muhammed al-Kanemi, the leader of the communities, who asserted that the Fulani clerics did not have a unique right to interpret Muslim law for the government of humanity. He was able to inspire a spirited national resistance, which by 1811 had turned the tide against the Fulani. Outside the region, dan Fodio also witnessed another significant setback at the hands of the Ibadan warlords in the West, when the Sheikh tried to extend his caliphate to other parts of the region. Ibadan is in the present-day Ibadan state, in the South Western part of Nigeria (Lapidus, 2014:469-472).

<sup>33</sup> For his role in the Islamic activism and the subsequent establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate, dan Fodio is still regarded as the father of Islamic religion in the region. He is revered even among different Islamic religious orders in the region, including Shiites (who would come into the region much later).

One main effect of dan Fodio's jihad and the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate in the region is the 'concretisation' of the role of Islam as a mobilisatory resource upon which opposition political activism is galvanised. By framing his activism around Islam, dan Fodio subtly introduced Islam as a tool to frame or mobilise forms of political activism against state opposition. His use of Islamic concept of 'jihad', as a tool to justify socio-political activism against the despotic Hausa Kings, subtly legitimised violent contention and activism against state authorities. A formation of sound organisation built upon Islamic theological concepts would consequently become an important way to engage with the state.

The fact that the religious tradition itself has a similar jihadi history further exacerbates this phenomenon. The understanding of politics, along religious lines is nothing new within the Islamic tradition. Prophet Mohammed himself, the founder of the religion, was both a political and religious leader during his life time. Following the early opposition in Mecca, the Prophet had around July of 622 migrated to Medina (a flight known as *hijra*). At Medina, Prophet Mohammed became the political head of the umma, creating a system that not only combined religious and political power in one figure, but also the first Islamic community (umma) under a constitution (Shari'a). The members of this community were bound to demonstrate their religious commitment through waging religious/political 'jihad' when necessary (Falola, 1998). Using this kind of framing, the Prophet and his immediate successors were able to establish Islam in both Mecca and beyond. Dan Fodio's jihad and establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate seems like a replication of Prophet Mohammed's 'religio-political' activism. By relocating to Gudu (a replication of the Prophet's hijra) and by evoking the kind of similar religious framing for his socio-political activism in the region, the Fulani respected cleric was able to indirectly bequeath a religious quality to what today could be termed a socio-political affair. This not only helped popularise his activism but also explains why political activities in this region are often seen and cast in religious terms.

A discussion with several of my respondents corroborates this notion. In fact, most of the respondents, particularly the religious scholars and politicians representing some of the constituencies in the region argue that it is Islam that gives political activism in the region its meaning. According to one of the politicians, "Islam teaches the people to stand up for their rights.... Starting from the days of our fathers, we have learnt to stand-up for what we believe in, with our religion as our guiding principle. Without the religion, people would not see the need to

speaking up against the evils of the state politicians. This is our history”<sup>34</sup>. Another politician also puts up a similar argument. According to him “our religion is our guide; it is part of our history. It is there to guide us”<sup>35</sup>. From a Salafi perspective, an Ahlus Sunna cleric respondent similarly argues:

How can you remove religion from politics? (he rhetorically asks) “Islam help us articulate our thoughts, actions and political positions.... Following the teachings of the Holy Qu’ran, the Hadith and the consensus of the approved scholarship; every Muslim would be able to live an authentic Islamic life style, like the early Muslims during the Holy prophet’s Mohammed’s time (peace be upon him), and during memorable days of the Sokoto Caliphate.

Why would we not follow in these footsteps, preach as they did, do what they did, and change our societies as they did? This will always be our mission. It is the beauty of our religion. I don’t subscribe to that Western nonsense of separating politics from religion. These two things are inseparable. We need our religion to guide our every action. I am sure you get it.

Even though this logic may not quite apply in other contexts, it is clear that the inclusivity of Islam and politics from its history makes the religion susceptible to political mobilisation, especially in Northern Nigeria where such understanding had obviously been concretised by Usman dan Fodio’s jihad. Once the fusion of Islam with socio-political activism was concretised, Islam had become a tool to mobilise people around a socio-political agenda, especially against state opposition. It becomes a viable force to unite activists around a collective social or political activism, against what they could perceive as enemies of the religion. Therefore, many of the internal revolts and insurgencies that resulted in the deposition of one Fulani despot by another in the pre-colonial period after the death of dan Fodio were framed along religious lines (Comolli, 2015; Last, 1967; Schacht, J. 1958).

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<sup>34</sup> Interview by the author with a politician representing one of the political zones in the Northern Nigeria in Abuja (February 2017).

<sup>35</sup> Interview by the author with a politician representing one of the political zones in the Northern Nigeria in Abuja (February 2017).

### 4.3 The Northern Nigerian Colonial Legacy

Other than the region's history of Islamic activism, another important political opportunity structure that concretised the use of Islam as a potent tool for socio-political mobilisation against state opposition, and subsequent evolution of a group like BH, later in Northern-Nigeria, was colonialism. The arrival of the British and the subsequent colonisation<sup>36</sup> of the region in the late 19th century did change the social and political landscape of the region. In the beginning, the colonialists' relationships with people in the region were mostly trade-related; revolving around the expansion of the Royal Niger Company<sup>37</sup>, which controlled trade and British interests in Southern Nigeria.

The British was not much of a direct threat to the Sokoto Caliphate or the other minor states in the region until in the late 19th century when Frederick Lugard, the military administrator and the last governor of Southern Nigerian Protectorate, decided to unite the Northern region with the rest of the Royal Niger Company (British Colony). By 1914, he had succeeded in amalgamating the two regions into one single colony of Britain, and consequently dismantled dan Fodio's Sokoto Caliphate. From the dismantling of the Sokoto Caliphate, change was inevitable, and this was when some of the main problems began.

The first change was on the socio-political level, where the region's *al-Shari'a* system of the Sokoto Caliphate had to be substituted for a Western-based colonial system. This inter alia meant introduction of a new political system and a new social value system that was incompatible with those of the Sokoto Caliphate. At the dawn of colonialism, the British had "inherited" quite a distinctively "conservative and close community." Different from the reality in the southern part of the country (where diverse ethnic autonomous communities lived side by side), the British found a region that was remarkably 'closed' from the liberal influences that existed outside the region,

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<sup>36</sup> British Colonisation, by the way, was achieved through conquest and subjugation. During this dark era in the region's history, states and semi-independent communities around the Caliphate were forcefully conscripted into part of the British state. The Emirates of Kabba, Kotogora and Illorin were the first to be conquered by the British. This was followed by Kano in February 1903, and the rest of other emirates within the Caliphate. The Sokoto caliphate itself finally fell on March 13<sup>th</sup>, 1903, when the Grand Shura of the Caliphate finally conceded and surrendered to Frederick Lugard's army.

<sup>37</sup> The Royal Niger Company was a mercantile company chartered by the British government in the nineteenth century. The company existed for a comparatively short time (1879–1900) and was instrumental in helping the British in the colonial days to take control over the area of the lower river Niger against the German competition. In 1900, the company-controlled territories became the Southern region Protectorate, which was in turn united with the Northern Nigerian Protectorate to form the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria in 1914.

particularly in the Southern Nigeria and in the Western world (Comolli 2015:14). Very few signs of “modernity” or Western lifestyle existed. The region had more relations with people from the Arab world than people from these areas. Such people were generally despised and were considered as mostly belonging to another world (Comolli 2015: 14). This was a very big problem for the British<sup>38</sup>.

Another significant change came in the education system. Before the arrival of the British, the most popular form of education was the traditional Islamic education, known as *Tsangaya* school system<sup>39</sup>. This system of education was mostly influenced by contacts with the Arab world. It dates back to the 13th Century, when Islam first arrived in the region. The system basically entailed intensive study of the Qur’an, whereby a teacher (*al-aramma*) pitches a camp, often in a place in the outskirts of a town, draw students (*almajirai*). The system is often divided into four different stages, with each of these stages forming the basis for progress into the next stages. The last of these stages is often the enrolment in more advanced theological schools (*madrassahs*), where students were meant to study Islamic Jurisprudence, Theology, History, Philosophy, Arabic Grammar and the Sciences (Umar, 2013). In each of these stages, the students were expected to studiously follow the teachings of the teacher. They are also supposed to replicate the *al-muhajirun* (‘migrants’ in Arabic) often referred to in many places in the Qur’an<sup>40</sup>, as people who had given up their earthly possessions and families, in fellowship with the Prophet during his *Hij’ra* from Mecca to Medina<sup>41</sup>.

Up until the arrival of the British, this system was clearly the preferred form of education for the majority of people within the region. In fact, when Lugard took over as the Governor of Northern

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<sup>38</sup> The only positive thing the British appreciated from the pre-existence of the Sokoto Caliphate was its already existing administrative structures, which made the region slightly easier to manage politically. While enthroning the colonial system, the British had retained the region’s pre-existing administrative structures. However, the incompatibility of the deeply entrenched Islamic cultural values within the region would still make governing the region very challenging.

<sup>39</sup> Studying the Qur’an under the *Tsangaya* school system, they are supposed to share in the same characteristics with the *al-mahajirun* of Medina. The students are expected to have left their homes and families and should have no other means of livelihood. However, on study free days (mostly Thursdays), they could engage in menial jobs normally assigned to them by their teachers. With these, the students are able to economically sustain themselves. The teacher himself does not necessarily reside in one particular place or town. Often, he is expected to be engaged in full-time studying and learning of the Qur’an and other Islamic sciences. He also does not receive any form of official payment from the students. His sustenance most of the time also comes from alms generated by his students or from his host community. Any literature that discusses this schooling system?

<sup>40</sup> The Qur’an 2:270; 274; 3:92; 3:134)

<sup>41</sup> Interview by the author with an anonymous Izala cleric in Kano (March 2017).

Nigeria in 1914, he found over 25,000 such Qur'anic schools, with a total enrolment of 218,618 pupils (Fafunwa, 1991:207). At first, Lugard maintained the Qur'anic school system. He not only acknowledged their existence, but also accorded them official status by paying monthly stipends to the teachers (Fafunwa, 1991:208). However, he soon realised how culturally and socially challenging allowing such a system was for the new united country. Besides the obvious incompatibility with the Western values in the colonial system, it was pragmatically unsustainable with the unification of the region with the South, who had already been introduced to the Western style education by the Irish and Portuguese missionaries. Thus, Lugard's administration would stop funding the Qur'anic schools. He would also introduce Western colonial education in the region; not only to align the region with its Southern counterpart, but also to make it less challenging for administrative purposes. This system of education, among other things, entails: (a) an abandonment of the Arabic language, which was the main language of instruction in the Islamic schools, (b) imposition of English as the main language of instruction, (c) No inclusion of the Qur'an in the academic curriculum, (d) and introduction of different Western subjects such as geography, biology, chemistry, English, and Christian religious knowledge, which were initially not part of the Islamic education (Salisu and Abdullahi, 2013). Even though Lugard would allow the Islamic system to continue to exist alongside this newly introduced colonial system (Imam, 2012; Garba, 2012), this practically devalued the traditional Islamic system in the region. It also seriously challenged the hegemonic position of Islamic authorities in the region, and soon created the opportunity for resentment towards the colonial state. In more practical terms, certification from the newly established colonial schools would become a pre-requisite for getting any assistance from the colonial government. To get anything from the colonial state, including employment (civil service), people were expected to attain a certain level of scholarship, or have certificates (degrees) from these newly established colonial schools. Both the students and the teachers who studied or taught in the traditional Islamic schools were either disregarded (seen as 'illiterates') or forced to change to the new system. All these were never easily accepted by many in the region.

In discussing this with my respondents, I was not surprised to learn how people in the region construed the effects of these changes, as the cause of deep-seated resentment against the colonial state. Beginning with Lugard's decision to stop funding the Qur'anic schools, some of my respondents argued that such actions were purely discriminatory and was simply unforgivable. In

their estimations, the colonial state's lack of funding to the traditional Qur'anic schools, left the schools completely on their own. Therefore, the schools now rely on the support from parents which most of the time was very minimal. As a result, the Qur'anic school teachers had to resort to sending their pupils to beg for food and money. This further tarnished the image of the schools and undermined the integrity of the teachers as well as their pupils until today.

Other respondents, who did not go this far in interpreting the effects of colonialism, restricted their thoughts on how much effect the substitution of the Qur'anic system with the Western style education has had on the grievance and the subsequent mobilisation of political activism against the colonial government. One of my most eloquent respondents, who had claimed to have conducted research himself on the "negative impact of colonialism on the region's Traditional Qur'anic system of education", argues that "this (referring to colonialism) was the most single element that made our people begin to revolt against the colonial state". Looking at me intensely with an eye above his white glasses, he continued: "the British, by trying to force us to change our system, made mockery of our traditional values. ...and sometimes, when you make people feel that their traditions are valueless, they are forced to prove you wrong"<sup>42</sup>. Another respondent who had a similar position also said:

"I cannot say that the colonial system is bad ... but what I know is that it was never compatible with our values. Its introduction as a replacement for our traditional system was not in our best interest. If the British wanted a system that suits the region, they would have balanced what we already had, with some things from their own system, and not bring something totally different"<sup>43</sup>.

These kinds of sentiments are reminiscent of Alao's (2013) observation in his analyses of the role of colonialism in "Islamic Radicalisation" in Northern Nigeria. In this study, the British-based Nigerian scholar explained that many Muslims in the region were frustrated by the way the colonial government devalued the traditional Islamic schools. According to him, the lack of recognition of the traditional schools by the colonial government was so bad, that the Muslim population were practically forced to attend the "Christian schools", where they were almost forcefully converted

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<sup>42</sup> Interview by the author with an Izala cleric in Kano (March 2017).

<sup>43</sup> Interview by the author with a politician representing one of the political zones in Northern Nigeria in Abuja (March 2017).

to Christianity. Suleiman Baba Ali, a former Commissioner for Health from one of the states in the region, recounted how “he felt that there were conscious attempts by the educators of the colonial government to subtly convert Muslims to Christianity.” This, in Alao’s assumption felt like a promotion of Christianity, and as a result caused a lot of frustration and backlash in the region. So, in those instances, most Muslims felt that this was an attack on their religion, leading to a resistant religious response.

The religious neutrality (secular) that guided the colonial state at the executive level of the colonial government also did not help matters. Even though the colonial government made some effort to accommodate<sup>44</sup> the political structures within the Sokoto Caliphate, it had at the centre of the government operated with a bureaucratic system that de-emphasised religion and tried to replicate the Western modern state. In the form of a separation of the State from religion, it pioneered the establishment of different arms of the government (the executives, the legislatures and the judiciary), a vibrant civil society and secular civil service system. Within these systems, Christian holidays (such as Easter and Christmas), rather than Muslim holidays, became used as state’s holidays. Saturdays and Sundays, which in the Sokoto Caliphate were nothing other than ordinary days of the week, were also regarded as weekends and weekly work holidays. This was completely different with what was applicable in the Sokoto Caliphate. While people grudgingly went along with it, they quickly translated it as “foreign and dangerous”<sup>45</sup> for the region’s Islamic identity. This is how my respondent put it:

How do you justify the fact that our people have to follow the colonial system which was Christianity-inspired. The Gregorian Calendar which was introduced by the colonial government is completely a Christian thing, not Muslim. Muslim Calendar was ignored as if it did not even exist. We preserve Saturdays and Sundays as holidays rather than Thursdays and Fridays, which we used to have from our learning days (*Tsangaya* Qur’anic school). Is Sundays more holy (sic) than Fridays, which is

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<sup>44</sup> The British had developed a distinctive policy of indirect rule, which made it possible for them to govern the region with the consent of the traditional rulers. They retained the administrative system of the Sokoto Caliphate, with Shari’a law as the recognised legal system, even to the areas in the region, where the majority of the population were ‘pagans. Emirs were allowed to largely exercise their administrative powers as they had done before, as long as they are to become accountable to the colonial government. These concessions, however, have been described as made for administrative convenience (Falolo, 2009), rather than to accommodate the region’s cultural values.

<sup>45</sup> Interview by the author with an anonymous Izala scholar in Knao (March 2017)

(sic) the Muslim days of worship? The colonial system in a way forced us to follow their ways which are inspired by Judeo/Christian religion, rather than our own Islamic ways. We are still suffering because of these things<sup>46</sup>.

Two politicians from the region also had a similar opinion. “The Christian-British intentionally wanted to favour the Christians”, one remarkably started. In continuation, he argued:

Their colonial Western system that we still use today completely devalued our already existing Islamic system, present before the British arrived. It completely favours our Christian brothers. Look at it this way: To gain affluence, job or good social status, we were encouraged to attend western schools, which were often administered by Christian ministers. We wear Christian clothes to go to the offices, many clothing of those in our in our country’s professional institutions; the judges, lawyers, academics, doctors, resemble those worn by Christian clergy and choristers. I can tell you; this is no coincidence at all. Colonial system worked hard to destroy our Islamic cultural heritage.<sup>47</sup>

Even one high-ranking police officer from the region, who himself claimed that religion had no role in BH’s activism in the region today argued “My forefathers had to revolt against the colonial powers, because that was too much to bear”. “Islam” he continued, “gave them the strength and the boldness to say ‘no’ to what was a human evil in our land. What else do they have if not the faith? In Islam, they found the resolve to resist, to fight and to say no to evil”<sup>48</sup>. He concluded. Another security personnel member with whom I specifically discussed some of the arguments with other respondents replied.

“Yes, you have to acknowledge the lessons from the history of our religion in the region. It was so powerful that it must motivate our people to revolt against the colonial government ... Taking lessons from our religious heritage, the people could articulate their thoughts of actions and resistance against the colonial masters whose mission was only to

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<sup>46</sup> Interview by the author with an anonymous Izala scholar in Kano (March 2017).

<sup>47</sup> Interview with the author with an anonymous politician representing one of the political zones in Northern Nigeria at Abuja (February 2017).

<sup>48</sup> Interview by the author with an anonymous Nigerian police officer in Kaduna (April 2018).

destroy ... It didn't matter if they used violent resistance or not. They just had to fight them-off (referring to the colonial government)."<sup>49</sup>

Although these kinds of sentiments may not have been articulated in such a manner in those days, it is easy to see why they could create a conducive avenue for resentment against the colonial state in the region. Having rendered previously acquired degrees from the Islamic schools useless in the public sphere, and having devalued the people's traditional values, colonialism created opportunity for resistance against the colonial state, either in the form of individual resentment or collective resistance. In the context where Islam through its history in the region had been established as the most potent weapon to galvanise activism against state opposition, it became easily drawn as a tool to galvanise people for socio-political activism. From this, many resistance groups evolved in the region against the colonial state, framing their activism along Islamic terms (Schacht, 1958). Although such resistances were quickly dismantled by the superior fire power of the colonialists, their evolution and the little success they achieved helped further cement and concretise the political role of Islam as an instrument for resistance against state opposition. Not being able to achieve their goals due to structural changes and repression from the colonial state left most people 'bottling-in' their resentment to wait for the demise of the British at independence. At least within an independent state, they could rewrite all the wrongs of the colonial state or so they thought.

#### **4.4 Northern People's Congress: The Formation of the Most Popular Islamic-Based Political Party in Northern Nigeria**

With the prospect of an independent state, socio-political resistance in the region was quickly transformed into the formation of political parties. Activists were no longer dealing with the colonial masters, but with people from the other region (particularly people from the Southern Part of the country), which now forms part of the political union, Nigeria<sup>50</sup>. The main political party

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<sup>49</sup> Interview by the author with an anonymous Nigerian JTF personnel in Kaduna (April 2018).

<sup>50</sup> At independence, the country was patterned in a semi-autonomous tripartite regional structure: The Northern, the Eastern and the Western regions. Each of these regions represents the three biggest ethnic groups, the Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. These regions were semi-autonomous from the federal government. They had different indigenous premiers that governed and conducted their affairs. While the North had NPC, the two Southern regions had the National Convention of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) and the Action Group (AG), with each of the parties formed along the ethnic and religious lines within the regions. Ethnically, Nigeria is believed to be comprised of about 270 different ethnic groups with over 350 languages. However, the three biggest ethnic groups are the Hausa-Fulani, the Igbos and Yorubas. Together, these three groups, make-up 75% of the country's population. The groups are also split along the

that emerged was the Northern People's Congress (NPC). Founded on the region's Islamic identity, NPC would grow to become the most dominant party in the region (Falolo, 1998:54). The manner in which most of the respondents described NPC reflects a political party that was built mostly on the fusion of Islam and political activism, rather than a political party with a merely socio-political role. Its leader was Ahmadu Bello, a great-grandson of Usman dan-Fodio.

In establishing the party, this influential Muslim scholar went back to the structure of the Sokoto Caliphate to build up a united Northern Nigerian party with Islamic identity. He operated a close system that prevented people from the other regions penetrating the Northern region's politics. For him, Islam was not just a tool to win political influence and consolidate power in the region; it was also a resource to foster an unbroken continuity and establish Islamic identity in the entire Northern Nigeria. Under such a structure, the party was not just meant to win elections, it was also meant to help rewrite all the wrongs of the colonial legacy (Falola, 1998:55). Till today, NPC has remained the most successful and most popular political party to have operated in the region.

Consistent with its goals, the party on the Nigerian national stage consciously pushed for an enthronement of a-*Shari'a* system that entailed a unification of political authority and religious authority. This, as one of my respondents explained, is not to be confused as a "mass conversion of all Nigerians to Islam." What it means, he argued, "is a situation whereby the country's political and moral compass would be drawn from the Islam, ... and not from the Western secular values"<sup>51</sup>. My respondent also took out time to connect the Muslims' global *al-Shari'a* advocacy to the genealogy of Islam itself in the seventh century, especially on how the Prophet's reception of the message from Allah led to Islam's establishment, both at Medina and later in Mecca. For him, *Shari'a* draws from this Islamic history. In his estimation, it is only a body of law that tries to help Muslims all over the world to attain that ideal state that existed during the Prophet Muhammad's early days in Medina. Thus, the enthronement of such a system in Nigeria, in his estimation meant for NPC "a step towards freedom from colonialism, Western subjugation, emancipation and everything that is related to colonialism for every Muslim."<sup>52</sup> In this light, they (NPC) believed that they could through *Shari'a*, actually rewrite the wrongs of colonialism.

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country's geographical lines, with the majority of the Hausa-Fulani living mainly in the Northern region; the Igbos in the South-Eastern and the Yorubas in the South-Western regions.

<sup>51</sup> Interview by the author with an anonymous Izala cleric at Kano (March 2017).

<sup>52</sup> Interview by the author with an anonymous Izala cleric at Kano (March 2017).

The NPC could not stay in power long enough<sup>53</sup> to implement its full Islamic agenda. With the country's first military coup in 1966, both Ahmadu Bello and his NPC's second in command, Abubakar Tafawa Belewa,<sup>54</sup> were assassinated. The coup was orchestrated by a group of young Igbo military officers, namely Kaduna Nzogwu, Tim Onwuatiegwu, Emmanuel Ifeajuna, Nwobosi and Oguchi, who capitalised on the country's perceived economic decline and high level of corruption in both the regional and federal governments. The Premier of the Western region, Ladoke Akintola, was also killed in the coup. Only Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, the leader of the Eastern Nigerian based National Convention of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), who also happened to be the Nigerian ceremonial President, and the Dr Michael Okpara, the Premier of the Eastern region escaped the coup plot (Amaechi, 2013). After the coup, Nwafor Orizu, an Igbo politician and the then Senate President, was pressured to take over as the interim president just to fill up the power vacuum. He later handed over power to the military supreme council that was chaired by major-general Aguiyi Ironsi (another Igbo military man, from the Eastern region) (Amaechi, 2013).

Even though the coup was seen by many in the Nigerian public (Falola, 1998:55) as influenced by patriotic reasons, Ironsi's failure to prosecute the coup plotters, and the fact that both Azikiwe and Dr Okpara, the two Igbo politicians occupying key political offices in the first republic, did not meet the same fate as their Northern and Western counterparts, would make people from the Northern Nigeria construe the coup as a "political injustice". In other words, it was interpreted in the North as a systematic plot by the Igbo military officers to prevent people from other ethnic groups, particularly the Northern Nigeria, from national leadership. In the preceding months, officers from the Northern Nigeria carried out a counter coup, killing Ironsi and some of the officers who had conducted the first coup. Lieutenant-Colonel Yakubu Gowon, a Northern

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<sup>53</sup> NPC had earlier won more seats in the first national election at independence than both parties from the Eastern and Western regions combine. With this, it formed a coalition government with the NCNC. The AG became the opposition party. However, in 1964, this alliance crumbled. A 1962 and 1963 attempt by the federal government to conduct a national census was interpreted across the Southern region as an attempt by the NPC to fix the figures in the Northern region's favour, so as to strengthen their hold on power in the federal government. As a result, the NPC lost the much-needed support from the NCNC. This notwithstanding, NPC still dominated the Nigerian National politics.

<sup>54</sup> Despite being the party's leader, Ahmadu Bello chose to become the Premier of the Northern region. Instead, he supported Abubakar Tafawa Belewa's (his second in command) candidacy to become the Nigerian Prime Minister (the Head of the Government).

Nigerian military officer from the minority tribe in the region (the Kanuri) was installed as the country's Head of State (1966). However, Gowon's installation as the Head of State clearly ignored the military's principle of seniority - at the time of his coronation, he was a junior to many military officers from both the Western and Eastern region in the military hierarchy. This created a lot of tension. Within the next three months, more animosity and hatred between the Igbos and the northerners developed, culminating finally in the thirty months Nigerian/Biafran civil war between the Igbos in the South-eastern part of the country on one side, and the rest of Nigeria on another side. Both sides framed the war as a religious battle between Christian Biafra and Muslim Nigeria. The war ended in January 1970 when the Biafran troops surrendered and were absorbed back to the Nigerian State. To diffuse the ethnic/religious politics and tensions that contributed to the civil war, Gowon disbanded the regional system that existed since the end of colonial reign. In place of this system, he created a twelve-state structure, six in each from the old Southern and Northern regions. He would stay in power until 1975.

However, despite Gowon's actions and the successive Nigerian military and civilian Presidents<sup>55</sup> that came after the civil war (1970-1980), political activism had continued to be couched in religious terms in the region. The lack of representation on the NPC ideology at federal or local state governments at the end of the civil war has often led to political revolts, along religious lines, leading to the formation of many religious activist movement organisations in the region. Some of such movements include the Maitatsine movement, the Muslim Brothers and the Izala. A summary of the story of the Maitatsine Movement particularly is worth recounting here, because it

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<sup>55</sup> Yakubu Gowon (1966-1975), who was himself from one of the minority ethnic groups was succeeded by Murtala Muhammed (1975). This was through a bloodless coup. His tenure lasted for only a few months as he was himself over-thrown by military officers believed to be from the minority ethnic groups from the Northern region. The perpetrators of the coup were later arrested and executed. As the highest-ranking military officer, Olusegun Obasanjo (1975-1979), a Yoruba from the South-western part of the country, took office. He successfully handed over power back to a Northern civilian elected government of Shehu Shagari for the Second Republic in 1979. The Second Republic only lasted for four years (1983), when the military forcefully took overpower through another coup. First was Muhammed Buhari (1983-1985), and then by Ibrahim Babangida (1985-1993), who promised to hand over power to a democratically elected civilian government. But when it became apparent that Chief M.K.O. Abiola, a southern Yoruba business tycoon was going to win what is still considered as the most free and fair election in Nigeria, which he himself Babangida organised, he halted the polling mid-course and nullified the election. This received wide range criticism across the country. In the coming days protests ensued in different Southern parts of the country. Probably, sensing grave danger, Babangida handed over power not to Abiola, but to a weak interim civilian government of Ernest Shenekeon, who lasted in office for only 3 months. He was quickly removed by Sani Abacha, who ruled until 1998. Abacha's tenure ended when he abruptly died, allegedly of a heart attack. He was succeeded by Abdulsalam Abubakar, who handed over power to a military retired Obasanjo civilian government. A reference will be helpful.

concretises how lack of representation at the Federal government was able to create the conducive socio-political environment for the birth of a religious activist movement organisation.

The Maitatsine movement arose around 1978 (during the reign of Olusegun Obasanjo, a military dictator from the South) in Kano, the most populated city in Northern Nigeria. Maitatsine was led by one Mohammadu Mai Tabsiri (widely known as Marwa), a self-proclaimed Sunni cleric, who migrated to Nigeria in the early 1940s. The roots of his birth are not very clear; however, many Nigerian scholars (Falola 1998; Alao 2009) believe that he was born in Marwa, a town in the northern part of Cameroon. This is probably where he got the name, “Marwa”. By the late 1950s, the eloquent preacher had started his anti-state preaching, but was quickly deported by the Nigerian authorities to Cameroon in the 1960s. It is not known how he was able to come back to Nigeria. What is known, however, is that he returned to the region around 1972, and by then he again started his preaching shortly thereafter (Amaechi, 2013).

With a religious practice that was based on a mixture of radical interpretations of Sunni theology and sorcery, Marwa was able to create a kind of anti-materialistic cultic militancy, which resonated among the poor and the marginalised urban classes within the Northern Nigerian society. Later he and his group established their own mosques, from where they criticised other established Muslim orders and violently attacked government institutions, claiming that they were all agents of the infidel government. His popularity grew further in many parts of Northern Nigeria in 1979, after he performed the holy pilgrimage to Mecca. Building upon this popularity, he would controversially start to claim that he had divine revelations that superseded those of Prophet Muhammad. From his base in Kano, Marwa and his group consistently attacked different segments of the government. By 1979, their attacks on government had spread to other parts of Northern Nigeria, prompting the Nigerian government to declare war on the group. In 1980, the leader of the group was killed alongside most of his followers in a brutal security raid that was conducted by joint police and Nigerian military forces (Amaechi, 2013).

Like most activist movement organisations that evolved in the region at this period, the Maitatsine movement is better explained because of a mixture of economic decadence and perception of political injustice (Muslim marginalisation). It emanated from the region’s perception of injustice coming from the region’s lack of political representation at the Nigerian Federal government. The Maitatsine movement arose before the Nigerian Second Republic, against a background of serious

economic decline, high unemployment and political corruption in the country (Falola, 1998:138). Growing up in the region, the self-proclaimed cleric understood that Islam had proved to possess a liberatory quality in social and political terms. The religion has the power to bring people together under a one united socio-economic and political agenda. Hence, he tapped into this, presenting his austere version of Islam as an alternative solution to all the economic problems that had bedeviled the region, of which he claimed to have been given a divine mandate to restore (Falola, 1998:138). In addition, Marwa had also tapped into the region's perception of political marginalisation at the time. The movement had emerged at the enthronement of Olusegun Mathew Obasanjo, a Southern Yoruba Christian military dictator, who became the President at the death of Murtala Muhammed. Obasanjo only became the President because he was the highest-ranking military officer at the time. His boss, the previous military President Murtala Muhammad was during the days leading to his ascension brutally murdered in a military coup. Being the highest-ranking military officer, he was required by military tradition to take over office. Before him, all the former Nigerian civilian and military Heads of State (except Aguiyi Ironsi, who ruled for only three months in 1966, before he was brutally murdered in a military coup) have all come from the Northern Nigeria. The Federal government had been dominated by politicians from Northern Nigeria. He quickly handed over power to a democratically elected civilian President (Shagari) from the North, but not before his ascension to the Presidency had begun to be perceived as political injustice from the North.

This perception of "political injustice", albeit strange in other contexts has to be understood in the context of Northern Nigeria as a product of the emergence of the NPC. One main effect of the rise and success of the NPC in the region was the concretisation of regional and ethno-religious identity, as a marker of identity in the region. Given that this most popular party was built on religious and regional backgrounds, it incubated a sharp political status quo, which makes religion and ethnicity the pre-eminent marker of identity and political agitation in the region, especially at the federal government level, where activists had to compete with political parties from other regions. This was further exacerbated by the civil war, which was fought along regional and religious lines. Fighting along these different ethnic and religious fronts in the Nigerian Federal government, this ethnic and religious identity became entrenched in the social and political consciousness of the people.

At the dawn of the civil war, most Nigerians would begin to see themselves first as Hausa-Fulanis, Igbos and Yorubas, or Muslims and Christians before considering themselves as Nigerians. Loyalties to regional ethnicity and religious affiliations often supersede that of the state. Lack of representation of one ethnic/regional or religious group at the federal government level became easily interpreted as “political injustice”, and as such created negative grievances and political opportunities for tensions between the ruling ethnic groups and the ones lacking representation at the centre. In such cases in the Northern region, this has led to the formation of opposition of activist groups with an agenda, to either depose the government or return the region to its former *al-Shari’a* system, the same message upon which NPC became the most popular party in the region. This was the foundation upon which Maitatsine was founded. Many years after Maitatsine, this perception of political injustice in the Nigerian Federal government has continued to propel the evolution of political activism, including an invigorated *al-Shari’a* advocacy that laid the foundation of BH. In the events of lack of representation at the federal government in Northern Nigeria, activists have easily decried political marginalisation, and have often tapped into the region’s culture of Islamic activism, to frame their political activism as a call for change.

#### **4.5 The Return to Democracy in 1999: The Resurgence of *al-Shari’a* Advocacy in Northern Nigeria**

The Nigerian return to democracy in 1999 and the subsequent electoral victory of the Christian southerner, Olusegun Matthew Obasanjo (under whose military regime, the Maitatsine movement previously arose), provided an overwhelming opportunity for *al-Shari’a* advocacy in the region. Obasanjo’s emergence at the helm of the Country’s political affair, meant that the region had to wait for four years before it could have a shot at the country’s Presidency. This created a renewed feeling of political marginalisation, within the region. Given the new brought-in freedom from the new democratic system, activists in the region saw new opportunity to renew the region’s popular *al-Shari’a* advocacy. In the new democratic system, they could at least take their religio-political activism to the political arena, without state intervention<sup>56</sup>.

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<sup>56</sup>This is different from what was obtainable during the military era. On many occasions during such periods, the religious/ethnic demography of the country had meant that discussions about *al-Shari’a* in the Nigerian federal government had always evoked ethnic/religious tensions; hence, the discussions had also been met with brute force from the state. In 1988, *al-Shari’a* constitutional proposals for example brought forward in the country’s National

Ironically, Obasanjo's ascension to the Nigerian Presidency is believed to have been orchestrated by a mixture of military and civilian cabals who controlled Nigerian politics in the Northern region. According to some of my respondents, the former Nigerian Military Head of State was only allowed by these Northern 'cabals' to become the President for two main reasons. Firstly, it was because of his military experience. Given his experience, they believed that Obasanjo was the only person, who could cool the growing tension and complaints of "political injustice", which was at that time beginning to rise among many ethnic groups within the Southern region<sup>57</sup>. Secondly, they had thought that Obasanjo was the only trusted Southerner who could hand over power to the North after his first tenure in office. This was reasonable, since he successfully handed over to a democratically elected Northern President, during his short spell as a military President. One politician with more than 15 years of experience in the public service told me that Obasanjo was even made to sign a legal document<sup>58</sup>. In the document, "he swore to the Northern oligarchs, that he would hand-over the Presidency to a politician of the Northern choice, after his first tenure"<sup>59</sup>, he recounts. Unfortunately, things did not turn out the way they had thought. Even though, Obasanjo quelled the rising militancy from the Southern region within a few years of his reign, his other political actions on behalf of the Nigerian federal government would create a lot of tension in the region. In the first years of his tenure, Obasanjo dismissed all the high-ranking military officers, most of whom were from the Northern region. Some of these were also part of the cabal that had helped him become the president. These created a lot of tension and a sense of mistrust between the Obasanjo-led federal government and politicians within the region, leading to several

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Assembly brought the House to a standstill - so much so that the then new military President, General Ibrahim Babangida, had to ban all Shari'a related discussions in the House of Assembly (Falola, 1998:94).

<sup>57</sup> Prior to the general elections, there was a consistent rise of "militant groups" in the country's Southern region. During this period, activities of these groups had affected the production of petroleum products which accounts for the country's Gross Domestic Product. Thus, it is believed that there was desperation from some of the Northern cabals, who own most of the oil fields in the region to stop this militancy. Obasanjo was among the only trusted southerners, who could quell-down those uprisings, and normalise the situation in the region.

<sup>58</sup> I did not myself see this document. However other scholars including the Nigerian Nobel Peace Laureate have on different occasions alluded to the existence of such arrangement. In an interview with *The News Africa*, he details how Obasanjo's political sponsors had brought him (Obasanjo) the document to sign. He explained that he was not sure if Obasanjo signed or not. But it was no doubt that there was such an arrangement. This interview is still available online from: <http://saharareporters.com/2012/02/06/interview-wole-soyinka-next-phase-boko-haram-terrorism-thenews>. Given the complexity of the Nigerian politics and the mistrust between the Northern and Southern Politicians in Nigerian, it is not impossible to surmise that these cabals had gone this extent to protect their 'interests. It is more unlikely that they would trust Obasanjo, without committing him to some sort of binding agreement.

<sup>59</sup> Interview by the author with anonymous politician representing a geo-political zone in one of the states in Northern Nigeria at Abuja (March 2018).

calls and verbal attacks from many politicians within the region, for a dethronement of the Obasanjo led government.

Things became worse in 2001, when Obasanjo began to actively campaign for a second tenure, against the wish of his Northern Nigerian political godfathers again. Attempts by these elite to make Obasanjo change his mind fell on deaf ears. This was perceived within the region as political injustice. It was at this stage that many politicians in the region began openly to call for a change of government, and the deposition of Obasanjo. In the succeeding months, *al-Shari'a* advocacy intensified among different activists in the region. In the light of this opportunity, activists from different religious activist groups would also embark on a barrage of consistent campaigns for the establishment of Shari'a in the country and regionally. By 2001, all the 12 states within the region had introduced Shari'a as their respective states' legal penal code. People like Yusuf Mohammed, the would-be spiritual leader and founder of BH, who had worked with some of the main established Salafi-networks in the region in their *al-Shari'a* advocacy would start to openly call for enthronement of *al-Shari'a* in the Nigerian Federal Government. By 2002, he would encourage a group of Salafi-oriented youths to follow one Mohamed Ali to relocate to a camp in Kanama, in pursuit of a true Islamic lifestyle that is hoped to enthrone *al-Shari'a* system in the region and the entire Nigeria.

It is important to emphasise that this was only the political background upon which BH emerged in the region. Though such political background provides insight on the timing of the evolution of the group, it does not explain the Salafi-orientation and internal dynamics within which the group was formed. To understand this, I will now look at the doctrinal dispute between Yusuf and the two main Salafi networks (the Yan Izala and the Ahlus Sunna), and how the fall-out from the *al-Shari'a* advocacies encouraged the foundation of an al-Qaeda camp in Kanama and then the establishment of BH in 2005. I will also examine the material resources upon which the Kanama camp was founded. These political structures hence shed more light on the Salafi-ideological orientation of the group, as well as the significance of material resources in the formation of the group in the region.

#### **4.6 The Two Main Salafi Networks in Northern Nigeria: Intra-Ideological Dispute and the Formation of Boko Haram**

Two main groups represented the Salafi network in Northern-Nigeria: the Yan Izala and the Ahlus Sunna. At the dawn of democracy in 1999, the two groups were at the forefront of *al-Shari'a* advocacy, participating in TV and radio debates, and taking their advocacy in the different parts of the region. A quick summary of their formation and the doctrinal disputes among them at the dawn of the implementation of the Shari'a is important to contextualise the Salafist roots of BH, as well as the organisational aspects involved in the formation of the group.

##### **4.6.1 Izala (*Jamā'at 'Izālat al-Bid'awa-Iqāmat al-Sunna*)**

*Jamā'at 'Izālat al-Bid'a wa-Iqāmat al-Sunna* also known as Yan Izala or simply Izala was the first of the two Salafi networks in Northern Nigeria. Unlike other Muslim groups, it is relatively new in the region. The network was introduced by students of Abu Bakr Mahmud Gumi, a highly respected Sunni cleric, who became famous during the Nigerian First Republic (Loimeier, 2012:141). Born on the 7th of November 1924, to a family of Muslim preachers and scholars, Gumi's lineage had been traced to an Arab Shaikh who was from the Bedouin nomads; they migrated to the Sokoto Caliphate before the 19th century (Falola, 1998:117). Though Gumi never identified himself as a Salafi (Brigaglia, 2012b; Thurston, 2011), his thoughts as expressed in his popular book, *Al-'aqida al-sahiha bi-muwafaqat al-shari'a (The Correct Creed in accordance to the Prescriptions of the Shari'a*, first published in Arabic in 1972) throughout this period reflect Salafi's core notions and ideological thoughts (Brigaglia, 2012b). Also, his ideas in his numerous radio broadcasts and preaching, demonstrates his belief that Muslims all over the world can attain correct spiritual belief and practice from the scripture without need for religious intermediaries or esoteric insight (Gumi, 1972). Thus, a return to this creed was the only way to restore the region's Islamic heritage.

Influenced by his father's example, Shaikh Gumi studied in some of the best schools in Northern Nigeria. As an adult, he also studied Arabic at the famous Bukta Al-Ruda Institute in Sudan (Thurston, 2011). He was among the most famous Northern Nigeria scholars who had studied at Arab Universities and had returned home after their studies, often with a penchant for attacking the traditional Sufi orders in the region. Most of them in return, maintained life-long connections

with the Saudi Arabian elites, and had consistently worked to foster religious careers of other future Northern Nigerian returnees (Brigaglia, 2012a). Gumi's popularity in the region grew in the 1960s, when he was made the deputy Grand Qadi (Shari'a Judge) of the Northern Nigerian region, at Nigerian independence in 1960. Two years later, he ascended to the position of the Grand Qadi. In this position, he advised Ahmadu Bello, the then Premier (of the Northern region) and the leader of the NPC, on Islamic matters. After the first major Nigerian military coup that killed the Northern Premier and ended the First Republic, Gumi retired from political service, but remained active in the public arena.

Partly as a result of frustration from the lack of implementation of the NPC Islamic policies in the government, Gumi in the coming years became a fierce critic and an outspoken opponent of the traditional *Sufi* orders. He accused them of being too close to the Nigerian and the regional secular government. Most of his criticisms were through TV and radio shows. Through Radio Kaduna (arguably the most popular and one of the first radio stations in the region) he would broadcast his *tafsir* (exegesis) of the Qur'an. He also became a regular contributor to the Northern Nigerian daily newspaper *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo*, where he consistently accused the Sufis of promoting *bid'a* practices, such as marriage bride price, extensive mourning, belief in superstitions and supererogatory prayers. These in his estimation are heretical practices that are not rooted in the Qu'ran and Sunnah. The practices, according to him were also backward and out of touch with the new Sunni religious thought. To be part of this emerging thought, Gumi believed that it was important to free the region of these heretical innovations, legitimised by the traditional practices of the Sufi orders.

Others within the Nigerian Sufi orders (particularly those within the Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya orders) responded by publishing their own pamphlets, using Qur'anic evidence to defend their Sufi traditions against Gumi's literary attacks. Some of the Sufi scholars in the region at this time also began to broadcast their own radio programs such as Quranic interpretation (*tafsir*) and they started to write their own newspaper columns (Loimeier, 2012). All these widened the gap between the traditional Sufi orders, and this created a new generation of young Sunni adherents who had begun to embrace Shaikh Gumi's version of Sunni Islam. In 1978, this crop of followers (most of who had also studied at universities in the Arab world) with financial resources coming from Saudi-Arabia would form *Izala*, as a proper reformist organisation to lead the fight against the followers

of the Sufi orders (Loimeier 2012:142), as well as to bring about proper political change in the region. In identification with Gumi's message, they called themselves *Jamā'at 'Izālat al-Bid'a wa-Iqāmat al-Sunna* (Society of Removal of Innovation and Re-establishment of the Sunna). In the next few years, this group would become a powerful force for political activism within both Northern Nigeria and the other neighbouring countries like Cameroon, Niger and Chad that share the region's socio-political culture.

The formation of *Izala* was a huge success. Here, many people within the region, particularly the youths, women, urban, western-and newly returned Arab educated scholars, who had shared the same frustrations, were able to find an alternative vision of *Sunni Islam* that appealed to their political, economic and social sensitivities in the region. However, with *Izala*, there was at least hope that there could be a pressure on the government to effect change in the region's political system. Under such circumstances therefore, there is no longer any need to wait to be mediated by established religious authorities, if people are to attain correct spirituality and the politically needed change in the region. This is how one of my respondents put it:

Becoming an *Izala* meant change, it meant freedom from the ignorant Sufi establishment.... It also meant breaking with established traditional religious society, including parents, and all manifestations of allegedly un-Islamic social customs, such as bride price, extensive mourning (*bika'*), and supererogatory prayers, which is quite out-dated and had no place in modern Islamic society....

It meant returning the region to its Islamic identity.”

Another key element that popularised the *Izala* campaign during this period was its mobile preachers, known in the local Hausa language as *masu waazi* (masters of *wa'z*), my respondents told me. In line with Loimeier's (2012) findings, both my *Izala* and Salafi respondents explained how these preachers were never apologetic in challenging the traditional Sufi thoughts. Again, having financial backing from Saudi Arabia, and having learnt some of these innovative mobilisation tactics from similar groups in the Kingdom, the *Izala* preachers were vigorously emboldened to challenge the Sufi orders. They had different specialisations. While some specialised in themes such as marriage, customs, Shari'a law and religious rituals, others became famous for their political polemics and moralistic speeches. In these different areas, they

vigorously challenged the *ulama's* hegemony of interpretation of Islam in the public sphere, sometimes employing violent means, such as the occupation of Sufi mosques and interruption of Sufi religious gatherings. Sometimes, they would go as far as mounting loudspeakers and preaching in the areas regarded as the heart of Sufi adherents. “We didn’t even care to expound on certain intricate details of Salafist thoughts; rather what was more important for us was to popularise, and to get our true message across to the people”, my Izala scholar explained. “We really advocated for substantial social and institutional reforms”<sup>60</sup>, he concluded.

Within the next few years, Izala had become one of the biggest activist political activist organisations in the region. Again, with their huge financial assistance from Saudi Arabia and their popularity in the region, they had been able to establish branches in virtually all the big cities in the region. The group had also gone into establishment of modern Islamic schools, which combined a chunk of the Western curriculum and Wahabi Islamic studies in rural areas. From here, they had continued to preach their message of religious reform and social change, reaching its peak in the late 1980s. However, political collaboration with the main Sufi orders halted Izala’s momentum, leading to the establishment of another, new and potentially more vibrant organisation that promised to be more committed to the eradication of traditional Sufi religious innovations.

#### **4.6.2 Ahlus Sunna**

*Ahluṣ Sunna wa-l-jama‘a* (the people of the Sunna and the community) often referred to in its abridged form as Ahlus Sunna is an offshoot of *Izala*. It emerged in the 1990s around a generation of younger Izala adherents, most of whom had studied at the Islamic University in Medina (Saudi Arabia). This group of Salafists boasted of a more insightful grasp of Wahhabi theology than their Izala counterparts, as well as a closer link to the global Salafi network. For them, Izala at this time had become too entangled with the Sufi establishments, and hence have become more parochial and insufficiently attuned to global Salafi scholarship. So, rather than continue to mend an already fractured organisation, there was a need to sever ties with the old group, and establish a new

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<sup>60</sup> Interview by the author with an anonymous Izala at Kano (March 2017).

organisation that is “pure, unadulterated, and more committed to the Sunni tradition”<sup>61</sup> as one of my Salafi cleric respondents put it.

Two main reasons have been identified as the main cause of *Ahlu Sunna*’s split from Izala. First, the latter’s periodic entanglement with Sufi establishments in the late 1980s, to salvage electoral losses from the previous elections. Amid *Izala*’s activism in the 1980s, the region witnessed a sudden upsurge of Pentecostal Christianity (Loimeier, 2012:144-148). Carrying this into the local government elections, the Muslim votes were thus split among Izala, the Tijaniyya and Qadiriyya candidates. Christian candidates on the other hand did not have to share their votes; hence, they managed to win a surprising number of local government seats even in Muslim-majority areas. In the coming days, this forced the Izala, Tijaniyya and Qadiriyya to shelve their disputes and form an alliance of (political) convenience (Loimeier 2012:143). To be in this unconventional union, the *Izala* movement had to stop its attacks against Sufi orders and shift towards more moderate positions. This periodic entanglement with the Sufi establishments alienated a young generation of *Izala* adherents.

The second reason, and perhaps the most important for this study, was internal disputes over leadership, authority and regional autonomy that engulfed *Izala* in the 1990s. In almost all the different branches of *Izala*, from Kaduna, Sokoto, Kano, the other main branches in the region, *Izala* underwent a leadership crisis. In line with Loimeier’s (2012) findings, my Salafi respondents narrated to me how they personally were disturbed by this. Given the reduced spiritual guidance of Shaikh Gumi at this time (who had become old at this time and would later die in 1992), explained that, many actors within the different branches began to openly question the authority of Ismaila Idris, the retired military Imam who became the general leader of Yan Izala. While many still accepted the overall spiritual leadership of Abubakar Gumi, many actors rejected the authoritarian leadership style of his protegee Ismaila Idris (Amara, 2011). This in time led to rebellion in many branches of *Izala*.

My respondents also recounted how the rebellions first occurred in Sokoto, where Abubakar Jibrin and Shaikh Abubakar Tureta broke away to join the politically radical “Muslim Brothers”<sup>62</sup>. The

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<sup>61</sup> Interview by the author with anonymous Ahlu Sunna cleric at Kano (March 2017).

<sup>62</sup> *Muslim Brothers* was another important activist group that evolved in the region in the early 1980s. Believed to have been effectively influenced by the Egyptian *Moslem Brotherhood* and Iran’s successful revolution (Alao, 2009),

*Muslim Brothers*, aside from being in constant doctrinal dispute with the *Izala* were also the main activists' rival group for the *Izala* in the region. This is mainly because of their doctrinal differences. However, before they left, my respondents explained, they made sure that they took control of Farfaru, the most important *Yan Izala* mosque in Sokoto. Similar incidents also occurred in the city of Sokoto. In this case, Sidi Attahiru Ibrahim, another prominent leadership figure within the *Izala*, would also turn away from the *Yan Izala* and set up his own organisation, the Ahl al-Sunna<sup>63</sup>. Although Ibrahim's group failed to gain much popularity in Sokoto, their break-away further intensified the internal divide between different leaders within the *Izala* (Loimeier, 2012). In Kano, Jos and Kaduna similar incidents also occurred. In Kano particularly, an influential businessman, A.K. Daiyyabu, openly challenged the leadership of the organisation under the tutelage of Shaikh Sulaiman, believed to be a close ally of Ismaila Idris. He singled out the loyalist attitudes of the *Yan Izala* movement regarding the Nigerian government under General Babangida, the young Muslim military dictator, who forcefully came to power on the promise that he would restore the Islamic identity of the region<sup>64</sup>. As a result of this, Daiyyabu was forced out of the organisation by the group's central committee in Jos. However, his expulsion did not put an end to the internal disputes.

In the next two years the group would witness rebellions against the organisation's different regional leaderships. In 1991, Alhaji Musa Mai Gandu (1930–2011), the chairman of the national Committee of Patrons, and Rabiu Daura, the chairman of the Council of ulama of the *Yan Izala* for Kaduna State separately accused the *Izala* leadership of financial mismanagement and collusion with the region's corrupt political elites (Loimeier, 2012). They openly criticised Ismaila Idris and questioned the sources of his income. In direct reaction, Ismaila Idris and the *Izala*'s National Steering Committee removed Musa Mai Gandu and his supporters from all official functions. As a result, the Musa Mai Gandu Kaduna's group and the Ismaila Idris Jos' faction of

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the group claims to have arisen to enthrone Islamic leadership in the centre of the Nigerian government. Although the group started as a Sunni group, the close association with Iran inevitably led to its infiltration by Shiite doctrine. In the late 1990s, the leader, El-Zakzaky would himself become a Shiite (Alao, 2013), leading to rebellion and fragmentation in the movement, into the two main networks, that threatened its existence.

<sup>63</sup> This is not to be confused with the Ahlus Sunna under discussion. This Ahl al-Sunna only existed and operated in Sokoto.

<sup>64</sup> Both Abubakar Gumi and the *Izala* leadership in the region were highly supportive of the Babangida government (Amaechi, 2013), probably because of his religious portfolio and seemingly conservative foreign policies. By 1986, he unapologetically pushed Nigerian status in the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), from an observer status to full membership (Amaechi, 2013), at the chagrin of his deputy Ebie Ukiwe (Falola, 1998:94).

the Yan Izala started a bitter dispute, which continued to divide the Yan Izala movement. This dispute continued after Ismaila Idris' death in 2000, when his successor Muhammad Sani Yahya Jingir took over the group. All these created animosity, silent protests and bitter divisions within the group's leadership. It also created a toxic and unhealthy environment, whereby stubborn adherence to theological arguments easily led to mutual accusations of unbelief from each group, to discredit the other group.

It was within this context, that the group of young Saudi Arabia returnees founded *Ahlu Sunna*, arguing that the old *Izala* has now become very much distracted and had departed from its very mission of eradication of Sufi traditional innovations. Claiming to have much closer links with the global Salafi networks, these group of young activists vowed to renew commitment in the eradication of Sufi traditional innovations. Like *Izala*, the group adopts some of the basic Salafi theology such as the struggle against un-Islamic innovations; yet emphasising the need for Muslim unity and the necessity for them to take an active part in politics (Brigaglia, 2012a; Thurston, 2016). With its first base in Kano, the group would soon begin to present themselves as independent – *ahl al-sunna wa-l-jama'a*, “the people of the Sunna and the community”, a synonym for Sunni Muslims. With this, in my respondents' words “we wanted people to think of us not just as Izala members, but as the representatives of a pure kind of Sunni Islam, with more influence in the general advocacy for the eradication of Sufi innovations within the region”<sup>65</sup>. Within ten years of its formation, the *Ahlu Sunna* would have branches in most of the important cities in Northern Nigeria, including Maiduguri where BH emerged.

#### **4.6.3 Yusuf and al-Shari'a Advocacy within the Two Salafi Networks**

Before becoming the spiritual leader of BH, Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf was also a well-known and charismatic figure within both traditions (Izala and the Ahlu Sunna); rising to the position of the leader of the youth wing within the Ndimi mosque<sup>66</sup>. At the height of the al-Shari'a advocacy in 1999, he had travelled to different parts of the region, preaching and representing the Ahlu Sunna

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<sup>65</sup> Interview by the author with an Ahlu Sunna cleric at Kano (March 2017).

<sup>66</sup> Ndimi mosque was a very popular mosque in the city of Maiduguri, partly because of its impressive structure. It was adorned with stained glass, marble tiling and two minarets and located in a relatively upscale centre of the city. The name Ndimi is derived from one Alhaji Muhammad Ndimi, the influential businessman, who financed the erection of the Mosque.

in several TV and radio debates. By the early 2000s, he had become a leading protégé of Ja'far Adamu<sup>67</sup>, one of the leadership figures within the Ahlus Sunna. At some point he was known to have been considered as one of the most promising upcoming leaders in the Ahnus Sunna circle by Adamu (Amaechi, 2017; Brigaglia, 2012a; 2012b). The relationship between the two men had grown during their time at the Ndimi mosque. One Ahlus Sunna imam, who had known both men from the Ndimi Mosque, confirmed to me that the two had apparently been very close - so much so that it was Mohammed Yusuf, who regularly hosted Ja'far Mahmoud Adamu in his house, during any of the latter's visits<sup>68</sup> to Ndimi mosque. Their relationship had flourished at this point. However, everything would change in the early 2000, when both men fell out, due to doctrinal differences. In the coming years, this would culminate in heated public verbal disputes that probably led Yusuf to order the killing of Adamu in 2007 (Brigaglia, 2012a).

In recent BH scholarship (Anonymous, 2012; Brigaglia, 2015; Kassim, 2015; Thurston, 2015), Yusuf's doctrinal dispute with Adamu (as well as the Ahlus Sunna) has been identified as a local manifestation of the tension existing between the two main trends within the global Salafi discourse: the "quietist" and the "jihadist". While recognising the inadequacy, Wiktorowicz's categorisations expanded by previous scholars (Anonymous, 2012; Kassim, 2015; Thurston, 2015), Brigaglia (2015) particularly explained that the doctrinal dispute between the two was

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<sup>67</sup> Jafar Mahmud Adamu was among one of the prominent actors at the forefront of *al-Shari'a* advocacy at the dawn of Nigerian democracy in 1999. He was well-known figure within both the Izala and the Ahlus Sunna, becoming a popular voice among the new generation of Salafi/ Wahhabi scholars when he returned from his studies in Saudi Arabia. According to previous studies, he first rose to prominence in the region, when he won the Nigerian Qur'an recitation competition in 1988. He would later travel to Saudi Arabia in pursuit of his bachelor's degree studies (Islamic University of Medina). Upon his return, he had devoted his life to an extensive preaching of the Wahhabi/Salafi doctrines, becoming both the imam of the Dorayi Friday mosque in Kano and the leading representative of the British al- Muntada al-Islami organisation, a Saudi-financed NGO that had started to develop a network of modern schools in the region (Brigaglia, 2012a: 6; Loimeier, 2012:147). He would also become the director of Usman Bin Affan Institute in Kano, a Salafi-based institution that works to nurture more aggressive Salafi thoughts within the region. Within these platforms, Adamu was able to espouse his Salafi thoughts and mobilised enough resources to coordinate his *al-Shari'a* activism during the early 2000.

<sup>68</sup> Adamu had first visited Ndimi Mosque at the invitation of Alhaji Muhammad Ndimi. At the peak of Adam's career as a prominent preacher at the Usman bin Affan institute in Kano, this Izala supporter had invited the emerging Kano religious scholar to give *tafsīr* lectures in the mosque attached to his private house. This move was very much welcomed by Adam and his Ahlus Sunna colleagues because it provided them with an opportunity to extend their influence in the eastern part of the region (the old Bornu), which unlike many parts of the region had been previously almost impermeable to the influence of the Salafi mission. Rather than Salafism, the Tijani order had had a vast following in the area, including its neighbouring Chad and Cameroon. The beginning of the *tafsīr* in Maiduguri and the opening of a new frontier under the protection of a local sponsor was to be for Shaykh Adamu and Ahlus Sunna leadership, an occasion to re-sharpen their attacks against Sufism (see Brigaglia, 2012a for a more detailed analysis of this).

rooted in the political theology that had in the mid-2000s come to dominate the global Salafi landscape. Other than the inclination to political violence thesis, the major divide within the recent global Salafi discourse according to him was judgements on things like democracy, acquisition of Western education, participating in democratic elections, and support for insurgencies against democratic systems. Given that positions of groups or activists within different Salafi often overlap about these issues, it has become inadequate to define doctrinal disputes within Salafi trends along the ‘quietist’ and ‘jihadi’ divide.

In the Nigerian context, Yusuf took a more extreme and austere position. While he agreed with the *Ahlu Sunna* on the desirability of a struggle to establish a Muslim form of government, he vehemently disagreed with them on the answer how this system should be attained. For him, it is “lawful” to change to such a system through violence. He rejected participating in democratic elections, employment in the government and acquisition of Western education. All these are for him products of democracy, and hence are *haram* (unlawful/forbidden). As a result, they should not be accepted by any true Muslim<sup>69</sup>.

On the contrary, the *Ahlu Sunna* leadership (particularly Adamu), rejected Yusuf’s theological positions. For Adamu in particular, these Yusuf’s positions were simply ignorant, stupid, and dangerous for the political ambitions of Muslims in Nigeria (Brigaglia, 2012). While he agrees with Yusuf on the importance of establishing “true Shari’a” in Nigeria, he however argues that such substitution had to go through the already-existing system. So, rather than a radical violent path that disregards the existing system, the most effective approach for him was to work within the existing Nigerian system, pending the right time when the system would become desirable for the state to adopt such a Shari’a system (Brigaglia, 2015:182). As Adamu perceives it, Yusuf’s militant approach is simply counter-productive, and would only jeopardise the region’s quest of enthroning Islam in the long run. Adamu and the leadership of the *Ahlu Sunna* also had a subtle approach to issues like Western education. Rather than reject it, he believed that Muslims should in fact acquire it, if they are to enhance their political influence in a place like Northern Nigeria (Harnischfeger 2015:38). Only the conscious adoption of Western and secular *boko* education

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<sup>69</sup> A more detailed description of the schism between Yusuf and the *Ahlu Sunna* would be provided in the next chapter, when I discuss the activities of BH post 2005 (chapter 5). Most of Yusuf and Adamu’s disputes escalated after 2005.

would eventually enable Muslims to effectively fight the Western enemy, he would argue (Brigaglia, 2012b). In Adamu's estimation, it is only with such knowledge, that Muslims can have the possibility to implement the kind of change that is needed in a country like Nigeria.<sup>70</sup>

This back and forth between Yusuf and the Ahlus Sunna leadership continued for some time, particularly with Adamu. In 2002, these obvious contradictions and the incessant clash between the two would ultimately lead to Yusuf's expulsion from the Ndimi Mosque. However, before this, Yusuf has won the heart and soul of many youths who had worshiped together with him and had studied under him at the Ndimi mosque. Under his doctrinal tutelage, and guidance from one Ali Mohammed (more information on Ali's role would be provided below) most of them would in the coming days relocate to Kanama, to start a new organisation, which is devoted to the "ousting of the corrupt Nigerian government and western education they saw as antithetical to true *al-Shari'a* system" (Zenn, 2018:118).

Two main issues made joining the Kanama camp very appealing for the new generation of Salafi youths. First, there was the political implication of the Shari'a implementation in the region. In working with other Islamic establishments in the implementation of Shari'a law in the region, Salafi actors had in what Kassim (2018:14) calls "jihadi revisionists". They shelved some of their Salafi radical tenets, choosing instead to become more "moderate and less critical of the State". This meant amending their ideologies or framing it in such a way that it accommodated the possibility of working within a western democratic system (Amaechi, 2017:63; Loimeier, 2012:147-147). Paradoxically, the Shari'a reforms, which had been championed by activists within the main Salafi networks, Izala and Ahlus Sunna) ended up empowering the Sufis, and forced the Salafis to accept a doctrinal compromise. This was the very canon they had always wanted to correct. For the new younger generation of Salafi actors, this was not acceptable. Hence, they became disenchanted with the Salafi leadership, and as such began to find Yusuf's accusation of the Salafi establishments as "colluding with the government in not advancing the cause of Islam" as credible (Amaechi, 2017:62).

Secondly, the implementation of the Shari'a did not necessarily create a secure and corrupt free environment, or an economic *uhuru*, as many Salafi activists, who had been very vocal during the

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<sup>70</sup> I will elaborate more on these ideological differences between Adamu and Yusuf in the next chapter, as most of these disputes took place after the later took over BH's leadership in 2005.

al-Shari'a campaign claimed<sup>71</sup>. Despite the region's public show of religious consciousness and the Shari'a law implementation, the region remained characterised by political corruption and lack of accountability in the public offices. There was also tremendous lack of basic infrastructure, poor education systems, lack of basic health care, and youth unemployment. Government public offices not only remained platforms to acquire easy wealth; they were still avenues for other lucrative criminal enterprises. Instead of the expected dividends of democracy, the citizens remained impoverished.

The story was also the same on the economic front. The social environment that emerged at the implementation of *al-Shari'a* did not lead to the economic boom, the *al-Shari'a* advocates had promised. Rather than this, the situation seemed to have gotten worse. In Williams and Guttschuss' (2012) study about the emergence of BH in the region, the two senior researchers for the International Human Rights Watch observed that poverty and economic hardship were at this time more prevalent in the Northern Nigerian states than in other parts of the country. In comparison to its Southern region's counterpart, the study also found that the country's "very high level of poverty is essentially a Northern Nigerian phenomenon". About 70% of the populations in the Northern Nigeria, especially in the north-east, including Maiduguri, where Boko Haram eventually emerged, live on less than a dollar a day, compared to about 50% in the Southern part of the country. The region also had the lowest literacy rate in the whole of Nigeria. Less than 23 percent of women and 54 percent of men in the Northeast can read, compared to more than 79 percent of women and 90 percent of men in the South (Williams and Guttschuss, 2012:27).

In addition, there was also no clear career path to leadership within either the Izala or the newly founded Ahlus Sunna. Finding employment leadership positions for the new vibrant activists became quite difficult. The modern Islamic education which had been one of the major programmatic features of the Yan Izala's and Ahlus Sunna advocacy as Brigaglia (2015) rightly observed did not necessarily provide jobs. The stress on sound training in Arabic in Yan Izala

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<sup>71</sup> The adoption of Shari'a by the 12 state governments as their respective states' binding penal code, by no means did not achieve what it was intended to achieve, at least from the Salafist estimation. The introduction of the new penal codes had elicited two main popular dreams within the region - what Brigaglia (2015:182) would refer to as 'Islamist and salafist utopia'. The first is a political dream based on the assumption that the implementation of the new Shari'a-inspired penal codes would lead to the creation of a perfect, united, secure and corruption-free Islamic society. The second was a puritanical Salafist religious utopia, based on the assumption that the Shari'a reforms would ultimately empower the Salafi movement, providing it with new tools to enforce its creed and to implement 'correct' religious practices (Brigaglia, 2015:182). None of the two aspirations was fully realised in practice.

schools as well as Yan Izala's sponsored university education in Saudi Arabia also did not provide enough career options. Positions within the Yan Izala and the new Ahlus Sunna were still occupied by either the first-generation Yan Izala members or people from the new emerging Ahlus Sunna. The young generation of Salafi activists thus found their career paths blocked and were increasingly prepared to dispute existing claims to leadership. Many of them who had material resources established their own schools. Others found careers as teachers, leaders of Islamic NGOs, or split from the main Salafi establishments to carve out a position for their own endeavours for religious reform (Loimeier, 2012; Umar, 2012). These kinds of conditions were far from what the Salafi *al-Shari'a* advocates had promised.

It further exacerbated the tensions between the older Salafi leadership and younger generation of Salafi activists, and created silent protest among young Salafi actors, who increasingly began to perceive the older Salafis as colluding with the government in sabotaging the region's *al-Shari'a* project. Some of these young zealous Salafi actors in the Kanama camp would provide the answer they want: an opportunity to live an authentic Salafi lifestyle, with a prospect of economic prosperity and freedom from all the un-Islamic practices of the Nigerian government and the old Salafi-establishments. Under the leadership of the Nigerian-born member of the al-Qaeda movement, Mohammed Ali, the group took the name *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-jihad* (the People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad). However, for their austere Salafi-motivated lifestyle that mimicked "the Taliban" in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Northern Nigerian public would start referring to them as the "Nigerian Taleban (sic)".

#### **4.7 The al-Qaeda Influence: Connecting Material Resources to the Establishment of Kanama Camp**

Before now, it has been very difficult to connect al-Qaeda to the establishment of the Kanama camp. In fact, most previous research (Smith, 2016; Walker, 2016), including mine (Amaechi, 2016; 2017), saw the Kanama camp more as a secluded community that housed mostly youths from the Ndimi mosque and other Salafi centres in the region, rather than an al-Qaeda specific camp. I have argued elsewhere (Amaechi, 2017: 65) that the Kanama did not quite seem like an al-Qaeda specific militant camp. Basing my argument on primary interview data from several individuals with members of the Nigerian Joint Task Force, I rather postulated along with other

researchers that the camp was more of a secluded community that housed mostly youths from the Ndimi mosque and other Salafi centres in the north. I also described the violent outburst that later occurred between the initial members of the camp and the security forces, as emerging from a simple dispute between members of the group and some of the villagers, regarding fishing rights. The violence, as I saw it then, escalated when the police tried to meddle in the peace process culminating finally in the Nigerian government's raid on the camp<sup>72</sup>. In the aftermath of recent research (Kassim and Nwankpa, 2017; Kassim, 2018; Zenn, 2018) and a set of newly released letters<sup>73</sup>, detailing the internal functions and the corporations between BH and al-Qaeda; this description of Kanama camp does not seem to portray the whole picture of the reason behind the Kanama group's use of violence.

In a recent report for *Combating Terrorism Centre at West Point, United States Military Academy*, Abdulbasit Kassim (2018:3-32) particularly detailed how the Kanama camp may have been fully funded by the al-Qaeda's top leadership. In the report, the Nigerian US-based scholar explained how Mohammed Ali, who worked as the leader of the camp was not just a member of al-Qaeda, but a direct coordinator of the Osama bin Laden's violent intended jihadi activity in Nigeria. According to him, Ali had contact both within the main al-Qaeda leadership and its affiliate group, Salafi Group for Preaching Combat (GSPC)<sup>74</sup>. Before returning to Nigeria, he had also studied under the late al-Qaeda leader's teachers in Sudan, from 1991 to 1996 at the International University of Africa in Khartoum (Kassim, 2018:9). During this period, he had fought in

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<sup>72</sup> Brigaglia (2015) on the other hand had presented a different description of the Kanama camp. In his 2015 article, *The Volatility of Salafi Political Theology, the War on Terror and the Genesis of Boko Haram*, the South African based scholar presented Kanama as a sort of "outpost" of the Nigerian main *Salafi* establishment's mission and an al-Qaeda training camp, specifically designed for jihadi training purposes. Yusuf according to him had already been appointed by one Malam Hudu Muhammad, then Yobe State's Commissioner of Religious Affairs, as the representative of Jakusko local government for the camp, by the time of the Nigerian security forces raided the camp. Brigaglia also dismissed previous reports about arguments over fishing rights as the cause of the Nigerian forces raid on the camp. Instead, he hypothesised that the decision to sanction the raid on the camp from the main Salafi establishments may have flown among other reasons from the fear that the Kanama camp had become an al-Qaeda training camp for jihad in Nigeria, rather in other countries such as the US and Israel, which most main Salafi actors including Adamu approved. In the light of new evidence about the inner functions of the group, Brigaglia's hypothesis appears more plausible and accurate than most reports. Although his presumption that Yusuf was already in charge of the camp in 2002 may not be exactly accurate, his postulation that Kanama camp may have been an al-Qaeda training camp seems quite accurate.

<sup>73</sup> I will elaborate more on these letters in the next chapters. I will provide the contents of some of the letters and how they provide evidence of BH and al-Qaeda's collaboration (and its affiliate, AQIM), from August 2009 to the beginning of 2011.

<sup>74</sup> GSPC has since 2007 changed its name to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), after its alliance with al-Qaeda in 2007.

Afghanistan with al-Qaeda. Before leaving Sudan, he reportedly met with Osama Bin Laden, during which the latter asked him to organise a cell in Nigeria, with a budget of 300 million naira (approximately 3 million US \$ as at then). It was probably some of this funding that enabled Ali to establish the camp when he returned to Nigeria in 2002.

I find this report very credible. The channelling of funds for setting up an al-Qaeda infrastructure in Nigeria was not only consistent with al-Qaeda's interest in sub-Saharan Africa it is also a fulfilment of al-Qaeda's long-time goal in the Nigeria. During this period, bin Laden never hid his interest in Nigeria. In a tape ascribed to him in 2003, he explicitly explained that his group had a long-term goal of establishing a jihadi "battlefront in Nigeria", a situation he believed was needed to liberate Muslims in the country<sup>75</sup>. In a tape he allegedly released in 2003, he also explicitly mentioned Nigeria as a country where Muslims needed to be liberated. This plan was also corroborated by Abubakr Naji (2004), believed to be a top al-Qaeda insider<sup>76</sup>. In a book published online, *Idārat at-Tawahhuṣh: Akhtār marḥalah satamurru bihā l 'ummah Idarat al-Tawahhush* (Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage Through Which the Islamic Nation Will Pass), the supposed al-Qaeda insider classified Nigeria together with Jordan, Maghreb, Pakistan, and Haramayn (Saudi Arabia and Yemen) as some of the countries of priority for al-Qaeda, because of the readiness of its people to accept the initiative of jihad. If this is the case, disbursing fund for the establishment of such a camp, would seem like a step towards the fulfilment of this long-term goal.

Another interesting piece of evidence that further supports the argument that there could be a real signature of al-Qaeda in the formation of the Kanama camp could have been found in the court transcripts<sup>77</sup> from a trial of an al-Qaeda member, convicted in an Eastern District Court of New York (United States of America against Ibrahim Suleiman Adnan Adam Harun) in 2017. According to the transcripts, the Pakistan-based leadership of al-Qaeda delegated a Nigerian

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<sup>75</sup> "Tape Ascribed to Osama bin-Laden Urging Muslims to Stand with Iraq," as Cited by Kassim, 2018: 11. Also, see Neil MacFarquhar's article on New York Times, February 12, 2003, "Tape Ascribed to bin-Laden Urges Muslims to Stand with Iraq" available online at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/12/world/threats-responses-terrorists-tape-ascribed-bin-laden-urges-muslims-stand-with.html>.

<sup>76</sup> Michael W. S. Ryan (2010), has identified Abubakr Naji as a top al-Qaeda Operative.

<sup>77</sup> These court transcripts became public in March 2017, after the trial. It is available at: [https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/USCOURTS-nyed-1\\_12-cr-00134/pdf/USCOURTS-nyed-1\\_12-cr-00134-1.pdf](https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/USCOURTS-nyed-1_12-cr-00134/pdf/USCOURTS-nyed-1_12-cr-00134-1.pdf).

Ibrahim Harun to meet with people from the Kanama camp and the GSPC in Nigeria as early as 2002. The Nigerian was supposed to coordinate with one of Ali Mohammed's deputies, Muhammed Ashafa. The court believes this individual to be a Saudi-born Nigerian, but a member of the Ali group. The two individuals were supposed to be sent to Niger Republic for trainings with AQIM. Together with AQIM, they were supposed to develop skills to scout more activists to help them bomb the U.S. embassy or other U.S. and Israeli interests in Nigeria. The plans were halted because Ashafa was arrested in Pakistan. The court transcript also explains how communication between Harun and the al-Qaeda leadership in Pakistan continued back and forth, from Nigeria, to Niger and Pakistan, on what to do next after Ashafa was arrested. In 2005, he fled to Libya where he was arrested. Later in 2011, he was put on a boat by the Libyan government to Italy, where he was re-arrested and extradited to the United States for his role in killing two U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan. He was implicated in this by his fingerprints found on a Qu'ran left at the scene of the crime. The Eastern District of New York in March 2017 would find him guilty. These coordinations means that by the time the Kanama camp was established in 2002, al-Qaeda already had a strong presence in Nigeria and had plans to carry out al-Qaeda's missions in Nigeria. The Kanama was probably meant to be the base from which such missions would be coordinated. Nobody would have been more qualified than Ali, himself, who was already known within the al-Qaeda circle.

There is a gap in the literature on how much collaboration may have existed between Ali and Yusuf in the formation of the camp. However, a close reading of the recent released letters between AQIM and BH's leadership after 2009, and interview data from my respondents reveal that it was likely Ali, not Yusuf who ran the camp. None of the letters between Shekau and the AQIM leadership showed that Yusuf was already known within the al-Qaeda circle. In fact, in Shekau's first letter to AQIM, he specifically made effort to explain to the AQIM leadership who Yusuf Mohammed was. He also explained how he (Yusuf) had built and established a centre in Maiduguri in 2005. From the letter, it was clear that Yusuf was not known within the AQIM or al-Qaeda circle. In their response, al-Qaeda (through AQIM's leadership) expressed their condolence, but also showed complete lack of knowledge of who Yusuf was. If Yusuf was the one who ran the camp probably funded by their parent Organisation, there was no way, he would not have been known within the AQIM leadership circle. Ali on the contrary was known within the al-Qaeda

circle. Having himself fought in Afghanistan and having met with the Osama bin Laden, it is easy to surmise that he must have gained the al-Qaeda leadership's trust. Hence disbursing funds to him and trusting him to establish and coordinate the group's mission in Nigeria seems quite natural from the al-Qaeda circle.

Interview data from some of the Salafi scholars who knew Yusuf from the Ndimi mosque also corroborate this narrative. In discussing the role of Yusuf in the actual establishment of the Kanama camp, my respondents were quite certain that Yusuf could not have been involved in the actual formation and running of the Kanama camp. Two of my Salafi respondents specifically explained that Yusuf could not have run the day to day activities of the camp because Kanama camp was never really his project. They argued that it was rather, Ali's project. They explained how when Ali returned to Nigeria around 2002, he had travelled to many states of Nigeria trying to propagate his new-found extreme jihadi ideology to the religious leaders in the region, including themselves<sup>78</sup>, (the Salafi clerics). According to them, "the only person, who supported that kind of message was Yusuf". However, they were quick to point out that Yusuf also differed with Ali, when it came to the question of the appropriate time to start the jihad in Nigeria:

On the issue of when was the right time to start jihad, Yusuf and Ali never agreed. While for Ali, Nigeria as at then was ripe for jihad, Yusuf favoured the idea that they should delay the jihad until there is no excuse of "ignorance" by the political leaders that they should govern by the only law approved by Allah. ...Other than this, Yusuf also wanted to wait until when they have more popular support in the region<sup>79</sup>.

The schism between Ali Mohammed and Yusuf has also been corroborated by recent studies (Kassim, 2018:10-11). In discussing the schism between Ali and Yusuf, Kassim explains that both men differed on two main positions that other Salafi clerics in the region (especially after 2000) commonly accepted. First, the issue of ruling by any source, other than God's laws. For both men, this was a major unbelief and polytheism. In fact, they believed that it should lead to excommunication from Islam (Kassim, 2018:13). The second issue was about *al-`udhr bi-l-jahl*

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<sup>78</sup> This has also been corroborated in Kassim's (2018) article.

<sup>79</sup> Interview by the author with an anonymous Salafi cleric in Kano (March 2018)

and *Iqamat al-dalil/al-Hujja* (about declaration of *takfir* on political rulers). Here both men also agree that it is accepted to declare *takfir* even before *tafsil* (investigation by Muslim scholars) on such rulers who rule by other laws other than *al-Shari'a*. However, both men disagree on when it is appropriate to declare this and thus on the time for jihad. For Ali, it is not obligatory to establish the Islamic evidence on the political rulers before declaring jihad against them because none of them can claim to be ignorant of God's command to rule with His laws as opposed to secular laws. Yusuf on the other hand believed that before embarking on jihad on such apostate rulers, Islamic evidence (*Iqamat al-dalil/al-Hujja*) should be established against them through proselytism.

Kassim also cited an interview by Abu Aisha, a former member of Yusuf's inner circle who was interviewed for a documentary on Boko Haram. In the interview, Mr Aisha recounted the dispute between Ali Mohammed and Yusuf over the appropriate time to declare jihad. He said:

We encountered differences of opinion when we started the struggle. Some of us understood that it was not yet the appropriate time to declare jihad, while those who fought in Kanama during the administration of Obasanjo believed it was the appropriate time to declare 'jihad'. Our reason for postponing the declaration of jihad at that time is because we reasoned that the people are yet to fully understand the religion, and we thought they should be given an excuse since our main goal is the elevation of the religion. So, we considered it as a necessity for us to propagate the religion and convince the people with evidence from the Shari'a until the time when they have no excuse before what should happen happens (Abu Aisha, quoted in Kassim, 2018:11).

Kassim's point was that Yusuf believed that armed struggle against the Nigerian State should not be started until the true message of Islam has been properly preached to the different corners of the region. Although like most Salafis, he believed in appropriateness of using armed struggle against democratically elected governments; he was convinced that it was not yet time to use this strategy against the Nigerian State. In his view such a strategy should be sanctioned only when activists had been well indoctrinated on the religion, and they have been well prepared on how to use this strategy against the secular rulers. From this conviction, it is unlikely that he (Yusuf) was fully involved in the activities of the Kanama camp. In fact, when it became obvious that Yusuf was not going to give-in on the issue of starting an arm struggle against the Nigerian state after the

Kanama camp has been established, Ali and his group would declare *takfir* on him. Yusuf recounted this *takfir* in an audio lecture many years later<sup>80</sup>. It is unlikely that both men had worked strictly together in the Kanama project. Kanama was likely Ali's/al-Qaeda project. With the help of al-Qaeda, Ali was able to establish the camp. Having a huge financial resource from Osama bin Laden, and the disposition to flee the antecedents of the intra-Salafi disputes at the time, he did not have much significant problem attracting many new young generations of Salafi adherents to the Kanama camp.

Through Osama bin Laden's financial support, Ali was able to not only establish the camp at Kanama, but also to attract the youths from different parts of the region to come to the camp. By mid-2003, he and his activists had started training and waging "violent jihad" against the Nigerian state from Kanama. They attacked government buildings, including police stations, a local government secretariat and a government lodge (Kassim, 2018:11). On September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2003 particularly, they staged attacks against police stations in Bama and Gwoza (in the neighbouring Borno state). In this instance, they over-powered the police officers at the stations and made-away with most of their local ammunitions, including at least about five AK 47s. The Nigerian government could not watch them start such a violent attack. In collaboration with the local Yobe state police, they launched a serious violent crackdown that dismantled the Kanama camp within four days. The result of the raid was that Muhammed Ali and dozens of his boys from the camp were killed. Yusuf himself, who was at this time known by the Nigerian authorities, fled to Saudi Arabia. He stayed there for about one year. He was only allowed to return to Nigeria through the assistance of many political figures within the region, (particularly the then deputy governor of Borno state Alhaji Adamu Shettima Yuguda Dibal and Adamu, his old mentor), on the promise that he would not propagate violence. Following his return, he moved the group's base from Kanama to Maiduguri. Given more funding from Saudi Arabia, he built a new centre that attracted some of the former boys from Ndimi mosque, who had earlier gone to the Kanama camp. From there, the group grew from strength to strength becoming one of most vocal activist jihadi groups in the region (I will elaborate more on this in the next chapter).

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<sup>80</sup> Yusuf details this in his lecture "Clearing the doubts" recorded around 2006/2007 in Kano. I have not heard the audio version of this lecture myself; however, a detailed written version of the lecture has been presented by Kassim and Nwankpa (2017:35-41).

#### 4.8 Summary

This chapter has presented the socio-political, ideological and the organisational background upon which BH evolved in Northern Nigeria. It presented this through the analysis of six main political opportunity structures: The Northern Nigerian culture of Islamic activism evolving from the history of Islam in the region; the Northern Nigerian Colonial legacy; Northern people's Congress; the Nigerian return to democracy in 1999; the intra-ideological dispute between the two main Salafi-networks (Izala, and Ahlus Sunna); and mobilisation of resources from cooperation with al-Qaeda, particularly Osama Bin Laden. Its central argument was that these main structures/conditions provided the political opportunities upon which Mohammed Ali (2002, Kanama) and later Mohammed Yusuf (2005, Maiduguri) established the group in the region.

First, the chapter traced BH's religio-political activism to Usman dan Fodio's jihad and subsequent establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate, where the use of violent activism was justified as a legitimate tool against Hausa despotic rulers and state oppositions. It explained how this unique religio-political history had bequeathed the region with a unique identity that encouraged the formation of opposition activists' group and the use and justification of violence as a legitimate tool against state oppositions. Based on this unique history, Islam became a unique resource upon which political activism are galvanised and mobilised against state opposition, within the region.

This phenomenon was further exacerbated by the colonial legacies and consequent secular Nigerian state that emerged at independence. With the region's al-Shari'a foundation being threatened by the Western-based system of the colonial state, more opportunity for religious opposition against the state emerged. Having a prospect of independence easily transformed to the formation of a political party (NPC), that towed along regional and Islamic lines. In the contexts of political agitations that are defined along regional and ethno-religious at the end of Nigerian civil war, this helped make Islam the marker of identity and a tool for political contention in the region. In situations whereby one region or religious group is not represented in the country's federal character, the situation is easily interpreted as a "political marginalisation", and Islam is easily used as a tool to galvanise socio-political against state opposition.

This was the case in the dawn of a new democracy in 1999, when Obasanjo, a Southern Christian former Military head of state won the Nigerian Presidency in 1999. The political opportunity that emanated from this led to increased advocacy for Shari'a activism, conceived to be the right system to return the region to its correct economic, religious and political path. Led by different Islamic organisations, this became the trademark of socio-political activism within the region. By 2001, all the twelve states in the region had adopted Shari'a as their respective states' penal codes. With the freedom democracy afforded, this came pretty easy.

However, the enthronement of the Shari'a did not create the much desired "true Islamic" environment as most of the actors who championed it within the Salafi networks had promised. It also did not necessarily create the much-needed economic boom or the procurement of a corrupt free environment, as the Salafi activists had advocated during the *al-Shari'a* advocacy. These, as time went on, ignited silent protest among young Salafi adherents, who felt betrayed by the main Salafi establishment. Empowered by a rising Salafi actor (Mohammed Yusuf), who had pounced on the political opportunity created by this, as well as the feelings of "political marginalisation" in the region (from Obasanjo's Presidency), these young Salafi adherents left the old Salafi establishments to join the newly established al-Qaeda-funded movement in Kanama. At Kanama, these groups of youths, easily found a natural home to practice their faith without being compromised by the corrupt Islamic establishments and their Nigerian state collaborators.

However, within two years, the Nigerian government dismantled the camp. Ali, the leader of the group and many other members of the group were killed. However, Yusuf who had been the spiritual leader of the group, survived. Following his return from self-imposed exiled in Saudi Arabia, he would move the group's base from Kanama to Maiduguri. Using funding from Saudi Arabia, he built a new centre that attracted some of the former Kanama boys, who survived the previous raid. From here, the group grew from strength to strength, becoming one of most vocal activist jihadi group in the region. The analysis also showed that Ali had been able to establish the Kanama camp because of the financial assistance he received, very likely from al-Qaeda. These material resources combined with other political structures within the region provided him with the window of opportunity to both establish the group, as well as attract other Salafi activists who had stayed earlier at the Kanama camp.

All these demonstrates the significance of political opportunity structures in the formation of Salafi-oriented groups. As the analysis demonstrates, Salafi-oriented groups are much like regular social movement organisations. They do not evolve in a vacuum; instead, they are sensitive to the specific conditions and the political structures present within the socio-political environment they identify. It is these structures that provided the needed political opportunity to establish their groups. In the presence of such political structures, activists can draw from the political opportunity structures to establish their organisations.

Different from many previous analysis on Kanama camp, I found particularly the availability of funds a very important resource for establishment of such groups. The ability of religious actors such as Ali, to form new associations or collectivise their religio-political activism has a lot to do with their ability to mobilize resources and to conduct their organisation on the basis of planned and rational action. Social movement scholars, such as Jeroen Gunning and Ilan Baron (2013), McAdam et. al. (2001) and Tilly (2004) have in the past pointed out that even though there could ideological motivations or strain/conflict within organisations, such elements may not necessarily be transformed to a mobilisation of new movements. Rather this happens in the presense of resources. Such resources, provides movement actors with the political opportunity and rational orientation for action. Religious actors like regular social movement actors should not be understood as actors that only operates under the sway of ideological conflicts, sentiments, or emotions. Rather, they should be understood in terms of the logic of the availability of incentives, costs and benefits, as well as opportunities. In the absence of such resources, even in the case of many grievances and ideological motivations, activists may not be necessarily able to mobilise and form their organisations.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: BOKO HARAM'S USE AND JUSTIFICATION OF ARMED VIOLENCE**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, the emergence of BH was discussed, arguing that the evolution of the group is better understood in the context of six main political opportunities. This chapter is a continuation of that narrative. However, in addition to the analysis of the different conditions that influenced the adoption of violence, the chapter will also discuss the different mobilisatory conditions and resources which the group's leadership could call upon that encouraged the use of this strategy. The chapter is prefaced with a discussion of how Mohammed Yusuf was able to build the group when he returned from Saudi Arabia; what the group's goals were, and how it grew to become a very formidable activist organisation with branches in different parts of the region. There is also an analysis of how two main conditions created a political opportunity for the adoption of this strategy: the group's involvement with the local Borno state politics; and the violent interactions and engagements with the Nigerian security forces created the political opportunity for the adoption of this strategy. The chapter concluded that even though the group had ideologically already moved to jihadi positions at the time it was established in Maiduguri, it was the fall-out from these conditions that catalysed the decision to use this strategy (violence) in 2009.

### **5.2 From Kanama to Maiduguri: The Reign of Yusuf as the Leader of Boko Haram**

After the destruction of the Kanama camp in December 2003, most of the people who survived the raid dispersed to various Northern Nigerian cities. Others who had contacts with GSPC, fled and joined the SOMO group in the Sahara Desert and Algeria (Kassim, 2018:11). Yusuf himself, who was at that time known by the Nigerian authorities fled to Saudi Arabia. For his suspected involvement with the group in Kanama, "the Nigerian Taleban", he was declared wanted by the Nigerian police. He stayed in Saudi Arabia, for about one year. While in Saudi Arabia, he held series of talks with many actors in the region including the very same Adamu Jafar, whom he had a doctrinal disagreement with, before the Nigerian government dismantled of the Kanama camp. He also met with the Deputy Governor of Borno State, Adamu Dibal, who in 2005 was also in Saudi Arabia for pilgrimage. According to Kassim (2018), Adamu at this time advised him to hire

a lawyer and explain his lack of involvement with the Kanama group to the Nigerian security forces. It is not clear that Yusuf eventually hired a lawyer as was advised by Adamu. What is clear however, is that both men (Adamu and Dibal) worked together to facilitate Yusuf's return to Nigeria at that time. Together, they negotiated for his return to Nigeria (Kassim, 2018:12; Zenn, 2018:121), on the promise that he would not support jihadi violence against the Nigerian state.

Upon his return in Nigeria, Yusuf focused on building up his own group. He is credited to have openly condemned the use of violence against the Nigerian state by the Kanama group. He acknowledged that although the youths had studied under him, and that he shared their goals, he "never urged them to use violence" (Williams and Guttschuss, 2012:32). Considering Yusuf's ideological position, this is most likely correct. Almost all my sources agree that what was more important for Yusuf at this time was to build up a "new organisation". He wanted to build a formidable and more popular organisation, within which it would be possible to bring about the much needed *al-Shari'a* change in the region.

In earnest, he convened an internal meeting that included most of the dispersed members of the "Nigerian Taliban" from the Kanama camp, most of whom he had known from his time at the Ndimi mosque. After the meeting, they all pledged their allegiance and to listen and obey his commands in his upcoming activism and rebuilding process (Kassim, 2018:11). In the beginning, Yusuf used a makeshift venue outside his home to set-up the base for the group. After some months, he relocated to a permanent site in a land donated to him by his father-in-law, Baba Fugu Mohammed, who was also an influential businessman in the city<sup>81</sup>. It is not clear where Yusuf got all the funds he used to do all this at this time<sup>82</sup>. However, what is obvious is that Yusuf had some sort of funding by the time he returned to Nigeria. With this funding, he was able to begin the building process of the new group.

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<sup>81</sup> Anonymous interview by the author with a police officer in Kaduna (March 2017).

<sup>82</sup> All my respondents were quite unsure where Yusuf got the initial money, he used to rebuild his group. Some who tried to provide answer speculated that the funding may have come from the Saudi Arabian government. However, knowing Yusuf's ability at this time, I didn't find this credible. Looking at previous literature, I also did not find evidence of financial support between Yusuf and either the Saudi government or other tangible actors. Most scholarly discussions about this were quite speculative (Zenn, 2018:121; Kassim, 2018:11). Here, Yusuf's funds during this period were credited to have come from his 'friends' in Saudi Arabia. This is not clear enough. Moreover, who these friends were, remain unknown.

A quick explanation of Yusuf's personal life at this juncture is important to help capture the background against which the former Ahlus Sunna activist established the group in the region. The story about Yusuf's personal life is not quite clear. However, some of my respondents who knew him from the Ndimi mosque explained that he was born in 1970 in a very poor family in Girgir village of Jakusko local government, in the present day Yobe State<sup>83</sup>. He is described as a "self-made man", in terms of how he managed to achieve what he did despite his poor economic background<sup>84</sup>. He is credited to have been financially responsible for his education, studying up to a diploma level in the University<sup>85</sup>. It is also believed that he was first introduced to his radical jihadi ideas by his father, who was a poor imam that ran a *Tsangaya* Qur'anic school. According to my source<sup>86</sup>, he was so radical with his criticisms of Western education at that time, that the Emir of Gasua considered him dangerous to his Emirate. As a result, he was expelled from the Gasua Emirate. He would later move to Kano in a place called Regionsaki where he continued his teachings. He later joined forces with Marwa, during the reign of the Maitatsine movement. He is believed to have been killed during the security forces' raid on the Maitatsine movement in 1980<sup>87</sup>.

Growing up without his parents, Yusuf eventually found his way to Maiduguri; the Borno state's main economic centre. It was there that he met Baba Fugu Mohammed, who later become a sort of a foster parent to him. According to my sources, Yusuf would for his devotion, dedication and hard work in his business, be taken in by Fugu<sup>88</sup>. He (Yusuf) ended up marrying one of Fugu's daughters; they have about three children together. Yusuf also had three other wives, with whom he had nine more children. It was on the basis of this personal relationship with Baba Fugu Mohammed, that he got the land from him to build his new centre. He named the centre *Ibn Taymiyyah*, after the famous thirteenth century Islamic cleric, whose writings have strongly influenced modern Wahabbi/Salafi thoughts. This centre, according to most of my sources, was well planned. It had a mosque, a school building and several guest rooms, to accommodate the old students from the Ndimi mosque and the Kanama camp; as well as the new students, who are

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<sup>83</sup> Interview by the author with an anonymous police officer in Kaduna (March 2017)

<sup>84</sup> Interview by the author with anonymous Police officer in Kaduna (February 2017)

<sup>85</sup> Interview by the author with anonymous Izala cleric in Kano (March 2018).

<sup>86</sup> Interview by the author with an anonymous police officer in Kaduna in Kaduna (March 2017)

<sup>87</sup> Anonymous interview by the author with a JTF member in Abuja (February 2017).

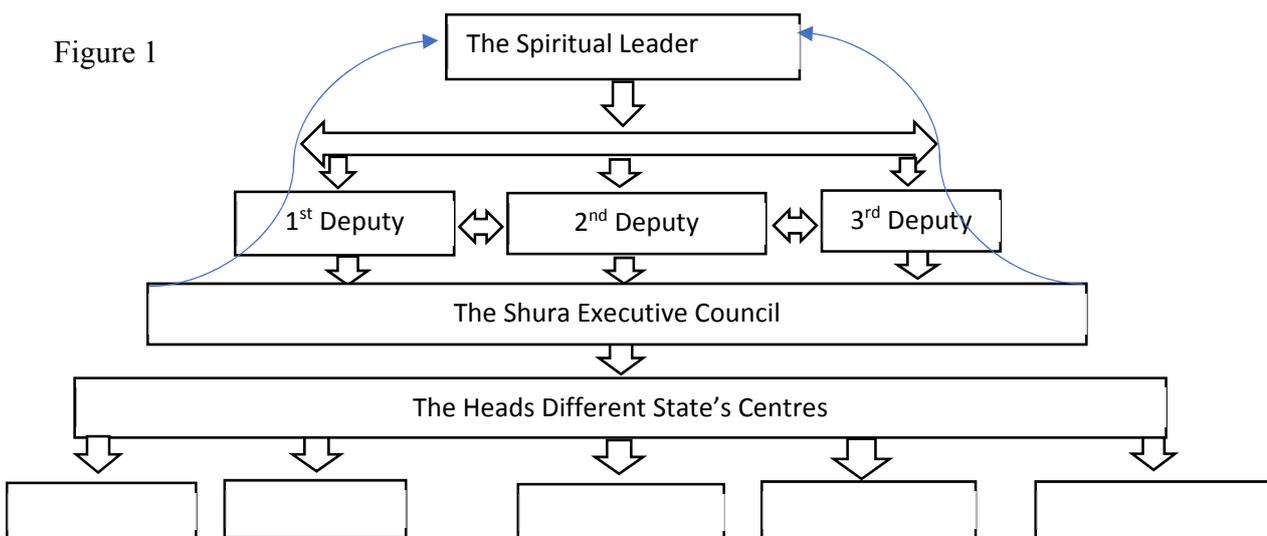
<sup>88</sup> Interview by the author with several police respondents and the religious clerics in Kaduna and Kano (March 2017).

joining the group from different parts of the Northern Nigeria, and from mostly the Kanuri regions of Niger and Chad (Onuoha, 2015).

To distinguish his group from the previous Kanama group, Yusuf would take the name *Jama'atu AhlisunnLidda'awatiwal-jihad* (the People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad), rather than *Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'a* (Adherents to the *Sunnah* and the Community of Muslims) that was associated to the Kanama group. Together with some of the significant actors in the group, Yusuf was also involved with *dawah* campaigns in different states of the region. They travelled to different parts of the region, preaching and selling the group's message to the people, especially to the youths. By 2007, Yusuf's group had established branches in some of the important states within the region, (especially in Bauchi, Adamawa, and Katsina and even in Diffa in Niger). From these centres, Yusuf made sermons, where he tried to spread the group's message. From time to time, he also released these sermons as DVDs, audio cassettes and pamphlets to the public. These helped popularised the group and drew many youths to his centre.

The way Yusuf structured his group bore full inprints of a typical movement organisation. First, the organisation had a hierarchical structure that had Yusuf at the top as both the spiritual leader, and the commander-in-chief (*amir ul-'aam*) of the organisation. He was assisted by three deputies (*na'ib amir ul-'aam* I and II). Under the deputies, there was the apex executive Shura Council (decision-making), made up of the heads of the different centres. The function of this council inter alia was to over-see and deliberate on the most important decisions of the organisation. Each of the centres of the organisation, particularly that of Yobe, Katsina, Adamawa and Bauchi states where the group had its biggest influence and corresponding branches were represented in the council. The centres also have their own mini Shura councils (Onuoha, 2015). The figure 1 below is a hypothetical representation organisational structure of the organisation during Yusuf's days.

Figure 1



This hierarchical and organisational structure made it easier not only for communication, but also for a fostering of a sense of opportunity for a career path within the organisation.

On socio-political aspects, BH's activism was defined by Yusuf's advocacy for an Islamic-based theocratic (*al-Shari'a*) system of government. Like most Salafi actors within the two Salafi establishments, he rejected Western-based democratic system of government. For Yusuf:

Democracy positions the people as an authority in rivalry with God. From democracy, multiple evils flowed, all of them cloaked as freedom: for example, "freedom of belief" allowed for apostasy from Islam. ...Democracy "is the school of the infidels: following it, having dealings with it, or using its system is unbelief... (Yusuf, 2009:63).

In the Nigerian case, he traced the establishment of this system to British colonialism and consequent introduction of secular values (*boko*). For him, it was because of this system that the region had become defined by what he and other Salafi establishments conceived as religious weaknesses, moral decadence and socio-economic disadvantage (Yusuf, 2009)<sup>89</sup>. Hence, it must be rejected. Thus, he maintained an extremist version of the region's Salafi tenets, such that unlike his fellow Salafi actors, he disapproved participation in employment in institutions coming from democracy, including working with the Nigerian government. For him a "true Muslim" cannot

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<sup>89</sup> This idea was also repeated in an interview with anonymous Ahlus Sunna cleric in Kaduna (March 2017).

reject Western democracy and yet work within an institution that is established by the same system he rejects. Such a practice is simply illogical, because the two issues form part of the same package. Hence, such practices are *haram* (forbidden) (Yusuf, 2009).

Another major area of disagreement between Yusuf and the Ahlus Sunna leadership, was on the status of the Nigerian state and its institutions. Yusuf questioned the authority of the state and these institutions, particularly, the police and the other security forces. In the course of his heated disputes with many within the region, he would refuse to recognise the Sultan of Sokoto as the nominal head of all Nigerian Muslims, in some occasions regarding him as “*Sarkin Sokoto*”, i.e. “King of Sokoto”, rather than that of the Muslims in the region (Thurston, 2016). All these institutions are for Yusuf, imposed institutions, coming from the colonial imposed system of government of Nigeria. Hence, they should be rejected by all true Muslims.

As a solution, Yusuf presented a strict *al-Shari’a* theocratic system, and a return to Qur’anic dictates that governed the Northern Nigeria before the colonial era. For him, the Shari’a law is a perfect and complete. “It is appropriate in every time and place, globally” (Yusuf, 2009: 143). It is also the only way to restore the region (and by extension, the country) to its rightful religious, political, social and moral path. Thus, it is imperative for every true Muslim, including religious and political leaders to join in this advocacy.

Yusuf’s ideas on how to change to this system was also quite consistent with the then mainline Salafi thoughts within the region, (at least before the main Salafi actors began to take a more moderate turn<sup>90</sup>). Like most actors (including his former mentor Adamu), he preached and supported the type of Salafi cannon that favoured political change through arm struggle (Anonymous, 2012:120-122). Consistent with this kind of preaching, he frequently extolled people like Usama bin Laden, the Taliban, Sayyid Qutb, and Hassan al-Banna as the type of Salafi actors who had followed the true path of Islam (Anonymous, 2012; Mamoud, 2018: 90). In this sense, Yusuf also demonstrated an overlapping thought with other international SOMOs, which in turn provided the ideological underpinnings for his movement.

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<sup>90</sup> Andrea Brigaglia (2015) and Kassim (2018) had brilliantly analysed how the main establishments had initially supported jihadi violence but took a more moderate tone at the dawn of Shari’a implementations after 1999. I will elaborate on this a bit more in the next section.

However, on the question of when the right time is to use armed struggle against secular political leaders; Yusuf's ideas were quite complicated. As I have explained in the previous chapter, even though he promoted *al-Shari'a* system, he was skeptical (at least from the beginning) on the need to use arm struggle against political leaders. Unlike the leader of the previously dismantled Kanama camp, he was quick to point out that such strategy must be applied after enough Islamic evidence must have been established (*Iqamat al-dalil/al-Hujja*) against them through proselytism; when such rulers would no longer use ignorance as an excuse (Kassim, 2018:12). Applying this in the Nigerian context, Yusuf believed that such strategy should be delayed until the true message of Islam has been properly established through proselytisation. Within such contexts, secular political rulers would not only be able to use 'ignorance' as an excuse, the delays would have given his organisation an opportunity to attract a large followership and support communities, which would be better indoctrinated to fight jihad against such secular rulers (Kassim, 2018:12).

From 2005 to 2007, Yusuf consistently spread these messages. Throughout these years, he and his group operated more like a moderate revivalist activist group, attempting to change the region and country's political system. Yusuf intentionally avoided violent confrontation with the state. Despite his support for armed struggle, he and his group generally abstained from the use of violence against either the Nigeria state, or any of the local state governments within the region. The group only officially adopted and subsequently used violence against the Nigerian State in June 2009, after they had become well established in the region, and had been involved with the local Borno state government on different levels. Below is an analysis of how these inter-relations and involvement with the local Borno state politics created the political opportunity for the adoption of this strategy.

### **5.3 The Beginning of Armed Struggle against the Nigerian State**

Two main conditions accelerated BH's adoption and use of armed struggle in 2009: the group's brief involvement in the state's institutionalised political system and the Nigerian government's violent repression of the group.

### ***5.3.1 Involvement in the Borno State's Institutionalised Political System<sup>91</sup>***

The influence of activists' involvement in institutionalised political system in investigating the temporality of jihadi violence in a SOMO against a state is important because it bears directly on the question of "reform versus revolution" (Wiktorowicz and Hafez, 2004:66). Within the SMT scholarship, this specific condition has been investigated both in general and in specific contexts, as a condition propitious for determining the adoption of violence in social movement scholarship (Wiktorowicz and Hafez, 2004; Hafez, 2004; Godwin, 1997). In this case, a social movement organisation is assumed to be less likely to adopt violent activism, when its leadership or individuals within its leadership have procedural and substantive involvement in the state's institutionalised political system(s). Involvement here could be in the form of political appointments, positions within the state policy making institutions, becoming a member(s) of parliament or even informal ties with individuals within the state institutions. Thus, operating within such institutions, activists can exert political influence on the state, negotiate better reform agendas, communicate with the state, or assert some form of formal or informal pressure that enables the state to change its laws or policies, in line with the group's goal (Hafez, 2004: 37-60; Wiktorowicz and Hafez, 2004:61-88). Hence, such groups are less likely to adopt less conventional tactics such as violence because they have access to these traditional options, within which it is easier to bring about the desired socio-political change. On the contrary, social movement organisations are more likely to adopt violent activism when its activists are cut-off from the states' formal policy-making channels or institutions, especially after some periods of having such involvements. In the absence of such involvement, activists are not only likely going to struggle to exert influence (effect policy change), they are also likely going to be limited from using conventional means to achieve their goals. This, thereby, reinforced the disposition for unconventional means such as violence, and it increased the possibility for its adoption as a strategy for goal attainment (Amaechi, 2017; Godwin, 1997; Hafez and Wiktorowicz, 2004).

Jeff Goodwin's (1997) study of collective violent revolutions in "developing countries" illustrates this, very succinctly. In this case, the American social movement scholar showed how movement

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<sup>91</sup> In social movement scholarship the term "*institutionalised political system*" is often used as a broader socio-political category, to refer to the set of formal state institutions such as the executive bodies, judiciary organisations, parliaments, government ministries, policy implementing agencies -and informal mechanisms, procedures and policy styles by which state elite governs.

organisations, particularly those in authoritarian regimes, tend to be more violent and revolutionary in “countries that are more exclusive” (that is: countries where movements have no access to institutionalised political institutions) than in countries where groups have more access to institutional politics. The social movement organisations’ lack of access to the state institutionalised politics re-enforces their resolve for the adoption of violence against authoritarian state opposition. “Exclusive regimes”, he argues, “tend to incubate radical collective action: those who specialise in it tend to prosper because they come to be viewed by many people as more realistic and potentially effective than political moderates, who themselves come to be viewed as hopelessly ineffective” (Godwin 1997:18). On the contrary, “an accessible political system discourages the sense that the state is ‘un-reformable’, or that it is an instrument of a narrow class or clique and (accordingly) needs to be overhauled” (Godwin, 1997:18).

Mohammed Hafez and Quentin Wiktorowicz’s (2004, 61- 88) also made a similar analysis in their discussion of the use of violence against the Egyptian state by Salafi-oriented *Gama al-Islamiyya* group in the late 1990s. Literature showed how the Egyptian government’s limiting of political involvement of opposition actors to the state’s institutionalised political systems (what they called “political deliberation”), after some tangible opening of state institutions, made it so difficult that the initially moderate Islamist group could no longer legitimately expand their political influence. This set the context for the formation of the Gama al-Islamiyya, within which violence was justified as a strategy to exert influence. Thus, in violence the activists easily saw an effective alternative, (which in their judgement is properly justified due to their exclusion from the state institutionalised political system). Using such strategy, they would not only be able to put pressure on the Egyptian government, they would also be able to achieve their goals. Hafez and Wiktorowicz’s point here is that the ability to effect major political influence due to involvement in institutionalised political systems provides movements with the possibility to be directly engaged with the state through other forms of legal or systematic contention whereas inability to effect change due to lack of involvement on the other hand minimises options and hastens the need to resort to radical strategies that is already incubated in such groups. When groups are excluded from the formal and informal institutionalised system of governments, violent activism often easily presents itself as the best possible option to exert influence.

In investigating BH's case, I saw similar, but slightly different patterns in the adoption of violence in 2009. Despite having already developed his jihadi ideological positions, Yusuf's final resolve to use violence on the Nigerian security forces (further on the different elements within the local Yobe and Borno state governments), grew much later, after he and his group had become involved and had worked closely with the Borno state government. It is believed that amid his group's growing influence in Maiduguri in 2006-2007, the All Nigeria's People's Congress (ANPC)<sup>92</sup> gubernatorial candidate, Senator Ali Modu Sheriff allegedly sought the support of Yusuf and his group, during his campaigns for a second term as the governor of Borno. Strictly from a political perspective, this makes perfect sense, since Yusuf whose growing youth following could bring significant electoral votes. In return for this support, Sheriff promised a stricter implementation of Shari'a law, (something BH had been advocating for), if he wins (Brigaglia, 2015; Smith 2015). Yusuf's group went as far as occasionally joining the governor in some of his campaign rallies. In some of such cases, they stood by the governor, allowing themselves to be used as political thugs during the campaigns<sup>93</sup>. As expected, Sheriff won the election. For the second time, became the governor of the state. Upon his electoral victory, he appointed Buju Foi<sup>94</sup>, as his Commissioner of

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<sup>92</sup> ANPC was the Nigerian main opposition political party at the dawn of Nigerian return to democracy in 1999. In the run-off to the 2015 Presidential election, the party had merged with other small opposition parties to form new party All Progressive Congress (APC). The party defeated the former ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) in the 2015 election.

<sup>93</sup> The use of youths as political thugs is not new to Nigerian Politics. In the past several of such youths have been reported to have been used by the Nigerian politicians (including those in the South) as thugs in run-up to elections. Here, they are used to harass, intimidate opponents and snatch ballot boxes if there is a suspicion that the election results were not going their way. But once the elections are over, the politicians often stop paying them and leave them to their fates (Smith, 2015). This was what happened in the Sheriff's case with the youths from the Yusuf camp. These youths worked for the governor during the elections. But as soon as the elections ended, the governor tried to distance himself from them. This information has also been corroborated by a White Paper report from the Nigerian Former Interior Minister, Abba Moro, who headed the Nigerian government committee, mandated by the government in 2011 to look into youth recruitment in the Boko Haram crisis. In the report, the former minister traced in detail the assimilation of some of the youth militias known within the region as ECOMOG, (in reference to the West African military force formally stationed in War-ravished African countries) into BH after the 2007 election. The Report claims that some of these thugs were armed and were used extensively as political thugs during the 2007 gubernatorial election. But having achieved their primary purpose, the politicians left the militias to their fate after the elections. With no visible means of sustenance, some of the militias gravitated towards religious extremism, the type offered by Mohammed Yusuf. The government White Paper Report is still available from Ini Ekott's Newspaper article to the Nigerian Premium times, *Government White Paper Indicts Prominent Politicians for Creating Boko Haram*. The article is still available at: <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/131694-government-white-paper-indicts-prominent-politicians-for-creating-boko-haram.html>.

<sup>94</sup> Buju Foi was a local Borno state politician. He had worked with Sherriff during his first tenure. However, during that period, he had become one of Yusuf's close allies and major financier.

Religious Affairs. This was supposed to provide Yusuf's group access to the state's institutionalised political system the very opportunity to push for their *al-Shari'a* agenda. The group's inability to achieve any substantial change despite being this close to power would provide a basis for frustration, and later to more disposition for violence.

Most of my respondents who had followed the activities of BH closely during this period explained how Yusuf was frustrated by his group's inability to achieve any substantial change, despite being very close to power (the state institutionalised politics). They explained that in working within the local Borno state government, Yusuf genuinely thought that he could progress his *al-Shari'a* agenda. In earnest, he began to engage with the state, bringing along his group's uncompromising version of the Shari'a law. During this time, he also systematically doubled down on his criticisms of the state's constitutional democratic system, arguing that it is a form of *Kufir* (unbelief). For him therefore, the state should abandon its democratic system, its constitution, and flag, in exchange for a theocratic *al-Shari'a* system. However, when it became obvious that such a system was not going to be accepted, because of its unviability and incompatibility with the already existing democratic system, Yusuf and his group became frustrated. Hence, they started to seek an alternative method to coax the state to buy-into their message and achieve their *al-Shari'a* goals.

Within the state's different Shari'a institutions, objection to Yusuf's call for stricter Shari'a implementation was even more pronounced. Yusuf had to work with some of the traditional actors within the main Salafi networks<sup>95</sup>, with whom he had doctrinal disagreement in the region. In

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<sup>95</sup> The *al-Shari'a* advocacy and the consequent adoption of Shari'a by the twelve states in the region at the dawn of democracy in 1999 opened-up opportunities for numerous Izala and Ahlus Sunna activists to come closer to political power in their respective states. Having worked in different capacities in the *al-Shari'a* advocacy, most of them were appointed (rewarded) to different government institutions, which controlled the *Shari'a* implementations in the different states (Amaechi, 2017; Brigaglia, 2012a). In fact, the Ahlus Sunna and Izala activists formed part of a majority of the Yan Hisba militia members. In the key Northern state of Kano for example, activists like Jafar Adamu got appointed to different political positions. In 2003, when the issue of the Shari'a penal code reform had assumed a heated political dimension during the gubernatorial elections of 2003, he (Adamu, with the Ahlus-Sunna leadership) had taken an open stance against the then Kano governor Rabiu Kwankwaso (1999-2003) of the PDP (People's Democratic Party). Besides being accused of corruption, the then Kano governor was also judged as being too reluctant and hypocritical, in the implementation of Shari'a reforms in the state. So instead of Kwankwaso, the SCSN and the Ahlus Sunna openly supported the candidate of the ANPP (All Nigerian Peoples' Party), Ibrahim Shekarau, promoting him as the authentic champion of Shari'a. Upon, his electoral victory, Shekarau appointed Adamu to a position (first as a member, and then to head the institution) in the state-run Hisba Board, a body entrusted with security matters, public morality, and implementation of the new Shari'a codes in the state's public life. However, Adamu would later resign his position when he became

working with other Islamic establishments in the region, most of these actors, became what Kassim (2018:14) calls “jihadi revisionists”; by shelving some of their Salafī radical tenets<sup>96</sup>. Also, to be able to work within these institutions, they had stopped some of their attacks against the Sufi orders and become more “moderate and less critical of the state. This means, amending their ideologies, or framing it in such a way that it accommodates the possibility of working within the system, something Yusuf would not accept. This is how one of my respondents put it:

By working with the states, the ahlu sunna (and the izala) had already soft pedalled in their advocacy for jihad and radical transformation. They had realised that they cannot be working with the state’s institutions, and yet be criticizing them as unbelievers. The option was either to work with the state to try to implement a reasonable version of the Shari’a law, to continue to insist on the uncompromising version. They chose to work with the state and amend their teaching.

This was the reality Yusuf faced. Despite being close to power, he would soon realise that there was no pathway to success through the state engagement. In the coming months, Boi at the behest of Yusuf resigned his political appointment, citing dishonesty on the part of the government in implementing the Shari’a mandate<sup>97</sup>. Now, having no real chance of achieving the kind of change they desired through the legal engagement with the state, internal debate and discussion in the group around unconventional means naturally grew. Considering that the group has already moved to the jihadi position, jihadi violence would appear as one of the first options to force the hand of the local Borno state government. At least in this context, political rulers can now no longer use the “excuse of ignorance” for their inability to enthrone al-Shari’a, having been repeatedly informed (by the group’s activism) of the consequences of not embracing such theocratic system. This is well captured in one of Yusuf’s lecture during this time:

What will stop them ...is ‘jihad’ (taking jihad here to mean arm struggle).

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disillusioned with the institution’s collusion with the state, and level of corruption within the institution. For more on the collaboration between the state and the main Salafī establishments see (Brigaglia, 2012a; Loimeier, 2012).

<sup>96</sup> It is important to reiterate that Yusuf’s push for this uncompromising version of theocracy and implementations of Shari’a law had long been the main cannon of the Salafī establishments. In fact, it was not him, but rather the Salafī establishments that abandoned their initial jihadi position. An elaborate analysis of this has been provided by Andrea Brigaglia (2015).

<sup>97</sup> Interview by the author with an anonymous Izala scholar (Kano, March 2017).

But how are we going to carry out the jihad? With whom are we going to carry out the jihad? Allah made me to understand that first and foremost, we must embark upon the preaching towards Islamic reform. Then, we will have to be patient until we acquire power. This is the foundation of this preaching towards Islamic reform. It was founded for the sake of jihad, and we did not hide this objective from anyone<sup>98</sup>.

A similar idea is also portrayed in another lecture:

We establish iqamat al-hujja for them, but you might not know since you have never gone to the presence of the Divisional Police Officer to discuss this issue. On the other hand, I have been called several times to their office. There was a time I was invited by the Director-General of the State Security Service—look at Ibrahim and others were the people who escorted me. I went to their office, and we sat with him to discuss the mission of our preaching towards Islamic reform ... Anyone about whom we are certain to have establish evidence upon is an apostate from Islam. If it is the *taghut*, you should present evidence to him, but once you present your evidence, it is over<sup>99</sup>.

All these for Yusuf further explained that the requirements for establishing evidence on the political rulers have been fulfilled. Hence, the organisation was therefore ready and justified from their ideological perspective, to begin their armed struggle against the Nigerian state. From this background, he and his Shura council would reach a verdict on the use of armed struggle against the state and the political rulers.

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<sup>98</sup> This statement was culled from Yusuf's lecture titled "History of the Muslims" cited in Kassim and Nwankpa, 2017:94).

<sup>99</sup> This statement was culled from Yusuf's lecture titled "History of the Muslims" cited in Kassim and Nwankpa, 2017:97).

### ***5.3.2 The Nigerian State Violent Response (Reactive and Indiscriminate Repression)***

Another important condition that catalysed BH's decision to adopt violence in 2009 was the Nigerian government's violent response. Here, I have looked at how the Borno state government's response and that of the Nigerian government, helped provide more justification and encouragement for the group's adoption of violence, after they had withdrawn from working with the state. Different interviews from many actors within the Nigerian security forces show that the Nigerian state government's response had started with some sort of "pre-emptive and selective targeting"<sup>100</sup>, but it later became indiscriminate when the group's anti-state rhetoric persisted. At the height of Yusuf's anti-state rhetoric, the Borno state government had successfully targeted the group's leadership. On several occasions, they arrested Yusuf and some of his assistants. Twice, he was charged, but his prosecutions never went forward. In late 2008, the Borno state government banned Yusuf and his then deputy Abubakar Shekau from preaching in public (Williams and Guttschuss 2012:32). Rather than deter Yusuf from his anti-state rhetoric, these arrests and public intimidations further played into Yusuf's hands as a tool to mobilise his base. Upon Yusuf's releases from bail and return from Abuja (where he was held), the BH leaders was often greeted by thousands of his followers, who closed some streets of Maiduguri in symbolic celebrations. These celebrations elevated his hero status in the eyes of many, thus becoming a potent tool for him to recruit and draw more people into his cause.

Things continued this way until in the middle of 2009, where Yusuf's persistent violent rhetoric and continuous advocacy for *al-Shari'a*, the Borno state government, in collaboration with the Nigerian government changed tactics. As one of my respondents explained it, "we now began to extend the target base."<sup>101</sup> Rather than just targeting Yusuf and the group's leadership, the state security force's approach became more proactive and indiscriminate. Every member of the group

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<sup>100</sup> Within the social movement discourse, scholars have often made distinction between the two main dimensions of repression; pre-emptive and selective targeting or reactive and indiscriminate targeting (Hafez and Wiktorowicz, 2004: 67-71). Repression is considered as pre-emptive and selective when it is applied before the opposition movement has gathered momentum and is targeted at the certain individuals within the group. In contrast, it is reactive and indiscriminate when it is applied in the ascendant phase of the protest cycle –that is after the activists have gained organisational momentum. Here, the targeting is random and not selective. The assumption here is that it is not all forms of repression that encourages violence. Rather what determines whether repression encourages violence is the manner in which the state combines the timing and the targeting of the repression.

<sup>101</sup> Interview by the author with an anonymous police officer in Kaduna (February 2017).

was now a potential target. First, they began to monitor the activities of even low members of the group. By early 2009, the Borno state government had also deployed more police troops on the streets of Maiduguri including the dreaded *Operation Flush II Task Force*<sup>102</sup>, whose real job according to one of my police sources was to “checkmate BH’s violent excesses”. A heated interaction between this group and the Operation Flush II Task Force would turn out to be a major precipitant for the group’s use of violent jihad against the Nigerian security forces.

The violent altercation between the Operation Flush II Task Force and members of BH happened on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2009, when members of BH were on their way to a funeral in the Gwange area of Maiduguri. Confirming one of the several previous reports about this incident (Smith, 2015; Williams and Guttschuss, 2012:33), one of my respondents who had worked with the Operation Flush in Maiduguri in 2009 (although he was not himself part of this mission), recounted how the encounter with the BH activists happened. According to him, the BH activists on their way to the cemetery spotted some unarmed Boko Haram members, who were being forced by the members of the Operation Flush II task force to perform “frog jumps”<sup>103</sup>. The arrested members were found ‘guilty’ of refusing to wear their motorcycles helmet, a transportation policy newly enacted by the state, to protect commercial motorcycle riders<sup>104</sup>. On spotting their members being humiliated by the security forces, BH activists tried to ‘rescue’ them from the security men. When they failed’, they tried to forcefully engage with the security officers, who in response started firing at them. According to my respondents, “the officers only shot at their legs and did not try to kill any of them.” In firing at the activists, they wounded about 17 members of the group<sup>105</sup>.

A deeply enraged Yusuf had a different version of what happened; he later appeared before his followers and deliver a passionate and fiery speech labelled “Open Letter to the Federal Government of Nigeria”<sup>106</sup>. In the speech, he lashed out at both the Nigerian government and the

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<sup>102</sup> Operation Flush II Task Force was a joint group of mobile and regular police squad. The group on paper was set up by the local Borno state government in early 2009, to help the police combat the armed robbery and other petty crimes in the state.

<sup>103</sup> Frog Jump or other humiliating exercises is “discipline” approach often used by the Nigerian security forces to punish people they deem guilty of minor infractions, once they are caught.

<sup>104</sup> Refusing to obey secular authorities like the Nigerian security forces is consistent with BH’s Salafi ideology. Before this, Yusuf had in many occasions drawn from the idea of *tawhid* to argue that that obeying such authorities is tantamount to polytheism (Yusuf...). So, refusing to follow orders from the Operation Flush was not out of order, at least from the point of view of the group.

<sup>105</sup> Interview by author with an Anonymous police officer in Kaduna (February 2017).

<sup>106</sup> Yusuf’ speech is still available online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f89PvcvWSRg>.

security forces, calling them murderers and accusing them of intentionally targeting his group without justification. This is an extract from the speech:

Several Boko Haram members were taking four corpses for burial at Gwange Cemetery, he began: They ran into some Nigerian army members along with mobile policemen belonging to Operation Flush under the leadership of Ali Modu Sheriff, the governor of Borno state. They opened fire on the procession, and at the moment 18 brothers are in hospital receiving treatment. One was shot in the back. Two bullets were removed in an operation. There was one who was shot in the groin. A bullet brushed someone close to the eye. If it had moved an inch, he would have been killed. Another one had both his legs battered. Somebody was shot in the thigh. We said that we would not rely on rumours and stories reaching us, which was why we refused to comment yesterday until we went and saw for ourselves. We went and saw them drenched in their blood. They did nothing; they did not insult anyone; they did not commit any crime. But simply out of sheer aggression, which is the hallmark of the government of Borno state.

Subsequently, Yusuf began to threaten that he would take revenge on the Nigerian security forces, unless the Nigerian government investigates the incident, apologises to his group and makes reparations for what they had done. He practically prepared his group and started mobilising material resources for the violent battle (stacking up guns and other ammunitions in the group's different centres). The fact that his organisation had become more established at this time, made this a bit easier. With the group's experience of activism and level of operation in the region, activists were likely going to see the need for such form of activism, especially if there is a believe that it would protect the group's hard earned resources. Movement actors are more likely to be convinced on the need to resort to arms in case whereby such groups have more to lose, than when they had not infested much in the group. The call for violence is more likely to evoke more support from the group because the group had more to lose if they were decimated (Hafez and Wiktorowicz, 2004). If inaction entails continuous loss, it was more likely that there was a greater inclination towards risk to mitigate the losses.

Ideologically, this also makes sense. Now, the Borno state government can no longer use "ignorance" as an excuse for not implementing Shari'a. Having repeatedly argued publicly and in

the different Shari'a boards, the state's political rulers have been duly informed; hence it is no longer inappropriate to use armed struggle against them.

#### **5.4 Mobilisatory Resources**

Two main mobilisatory resources helped Yusuf to mobilise his activists for this strategy: financial resources and the group's centres. A significant amount of BH's financial resources were generated internally through monthly dues and financial contributions by members of BH themselves. At the peak of the group's popularity (2006-2007), it is believed that Yusuf had also encouraged his members to sell-off their goods and property and commit the money to the cause<sup>107</sup>. Most of his followers contributed, and from these contributions, Yusuf was also able to provide some form of welfare assistance to the particularly impoverished members of his group. Other than this, other forms of funding for the group were also generated through selling his audio recordings and books (pamphlets). Like most known religious imams in the region, Yusuf made and released audio recordings in the markets among his sympathisers. This served two purposes: disseminate his message and generate funding for his group. The money from this was channelled to the group's cause.

Other financial resources may have come to the group from some of the politicians within the region. In the past, politicians such as Ali Ndume, a former governor of Bauchi state (1999-2007) and a serving Nigerian senator representing Bauchi South; Alhaji Shettimma Pindar, Nigerian former Ambassador to Sao Tome and Principe, Adamu Dibal, the former deputy governor of Borno state known to have helped negotiate for Yusuf's return from Saudi Arabia after the Kanama violent incidents (Amaechi, 2013; Williams and Guttschuss, 2012:24). These allegations got much credence when the Nigerian Former President made an audacious statement in 2012 that BH had infiltrated the different arms of the government, as well as the security agencies such as the police and the army (Smith, 2015). Other reports have also linked people like Buji Foi and the former governor, Sheriff who had entered into an agreement with Yusuf earlier, stating that they have all been identified as possible sponsors of the group at that time. Some of these reports claim that the

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<sup>107</sup> Interview by the author with an anonymous Izala scholar at Kano (March 2017).

governor may have funnelled funds to the group through Foi when his relationship with Yusuf was good (Smith, 2015).

Other reports (Smith, 2015) even claimed that Sheriff's pact with Yusuf included monetary support for the group. These claims were re-enforced by the extra judicial killing of Buji Foi by the Nigerian security forces in the peak of BH's violent crack-down in 2009. A video on YouTube shows the defenceless former Commissioner being brutally shot multiple times by the Nigerian security forces<sup>108</sup>; many within the Nigerian public believe that Foi was murdered from the governor's order, to prevent him from exposing his financial involvement with the group. Although most of these claims are very difficult to verify, due to BH's continuous underground nature, it is not unreasonable to believe that some Northern Nigerian politicians had supported and may have provided Yusuf and his group some sort of material support in the early stages of the group. With the little popularity the group enjoyed at the time, due to its anti-establishment rhetoric, it would make sense for politicians to align with the group. This is probably what prompted Sheriff's earlier alliance with Yusuf, and the consequent appointment of his (Yusuf's) collaborator to his cabinet. Such was a calculated political move by the ex-governor to cement his alliance with Yusuf and his group. It should be stressed however that Sheriff and many of the other northern Nigerian politicians implicated in such reports have continued to deny these reports (Smith, 2015). With Yusuf dead, perhaps nobody would ever know some of the Nigerian politicians involved in the group at this stage.

Beyond Nigeria, it is very likely that Yusuf may have had financial support from his 'friends' in either Saudi Arabia or elsewhere (Zenn, 2018:121; Kassim, 2018:11). It is not clear, who these friends were. The first possible sponsor was al-Qaeda, since he had already indicated his interest in Nigeria, and may have also followed this up with the establishment of the Kanama camp. If he had supported the establishment of the Kanama camp in 2002, it was unlikely that he was going to discontinue supporting the mission that promised some sort of continuity in the region. However, in the face of no serious evidence, I am a bit sceptical to make this conclusion. As I see it any conclusion of al-Qaeda's support of Yusuf at this time, should be more of a hypothesis, until

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<sup>108</sup>Video about Foi's death is still available online on YouTube at: <https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=Buji+Foi%2c+killed+by+the+police%2c+you+tube+video&view=detail&mid=013680B8D32751B7DEF5013680B8D32751B7DEF5&FORM=VIRE>

there is more evidence to justify it. What is clear in any case is that Yusuf did have some sort of financial resources at this time, albeit small. With such resources, he and his group were able to acquire different ammunition such as bows and arrows, daggers, machetes, some locally made guns, a few bomb making materials, a few Kalashnikovs and a number of AK 47s<sup>109</sup>. Some of these ammunitions were recovered by the police in the aftermath of the first violent altercation with the security forces. According to my respondents, they purchased most of these ammunitions from the black market, across the region's border with Niger and Cameroon. They stocked them up in the group's different centres around the region, to be used when they finally began the violent jihad against the Borno state government. The availability of such ammunitions brought in more emboldenement for the group's all-out assault on the Nigerian security forces.

Another important resource that helped Yusuf mobilise support for violence against the Nigerian security forces at this time was the group's centres and its organisational structure. The fact that Yusuf had already existing centres in the different regions at this period helped him concretise the importance of this strategy and advance its use against the state. Within the physical structure of these centres, Yusuf and the different group leaders had a religio-social platform to showcase the group's acquired ammunition, as well as prepare their followers to prepare for the ordeal that await them once the violent jihad was declared. My respondents explained how within these centres, Yusuf and other leaders in the group gathered members of the group, trained them on how to use the ammunitions, provided information about potential attacks and articulately discussed the group's plans going forward<sup>110</sup>. The arrangement of meetings at these centres brought-in more legitimacy to the use of such strategies in a very volatile environment. Such legitimacy would further embolden activists, for the task ahead.

The group's first strike occurred on 26 July 2009 in the city of Bauchi (where had very loyal disciples), many kilometres away from where the police attack happened. Reports from Smith, (2015) put the estimated number of Boko Haram members involved with this attack at 70. Armed with locally made guns and grenades, the activists from the Bauchi branch descended on two

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<sup>109</sup> Separate interviews by the author with an anonymous JTF personnel and a Nigerian police officer in Kaduna, (March 2017).

<sup>110</sup> Interview by the author, with two anonymous Ahlus Sunna clerics in Kaduna (February 2018).

locations: a police station and a mosque belonging to *Izala*. The local police there were completely taken unawares. Not prepared for this kind of attack, the few policemen on duty on the station had to abandon their duty posts. It needed new larger deployment from the state command to keep the attackers from breaking into the armoury.

This was just the beginning. In the coming days, BH activists in other parts of the region would follow up this attack with similar, but more coordinated attacks. Probably energised by the availability of a few AK 47s, grenades, and some locally made weapons such as bows and arrows, as well as the success of the Bauchi attacks; they descended on police stations in Potiskum in Yusuf's home state of Yobe, and in Wudil area in Kano state. In Maiduguri (the city, where BH's has its strongest support), the group also attacked three local police stations (including the police headquarters), police training camp and a prison (Smith, 2015). These series of attack would change the group's narrative, from being a group which merely preached anti-state jihadi messages, to a group now willing to use violent strategies to achieve their aim. The dynamics have now changed.

To continue to mobilise his group, Yusuf consistently framed the group's violence as not only necessary, but also as a defence strategy to circumvent attacks by the Nigerian security forces. This is how he put it in his speech:

The same way they gunned down our brothers on the way, they will one day come to our gathering and open fire if we allow this to go unchallenged. The way they did this; they will commit terrorist acts against women if they are allowed. We'd rather die than to wait for them to commit aggression against our women or to come to our gathering and humiliate us. You should know we would never keep silent and allow anyone to humiliate us. It's not possible for someone to come and shoot our brothers. We take them to hospital and bear their medical bills while [the shooter] goes home, without giving a damn. It's not possible.... Mad soldiers. As long as they are not withdrawn from the city, there will be no peace<sup>111</sup>

This kind of framing, resonated with the activists not only because it emphasised the activist's sense of solidarity with their wounded and slain brothers, it evoked a sense of self-defence. In this

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<sup>111</sup> Yusuf's video still available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9nYGyYEA1Y8>

situation, violent retaliation becomes a significant asset for self-defence. Here, inaction is not an option, since it could depict cowardice and loss of even more resources that had already been achieved by the group through many years of activism.

Faced with this situation, the Nigerian government had to respond. In the next few days, Umar Yaradua (the then Nigerian President) would commission a new set of security personnel, the Nigerian Joint Task Force (JTF), to assist the local security forces in dealing with the situation in the region. According to a security report I obtained from one of my JTF respondents, who was part of the first group of security personnel deployed to the region, the JTF's mission was simple: "to bring calm and normalcy to the states where BH is causing problems, with immediate effect" (JTF Security Report on Boko Haram, 2009:2). This, as the respondent explained, entailed "crushing Yusuf and his group, so that calm will return to the region." In justifying this, he explained that "The Federal government could not just fold their hands and watch BH continue to cause havoc and disturb public peace. We had to go and restore peace and order to the region"<sup>112</sup>. That was exactly what they did. This is how another member of the JTF personnel puts it:

The government could not afford to continue to let the group operate freely when they are continuously threatening to bring down a democratically constituted state. The government had two choices, either they check-mated the group's excesses or they crush the group immediately. Whichever one they choose; the use of force was absolutely necessary<sup>113</sup>.

Obviously, the state would choose the second option. In the coming days, the military troops sent to the region would help the local police in the region violently crush the group. For few days, members of the security forces roamed the streets of Maiduguri, indiscriminately arresting, detaining and killing people suspected to be members of the Yusuf's group. But, as they went deeper, Boko-Haram also fought back with the resources at their disposal, making the environment even more tense than it already was. Due to lack of experience and the numerical advantage of the security forces, the group would suffer a lot of casualties. Probably, sensing that they did not have much chance against the well-equipped security forces, the group would also change tactics. Most of them began roaming the Maiduguri streets in the night; fighting and indiscriminately killing the

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<sup>112</sup> Interview by the author with anonymous JTF member in Kaduna (March 2017).

<sup>113</sup> Interview by the author with anonymous JTF member in Kaduna (March 2017).

police and people suspected to be members of the JTF. However, this could still not match the JTF's military power. Within a few days, an estimated 800 members of the group were rounded up. Many others were also killed (Smith, 2015). Through this state violence, peace and order were temporarily restored in the region.

While this approach (at least from the security forces perspective) in the short term helped calm the situation, it would turn out to be one of most significant motivating factors for further development of violence. By proactively and openly subjecting BH activists and suspected sympathisers to such violent inhumane abuses, the Nigerian security forces indirectly antagonised hitherto inactive supporters and sympathisers, as well as gave Yusuf and the BH leadership the tools to not only intensify their members' moral outrage, but also to use it to encourage and justify the resolve to adopt violence. In such cases, violence becomes not only a tool to stop the security forces' abuse on both the activists and the sympathisers, but also an element to justify the employment of violence against the members of the security forces. This is how Yusuf puts it one of his sermons after these attacks:

What I said previously, that we are going to be attacked by the authorities, has manifested itself in Bauchi, where about 40 of our brothers were killed, their mosque and homes burnt down completely, and several others were injured and about a hundred are presently in detention. Therefore, we will not agree with this kind of humiliation. We are ready to die together with our brothers and we would never concede<sup>114</sup>

Even my respondents who were members of the security forces found themselves confirming that the violent exploitations and the excessive use of force by the security on the activists and sympathisers had an impact on why the group's adoption of violence. In a very rare admission, another high ranking JTF member told me:

Sometimes I have gotten angry at some of my colleagues. Yes, these BH people are animals, but when we engaged with them in such manners, we give them and their sympathisers the tools to hate us more. Look at this video, (showing me a video, depicting BH suspects being shot by members of the security forces), how can you

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<sup>114</sup> Yusuf's speech still available online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BxZXhOpmqSU>

not be angry, after watching this video? Some of my colleagues were simply carried away. They thought that they were in a war. They forgot that they are soldiers, not murderers. Remember to be a soldier during war, is different from being a murderer. When you are murderer, you simply play into the hands of terrorists. Our attitude had given Boko Haram the motivation to recruit members to attack us<sup>115</sup>.

Operating in the face of this kind of repression, Yusuf's followers easily become drawn to answer the call to adopt violence, not necessarily because it was as a natural response to defend themselves, but because it gave them a sense of solidarity with other mistreated activists.

Some of my respondents, who were living in the region, particularly in Maiduguri during this period described the situation as "a complete war"<sup>116</sup>. According to one victim of BH violence who now was living in one of the camps of people displaced by the BH violence, "there was a complete and total chaos everywhere on the streets. We practically could not do anything, other than stay home and watch the violence between the security forces and BH unfold."<sup>117</sup> For three days, the group was locked in an armed battle with the security forces. The roads were completely deserted. The residents of the city had to take cover in churches and military barracks, to avoid being caught in the crossfire. Dozens of people presumed to be high profile members of the group were abducted and killed. Some who were presumed to be low key members and sympathizers were simply locked up and taken to undisclosed police stations. Despite all this, BH kept fighting and continued to push the security forces back.

The environment was tense, even on the third day after the military had been heavily reinforced by the regional military divisional headquarters in Jos. According to Smith's (2015) report, the security forces had on this day (28<sup>th</sup> of July 2009) sought to crush the group once and for all. After getting troop reinforcements from the military regional headquarters in Jos, they tactically executed a well-coordinated military attack on the group's mosque and its headquarters. Within a few hours, they were able to reduce the group's mosque and headquarters to rubble. The result of this would be piles of dead bodies. Yet, somehow Yusuf managed to survive and escape from his domicile, although soldiers remained on his trail.

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<sup>115</sup> Interview by the author with an anonymous JTF personnel in Abuja (March 2017).

<sup>116</sup> A discussion from two focus group interviews (April 2017).

<sup>117</sup> Focus group interview by the author (April 2017).

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of July, the attacks finally paid-off after the soldiers were tipped off that he was hiding in his father in-law's barn, not far away from the mosque. He was subsequently arrested and handed over to the police alive. However, he was later shot by the police, multiple times on the chest and at back of the head (Walker, 2012:8; Williams and Guttschuss, 2012:34). The police, though, had a different version of how the BH founder was killed. A few hours after his death, the Nigerian police officials offered at least two different contradictory versions of what happened. While one version claimed that Yusuf was shot while he was trying to escape from police custody; another one claimed that he was killed in a shoot-out between Boko Haram members and security forces. None of these versions are true. The truth is that Yusuf was summarily executed after he was captured alive by the soldiers who carried out the last raid on his father in-laws' barn. The military openly paraded Yusuf before handing him over to the police. He was never killed in a gun shoot-out. It is also not plausible that he would try to escape, considering the tight surveillance which greeted him at the police station, when he was handed over to the police. Instead, he was simply murdered by the police at the police headquarters after he must have been handed over by the JTF. This was confirmed to me by many of my sources<sup>118</sup>.

One eye witness interviewed by the Human Rights Watch, described seeing Yusuf handcuffed and sitting on the ground, saying that they should pray for him, when three enraged policemen opened fire on him. According to her, after questioning him for more than one hour, the police simply shot him in the head, the stomach and in the chest: "They first shot him in the chest and stomach and another came and shot him in the back of his head", the woman told the Human Rights group (Williams and Guttschuss, 2012:35). This version was also corroborated by the US State Department's Country Reports on Terrorism in Nigeria, for 2009:

The Nigerian military captured Maiduguri-based Boko Haram spiritual leader Mohammed Yusuf alive after a siege of his compound, and turned him over to Maiduguri police, whose colleagues had been killed by the group. A local policeman summarily executed Yusuf in front of the station in full view of onlookers, after

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<sup>118</sup> Interview by the author with separate anonymous interviews with Nigerian police officers and members of the JTF in Kaduna (February and March 2017). This information has also been corroborated in many previous research (Comolli, 2015; Smith, 2015; Williams and Guttschuss, 2012).

parading him before television cameras (Country Report on Terrorism Nigeria, 2009).

Later that day, images of what turned out to be Yusuf's dead body were shown to journalists, with his lifeless body tossed with dirt and riddled with bullet wounds<sup>119</sup>.

I was lucky to have spoken to one of the police officers<sup>120</sup> who was believed to have shot Yusuf in Maiduguri, when he was handed over to the police by the JTF. Now stationed in another big city in the region, I was given his contact by some of two of his colleagues who worked together in Maiduguri. Initially, he was reluctant to talk about the shooting of Yusuf. In the beginning of the interview, he tactically avoided discussing how Yusuf was killed. But as the conversation went on, he changed his mind, and become more talkative. He admitted to shooting the BH leader, however justified it by saying that he was only following "instructions from the *Oga* on top". He refused to explain further, when I queried him further on what he meant by that; or who the *Oga* on top was: Do you mean, your Police Commander, or the Borno state governor, I asked. He would not answer further, instead, he just looked at me sternly and asked that we leave that subject at that for now. And I respected his decision, I changed the subject.

However, some of his colleagues were not as taciturn as he was. Most of them were eager to point out to me that they had been within the vicinity where the BH founder was shot. They were also quick to explain to me that there was no order from the state or the Federal government to kill Yusuf. Rather what had happened according to one of them was that there was an unspoken agreement among the local police officers, that "the best way to put the BH insurgency to bed once and for all, was to eliminate the group leader, especially after he and his group had been involved in the death of some of the local police officers. Thus, seeing Yusuf delivered into their hands by the military on one of those raids, was a golden opportunity, no local police officer would afford to let go. "The police officer who killed him, may have done so not only because he wanted to avenge the deaths of his colleagues, but because he must have thought that it would help eliminate the threat of BH once and for all. There was no other reason" I did not bother trying to corroborate the veracity of any of these explanations because I did not think it had much significance on why the group adopted violence. What was important to me was to understand how the BH founder

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<sup>119</sup> Focus group interview by the author with victims of BH (April 2017).

<sup>120</sup> Interview by the author with a Nigerian Police officer (Kaduna, March 2017).

was brutally murdered in the hands of the security forces, and how this may have influenced the trajectory of violence in the organisation later. For whatever reason, it was, it did not have much theoretical significance on the how the group had adopted violence.

This kind of intentional extra-judicial killing is consistent with possible result of the approach adopted by the Nigerian security forces at the onset of the onslaught on the group. The security forces had started the onslaught against the group with the mentality that BH had to be crushed at all cost. In implementing this mandate, the Nigerian security forces had committed severe human right abuses. In the wake of the final raid at the Yusuf's father in-law's house, the security forces had been accused of rounding up young men they suspected of being Boko Haram members and forcing them to kneel or lie on the ground, then shooting them point blank without trial (Smith, 2015). In a particularly hard-to-watch video, alleged security forces were seen shooting dead a number of young men in that way. In another similar video, a man identified as Buji Foi, the former commissioner for Religious Affairs for Borno state and prominent Boko Haram member, can also be seen being forced to walk before being shot dead by the security forces. Yusuf's father-in-law, Baba Fugu Mohammed would also meet similar fate. On invitation by the local police on the 31 July, the day after Yusuf was killed, the old man was summarily executed at the Maiduguri local police station. In 2012, his family was later compensated by the government, with a payment of 100 million naira (about 5 million Rand), after they had refused for nearly two years to pay damages for the unlawful death of Baba Fugu Mohammed.

All these would temporarily bring the insurgency to an end. Other surviving members of the group including Shakau (Yusuf's deputy, who was brutally wounded), to go underground, into the neighbouring camps of similar ideological groups outside Nigeria. Not much was heard of the group, until December 2009 when it re-emerged; this time with more determination to fight the Nigerian state, as well as avenge the death of its former leader, Yusuf.

## **5.5 Summary**

This chapter set out to analyse the evolution of violent activism in BH. It was part of a general attempt to answer the thesis' second main research question: What conditions triggered BH's use of violence against the Nigerian State? Given that Yusuf and his group had already ideologically

moved to a jihadi position, the question was not just about ‘why’; but about also about “when”. In other words: When did the group start to see elements within the Nigerian State as a legitimate target for jihadi violence? What conditions and experiences around the group helped accelerate and justify the group’s use of this strategy at the time they did?

To contextualise these, the chapter began with a brief recap and description of how Yusuf returned to Nigeria, after staying away in Saudi Arabia at the dawn of the Nigerian government’s destruction of the Kanama camp. It described how the former *Ahlu Sunna* actor was able to build a new formidable organisation, with possible financial assistance from his ‘friends’ in Saudi Arabia. For few years, the group operated more like a moderate revivalist activist group, agitating mostly to change the region and country’s political system. They generally abstained from the use of violence. The chapter argued that despite the group’s disposition to violence from the ideological perspective, the use and adoption of this element only evolved in June 2009, after the group had become well established in the region and had already had an experience with working within the Borno state government. These interrelated conditions informed internal debate and accelerated the use of this element.

Two main conditions were identified as most important here: the group’s brief involvement with the Borno state Government and the Borno state government’s (in conjunction with the Nigerian government) method of policing in the wake of the group’s increase anti-state and violent rhetoric. With Yusuf’s group growing popularity in early 2007, the group’s leader was able to enter into a ‘pact’ with an upcoming governor of Borno state, Ali Modu Sheriff, to support his political campaigns. The governor in return promised a stricter implementation of Shari’a, something Yusuf and his group had been championing. Upon his electoral victory, the new governor partly fulfilled his promise by re-appointing Yusuf’s friend, Buju Foi as the state’s Commissioner for Religious Affairs. Yusuf himself became a representative in the state’s local Shari’a board. Given such access to power, Yusuf now had the opportunity to push for his al-Shari’a agenda. But because Yusuf and his organisation’s agendas were completely unviable and considered to be very extreme given the various aspects of the political terrain, the state had no choice, but to isolate him. Frustrated, Yusuf and his friend resigned from their positions. Since having very little pathway to achieve the organisation’s *al-Shari’a* goals through state legitimate means, unorthodox means such as violence soon became more appealing as an appropriate tool. Moreover, this also synchronised with Yusuf’s

ideas that jihadi violence could only be permitted in situations when political rulers could no longer use 'ignorance' as an excuse for not enforcing al-Shari'a. So, Yusuf believes that having made his case in the different state's Shari'a institutions, political rulers in the state could now no longer claim ignorant. Therefore, the group is justified ideologically and ready to begin armed struggle against the state, especially the Borno state government.

In the coming days, Yusuf would begin to tune up his anti-state rhetoric, and in some cases threatened that he would depose both the Borno state government and the Nigerian State. For this, he was on many occasions, arrested and detained. Twice Yusuf was charged. In late 2008, him and his deputy, Shekau were also banned from preaching in public by the Borno state government. The government also consistently increased the militarisation of the region, to checkmate Yusuf and his group's activities. However, as the group's goal of changing to *al-Shari'a* system remain unaccomplished, all these measures further pushed the group into becoming more emboldened to adopt violence against the state. With access to some resources (in the form of finance and the group's centres), Yusuf was able to articulate these frustrations into more coordinated collective violence against the Borno state government and the Nigerian security forces.

A violent clash between the group and some members of the state's Operation Flush Task Force II, where some members of the group were killed will finally push the group over the line. In response to the assault, Yusuf called for the state to apologise and make up for what he believed was an injustice on his men. When nothing of this came, Yusuf and his group vowed to retaliate. Having been "well-prepared" for this day, he was able to mobilise his group to launch attacks on the security forces, relying mostly on the group's Salafi-jihadism ideology. Having the *Ibn Taymiyyah* centre (as well as other different cells scattered in other parts of the region) as the religio- physical space to plan and execute his violent attacks on the security forces, made this task easier. In response, the Nigerian government would launch a major "political crackdown" on the group. Led by a newly formed JTF, the state descended on the group. But as they attacked, BH fought back, leading to total chaos in the region. Violence finally ended on the 30<sup>th</sup> of July when the military captured Yusuf. They handed him over to the local police at the Maiduguri police station, who later executed him, putting an end to group, at least so they thought.

All these highlight the importance of interactions between the state and movement actors in the understanding of how SOMOs adopt violence as a strategy for goal attainment. Actors within

SOMOs often do this, not necessarily because of the Salafi ideological dispositions existing prior to participation in the organisations, but also because of the experience of activism and interactions between the group and the state in the socio-political environment in which they operate. As the BH case clearly illustrates, it is such interactions that often set the context and encourage justification for the mobilisation and adoption of such strategy at the particular “time” such strategies evolve.

The nature of State response to SOMOs is also particularly significant. The paradox of state’s violent response is that, while it can repress movements because of its destabilising nature, violent response can create more crisis and conditions for SOMOs to adopt and justify further violence. As also illustrated by Hafez and Wiktorowicz (2004) the collective action variant of escalation in violence in SOMOs is often more likely to be reinforced and justified when the state escalates its violent contention as either defensive or deterring measure. In such situation, reciprocated violent activism is more likely going to resonate with activists because it easily feeds into SOMOs leadership’s narrative as a defence strategy. Of course, activists could act because they want to achieve a purpose; but they are more likely to act if they believe that inaction could be worse – it could lead to loss of hard-earned movement resources or to total annihilation of the group. If inaction entails continuous loss, it is more likely that there would be greater inclination towards risk to mitigate the losses.

## **CHAPTER SIX: BOKO HARAM'S RESOURCES AND SUSTENANCE OF ARMED VIOLENCE**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This is the last chapter on data. The chapter analyses how other sophisticated forms of violence evolved and are sustained in the group after 2009. Some of the main forms of violence to be analysed are professional targeted assassinations, guerrilla warfare, suicide bombings, kidnappings for ransom and armed bank-robberies. The chapter begins with a quick historical outline of how the group re-emerged from the violent crack-down by the Nigerian security forces in 2009. It will explain how the trajectory of the above-mentioned forms of violence is connected to the several socio-political conditions and internal dynamics in the group. These include the group's mutual co-operation with similar brother organisations (particularly AQIM, al-Shabaab and Islamic State), the internal competition between the different factions of the group and the group leadership's framings of the group's activism as a form of battle between "true Muslims" and non-believers. The chapter argues that these conditions have enabled the mobilisation of more resources, within which the group has been able to develop and sustain these different forms of violence amidst more militarised Northern Nigeria.

### **6.2 Profiling the Re-Emergence of Boko Haram (2010-2016)**

The Nigerian government's 2009 crack-down on BH temporarily put an end to their violent campaign. With the death of Yusuf, and a complete destruction of the group's Ibn Taymiyya centre in Maiduguri, all the surviving members of the group were either forced to flee the country or forced to go underground (Kassim, 2018). From August 2009, not much was heard from the group in the region until the beginning of 2010 when audios and video clips of the group started to circulate in the region (Smith, 2015). In the videos, the group through its new leader, Abubakar Shekau, they presented themselves as innocent victims of the Nigerian state's brutal oppression.

They also threatened revenge on the Nigerian government's security operatives, for the death of their leader<sup>121</sup>.

Abubakar Shekau is a well-known figure both within the BH circle and the Nigerian security community. He had been a close confidant of Yusuf and had also preached alongside the late BH's leader during their formative years in Maiduguri. As I recounted in the last chapter, he was banned alongside Yusuf from preaching in the public by the Yobe and Borno state governments in 2008. Some of my sources say that the relationship between both men goes way back to 1998/1999, when both men studied in Maiduguri. They had met through Mamman Nur, another high profile BH member, who studied theology with them. From there, the friendship between the three men had flourished all through the group's formative years<sup>122</sup>. Under him, BH had modified its organisational structure previously established by Yusuf. Rather than a strict organisational structure, the group now maintains a loose command-and-control structure, which allows its different cells to operate autonomously. Each of the cells and units are interlinked, and generally take directives from him, Shekau.

The genealogy of his birth is not very clear. However, many within the Nigerian security community believe that he was born in a village in the north-eastern part of Yobe state known as Shekau<sup>123</sup>. This is probably where he got the name 'Shekau'. He and Yusuf are from the Kanuri ethnic group. Since he took over, Shekau had been the main face of the group's violent campaign both against the Nigerian state as well the Nigerian neighbouring countries such as Niger, Cameroon and Chad. He had capitalised on the group's new relationship with GSPC/AQIM after 2009 to mobilise resources for other forms of activism he construes as useful for the attainment of the group's goals. Most of these are detailed in the internal letters released by AQIM in 2017, and in some of the files recovered in the US raid of Osama bin Laden's house in 2011, released by the U.S. Office of the Director of National Intelligence. These will be discussed in the up-coming sections below.

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<sup>121</sup> Some of these clips are still available online. An example of one of such clips could be found at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ChTgAjpoyY>.

<sup>122</sup> Interview by the author with two anonymous police officers in Kaduna (February and March 2017).

<sup>123</sup> Several interviews by the author with police officers and JTF personnel (February and March 2017).

From early 2010, Shekau had led BH to an increased number of violent activisms both within and outside Nigeria. Following his ascension to BH's leadership, he had followed up the release of the early footages with assassinations of local clerics and members of the security forces, with his men carrying out the attacks in a hit and run fashion. In September 2010, he led his men in a very complicated prison break in Jos, Bauchi state. In a well-planned and coordinated attack, the group had descended on the Bauchi Federal Prison, housing more than 700 inmates, including about 150 BH activists captured during the 2009 violent assault. Heavily armed with automatic rifles, and professionally made bombs, they sporadically shot at the prison gates and forced their way into the prison.

The group also followed up these kinds of attacks with a series of guerrilla warfare campaigns and attacks throughout the region, assassinating politicians and policemen who dared to criticize them or stood on their way. Such individuals include: Abbas Annas bin Umar, the brother of the Shehu of Borno (30<sup>th</sup> May 2011), Bashir Kashara, a prominent cleric (9<sup>th</sup> October 2010), Ibrahim Ahmad Abdulahi Bolori, a "non-violent Islamic preacher" (13<sup>th</sup> March 2011), Ibrahim Birkuti, a well-known popular cleric (7<sup>th</sup> June 2011), Mallam Dalu, another well-known cleric in Maiduguri and Babakura Fugu, a brother-in-law of Muhammad Yusuf, who had attended peace talks with former president Obasanjo (Amaechi, 2013). All these were people who had in one way or the other cooperated with the government or openly criticised the group. Targeting them was a way of creating fear among the people and the general population, to deter them from cooperating with the Nigerian government in working against the group in the future. In the wake of the Borno state government's refusal to return the group's centre in Maiduguri, BH had also assassinated the Borno state's gubernatorial leading candidate, Alhaji Modu Fannami Guio, together with his brother and 5 police officers. According to the group's spokesman in a statement released to the press after the attack, the popular politician had been a vocal critic of the group, since its re-emergence (Amaechi, 2013). He had also been an ally of the incumbent State governor Ali Modu Sherif, who the group believed refused to return the group's mosque to them (Williams and Guttschuss, 2012:54). This new tactic had become part of BH's new form of violent strategy.

From 2011 to 2016<sup>124</sup>, the group has also been able to develop other different sophisticated tactics to attack different segments of the Nigerian society and beyond. From the hit and run attacks, the group has graduated to the use of different advanced forms of violence such as suicide violence (mostly with bombs), kidnapping for ransom, arm robberies and guerrilla warfare. Under the guidance of different splinter group leaderships, BH had consistently used its mutual co-operations and relationships with similar brother groups to innovate and advance the use of these methods. Such methods have made it easier for the group to attack state institutions, international institutions, churches, mosques, media houses, security personnel, religious leaders, politicians and ordinary civilians both within and outside the region. In 2014, the group has also been able to use some of these methods to capture cities such as Gwoza (August 2014), Bama (September 2014), and Mubi (September 2014), uniting them with the areas around the already dominated Sambisa forest, as part of a utopic Jihadist Islamic Caliphate. These cities would later be rescued by the combined effort of the Nigerian government security forces, and that of the combined forces of the regional governments of Cameroon, Chad and Niger. Amidst these increased violent interactions with state actors, the group had in 2014 recognized the establishment of the new Islamic State. They would finally pledge allegiance to Isis in 2015, leading to further mobilisation of resources for the development of new forms of violence to carry-out its attacks in Nigerian and beyond.

### **6.3 Connecting the Interactions and Mutual Co-operation with AQIM and Al-Shabaab to the Development and Sustenance of the Specific Forms of Violence in Boko Haram**

In analysing the data, one theme that emerged as a major condition for the emergence of the different forms of violent strategy adopted by BH in 2010 was the mutual co-operation and interactions between BH leadership and other similar SOMOs, particularly AQIM and al-Shabaab. These interactions are detailed in three documents: two files recovered in Osama bin Laden's bookshelf by the US Navy SEAL, titled "Letters from 'Abdallah Abu Zayd 'Abd-al-Hamid<sup>125</sup> to Abu

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<sup>124</sup> As most of the data for the study were collected in early 2017, the study has not analysed most of BH's activities beyond 2016.

<sup>125</sup> 'Abdallah Abu Zayd 'Abd-al-Hamid was AQIM's regional commander in Tariq (Tariq ibn Ziyad Brigade in the Sahel).

Mus'ab 'Abd-al-Wadud<sup>126</sup> and "A Letter to Osama bin Laden", released in March 2016<sup>127</sup> and January 2017<sup>128</sup> by the US office of the Director of the National Intelligence; and another file titled "Documents for Advice and Shari'a Instruction to the Fighters in Nigeria", released by a representative of AQIM, Abu Num'an Qutayba al-Shinqiti<sup>129</sup> in April 2017<sup>130</sup>. I will use details in these letters to discuss how these mutual co-operations and relationships influenced the evolution and sustenance of some of the main forms of violence that evolved in BH, between the end of 2009 and the end of 2012.

### ***6.3.1 Lone Professional Targeted Assassinations and Guerrilla Warfare in Boko Haram (2010-2011)***

Letters between Abdallah Abu Zayd 'Abd-al-Hamid's and Abu Mus'ab 'Abd-al-Wadud accurately reveal how most of the surviving members of BH after the 2009 violent crack-down escaped into militant training camps in Algeria, Mauritania and Somalia, organised by AQIM and al-Shabaab. The letter also showed how Shekau himself survived the 2009 violent onslaught. Contrary to what people within the Nigerian security community believed<sup>131</sup>, the new BH leader was not killed. Rather he sustained some serious injuries from the 2009 crackdown. As a result, he was able to relocate to a hideout in the Northern Cameroon, where he recuperated. He would take over the group's leadership at the death of Yusuf after he had fully recovered from the injuries. Before his death, Yusuf had nominated him alongside Muhammad Auwal or Salisu Wudil as his possible successors<sup>132</sup>. However, because Muhammad Auwal died in the 2009 uprising, and the whereabouts of Salisu Wudil remained unknown, Shekau was made to take over the group's

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<sup>126</sup> Abu Mus'ab 'Abd-al-Wadud was AQIM's over all Commander.

<sup>127</sup> These documents are available on the Website of the US Director of National Intelligence at: <https://www.dni.gov/index.php/features/bin-laden-s-bookshelf?start=1>.

<sup>128</sup> These documents are available on the Website of the US Director of National Intelligence at: <https://www.dni.gov/index.php/newsroom/press-releases/press-releases-2017/item/1737-closing-the-book-on-bin-laden-intelligence-community-releases-final-abbottabad-documents>.

<sup>129</sup> al-Bulaydi was a member of AQIM's Shura Council. He was killed at the end of 2015 in Algeria in an ambush by Algerian soldiers.

<sup>130</sup> I have not seen this document in its original form. However, extracts from the document were culled from Kassim and Nwankpa's (2018:209-213 and 235-239) Boko Haram Reader.

<sup>131</sup> The Nigerian security had at the dawn of the 2009 crackdown claimed that Shekau was killed alongside Yusuf (Smith, 2015)

<sup>132</sup> Yusuf had also mentioned Shekau as his second in command from a brief interview, he had with the Nigerian security forces before he was murdered (Commoli, 2015:55-58; Smith, 2015). This interview is still available online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ePpUvfTXY7w>

leadership as the only surviving member of the nominated candidates. Consequently, he was elected by the group's Consultative Council to succeed Yusuf.

Abu Zeid's letter dated 24<sup>th</sup> August 2010 explained how desperate the BH activists needed assistance during this period. Desperate to revenge the death of their leader and to cement his control of the group, Shekau reached out to AQIM's leadership. Even without being fully recovered from the gun wounds, he sent delegates to the AQIM leadership to Tariq. The delegates were supposed to deliver a letter to the AQIM overall commander Abdelmalek Droukdel, through Abu Zeid. Here, they were supposed to consult AQIM about advice "on waging jihad in Nigeria", as well as a request for financial support, military training and alliance with the group. The delegates included Khalid al-Barnawi, Abu Muhammad, and Abu Rayhana. In making Shekau's case, the AQIM's Tariq commander also explained to the AQIM's over all commander that the emissaries had trained with the Tariq group of AQIM. Hence, they were already known within their circle. In his words: "they have lived with us previously, and we know them well." This previous knowledge of BH activists, would also make it easier to agree on some of the group's demands. In the coming days, he would set up a line of communication with the group. He also helped them set up a safe training camp in Niger<sup>133</sup>.

In his response to Shekau on another letter dated 30<sup>th</sup> September 2010, Abu Mus`ab `Abd-al-Wadud expressed this willingness to collaborate with BH. He expressed his satisfaction with Shekau's delegate, saying that he and his group (AQIM) sees it as an initiative for good, towards a new era which will confound the Crusader's plan of aggression towards Islam and its people in the Sahelian nations and in Africa generally." He (Abu Mus`ab `Abd-al-Wadud) also affirmed his willingness to effectuate Shekau's request, but however cautioned Shekau to trade carefully when

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<sup>133</sup> The setting up of a safe and training camp in Niger is detailed in another letter the AQIM's regional commander sent to the AQIM's overall commander. In the letter he made a case for AQIM to help Shekau group. According to him, they (BH) had a "big problem with weapons and money; and that they also wanted to establish a safe house in Niger, for the training of their fighters". He also explained that he had already agreed to set up a line of communications between their group and BH, to be based in Niger.

it comes to starting new attacks in Nigeria, to avoid a hasty declaration of jihad without adequate preparation. In his words:

The question of the proclamation of jihad in Nigeria, we advise you not to take any decision or to proclaim anything under the influence of shock, but to put it off until the time is ripe from all perspectives with calm nerves, together with a comprehensive consultation with the jihad leaders in the Islamic world. The present stage is one of good preparation, watching and planning. It is necessary to mobilize the Muslim community in Nigeria to embrace the mujahidin; then it is necessary to prepare well by training and educating the mujahidin, and gathering all the requisite military equipment, especially explosive materials.

Meanwhile, another undated letter discovered at Osama bin Laden's compound in Pakistan in 2011, also confirms that Shekau during this time made a similar request to al-Qaeda itself. In the letter he sought al-Qaeda's imprimatur and indicated his interest to continue to form an alliance with al-Qaeda. "There is nothing remaining than for us to know more about your order and organisation, because the one who does not know his path will be helpless after the journey". Shekau writes. It is not quite clear, why Shekau still saw the need to write to the al-Qaeda leadership, when he had already established a line of communication with its affiliate group. Probably he wanted to solidify the relationship between the groups. For whatever reason, these initial contacts would result to financial assistance and training from the Salafi organisation (s) as evidenced in a letter by Abu Mus'ab `Abd-al-Wadud. In a letter dated July 2010, the AQIM commander instructed the Tariq commander (Abu Zayd), to disburse the sum of 200,000 Euro to the Nigerian organisation. It is likely that this money was delivered to BH, as Shekau would in a subsequent letter to Abu Zayd (dated October 7, 2010), express gratitude to al-Qaeda for the "financial generosity and training" offered to the group by AQIM. The group would also continue to benefit from AQIM's financial support and military training throughout the period (Kassim, 2018).

Any more doubt about these interactions and collaborations were seen from AQIM's activities in the media during this period. In June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2010 for example, AQIM's leader, Abdelmalik Droukdel, openly admitted on Al-Jazeera TV that his group works together with Boko-Haram and that they had would not hesitate to provide Boko Haram with weapons, support and trainings, if

they would ever ask (Amaechi, 2013:80). During this period, the *al-Andalus* Media of AQIM also published Shekau's 'Id al-Fitri sermon, which was the first AQIM's dissemination of an official message attributed to a group other than al-Qaeda or its affiliate (Pham, 2012:5-6). This was followed by the release of three videos from the al-Qaeda offering condolences for the extrajudicial killing of Muhammad Yusuf and other members of the group in the al-Qaeda. In the contexts of the interactions between these groups, these were ways to show solidarity and expression of public support for the group's activism. In the coming days, these solidarity and support would materialise into some funding and support of BH's mission in Nigeria. It would also materialise into training in the use of sophisticated ammunition and provision of funds, within which it is possible for the group to obtain security intelligence and bribe their way<sup>134</sup> through the Nigerian security forces. All these would soon define and shape the group's repertoire of contention when they re-emerged in 2010.

Due to the availability of such financial resources and military training in Niger, Shekau and his group gradually became very emboldened to carry-out significant attacks, including the attack on the Jos Federal prison (7<sup>th</sup> September 2010) and the professional style assassinations of politicians and Islamic clerics who had spoken out against the group. It cannot be a coincidence that most of these attacks had happened mostly after Shekau acknowledged the reception of the financial assistance and military training from AQIM. All the attacks involved the kind of sophistication and high-level professional training that was not existent among BH members in 2009. It is such trainings and material support that made it possible for a previously ill-equipped group to carry out such attacks amidst highly militarised environment.

Ideologically, Shekau did not need to go far to find justifications for this form of violence. Given the group's late leaders' construction of the group's activism, he could justify violent activism as a sort religious moral duty. In the adoption of violence in the group, the late Yusuf had often presented the group's activists and the entire Muslim constituency in the region as 'victims' rather than the aggressors in the trajectory of violence in the region. In the previously cited "Open Letter to the Federal Government of Nigeria"<sup>135</sup> he delivered shortly before the uprising in 2009, for

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<sup>134</sup> Many of my respondents confirmed that BH had many security personnel under their payroll. Before conducting attacks, they often rely on security intelligence from these officers.

<sup>135</sup> This video was accessed from YouTube on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2017 at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f89PvcpWSRg>.

example, Yusuf documented what he conceived to be a pattern of anti-Muslim violence in Nigeria. He mentioned famous Muslim Christian clashes: the 1987 riots in Kafanchan, Kaduna State; the 1992 killings in Zangon-Kataf, Kaduna; and cyclical violence in Plateau State, dating to 1994. In consistent with his previous anti-state rhetoric, he also told his audience that the Nigerian Federal Government itself had never been established to do justice; instead “it has been built to attack Islam and kill Muslims”. In the wake of a massacre of the Muslim community murdered in Onitsha (in 2006), the capital of Anambra State in the Southern part of Nigeria; in retaliation of the murder of Christians murdered in the North after demonstrations against cartoons of Muhammad published in Denmark, Yusuf told his audience:

Once (the Christians) have power, once they have control, they show no mercy, they show no forgiveness. In Onitsha, they killed everyone. That’s why we can’t put down our arms. Allah said: ‘You should always carry your weapons with you.’ Hide them! Allah didn’t tell you to leave your weapons behind. Because if they gain an advantage over you, they won’t spare you. You can’t love them, you can’t show them love, but you can show resistance. When the Prophet was chased from Medina, it was the same people, the same infidels. The same people that chased the Prophet from Medina today draw cartoons of him. Why would you love those people? Because they’re good at football? Would you wear a shirt with the name of someone who doesn’t carry Allah in his heart? Like Ronaldo? Why would you love those people? Because they do politics? Because they make movies? Can you even think of Muslims being in Guantánamo? In Iraq, people have been humiliated in their homes, in their own country. They built their country, and they were forced to go on their hands and knees. They were stripped and then raped by dogs. Can you imagine? To strip a woman and have her raped by a dog? Can you remain silent before such humiliations? Remain silent, and on Judgment Day, Allah will hold you accountable.... Even faced with the worst attacks, we cannot back down. The prophets were tortured, but they didn’t backdown.... The *chehi* ‘martyr’ is he who practices Islam properly. If he’s killed, Allah will save him, and he’ll be reborn into another life.... (Yusuf’s sermon quoted in Apard, 2015:44-45).

Although this kind of framing was not the only influence upon which the activists engaged with the state security forces then, it was obviously useful in providing Yusuf with the needed ideological resource upon which mobilisation for such activism was sustained during that period.

Emerging in 2010, Shekau consolidate this kind of framing. This time the group had even more reason to attack the Nigerian government, namely, the brutal assassination of the group's activists, especially their leader Yusuf. Having these issues in the background, he consistently appropriated narratives that intensified the sense that the state was systematically victimising Muslims. This is how he puts it in one of his first public statements in 2010:

Everyone knows the way in which our leader was killed. Everyone knows the kind of evil assault that was brought against our community. Beyond us, everyone knows the kind of evil that has been brought against the Muslim community of this country periodically: incidents such as Zangon Kataf... These are the things that have happened without end<sup>136</sup>.

On another occasion he posits,

They are fighting us for no reason, because we have said we will practice our religion, we will support our religion and stand on what God has said...<sup>137</sup>

Using this kind of rhetoric, Shekau made BH and by extension, the Muslim population in the region appear like 'victims' of successive Nigerian government aggression, a result of which violent retaliation against the Nigerian state was necessary. Such retaliatory attacks within this kind of framing would appear as the only way to save the faith and the region from the hands of the Nigerian state. Following such logic, any Muslim who refused to heed to this 'call' (to join in the BH activism), would appear as not to be a true Muslim.

Other people within the BH's leadership also used this kind of framing. In the aftermath of a notorious bomb attack in Maiduguri in December 2010, an alleged BH's spokesman told journalists: "Before, Christians were killing Muslims, helped by the government; now, we have

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<sup>136</sup> Shekau's video of January 11, 2012 titled "Imam Abubakar Shekau's Message to President Jonathan 1," still available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=umkj50SUzck>.

<sup>137</sup> Shekau's video of 30<sup>th</sup> September 2012 titled "A Message to the World", still available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=txUJCOKTIuk&sns=em>.

decided to hunt them down wherever they are” (Smith, 2015:109). Four days later, a statement accredited to Shekau on the group’s website claimed credit for this attack, as well as a similar one that happened in Jos shortly after the Maiduguri attack. In the video footage, the BH’s leader, called the attacks part of a “religious war”:

We are the ones who carried out the attack in Jos. We are the Jama’atu Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda’Awati Wal Jihad that have been maliciously branded Boko Haram...Everybody knows about the gruesome murders of Muslims in different parts of Nigeria ... Jos is a testimony to the gruesome killings of our Muslim brethren and the abductions of our women and children whose whereabouts are still unknown ... My message to my Muslim brethren is that they should know that this war is a war between Muslims and infidels. This is a religious war (Smith, 2015:110).

It is interesting to note that most of BH’s attacks on Christians during these periods happened at places with re-occurring volatile Muslim-Christian conflicts. Some of my respondents interestingly explained to me that, other than the conviction that some of such Christian communities had always collaborated with the Nigerian state in targeting their different neighbouring Muslim populations, Shekau may also have “intentionally directed these attacks to these places because he sought to inflame the already Muslim-Christian tension already existing within such communities”. Thus, other than being a mere revenge on Christians, the attacks were also tactical plots to galvanize support from the Muslim population, whom he wants to believe that he was politically fighting for at the time. I find this assessment to be very credible. Looking back at the political situation of the region at the time, (Early 2010) it is easy to understand why Yusuf would want to galvanise such Muslim support. The possibility of having a Christian Southern President was looming around the corner. Musa Yar’adua, the then Muslim President from the region (North) was at that time seriously sick in a hospital in Saudi Arabia. He was hardly seen in the public. In the event of his death, his deputy Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian from the South was, according to the Nigerian constitution, to see out his tenure. This means that the region would have to endure a power shift to the south and must wait until 2011 to have a chance of another shot at the Presidency. In a country where political interests are pursued along regional and religious lines, this was a very big political problem. In fact, those surrounding Yar’Adua manipulated the situation to keep the vice President, out of the office. It needed the intervention of some members

of the Presidential executive council and the senate before he could be allowed to become the acting President. He would eventually become the President when Yar'adua died after many months in the Saudi hospital. This again reinforced a feeling of political marginalisation, especially after the country has had 8 years of Obasanjo's Presidency (A Christian Southerner) before Yaradua's Presidency. So, evoking this kind of narrative, Shekau was probably hoping to not only mobilise his activists to carry out these attacks, but also to draw sympathy from the entire Muslim population who opposed the Christian ticket of Jonathan's Presidency. In retrospect, I would say that this calculation had not actually worked, but at least it is not out of place to comprehend that Shekau had thought in this direction.

Another significant implication of this framing is the religio-moral duty function it bequeathed to such violent activism. Conceptualising the group's activism as a sort of moral defence of Islamic faith against state/Christian (jihad) collaboration infuses into the activism some sort of imperative moral duty. Within such contexts, all violent activism against the unbeliever becomes a sort of religious and political moral duty, which demands unflinching commitment and sacrifice (including self) to the cause of the religion. This is much greater than any individual activist. Here, the activists would no longer see himself as a mere BH activist, but a rather a 'martyr' and a 'soldier' for the religion in the global jihad. In this sense, he or she may be willing to lay down his life, his possessions and any other earthly possession without flinching, for the sake of this cause. In other words, high-risk activisms like suicide violence, which ordinary would not have made sense may seem imperative, irrespective of the cost.

This is a reminiscent of how Islamist actors in the Egyptian case analysed by Wickham (2004:231-249) were able to mobilise activists to embrace high risk activism. By exclusively defining the organisation's potential targets as aggressors of the Egyptian culture and religious tradition, the Egyptian group's leadership were able to present activists who adopted higher-risk actions against the Egyptian state as soldiers of the faith, rather than mere activists. In this case, violent activism against such enemies becomes something bigger than the individual himself and the immediate socio-political context the activists operate.

### ***6.3.2 Suicide Violence (2011)***

Like lone professional assassinations and guerrilla warfare, the use of suicide violence is also connected to the availability of resources coming from the mutual co-operation between BH and the al-Qaeda affiliate organisations. Having developed in the group, this form of violence became one of the forms of violence within the organisation. It first emerged in June 2011, when the organisation used it to attack the Nigerian police chief at the Police Headquarters in Abuja. Few days before the attack, the Nigerian Police Chief Hafiz Ringim had visited Maiduguri to receive 10 Armoured Personnel Carriers from the Borno State government, in support of the newly commissioned JTF to boost the crack-down on BH. During this visit, the police chief had ‘boasted’ that his men has already concluded plans to wipe out BH and that their days are numbered<sup>138</sup>. Enraged by the police chief’s statement, BH’s leadership according to my respondents desperately wanted to “rubbish the police chief”. The attack was meant to personally attack the police chief, as well as show the region that the group was very capable of attacking any segment of the Nigerian security force. Thus, in the morning around 9 o’clock, a 37-year-old member of the group Mohammed Manga, followed the Nigeria’s police chief’s convoy into the Police Headquarters, and detonated his big explosives as he entered the garage gate. Although the police chief luckily escaped the attack unharmed, both the suicide bomber and other six policemen standing nearby were killed at the spot. The attack was also large enough to destroy about 40 vehicles packed in the parking lot (Amaechi, 2013; Pham, 2012).

What Boko Haram missed/failed in the Police Headquarters attack, they perfected at the UN building. On 26<sup>th</sup> August 2011, Mohammad Abul Barra (27) another Boko Haram militant allegedly drove his Honda Accord car into the UN building, ramming it into the two entrance gates, and then unto the lobby of the main building, before detonating his car bomb. The wave from the blast, according to some of the respondents from the Nigerian security forces, was big enough to flatten a water tower; 100 meters away from the main building. According to them, “the effects of bomb was (sic) very colossal and very expertly made”. These two attacks marked the evolution of Boko Haram’s use of suicide bombing in carrying out political violence in Nigeria. From there, suicide violence has become a strategy often used by BH to carry out significant attacks. Between 2011 and 2017, BH had used this sophisticated form of violent strategy to carry out attacks in

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<sup>138</sup> Separate interviews by police officers in Kaduna (February and March 2017)

different parts of the country (Comolli, 2015, Smith, 2015; Onuoha, 2015). Sometimes, the group combines this strategy with guerrilla attacks, where one or several activists set (s) off their suicide vest, to clear the way for impending guerrilla attacks by other foot soldiers. In a 20<sup>th</sup> of January 2012 BH coordinated attack on the Bombai Police Headquarters in Kano (one of the deadliest attacks on Police officers in the region) for example, the group had used a series of suicide bombers to clear the way for other foot soldiers to enter the gate of the barracks and gun down unsuspecting police officers. The group has also used this method to attack several government institutions and churches within the region in the last few years (Smith, 2015: xv-17).

Reading from the letters released by AQIM and from my interviews with security personnel, it is evident that the interactions and mutual co-operations between BH, AQIM and al-Shabaab played a very important part in the evolution of this form of violence. The mutual co-operations and subsequent reception of arms, military tools, ammunitions and training for strategic planning on how to carry out violent attacks had continued from 2010 to 2011. In fact, Mamman Nur, one of the initial members of BH at the Maiduguri centre (who is also believed by people within the Nigerian security community to be the master-mind behind the first two suicide bombings), had trained with AQIM and al-Shabaab after the 2009 violence (Zenn, 2018). Before the suicide attacks, together with other activists, he had just returned from trainings in one of AQIM's camps<sup>139</sup>. He, and some other foot soldiers within the group had also frequently visited AQIM and al-Shabaab. This is probably why two days before the suicide attack on the Police Headquarters, a BH's spokesperson, openly claimed that the group sent their members to other Muslim militant groups outside the country for training, and that soon they would start welcoming them back into the group (Pham, 2012:4). Two of these activists would turn out to be Mohammed Manga and Mohammad Abul Barra. Given, that these forms of violence have long developed within these international similar groups, it easily became part of an option to carry out such sophisticated attacks<sup>140</sup>.

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<sup>139</sup> One high-ranking JTF member told me that his source inside BH had revealed this to him. He, however, did not provide any evidence to support this. J. Peter Pham, (2012) had also made similar claim. Using sources from both Nigerian and US intelligent communities, he explained that Nur had just returned to Somalia where he and his followers trained in al-Shabaab camps and forged links with the jihadist group. He only returned to Nigeria in early 2011 before BH carried out the attack on the UN building.

<sup>140</sup> AQIM particularly had in December 2007, used suicide bombing to attack the UN building in Algiers (Thurston, 2017).

Collaboration with AQIM and al-Shabaab regarding the development of suicide bombing was also corroborated by some of my respondents who had opportunity to interrogate some of the BH activists. One of my JTF respondents who interrogated two male BH activists, arrested before they could detonate their suicide vests in a market in Maiduguri in 2012 explained that the influence of the association with these brother networks in this kind of activism is undeniable: “Those boys don’t even try to hide that they were trained with AQIM and al-Shabaab. ...They will even tell you, how long they were in Somalia perfecting the plans. They took pride in telling us that they and these organisations are now one and the same thing... We know this. It is not a secret for those of us in the intelligence community.”<sup>141</sup> Another high-ranking member of the JTF also made a similar claim: “Boko Haram is AQIM, and AQIM is Boko Haram. Without the assistance from AQIM, there is no way Boko Haram can know how to plan these attacks.”<sup>142</sup>

Indeed, BH has been able to embrace this strategy due to their corporation and affiliations with these groups. Having these relationships and mutual cooperation, meant they had access not only to financial resources, but also to the experience and the technical know-how required to to adopt and carry-out the different coordinated form of violent activism they construe as necessary, to achieve their goals in the region. Given that such a radical method had already been used and justified within these ‘brother’ groups, particularly AQIM (Thurston, 2017:6), it became natural and made easier for them to adopt such a form of violent activism, when the ‘need’ to carry out such attacks arose in the organisation.

The particular use of this strategy rather than other less radical forms of violent tactics also makes broad sense when considered that they occurred in the context of the heightened security situation in the region. On the inception of BH’s re-emergence in the region, the Nigerian government had maintained its militarisation policy. The successive military and civilian governments (including the newly inaugurated Jonathan-led administration in 2011) had operated with the policy that the resolution of such violent crisis lies in the maximum military crack-down, rather than dialogue<sup>143</sup>. At the dawn of the 2010 attacks, the Nigerian President had commissioned and deployed more JTF and military troops, to help the Borno state government tackle the BH crisis in the region. By mid-

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<sup>141</sup> Interview by the author with anonymous JTF personnel in Kaduna (March 2017).

<sup>142</sup> Interview by the author with anonymous JTF personnel in Kaduna (March 2017).

<sup>143</sup> Interview by the author with a high-ranking JTF personnel in Kaduna (March 2017).

year, the situation had become very critical, that things such as Okadas (motorcycles that are the primary means of locomotion for majority of the people in the region) were prohibited in some of the major cities, because they have been the group's easiest means of carrying-out their attacks and escaping, after the attacks. On two occasions within these periods, the President had also declared a State of Emergency in fifteen local government areas in parts of Borno, Yobe, Plateau and Niger states (December 2012) and in the entire states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (May 2013), in which cases more severe military action has been devised to curtail the group's militancy (Williams and Guttschuss, 2012: 83). The emergency regulations also permit searches and seizure of property within the emergency area without warrant<sup>144</sup>. An authorised state authority could "declare curfew or ban any public procession, demonstration, or public meeting in the emergency area, where it was likely to cause serious disorder" (Williams and Guttschuss 2012: 83).

All these meant that the new BH that emerged in late 2009 had met a new security situation in the region, where police vans paraded in every corner of the major cities. There were constant stop and search operations by the JTF, even in the remotest villages in the region. Thus, adopting this form of violence to carry out attack was construed from a rational calculation that sees this tactic as a very potent method; sophisticated enough to be used to attack the different elements of the Nigerian security forces, without being thwarted. In the case of the Nigerian Headquarters attack in Abuja, it was unlikely that there were any better viable and efficient ways to carry out the attack without being stopped. Other means may easily have been thwarted by the Nigerian security operatives before the attacker approached the target. Hence, amid such militarised and hostile environment, this strategy naturally appeared as a very reasonable and efficient option to carry out such strategic attacks, which ordinarily would seem impossible without being stopped.

Within the BH's organisational setting, the mutual bonding and interactions between activists help explain the individual's decision to participate in this kind of activism. The personal decision to embrace and personally justify participation in a suicide bombing in the face of the Nigerian police presence in the region could flow not just from the ideological exposition, but from the socialisation process that went on within the group. More than just a mere ideological disposition, the individuals' transition from partaking in the use of just knives and guns, to sacrificing one's life for a greater cause should be seen more because of personal interpretations and internalisations

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<sup>144</sup> Interview by the author with JTF personnel in Kaduna (March 2017).

of the activism that exists within the group. Real transformation for individuals within the group to partake in this kind of violent activism obviously did not begin prior to the participation in the group. Rather, it may have begun with the individuals' participation in BH's activities. Through participating in the activities within the group by group members (both violent and non-violent), they must have had investments in the group in terms of their identity and emotions that tend to create strong linkages with individuals within the group. They must have existed within social bonds that superseded previous social ties, which makes attacks against such individuals within the group to be easily internalised as personal. Such social bonds are very powerful; they could be socially appealing to motivate individual activists to sacrifice their lives to avenge another brother's life, rather than die in the group for nothing.

#### **6.4 Internal Dynamics: Connecting the Use of kidnappings and Armed Robbery to the Internal Competition from the Split and Unification of Jama`at Ansar al-Muslimin fi Bilad al-Sudan by BH**

Other than interactions between BH and other similar SOMOs, another condition that has helped influence the sustenance of more sophisticated forms of violence by BH is the internal competition between the different actors in the organisation. In the last few years, this internal competition has also proved to be another significant mobilisatory condition under which development of forms of activism such as kidnappings and armed robbery ensued in the group.

Internal competition between different actors in BH first became public when *Jama`at Ansar al-Muslimin fi Bilad al-Sudan*, mostly known for its short form, *Ansaru*, split from Shekau in 2011. A close reading of some of the internal letters and an analysis of "Open letter to Shekau" from Nur Mamman to Yusuf in 2016 show that the split had happened because of mostly doctrinal and methodological disagreement between some high-ranking members of the group (particularly Khalid al-Barnawi and Abu Muhammed) and Shekau. Relationship between these actors soured, when Shekau refused to listen to the counsel from AQIM in 2011. Before this, the relationship between the two groups (BH and AQIM) had in fact continued to flourish, until Shekau began to manifest signs of deviation on the issues of *al-`udhr bi-l-jahl* and *takfir al-Muthlaq* (being excused due to ignorance and excommunication). Thus, he would begin to use violence to carry out targeted attacks on the Muslim population, who were fleeing the BH violence. According to

Kassim 2018, Shekau, who had at this time begun to argue that anyone, who did not join in the BH activism including the entire Nigerian Muslim population, is an infidel. As a result, he started to carry out attacks targeted on “innocent Muslims” fleeing the BH violence. For deciding not to join the BH activism and deciding to reside under and receive assistance from the Nigerian government, Shekau took this kind of Muslim population as ‘infidels’. Their children still attended government schools, and they participated in democratic elections, he would argue. For this, they are “legitimate target of the jihad” (Kassim, 2018:18).

This did not go down well with many within the BH leadership hierarchy, especially Khalid al-Barnawi and Abu Muhammed who felt that the practice was alienating the entire Muslim population and “leading the Nigerian people to criticise the religion and the jihad” (Kassim, 2018). These two were also among those emissaries that were sent by Shekau to visit Abu Zeid with al-Barnawi in August 2009. In the coming days, they would together with other eight members of BH *Shura* write a letter to the AQIM leadership, likening Shekau’s actions to that of Antar Zouabri of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), from which AQIM split during the Algerian civil war in the 1990s<sup>145</sup>. AQIM tried to intervene by sending letters to Shekau (Zenn, 2018:123). When it became obvious to them that Shekau was unwilling to change the approach, AQIM encouraged Khalid al-Barnawi and Abu Muhammed to form a new group. In January 2012, the group announced the formation of Ansaru, through a distribution of pamphlets in the different parts of the region<sup>146</sup>. The group was mainly made up of activists who are loyal to Khalid al-Barnawi and Abu Muhammed and had trained with AQIM and al-Shabaab. First, they took the name al-Qaeda in the Lands Beyond the Sahel, (in identification with AQIM and al-Qaeda), and later *Jama’at Ansar al-Muslimin fi Bilad al-Sudan* in 2012, when they had become very established in the region.

While this split played out in the public as only as a sign of infighting between BH activists, it significantly shaped the development and intensity of other forms of violence (particularly kidnappings and arm robbery) that would evolve in the group. Remaining connected to AQIM for example, meant that Ansaru were able to adopt the use of kidnappings, which at the time had been

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<sup>145</sup> Zouabri’s declaration of takfir against the entire Algerian Muslim population who did not join his group had led to the foundation of AQIM’s split from the GIA. The practice had alienated and turned many Muslims against the group during the 1990s civil war with the Algerian government. AQIM had to split from the GIA, when they could not resolve the problem with the Zouabri led GIA leadership (quote)

<sup>146</sup> Interview by the author with a JTF personnel in Abuja (April 2017).

part of AQIM's strategy. In AQIM, they (*Ansaru*) at least had the collaboration in the technical know-how and the mobilisation to adopt this kind of violent activism. Access to training and material resources in the contexts of continuous will to engage with the Nigerian security forces meant that the group could also mobilise and use this to coordinate high profile attacks, not only to raise funds for its other non-violent activities, but also to terrorise people in the region. The first time Ansaru used this form of violence was in the kidnapping of Chris McManus and Franco Lamolinara—a British and Italian engineer, who were kidnapped near the border with Niger in Kebbi State in May 2011, while working on a project for the Nigerian Central bank. In the coming days, Ansaru demanded for ransom before they would release the kidnapped individuals. A demand for ransom is a practice that has long been used to AQIM. In the past, the group had used this strategy to collect millions of dollars from abducted Westerners (Smith, 2015:137). In these contexts, this was a clear case of transfer of tactics.

Given the collaboration and connection with AQIM, Ansaru could find this strategy as a good option to raise more money, as well as terrorise foreigners (non-Muslims) doing business in the region. However, the ransom never came. Both men were later killed by Ansaru, when a combined rescue effort by both the Nigerian and British forces went bad in Kano (Smith, 2018:137). Other than these widely reported kidnappings, some of the other attacks by Ansaru include the kidnappings and killing of a German engineer in Kano on the day they officially announced the group's formation; a guerrilla ambush attack on Nigerian troops preparing to be deployed to Mali in January 2013; a well-coordinated attack in Abuja prison in November 2012 (which freed many members of the BH activists) and an abduction of seven foreign engineers on a construction site in Bauchi State in 2013 amidst AQIM's loss of ground in Mali as a result of combined French and West African military crack-down on Islamic militants in Mali. In claiming these attacks, Ansaru claimed that the attack was in response to French "atrocities" committed in Afghanistan and Mali. They later killed the victims in Sambisa forest, when their ransom demand was not met by the French government<sup>147</sup>. Ansaru had also conducted many suicide bombings, targeting mostly Christians and elements within the Nigerian security forces. Ansaru had been able to carry out this kind of attacks mainly because of their continued co-operation with AQIM. Having this co-

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<sup>147</sup> Interview by the author with an anonymous JTF personnel (Kaduna, March 2017).

operation, they had both the financial muscle and the training to carry out fewer but much potent and significant attacks.

On the contrary, Shekau's group at this time had fewer material resources, in terms financial support and less experience in militant training. Thus, they were handicapped and limited to mainly local attacks. Starting from the late 2011 to 2013, most of BH's attacks (Zenn, 2018)<sup>148</sup> were mainly limited to Borno and Yobe states. Most of these attacks were assassinations of religious leaders, politicians and government officials, and small-scale bombings of mosques and churches. Not having the kind of financial resources and military arsenal they previously enjoyed with AQIM, they resorted to bank robberies and petty local kidnappings. More than being part of the group's religious activism, the robbing of banks and making away with millions of Naira were meant to help the group generate the desperately needed material resources for financing the group's activisms. One chief police, who worked in Maiduguri during this period, estimated about 80 bank robberies and 20 kidnappings from the end of 2011 to 2013. He puts the estimated money generated from these robberies and kidnappings at about \$10 million<sup>149</sup>. Although this kind of strategy would ordinarily be forbidden for a religious inspired group such as BH, my suspicion is that Shekau's desperate effort to out-compete Ansaru must have motivated him to continue to use this strategy. Although this is quite speculative, I believe that within such a competitive atmosphere, actions of activists are likely to be affected by that of the other rival group. Through an unspoken competition to out-violence the Ansaru group, possibly, Shekau's actions must have been affected by Ansaru's significant attacks. The fact the Shekau could still want to show the AQIM leadership that he is still relevant despite being isolated, also gives more credibility to this argument. Within such contexts, it would seem natural to continue to engage in this kind of competitive violence with Ansaru. Not having the financial muscle like Ansaru, they were able to engage in other forms of violence that didn't need much material resources to conduct. My point here is that, the development and intensity of the attacks in both groups was not just about the BH's continuity in its jihadi activism, it was also about out competing the other group in the use of violent activism. Ansaru's different access to resources means that its violent actions were affected by different cost benefit calculations. Tactical decisions were not just about out-foxing

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<sup>148</sup> For a chronological account of the series of violent attacks by Ansaru and BH, I have relied mostly on Zenn 2018.

<sup>149</sup> Interview by the author with an anonymous police officer (Kaduna, May 2017).

the enemy, but also it was about impressing AQIM, as well as about out-competing the rival Shekau led faction.

Things would remain this way until towards the second quarter of 2013. Due to the imminent defeat of AQIM and other similar organisations in Mali and its subsequent inability to continue financially supporting Ansaru, most of the warring leaders in Ansaru, including Khalid al-Benawi, and Nur Mamman<sup>150</sup> had shelved their differences, and re-integrated<sup>151</sup> into the Shekau faction. As a result of this reintegration, Boko Haram in general rapidly improved in many tactical areas. For instance, kidnappings-for-ransom, which continued to generate millions of dollars for the group became its biggest source of income. Suicide bombings, which rapidly increased in the north-eastern Nigeria were used to conduct significant attacks against the Nigerian security forces (Zenn, 2018). Sophisticated raids on police stations and military barracks, which led to more acquisition of ammunitions influenced the overthrow of territories in eastern part of the region. And finally, the use of more media and social media narratives, which began to incorporate some of the former Ansaru themes (Zenn, 2018).

It was not a coincidence that these improvements began mostly after the March integrations. It was also during this time that the group began to increase the extent of its attacks outside Nigerian borders, starting with an attack on a military barracks in Monguno along Borno State's border with Niger (a natural entry point for militants from Mali to re-enter Nigeria). In the months after the Monguno, raids also continued in Baga, Marte, Maiha, Damatru, Benisheikh, Bama, Konduga, Gujba, and Demba<sup>152</sup>. There were also so many kidnappings of both local and foreign individuals from August 2013 to the middle of 2014, which resulted in the deaths of more than 1000 people in the region. My JTF respondents explained to me, how most of the people who carried out the kidnappings were practically ex-AQIM and BH combatants who re-joined BH after Mali. one of the respondents said, "Some of them were actually Arabs. They also had abundance of Hilux vans, sophisticated ammunitions and several different fighters, with which made carrying out such

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<sup>150</sup> It is not clear whether Nur was ever part of Ansaru faction at this time. Most sources, including the letter from AQIM are not explicit on this. What is clear, however, is that he was among those who disagreed with Shekau's thesis in 2011. Probably for fear of his life, he had also left and hidden himself away from Shekau at some point.

<sup>151</sup> Three main factors contributed to the integration of al-Benawi's and Nur's factions into BH in 2013. First, AQIM was unable to continue supporting Ansaru after the French-led military intervention in Mali in 2013; Shekau was ordering the killing of Ansaru members; and Nigerian counterterrorism operations had eliminated key Ansaru cells.

<sup>152</sup> Interviews by the author of several JTF personnel at Kaduna (March 2017)

attacks became a bit easier<sup>153</sup>. BH's propaganda videos<sup>154</sup>, at this time, that showed BH activists with several Arab looking men chanting war songs and shooting sophisticated ammunitions in the air. My assessment is that those were AQIM members who had aligned with BH and had then formed part of their violent activism in the region. It was during this time that Shekau men carried the highly reported kidnapping of more than 200 school girls from Chibok, a small town in Borno state. Although this action was not wholly supported by the al-Qaeda leadership<sup>155</sup>, the attack demonstrates the influence of the new imports that returned from Mali. Due to all these attacks, the group became stronger than ever. By early 2014, they had begun to abandon their previous guerrilla tactics, and instead begun to capture and keep towns as part of a territorial extension in the region. In August 2014, Yusuf would declare the captured territories as part of his Caliphate. As the Nigeria military steadily withdrew from its bases in these areas, Shekau's group extended their territorial conquest. However, none of these should down play the relevance of the intention to continue to carry out these attacks by the activists, which arise mostly because of their belief in their jihadist mission, as well as the interactions with several elements within the region. My point is that amid these resources, activists are more emboldened, because of the mobilising effects such resources entails.

In July 2014, Shekau voiced support for Islamic State in Iraq and Levante of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, ahead of al-Qaeda's head Ayman al-Zawahiri and Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Omar. In March 2015, the group formally pledged allegiance and was officially confirmed by their spokesman some days later. The alliance with the new ISIL group had gone through a gradual process. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's declaration of a caliphate from a mosque in Mosul, Iraq and the formation of ISIS (a name which had recently been changed to Islamic State to align with its global aspirations) in 2014 had coincided with BH's occupation of territories. As AQIM became increasingly estranged from Boko Haram, the group strategically saw a very viable opportunity to align itself with the Islamic State. By late 2014, Boko Haram had established a line of communication to some of the North African former AQIM members who had defected to the

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<sup>153</sup> Interviews by the author of a JTF personnel (Kaduna, March 2017)

<sup>154</sup> My JTF respondents showed me several videos of BH activists with Arab looking men, parading themselves as part of BH in the Sambisa forest.

<sup>155</sup> Al-Qaeda had in a statement in 2014 condemned the kidnapping of the Chibok girls, as this goes contrary to their theological thesis of not attacking innocent Muslims. See Adam Nossiter and David D. Kirkpatrick article of May 7<sup>th</sup> 2014 on *New York Times* available at:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/08/world/africa/abduction-of-girls-an-act-not-even-al-qaeda-can-condone.html>

Islamic State and ran a pro-Islamic State media agency in Tunisia called Africa Media (*Ifriqiya L'ilam*). In January 2015, these activists would set up an English, French and Arabic-language Twitter account called *al-Urwa al-Wutqha* for Boko Haram, with Abu Musab al-Barnawi (an alleged son of Mohammed Yusuf, who had in the last five years risen to a key leadership position within the group) as the Twitter account's official spokesman (Zenn, 2018: 117). The group would finally make the pledge of allegiance on March 7, 2015, after a consultative council meeting was held by all the factional leaders of the group (Zenn, 2018:128). Shekau appeared in the Twitter account in February 2015 (Zenn, 2018:128). From then on, the group would change its name to the Islamic State's West African province (ISWAP). Shekau automatically assumed the position of Governor, while Abu Mus`ab al-Barnawi maintained his position as the official spokesman. All factions withheld their ideological differences to support Shekau in the new ISWAP group.

Other than the influence on violent activism, due to the material support, another major visible "fingerprint" of IS in BH's activism had been on their propaganda and media exposure. The pledge was accepted by al-Baghdadi's spokesman and praised in 10 other Islamic State videos from Yemen, Algeria, Libya, Syria, and Iraq and in the Islamic State's English-language propaganda magazine *Dabiq* (Zenn, 2018:126). With such media presence, BH's activism and local attacks did become more of global issue. Its social and violent activism became fully merged into the Islamic State's social media system, together with the Africa Media members, such as Abu Malik Shaybah al-Hamad, who had also pledged allegiance to IS. In these social media networks, these outlets have also encouraged foreign fighters to 'migrate' to Nigeria, to join the ISWAP's jihadi cause, as the group has again begun to lose momentum as a result of both the Nigerian government and the joint military Multi-National (of Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Benin) Joint Task Force renewed military attacks on the group in 2015. In fact, with the formation of the joint military Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) involving Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Benin in the beginning of 2015, and a renewed effort by the new Nigerian President, Mohammed Buhari, things had begun to turn bad for the group. Within one year of the group's pledge to IS, the regional coalition forces have been able to re-take several towns previously taken by ISWAP and have consequently eliminated much of the group's authority in north-eastern part of the country. The unofficial Jihadist Caliphate that Shekau declared in August 2014 has also now become non-

existent. BH was further pushed into the Sambisa forest by the continuous military attacks on these forces.

### **6.5 Shekau Isolated From AQIM, al-Shabaab and ISIS (2016-)**

In the aftermath of the destruction of the BH's Islamic Caliphate in the region, the continued intensity and development of different forms of violence continued to be influenced by the mobilisation of resources and the continuous military attacks (by the Nigerian JTF and the regional MNJTF). With the increased military attacks against BH, Shekau, who had grudgingly accepted the IS thesis of limiting his attacks on non-Muslim population began to find ways to carry out attacks on both Nigerian and the neighbouring countries involved in the fight. By early 2016, he had started to attack the Muslim population, whom he believes were also legitimate targets, because they had continued to live under and had continued to receive assistance from the Nigerian government. On the 24<sup>th</sup> March 2015 under his command, BH attacked the residents of Damasak (Nigeria), as they were fleeing from the coalition forces, taking about 400 women and children<sup>156</sup>. They also launched several lone attacks on different segments in the region, including mosques. Between 1 and 2 July, 97 people, mostly men were also killed in numerous mosques suicide attacks. These were all part of Shekau's response to the new renewed Nigerian JTF and Multi-National Joint Task Force's (MNJTF) offensive against the group.

These attacks were not accepted by other fractional leaders such as Nur Mamman and Abu Musab al-Barnawi. Unlike Shekau, these men often employed the theological tool of deferment (*irja'*) and had opposed the view that "ordinary Muslims" who did not join ISWAP or who continued to receive services from an 'infidel' government and humanitarian organisations are themselves necessarily "infidels." Reading from the letters the activists sent to AQIM, it appears that they only want to kill Muslims who were actively opposing the jihad. Like the Ansaru faction in 2012, they only wanted to focus on targeting Christian 'proselytisers' or the Nigerian government. More importantly, they were also not convinced that the attacks on civilians and on ordinary Muslims as paraded by Shekau was of any benefit to the organisation's main goal. Such attacks as argued in one of al-Barnawi's videos would only cause the organisation to lose the support of the Muslim

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<sup>156</sup> Interview by the author with anonymous JTF personnel in Abuja (April 2017).

population, whose support they felt was important for them to achieve their aims. The inability of the different leaders in the group to resolve this, would lead to a complete breakdown in the relationship between Shekau and most of these actors.

Probably worried about how the IS leadership would interpret this conflictual relationship, a very calculated Shekau in early 2015 sent about 8 letters to the Islamic state. In the letters, he raised many issues. Four of these issues are for me the most important ones: First, his ideological differences with al-Barnawi, especially on the issue of capturing Muslims who are not involved in the group's activisms, as slaves. Secondly, the issue of carrying out attacks in markets involving Muslims, and the declaration of *takfir* on the refugee's fleeing Boko Haram's violent activities in the region. Third, the issue of *takfir* on those who possess national identity papers such as a passport. Finally, on the judgement regarding targeting Western secular schools, I was not able to access Shekau's letters myself, but a two-part audio lecture titled "Expose: Open Letter to Abubakar Shekau"<sup>157</sup> addressed to Shekau from Mamman Nur explained the contents of Shekau's letters. Nur's lecture Shekau also suggests that the Islamic State had also responded to these questions. In responding through their office for Research and Studies, ISIS gave a theological treatise admonishing Shekau on how to carry-out further attacks on the region. Writing as the coordinator of this ISIS office, Abu Malik al-Tamimi explained to ISWAP that living in the land of unbelief itself is not tantamount to *takfir*, except if it is accompanied with the obligation to approve acts of unbelief or declare alliance to the people of unbelief. He also explains that it is unlawful to migrate, "when emigration becomes mandatory, desirable, and permissible".

On the question of waging attacks in markets, al-Tamimi invoked "the principle of *Tatarrus*" to explain that it could be permissible and not permissible to attack jihadi adversaries who immerse themselves within the civilian population, which are predominantly non-Muslim. This depended on the context. On the question of possession of national identity papers, he argues that it should only be regarded as *takfir* if it is accompanied with a show of loyalty and support to the country of unbelief as well as subservience to its laws. Finally, on the question of attacking Western secular schools, al-Tamimi responded that it is permissible to attack them in Europe and other Crusader countries in Africa if the students from such schools are commissioned into military service to fight against the jihadis. Further, it is even more permissible "to attack the Western secular schools

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<sup>157</sup> A version of this lecture was drawn from Kassim and Nwankpa (2017:453-455).

if the students are non-Muslims, but the benefit of the attack should be determined by the people of authority in the jihadi circle”<sup>158</sup>.

It is not clear whether Shekau received these letters or not, as most of the communications were supposed to go through people within the Abu Mus`ab al-Barnawi’s faction of the group. Whatever be the case, Shekau’s continuous flaunting of some of the instructions (through his killings of BH activists and numerous attacks on innocent Muslims) from the IS would put him in the organisation’s “bad books”. By August 2016, IS demoted him from being the governor of ISWAP, and instead declared al-Barnawi as the new governor of ISWAP. Without informing Shekau, they used an interview<sup>159</sup> with Abu Musab al-Barnawi in their Al-Naba newsletter to announce that al-Barnawi has been made the new *wali* (governor) of ISWAP, thus indicating that Shekau was demoted from the position (Kassim, 2018, Kassim and Nwankpa, 2017).

Less than a day after this interview, Shekau responded. In 10 minutes YouTube video, he contended the decision as unfair. He declared that although he still believed al-Baghdadi (the leader of IS) was a Caliph, he is never going to follow al-Barnawi. Instead he was now reviving Boko Haram, which had ceased to exist after the formation of ISWAP and was reverting to be its leader again. In explaining his decision, he explained the ideological differences between him and al-Barnawi:

“My brothers in Allah, I received a message you sent regarding the selection of a new Governor. My brothers, Abu Mus`ab al-Barnawi and those with him are saying that if a Muslim enters a land of unbelief but does not manifest his enmity to the unbelievers there, he is not an unbeliever. However, we say that such a person is an unbeliever. Afterwards, they said that if he (a Muslim) does not show his enmity to the *taghut* who rules by other than Allah’s revealed law, he is not an unbeliever. However, we say that such a person is an unbeliever.

We found this in Allah’s Book and the Sunna of His Messenger. We wish to follow the Sunna of our Messenger. Patience after patience, O Shaykh! It is obligatory upon

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<sup>158</sup> I have relied on the English translation of the Shaykh Abū Mālik al-Tamīmī (Anas al-Nashwān): “The Nigerian Questions, as translated by Kassim (2018:22). The original version of this response in Arabic is available at: <https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/shaykh-abucc84-macc84lik-al-tamicc84micc84-anas-al-nashwacc84n-22the-nigerian-questions22.pdf>.

<sup>159</sup> An audio version of this interview is available at: <https://jihadology.net/2015/03/12/al-furqan-media-presents-a-new-audio-message-from-the-islamic-states-shaykh-abu-muhammad-al-adnani-al-shami-so-they-kill-and-are-killed/>

you to show us the truth of the matter in the Book, the Sunna and according to the understanding of the pious predecessors. Allah knows my brothers in Allah. As a result, we cannot follow a person who commits a major unbelief or polytheism, knowingly, with an explanation, and not based on misinterpretation. No, this is not possible...<sup>160</sup>

This video was also followed up four days later by Shekau's military leader, nicknamed Man Chari. In the new footage, the Chari further explained Shekau's polemic:

On this issue, we say the man whom you appointed to this position does not follow a sound doctrine from authentic Salafism. On this basis, we will not follow him. Our leader, Shekawi (Shekau), wrote eight letters to you where he explained that those people follow the ideology of *irja'*. You asked him about the meaning of *irja'*, and he explained to you in his third message, but you did not respond. Before these issues, we had already informed you that they split away from us, becoming isolated from us, but you did not do anything. We have also sent you several questions but did not receive any response from you—except that suddenly, we heard this news. As a result, we say that we are with our Imam, Abu Muhammad b. Muhammad Abubakar al-Shekawi, may Allah preserve him<sup>161</sup>

Despite Shekau and his military leader's complaints, he was not reinstated as the governor of ISWAP. From the middle of 2016 until January 2017 as data for this thesis was being collected, he faces a crisis of legitimacy with the other top members of ISWAP and Boko Haram. The doctrinal dispute and the open verbal confrontations between him and other factional leaders within the organisation had continued. As he had personally severed ties and criticised AQIM, he also “temporarily”<sup>162</sup> lacks the possibility of re-aligning with al-Qaeda. The last al-Qaeda acknowledgement of Boko Haram appears to have been in July 2014, when the leader of AQIM's Tunisian “sub-affiliate,” Abu Iyad al-Tunisi, sent a letter to al-Qaeda leaders, including Shekau, arguing that Ayman al-Zawahiri should pledge loyalty to al-Baghdadi as a way of marginalising Islamic State hardliners and ending jihadi infighting. Al-Tunisi would later retract his opinion upon

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<sup>160</sup> A written transcript of this video was culled from Kassim and Nwankpa (2017:468)

<sup>161</sup> Message from the soldiers by Man Chari and Abubakar Shekau, quoted in Kassim and Nwankpa (468).

<sup>162</sup> I use “temporarily” because it is very difficult to predict how things would turn out in the group.

advice of other al-Qaeda scholars and leaders (Zenn, 2018: 139). Also, it seems that once al-Baghdadi declared the Caliphate in June 2014 and Shekau claimed the Chibok kidnapping in May 2014, al-Qaeda may have fully ended the relationship with Shekau.

Amid all these, BH's violent activities including the use of suicide bombings and kidnappings for ransom under Shekau have been reduced to low level attacks. Largely because of reduced material resources from either AQIM and IS, Shekau has struggled to mobilise activists and generate the kind of intelligence needed to coordinate such forms of violence. Most of his activities are now focused on winning the support of foot soldiers, as well as potential recruits into the group. This is probably why the release and production of propaganda videos and images showing the resilience of his factions and their battlefield gains in their war against the Nigerian Army has increased during this period (Kassim, 2018). This is probably going to continue amid lack of material resources needed to conduct high profile attacks.

## **6.6 Summary**

This chapter has analysed the development and sustenance of different forms of violent activism in BH, particularly the lone professional assassinations, suicide bombings, kidnappings for ransom, armed bank robberies, and guerrilla raids on military and police barracks. Starting with a synopsis of the use of these forms of violence from the time the group re-emerged in 2010, it traces how these different forms of violent activism have remained part of the group's strategy for goal attainment.

The chapter explained how most of the BH activists had escaped into the neighbouring countries at the dawn of the 2009 crack-down by the security forces, where they aligned and trained with AQIM and al-Shabaab. Shekau, who succeeded the group's founder, took advantage of these contacts. While recovering from gun wounds, he was able to establish contacts with AQIM and probably al-Qaeda leadership, who helped his group with both training and material resources he needed to re-launch their activism in the region. The chapter argued that it was the availability of these resources and framing of the group's initial ideology of victimhood by Shekau, which portrays BH and the entire Muslim population in the region as victims rather than the aggressors.

This enabled Shekau and his group to develop the first forms of violence used in the group when they re-emerged in 2010.

Meanwhile, arriving in the region in 2010, Shekau's group quickly realised that the region was no longer how it used to be before the 2009 crackdown. In the aftermath of the 2009 crack-down, the Nigerian government had maintained a militarisation policy of the region: JTF and military troops paraded every corner of the major cities. There were constant stop and search operations, even in the remotest villages, security personnel randomly declared curfew and bans on any public procession, and demonstration and suspicious public gatherings were constantly banned. Therefore, for them to launch their attacks, the group had to adopt more sophisticated means, with which they could conduct their attacks without being stopped. Hence, they invented the use of shoot and run strategy, using motorcycles and local power-bikes that gives them easy access to escape. As a result, they targeted and killed key security personnel, religious leaders and politicians who in one way or the other stood in their way of their success or had helped the security forces in 2009. Where there was a need to carry out major attacks in the heart of the country's capital Abuja, they adopted the use of suicide bombing. Within such a militarised and security-tight environment, this tactic appears logical as the most potent and efficient means to carry out such strategic attack, which ordinarily would seem impossible to carry out without being stopped.

The development of activism such as suicide bombings, kidnappings for ransom, guerrilla attacks and raids on military and police barracks had also followed a similar path. Aside using historical narratives from Salafism to frame it as a moral obligation, the development of such activism was influenced by the group's continuous mutual co-operation with similar networks and internal competitions between different factions that evolved in the group. Having been used and justified within these similar organisations, such forms of violence tactics easily became an option to be used in BH. In cases when the groups were temporarily cut off from any of its global similar parent group, like in 2012 and currently, the organisation has developed these forms of violence to locally generate resources to buy weapons and ammunitions, to be able to continue to carry out its attacks.

All of these highlight the importance of resources in the development of specific forms of violence and the sustenance of such violence within SOMOs. To adopt a specific form of violent strategies SOMO leaders use different resources available to them to create crucibles for mobilisation. The availability of certain resources infuses the ability to adopt certain strategies which such resources

incorporate (Della Porta, 2009; Amaechi, 2013). The availability of certain resources influences both the willingness and the ability of SOMOs' to adopt the specific kinds of violent activisms they use, to maximise impact and the efficaciousness of their groups' goals

## CHAPTER SEVEN: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

### 7.1 Introduction

This thesis has used the case of BH to study the emergence and the subsequent development of different forms of violence in SOMOs, using BH as a case study. Drawing mainly from the idea of “political opportunity” and “resource mobilisation” from SMT, it conceptualises the organisation as a “movement organisation”. Hence, like its social counterparts, it regards the evolution and use of violence within the group as dependent on several specific mobilisatory and political opportunity structures within and around both the organisation and the socio-political environments the group identifies. The theoretical assumption is that such structures provide the window of opportunity, upon which such organisations, and the subsequent different forms of violence strategy evolve. Once they evolve, such strategies remain contested, and develop in accordance to constraints and opportunities available to such groups, as they navigate their socio-political terrain.

On this basis, three main research questions were formulated: (1) Under what socio-political structures did it emerge in the Northern Nigeria? (2) Under what conditions did the group began to use violence against the Nigerian state? (3) Finally, what specific forms of violence does the group use; and how are these different forms of violence sustained in the group? The idea here was not to provide a chronological account of all the various forms of violence that have been used by the group; but rather, to situate the use of this strategy to the specific shifting organisational and socio-political conditions the organisation identifies.

For the data, the study relied mostly on semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews with individuals who have in-depth knowledge on the possible inner workings of the organisations. Such individuals include religious leaders (particularly those within the Salafi networks), politicians within the region, victims of BH violence and finally security personnel working within the area. In addition, the study has also drawn on secondary sources such as videos of different leaders in the group, Yusuf’s manifesto, and finally, recently released letters between BH and the AQIM leaders, about the internal functions of BH. These sources contain ethnographic data, which contextualises both the evolution of the group and development of different forms of violence in

the group in the specific political and mobilisatory structures within the group and the Northern Nigeria.

## **7.2 Research Findings and Implications to Previous Research**

There are several key findings from this research. I present these findings in accordance with the study's three main research questions: the emergence of the organisation; the evolution and justification of violence in the organisation; and finally, the further escalation of the different forms of violence in the organisation.

### **7.2.1 The Emergence of Boko Haram**

In investigating the emergence of BH, the thesis identified six Northern Nigerian specific socio-political structures: The Northern Nigerian culture of Islamic activism; the colonial legacy; the rise of NPC in post-independent Nigeria, the *al-Shari'a* advocacy at the dawn of democracy in 1999; the intra-ideological dispute between the two main Salafi networks (Izala and Ahlus Sunna); and the al-Qaeda influence. These conditions provided the socio-political background upon which the SOMO was established, first by Mohammed Ali at Kanama in 2003, and later by Yusuf Mohammed at Maiduguri in 2005.

On socio-political aspects, the data shows that the whole idea of religio-political activism in the Northern Nigeria was rooted in the region's culture of Islamic activism, which dates back to the history of Islamic religion with Sheikh Usman dan Fodio in the nineteenth century. Drawing from Islam's understanding of politics and religion, and from its theological concepts such as "jihad", the respected Fulani cleric was able to mobilise socio-political activism, which justified the use of violence against despotic Hausa Kings. By so doing, dan Fodio subtly "concretise" the role of Islam as a mobilisatory resource within which oppositional political activism could be galvanised in the region. A formation of sound organisation around Islamic theological doctrines would consequently become an important way to engage with the state, especially in the face of unfavourable socio-political conditions.

This phenomenon was further exacerbated by colonial legacies and consequent secular State that emerged with colonialism. Colonialism came with many socio-political changes in the region. Among these changes were a substitution of the region's Sokoto Caliphate's *al-Shari'a* system

with Western-based constitutional democracy and an introduction of British education system that undermined the region's Islamic-based education system. These changes seriously challenged the hegemonic position of Islamic authorities in the region, and soon created the opportunity for resentment and political opposition against the state. Given the region's religious history, colonial activists easily used Islam as a tool to mobilise people against the colonial state. Due to the partial success some of these resistant groups achieved, Islam became more entrenched as a vital mobilisation tool for socio-political activism. Invoking the region's and general Islamic religio-political history, became a potent strategy to build political momentum, as well as to mobilise people around a common socio-political cause.

These kinds of practices continued in the independent Nigeria. The independent state, having been institutionalised on colonial foundation was easily interpreted as a continuation of the colonial state and thus was ideologically rejected. With the prospects of self-rule, this easily transformed colonial resistance into the formation of a formidable political party, the NPC. In such a party, activists could at least strive to re-write the colonial legacies and return the region back to its Islamic roots. Operating within a multi-ethnic and tripartite regional society, (religion) Islam easily became the ideal resource to articulate the region's political grievances and unite people for a vibrant socio-political activism. For that reason, therefore, the party grew and became very popular in the region. The party has remained the most popular political party in the region today. However, the consequence of this, is that it further entrenched the role of Islam, as well as regional religious identity as the pre-eminent marker of political contention, especially at the Nigerian federal government level. A lack of representation of Muslim or Northern activists at the Nigerian Federal government level became easily interpreted as "political marginalisation"; and as such creates grievances and political opportunities for tensions between the ruling ethnic group and the region. Drawing on such political opportunities, different activists from the region seized on the opportunity to establish activist groups which advocated for political systems that are hoped to return the region back to its *al-Shari'a* roots.

This was the case in 1999 when Nigeria returned to civilian rule, with Olusegun Obasanjo emerging as the new Nigerian president. Since Obasanjo was a Southerner and Christian, his electoral victory was easily interpreted as "political marginalisation" in the Northern Nigeria. Thus, given all the freedom democracy brings, there was a political opportunity for activists from

many religious networks within the region to become bolder and re-start activism for *al-Shari'a*- a system that is generally believed to bring the region to its proper Islamic, economic and political freedom. The situation became worse in 2001, when Obasanjo, in his constitutional right decided to dismiss all the high-ranking military officers, who had held political offices. Those most highly affected were the Northerners. As if this was not enough; the president would also in defiance to a possible agreement he had with some Northern Nigerian political elites about ceding power after his first tenure, started campaigning for a second term. This was completely against the belief that he (the President) was only going to hold forth the Presidency until 2003, after which he was expected to hand over to a Muslim Northerner. This further set the context for more conditions and restlessness for *al-Shari'a* or other forms of religio-political activism. Soon, bolder agitations for *al-Shari'a* and the enthronement of Islamic supremacy at the centre of the Nigerian government ensued. By the end of Obasanjo's first year in office, twelve states from the Northern region had adopted *Shari'a* law as their state's penal code. It was on this background that a socio-political activist organisation that wants to return Nigeria to its *al-Shari'a* system resonated with many activists within the region.

On the socio-religious aspects, the data found that the evolution of BH was very rooted in the internal dynamics within the established Salafi networks within the region. At the dawn of democracy, many activists within these networks were at the forefront of *al-Shari'a* advocacy, advocating that a return of the region to its former Shari'a based system was the best way to return the region back to its religious and economic boom. Unfortunately, this did not turn out to be the case. Although the Shari'a law was enthroned in twelve different states of the region, the system did not create the much anticipated religious and economic boom, as most of the actors who championed it within the Salafi networks had promised. In fact, in implementing the Shari'a laws, the states ended up empowering the Sufis and forced the Salafists to accept a doctrinal compromise; the very issue the Salafis had always wanted to change. Despite the region's public show of religious consciousness and the Shari'a law implementation, the region remained characterised by political corruption and lack of accountability in the public offices. There was also a tremendous lack of basic infrastructures, poor education systems, lack of basic health care, and youth unemployment, especially among the Salafi youths, the majority of whom had not attended Western education system. These, as time went on ignited silent protest among young

Salafi adherents, who felt betrayed by the main Salafi establishments. Empowered by al-Qaeda-funded Mohammed Ali and Mohammed Yusuf, another rising Salafi actor (Mohammed Yusuf), who had become famous both through his criticisms of the main Salafi establishments at the Ndimi mosque, and through his activism during the *al-Shari'a* advocacy, these young Salafi adherents left the old Salafi establishments. They joined Ali in his newly established al-Qaeda-funded camp in Kanama. In the Kanama camp, they easily found a natural home for “true Islamic freedom”; a version of the faith that would not be compromised by the corrupt Islamic establishments and their Nigerian state collaborators.

The data also reveals that Mohammed Ali, the leader of the group at the Kanama camp was a member of the al-Qaeda. He was able to establish the Kanama camp largely because of the financial assistance he received from Osama Bin Laden. Before returning to Nigeria he had studied under al-Qaeda scholars in Sudan and had also fought in Afghanistan with al-Qaeda. He had met Osama Bin Laden in Sudan, with whom they had agreed to open an al-Qaeda training camp in Nigeria. For this, he received about 3 Million dollars to set up the camp. However, within two years, the Nigerian government dismantled the camp. Ali, the leader of the group and many other members of the group were killed. But Yusuf, who had been the spiritual leader of the group survived. He would stay in Saudi Arabia for about one year. He was only allowed to return to Nigeria at the intervention of Jafar Adamu (his mentor) and Adamu Dibal (the then deputy governor of Borno state), on the promise that he would not be involved in any more violence in the region. Following his return in 2005, he moved their base to Maiduguri, and with more funding from undetermined ‘friends’ in Saudi Arabia, he built a new centre that attracted some of the former Kanama boys, who survived the previous raid. From there, the group grew from strength to strength, becoming one of most vocal activist organisations in the region.

The identification of the evolution of BH to the six political structures confirms the understanding in several previous research (Anonymous, 2012; Brigaglia, 2015; Kassim, 2015; Thurston, 2015; Zenn, 2018) that SOMOs like BH do not evolve in a vacuum. However, different from concentration on ideas within Salafism as the primary motivator for such organisations, the BH case shows that the evolution of such groups is also sensitive to the specific socio-political and environmental structures (Loimeier, 2012) within the Northern Nigeria, where the organisation

identify/operate. These political structures in themselves do not necessarily produce SOMOs, rather they provide the window of opportunity upon which activists establish such organisations.

The findings also show that the role of material resources is particularly significant. The availability of resources impact both the willingness and the ability of SOMO actors to establish their organisations. In the case of BH, the availability of material resources from al-Qaeda and that of Yusuf's "friends" from Saudi Arabia provided the enablements for the two men to establish both the Kanama camp and the formation of BH later in 2005. Ali and Yusuf's ability to build on both the grievances from the political events in the region and on the fallout from the disappointment regarding lack of Shari'a implementation in the region, to establish either the Kanama camp or the *Ibn Taymiyyah* centre in Maiduguri, depended a lot on the availability of financial resources available to them. Given such material resources, activists are likely to be empowered to establish their organisations, as well as the kind of initial activism they construe as useful for the success of their organisations.

Thus, activists who establish SOMOs are often encouraged not necessarily by religious ideologies, but by rational calculus to achieve certain socio-political or religious goals. Cognitive processes mediate between political environment and resources, to influence religious or social activists to sacrifice their time, money, and energy, in pursuit of certain believed goals. As has been consistently identified in SMT scholarship, frustrations or ideologies may influence grievances, but they do not necessarily transform to contentions in the form of collective violent actions. For such to happen, there must be the existence of other resources in the form of intermediary variables (money, mobilization structures such as centres within which activists mobilise), which influence the internal debate within the movement to encourage the transformation of these individualised discontents into collective activism. Without these elements, it is impossible to transform grievances and frustrations into any form of collective activism.

### ***7.2.2 The Adoption of Violence as a Strategy for Goal Attainment***

Two main conditions accelerated the adoption of violence after Yusuf took over the organisation in 2005. Firstly, the group leadership's involvement in the Borno state institutionalised politics.

Secondly, the Nigerian state's (in conjunction with the Borno state government) indiscriminate method of policing of BH's activists.

The data showed that despite having already 'moved' ideologically to jihadi position, Yusuf and his group never really begun to use violence against either the state actors or the security forces, until 2009. Returning to Nigeria from Saudi Arabia, Yusuf was able to build a new group in 2005. As a result of financial resources from Saudi Arabia, he was able to quickly build-up a group that attracted most of the Salafi youths, who had survived the Kanama violent crack-down. In identification with his Salafi mission, he took the name *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunn Lidda'awatiwal-jihad* (the People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad). He relocated the group's main base from Kanama to Maiduguri, establishing a mosque in a land given to him by his father-in-law. From there, he espoused the group's message to other parts of the region, through the making and releasing of DVDs, audio cassettes and pamphlets of his messages. He and others within the group's leadership were also involved in *dawah* campaigns in different parts of the region. All these helped increase his popularity in the region. By 2009, the group had branches in some of the major cities and states within the region.

As the wave of the group's popularity continued, he entered into a pact with an upcoming governor of Borno state governor, Ali Modu Sheriff, on the promise that he (Sheriff) promulgated a strict implementation of Shari'a law. Upon Sheriff's electoral victory, he appointed Buju Foi, Yusuf's friend and BH's collaborator, as the state's Commissioner of Religious Affairs, on Yusuf's recommendation. Yusuf also become a representative in the state's Shari'a board. With these, Yusuf and his group had access to the Borno state's Shari'a board and the state institutionalised political system. From such access, he and his group continuously pushed for a strict theocratic system, which technically entailed dissolution of the existing system. This was obviously unviable and considered to be very extreme by different actors in the state. Hence, the state had no choice but to reject and isolate him. Frustrated, he and his friend also resigned from working within the state's institutionalised political system. Since he was no longer tied to the state's political institutionalised apparatus, violent activism became more appealing as an appropriate medium to bring about the change he and his group desired for the state.

In those days, he started by intensifying his criticism against the state. In some cases, he would go as far as threatening to depose the state. For this, he was on many occasions, arrested and detained. Twice he was charged, but his prosecution never went ahead. In late 2008, Yusuf and his deputy, Shekau were also banned from preaching in public by the Borno state government. However, as the group's goal of changing the state system remain unachieved, all these further pushed the group into becoming more hardened and louder with more controversial and anti-state rhetoric. Convinced of the need to adopt violence, Yusuf also began to secretly acquire weapons and ammunitions to start his violent jihad against the state. Due to increased access to some material resources, and in the background of the state's increased indiscriminate targeting of the group's leadership, Yusuf was able to finally articulate his frustrations into more coordinated decision to start attacking the Borno state government and the Nigerian government security forces.

A violent encounter between Yusuf's group and the Borno state's newly formed Operation Flush Task Force II in June 2009 would finally push the group over the line on the use of violence against the Borno state government. For their non-compliance with a new law instructing all motorcycle drivers and passengers to wear helmets as a safety precaution, the members of the Operation Flush had on that incident shot and killed some members of Yusuf's organisation. Yusuf's men had not complied with this law probably because they believed that obeying it was an affront to polytheism. Obeying such secular laws was tantamount to according reverence to something other than God. Rather than obey the security forces, they chose confrontation with them.

In the coming days, Yusuf would call for the state to apologise and make up for what he believed to be injustice on his men. This never came. This further infuriated Yusuf and provided him with the appropriate basis for justification of reciprocated violence against the Nigerian security forces. Having been "preparing" for a day like that day, Yusuf was able to mobilise his group. Relying mostly on the ammunition previously gathered for such events, he and his group launch attacks on the security forces. The *Ibn Taymiyyah* centre (as well as other different cells scattered in other parts of the region) was also there as the religio- physical space to plan and execute their violent attacks on the security forces, this came pretty easy.

In response, the Nigerian government would launch a major "political crackdown" on the group. Led by a newly formed JTF, the state descended on the group. But as the Nigerian government's method of policing become more indiscriminate and brutal, BH found more justification to become

more emboldened in their choice for violence. Thus, they fought back, leading to total chaos in the region. The violence would finally end on the 30<sup>th</sup> of July when the military captured Yusuf. They handed him over to the local police at the Maiduguri police station, who later executed him. This would temporarily put an end to group, until 2010, when the group re-emerged with more sophisticated forms of violence.

BH's case highlights the significance of both the involvement of SOMO activists in the state institutionalised politics and the role state actors in the provision of the appropriate political opportunities for violence in SOMOs. Activists are more likely to draw on violent ideologies in the face of brutal state violence, especially when there is availability of resources. Against violent interactions with the state, activists are more likely to draw up violent ideologies within which it is possible to respond to state's violent approach. On the contrary, they are likely to find reasons to suspend the use of violence strategy in the face of reduced opportunities and constraints, even when there is an obvious ideological conviction for violence. Unfortunately, the paradox of State repression in response to violent activism in SOMOs is that while it helps the State take control of the situation, its very nature itself creates crisis and conditions for internal debates and more justification for violence within SOMOs.

This explains the timing and the temporality involved in the evolution of violence in SOMOs. In many cases, the use of violence in SOMOs do not evolve arbitrarily (Amaechi, 2017; Gunning 2009). Activists do not necessarily subscribe to violent activism, because they are empowered by ideology. Rather, the cognitive conviction to adopt such often mediates between the volatile political environments, the availability of resources, and the experiences inside the movement organisations, given the stage of the organisation. There is often a rational calculus that such activism (at least from their calculation) above other strategies, is the best option with which to achieve the group's identified goals. This rational calculus regarding the tactical efficacy of such activism also determines the initial preparation and intensity such activism takes.

Contrary to the popular perception that SOMO leaders are irrational, religious bigots, BH's case shows that such actors are often very calculative. They are as much rational as activists within broad-based movement organisation. Just like other activists in social movement organisations, these activists are likely to seek to acquire and allocate resources to maximise the goals of their movement organisations under political opportunities and constraints. These opportunities and

constraints made possible by the presence of resources both within the group and within the political environment, enter their rational calculus to help shape intra-movement debates over the efficacy of different strategies, including violence.

### ***7.2.3 The Escalation and Sustenance of Different Forms of Violent Activism***

In investigating the further use and escalation of violence, the study first identifies five major forms of violence: lone professional assassinations, suicide bombings, kidnappings for ransom, bank robberies, and guerrilla raids on military and police barrack. These forms of violence have in the last seven years (2010-2017) become the main tools used within the organisation to carry-out significant attacks. However, the progression from simple use of locally made guns, knives and machetes to these sophisticated forms violent repertoire did not happen overnight. The data reveals that these progressions is better understood when linked to the political opportunities that came from the availability of resources (material and ideological) due to the group's interactions and mutual corporations with similar brother networks, as well as the internal competition from the different factions within the group.

At the dawn of the 2009 crackdown by the security forces, most BH activists had escaped into the neighbouring countries, where they aligned and trained with AQIM and al-Shabaab. Shekau, who took over the group's leadership after the death of Yusuf had relocated to an unknown destination in Northern Cameroon. Upon his recovery from gunshot wounds, he re-established contacts with AQIM. He sent delegates to AQIM asking for financial assistance and training. Upon the reception of such assistance, he led the group on a campaign of violent attacks in the region. As a result of these material resources and an added framing of the group's initial ideology of victimhood, which portrays BH and the entire Muslim population in the region as victims rather than the aggressors, Shekau was able to re-assemble and mobilise the scattered BH activists to re-start their activism in the region in 2010. This time the group had even more reason to attack the Nigerian government: they had to revenge the death of their leader and other members of the group, whom the Nigerian government "unfairly" killed in the 2009 crack-down of the organisation.

However, Shekau's men would soon realise that the region was no longer how it used to be before the 2009 crackdown. In the aftermath of the 2009 crackdown, the Nigerian government had

maintained a militarisation approach that saw BH activists as simply a bunch of criminals that had to be crushed at all cost. Using this approach, the federal government had increased the presence of security personnel in the region. Under the new measure, security personnel could randomly declare curfew and bans on any public processions, demonstrations or suspicious public gatherings. As a result, attacks in the region became a bit more difficult. For the organisation to continue to carry out its attacks or engage with the security forces in the region under such a militarised environment, they had to devise more advanced and sophisticated means that could match those of the security forces. This was the background upon which suicide bombing evolved in the organisation. Instead of using locally made knives and bows and arrows, they had to employ machine guns, AK-47 assault rifles and car bombs, to carry out their well-planned guerrilla attacks. These advanced weapons appeared to be the best means with which the group could still compete with the Nigerian security forces, as well as effectively carry out their attacks without being stopped.

First, Shekau and his group started with a high-level hit-and-run assassinations of selected individuals and high ranking JTF personnel stationed in the areas using motorcycles. With this strategy, the group were able to easily evade arrest after each attack. Using this they targeted and killed some of the commanders of the joint task forces that were conducting the operations in the region. To further demonstrate continuity with the original dismantled 2009 set, the group also attacked local politicians and religious leaders, who had cooperated with the police and implicated the BH members in the 2009 raid. They re-took houses belonging to members of group, who either died or escaped the first raid. The people who had taken over these houses were either killed or forced to vacate them. Due to the success of these attacks, the group became bolder and more emboldened. In September 2010, with the help of AQIM, the group would also attack the Federal government prison in Jos, Bauchi state. In this case, they liberated about 150 BH inmates together with about 550 other inmates.

Other forms of violent strategy such as suicide bombing has also developed in similar fashion. With this method of violent strategy, the group has been able to carry-out major significant attacks, which ordinarily would not have been possible. The first time the group used this was in 2011, when they used it to attack the Nigerian police chief at the heart of the country's security capital. Within such a militarized and security-tight environment, this tactic appears naturally as the most

potent and efficient means to carry out such strategic attack, which ordinarily would seem impossible to carry-out without being stopped. The fact that this form of violent strategy had long been developed in those similar “brother” organisations (who had continued to work with BH), makes the adoption of this strategy very natural. These relationships and cooperation meant that by the time BH needed to step up its attacks, they have access to both the experience and the technical know-how required for the adoption of this radical form of violence that already exists within these organisations. In fact, Mohammad Abul Barra, the 29-year-old who executed the group’s first suicide bombing at a UN building in Abuja in 2009, returned from Somalia a few days before he carried-out the attack in Abuja. Thus, given that such a radical method had already been developed and justified within these ‘brother’ groups, this strategy was at least an option to be adopted by the group. In such a militarised and hostile environment where the group operated, this strategy naturally appeared as a very reasonable and efficient option to carry out such strategic attacks, which ordinarily would seem impossible to carry out such attacks without being stopped.

The significance of this mutual co-operation is also exemplified in the intensified use of this form of violence in 2013 and 2014, when the different factions of the group who trained and fought with AQIM in Mali, re-integrated into the group. Through much added resources, the group was also able to develop and intensify the use of other forms of violent strategies such as kidnappings and guerrilla attacks, which they had learnt from their interactions with AQIM. Using these methods of violence, they were able to intensify and carry out attacks, which ordinarily would have been impossible. Some of the resources entail the ability to adopt certain strategies which such resources incorporate (Della Porta, 2009; Amaechi, 2013). The availability of such strategies from this co-operation impacts on both the willingness and the ability of activists to mobilize strategies with which they can use to maximise the impact and efficaciousness of their groups’ goals (Oberschall, 1993; Amaechi 2013, Gunning & Baron 2013).

This was also similar in the case of use of kidnappings for ransom in the group (which developed after 2011 and intensified in 2013 and 2014). However, in addition to the interactions and mutual co-operation between BH and the similar organisations, this form of violence is connected to the internal competitions between the different factions of the group. As a function of Ansaru’s split from the Shekau in 2011, the development and intensity of the different attacks in both groups was not just about the BH’s continuity in its jihadi activism; rather it was also about out-competing the

other in the use of violent activism. Access to different resources meant the ability and motivation for different forms of violence. Thus, tactical decisions to use the different forms of sophisticated violence were not just about out-foxing the Nigerian state, or just a continuation of the groups' violent activism, it was also about ability, and using this ability to impress AQIM, as well as about out-compete the rival faction.

All these demonstrate the significant role of resources in the sustenance of different forms of violent activism. Obviously, the development and use of different forms of violence in BH are sensitive towards the availability of resources, which comes from the organisation's interactions and mutual co-operation with other similar Salafi organisations. To adopt specific strategies, movement organisation leaders use different resources available to them to create crucibles for mobilisations. Religious ideology or violent confrontations with state authorities can create enabling political opportunities for movement organisations to act; however, without the corresponding resources (in the form of ideological framings, the financial resources to buy ammunitions, or training in arms from similar networks) SOMOs leaderships may find it difficult to sustain such violence over a long period of time. These resources can determine both the form and the intensity which these strategies take within such organisations.

The evolution of suicide violence is more of a result of availability of resources that came with mutual co-operation and interactions with similar organisations, than a result of ideological imperative evolving from the organisation's radical Salafists ideology as some studies about such groups imply. This strategy did not simply emerge as a static, individual Salafis disposition, prior to participation in the movement organisation. Instead, it was more of a result of experience of activism within the group. Dispositions to violence may have started before participation in the organisation, but the decision to participate in collective violent activism was re-enforced through participation in the group: the experience of activism both within the group and exposure to other similar brother organisations. By participating in such activism, and by being exposed to such organisations, individuals within such groups internalised and personalised the organisation's goals and interests, such that 'necessary' strategy, which ordinarily would not appeal to them became personally meaningful and more acceptable. Given such a background, individuals sacrificing their life for the sake of the group, therefore, make perfect sense. Under such structured conditions, adopting such strategies becomes a duty bigger than the individual.

Of course, the fact that organisations like BH have access to theological concepts within which such activism has been justified makes it easier for “talented” actors like Yusuf or Nur to mobilise such forms of violence in the group. From such theological heritage, activists could construe violent activism as a sort social and religious duty that demands self-sacrifice. However, this does not in any way imply that the existence of such concepts automatically leads to suicidal violence. For this to happen, suicidal violence needs to be framed in a such a way that it resonates with the activists’ individual, historical, organisational and socio-political conditions. There also need to be corresponding resources, within which it is possible to carry out such forms of violent activism.

### **7.5 Limitations of the Research**

Despite the potential contributions of this thesis to the study of SOMOs, this research is not without its own limitations. Two of these limitations are most significant: First, the inability to strictly make a general conclusion about SOMOs. Given that this study is a case study, it has only concentrated on BH. While this has provided an opportunity for an in-dept analysis, its findings have limited implications on other SOMOs around the world. BH is only one among many SOMOs around the world. Since activism within such organisations are affected by specific contextual and organisational dynamics within such organisations, findings from this cannot be generalised. Findings from this study can only be generalised theoretically (analytic generalisation).

Secondly, the inability to engage with former or current BH activists. As detailed in Chapter three, I had initially intended to engage with a set of participants from BH. Assumptions are that such a set of participants would have given the study access to unique primary data about both the emergence of the group and development and use of violence within the group (something, many previous researchers about the group have not been able to accomplish). Also, the consequent recourse to engage mostly with only security personnel, politicians, religious clerics and victims of BH violence meant that the data is inevitable coloured by assumptions of the group from these participants.

## **7.6 Final Thoughts**

This study has used the case of BH to study the use of violence in SOMOs. Based on the application of SMT paradigms into the analysis of this Northern Nigerian-based organisation, this research hopes to have theoretically broadened the understanding of how SOMOs use violent activism. The main argument of the thesis has been that the emergence of such organisations and the evolution of activism within them, including violence are similar to traditional social movement organisations. Despite their religious orientation, they are dependent on the availability of resources and political opportunities as their traditional social movement organisations counterparts, albeit in a different degree. Like their social counterparts, activists within such organisations are also affected by their actional calculus and the internal dynamics within the groups, the prevailing socio-political contexts, state practices towards them and the availability of mobilisation structures in their groups.

Strategies such as violence in such groups do not evolve arbitrarily or in a vacuum: they belong to organisational and shifting social milieu which structure and constrain them. Movement activists would likely suspend the adoption of such strategy in the presence of limited resources, even when there is an obvious ideological conviction. In other words, activists do not necessarily utilise violent activism, because they are empowered by ideology. Rather, the cognitive conviction to adopt such strategies often mediate between the volatile political environments, the availability of resources, and the experiences inside the movement organisations, given the stage of the organisation. There is often a rational calculus that such activism (at least from their calculation) above other strategies, is the best option with which to achieve the group's identified goals. This rational calculus regarding the tactical efficacy of such activism also determines the initial preparation and intensity such activism takes.

This being the case, violence should not be exceptional in SOMOs. Like every other form of movement activism this element is often part of movement organisation dynamics, which involves organisational structuring and normative framing that is facilitated by resources and political opportunities. How the movement actors' structure and restructure their organisation's behaviour depend on the availability of resources and the level of opportunities and constraints within the political environments upon which they identify. Therefore, referring to BH (or any other SOMO who use violence) as 'Salafi-jihadist' was avoided in this research. Such tag not only connotes an

‘exceptionalisation’ of one form of activism (violence) within such group, it also downplays significance of other forms of activism that evolve within such organisations.

The development of different forms of violence such as suicide bombing, kidnapping for ransom, and armed robbery, which evolves within SOMOs, are not unique to Salafi-oriented groups. Much like the case of BH, these forms of violence are more of access to material resources and internal competition within such organisations rather than jihadi ideological motivations. Activists within SOMOs embrace such activism (practically moving from lower-risk, to higher-risk), not necessarily because they arose from an ideological imperative from Salafi-jihadism, but because they were socialised through their experience within the group, from training with similar brother organisations and from connection of the group’s activism to the individual experience within the movement. As I see it, rather than being a result of static or ideological dispositions that exist prior to participation in such organisations, the choice and the decision for such activism are often influenced by the experience of participation inside the movement organisation. On the contrary, these kinds of activism may evolve in any movement organisation irrespective of the ideological orientation of such organisations. The increasing use of such radical forms of violent strategy in Salafi-oriented movement organisations does not imply that such forms of activism are unique to such groups. It also does not mean that these kinds of groups are inherently violent. What this shows however, is the tactical ability of activists within such groups to frame activism in such terms that it resonates with activists operating within their groups. Operating within similar socio-political contexts, and having similar political opportunities, activists within regular social movement organisations could also mobilise their activists for similar radically violent strategies, without being indoctrinated in any religious concepts.

Of course, the fact that SOMOs have access to ideologies and concepts within Salafism, within which such violent activism were justified, makes it easier for talented SOMO leaders to motivate activists for such activism. Such heritage provides talented leaders within SOMOs an opportunity to provide actors with both the political identity and violent ideologies upon which to justify violent activism. This, however, does not in any way imply that the existence of this concepts or ideologies in organisations would inevitably result in adoption of such armed violence. For this to happen, armed violence needs to be framed in such a way that it resonates with ‘activists’ historical

and socio-political conditions. Such organisations would need to have access to corresponding resources, within which it is possible to motivate such activism.

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## APPENDIXES

## Appendix A: Cover Letter of Approval for Field Work in Nigeria



19 Jan 2017

From:  
 Prof Johan Strijdom  
 Department of Religious Studies and Arabic  
 PO Box 392  
 University of South Africa (Unisa)  
 Pretoria  
 0003  
 South Africa  
 Email: [strijm@hotmail.com](mailto:strijm@hotmail.com) / [strijm@unisa.ac.za](mailto:strijm@unisa.ac.za)  
 Tel: +27 12 8041312  
 Mobile: +27 798193169

To whom it may concern

Re: Doctoral Research on Boko Haram by Mr AMAECHI, Kingsley  
[Kingsleyokafor06@gmail.com](mailto:Kingsleyokafor06@gmail.com)

Mr Kingsley Amaechi is currently registered for a doctorate in Religious Studies at the University of South Africa (Unisa), with me as supervisor and Dr Auwais Rafudeen as co-supervisor. The title of his dissertation is *The Adoption and Escalation of Violence in Religious Movements: The Case of Boko Haram (BH) in Nigeria*.

He has completed the research proposal phase successfully. His proposal was unanimously accepted by the Department of Religious Studies and Arabic at the University of South Africa (Unisa). He has demonstrated his ability to deal with theory, concepts and methods that are needed for his research. He also obtained ethical clearance from the university to commence with fieldwork on Boko Haram.

We would greatly appreciate it, if you could facilitate and assist Mr Amaechi in his fieldwork and research in Nigeria.

Best regards.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Strijdom".

Prof Johan Strijdom



## Appendix B: A Letter of Solicitation for Participation in the PhD Research

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**University Of South Africa (UNISA)**

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**School of Humanities, Department of Religious studies and Arabic**

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Dear .....

I hereby invite you to participate in a semi-structured interview, which is part of a research being conducted by me Kingsley Ekene Amaechi, in fulfillment of PhD research in the department of Religious Studies and Arabic, University of South Africa.

**Research Title** is *The Adoption and Escalation of Violence in Religious Movements: The Case of the Boko-Haram in Nigeria.*

**Purpose of the study** is to understand the adoption and development of violence in Islamic oriented movement organization. Using Boko-Haram in Nigeria as a case study, the research aims to gain a deeper insight into why and how this element develops in such movement organizations.

**Your Role as A Participant:** I chose you to participate in this research because I believe that your experience as a .....can contribute much to the understanding and knowledge of this element within the group. Your participation will consist of an audio recorded semi-structured interview lasting approximately for about 1 hour. During the interview, I will ask you questions about the emergence of the group, their ideology, and the development of violence within the group. I will also ask you questions about factors which must have contributed to the development of this element both within the group and within the region where the group operates.

**Your right as a Participant:** Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. In other words, it is your choice whether to participate or not. During the interview, you are not obliged to answer all questions. In fact, you may pass on any question that makes you uncomfortable. Also, at any time during the interview, you are free to stop your participation, of which there is absolutely no penalty for discontinuing your participation.

**Confidentiality:** You can also be assured that although the entire interview will be tape-recorded, your name will not be mentioned or identified on the tape. The essence of recording the interview is only to ensure an accurate understanding and recording of your responses. The tape will be kept in a secured location that is accessible only to me, to be destroyed after the research. In fact, every information and data collected from you must be treated in the strictest confidentiality and will be used for academic purposes only. No one else except me, or my supervisors may listen to them. Never will your name or anything that gives away your identity appear in any report, publication or presentation resulting from this study, unless if you indicate otherwise (in which case we would have another discussion about this).

Thank you in advance for your anticipated cooperation.

Yours Sincerely

.....

Kingsley E. Amaechi

For Further Questions please contact me at [kingsleyokafor06@gmail.com](mailto:kingsleyokafor06@gmail.com)

Phone no. +27838806473, +2348021381297

**Appendix C: Consent Form**

**Consent Form**

I have read the information concerning participating in the study about *The Adoption and Escalation of Violence in Religious Movements: The Case of the Boko-Haram in Nigeria*. I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be audio recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses. I am aware that excerpts from the interview may be included in the publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations would be anonymous. In case where this would not be the case, it would be with my permission. I have also been informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty. With the full knowledge of the on-going, I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

.....	.....	.....
Name of Participant	Date	Signature
Gender	.....	
State of Origin	.....	
Religious affiliation	.....	
Ethnic Affiliation	.....	
.....	.....	.....
Name of Researcher	Date	Signature

**Appendix D: Letter to the General Commander of the Nigerian JTF  
University of South Africa (UNISA)**

**School of Humanities, Department of Religious studies and Arabic**

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The General Commander,  
Nigerian Joint Task Force  
C/O The Police Unit commander (UC) Imo State, Nigeria.

20<sup>th</sup> February 2016.

Dear Sir/Madam

**Application to Interview Boko-Haram Prisoners**

I hereby kindly request to be given the opportunity to interview Boko-Haram suspects held in the Kirikiri Maximum Security Prison, as part of a research being conducted by me Kingsley Ekene Amaechi, in fulfillment of PhD study in the department of Religious Studies and Arabic, University of South Africa.

**Research Title:** The Adoption and Escalation of Violence in Religious Movements: The Case of the Boko-Haram in Nigeria.

**Purpose of the interview:** To understand how, and when violent activism evolved and developed within movement organization. Using these suspects as a window into the Nigerian Boko-Haram, I aim to gain a deeper insight into why and how this element develops in such movement organizations.

**The Inmates' Role As Participants:** I chose to have them participate in this research because I believe that their experience as a members or former members of the group can contribute immensely to the understanding and knowledge of this element within the group. Their participation will consist of an audio recorded semi-structured interview lasting approximately for about 1 hour. During the interview, I will ask them questions about the emergence of the group, their ideology, and the development of violence within the group. I will also ask them questions

about factors which must have contributed to the development of this element both within the group and within the region where the group operates.

**Their right as a Participant:** Their participation in this research is entirely voluntary. In other words, it is their choice whether to participate or not. During the interview, they are not obliged to answer all questions. In fact, they may pass on any question that makes them uncomfortable. Also, at any time during the interview, they are free to stop their participation, in which case there is absolutely no penalty for discontinuing their participation.

**Confidentiality:** You can also be assured that although the entire interview will be tape-recorded, their names will not be mentioned or identified on the tape. The essence of recording the interview is only to ensure an accurate understanding and recording of their responses. The tape will be kept in a secured location that is accessible only to me, to be destroyed after the research. In fact, every information and data collected from them must be treated in the strictest confidentiality and will be used for academic purposes only. No one else except me, or my supervisors may listen to them. Never will their name or anything that gives away their identity appear in any report, publication or presentation resulting from this study, unless if they and you (as the director of JTF) indicate otherwise (in which case we would have another discussion about this).

Upon your approval for the interviews, I will go further to contact the inmates and their legal councils for the permission. I will also contact the prisons to ensure that the interviews are conducted in a civilized and secured environment. Thank you in advance for your anticipated cooperation.

Best regards.

Kingsley E. Amaechi

.....

For Further Questions please contact at: Email: [kingsleyokafor06@gmail.com](mailto:kingsleyokafor06@gmail.com)

Phone no. +27838806473, +2348021381297

**Appendix E: Questionnaire Guide for Interview Participants**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Main Questions</b>	<b>Additional Questions</b>
<b>The emergence of Boko-Haram</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When did you first hear about BH?</li> <li>• How would you describe the evolution of the group in the Northern Nigeria?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was your first impressions about the group when they first emerged?</li> <li>• What did you understand then was the group's main aim at the time?</li> <li>• In your estimation why do you think, these group chose your area?</li> <li>• What do you think attracted the group to your area at that time?</li> </ul>
<b>The use of Violent strategy by BH</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When did you first hear that the group now uses violent strategy?</li> <li>• Have you or any member of your family had a first-hand experience of Boko-Haram?</li> <li>• If yes, when did this happen?</li> <li>• Why do you think the group uses violent strategy now?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you describe these incidents?</li> <li>• How did you survive?</li> <li>• What was the message you got from the group from these incidents?</li> <li>• Islam is often believed to be one of the main factors which influences the adoption of violent strategy within such group; do you agree with this assumption?</li> <li>• Does the fact that the group has a salafist background have any influence in the emergence of this element?</li> <li>• From your experience, do you think there are other elements both within and outside the group that contributes to the development of this element?</li> </ul>

<p><b>The Further Escalation of Violence</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you see as the major significant development in the way in which BH carry out its attacks now?</li> <li>• What do you think is the cause of these developments?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Under what circumstances do you think these developments occurred within the group?</li> <li>• Who are the people behind these developments?</li> <li>• Do you think there is also a connection between these developments and your earlier mentioned factors that caused the development of violence in the group?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Conclusion of the interview</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there any other thing regarding the development of violence within the group that we have not</li> </ul>	

	<p>touched upon and you wish to discuss?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do you want to add or withdraw anything on some of your previous answers?</li></ul>	
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