universität wien

MASTER THESIS

Titel der Master Thesis / Title of the Master's Thesis

"Fight in the way of Allah: Examining the Boko Haram insurgency through the lens of the post-Cold War international system"

verfasst von / submitted by

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angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Advanced International Studies (M.A.I.S.)

Wien 2017 / Vienna 2017

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt Postgraduate programme code as it appears on the student record sheet:	A 992 940
Universitätslehrgang lt. Studienblatt Postgraduate programme as it appears on the student record sheet:	Internationale Studien / International Studies
Betreut von / Supervisor:	Prof. Arthur R. Rachwald

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Vienna School of International Studies
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Abstract

The propagation of Islamist insurgencies since the end of the Cold War has become a defining feature of contemporary global politics. This study examines why that is, by deconstructing the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, in order to extrapolate a systemic understanding of the group's rise. In other words, it seeks to reduce the emergence of Boko Haram to systemic weaknesses in the post-Cold War global order. The thesis first constructs a model of the international system, pinpointing the features which endow it with an inherent propensity for generating this kind of conflict. It identifies state failure and Islamic revivalism as key components of this systemic propensity, singling out the collapse of the bi-polar power structure, the spread of neoliberal globalisation, and the concomitant rejection of secular democracy, as the primary drivers of these trends. The study then tests the validity of its model by linking the conditions which led to the emergence of the Boko Haram insurgency, to the processes of state failure and Islamic revivalism inherent in the model. It does so by developing a detailed narrative of the conflict across a wide historical time-frame, and deconstructing it into varying levels-of-analysis. The study's conclusions point to a correlation between systemic trends and the emergence of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, whilst acknowledging that conditions specific to Nigeria have played an equally significant role. It concludes that the complexities of each instance of conflict, the Boko Haram insurgency included, ultimately render systemic explanations unsatisfactory tools of analysis. The thesis ends with a brief set of prescriptions which it considers necessary to rectify the systemic flaws identified in the model of the international system.

Key words: Boko Haram; Nigeria; post-Cold War international system; state failure; bi-polar power structure; neoliberal globalisation; Islamic revivalism; global violent *jihad.*

Synthese

Die Verbreitung islamischer Aufstände seit dem Ende des Kalten Krieges ist zu einem entscheidenden Merkmal der zeitgenössischen globalen Politik geworden. Die Studie untersucht die Hintergründe anhand des Boko Haram Aufstandes in Nigeria, um ein systemisches Verständnis für den Aufstieg der Gruppe zu erhalten. Anders formuliert, es wird angestrebt, die Entstehung Boko Harams auf systemische Schwächen in der globalen Ordnung nach dem Kalten Krieg zurückzuführen. Die Thesis entwickelt zunächst ein Modell des internationalen Systems, das die Merkmale der zugrundeliegenden Neigung zur Erzeugung dieser Art von Konflikten genau hervorhebt. Staatsversagen und die islamische Erweckungsbewegung werden als Schlüsselkomponente dieser systemischen Neigung identifiziert. Grundpfeiler für diese Tendenzen sind vor allem der Zerfall der bipolaren Machtstruktur, der neoliberale Globalisierungsprozess sowie die damit verbundene Ablehnung der säkularen Demokratie. Im weiteren Verlauf der Studie wird die Gültigkeit des Modells geprüft, indem die Bedingungen der Entstehung des Boko Haram Aufstandes mit den Prozessen des Staatsversagens und der islamischen Wiederbelebung, die dem Modell innewohnen, verknüpft werden. Dies geschieht anhand einer ausführlichen Beschreibung des Konflikts über einen breiten historischen Zeitrahmen hinweg und einer Dekonstruktion dessen auf mehreren Analyseebenen. Die Schlussfolgerungen der Studie deuten indes auf einen Zusammenhang zwischen systemischen Trends und der Entstehung des Boko Haram Aufstandes in Nigeria hin. Es wurde jedoch anerkannt, dass die für Nigeria spezifischen Bedingungen eine ebenso bedeutende Rolle gespielt haben. Die Studie kommt zu dem Schluss, dass systemische Erklärungen unzureichende Analyseinstrumente für die Komplexitäten der einzelnen Konfliktfälle, die des Boko Haram Aufstands eingeschlossen, darstellen. Die These endet mit kurzgefassten Vorgaben, die für notwendig gehalten werden, um die im Modell des internationalen Systems identifizierten systemischen Mängel zu beheben.

Schlüsselwörter: Boko Haram; Nigeria; internationales System nach dem Kalten Krieg; Staatsversagen; bi-polare Machtstruktur; neoliberale Globalisierung; islamische Wiederbelebung; global gewaltsamer Dschihad

To mum and dad, without whom my journey from Verseau to Vienna would never have been possible.

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INTRODUCTION

The central purpose of this study is to determine whether the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, can be considered a product of system-wide factors inherent in the post-Cold War international system, or whether it is the result of localised conditions unique to the country itself. More concretely, it seeks to establish the conceptual weaknesses of the contemporary system which make it disposed to generating violent Islamist insurgencies within nation-states, and test them against a case study of Boko Haram. The enquiry is guided by two principal research questions, and three additional sub-questions:

(i) To what extent is the Boko Haram insurgency the product of a post-Cold War international system inherently prone to intra-state conflict? (ii) Can these systemic failures be deemed the principle cause of the insurgency, or are there other localised conditions which have played a more prominent role? (iii) What explains the precise timing of Boko Haram's emergence? (iv) What is it about today's conditions which have led to its genesis? (v) Is Boko Haram a systemic issue, a mere extension of a global problem, or one specific to Nigeria?

The first section of the thesis identifies the intrinsic characteristics of the post-Cold War international system, which make it susceptible to this specific type of conflict. It first examines the phenomenon of state failure, attempting to understand why it is often deemed an innate feature of the post-Cold War world. It argues that it is a result of both the collapse of the bipolar power structure, and of the propagation of neoliberal globalisation, pressures which have weakened state structures and rendered them more prone to conflict. It then examines the development of Islamic revivalism, and the spread of global violent *jihad*. It evaluates its impact on religious narratives in Nigeria, and seeks to ascertain the role – if any - it has played in the instigation and sustenance of the Boko Haram insurgency. In this sense, a model is first constructed, that is, a commentary on the international system, whose core assumptions are then tested in the subsequent analysis. The thesis then develops a detailed account of the Boko Haram insurgency's rise, but also delves deeper into Nigerian history in search of common threads. In doing so, it determines whether it is an entirely new phenomenon, or whether it can be identified as a recurring facet of Nigerian history, a deep-seated pocket of instability which has merely been roused from its slumbers by the pressures of the modern international system. The enquiry then evaluates the roles and conduct of the conflict's main actors at various levels-of-analysis. It

begins with the individual level, focusing on Boko Haram's leadership circle, and those who are drawn to membership. It dedicates particular attention to Boko Haram's recruitment strategies, examining the religious discourse used by the leadership to affix moral sanction to their conduct. It seeks to determine the rationale behind Boko Haram's actions and their ultimate vision, assuming that such an end goal exists. The section considers the role that religion plays in invigorating and sustaining the conflict, in particular by examining the notions of *jihad*, and the binary worldview which is a hallmark of fundamentalist Islamist thinking. The enquiry then progresses to the nation-state level-of-analysis, and evaluates the role which the Nigerian government has played in the generation of the insurgency. It examines its response to the insurgency, highlighting how its heavy-handed and haphazard reaction has, in many ways, reinforced the grievances and cleavages which led to Boko Haram's emergence in the first place. Finally, the analysis shifts to the systemic level, by determining how the system has reacted to the insurgency. It attempts to place this Nigeria-centric issue in its wider regional and international political and security context. In conclusion, the validity of the initial claims is evaluated, and changes at the systemic, and indeed the domestic level - in order to address the conditions which generate the phenomenon under discussion – are proposed.

The analysis is steered by the following five hypotheses, the accuracy of which are examined as the enquiry develops: (i) Conflict in the post-Cold War international system is of an inherently *intra*-state nature, which differs from *inter*-state conflicts which defined systems of the past (ii) The end of the Cold War, and the concomitant collapse of the bi-polar power structure and spread of neoliberal globalisation, is responsible for the generation and spread of 'failed states', which has in turn provided the conditions for the emergence of insurgencies (iii) The Islamic 'revival', begun in the twentieth century, has been consolidated and rendered more acute by a post-Cold War international system geared towards the propagation of secular democracy, and has contributed to the phenomenon of global violent *jihad* (iv) The Boko Haram insurgency has benefitted from the conditions generated by this system - namely Nigeria's failure as a state and the revival of religious fervour - enabling it to take root and thrive (v) Northern Nigeria, from where Boko Haram emerged, has a history of violent *jihad*, and common threads between the group and past instances of Islamic revivalism can be identified.

The thesis uses a hybrid theoretical framework to guide its enquiry, using varying levels-of-analysis to isolate its constituent parts. The first section broadly relies on the core tenets of **Classical Realism** as it constructs its model of the post-Cold War international system. It proves particularly useful when examining the collapse of the bipolar power structure, and the

peripheral vacuums which it left behind. The 'deconstruction' of the conflict in the third chapter, is conducted through the lens of Constructivist thinking. **Constructivism** rejects, to a large extent, the materialist and positivist approaches of Realism and Liberalism, respectively. Rather, it is founded on the belief that 'structures of human association are primarily cultural', that such structures shape actors' identities, and that these identities in turn fashion their interests (Behravesh 2011:2). The constructivist approach is particularly appropriate for the specific type of phenomenon this thesis seeks to explain, namely, Islamist insurgencies. Firstly, it stresses 'the role of non-state actors more than other approaches' making it an obvious choice for the issue under discussion. Perhaps more importantly however, it argues that such concepts as power, interests and justice have certain 'social meanings' which are 'constructed from a complex and specific mix of history, ideas, norms and beliefs' which need to be understood in order to explain 'human motivation and agency'. The constructivist framework thus accounts for 'issues of identity and belief' which other 'traditional' theories omit (Slaughter 2011). Constructivism is thus an effective tool for understanding Boko Haram's appeal, its capacity to mobilise individuals, and the ways in which it 'converts' its adherents to its murderous interpretation of Islam. The thesis follows a deductive line of enquiry, employing systematic reasoning to validate its starting assumptions. It first constructs a model, that is, an overview of the international system and the characteristics which make it a structure prone to generating intra-state conflict, and more specifically, Islamist insurgencies. Once these features have been identified, the thesis develops a detailed historical narrative of the Boko Haram insurgency, and of religious violence in Nigeria more broadly. It provides an overview of the current status of the conflict, and discusses the roles and conduct of actors at varying levels-of-analysis. The analysis is in this sense fluid, ensuring that generalisations typical of the systemic approach are avoided, whilst benefitting from the depth and insight which the nation-state level and individual level analyses provide (Singer 1961). As the case-study develops, its insights are tested against the core assumptions of the initial model, providing the basis on which to draw conclusions regarding both the root causes of the Boko Haram insurgency, and the phenomenon which it embodies more generally. The use of a single case study may on the surface appear restrictive, but it arguably yields more comprehensive and insightful conclusions, as focusing the research allows for a more in-depth appraisal of what is a highly intricate phenomenon. Whilst secondary literature features most prominently, the thesis also employs original sources to substantiate its claims, including interviews, speeches and personal accounts, particularly in sections dealing specifically with the conflict. Given the both recent and changeable nature of the conflict, online media sources, including from Nigerian media outlets, are used. Not only does this ensure that the information presented is up to date, but it also provides insight from an inherently Nigerian

perspective. These include but are not limited to Vanguard, Punch, Daily Trust and Jeune Afrique. Reports and policy papers from think-tanks and NGOs, in particular the International Crisis Group (ICG) and the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), provide a crucial source of field research and expert analysis. The thesis uses its two disciplines – **History** and **International Relations** - in broadly equal measure, with the former featuring more prominently in the systemic analysis sections at either end of the thesis, and the latter in the conflict-specific case study. One used in isolation to the other generates less than thorough conclusions. Ultimately, 'history matters, and IR theory cannot escape history as a discipline' (Lequesne 2015:364). This is particularly relevant for the study of such a 'complex social phenomenon' as violent conflict, which only a multi-disciplinary approach can explain (Demmers 2012:2).

The study has drawn on a variety of literature, providing both empirical and analytical depth. The sources used can be broadly broken down into the following categories. The first consists of secondary literature, used most prominently in the construction of the model of the post-Cold War international system in the opening chapter. These include books, journal articles, and essay collections. The clear strength of this kind of literature lies in its lending academic authority to the analysis, as well as in its capacity to incorporate competing, and often conflicting, viewpoints and arguments, enabling it to draw authoritative conclusions. However, by virtue of the fact that many of the authors referenced, describe and analyse phenomena with which they have a degree of distance, the end products are inevitably prone to generalisations and lack the capacity for detailed case-by-case analysis. It is also worth noting, that though there is naturally an abundance of secondary literature on Islamist insurgencies as a systemic feature of the post-Cold War world, much of the academic work perused made scant reference to the issue specifically in sub-Saharan Africa. More common areas of concern such as the Middle East and North Africa, were instead the focus of analysis. This is perhaps a reflection of the fact that the issue of Islamist insurgencies has, until recently, been traditionally associated with the latter two regions, and not sub-Saharan Africa. It is also true that much of the international policy-making with regards to such groups in the decades since the end of the Cold War, has been focused most prominently on these regions. The types of literature used in the sections on Boko Haram were more varied than those in the first chapter. The works which provided the basis for much of the historical narrative of Nigeria and the insurgency, were hybrid in nature, relying both on previous academic material, as well as on original sources, including interviews, manuscripts, and field research. This homogeneity combined both historical and factual accuracy, with a more subjective appraisal of a dynamic and changeable situation. Herein lies the key strength of this type of literature, furnishing the study with unique, first-hand insight which the purely secondary

literature of the opening chapter lacks. This is also true of the studies by the ICG, CFR, HRW and Amnesty International, which provided in-depth and impartial information on the Boko Haram insurgency, and Nigeria more broadly. The study also used a variety of journalistic materials, from both international and Nigerian online news outlets. These sources naturally suffer from a dearth of detail, given their concise nature, but are often the only source able to provide the most up-to-date information on the rapidly changing situation on the ground. Transcripts of speeches or statements given by Boko Haram leaders were consulted *within* the secondary literature, adding a personal dimension to the analysis, although much of what is issued by the insurgency's leaders, should of course be taken with a dose of scepticism and seen with a critical eye. Lastly, interviews conducted with experts on the ground, a Muslim leader from the north, and academics specialised in the region, have provided a singular insight into what is a far more complex phenomenon than first meets the eye. This enabled the formulation of a much-need counter-narrative to the explanations for Boko Haram's rise, which the secondary literature proposed.

I. THE POST-COLD WAR INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

I.I THE STATE OF AFFAIRS

The core starting assumption of this thesis is both a compelling and challenging one, that modern-day intra-state conflict - fuelled by Islamist insurgencies - is the product of systemic deficiencies in the current international system. At its heart, lies a humble observation regarding the state of international affairs in the second decade of the twenty first century. It reflects a concerned and inquisitive appraisal of the calamity and disorder which reigns in vast portions of the globe at the time of writing. In isolation, the observation may appear relatively unscientific, but it has spawned an endeavour to enquire with greater diligence and depth, the validity of its claims. The result of that undertaking, are the reflections and arguments expounded below. The opening chapter of this thesis will be dedicated to the construction of a model of the post-Cold War international system. It will identify the principal features of the system which make it one susceptible to violence and conflict *within* as opposed to *between* states. Given the nature of the selected case study which will be the focus of the second chapter, the commentary will home in on the characteristics of the system which are likely to generate a particular type of intra-state conflict – armed insurgency couched in violent Islamist ideology. The post-Cold War system is by its very nature, a broad topic, and attempting to cover all aspects of it is beyond the scope of the research questions posed in the introduction. Conceding this early on, will allow for a more focused and targeted analysis of what is truly relevant to the aims of the research. The construction of the model will be conducted along two main axes of enquiry, each with a series of sub-sections deconstructing the broader topics. The first will study the phenomenon of failed states. It will first define the term, with the aid of examples, and attempt to pinpoint the underlying causes of state failure. It will then critically appraise the causal relationship between the emergence of failed states, and a system forged out of the ashes of the Cold War. The second principal line of enquiry, will be the revival of religious identities and the propagation of faith-based movements which challenge – often violently - the established order. The focus of the analysis will be the resurgence and renewed appeal of Islamism as a paradigm of societal order, and its impact on the genesis of radical Islamist insurgencies. The extent to which this resurgence is part and parcel of the post-Cold War international system will then be evaluated. The chapter will conclude with a concise profiling of today's international system, and thus complete the construction of the model, enabling its core tenets to be tested against the empirical realities of the case study in the subsequent chapter.

I.II NEW ERA, NEW CONFLICTS

A superficial glance at the state of international affairs today, reveals a most alarming trend. Indeed, it is tempting to posit that the propagation of intra-state conflict across vast portions of the globe is a defining feature of today's international system. It is seemingly a scourge which spreads like an unshakable cold, infecting and ravaging all in its wake. For countless states, it is the bane of their short-lived existences, as the pandemonium of the Syrian civil war and the atrocities committed in South Sudan - to name but a few - vividly demonstrate. It would appear that from the ashes of an era dominated by Great Power rivalries - and the murderous wars which they engendered - has emerged an age of civil strife *within* states which, in many cases, were the artificial creations of their former colonial overlords. It has often been suggested that the Cold War kept a 'brutal check' on civil conflicts which had laid 'dormant' for decades, only for them to be roused in the most spectacularly violent fashion with the end of bipolarity (ICISS 2001:4). For some, this is too simplistic an explanation for such a diverse and intricate phenomenon, which only a diligent case-by-case analysis can truly deconstruct. Here lies the added value of this thesis. It will begin with a bold and challenging claim – essentially a generalisation - about the inherent propensity of the post-Cold War international system for intra-state conflict, before critically testing its validity against the hard facts of an in-depth case study. This will enable it to speculate on whether this apparent and alarming trend can indeed be diagnosed as a systemic predicament, or whether the specificities of each conflict make such generalisations moot.

Civil strife manifests itself in a variety of different forms, and there is no one-size-fits-all framework for understanding what causes and drives them. Internal conflicts are shaped by the historical, political and socio-economic conditions specific to the states in which they take place, and will therefore differ accordingly (Lynch 2006). And yet, evaluating localised conflicts in isolation from the pressures and dynamics of the international system, is academically unsound. It ignores the obvious fact that nation-states are mere sub-units in a modern international system whose interconnectedness and interdependence is only increasing. Under the broad umbrella of intra-state conflict, is a form of violence which has been the focus of international policy-making for the best part of two decades, especially since the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington DC. Religious terrorist groups and insurgencies, specifically those couched in violent Islamist ideology, have taken root in many of the world's weakest and most deprived states. This phenomenon is perhaps most commonly associated with states in the Middle East. The justification for the war in Afghanistan for example, was based on the claim that the Taliban-

controlled state had been sheltering and supporting militants belonging to al-Qaeda. And yet, this pervasive and pernicious plague has, in recent years, infected states outside the spotlight of international policy-making decisions, or at the very least not deemed priorities on the international agenda. As the subsequent chapters will demonstrate, the trend has proven equally prevalent and destructive in Sub-Saharan Africa, including in Nigeria, where a brutal insurgency is being waged by the radical Islamist sect-turned-terrorist group Boko Haram. Whilst the phenomenon of violent Islamist insurgencies is by no means a novel security threat, it has unquestionably grown in significance and extent over the past three decades. As McTernan notes:

> 'In 1980 the United States Department of State's roster on international terrorist groups included scarcely a single religious group. By 1998 it was estimated that at least half of the thirty most dangerous groups in the world were religious' (2003:xiii)

A brief glance at that same list in 2017 points to an increase in that figure, with names such as the so-called Islamic State, Ansar al-Dine, al-Shabaab, al-Nusra and Boko Haram among the most prominent to feature (US DoS 2017). What's more, and perhaps unsurprisingly, the FTO[1] list 'consists largely of Muslim-based organisations', reflecting the fact that 'Islam is at the heart of the [current] wave' of international terrorism (Onapajo et al 2012:340-1). The International Crisis Group confirms as much, highlighting that the reach of such groups has 'expanded dramatically over the past few years' exploiting fertile conditions in the states and regions in which they operate (ICG 2016). The ever-increasing magnitude of the phenomenon points to a pattern which is at once alarming and compelling. Crucially, it demands a systemic explanation, one which takes as its point of reference the 'whole'. In other words, it requires a model which establishes a causal relationship between the system and its sub-units, which elucidates how systemic dynamics generate the 'fertile conditions' referred to above. This ambitious endeavour will be the focus of the subsequent sections.

[1] Foreign Terrorist Organisation

I.III THE FAILED STATE

One of the central hypotheses of this thesis, is that the nature of conflict has undergone a fundamental transformation since the end of the Cold War. The Great Power rivalries of previous centuries, which culminated in the *nadir* that was the First and Second World Wars, gave way to a bifurcation of the world into two ideological spheres of influence. The Cold War era did not produce direct confrontations between the Great Powers – who by this time were only two – in the same way as the preceding decades. However, the system which underpinned this period was essentially a continuation of the traditional Balance of Power system which had existed in Europe for centuries. The Second World War had been the final nail in the coffin of European empires, and in the decades following 1945, a wave of decolonisation spread across the globe, ending European domination once and for all. According to this logic, the empires ceased to be empires and instead became spheres of influence of the two superpowers, the USSR and the United States. The balance was thus sustained by the bipolar world order, despite the intermittent conflicts which characterised the decades between 1945 and 1989. The end of the Cold War thus marked not only the termination of the bipolar power struggle, but also of 'the political systems of three centuries: the balance of power and the imperial urge' (Cooper 2004:12-16). Thus, with the end of a system whose repeated failures had generated humanity's most calamitous wars, came the culmination of Great Power rivalries and the termination of a specific form of conflict. This fundamental change entailed, amongst many other elements, a shift away from wars overtly *between* nation-states, to conflicts *within* them. The brunt of this shift was borne not in the former Great Powers who had dictated the major conflicts of the preceding centuries, but in the peripheries of global politics. It was the nascent nation-states of former colonial empires - and later, spheres of influence during the Cold War - which became the new receptacles of violent conflict. This 'new' form of conflict was not the total, all-consuming violence characteristic of twentieth century interstate conflicts, but civil war, insurgency, ethnic cleansing and genocide (Newman 2009:423; Huntington 1996:31-32). The peripheries of global politics, much like they did during the Cold War, became the focus of international policy-making. However, the crucial difference was that the conflicts ravaging these fragile nation-states were not based on the old Cold War ideological rivalry, but a complex blend of internal determinants. Although these conditions differed widely from case to case, the countries in question shared one defining feature – the fragility of their state structures. In his book, *The Breaking of Nations*, Robert Cooper presents a neat division of the world of the twenty first century into three distinct categories: The 'modern world', in which nation-states in their classical form largely abide by Westphalian and realist precepts of state sovereignty, *raison*

d'état and the balance of power. Here, order reigns and states maintain their key function - the monopoly over the use of force. Next comes the 'post-modern' world, portrayed as somewhat of an idealised, progressive form of international order. State sovereignty is no longer absolute, as actors have willingly ceded powers and competences to supranational structures in the name of cooperation and shared interest. Unlike the modern world, the distinction between foreign and domestic affairs is less clear-cut. The European Union is the chief example of a post-modern order, being 'a conscious and successful attempt to go beyond the nation state', to 'transcend' it (Cooper 2004:16-37; Kissinger 2014:368). The final category is the 'pre-modern' world, a realm of 'post-imperial chaos' where state structures are desperately fragile and have lost their fundamental capacity of the 'legitimate monopoly on the use of force' over considerable portions of their polity and territory (Cooper 2004:16-37). It is here, often in vast, ungoverned expanses of land, that much of the intra-state conflict referred to above plays out. The profound frailty of the state - and the chaos, violence and human suffering which it generates - has earned such countries the unflattering label of 'failed state'. This categorisation stems from the Weberian conceptualisation which holds that 'the monopoly over legitimate violence in a society is the very definition of a state' (Juergensmeyer 2008:22). Once a state is unable to fulfil this essential criterion of statehood, they can no longer be deemed worthy of the designation. State failure can however, manifest itself in manifold ways, and is not limited to the inability to monopolise the use of force. State failure can, for example, be defined as both the 'failure to control' *and* the 'failure to promote human flourishing'. The former being 'the inability of state institutions to control actors and processes within a given territory', and the latter the failure 'to provide public goods to their entire population […] either because of a lack of capacity or a lack of political will' (Williams 2008:1-2). Rotberg largely concurs with this definition, positing that the function of nation-states is to deliver a series of 'political (public) goods to persons living within designated parameters (borders)'. Crucially, these political goods exist within a hierarchy, in which the provision of security – 'especially human security' – is the most critical. Only once security has been satisfactorily delivered, can other public goods – the rule of law, key public services and infrastructure, civil freedoms – be securely and adequately provided (Rotberg 2003:2-3). A plethora of different indicators has been used to determine the extent to which a state can be considered 'failed', each varying – often significantly – in the nature of what is being measured. For example, the *Failed States Index* bases its analyses on indicators relating to aspects as varied as 'mounting demographic pressures […] uneven economic development along group lines' and 'the criminalization and de-legitimization of the state'. Others, such as the UNDP's *Human Development Index* relies on indicators such as life expectancy, GNI per capita and levels of schooling, thus being primarily a measure of 'human welfare and public service

delivery rather than explicitly failed states'. The diversity of indicators is compounded by inexplicable discrepancies between indexes which occasionally rank the same country in conspicuously diverging positions. Despite these discrepancies, and the variety of indicators used, none are superfluous to determining state failure (Newman 2009:425-428). In fact, the sheer heterogeneity of indicators highlights a fundamental truth about failed states. Namely, that the implications of state failure on those living within the borders of such an entity – and indeed beyond them – are both profound and far-reaching. Worse still, the consequences of state failure are mutually reinforcing, leading to a vicious cycle of conflict and destitution:

> 'Misrule, violence, corruption, forced migration, poverty, illiteracy and disease can all reinforce each other. Conflict may impoverish populations, increase the availability of weapons and debilitate rulers. Weak governments, in turn, are less able to stop corruption and the production and smuggling of arms and drugs, which may in turn help finance warlords, insurgents and terrorists' (Economist 2009)

In other words, 'instability breeds instability' (Ibid.). Although not the sole explanation for their predicament, the tragic dynamics of this cycle help to elucidate why so many of today's failed states persistently relapse into 'failure', despite attempts to counteract this tendency. As alluded to above, one of the most salient by-products of state failure is the descent into violent internal conflict. This may manifest itself in the shape of sectarian conflict between ethnic or religious groups, state-sponsored violence by the security forces, criminal violence, or even all-out civil war between two or more belligerent factions (Rotberg 2003:5). Within these broad categories, lies the phenomenon under discussion - Islamist insurgencies - whose emergence and success is intimately linked to state failure. Failed states provide fertile conditions in which insurgencies of this kind can take root and prosper in two principal ways. First, a state's inability – or unwillingness - to promote the flourishing of all its citizens, generates and aggravates amongst other human predicaments: widespread poverty; unemployment; illiteracy; poor health; food insecurity and socio-economic marginalisation, all of which are mutually reinforcing. The failure to provide the most basic public goods – education, healthcare, physical infrastructure, economic opportunities, a functioning and transparent judicial system, and the rule of law – not only leaves the population of a given state objectively destitute and disadvantaged, but also nurtures a pernicious sense of injustice, alienation, disillusionment and indignation (Ibid.:3-4). This volatile blend of sentiments culminates in an irreparable loss of trust and faith in a structure which has failed in its most elementary responsibility to promote the flourishing of its citizens. In the vacuum created by this neglect of duty, and the concomitant rupture of loyalty to the state,

individuals increasingly turn to other forms of societal association and support networks, including those of a religious nature (Williams 2008:5). These often take on 'state-like' characteristics, providing services which the nominal authorities have failed to do. Support structures of this kind were not uncommon in rapidly urbanising and modernising North African and Middle Eastern states in the 1970s and 1980s. Cities from Teheran to Algiers were flooded with 'decountrified countrymen' who had relinquished their rural roots in search of employment in urban centres. As their governments proved increasingly unable to absorb and provide for their bulging urban populations, 'Islamic welfare networks' sprung up in their place (Kepel 1994:24). As will be discussed in greater depth in the following chapters, the Boko Haram insurgency began life as precisely this kind of structure, providing basic services and support to its members (Hill 2012:26). The significance of these structures lies not only in their substituting as providers of political goods so vital to the survival and flourishing of those they serve. By virtue of their being underpinned by religious and ethnic allegiances, they also become effective vehicles of political mobilisation against a state whose identity many struggle to associate with (Shaw 2000). Whilst the initial objective of such organisations may simply be the peaceful provision of support, they have the potential to morph into violent forms of rebellion in pursuit of broader political aims. The correlation between violence and a state's failure to meet its citizens' basic needs is clear. When individuals are denied their most basic human needs, they are prepared go to any length to satisfy them:

> 'If individuals feel that the system cannot meet its basic human needs, its basic human rights, and provide basic human security, then that individual is ready to be mobilised to change the system, if necessary, by violent means'

This argument is based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, which holds that physiological needs - those necessary for survival – are the most fundamental to a human being. This is followed by the need for security, belonging, esteem and lastly, self-actualisation. The more fundamental the human need denied, the more mobilisable an individual to a cause which promises them a means of improving their lot in life (Groom 2013:182 & 2010:10). In more blunt terms, 'Failed states provide no safety nets, and the homeless and destitute become fodder for anyone who can offer food and a cause' (Rotberg 2003:9). This is not to say that all communal support networks are necessarily precursors to violent insurgencies. Many insurgent groups have broader aspirations from the outset, but the notion that the potential is there for such a radical transformation is an important one, especially when it comes to understanding the Boko Haram insurgency. It is therefore clear that the failure to promote human flourishing is a

compelling way in which failed states provide favourable conditions for the genesis of violent rebellion. As will be examined in more detail in the subsequent paragraphs, this is particularly true of religiously-based insurgent groups. The other fundamental way in which state failure is harbinger of violent insurgency relates to its failure to control. As discussed above, the very definition of a state, according Weberian logic, lies in its monopoly over the legitimate use of force. This monopoly gives it the moral sanction 'to kill legitimately, albeit for limited purposes: military defense, police protection, and capital punishment'. It is from this fundamental monopoly that 'all the rest of the state's power to persuade and shape the social order is derived' (Juergensmeyer 2008:22). It follows from this that when the state loses its exclusive right to violence, societal order is prone to collapse and susceptible to challenges from alternative holders of the means of violence. In this context of chaos, it is easy to comprehend how groups with effective means to use force – and an ambition to change or overturn the existing order - are able to flourish. In many cases, a state may have lost its *Gewaltmonopol* because it 'has in the past abused that monopoly and has lost its legitimacy' (Cooper 2004:16). This is another crucial indicator of state failure, in which state authorities have not just lost their monopoly over the use of force, but have systematically abused that inherent 'right', by targeting the very citizens they are duty-bound to protect (Rotberg 2003:6). Violence committed by state security services against their own people not only undermines the state's very legitimacy, it also renders its citizenry further alienated from and distrustful of a structure which is designed to ensure their safety and protection. Such practices therefore contribute to state failure in two, mutually-reinforcing ways. By perverting the fundamental Weberian function of statehood, they drive their population into the hands of those who have acquired the means of violence, who in turn further undermine the authority and functionality of the state through their destabilising actions. This precise scenario is playing out in tragic fashion in Nigeria, and is one of the prime causes and drivers of the Boko Haram insurgency (Hill 2012:24). A report by Human Rights Watch outlines these abuses in detail, noting that the 'Nigerian Police Force (NPF) is responsible for hundreds of extrajudicial executions, other unlawful killings and enforced disappearances every year'. A widespread culture of impunity ensures that 'the majority of cases go uninvestigated and unpunished', and enables the police and indeed other security services, including the army, to engage, unbridled, in these practices (Amnesty 2009:1-44). In this context, the appeal of a virulently anti-statist insurgency offering its recruits protection and a means of effecting change in the system, is understandably strong. While state failure is thus 'always associated with intrastate violence' and 'the rise of non-state actors' (Rotberg 2003:30), the exact form that the ensuing conflict assumes is naturally contingent on the specific conditions unique to the state in which it takes place. As this thesis' case study will demonstrate, violent Islamist insurgencies are

often the product of a complex blend of contemporary state collapse and deeply-rooted historical trends. Intrinsic discrepancies of each case aside, the causal relationship between state failure and insurgency is readily observable. What is perhaps less intuitive however, is the correlation between state failure and the post-Cold War international system.

I.IV Causes of State Failure – A Flawed System?

In his portrait of 'world order' in the twenty first century, Kissinger notes that 'we have witnessed, since the end of the Cold War, the phenomenon of *failed states*, of *ungoverned spaces*, or of states that hardly merit the term, having no monopoly on the use of force or effective central authority' (Kissinger 2014:368). Although not explicit, his observation implies that 'failed states' are an intrinsic part of the post-Cold War world. To suggest, however, that state failure is a defining feature of the current system, is not to claim that it is an entirely novel phenomenon. It is merely to posit that state failure is an inherently systemic problem, characteristic of, but not exclusive to the post-Cold War international system, whilst not precluding state failure as a feature of systems of the past. In fact, 'a broader temporal focus' suggests that 'failed states are not the exception but the norm in human history', whether in the pre-modern period with the rise and fall of civilisations and empires, or in the disintegration which befell a multitude of states well into the nineteenth century (Dal Bò, Hernandez-Lagos & Mazzuca 2016). After all, 'have not all post-WWII conflicts been marked by civil strife, government breakdown, and economic collapse?'. Undoubtedly, chaos of this kind is 'ubiquitous in human history', and yet it is 'the very nature of conflict [which] has fundamentally changed in the past two decades' (Debrouwere 2011). Understanding why this is, requires a grasp of the changed conditions of the states within whose fragile boundaries this novel form of conflict is taking place. Why is it that states in the 'pre-modern' world have lost their monopoly of violence? What explains their inability to provide even the most basic of public goods to their citizens? And crucially, how are these forces of change products of post-Cold War systemic weaknesses?

I.V The Collapse of the Bi-Polar Power Structure

On the surface, the defining feature of the Cold War international system was one of irreconcilable division. The antagonism between USA and the USSR, and their opposing conceptions of world order, coloured every aspect of international relations for over four decades. From domestic political changes, to the outbreak of violence in some remote corner of the globe, each development had an underlying Cold War hue, which would dictate the chosen response. In other words, 'most foreign policy issues could be viewed in the light of a single overwhelming question: was it good for Us or Them, for the West or the Soviet Bloc, capitalism or communism?'. In this sense, because of and not despite the overt dichotomisation of world politics, the international system in fact had an 'underlying order' which served to bring it 'together in a global confrontation' (Cooper 2004:5-13). The Cold War was 'cold' precisely because it never witnessed a direct confrontation between its two principal belligerents. Instead, the bipolar power struggle played itself out in the many theatres of conflict which dotted the vast spheres of influence over which the two superpowers presided. From the *revolucionarios* of Cuba and the *mujahedeen* of Afghanistan, to previously insignificant African dictatorships, each political development presented an opportunity – or rather, a necessity - for the superpower rivalry to assume a new dimension. Nigeria's civil war in 1967 was a prime example of this. In the face of initial US (and British) reluctance to support the Federal Government against the secessionist Republic of Biafra, the USSR stepped in to help General Gowon to victory. In the aftermath of the war, Nigeria, which had been 'one of the most consistently anti-Soviet and pro-West countries in Sub-Saharan Africa in the early 1960s', changed its tune. Economic ties with the USSR prospered, the domestic political elite shifted sharply to the left, and the popularity of the USA and Britain plummeted (Stent 1973:43-47). The Nigerian case is but one example of how the bipolar power struggle quickly assumed international dimensions, shaping political developments across the developing world. Being inexorably drawn into these conflicts meant providing support in some form to the parties with whom the USSR and the USA sided. Propping up an authoritarian despot who ran a structurally weak and illegitimate state was, according to the dictates of the Cold War, both necessary and justifiable. Indeed, 'the US and USSR made of the prevention of collapse in client countries an imperial priority' (Dal Bò, Hernandez-Lagos & Mazzuca 2016). In other words, regardless of the state in question's illegitimacy or inclination to failure, the perverse logic of the Cold War ensured that it survived. Once this logic ceased to be valid at the end of the Cold War, neither side had the political will, interest nor capacity to sustain states in the far-flung fringes of the globe. The perceived wilting strategic importance of the developing world in the aftermath of the Cold War, was reflected in a

corresponding decline in superpower support for such states (Newman 2009:424). As a result, state structures promptly gave way under the pressures which 'had, from 1949 to 1989, merely been suspended in the permafrost of superpower confrontation' (Howorth 2014:5). The breakdown was both swift and diffuse, with contagion spreading from Europe - the ultimate theatre of the Cold War - to states right across periphery of the global politics. It seemed as though the 'collapse of state structures, once the underpinnings of the Cold War' were removed was unavoidable (Shaw 2000). As Prof. J.E. Pondi notes, Nigeria differs in this respect, as it did not belong to the 'periphery' of global politics. Its strategic and economic importance meant that its collapse would not have been in the interest of the sole remaining superpower, and one of Nigeria's primary trading partners, the USA. Nonetheless, this pattern of disintegration did take hold elsewhere in Africa, as the cases of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia demonstrate, and indeed elsewhere in the former spheres of influence (Pondi 2017). What also appeared to be happening was the discrediting of a model of governance whose inevitable collapse had merely been protracted by the bipolar dynamics of the Cold War (Huntington 1996:39). This 'artificial and often very brutal check which Cold War politics imposed on the political development of many states and societies' was now unravelling in the most momentous of fashions. According to the Institute for Intervention and State Sovereignty, the 'proliferation of armed conflict within states' which so marked this new world, was the result of a demand for 'greater political rights and other political objectives' which had been 'forcibly suppressed during the Cold War' (ICISS 2001:4). The power vacuums left by the abrupt end of the bipolar power structure, were promptly filled with internal violence, new demands and new actors, and with it, a profound questioning of the viability of the nation-state which had so often been an arbitrary imposition from above. These developments were in a sense predictable, as they reflected 'a power vacuum which is typical of transition periods in world affairs' (Kaldor 2012:3). True though this may be, the harsh reality of the situation some twenty five years later, seems to indicate that this may not be a strictly transitional phenomenon. Instead, it points to something more enduring, and alarmingly more permanent. The dichotomy of chaos and empire, seems best placed to explain why this is. As alluded to above, the end of the Cold War marked the definite end of 'the political systems of three centuries' and thus the 'imperial urge' which had merely been perpetuated by the two superpowers' spheres of influence. If 'the most logical way to deal with chaos is by colonization', the 'pre-modern' world is confronted with an unenviable situation (Cooper 2004:65-69). With the 'imperial urge' – which prevented their descent into chaos - irreconcilably confined to the annals of history at the end of the Cold War, feeble and incipient nation-states the world over were left to fend for themselves and grapple with the 'chaos' unleashed by the end of bipolarity. The calamitous situation of state collapse,

and its natural corollary of violent internal conflict, stood in stark contrast to the misplaced idealism of those who saw in the end of the Cold War, not only the 'victory' of liberal democracy but its subsequent spread across the world. Francis Fukuyama, who trumpeted the 'end of history as such […] the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government', was one of many leading political figures and academics who were convinced of impending universal harmony. The multiplication of bloody conflicts in the 1990s, from the Balkans to the African Great Lakes, would promptly shatter that illusion and leave policy-makers scratching their heads in search of answers (Huntington 1996:31-32). The 'breathing space' between the end of an era and the dawn of a new one, allows those who will it, to make conjectures and predictions as to the future evolution of the human journey. Once that transitory phase has passed however, and the harsh realities of what that new era looks like begin to set in, the validity of their claims are held up to scrutiny and judgement is passed. Fukuyama's 'end of history' thesis is one such scenario which has regrettably failed to materialise. What has, is a *semblance* of Westphalian order and democracy across vast swathes of the former Third World, constituting what Jackson refers to as a multitude of 'quasi-states: legal fictions that rarely command[ed] much in the way of national loyalty or the power to control developments throughout their designated territory' (Williams 2008:2). These are the 'failed states' of the modern world, entities who bear all the superficial trappings of a nation-state, but who have ceased to exercise their key functions of control and provision. They are recognised legal units in the eyes of the international community, but possess little else of objective value which merits the designation 'nation-state'. This phenomenon has been referred to as 'negative sovereignty: a normative framework which upholds the *de jure* legal sovereignty of states in the developing world' despite their inability 'to meaningfully function or provide public services, including order' (Newman 2009:423). Although the liberal paradigm hailed the proliferation of 'democratic' sovereign nation-states, it failed to 'understand that democratic regimes survive only if they safeguard military power and security' (Snyder 2004:59). If they fail to fulfil these prerequisites of statehood, all other functions of state become unsustainable and dysfunctional, and violence is likely to ensue. Far from the harmonious portrait of universalised liberal democracy, the system which emerged at the end of the Cold War - and which persists to this day - provided the conditions for the genesis and propagation of 'failed states'. Their purported status of 'nation-state', endorsed by an international system which upholds their legal sovereignty, sharply contrasts with the objective reality which reigns within their borders.

I.VI NEOLIBERALISM & GLOBALISATION – AN EROSION OF STATE SOVEREIGNTY

Framing state failure as a product of systemic power vacuums is a compelling notion. It is, however inadequate for explaining the deep and protracted nature of a state's inability to control and to provide. State failure in its most rudimentary sense, is an erosion of sovereignty. A state who lacks the exclusive ability to control 'the actors and processes' within its territory (Williams 2008:1), loses its very meaning, its *raison d'être*. This at least, is the Westphalian conception of the nation-state, whose existence is first and foremost contingent on a concentration of 'power' over a given territory and of 'loyalty' of a given population (Cooper 2004:24). The state of affairs in the twenty first century, seems to indicate that the concomitant notions of the nation-sate and absolute sovereignty, conceived at the Peace of Westphalia of 1648, are being severely undermined (Newman 2009:429). With regards to nation-states in the 'post-modern' world - whose sovereignty is willingly given away to supra-national governance structures in the pursuit of some lofty goal – this is by no means a uniquely post-Cold War phenomenon. The gradual process of 'pooling' sovereignty and greater adherence to international norms began in earnest after the Second World War, in particular in the case of what is now the European Union. Whilst this particular development can be viewed in a positive light – nation-states acknowledging that cooperation is preferable to confrontation – the erosion of sovereignty takes on a much more sinister hue in parts of the world where it is intrinsically linked to state failure. Here, sovereignty is not consciously sacrificed in the name of the 'common good', but rather eaten away from the inside by a malignant concoction of forces. Whilst state failure ultimately plays itself out from within, the impact of systemic currents and trends inevitably have a bearing on the 'actors and processes' which generate that failure. Understanding the phenomenon of state failure thus demands a sensitivity to developments at a system-wide level, acknowledging that states, though primary actors in international relations, are slaves to forces often beyond their direct control. This much has already been demonstrated by the notion that the power vacuums inherent to the post-Cold War international system, were a preponderant factor in state failure in the 'pre-modern' world. There is however, another underlying feature of the post-Cold War international system which has can be deemed a cause of state failure: globalisation, and the spread of neoliberal forces. Granted, the argument that globalisation is an inherently post-Cold War phenomenon is a tenuous one. After all, 'globalization has its roots in modernity or even earlier'. However, the globalisation of the '1980s and 1990s was a qualitatively new phenomenon' and the post-Cold War era constituted a *consolidation* of that globalisation process (Kaldor 2012:3; Berger 2001:1079). The peculiarity of globalisation in the post-Cold War international system

lies in it being 'structured by the ideology and practice of global neoliberalism and the attendant lack of alternatives to it' (Moore 2001:910). This 'global shift' to a neoliberal paradigm, involving a 'process of economic liberalisation, deregulation and privatisation' took place 'against the backdrop of a waning Cold War'. Although fundamentally an economic phenomenon, it was part of a 'wider set of social, economic, political, cultural and technological' transformations which had far-reaching consequences for states and the populations over which they spread (Berger 2001:1080). This systemic change was felt particularly potently in the former Third World, 'in already fragile and contested societies', significantly reducing state capacity. In the most extreme cases, this led to an 'evaporated *Gewaltmonopol*' leaving the state incapable of sheltering itself and its people from an increasing privatisation of violence and a proliferation of non-state actors (Debrouwere 2011). This erosion of the state's monopoly of violence was compounded by a growing inability to provide basic public goods, further driving it towards failure. Both the failure to control and the failure to provide, have been attributed to 'neoliberal economic forces' and the gradual consolidation of the globalisation process (Newman 2009:424). In Africa, as in much of the developing world, the forces of neoliberalism took root in part as a result of grand schemes of structural adjustments. The underlying rationale for these programmes was that sustainable poverty reduction and stability could be achieved through:

> 'the application of free market principles allied to liberal political reform, reducing the role of the state in the economy and simultaneously making it more efficient: to use the familiar image, a leaner and fitter state' (Ellis 1996:5).

Structural adjustment is, in many ways, a form of 'voluntary imperialism' whereby, 'in return for financial support' a given country accepts 'advice and supervision'. In other words, the receiving state agrees – in theory – to adapting and adjusting its structures and practices of governance as instructed by institutions and actors beyond their borders. The fundamental issue with this new 'imperialism' however, is that it lacks the efficiency of the imperialism of old. By virtue of its voluntary nature, 'everything is subject to negotiation and compromise' (Cooper 2004:70-71). The artificial order which traditional imperialism was able to impose on its subject territories, is thus harder to achieve. Loans provided by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank became an increasingly vital source of income for such states, often to the point of dependence. Rather than producing the yearned-after stability and prosperity, the insistence on 'rolling back' the state eroded 'the capacity of existing elites to govern', increasing the likelihood of violence (Ellis 1996:5-24). Although the aim of stabilisation and structural adjustment programmes of the

1980s and 1990s was the reduction in the *scope* of the state, they often had the 'unintended and counterproductive' consequence of reducing the *strength* of the state. This was particularly true of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, where a system of neopatrimonialism co-existed alongside classical Weberian state structures. The former, being the dominant political regime 'used external conditionality as an excuse for cutting back on the modern state sectors while protecting and often expanding the scope of the neopatrimonial state'. The result was a stark reduction in the most fundamental public services – schools, roads, healthcare – and a swelling of the pockets of the neopatrimonialist state and their 'clientalist network of supporters' (Fukuyama 2004:26-27). This inherently flawed system of 'voluntary imperialism' thus led to a 'hollowing out of the state', severely reducing its capacity to exercise its most basic functions, and increasing 'the chances that minor political incidents and disputes could cause' its descent into failure (Williams 2008:3). As Prof. J.E. Pondi notes, Nigeria suffered a similar fate. As elsewhere in Africa, structural adjustment programmes devised by the IMF severely diminished the capacity of the state, depriving it of 'any authority on the structuration of their own economic and financial priorities', profoundly undermining both its credibility and sovereignty. He even goes so far as to bluntly claim, that states subject to structural adjustment programmes of this kind 'did not control anything in their own countries' (Pondi 2017). Despite a seemingly broad consensus that neoliberal pressures are *per se* a fundamental cause of state failure, there are some who insist that other factors should be given greater salience in the debate. Some have argued, for example, that states in Africa 'overall, were not forced to shrink and retrench'. Instead, structural adjustment programmes contributed to state failure by enabling 'weak and badly performing regimes to gain (not lose) resources and thus stay in power'. They did so without implementing the mandated reforms, whilst being allowed to bankroll their 'rent-seeking elites' (Rotberg 2003:29-30). The weakness of enforcement and surveillance mechanisms, coupled with the persistence and potency of exploitative neopatrimonial political structures, thus destined the system of aid to utter ineffectiveness, and the states it was designed to support, to failure. Closely linked to the presence of neopatrimonialism, is the prevalence of corruption, which itself is sign of state failure:

> 'As ex-colonial territories became, *faut de mieux*, nation-states, so in many cases their weak social bases were compensated for by neopatrimonialism […] Corruption, escalating levels of which are one of the indicators of state failure, accompanies neopatrimonialism and helps bring states to failure. Bad governance is an inescapable corollary, and it has often preceded insurgencies within states' (Rotberg 2003:27).

It is perhaps intuitive that the salience of corruption is intimately linked to the persistence of neopatrimonialism in developing states, as the holders of powers consciously deviate state resources to a select network of clients. And yet, corrupt practices are not limited to the ruling elites who have access to state funds. Nigeria is a prime example of how 'low-level officials and state employees […] doctors, nurses, police officers and petty bureaucrats' frequently engage in bribery and extortion. They do so either out of greed, but often out of necessity, because their salaries are so pitifully meagre, or they are not paid at all. The squandering of public money at the top – and the state's corresponding inability to pay their public servants - thus often forces those at the bottom to conduct themselves in an equally corrupt fashion. Not only does systematic and institutionalised corruption of this kind mean a reduction in available resources for the provision of basic public goods, but it nurtures a pernicious resentment and anger amongst an already deprived population, making them all the more susceptible to the pull of insurgencies (Hill 2012:60-61). The vast majority of the states in the lower echelons of Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index for 2016 are developing countries, begging the question of why corrupt practices are such a common feature of under-development. The notion that 'cultural' traits of certain countries - or groups within them – can help to explain the salience of corruption and other economically reckless practices, is one which is still put forward today. Others reject this hypothesis outright, claiming instead that a state's institutions and the historical processes which brought them into being, are the defining factor of economic prosperity, or lack thereof. Sub-Saharan Africa is a prime example of how 'extractive' economic and political institutions - often relics of colonial rule - have been perpetuated by post-independence leaders, enriching 'a few at the expense of many' (Acemoglu & Robinson 2012:57-343). Such states are thus inherently prone to corrupt practices, as a result of historically-rooted 'weak and inflexible political institutions' which facilitate this kind of activity. The greater salience of corruption in under-developed societies, has also been attributed to the fact that many are undergoing a process of rapid modernisation . Modernisation creates 'new sources of wealth and power', which in turn generates new groups eager for political - not only economic - influence. Corruption thus provides a bridge between the holders of economic and political power, enabling them to mutually satisfy their ambitions (Huntington 1973:60-61). The new and sudden sources of wealth which *were* generated by the spread of post-Cold War neoliberalism and the policies which they entailed, were thus used to enrich a narrow elite. In the absence of strong and transparent institutions, the holders of political and economic power were left to benefit from and prop up a corrupt and clientalist system, at the expense of the vast majority of the population. Nigeria is, again, a case in point. A sudden influx of wealth in the 1970s, fuelled by the rapid exploitation of its crude oil reserves and a concomitant hike in

international market prices, provided Nigeria with unprecedented levels of revenue. Rather than spend these new-found riches on the provision of public goods, much of it was – and continues to be – misappropriated and deviated into the pockets of state officials, and that of their support networks. The rapid generation of wealth thus provided myriad opportunities for high-level corruption, fostering the enrichment of a narrow elite, and the consequent 'pauperization of the masses'. That 'the spread of corruption in Nigeria occurred in tandem with the growth of the oil industry' is testament to the intimate connection between rapid modernisation – in this case through the domestic economy's exposure to global markets - and the prevalence of corruption (Hill 2012:87; Adenbanwi & Obadadre 2013:268). Nigeria is but one example of how neoliberal globalisation has created a cleavage between the 'winners' and 'losers' of that process, and the prosperity it generates. The neoliberal economic, social and political systems which the post-Cold War environment fostered, constituted an 'exclusionary form of democracy' (Moore 2001:909), in which wealth, power and security were concentrated in the hands of the few who savoured the fruits of globalisation, whilst the masses were left to wallow in destitution and marginalisation (Kaldor 2012:4). The unenviable situation described above epitomises the 'failed state' of the post-Cold War era. A society ridden with inequality, corruption, insecurity and mass poverty, indicative of a state which has ceased to carry out its cardinal functions of providing for all its citizens, and sheltering them from harm. The prevailing neoliberal consensus which accompanied the consolidation of the globalisation process, constituted a pressure exerted on feeble nation-states, by a system which offered few alternatives (Moore 2001:910). Furthermore, the expectation harboured by many at the end of the Cold War, that political and economic liberalisation would bring peace and prosperity to nation-states still in their infancy, blindly ignored 'the inherently conflictual character of democracy and capitalism'. There is little doubt that economic liberalisation brings prosperity to some, as the above discussion has illustrated. However, it is a paradoxically destructive and destabilising force, which incites competition over the wealth and resources it generates (Paris 1997:57). The paradoxical nature of liberalisation is inherent in the paradigm of international relations which champions it. Although it emphasises the constructive power of democracy, 'it also notes […] the propensity of emerging democracies to collapse into violent ethnic turmoil'. Part of this susceptibility to violence can be attributed to the economic liberalisation which accompanies democratisation. The penetration of world markets into traditional societies which are underpinned by a system of patronage and protectionism, 'can disrupt social relations and spur strife between potential winners and losers' (Snyder 2004:55-58). It is these 'losers' of the liberalisation process who constitute a disaffected, mobilisable mass, vulnerable to the appeal of ideas and causes which promise them a better

future. Northern Nigeria, the region in which Boko Haram originated, is a prime example of this phenomenon:

> 'many in northern Nigeria have come to see democracy as a system that keeps them poor and enriches undeserving, corrupt leaders' (Smith 2016:9)

It is easy to understand how the seething indignation felt by many towards a system which perpetuates inequality and injustice, can be transformed into a violent rejection of the established order. When this system is viewed as one 'imposed' from without by some alien force, as it is by Boko Haram, the propensity to oppose it with violence is even more acute (Comolli 2015:63). The conflictual character of liberalisation is of equal significance in the political dimension. Democratisation may well be designed to channel conflicts of interest and foster representative government, but without the requisite institutions, appropriate leadership and apposite political cultures to underpin it, it can have the inverse effect of reinforcing existing societal cleavages, and instigating conflict (Paris 1997:74-75). Whilst 'mature' nation-states, through their robust institutions and long-standing democratic cultures, are able to dampen the 'conflictual character' of liberalisation, nascent states are less able to do so. In their case, the 'structural conditions' of Westphalian statehood are weak and 'unripe', making them considerably more prone to this inherent destabilisation (Williams 2008:3). The structural deficiencies with which so many developing nations grapple, are in part due to the narrow time-frame in which they are expected to make the transition to democracy and market economies, which 'took several centuries in the oldest European states' (Paris 1997:78). This 'fast-tracking' of transformation, effectively by-passing the more 'natural' processes of historical change, exerts pressures on incipient nation-states which their societies are evidently unable to withstand. This process of economic and political transformation is closely linked to the 'paradox of civilisations', which holds that 'every society in the process of development faces a fundamental trade-off between prosperity and security'. The paradox lies in the notion that generating prosperity invites competition and 'predatory attacks from rival groups', which naturally undermine their security. Societies are thus confronted with a choice between stymying economic growth and thus hampering development, or pursuing 'self-defeating prosperity' by enabling the creation of wealth at the expense of security (Dal Bò, Hernandez-Lagos & Mazzuca 2016). This choice may of course not be a deliberate and informed one. Elites will seek prosperity regardless, ignoring the threats of competition, and preferring to deal with them as and when they emerge. This paradox serves to highlight an intriguing truth about the conflictual nature of development, and the trade-off between two equally valuable commodities – prosperity and security – which incipient nation-

states are confronted with, knowingly or not. Identifying the tantalising yet inherently destabilising nature of liberalisation, informs our understanding of how the forces of neoliberal globalisation, which underpin the post-Cold War international system, have contributed to state failure across the developing world. The transformative trends endorsed and propagated by the system, have done so in two ways. Firstly, they have fostered a socio-economic system predicated on inequality, exclusionary prosperity and marginalisation, whilst providing the conditions for corruption to thrive. Secondly, they have contributed to the erosion of state capacity, both in its provision of public goods and in its monopoly of violence, fuelling destitution, indignation, and a loss of faith in the state. Both effects are mutually reinforcing, creating a seemingly endless cycle of poverty, instability and violence. The fertile conditions generated by these pernicious dynamics, have enabled challengers to the nation-state to emerge, and to appropriate the means of both violence and provision with which the state is traditionally entrusted. The vacuums of authority, political goods and loyalty created by state failure, have been filled by actors who often couch their aspirations in overtly religious terms and frame their goals according to the alleged dictates of faith. The subsequent section will seek to demonstrate why this is so, focusing on movements of an Islamist nature, in view of the case study of the second chapter.

I.VII Religious Identities in the Post-Cold War World

And so it was that those who saw in the end of the Cold War, the universalisation of liberal democracy and the dawn of a more peaceful age, were rudely awoken by the abrupt onset of state collapse, civil war and sectarian violence. Their idealistic musings were starkly opposed to those who subscribed to a considerably more pessimistic and sinister vision of the future. Among them was Samuel Huntington, whose *Clash of Civilisations* thesis offered a different interpretation of the post-Cold War international system, and the conflicts which would define it. In his view, it was pure fallacy to assume that the ‘defeat’ of communism necessarily entailed the universalisation of liberal democracy. This argument was based on the obsolete Cold War logic that ‘the only alternative to communism is liberal democracy and that the demise of the first produces the universality of the second’. Instead, the future dynamics of human cooperation and conflict would, he argued, be defined by cultural and civilisational identities, more so than ideological, political or economic considerations. This is because ‘peoples and nations are attempting to answer the most basic question humans can face: Who are we?’ (Huntington

1996:21-66). The predominance of this most fundamental of human divisions, is unlike the constructed nature of faultlines which defined the twentieth century:

> 'Nationalism and communism were essentially artificially constructed belief systems, whereas culture, the defining factor in a civilization […] is about identity itself; it shapes the basic perceptions that people have about life and their understanding of their relationships with God, with each other, with authority, with the State' (McTernan 2003:2).

Identity is the primary lens through which individuals perceive reality, and make sense of the chaos and confusion around them. This is particularly true of religion, in that it allows people to 'integrate the messy everyday reality into a pattern of coherence at a deeper level' (Juergensmeyer 2008:20-21). It is the transcendence and depth of this mindset that leads Huntington to argue that religion is 'possibly the most profound difference that can exist between people' (McTernan 2003:2). Bernard Lewis was another who considered age-old religious divides a fundamental cleavage along which conflict lines would be drawn. In his 1990 essay *The Roots of Muslim Rage*, he warns of 'a new era of religious wars, arising from the exacerbation of differences and the revival of ancient prejudices' (Lewis 1990:60). Faith provides its adherents with a framework of behaviour, shaping and regulating daily life. It sets a clearly-defined relationship between the divine and worldly realms, lends meaning to the *peripéties* of life, and endows existence with direction and purpose. The process of religious introspection is not *per se* problematic. The individual search for religious identity remains, for the vast majority, an inherently peaceful enterprise. And yet, in propitious circumstances, it has the tremendous capacity to become both the instigator and driver of violence. Has religion not, throughout human history, been used as a pretext for mass murder and a tool for pursuing what are essentially political and economic aims? From the slaughter and pillage of the Crusades to the apocalyptic chaos of 9/11, the instrumentalisation of religion is a recurring facet of ages past. However, dismissing religion as merely a pretext for violence ignores its ability to be 'an actor in its own right'. The study of conflict has consistently been obscured by the narrow precepts of the 'secularisation thesis', the consensus that 'for the past two hundred years or so religion has ceased to be a cause of conflict'. That consensus was reinforced during the Cold War by a reductionist study of conflict, viewed exclusively through the bipolar lens. As a result, religion was dismissed as a genuine trigger and driver of conflict, and was instead explained away as a mere 'surrogate for grievance, protest, greed or political ambition'. Theories relating to the study of violent conflict thus discarded the possibility that religious fervour, and an unwaveringly

staunch belief in the divine nature of one's mission, could *per se* play a role in motivating violence (McTernan 2003: x-xx). As noted above, this has also been true of International Relations more broadly, whose limited ability to account for the role of religion is 'a product of its origins in European traditions including liberalism and securalization theory' (Menchik 2015:8). This inherent limitation may well account for the widespread belief that the end of the Cold War heralded the ultimate victory of liberal democracy, whilst overlooking the possibility that traditional, non-secular alternatives might challenge that system. It is difficult to fathom how proponents of this view seemingly disregarded shifting global religious currents which were actively undermining the very system they so passionately championed. The seemingly irreversible secularisation process which coated approaches to religion and conflict, was brought to a halt by a certain 'revival' of the three Abrahamic religions, in the latter stages of the twentieth century. This was a period in which Judaism, Christianity and Islam all began to experience a renewed appeal, driven by a resurgence in religious activism. Although products of differing cultural and historical circumstances, the movements which embodied this revival shared several common traits. The main thrust of their cause was a rejection of modernism and secular society, and the 'anomy' and fragmentation which had engulfed it. They were critical of, and dissented from the religious establishment, and framed their mission against the backdrop of what they perceived as a societal 'crisis', attributable to humanity's 'separation from God' (Kepel 1994:2-4). They believed that a societal order predicated on the laws of God, was the means by which society's ills could be cured. This was more than merely a rejection of democracy, but of the very paradigm upon which 'modern' society rests - secular nationalism. Nationalism implies by definition, that the '*supreme loyalty* of the individual is felt to be due the nation-state' and no other overarching authority. In this sense, secular nationalism and religion are 'two competing frameworks of social order', which fundamentally diverge on how society should be governed and how individuals should relate to authority (Juergensmeyer 2008:12-17). A denial of 'modernity' thus entails not only a repudiation of the individualism, materialism and decadence which supposedly characterise Western society, but also a profound rejection of the 'modern' Westphalian concept of the nation state, predicated on the division between religious and temporal authority. The Islamic fundamentalist worldview, 'an almost total inversion of Westphalian world order', is a case in point. 'For the Islamic fundamentalists', the belief in the religious imperative of overturning – often violently - the established order and returning to the path of God, are 'truths overriding the rules and norms of the Westphalian – or indeed any other – international order' (Kissinger 2014:121-122). This clash of 'frameworks of social order', rather than pitting the 'West' against the 'Rest' can instead be seen broadly as a confrontation between 'cosmopolitans' - those who have benefitted from the fruits of globalisation and

modernisation and are thus supportive of the established system – and 'fundamentalists' - those who, having been excluded from the process, are lured and driven by the promises of a radically alternative form of societal order (Groom 2010:13; Kaldor 2012:5). This cleavage offers a more appropriate lens through which to view post-Cold War divides, than one which over-emphasises broad civilisational faultlines.

As the bipolar world order began to fade, an ideological vacuum – as well as the 'physical' vacuum discussed above – emerged (Huntington 1996:100). The discrediting of communism as a means of ordering and governing society, created a void which Islamic identities – amongst others – promptly filled (Kaldor 2012:3). University politics were an indicator of this trend, as the previously prominent Marxist student organisations were gradually replaced by Islamist movements. This pattern was mirrored in Nigerian universities, where 'left-wing radicalism' was making way for Islamist student networks. The 'revolutionary torch' of Marxism, which up until this point had served as a mouthpiece for the 'radical critique of the existing order' and had provided a 'blueprint for a better society', was now being passed on to the Islamists (Kepel 1996:17-26; Walker 2016:142-3). In Nigeria, this shift proved momentous. Not only did it mark a fundamental change in the ideological landscape of university and intellectual life, but it also constituted a profound transformation in the nature of faultlines along which political contestation would occur in the future. During the Cold War, the left-right cleavage had served as the primary driver of political confrontation. Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria was a prime example of this, acting as the flashpoint between left-wing radicalism and the far-right. The fall of communism, which had for so long acted as the only vehicle for protest and for defying the established order, left an ideological void which was filled by alternative means of political mobilisation:

> 'The long period of military rule left the intelligentsia with no alternative ideological weapon of protest against the system and contestation for political relevance than communist radicalism. With the fall of communism and the subsequent advent of democracy, religious and ethnic/regional fault lines became the platforms for political contestation. Political parties were established along those fault lines' (Atang 2017)

In Nigeria, as elsewhere, the emergence of new faultines – or rather the revival of old ones - brought on by the disintegration of the Cold War ideological divide, provided the basis on which new conflicts, often of a religious nature, would be fought. This shift was compounded by the reaction to and repudiation of, the other Cold War ideology. As noted above, the post-Cold War

neoliberal consensus, was merely a consolidation of a process which had been maturing for many decades prior to the early 1990s. Not only were nascent nation-states confronted with a system of governance which ran counter to the very fabric of their societies, but the rapid modernisation and globalisation which followed, generated a crisis of identity. By dissolving 'traditional bonds and social relations', modernisation – accelerated by neoliberal globalisation – undermined the very foundations upon which societies operated, and incited a return to age-old identities with which individuals could readily associate. An environment increasingly characterised by individualism and social alienation, in which everyday life had become 'amorphous' and devoid of meaning, was fertile ground for the resurgence of more familiar, traditional identities. Individuals attributing their plight to the failure of the prevailing governance system, gradually resorted to alternative forms of order and support (Huntington 1996:76-98). This is precisely what occurred in Nigeria between the late 1990s and early 2000s when the group which would eventually become the Boko Haram insurgency, was taking shape. As highlighted above, Yusuf's group began life as a religious commune, acting as a socio-economic support mechanism, providing employment, financial aid, and arranged marriages for its members. In the absence of the state, large numbers of people turned to faith. Beyond purely economic motives, the need for identity, a framework for understanding one's role in society was key to the lure of the group. With the state unable to provide this reference point for its people, religion became the overriding identity with which they could associate, and in which they could believe (Eder 2017). As the case of Nigeria demonstrates, the alienating and exclusionary nature of modernisation provided the conditions for individuals to seek the meaning, familiarity and reassurance that traditional affinities had once provided. Religion was a 'ready-made source of identity' around which 'group loyalties' coalesced in the vacuums generated by the end of the Cold War (Cooper 2004:21). This was particularly true of multi-ethnic states like Nigeria, whose people were 'linked by little more than geography' and for whom ethnicity and religion were the ultimate means through which to 'differentiate one's place in the socio-political order' (Schultz & Dew 2006:32). The renewed relevance of Islamic identities – embodied amongst others, by the propagation of the Islamist cause - can therefore in part, be attributed to a reaction to the 'onslaught of globalization and the collapse of the communist ideology', each respectively personified by the Cold War's two competing ideologies (McTernan 2003:3). Whilst the system which emerged after the end of the Cold War may have rendered the resort to Islamic identities more acute, it clear that the process took root decades before the end of the Cold War, whilst the bipolar world was still intact. This is particularly true of revivalism in its most extreme form. Indeed, the seeds of what has now become a global movement of violent *jihad,* were sown in the preceding decades and centuries (Milton-Edwards 2005:98). Arguably the most defining year in

contemporary Islamism – from which violent global *jihad* eventually sprung - was 1979. The 'trinity' of the Iranian Revolution, the storming of the Great Mosque in Mecca and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, were all turning points in the development of the Islamist cause, and provided the basis on which global violent *jihad* could thrive (Kepel 1996:7). The Muslim Brotherhood, often considered the primary source of contemporary Islamism, is another case in point. The group was founded in Egypt in 1928, in response to a growing sentiment of anti-colonialism against the British and French occupation, circumstances far removed from those which prevailed in the aftermath of the Cold War. Other events of equal weight – amongst others, the creation of Israel and growing oil wealth of Saudi Arabia – have each contributed to the genesis of what is now global violent *jihad.* One has to delve even deeper into the annals of history to identify the intellectual roots common to many of today's most violent Islamist groups. It was Ibn-Taymiyyah, a thirteenth century Syrian scholar who advocated that *jihad* be an obligation of the faithful on a par with the five pillars of Islam, and who claimed that violence against fellow Muslims was legitimate in certain contexts. In the eighteenth century, Ibn-Abd-al-Wahhab promoted the concept of *takfir*, according to which the murder of Muslims deemed apostates is rightful and just. Later figures, including Rashid Rida, Abu-al-A'la Mawdudi and Sayyid Qutb, who built upon this legitimisation of violent *jihad* in Salafist thinking, were all products of historical circumstances far removed from the systemic changes of the early 1990s (Springer, Regens & Edger 2009: 18-51). No event or development can be singled out as marking the birth of the Islamic resurgence, nor indeed its violent incarnation in the shape of global violent *jihad*. Instead, the phenomenon is better viewed as one of constant 'ebb and flow', with each episode in the process reflecting a 'response to the challenges inherent in the historical dynamic' of the time. The decades following the end of the Cold War merely constituted a step in this revival process, one which culminated in the globalisation of violent *jihad* (Milton-Edwards 2005:51-98). This explains - in part - the timing of Boko Haram's emergence in Nigeria. Despite the existence of fertile conditions for its rise in the past, as one Nigeria expert puts it, 'the idea simply wasn't there' (Eder 2017). The 'idea' was global violent *jihad*, waged by non-state actors with access to sophisticated means of violence, technology and transnational scope and support. This is the broader shift which took place in the years which followed the end of the Cold War, and which led to the multiplication of groups with common ideological agendas and the means of executing them. The rise of violent *jihad*-inspired ideologies and the groups they have spawned, can therefore not be reduced to simplistic, systemic explanations. The end of the Cold War may have provided the ideological 'space' and socio-economic conditions for such beliefs to thrive, but it is only by examining them through a broader, less reductionist historical lens, that their revival can truly be understood.

I.VIII PROFILING THE POST-COLD WAR INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

Drawing on the arguments presented above, a concise profile of the post-Cold War international can be devised, and the construction of the model completed. Though the features of the system are manifold, there are three defining characteristics which are relevant to the present discussion. The first, is the absence of the bipolar power logic which dominated global politics for over four decades. The foreign policy decisions of the Cold War's two superpowers, were formulated through an inherently realist lens, founded on the pursuit of state interests and the quest for power - in the form of spheres of influence. The result of this perverse logic, was the sustenance of otherwise weak and illegitimate entities, which promptly collapsed when the Cold War rationale became obsolete. The second inherent feature of the system, is the acceleration and consolidation of the globalisation process, driven by the neoliberal consensus. The propagation of neoliberal economic, political and social agendas, incited - or 'imposed' - by external actors have provided propitious conditions for state weakness, and in certain cases, collapse, whilst simultaneously feeding and perpetuating a system of institutionalised corruption and inequality. The blind promotion of economic and political liberalisation, ignored their inherently destabilising effects, fostering instability and inequality. The lack of alternatives to the neoliberal paradigm has also reinforced its attempted quasi-universal application. Together, these two features of the post-Cold War international system have combined to generate the phenomenon of state failure. As state control and provision whittled away under the weight of these pressures, they became increasingly susceptible to civil conflict, often in the shape of insurgencies who violently challenged the legitimacy of authority. Added to this already convulsive mix, was the resurgence of sub-national identities which challenged the established order. The obsoleteness of communism, and the rejection of the liberal democracy provided the ideological space for system-challenging alternatives to emerge. This manifested itself most profoundly in the shape of fundamentalist Islamic revivalism, and in many cases, violent *jihad*. Combined, these three pillars of the post-Cold War international system provided favourable conditions for the emergence and flourishing of insurgencies couching their agendas and grievances in violent fundamentalist Islamist rhetoric.

II. NIGERIA AND BOKO HARAM

Having constructed a model of the post-Cold War international system, pin-pointing its predominant features and examining how, combined, they provide fertile conditions for the flourishing of Islamist insurgencies, the thesis will now turn to its selected case study. In doing so, it will to test the core assumptions of the model against the realities of one of the bloodiest and most intractable insurgencies of modern times. The choice of Nigeria and the Boko Haram insurgency as a focus of analysis, is by no means a casual one, but reflects first and foremost its broader regional and international relevance. For Nigeria is not only the African continent's most populous nation, but also its wealthiest, owing chiefly to its sizeable reserves of crude oil. Since gaining its independence from Britain in 1960, Nigeria has had to grapple with attempted secessionism, civil war, successive military coups, and communal violence, all of which have thwarted stability and social cohesion, and precluded an extended period of peace. This sustained turbulence, and all that it entails, has held the country back economically, preventing it from fulfilling its considerable potential and from bettering the lives of its citizens. Nigeria's sheer demographic size and economic importance, make its stability and integrity – under threat ever since independence - of genuine interest to both regional and international players. In other words, 'Nigeria's disintegration would be a local, regional and global disaster' (Hill 2012:4). The political, economic and humanitarian contagion its failure would entail, makes it a worthwhile, and indeed, necessary area of study. A thorough grasp of the underlying causes and drivers of the conflict has an additional value which stretches beyond the case study itself. It would be both imprudent and academically unsound to extrapolate from the thesis' conclusions, sweeping generalisations regarding the phenomenon of Islamist insurgencies in the post-Cold War international system. However, by evaluating the potential correlation between systemic failures and the emergence of this form of conflict, it may well be able to extract some important insights into a scourge which shows little sign of abating.

In order to fully understand the root causes of the Boko Haram insurgency, a detailed examination of its development must be conducted. As will be discussed in depth in the subsequent paragraphs, the factors which generated and sustain the insurgency are manifold. And yet, the overarching veneer which coats its rhetoric and alleged objectives, and provides the ideological impetus and justification for its action, is religious. As such, a broader narrative of Nigeria's religious history is required. The rationale for this is twofold. An appreciation of the country's longstanding Islamic past will not only shed light on the religious landscape into which the insurgency was born, but also enable the study to identify common threads and linkages

between historical violent Islamism and its modern-day incarnation. This chapter will be divided into five sections. The first will provide a broad overview of Islam in Nigeria, its origins, and its various denominational groups. The second section will examine the pre-colonial Islamic history of Nigeria, focusing in particular on the *jihad* waged by Uthman Dan Fodio and his followers, and the founding of what would become 'West Africa's most powerful pre-colonial state', the Sokoto Caliphate (ICG 2010). The analysis will then consider the lot of Islam during British colonial rule, and ponder the impact of the latter on the religion's post-independence dynamics. The fourth section will examine the multiplicity of Islamic movements - some reformist, others extremist - which pre-date the rise of Boko Haram, and determine both what links them, and distinguishes them from the present insurgency. The final section will be dedicated to Boko Haram itself, identifying the key stages of its evolution. Whilst it will touch upon the features developed in model, and determine how they feed into the emergence of the group, the bulk of this analysis will be reserved for the final section, and the conclusion.

II.I ISLAM IN NIGERIA

Nigeria lies precariously on what Huntington would have referred to as a 'civilisational faultline', a fictitious boundary separating populations belonging to different cultural entities, subscribing to contrasting, and often conflicting, belief systems. Its tenuous position at the 'crossroads of civilisations' makes it a prime example of the 'torn country' syndrome. The leaders of torn countries are typically eager to become 'members of the West' but their 'history, culture and traditions' are intrinsically 'non-Western' (Huntington 1993:42). This manifests itself as a constant antagonism between the opposing forces of 'westernisation' and liberal democracy on the one hand, and the pull of age-old affinities of the other. This of course, is somewhat of a generalisation, as Nigeria's 'civilisational' make-up is far more complex than this. Nigeria can best be described as a 'conglomerate society' (Adebanwi & Obadare 2013:265), consisting of hundreds of ethnic groups, whose cultures, languages and customs continue to govern the lives of much of the country's 180 million people. Nonetheless, the simplistic 'torn country' division does allow for reflection on the highly delicate divide which has plagued a 'nation' which was 'gummed together […] in such a casual manner' just over a century ago (Hill 2012:66). Various authors have made explicit reference to a 'faultline' cutting across the vastness of what is today Nigeria, specifically one characterised by religion. It refers to a poorly defined division (Fig.4) between the mainly Muslim north - albeit it with a significant Christian minority – and a southern dominance of Christianity (ICG 2010). As will be discussed in greater

detail in the next section, the presence of Islam in the north can be traced as far back as the eleventh century, to the ruling elite of the Kanem-Bornu Empire, although some sources suggest Islamic influences as early as the ninth century. As the region came increasingly into contact with merchants and travelling Muslim scholars from North Africa and the Arab World, its exposure to Islam grew, and with it, the spread of the faith across much of what is today northern Nigeria (Smith 2016:29-30). Christianity, on the other hand, is a more recent import of European missionaries and later, of British colonialists, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The convergence point of these two 'civilisations' – a term which nonetheless ignores the heterogeneity of both religious groupings – is Nigeria's Middle Belt, a central region stretching across the breadth of the country. It is here that some of the most violent and deadly clashes between Christian and Muslim communities have taken place, with the cities of Jos and Kaduna standing out as particularly infamous flashpoints (Comolli 2015: 20,64).

Although superficially this division would seem to portray a neat and distinguishable split akin to Huntington's definition, the religious landscape of Nigeria is in fact far from the simplistic portrayals formulated for external audiences, and its cleavages are anything but clear-cut. Whilst the Muslim community is largely Sunni, within this broad group lie significant divisions. For many, Sufi brotherhoods (*tariqa),* play an important role in the organisation of Islamic life, with the *Qadiriyya* and *Tijaniyya* being of particular relevance in Nigeria. The mysticism and saintly worship which amongst other practices, are central to Sufism (Pew 2012:31), are shunned as *bid'ah* (innovation) by the strictly conservative Salafist elements in the country (Mustapha 2014:4). Added to this, are a multiplicity of reformist and revivalist movements, with varying motivations and outlooks, which scatter a profoundly complex Islamic landscape. These will be examined in greater depth in the fourth section. Nigeria's Shia minority is effectively represented by the Islamic Movement of Nigeria, and led by Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky. The Zaria massacre of over 300 Shia Muslims in 2015 by government forces and Zakzaky's detention, is a striking illustration of volatile *intra*-communal relations within Nigerian Islam (HRW 2015). His movement will be discussed briefly in the subsequent section. The *de facto* head of the Islamic Community in Nigeria is the Sultan of Sokoto – currently Sa'adu Abubakar - a title first attributed to Usman dan Fodio, founder of the Sokoto Caliphate in 1809. Although he lacks the political authority his office once entailed, he remains a highly respected figure and is often consulted by the Nigerian political establishment (Comolli 2015:15). His role also endows him with leadership of the Sufi *Qadiriyya* brotherhood and of *Jama'atu Nasril Islam*[2] (JNI), an umbrella organisation for the country's Muslim community.

[2] Society for the Support of Islam

The significance of the Muslim-Christian divide, and indeed the heterogeneity *within* the Islamic community, lies in the degree to which religious identity in Nigeria shapes the fundaments of an individual's existence. Religion is ultimately the lens through which human beings make sense of their role in the world, define their objectives and missions, explain their fortunes and misfortunes. Whilst in much of the Western world, faith has ceased to play a role as fundamental as that described above, in less developed portions of the globe, religion continues to govern – and often to dictate – considerable aspects of daily private and public life. Nigeria is one such place, which is why, provided the conditions are propitious, religious divides far too often prove to be the 'faultlines' along which conflicts occur. Whilst the Boko Haram insurgency can be seen as just the latest bloody episode in Nigeria's post-independence history of religious violence, many view this period as its darkest chapter yet (Onapajo et al. 2012:337). There is a feeling amongst Nigerians, that this period of violence is unlike any other in living memory, that inter-communal coexistence has been shattered by some force which they struggle to describe or explain. As a removed observer, this conundrum inevitably throws up a flurry of provocative questions. Is religious violence of this kind really a new phenomenon? Why, if Nigeria has been independent since 1960, has Boko Haram only recently come to the fore? What is it about today's conditions that have led to Boko Haram's emergence? Is it a systemic issue, a mere extension of a global problem, or one specific to Nigeria? Finding satisfactory answers to these questions will be a core objective of the research.

II.II Dan Fodio's Jihad & The Sokoto Caliphate

At the turn of the 19th century, what is today northern Nigeria was governed by two distinct entities, the Kanem-Bornu empire to the north-east, and a series of Hausa city-states each led by a king, to the north-west. With the arrival of traders, scholars and missionaries from Muslim lands in West and North Africa, as well as the Arab world, came the gradual exposure to the faith which they brought with them. The adoption of Islam in both the Kanem-Bornu empire and Hausaland was however, largely limited to the ruling elites, and much of the population remained rooted in pagan and animistic practices (Smith 2016:29-30; Walker 2016:12). The Hausa city-states were highly hierarchical in structure and autocratic in nature, and engaged rapaciously in the practice of slavery. Although nominally Muslims, the despotic regimes of Hausaland oppressed, persecuted and enslaved Muslim populations, whilst permitting and actively participating in paganistic cults. Islam, in their eyes, was merely a means of exerting

political control over the territories and people which they governed, a tool to be exploited when the circumstances required it (Mustapha 2014:2, Ehiedu 1982:507-509; Comolli 2015:12-15: Walker 2016:12). It was against this backdrop of persecution, decadence and corruption that a learned Muslim preacher named Uthman dan Fodio emerged. He hailed from the Fulani Toronkawa clan, a people who inhabited the peripheries of the main Hausa cities and towns, and who were known and respected for their knowledge of Islamic scholarship and the Arabic language. From a young age, dan Fodio excelled in his Islamic education, reciting from memory the *suras* of the Qu'ran, and learning to read and write. He gained a reputation for having an austere and abstemious lifestyle, shunning the corrupting influence of material wealth. He began to travel as a preacher, and quickly developed a following amongst diverse populations, disillusioned with the brutality and oppression of the Hausa elites, and drawn to his reformist message. His call for social justice and religious purification resonated amongst a group of supporters which grew ever larger (Smith 2016: 33; Walker 2016:5-6; Comolli 2015:14-15). Dan Fodio's growing popularity, coupled with the radical vision he was propagating, became an increasing preocupation for the ruling Hausa elite in Gobir, the city-state which he inhabited. Not only did dan Fodio command enough support to be considered an existential political threat to the traditional establishment, he had also nurtured a certain spiritual aura around him. Many came to view him as the *Mujaddid*, a prophesised figure who would 'revive the faith' and 'renew the religion' prior to the advent of the *Mahdi,* a messenger whose own coming would indicate the imminence of the Islamic end-times. *Mahdist* beliefs were common at the time of the *Shehu* – as dan Fodio came to be known – and even he acknowledged that 'the end of the world was at hand'. He is even believed to have received visions in which he spoke to the Prophet Mohammed and the founder of the *Qadiriyya* Sufi brotherhood, 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (Walker 2016:15-16; Smith 2016:33). His popularity and authority thus stemmed not only from the resonance of his social and political message, but also from a profoundly and innately religious quality with which he came to be endowed. Although he nurtured a certain degree of cooperation with the ruling Hausa elite in Gobir, and obtained concessions on the treatment and rights of Muslims in the kingdom, the situation became untenable under the reign of Yunfa. His persecution and brutality towards Muslim communities led dan Fodio to flee to Gudu with his followers, and set up a community in exile, much like the Prophet Mohammed had done in the seventh century when he fled persecution in Mecca to establish the early *ummah* in Medina. This *hijra* marked the beginning of dan Fodio's *jihad*, which he proclaimed after receiving another vision from al-Jilani ordering him to 'wage holy war' upon the 'sinners' and 'apostates' of the Hausa kingdoms. The *Shehu* declared *jihad* to be an 'obligation', one which was readily assumed by his followers (Walker 2016:21; Comolli 2015:15; Smith 2016: 35). The ensuing wars

culminated in the assault on Alakawa, the capital of Gobir. With the support of Muslim leaders from other Hausa city-states and 'a motley collection of fighters' who joined in the *Shehu*'s divine cause, Gobir's army was defeated and Yunfa slain (Smith 2016:35-36; Comolli 2015:15). The year was 1809, and the victory marked the foundation of the Sokoto Caliphate, with dan Fodio as Sultan. It was in essence, a theocracy – an Islamic state – which over time would expand its reach across vast swathes of territory. It would come to comprise '30 emirates and sub-emirates, stretching from present-day Burkina Faso in West Africa, to Cameroon in Central Africa', including much of present-day northern Nigeria. Although in its early years, the Caliphate would strive to stay true to the reformist mantra of its founder, dan Fodio's death would mark a return to 'many pre-*jihad* practices' (Mustapha 2014:2). Even prior to his demise, the enthusiasm and vitality on which the *jihad* had thrived, slowly began to dwindle. The corrupt and unjust practices of the Hausa rulers against which the *Shehu* had so scathingly railed - including slavery - would gradually become the norm of the new Fulani-led aristocracy in Sokoto (Walker 2016:24-25). Much like the harmony and idealism of the early Islamic community was thrown into tumult and violence following Prophet Mohammed's death, so too was the Sokoto Caliphate, as the ruling elite became increasingly detached – in both time and morals – from the vision which its founder had so ardently advocated.

II.III Islam During British Colonial Rule

To a lay reader, Flora Shaw is perhaps not among the first names evoked by the word 'Nigeria'. Granted, her historical relevance to the country is quite limited. And yet, her otherwise inconsequential gesture some one hundred years ago, is highly indicative of the artificial origins of present-day Nigeria. For it was she who, in an article for *The Times* of London in 1897, proposed that the territories over which the *Royal Niger Company* had 'extended British influence' be called 'Nigeria'. The territory in question corresponded to much of what is today central and northern Nigeria, as opposed to the British Protectorate in the south (Hill 2012:128). British presence in the latter pre-dated that in the centre and north. Spurred on by the novel and altruistic ideals of the Enlightenment, British colonialists and European Christian missionaries had alighted in the region on a 'civilising' mission, 'bringing with them new beliefs, Western forms of education and a desire to eradicate slavery' (Smith 2016:41-42). The British presence was however, ultimately driven by an urge to open up new markets, and establish outlets for its burgeoning economy, which had been the first to savour the fruits of the Industrial Revolution. In particular, the British coveted palm oil which they would trade for 'cloth, medicines and guns'

(Walker 2016:46). The British acknowledged however, that penetrating further inland and expanding their presence to the hitherto relatively uncharted north, would provide even greater trading opportunities and ensure the security of existing markets. British expansion northwards thus began in earnest in 1894 when Sir George Taubman Goldie commissioned a former British army captain by the name of Sir Frederick Lugard, to lead an expedition to Borgu, an area in present-day Benin and Nigeria. On behalf of the Royal Niger Company, Lugard was to secure a treaty with the King of Nikki, as a means of establishing British presence in the region, and warding off the competing influence of France (Smith 2016:38-42; Walker 2016:48-51). This initial foray into the vast expanse of what would later become northern Nigeria, was followed by the establishment of a British Protectorate there in 1900, of which Lugard was promptly appointed High Commissioner. With the administrative foundations of colonial authority now in place, Lugard and his West African Frontier Force (WAFF) launched a military campaign to bring the emirates of the Sokoto Caliphate under British control. Three years of war climaxed in the battle of Burmi in 1903, when the Sultan of Sokoto Attahiru I was killed by British troops (Umar 2006:20-21; Smith 2016:44; Walker 2016:46). The lands now under British colonial rule would be administered via a system of 'indirect rule', whereby Muslim emirs would maintain their right to govern, but with restrictions. Lugard deposed uncooperative and unruly emirs as he saw fit, allowing others to remain in place. Although nominally governors of their territories, the 'native' rulers were ultimately subject to the laws of the colonial administration and were expected to follow the 'advice' of the resident political officer. The rationale for the system was twofold. First, the British lacked the manpower on the ground to administer the vast and populous territories which they now controlled. In the early years of the protectorate, there were said to be 'less than a hundred British officers and men' to administer 'an area of 276,034 square miles and a population estimated at 8.7 million'. Despite their unquestionable military superiority, the outright numerical inferiority of the British made their reliance on local rulers a necessity (Umar 2006:23-25). The system was also designed to ensure the stability of the Protectorate. In forging a '*native* emirate system', as opposed to one staffed by colonial officers, Lugard sought to thwart any attempt to mobilise popular resistance against British authority, especially along religious lines (Walker 2016:47; Comolli 2015:16). Although the system persisted until the end of colonial rule in 1960, it was not able to fully stem unrest among the populations of the Protectorate (Umar 2006:25). A spate of insurrections was directed against the corruption and brutality of the new Fulani elites who, by this time, had reinstated many of the practices which the man to which they owed their position, Usman dan Fodio, had so passionately denounced. The British colonialists, who had either hand-picked the corrupt Fulani leaders or sanctioned the maintenance of their rule, were also a target of the rebellion. Unrest

among subjugated populations was certainly not an unusual occurrence, in British colonies or elsewhere. However, the religious fervour which fuelled the rebellions, in particular the re-emergence of the *Mahdist* beliefs which had surrounded dan Fodio, endowed them with added significance and disquiet. Chief among the uprisings was that of Satiru, led by a *mallam*[3] named *dan Mafako* – 'The Blind One'. Determined that the British would not tolerate an insurgency, and particularly one inspired by fanatical religious beliefs, Lugard ordered the 'annihilation' of Satiru. The slaughter which followed spared no one, as men were tortured and women and children carried off into slavery (Walker 2016:56-59). The support that the British force received from the Sultan of Sokoto in the assault, led Lugard to conclude that the *Mahdists* were '*rebels*, for they were fighting not merely against the British suzerainty, but against the native Administration' (Smith 2016:53).

Aside from the uprisings which it was partly responsible for generating, British rule in present-day northern Nigeria had a more direct impact on Islamic institutions and norms. The colonial administration has been both criticised for stifling the growth of, and credited with fostering the spread of, Islam in Nigeria. Three distinct colonial policies - '*appropriation, containment* and *surveillance'* - help to explain this apparent contradiction. The British approach simultaneously allowed for a degree of local and traditional continuity, whilst maintaining a firm check on governance, law enforcement and potential pockets of resistance. Perhaps most notable of all, was the British sanctioning of *shar'ia* law, whilst simultaneously taking ownership of the court system. (Umar 2006:27-29). The British maintenance of *shar'ia* as the 'recognised legal system until the end of the colonial era - even in those regions of the empire where the majority of the population was pagan […] institutionalised the inferior status of non-Muslims' (Comolli 2015:16-17). Ultimately, the logic which governed British policy towards Islam in present-day northern Nigeria, was dictated purely by colonial interest:

> 'any aspect of Islam that helps to routinize the hegemony and autonomy of the colonial state deserves to be appropriated, while any aspect of Islam that subverts either, or both the hegemony and autonomy of the colonial state had to be eliminated, or at least contained' (Umar 2006:35).

In this sense, Islamic norms and culture were both promoted and suppressed, depending on whether or not they served the British colonial interest. This ambivalence towards existing customs in the Northern Protectorate, would distinguish it from its Southern counterpart,

[3] A term used in Nigeria to denote a learned man

shielding it from the rest of Nigeria and preserving its 'very special [Islamic] identity' (Onapajo et al 2012:342). When the two Protectorates were unified in 1914 under the single Colony of Nigeria, this distinction would have profound consequences on the balance of power and socio-economic standards between the two halves of this colonial construct. Early on in their subjugation of the north, the British 'found it to be markedly different from the south coast and its hinterland […] with very few signs of modernity' (Comolli 2015:16). This distinction would be reinforced by a reluctance of the colonial authority to impose radical, Western-style change on the region. These qualms were driven by an eagerness to preserve the loyalty of their Muslim subjects, and avoid rousing too much dissent in lands prone to insurgency and revolt (Umar 2006: 28-34). The north-south imbalance became even more entrenched through further ambivalence on the part of the British colonial administration, in their approach towards education. British policy was underpinned by Hans Vischer's education plan of 1909 which 'emphasised caution and sensitivity to Islamic heritage'. Lessons were taught in Hausa – not English - and followed 'a selective syllabus that steered clear of controversial subjects'. In stark contrast, education policy in the south was founded upon 'a wholly imported version of the British school syllabus' (Walker 2016:61-62). As Lugard prepared the ground for unifying the two Protectorates, attempts were made to enhance the uniformity of education policy across divide. The resistance of the ruling elites proved too strong, and a 'two-track system' ensued, whereby some in the north were taught according to Western – '*boko*'[4] – norms, whilst others pursued a traditional Islamic schooling. Upon gaining independence in 1960, this deeply-ingrained imbalance was laid bare in striking fashion. Isolated and staunchly rooted in the past, the north lacked an educated class capable of assuming the administrative tasks that the new independent republic demanded. Instead, many of the high-ranking positions became the privileged preserve of the better educated southerners (Comolli 2015:17; Walker 2016:62-63). The most momentous consequence of this asymmetric education policy, however, lay *within* northern Nigeria itself. The few northerners who *had* received '*boko'* education would come to form an elite, and assume the mantle of leadership, being as they were, endowed with the capacities –notably fluency in English – which their education had bequeathed on then. These individuals were those who had 'come to terms with' their new country's colonial heritage. This acceptance lay in stark contrast to others who, by virtue of the old elite's dogged attachment to their Islamic and traditional heritage, became a 'disempowered' and disaffected class (Walker 2016:62-64). A feeling of hostility developed among the intransigent northern aristocracy, who saw their 'traditional and highly conservative way of life' threatened by this new balance of

[4] *karatun boko* is a Hausa term, often translated as 'Western education', an association which stems from British colonial education policy. However, the term *boko* originally denoted 'an object or idea that is fraudulent or deceitful', or anything that is 'non-Islamic' (Comolli 2016:190).

power. It was this delicately poised dynamic which would provide the fuel for 'much of the inter-religious and inter-ethnic conflict' that would follow in the years after independence (Comolli 2015:17). Colonialism thus left scars which would remain etched into the very fabric of modern-day Nigeria. Through its asymmetric policies, it created cleavages which, when forced to interact through unification, would lay the foundations for many of Nigeria's most intractable issues. In other words, 'modern Nigeria is still struggling to live with the ghosts of its past' (Hill 2012:66-67). Chief among these intractable issues, is the insurgency being waged by *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'wati wal Jihad*[5], more commonly known by their Hausa appellation, Boko Haram, which has spread terror and suffering across Nigeria for the best part of a decade. As the thesis investigates the group's origins and the conditions under which it emerged, the historical trajectory of Islam in Nigeria detailed above will, where appropriate, inform the analysis and provide it with the depth necessary to deconstruct a most complex phenomenon.

II.IV Post-Independence Islamic Movements

Nigeria's early experience of independence promptly shattered any sense of hope or optimism which had surrounded the era of decolonisation. Within a mere seven years of existence, Nigeria had witnessed a military *coup*, a counter *coup*, and an attempt at secessionism which had plunged the country into a calamitous civil war. The socio-political tumult which characterised the early 1960s was due, in considerable part, to a final piece of colonial manoeuvring on the part of Britain, who divided the country into three regions, broadly in accordance with the country's three largest ethnic groups – the Hausa-Fulani, the Igbo, and the Yoruba. The move was designed to appease ethnic tensions by allowing each region to be self-governing, and be ruled by people of 'their own kind'. Whilst perhaps well-intentioned, the arrangement blatantly ignored both the heterogeneous ethnic make-up of the three regions, and the presence of a multiplicity of other, smaller ethnic groups. The political response to the 'growing unrest and spiralling violence' which had plagued the nascent nation-state from the outset, was Federalism. This system has both reinforced cleavages and bad governance, whilst simultaneously providing the mechanisms for strengthening unity and national identity (Hill 2012:47-69). Though the violence and turmoil of the early years of independence – including the civil war - had 'some religious connotations […] it was in the late 1970s that religious conflict intensified'. This period

[5] 'People Committed to the Prophet's Teachings for Propagation and Jihad (Smith 2016:80)

of acute religious violence was, amongst other aspects, marked by rising 'religious activism' which saw the genesis of a myriad of Islamic movements with radical inclinations (Comolli 2015: 18-25). These movements pre-date the emergence of Boko Haram, and a grasp of their origins and ideologies, is helpful when attempting to understand the context into which the insurgency was born. Mohammed Yusuf, Boko Haram's founding leader at one time belonged to, or had connections with a number of these groups (Hill 2012:26). Whilst a multitude of movements exist, only those of particular relevance to the study of Boko Haram will be mentioned. The first is the IMN[6], an Iran-backed Shia organisation founded and led by Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky. Inspired by the Iranian revolutionary model, they shun both the Sufi brotherhoods and the secular state authorities, and are bent on using violence to achieve their '*shar'ia*-driven revolution' (Comolli 2015:35-36). As alluded to above, Sheikh Zakzaky is, at the time of writing, in state detention following deadly clashes between the IMN and the Nigerian army in Zaria in 2015, in which hundreds of the movement's adherents were killed. (HRW 2015). Zakzaky's protégé, Abubakar Mujahid, who 'was willing to use violence to turn Nigeria into an Islamic state', later split from the group to form the MIR[7] (Hill 2012:26; Comolli 2015:186). The Sufi brotherhoods were the target of another religious movement founded around this time. The *Izala*, also known as JIBWIS[8], owe their existence to Sheikh Abubakar Gumi and Isma'ila Idris. They advocate *tajdid* (renewal) as a means of purifying Islam of *bid'ah* (innovation), espouse Wahhabism and are backed financially by both Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. They differ in this respect from the IMN, but share a history of violent clashes with both the Sufi brotherhoods and the state authorities (Comolli 2015:35; Hill 2012:26-27). As Higazi notes, not unlike the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the *Izala* are a structured and well-organised movement, implanting themselves in local communities through the provision of schools and clinics (Higazi 2015:324). The final organisaiton of note, is the *Maitatsine*, led by Cameroonian-born Marwa Maitatsine, and 'arguably the most widely cited religiously-motivated insurgency in Nigeria before the emergence of Boko Haram'. They differed both in operational and ideological terms from the movements discussed above. Beginning life as a radical Islamist network, they morphed into a violent insurgency, fatally engaging the security services on more than one occasion. Their leader thrived on a fanaticism propagated through the construction of 'a doctrine and interpretation of his own', including an outright rejection of Western – *boko* – education. (Comolli 2015:38-41). As this non-exhaustive overview illustrates, whilst these movements differ in nature – Shia/Sunni, revolutionary/reformist, violent/largely peaceable– in many respects, they have overlapping aims and share certain key features. Crucially, they advocate a

[6] Islamic Movement of Nigeria
[7] Movement for Islamic Revival
[8] *Jama'atul Izalatul Bid'ah Wa'ikhamatul Sunnah* - Movement for the Eradication of Innovation and the establishment of the Sunnah

radical transformation of the status quo, which manifests itself through an often violent rejection of secular state authorities, established Islamic institutions, and others they view as being contrary to the puritanical tenets of Islam. In the case of the IMN and the *Izala*, foreign backing has allowed them to flourish and crucially, made their Nigerian-based networks part of a wider, international Islamist agenda. It is also important to note that this process of Islamic revivalism was taking place against the backdrop of a changing religious landscape in northern Nigeria, which manifested itself in two main ways. The first was the issue of *shar'ia* law. Decades-long debates surrounding its role in the public sphere, culminated in its ultimate adoption – to varying degrees – in twelve northern Nigerian states at the turn of the millennium (Fig.7). The path towards *shar'ia* was, amongst other factors,

> 'accelerated by the influx of missionaries from countries such as Libya, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Sudan (benefitting from Saudi sponsorship) that descended on northern Nigeria in the 1990s to promote Wahhabism'

The adoption of *shar'ia* law - deemed a means of 'ridding society of social vices and un-Islamic practices' – became a significant 'faultline' in the religious landscape of northern Nigeria, and triggered a spate of inter-religious bloodletting (Comolli 2015:19-20). Awareness of this issue, is crucial to understanding Boko Haram's identity as a group, as their stated ambition of founding a puritanical Islamic society, revolves in part around the strict implementation of *shar'ia*. The other issue concerns intra-Salafi competition in northern Nigeria, which intensified in the 1990s following the death of the *Izala* leader, Sheikh Gumi. A number of young *Izala* preachers came into the fold at this time, some returning from their studies in Saudi Arabia. Using the prestige of their experiences in Medina, they gained their own following outside of the JIBWIS framework. Among these followers was a certain Mohammed Yusuf, Boko Haram's founding leader (Thurston 2016:12). Saudi Arabian geo-political and ideological manoeuvring in northern Nigeria is, according to one Kaduna-based Shia leader, of primary importance in understanding the genesis of Boko Haram. The spread of Wahhabism, left to percolate by a 'marriage of convenience between politicians and mostly Wahhabi-inclined opportunists' (Anon. 2017), has shaped religious discourses in the north, and propagated to the kind of narratives which have fuelled Boko Haram's rise.

II.V Boko Haram

II.V.I Origins

Like so much about Boko Haram, the group's precise origins are shrouded in a veil of obscurity. A variety of narratives have been put forward - 'all competing, albeit somewhat overlapping' - by commentators, academics and state authorities alike. Despite the numerous discrepancies between them, all seem to 'converge' on one defining figure, that of the founding leader Mohammed Yusuf (Comolli 2015:49). Yusuf had been a travelling preacher in northeastern Nigeria since the mid-1990s before establishing himself as a leader of a 'Salafist group in the orbit of Maiduguri's popular Alhaji Muhammadu Ndimi Mosque' (Walker 2016:143-4). It was here that Yusuf met a Wahhabi-Salafist cleric known as Sheikh Ja'far Mahmud Adam. Adam was deeply critical of the Nigeria's Sufi Muslim establishment, but intent on working 'within the system' including with the 'secular government', to enact his desired transformation of society. Yusuf is also thought to have collaborated with another prominent figure in the obscure Boko Haram narrative, Mohammed Ali. In 2003, Ali is thought to have led a group of young radicals at the Ndimi Mosque – who had possibly been followers of Yusuf – on a *hijra* to an isolated portion of Yobe state (Smith 2016:74-77). Their goal was to 'start society anew […] shun the corrupted world and create a new state of Islamic purity' (Walker 2016:151). The group, who came to be known as the 'Nigerian Taliban', saw their venture promptly put to an end however, following a series of violent confrontations with the security forces. Although Yusuf's involvement in the group's actions are disputed (Smith 2016:78), it is thought that what remained of the movement, returned to Maiduguri and the Ndimi Mosque where Yusuf, as leading preacher, began to consolidate his following (Comolli 2015:47). Between 2005 and 2009, Yusuf's group established a base in Maiduguri's Railway district. Its name, the Ibn-Taymiyyah mosque, resonated with religious significance. Ibn-Taymiyyah, a thirteenth century Syrian jurist, espoused ideology of *takfir*, which held that *jihad* against 'false' and 'insincere' Muslims is an obligation of the faithful (Walker 2016:140-145). This period was one in which Yusuf's sect was 'dormant', to the extent that, despite some minor confrontations with the security forces, they were 'largely inactive' (Comolli 2015:50). This outward facade of dormancy belied the internal consolidation and growth which was gaining momentum within the railway compound in Maiduguri. The following description conveys the scale and sophistication of Yusuf's sect:

> 'By the end of 2008 the group was operating like *a state within a state*, they had their own institutions like a shura council that made decisions and a religious police who enforced discipline. They had a rudimentary welfare system, offered jobs working the land […] and they even gave microfinance loans to members to start entrepreneurial endeavours […] The group also arranged marriages between members, which many of the poorest could not afford in normal life' (Walker 2016:152).

At this stage in their evolution, Boko Haram was in essence, a 'religious commune' whose thousands of members included many women and children. Their original ambition was 'not to impose their politico-religious views on everyone else, but to live quietly and piously as the earliest Muslims had done, removed from the rest of society' (Hill 2012:26). However, this portrayal belies other commentaries on the group's penchant for violence at the time. According to some accounts, from the moment that Yusuf became leader of the sect in 2002, the 'descent [into] extremist violence' was already in motion (Onuoha 2012:3). Despite suggestions that the group was initially non-violent, Yusuf's early speeches indicate otherwise:

> 'In this *da'wah* we agreed that we are going to suffer like Bilal who was dragged to the ground, just like Ammar Ibn Yasir was tortured, just like a spear was thrust into Summayyah's vagina, these are the trials that are awaiting, these are the hurdles we want to cross. Anyone who dies in the process goes to Paradise' (Walker 2016:148).

Despite these overtly violent declarations, others believe that Yusuf and his associates did not have 'ambitions, intentions or connections' akin to those of the other revivalist movements described above (Hill 2012:6-27). The relative inconspicuousness and apparent lack of broader politico-religious ambitions with which the group operated, likely enabled them to thrive. They grew in number and popularity, left largely to their own devices, and aided by an agreement that Yusuf had concluded with the government. This included a pledge not to preach violent *jihad*, and an insistence that he had no connection with Ali's 'Nigerian Taliban'. Although he reneged on his pledge and was arrested on several occasions by the security services, he was released, enabling him to pursue his endeavours at the Ibn Taymiyyah Mosque (Walker 2016:140-153).

II.V.II The 2009 Uprising

Following half a decade of relatively quiet and secluded activity, a confrontation in 2009 with security forces would mark a major turning point in Boko Haram's development, and indeed in the modern history of Nigeria (Comolli 2015:53). Once again, accounts of the precise course of events differ, but the consensus points to an altercation between a group of Boko Haram members and security forces from 'Operation Flush', which had been set up in an attempt to tackle armed robbers and other criminals. A group belonging to Yusuf's sect had been travelling to the funeral of a fellow member, when they were stopped by police. Roadside stops of this kind are frequent occurrences in Nigeria. Police accuse their targets of wrongdoing, and release them only once they have paid a bribe. The opportunities for such extortion were particularly propitious in June 2009 – when the incident occurred - as a new law obliging motorcyclists to wear helmets had just come into force. This convenient arrangement was said to have been used by the police in their confrontation with the sect members, and allegedly led to the violence which ensued, in which the group suffered a number of casualties (Smith 2016:8-93). The confrontation was not the first time that Boko Haram had clashed with 'Operation Flush', and this latest episode only convinced Yusuf that the moment had come for his group, and indeed the Muslim *ummah* in general, to take up arms. A series of speeches given by Yusuf in the weeks after the incident, amounted to nothing less than a call to *jihad*, in which he spoke of the *fitna* (chaos) and 'corruption' which 'infidels' had brought upon 'the land of the Muslims'. He urged his followers to 'sacrifice' their souls and their property 'for the sake of Allah' (Walker 2016:141). The state authorities responded to Yusuf's murderous appeal in devastating fashion. As they set about arresting and killing suspected Boko Haram members, violence spread to states across northern Nigeria, engulfing Borno, Katsina, Kano, Yobe, Gombe and Sokoto (Fig.1). In the closing days of July 2009, the clashes came to a bloody head, in what came to be known as the 'Battle of Maiduguri' (Comolli 2015:54). The security forces besieged Boko Haram's headquarters at the Ibn Taymiyyah mosque, driving their members out into the street, where slaughter ensued. As well as the police and military casualties, Boko Haram members 'killed scores of civilians […] slaughtering them like rams, cutting open their throats and spilling their blood on the ground' (Walker 2016:142). Between 700 and 800 Boko Haram members are thought to have died, whilst their charismatic leader, Yusuf was captured and later killed by police. The latter claim he was shot whilst attempting to escape police custody, but images of his 'bullet ridden' body which were circulated at the time would seem to suggest otherwise. His death signalled a second turning point in Boko Haram's development. As his second-in-command, Abubakar Shekau, took over the mantle of leadership, the group 'took on a more

radical and violent turn becoming the fully-fledged insurgency Boko Haram has become known as' (Comolli 2015:53-55). Ravaged but not defeated, the group would embark on a new and far more ambitious endeavour, one fuelled by an insatiable thirst for terror, destruction and bloodletting.

II.V.III The Insurgency

Following the events in Maiduguri and the killing of Mohammed Yusuf, Boko Haram once again retreated into dormancy, and more than a year went by without major incident. Gradually though, operations resumed, in the form of 'mysterious', isolated and small-scale attacks on community leaders and security forces (Smith 2016:5-9). It is widely believed that the death of Yusuf and the ascendance of Abubakar Shekau to the leadership of Boko Haram, was a pivotal moment in the evolution of the group. It appears that with shifting dynamics at the helm, came a radical metamorphosis into a full-blown insurgency, characterised by an unquenchable thirst for terror, and a heinous tenacity. This was in part due to the differing stances and personalities of the two men. Despite his overtly violent sermons, Yusuf has been described as a 'dove' when compared to the deliriously radical Shekau (Jeune Afrique 2016). It was at this point that the scope of Boko Haram's operations began to expand, taking on an intrinsically indiscriminate and nihilistic hue. By 2011, the group had moved beyond their familiar security service targets, and had begun attacking schools, market places, mosques, hospitals, bars and polling stations. Suddenly, ordinary, unsuspecting civilians became 'legitimate targets', alongside the 'infidel' secular state. Muslim leaders and faithful deemed 'un-Islamic' were slaughtered at will, as were Christians, whose places of worship became the object multiple bombings. The deadly attack on church-goers on Christmas Day 2011 in Niger state, was a particularly egregious example of Boko Haram's increasingly mindless agenda. In the years following the Maiduguri uprising, the area in which the group operated also began to broaden beyond their traditional north-eastern base (Comolli 2015:59-64). From its initial springboard in Borno state, the insurgency spread ever southwards, reaching the states of Edo and Kogi (Fig.5). In the summer of 2011, Boko Haram struck at Nigeria's very core, the capital Abuja. It was here that a suicide bomber drove an explosive-laden car into the United Nations headquarters, killing dozens (Stanford University 2016). The attack was a fleeting deviation from Boko Haram's otherwise exclusively domestic agenda, an act which it justified by claiming that 'all over the world, the UN is a global partner in the oppression of believers […] a bastion of the global oppression of Muslims'. Crucially, the attack was indicative of the growing sophistication of the group's operational capabilities. The

nature and volume of the explosives used were believed to beyond the capacity of a 'local terrorist group' and instead suggested potential collaboration with al-Qaeda-linked organisations (Onapajo et al. 2012:347-348). The UN attack, and a similar bombing in Abuja two months prior to it, signalled not only an increasingly sophisticated turn in Boko Haram's capabilities, but also a tactical shift to 'the asymmetric threat *par excellence*' – suicide attacks. This significant development has been attributed to the group's growing exposure to international terrorist networks 'of the al-Qaeda variety', noting that the use of IEDs[9] became an ever more common feature of the group's *modus operandi* from this point onwards (Comolli 2015:69). In the years that followed the advent of the Shekau-led insurgency, Boko Haram built on their growing potency by seizing towns and villages in north-eastern Nigeria. Between 2011 and 2015, swathes of territory, mainly in Borno and Yobe states, fell under its control, with the town of of Gwoza, on the Cameroonian border, being declared the 'capital' of its 'self-proclaimed Caliphate' (Fig.6). Despite holding sway over significant portions of territory and population, Boko Haram – unlike the 'Islamic State' – remained uninterested in 'governing' the areas it controlled, indicative of the group's lack of an inherently political agenda (Campbell 2016; Blair 2015; BBC 2014). As the following chapter will highlight, the insurgency's seemingly unstoppable rise has recently been stopped in its tracks. Successive military campaigns have reduced the group's capabilities and pushed them out of the areas over which they once held sway. And yet, despite the progress, Boko Haram still mount frequent attacks, raiding villages and carrying out suicide bombings, whilst roaming relatively unbridled in more remote and rural areas of the north-east.

II.V.IV Discord & Fragmentation

A concomitant narrative to Boko Haram's ascendancy in the years following the 2009 uprising, is one of factionalisation. As the insurgency grew in prominence and potency, internal discord - in the shape of challenges to its vision and leadership - gave rise to the formation of several break-away groups. The first such instance occurred early on in the insurgency, with the emergence of *Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina fi Biladis Sudan*[10] in 2012. *Ansaru*, as the group is most commonly known, was founded on an apparent rejection of the increasingly indiscriminate nature of Boko Haram's operations, in particular the targetting of fellow Muslims. It is thought that in the aftermath of the 2009 uprising, a number of Boko Haram members fled to other parts

[9] Improvised Explosive Devices
[10] Supporters of the Muslims in Black Africa

of the Muslim world, to places such as Afghanistan, Algeria and Sudan. Their exposure to the more 'sophisticated' notions of global *jihad* – and likely interaction with AQIM[11] - led them to advocate a more measured and pondered approach to the fulfilment of their goals, upon their return to Nigeria. It is this particular contingent who are thought to be the core members of *Ansaru*. The group's alleged links to al-Qaeda, and its explicit reference to 'Black Africa' in its name, imply that its ambitions are more regional in nature, in contrast to Boko Haram's inherently domestic agenda. Led by Khalid al-Barnawi[12], the group is credited with the kidnapping and subsequent murder of two British and Italian nationals, Chris McManus and Franco Lamolinara, a further indication of its exposure to foreign terrorist networks. Despite this overt ideological split, the two groups are thought to cooperate closely, exploiting a 'fluid' membership to achieve 'similar goals' (Comolli 2015:64-69; Stanford University 2016). The second prominent instance of fragmentation came in the wake of Boko Haram's pledge of allegiance to the so-called Islamic State in March 2015. Rebranding the group as the Islamic State's West Africa Province, Shekau was initially recognised by IS[13] as the *wali* (governor) of the regional 'franchise'. He clung onto his authority for a mere five months however, as IS changed tack and appointed Mohammed Yusuf's son, Abu Musab al-Barnawi, as ISWAP's[14] new leader. Shekau's initial refusal to acknowledge al-Barnawi's authority, was promptly followed by a declaration of acceptance, and an announcement that he would instead re-assume the leadership of the original *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'wati wal Jihad* faction[15] (Zenn 2016; Ajayi 2016). This latest split has further complicated what was already a confused and obscure insurgent landscape, with factions and/or splinter groups possibly numbering as many as six (Comolli 2015:68). The fragmented and diffuse nature of the insurgency has led some commentators to categorise Boko Haram as a loose 'confederacy' of factions with varying agendas, leaders and capabilities, or better, as a mere 'umbrella term for the insurgency and the violence that has come with it' (Hill 2012:29; Smith 2016:12-13). The most recent literature and commentaries on the insurgency, point to a lack of clarity regarding the precise composition, strength and leadership of this myriad groups. This multiplication and obfuscation of the insurgent threat renders policy responses more difficult to formulate, and severely undermines the triumphalism of the Federal Government in alleging that Boko Haram has been defeated.

[11] al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
[12] Khalid al-Barnawi is not to be confused with Abu Musab al-Barnawi, the leader of ISWAP
[13] Islamic State
[14] Islamic State's West Africa Province
[15] This designation refers specifically to a faction of Mohammed Yusuf's surviving followers

II.V.V Funding Mechanisms

Since its inception, the Boko Haram insurgency has sustained itself through an array of financial and material resources, exploiting a lax security environment and a political climate teeming with corruption. Boko Haram's main source of funding is unsurprisingly derived from the conduct of illegal activity. These include a significant number of bank robberies, ransom kidnappings, extortion – often in the shape of protection money – car thefts, passage fees collected from people traffickers, weapons smuggling, and possibly drug trafficking. The group's means of resource acquisition has evolved over time, adapting to changing circumstances in their fortunes. Early sources of revenue included profits from small business ventures - for which the group provided micro-loans – and compulsory membership fees demanded by Yusuf. Boko Haram is also thought to have received financial support from wealthy individuals in the north, including members of the political class, who either assisted the group willingly, or did so in order to 'buy peace' in their constituencies. Given the 'lack of accountability that characterises political life' in northern Nigeria, it is probable that Boko Haram supporters among the political class, also deviated funds from state coffers in to the pockets of the group, aside from their personal contributions (Smith 2016:13; Stanford University 2016; Comolli 2015:77-83). The support that Boko Harm has received from several wealthy businessmen in the north-east has been well-documented. A notable case is that of Bello Damagum, the head of a 'northern-focused media group', who worked alongside Yusuf and is alleged to have financed 'terrorist training' for young boys going through Qu'ranic education. His case is one of a number of instances of backing from well-to-do businessmen which Boko Haram has enjoyed. Allegations of political patronage offered to the group have been directed against a handful of prominent public officials. Seeking re-election and eager not to openly oppose a group which initially commanded a considerable degree of popular support, the Governor of Borno state Ali Modu Sherif, is thought to have reached an agreement with Boko Haram. The deal provided 'one of the group's most zealous members, a man named Buji Foi', with a high-ranking position in the state religious affairs ministry. By having one of their own men on the inside, the group is thought to have had direct access to state patronage (Walker 2016:147-153; Onuoha 2012:3). It is testament to the lack of accountability, rampant corruption and widespread impunity which epitomise Nigerian politics, that Modu Sheriff was recently confirmed as the national chairman of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), one of the two main political groupings in the country. This account is illustrative of a broader, historically-rooted phenomenon in northern Nigeria, in which the lines between religion and politics are blurred:

> ‘Since the colonial days, religion has been a weapon for political mobilization in northern Nigeria. Even in spite of the advent of democracy with the requirement for political parties to be national in leadership and geographical spread, religion has continued to be a rallying point in northern Nigeria. In their search for constituencies, politicians go to any length, including hobnobbing with obviously dangerous religious leaders but who have a large following’ (Atang 2017).

In this context of collusion between the state and religious figures of all persuasions, it is easy to comprehend the ease with which Boko Haram was able to operate with such liberty for so long, and garner such a significant following, without sincere action to counter it. A final method of support from which Boko Haram is believed to have benefitted involves financial, material and technical aid from an array of foreign actors. These allegations mainly revolve around AQIM - and possibly Somalia-based al-Shabaab - with the former’s support increasing in the wake of the Malian security breakdown in 2012, which provided favourable conditions for ‘financial flows’ between the two groups (Comolli 2015:81). The issue of external support – which, like much surrounding Boko Haram’s funding mechanisms is consistently difficult to substantiate - is discussed in greater detail in the third chapter.

III. DECONSTRUCTING THE BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY

MULTI-FACETED CONFLICTS, MULTI-FACETED THEORIES

The sheer complexity of any instance of intra-state conflict makes its study a cumbersome and ambitious undertaking. The intricate web of circumstances, events and actors which instigate and sustain the violence, requires such an acute, multi-dimensional understanding, that any methodological and theoretical approach is inherently limited by what it can and can't account for. And yet, it is this very complexity that demands that we attempt to make sense of it nonetheless. Any model is by its very nature simplistic. It fails to account for certain things, and over-emphasises others. Where it is of unquestionable value however, is in its ability to explain causal relationships between phenomena, regardless of whether this link is an overly generalised one. It is this 'cartography' or 'simplified map' that enables us to navigate the maelstrom of the modern world, much like the simplistic binary understanding of the Cold War world provided direction and lucidity to generations of policy-makers and commentators alike (Huntington 1996:30-31). It is in this vein of thought that the academic thrust of this thesis was conceived, seeking to evaluate the validity of a simplistic - albeit bold - model, acknowledging that it could not entirely account for the phenomenon under discussion. It ultimately relies on several generalised assumptions, which nonetheless provide some valuable insights into the issue of Islamist insurgencies. The case of Boko Haram is a prime example of the intricate combination of perspectives required to fully appreciate the causes and drivers of intra-state conflict. This in part, is what makes it a worthy and challenging topic of study. With this *caveat* of over-simplication in mind, the third and final chapter of this thesis will unravel the Boko Haram insurgency into three levels-of-analysis, in an attempt to understand the behaviour of the conflict's main actors. One of the underlying assumptions of this study, is that nation-states – and actors within them - are susceptible to broader developments in the international system, to the extent that their internal circumstances can be altered by changes often beyond their direct control. This implies intimate inter-linkages between macro and micro-level actors, who react to changes in their respective environments. Studying the conflict through these multiple lenses allows us to understand these relationships in greater depth, counter-balancing the 'dearth of detail' of an exclusively system-level approach, with the empirical wealth of a multi-levelled analysis (Singer 1961:76-89). The analysis will begin with a detailed examination of the conditions which have enabled the Boko Haram insurgency to take root and thrive, through the lens of individual level actors. The following two sections will then evaluate the response to the

insurgency of actors at the nation-state and systemic levels-of-analysis, and determine how their conduct has, and will continue to shape the environment in which the insurgency operates. Deconstructing the case study in this fluid manner, will provide the basis on which to draw the thesis' final conclusions.

III.I THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL-OF-ANALYSIS

The 'deconstruction' process begins at the lowest, most fundamental level-of-analysis - that of the individual. After all, it is only by dissecting the behaviour of individuals that a genuine understanding of the motivations for waging the insurgency - multi-faceted though they may be - can be reached. This micro-level analysis will be conducted along two lines of enquiry. First, it will investigate the aims and motivations of Boko Haram, as expressed by its leadership group. It will identify the specific religious doctrine and ideology which underpin Boko Haram's *raison d'être*, and demonstrate how these shape the behaviour and worldviews of its members. Secondly, it will seek to understand the driving forces behind the recruitment and mobilisation processes, examining the reasons for which an individual is drawn to - or forced into - membership, and the mechanisms which the group uses to achieve this.

A logical starting point for understanding Boko Haram's behaviour, is their name. The Hausa appellation by which the group are commonly known – *Boko Haram* – roughly translates into English as 'Western education is sinful or forbidden'. Whilst this designation reflects their rejectionist stance on Western education, their beliefs in fact encompass a more sweeping condemnation of Western '*civilisation*' as a whole, as declarations by their leader, Abubakar Shekau, highlight:

> 'Boko Haram does not in any way mean 'Western education is a sin' as the infidel media continue to portray us. Boko Haram actually means 'western civilisation' is forbidden […] In this case, we are talking of western ways of life which include: constitutional provision as it relates to, for instance, the rights and privileges of women […] multi-party democracy […] and many others that are opposed to Islamic civilisation' (Comolli 2015:49-50).

Their repudiation of 'Western' principles societal order, in particular of secular democracy, pervades the thinking and rhetoric of the group. However, the anti-Western label by which they

have come to be known was not self-assigned, but was instead coined by external observers, in particular the international media. Their 'official' designation – prior to their affiliation with the Islamic State - *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'wati wal Jihad*, reveals an additional facet of their identity and their alleged *raison d'être*. In a literal sense, the name simply implies that the group is committed to the *Sunna* (the traditions and practices of the Prophet) and aims to propagate the Islamic faith through *da'wa* (proselytisation). Finally, they call on Muslims 'to support their interpretation of Islam and participate in the *jihad*' (Higazi 2015:312-14). What this implies in practice however, is an aspiration to supplant the states around the Lake Chad basin (Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria), with a puritanical Islamic society (Thurston 2016:9). They justify this ultimate struggle against the backdrop of a perceived societal 'anomy', fostered by the systematic corruption and mass injustice of a Western-inspired secular state. The deviation from core Islamic values, they purport, embodied in the perpetuation of secular democracy as a form of human governance, is the root of all of society's ills (Comolli 2015:41). The fundamental issue with democracy is that it entails 'rule by the people' and not by God. This allows for the possibility that society be governed by 'an unbeliever or a hypocrite or an immoral person' and thus prone to the corrupting and decadent practices which have come to characterise northern Nigeria (Walker 2016:144-5). These beliefs emanate from Boko Haram's foundational document 'This is our Doctrine and our Method in Proselytisation', written by its founding leader Mohammed Yusuf. The text relies heavily on the thinking of predominantly Saudi Arabian Salafist clerics, but also of the Egyptian Brotherhood scholar, Sayyid Qutb, who was a defining figure in the development of modern Islamism. The document is replete with mistakes and misquotes, and entire passages are merely lifted from their original sources (Higazi 2015:316-20). Although Boko Haram was ultimately moulded by a religious landscape unique to northern Nigeria, as the previous chapter has highlighted, the basis of their ideology resembles that of other Salafi-jihadist groups worldwide. Broadly-speaking, the underpinnings of the group's behaviour are twofold. First, is an exclusivist worldview based on the concept of *al-wala' wal-l-bara'*. This Salafi-jihadi doctrine - devised by the mentor of the so-called Islamic State's former leader - demands 'exclusive loyalty (*al-wala'*) to those whom they consider true Muslims, and complete disavowal (*al-bara'*) of all others'. This radical, uncompromising exclusivism manifests itself in an indiscriminately brutal and militant *jihad*, with anyone opposing Boko Haram's worldview deemed worthy of death. Added to this binary conception of order, is a pernicious narrative of victimhood and persecution. The group plays on the grievances of the Muslim community at large, who it claims have been the target of repression and violence for decades, by a state which has 'been built to attack Islam and kill Muslims' (Thurston 2016:12-24). In the pursuit of this exclusivist narrative, Boko Haram has constructed their own societal

'reality' which, though based on perfectly legitimate grievances, relies on a simplistic division of society into two antagonistic blocs: 'true' Muslims, and everyone else. This dichotomy is a hallmark of the classical doctrine of *jihad*, which partitions 'the world into two spheres, the House of Islam (*dar al-Islam*) and the House of War (*dar al-Harb*), with the former in constant pursuit of the latter' (Aslan 2005:110). The concept of *jihad*, which groups of Boko Haram's ilk have used to justify their armed struggle, is often viewed by external observers through skewed lenses. Indeed, in 'modern times in the West no vocabulary in the Islamic religion has been so distorted, maligned, misunderstood, and vilified as the word *jihad*' (Kamali 2013:xi). Whilst this may be so, *jihad* has suffered from just as much distortion and misappropriation in the Islamic world, and Boko Haram is a chief example of this. First and foremost, the group willfully ignores the notion that *jihad* is an inherently defensive struggle which forbids 'unprovoked aggression'. The group may well sanction their brutality through their narrative of persecution and victimhood, but their armed struggle also exceeds the scope a 'just war'. No verse in the *Qu'ran* legitimises *jihad* as a means of forced conversion to Islam, and should instead be limited to 'fending off aggression' (Shaltut 2013:10-14). Furthermore, Boko Haram utterly disregards a series of precise rules which regulate combat, as prescribed by the *hadith*. These include the prohibition to kill women, children, the old and the sick, to commit theft, to loot, and to burn and destroy towns and villages. These prescriptions seek to distinguish between combatant and non-combatant, and caution against indiscriminate violence and excess in the conduct of *jihad* (Dakake 2013:108-127). Just like other violent Islamic fundamentalist groups before them, Boko Haram has simply constructed a narrative to sanction its particular version of *jihad*. In an oddly post-modernist sense, the group has created its 'own reality', acted accordingly and pressed on, regardless of the consequences, with an unyielding determination which exceeds the boundaries of rationality (Sanders 2014). The uncompromising binarism central to this 'reality', involves the construction of an 'in-group' and an 'out-group' writ large - an 'us' vs. 'them' antagonism not unlike one a populist political leader would seek to create (Campbell 2016). In this context, a distinctive group identity is created, distinguishable from the 'out-group' by its specific 'rules of membership, characteristics' and expected behaviour (Williams 2015:149). It is by assigning significance to these issues of identity, that an understanding of why the group acts as it does and how its members relate to, and mimic this conduct, can be reached. The **constructivist** paradigm allows us to do just that, positing that actors' interests are primarily shaped by identities, ideas and beliefs. Crucially, **Constructivism** claims that actors, though still influenced by material considerations, are not entirely rational in the construction and pursuit of their interests, and are motivated by more than mere maximisation of advantages (Behravesh 2011:2; Slaughter 2011:4). It is clear that, if this were the case, Boko Haram's behaviour would have been radically

different. Analysing the group from a **constructivist** perspective, accentuates the role that religious doctrine and ideational factors – in the form of the worldview and identity construction discussed above – play in shaping their conduct. **Constructivism** posits that 'promoters of new ideas' are the key agents of change in international relations. These actors – state or non-state – 'proselytize' these novel ideas and '*name and shame* those whose behaviour deviates from accepted standards'. Ultimately, the power and relevance of these actors, depend on their ability to convince others that their concepts of order and governance are worth adopting (Snyder 2004:60). This is precisely what Boko Haram does. Using its anti-statist, anti-Western worldview as a vehicle for popular mobilisation, it violently denounces the legitimacy of - and fights against - the established order. The broad-based appeal which Boko Haram – at least initially – enjoyed, is multi-faceted. For ease of understanding, three distinct categories of recruits can be identified:

> 'people who have fallen into it through fate, swept up into it and could not escape. Then there are those who joined for opportunistic reasons, or to exploit the chaos that Boko Haram represented, or for a salary paid in hard currency. Finally there are the ideologues, the people who really believe in Mohammed Yusuf's teachings, the coming of the end of days, the promise of resurrection and paradise for the jihadi who is *pure of heart*' (Walker 2016:167).

The motivations of individuals belonging to the first two categories, are a direct product of the structural violence inherent in the socio-economic and political order of northern Nigeria (Atang 2017; ICG 2016). In what ultimately amounts to state failure, the Federal Government and its respective state-level entities, have broken the 'social contract' between them and their people in this portion of the country (Comolli 2015:3). They have done so be failing to 'promote the human flourishing' of its citizens, and failing to provide them with the security and protection essential to the conduct of everyday life. In neglecting its cardinal functions as a state, the Federal Government has provided the enabling conditions for recruitment by a group which offers hapless Nigerians relative economic security, a mechanism through which they can effect a change in the established order, and an identity, all of which they are otherwise denied. State failure manifests itself in the profound socio-economic inequality, systematic corruption and wanton security service abuse which plague the north of the country. These conditions only serve to reinforce and justify Boko Haram's exclusivist narrative, and to foster resentment and rejectionism *vis-à-vis* the state. This much is confirmed by statements from Boko Haram's spokesman, Abu Qaqa:

> 'the secular state […] is responsible for the woes we are seeing today […] Poor people are tired of the injustice, people are crying for saviours and they know the messiahs are Boko Haram' (Hill 2012:88)

There can be no denying that the grievances alluded to by the group are legitimate ones. Socio-economic marginalisation is a defining feature of life in the north. Poverty is thought to affect 75 per cent of the population, compared to 27 per cent in the south (Fig.4). Combined with startlingly low levels of school attendance, high illiteracy rates, a lack of access to clean drinking water and nutritious food, high infant and maternal mortality rates, tragically low life expectancies, and a pitiful - and in some places, non-existent - healthcare system, daily life in the north is for many, little more than a struggle for survival. This miserable situation is aggravated by a climate of widespread insecurity, in which state security services not only fail to fulfil their duty of protection, but pervert it by engaging in heinous violence against their own people, in the knowledge that a pervasive culture of impunity will shield them from the consequences. This has not only nurtured a sense of distrust and indignation towards state authorities which Boko Haram has exploited, but it has also allowed the group to plunder, capture and enslave at will, destining thousands of Nigerians to a choice between joining or facing certain death (Comolli 2015:2-4; Hill 2012: 32-43; Mercy Corps 2016). The concise profiling of Boko Haram members provided above, is a useful tool for understanding the multiplicity of motivational factors which drive individuals towards the group – willingly or not. Nonetheless, as a recent study by Mercy Corps highlights, within these categories lies a multiplicity of intertwining circumstances often unique to a given individual. Based on the testimonies of former Boko Haram members, the research paints a somewhat counter-intuitive picture. One of its main findings, is that no specific profile for a Boko Haram member exists. Membership cut across ethnic, socio-economic and educational backgrounds, with no clear relationship between unemployment or poverty, and attraction to Boko Haram. Some of the former members interviewed had formal employment when they joined, and many had completed secondary education. They had done so either in secular institutions or in Islamic *Tsangaya* or *Islamiyya* schools (Mercy Corps 2016). The fact that Boko Haram has enjoyed support from wealthy businessmen, politicians, and other well-educated and well-off individuals, reinforces this complex profiling of recruits and supporters (Comolli 2015:79; Onuoha 2012:3; Walker 2016:143-153). Where the study does identify a correlation between the structural violence alluded to above and membership, is in a deep-seated frustration and resentment *vis-à-vis* the state. The state's failure to provide basic public goods, a pervasive culture of corruption and nepotism, security service abuse, and the inability of

ordinary people to influence the political process, have generated a pernicious sentiment of neglect and alienation amongst northern populations. It is therefore reasonable to claim that the group's early appeal - its popularity waned as its brutality grew - was founded on its ability to fill a gaping vacuum, generated by the failure of the Nigerian state apparatus to provide for its citizens, and on the rejectionism and indignation which this fuelled (Mercy Corps 2016). Boko Haram's success is thus fuelled by a structure which is inherently geared towards perpetuating socio-economic hardship, and sanctioning violence against its own population. Abject poverty, the denial of basic human needs, and an environment of permanent insecurity have led to a violent rejection of a system which allows the structural violence which generates those conditions, to persist.

Boko Haram's appeal is not limited to young males, who constitute the bulk of its recruits (Onuoha 2012:2). Research by the International Crisis Group has added to a growing body evidence that women and girls are a non-negligible constituency. Abductions of women and girls, like that in Chibok in April 2014, are a frequent strategy of Boko Haram. They are in many ways, representative of the group's treatment of and attitude towards women, many of whom have been subjected to forced marriage and sexual slavery. And yet, in many instances, women have been drawn to membership on a relatively voluntary basis. The lure of relative security and welfare, coupled with the opportunity to further their Islamic education, both of which they are mostly denied in the highly patriarchal and restrictive society of north-eastern Nigeria, makes membership of Boko Haram a paradoxically attractive prospect. Upon entry into the group, women and girls have often assumed roles beyond the rigid confines imposed by society in the north-east, becoming spies, recruiters, messengers and even trained fighters in the insurgency. The plight of women in the insurgency reinforces the notion that Boko Haram's success, stems from its supplanting a state which has denied its people the basic human needs of survival and identity. A tactic to which Boko Haram has increasingly turned, is the use of women and girls as suicide bombers, whose relative inconspicuousness makes them an effective means of carrying out such attacks. Whilst some are forced into the act, drugged or duped, others do so willingly, supposedly convinced of their divine mission and committed to *jihad* (ICG 2016). The latter is illustrative of another layer of Boko Haram's appeal which should not be neglected. Although the attraction of the group's religious message as a *genuine* driver of recruitment should not be overstated, nor should it be merely brushed aside. For there are some within Boko Haram's ranks – 'the ideologues' – who hold an unwavering conviction that their mission is ordained by God, and that the profligacy and corruption of the secular modern world can be 'cured' by a return to

strict Islamic fundaments. A particularly indicative example of this kind of zealotry, is the belief within this group that they are waging *jihad* in anticipation of eschaton:

> 'This sense of an end is an apocalyptic resonance which sounds deep within the ideological core of the group. There are zealots among them who believe their violence will be rewarded by Allah with victory and that the violence itself will bring about, not only a personal entry into Paradise for the fallen, but also bring on the end times and the longed-for day of Judgement. In pursuit of this, compromised Muslim rulers are deserving of death; Muslim civilians too' (Walker 2015:150).

Much like the Mahdist beliefs which surfaced during dan Fodio's *jihad* and the various uprisings in colonial Nigeria, there was – and likely still is - a contingent within Boko Haram who staunchly believe in the divine and millenarian nature of their actions. This conviction is typical of the faith-based terrorist, who 'perceives himself to be engaged in a mission of transcendent importance […] driven by an apocalyptic vision, the belief that he is fighting in that final battle between the forces of good and evil'. This binarism is perpetuated by a belief that he has 'a total and exclusive monopoly on truth and goodness', dehumanising 'anyone not belonging to the inner circle of the committed', and rendering them 'a legitimate enemy' (McTernan 2003:34-42). This thinking feeds into the above discussion on **Constructivist** understandings of actors' behaviours. It highlights how the creation of 'in-groups' and 'out-groups', underpinned by a violently uncompromising vision of what is right and wrong, can condition the conduct of 'ideational' actors such as Boko Haram.

III.II The Nation-State Level-of-Analysis

That much of the analysis of the role that the Nigerian state has played in the genesis of Boko Haram, has already been conducted in the previous section, indicates the intimate linkages between individual level and nation-state level actors in the generation and persistence of the conflict. It is clear that the state's failure to fulfil its primary functions of provision and protection *vis-à-vis* its citizens, has generated the enabling conditions in which the insurgency has been able to take root and thrive. The woeful conditions of existence to which the great mass of the people in northern Nigeria are subject, has been exploited by a group whose simplistic message of salvation and renewal is resounding. It is therefore reasonable to claim that 'Abuja's [i.e. the Nigerian state's] role in Boko Haram's origins is enormous' (Sanders 2014), and that

individual level actors' motivations and behaviour are a response to the actions – or lack thereof – of the state. Having established this linkage, the final two sections of this chapter will ponder how the Nigerian state, and the system of which it is a constituent part, have reacted to the insurgency.

The Federal Government's response to the phenomenon it was partly responsible for creating, is symptomatic of its broader ineptitude and generalised apathy *vis-à-vis* its citizens. Despite the rising death toll and the gradual loss sovereign control over its territory, the government's initial reaction was painfully slow and lacklustre. The laboured, almost reluctant, reaction to the kidnapping of the Chibok girls in April 2014, is a chief example of the indifference and inaction on the part of state authorities (Smith 2016:10). President Goodluck Jonathan's declaration of a state of emergency in the states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe in 2013, was nonetheless a turning point, and triggered a more 'robust' military response to the insurgency. Indeed, the announcement was followed by a large-scale military operation which constituted 'the largest military deployment since the Nigerian Civil War' (Comolli 2015:70-120). The campaign proved somewhat successful, forcing Boko Haram out of its urban strongholds and into more isolated, rural areas of the north-east. This displacement brought about a change in operational tactics on the part of the insurgency, which adapted to the new circumstances by shifting targets and means of engagement. Despite these initial gains, corruption, under-equipment and a general lack of faith in the armed forces hampered the success of the operation (Higazi 2015:342). This situation was aggravated by the heavy-handed nature of the campaign, and large-scale abuses by the security forces. As the military and police scoured towns and villages for remnants of the insurgency, Boko Haram suspects, but also civilians were rounded up and summarily killed. These brutal and indiscriminate extra-judicial killings have not only thwarted the effectiveness of the counter-insurgency, but sown greater resentment and indignation towards the authorities amongst local populations (Sergie and Johnson 2015). Government-backed civilian vigilante groups known as the Civilian Joint Task Force (C-JTF), have often been complicit in such instances of extra-judicial killings (Thurston 2016:20). The C-JTF benefit from local knowledge which the state authorities lack and are therefore effective instruments for ridding areas of Boko Haram insurgents. As such, they have become a force upon which the government has increasingly come to rely (Higazi 2015:344). The state's legitimisation of these groups, affords them the opportunity to pursue their activities with a relative degree of autonomy and impunity.

A renewed offensive between February and March 2015, marked a turning point in the military campaign against Boko Haram. The group saw its territorial control in the north-east wane and

eventually collapse (Fig.6), in the face of a more concerted military onslaught. The campaign had been launched in the run-up to the presidential elections, purportedly delayed until the insurgency had been pushed out of its north-eastern 'Caliphate' (Campbell 2015). When the poll was eventually held, it spawned Nigeria's first peaceful transfer of power since its independence. The victorious candidate and former military head of state, President Muhammadu Buhari, has since consolidated the gains made by the security forces. His successes led him to declare in December 2015, that Boko Haram had been 'technically defeated', whilst warning that they were still capable of attacking 'soft targets'. Indeed, the group's significant loss of territory over the past year, and its growing fragmentation into competing factions, has eroded its potency. It has restricted its capacity to act, and confined it to attacks in remote areas, primarily through suicide bombings (ICG 2016; Punch Newspaper 2016). And yet, for all the triumphalism, 'the group still operates, and kills at will' in the north-east. Using territorial control as a 'yardstick' for gauging the degree of Boko Haram's decline, defies the reality on the ground, and is indicative of the value – or lack thereof - which the Nigerian state places on the lives of its citizens. Defeating Boko Haram militarily is evidently deemed the priority, despite a continuously rising death toll. Territory or no territory, Boko Haram - or individuals associated with it - remain capable of inflicting their nihilistic brutality on ordinary Nigerians (Salkida 2016). A spate of attacks on north-eastern villages, an IDP camp, and Boko Haram's original base of Maiduguri, as recently as June 2017, are but few examples of the enduring potency of the group (Sahara Reporters 2017; Vanguard 2017; Daily Trust 2017). As various commentators have noted, defeating Boko Haram ultimately requires efforts beyond exclusive military force. A far more 'holistic' approach, targeted at countering its narratives, its worldview, its appeal and the socio-economic factors fuelling its success, is needed (Thurston 2016:25). Until then, it seems tragically inevitable that Boko Haram will only add to the twenty thousand casualties and the two million displaced people its insurgency is thought to have generated.

III.III The Systemic Level-of-Analysis

Placing the Boko Haram insurgency within a broader regional and international context, acknowledges that the conflict cannot be viewed in isolation from broader, systemic concerns. The growth of the insurgency has, to varying degrees, provoked a reaction from the system. The group's re-emergence in 2011, occurred at a time of shifting dynamics in global Islamist terrorism. That weak African states might become hotbeds and safe havens for terrorist groups such as AQIM, al-Shabaab and Boko Haram, was becoming an increasingly concerning prospect

for policy-makers in the West. More specifically, alarm was expressed at the possibility that these groups may be deepening their links with one another, turning a localised threat into a regional, and possibly, global one (Smith 2016:11-15). As discussed above, although there is evidence to suggest cooperation between Boko Haram and other violent Islamist groups, it is often difficult to establish the degree to which these links are formal and continuous, or rather *ad hoc* and sporadic. Boko Haram's international connections can be traced back to 2005, when members of the then sect were said to have fought as mercenaries under the command of Malian warlords. The increasing sophistication of Boko Haram's attacks, and its resort to suicide bombings after 2011, were further indications of their international links and possible financial backing, most likely from al-Qaeda-linked groups. Their fighters are also thought to have received training in AQIM camps in northern Mali (Onapajo et al. 2012:3426-7). The group's most overt and high-profile international link came in 2015, when it pledged formal allegiance to the so-called Islamic State, rebranding itself as the Islamic State's West Africa Province. Although ideologically close to the Islamic State, Boko Haram's motivations for affiliation were primarily strategic, coming at a time of severe weakness and territorial losses. Its hope would likely have been to somehow compensate for its waning relevance, but formal tactical command links and significant material, financial and human support are unlikely (Thurston 2016:9-24). Despite these putative international ties, Boko Haram's reach has been limited to the Lake Chad basin region. Nigeria has borne the brunt its violence, despite the group launching attacks in neighbouring Cameroon, Chad and Niger, from where some of its members are thought to hail (Onapajo et al 2012:345; Thurston 2016:22). These Lake Chad basin states have responded through enhanced military cooperation in the shape of the Multinational Joint Task Force (which also includes neighbouring Benin), in order to root out the insurgency in the region. Despite concerns about the growing threat of Islamist terrorism in the Maghreb and Sub-Saharan Africa, Western responses to the Boko Haram insurgency have been somewhat muted. French military assistance was provided in Niger in 2015, whilst British troops have been deployed to Nigeria, but in a purely training and advisory capacity (Sergie and Johnson 2015; MacAskill 2015). National and international development and humanitarian aid agencies have been active in the region (Onapajo et al. 2012:350), whilst a recent visit of a UN Security delegation brought the unfolding humanitarian catastrophe around Lake Chad into the international spotlight. The USA's response to the insurgency has been equally limited, in part due to the minimal leverage that Washington has over the Nigerian authorities. The latter's oil wealth and self-perception as an African 'superpower', gives it a certain degree of autonomy compared to other regional players, where the United States has greater presence and influence (Thurston 2016:27). It is worth noting that the significance of the USA as a destination country for Nigeria's crude oil

exports has severely declined in recent decades. Whilst in 1995, 43 percent of Nigerian crude oil exports went to the USA, by 2015 that figure stood at 3.3 percent (OEC 2015). Nonetheless, the country's economic clout remains important enough for the international community to be eager not to let Nigeria disintegrate into greater chaos and fragmentation:

> 'Nigeria's importance as an energy provider means that Washington, London, Paris and Brussels are extremely anxious to make sure that nothing disrupts the flow of oil from the Niger Delta onto the international market' (Hill 2012:94).

Indeed, the sheer size of Nigeria's crude oil reserves makes preserving the country's integrity and preventing its breakdown into greater lawlessness, a prime economic interest of the international system's major actors. From a security perspective too, the profound instability in the Lake Chad basin area - a significant crossroads between the Sahel and Sub-Saharan Africa - is a concern. The failed (or at least, failing) states of the region not only provide the conditions for internal unrest, but also for the expansion and flourishing of trans-national terrorist networks such as AQIM and IS, which are undoubtedly a threat to states beyond the confines of Boko Haram's area of operation. With this in mind, it is somewhat surprising that international engagement has not been more forthcoming. The economic and security fallout of Nigeria's continued failure as a state and the endurance of insurgencies like Boko Haram, are likely to be huge. Any cost-benefit analysis of committing greater resources and efforts to addressing the root causes of Nigeria's failure, would surely advocate more sincere engagement. It may well be however, that Boko Haram remains, for the time being, an exclusively regional threat. Its confinement to the Lake Chad basin states, and its unsubstantiated links to international terrorist groups, make it less of an immediate concern in the eyes of international policy-makers. After all, Buhari's recent gains against the group have considerably reduced its relevance and potency, leaving what remains of its networks and indeed its ideas, a predominantly Nigerian problem which only targeted national responses can solve. Regional engagement has thus far been the most prominent systemic reaction to the insurgency, and is likely to remain so. War-weary and consumed by the tumult engulfing other parts of the world – and indeed their own societies - Western powers evidently have more pressing priorities than to embroil themselves in a conflict which ultimately, Nigeria has the potential resources to address alone, or in concert with its regional partners. However, as long as the Nigerian government perpetually fails to deal with the structural conditions which led to Boko Haram's emergence, the likelihood of regional and even international contagion, cannot be discarded.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has attempted to offer an alternative explanation for the rise of Boko Haram. It has sought to reduce the causes of the insurgency to inherent weaknesses in the post-Cold War international system, which make it prone to the generation of violent intra-state conflict, and specifically Islamist insurgencies. The opening chapter argued that state failure is a defining characteristic of the post-Cold War system. It attributed this to the collapse of the bi-polar power struggle, which left states in the former spheres of influence exposed to overwhelming forces of change, and threatened with collapse. It further pinpointed the consolidation of neoliberal globalisation as a primary driver of state failure, framing it as both a prosperity-generating and instability-instigating process, which has eroded traditional societal bonds, enriched a narrow clientalist elite, and impoverished the masses. The final section of the chapter asserted that the resurgence of Islamic identities can be attributed to the repudiation of the obsolete Cold War ideological logic, and a reaction to the exclusionary and alienating nature of neoliberal globalisation. It further demonstrated that whilst the trend of global violent *jihad* is part of this process of revival, it has its roots in a far broader historical time-frame.

The case study of Boko Haram in the second and third chapters, sought both to pinpoint the root causes of the insurgency and to determine to what extent - if at all - they can be deemed systemic in nature. The detailed historical narrative in the second chapter illustrated the depth and complexity of Nigeria's Islamic past. It identified Islam as a thread running through Nigerian history, and highlighted how the endurance of Islamic values and governance systems through indirect rule during the colonial era, created asymmetries between the two halves of Nigeria which persist to this day. The study argued that Islamic revivalism in Nigeria did not begin with Boko Haram. It identified it instead as a recurrent theme in Nigerian Islamic history, originating in dan Fodio's *jihad*, and perpetuated by the revivalist movements of the post-independence era, which in many ways laid the foundations for the genesis of Boko Haram. The pattern of revival in the late twentieth century took place against the backdrop of the debate surrounding the implementation of *shar'ia* law, and an Islamic landscape characterised by intra-Salafi competition and the growing significance of Wahhabism. In sum, the historical analysis illustrated how Boko Haram is merely one instance of a long historical trend of violent Islamism in Nigeria.

The deconstruction of the Boko Haram insurgency in the final chapter enabled a more incisive examination of how the behaviour of various actors have shaped the course of the conflict. Firstly, the study homed in on the ideological foundations of the group, and elucidated how these have dictated their behaviour and, in some cases, enhanced their appeal. The unravelling of the multi-faceted motives for joining the insurgency illustrated that, whilst socio-economic marginalisation, poverty, and lack of education have played a role in fuelling recruitment, membership of the group cuts across all manner of socio-economic, ethnic and educational backgrounds. A more convincing understanding of the groups' appeal lies in a generalised distrust and rejection of the state, as well as the material and social advantages which being a member of Boko Haram provides. The study then attributed these conditions for recruitment to the Nigerian state's failure to fulfil its function of provision *vis-à-vis* its citizens, identifying corruption as a primary driver of this neglect. It also argued that the state's loss of its monopoly over the use of force, and the perversion of its duty of protection, has driven more people into the arms of Boko Haram, and at one point allowed the insurgency to control vast swathes of Nigeria's sovereign territory. The state's heavy-handed response to the insurgency, whilst somewhat successful, has mostly reinforced the grievances which led to Boko Haram's emergence in the first place. Finally, whilst highlighting the group's alleged international links, the study asserted that Boko Haram's ability to project its violence beyond the Lake Chad basin is questionable. The study argued that Boko Haram's systemic significance is therefore somewhat limited. As evidenced by the muted reaction of major international actors, Boko Haram remains a primarily regional concern, which must be confronted holistically by Nigeria and its regional partners.

The processes and trends inherent in the post-Cold War international system, have unequivocally manifested themselves in Nigeria. Exclusionary neoliberal globalisation has fostered the Nigerian state's failure to fulfil its cardinal responsibilities, creating an irreconcilable cleavage between affluent, corrupt elites and a destitute, indignant mass. The abuse of its primary duty of protection has reinforced a profound disillusionment and rejectionism towards the secular state. Shifting domestic faultlines, driven by the disintegration of the bi-polar power structure, transformed the cleavages along which political mobilisation and conflict occur, reviving dormant and long-suppressed allegiances. This materialised in tandem with a rejection of the very paradigm of societal order on which the post-Cold War system was based, and with a resort to more inclusive, familiar and traditional forms of association and identification.

The conditions which these transformational processes have generated are among the primary causes of the Boko Haram insurgency, as the preceding chapters have demonstrated in some detail. What is far more difficult to ascertain however, is the extent to which the forces which triggered them, are *truly* systemic, or whether they are the product of a much broader set of factors for which the model simply cannot account. It is also inordinately difficult to pinpoint the precise source of these changes, and locate them chronologically, as many were set in motion prior to the establishment of the current system. The systemic approach is useful to the extent that it identifies broad trends and developments which have made the generation of conflict fuelled by insurgencies like Boko Haram, more likely. It helps to interpret how sub-system level actors react and respond to changes in their respective environments, and how this in turn determines the propensity of a given state to breakdown into conflict. Nigeria and Boko Haram are no different in this respect. And yet, the model is by its very nature unable to account for the complexities and specificities of each case. No one state is impacted by the processes inherent in the model in the same way as another, and circumstances unique to a particular state ultimately dictate the course and nature of the conflict which occurs within its boundaries. The case study of Boko Haram makes this ostensibly clear. Herein lies the fundamental weakness of the model. Whilst the insurgency owes much of its success to the conditions created by an international system with an inherent propensity for fostering the failure of nation-states and for nurturing a return to pre-modern alternatives, it is just as much the product of intrinsically Nigerian circumstances: a historical recurrence of violent Islamic revivalism, deeply-rooted structural violence, a volatile religious landscape and a widespread culture of unaccountability, corruption and impunity. The model itself is not necessarily wrong, it simply relies too heavily on a series of broad assumptions, whilst ignoring the myriad idiosyncrasies which ultimately dictate the nature of a particular conflict. In this sense, Boko Haram has benefitted from many of the conditions which have enabled other Islamist insurgencies to thrive, but it cannot be framed as a mere extension of the broader issue of global violent *jihad.* Boko Haram remains the product of a set of uniquely Nigerian circumstances.

Despite its weaknesses, the model is a practical tool for identifying fundamental flaws in the system, and for speculating on possible means of correcting them. I am of the opinion that state failure can only be addressed through a paradigm-shift in the way in which the system and its major actors, approach the predominant development and security questions of the day. This requires a greater sensitivity to the particularities of each case, rather than a blanket promotion of liberal democratic norms as the only viable path to prosperity and stability. A staggered approach to change may also prove more fruitful, acknowledging that nurturing the conditions

for stability requires time, and that certain basic pre-requisites have to first be met before pushing ahead with more transformational policies. Nigeria is somewhat exceptional in this respect, as it has vast amounts of untapped human capital and wealth which could enable it to transform its society for the better, and finally merit its designation as the 'Giant of Africa'. In other words, it has the ability to go it alone, and addressing the conditions which led to the emergence of the Boko Haram insurgency, is part of that process. Nonetheless, it would require such a fundamental degree of change in the nature and culture of governance, that even if positive steps in that direction were taken, it would likely take generations for their effects to be truly felt.

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Interviews[16]

Interview with **Matthias Eder**,
Former Programme Manager for Nigeria, KAICIID[17] International Dialogue Centre,
January 2017, Vienna.

Interview with **Joseph Tanko Atang,**
Nigeria Field Expert, KAICIID International Dialogue Centre,
May 2017, via email.

Interview with a **Shia leader from Kaduna,** [18]
Northern Nigeria,
May 2017, via email.

Interview with **Prof. Jean-Emmanuel Pondi**,
Professor of Political Science and International Relations, Head of Department of International Politics, International Relations Institute of Cameroon (IRIC),
June 2017, via email.

On my honour as a student of the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, I submit this work in good faith and pledge that I have neither given nor received unauthorised assistance on it.

George Biesmans

12th June 2017, Vienna

[16] Transcripts of all interviews are available upon request
[17] King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue
[18] This interview was confidential; the name of the interviewee is withheld by mutual agreement

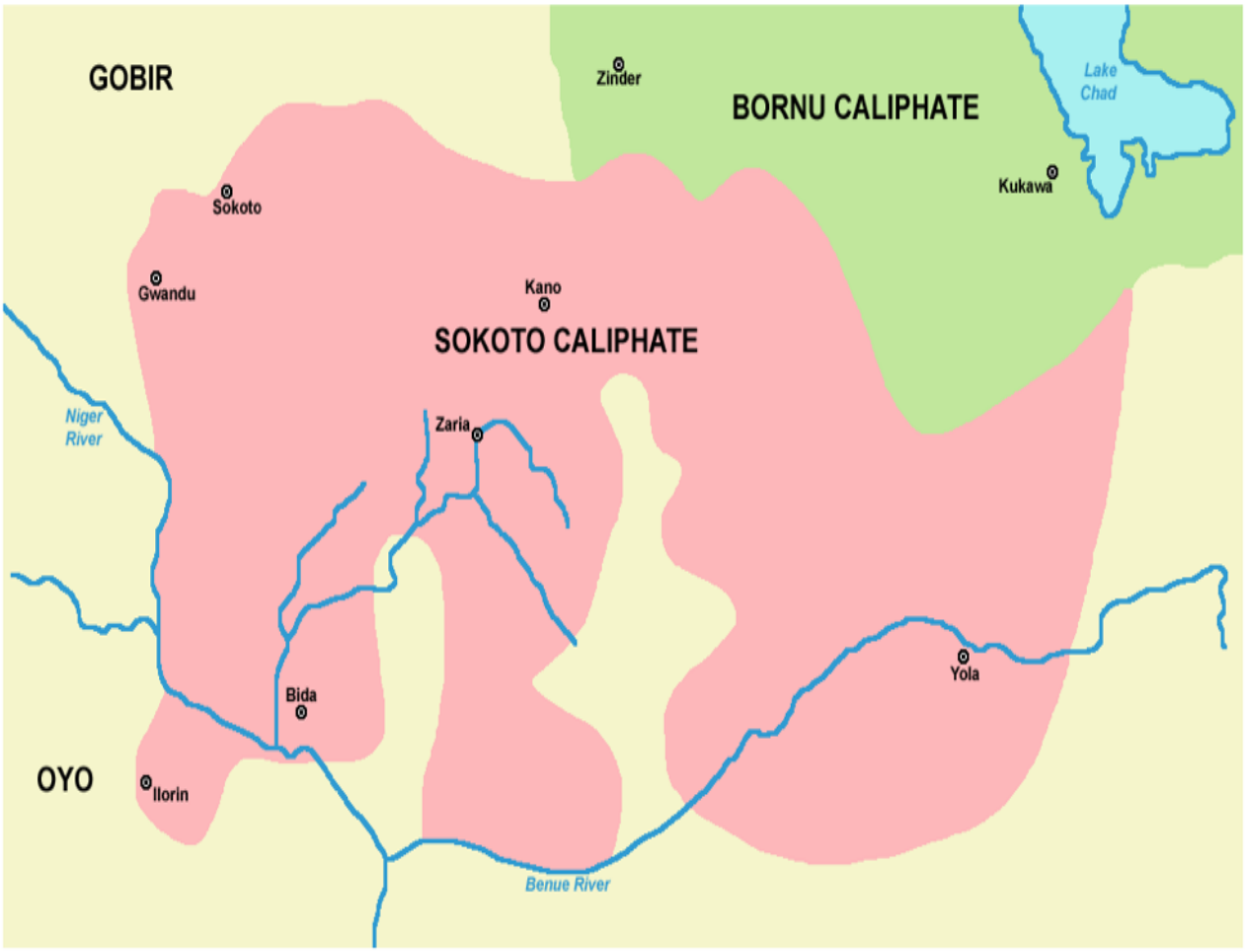
APPENDIX

I. MAPS

FIG.1 - MODERN-DAY NIGERIA

Source: https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/nigeria-women-and-boko-haram-insurgency

FIG.2 - SOKOTO CALIPHATE & KANEM-BORNU EMPIRE

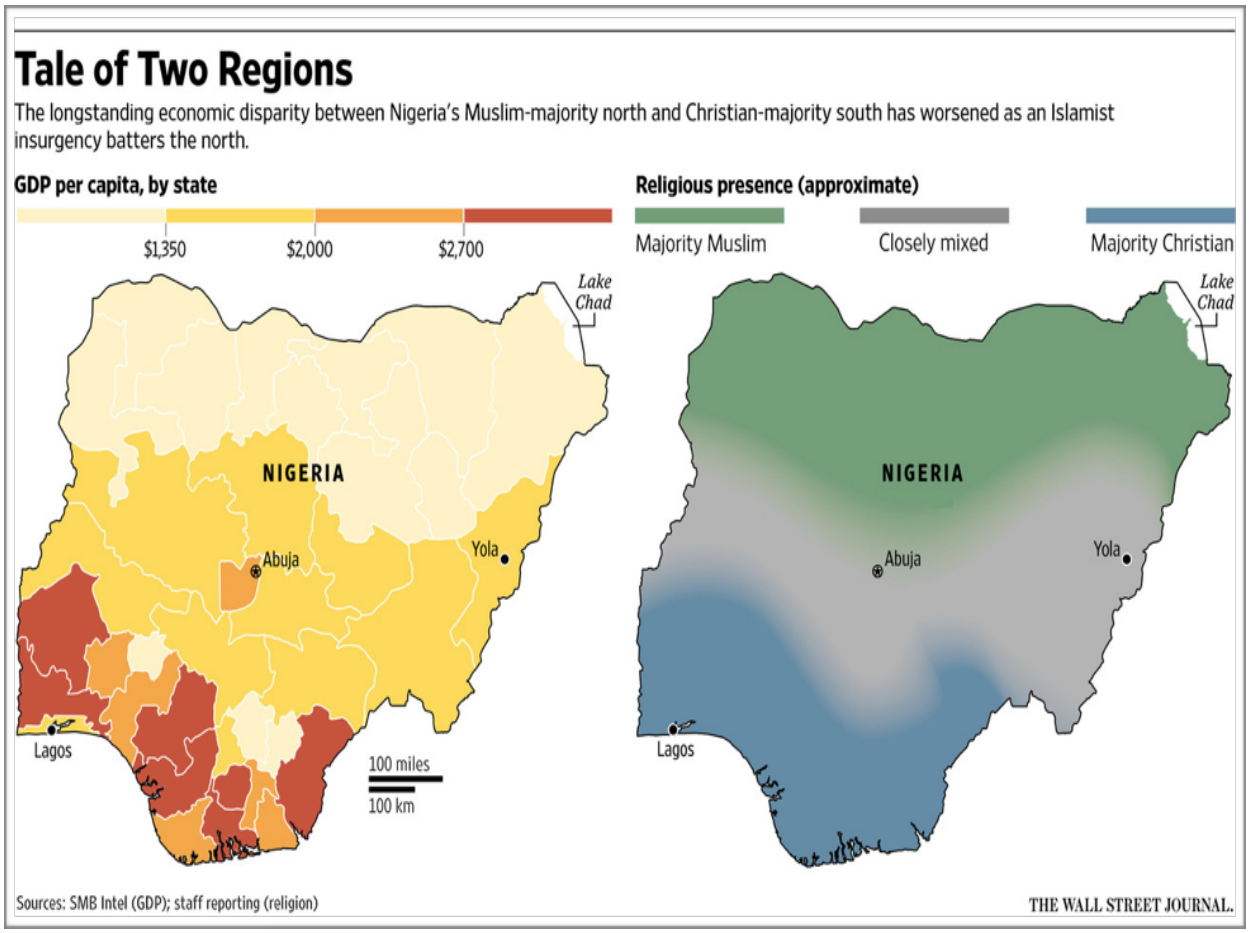


Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sokoto_Caliphate#/media/File:Sokoto_caliphate.png

FIG.3 – NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN PROTECTORATES OF NIGERIA DURING BRITISH COLONIAL RULE

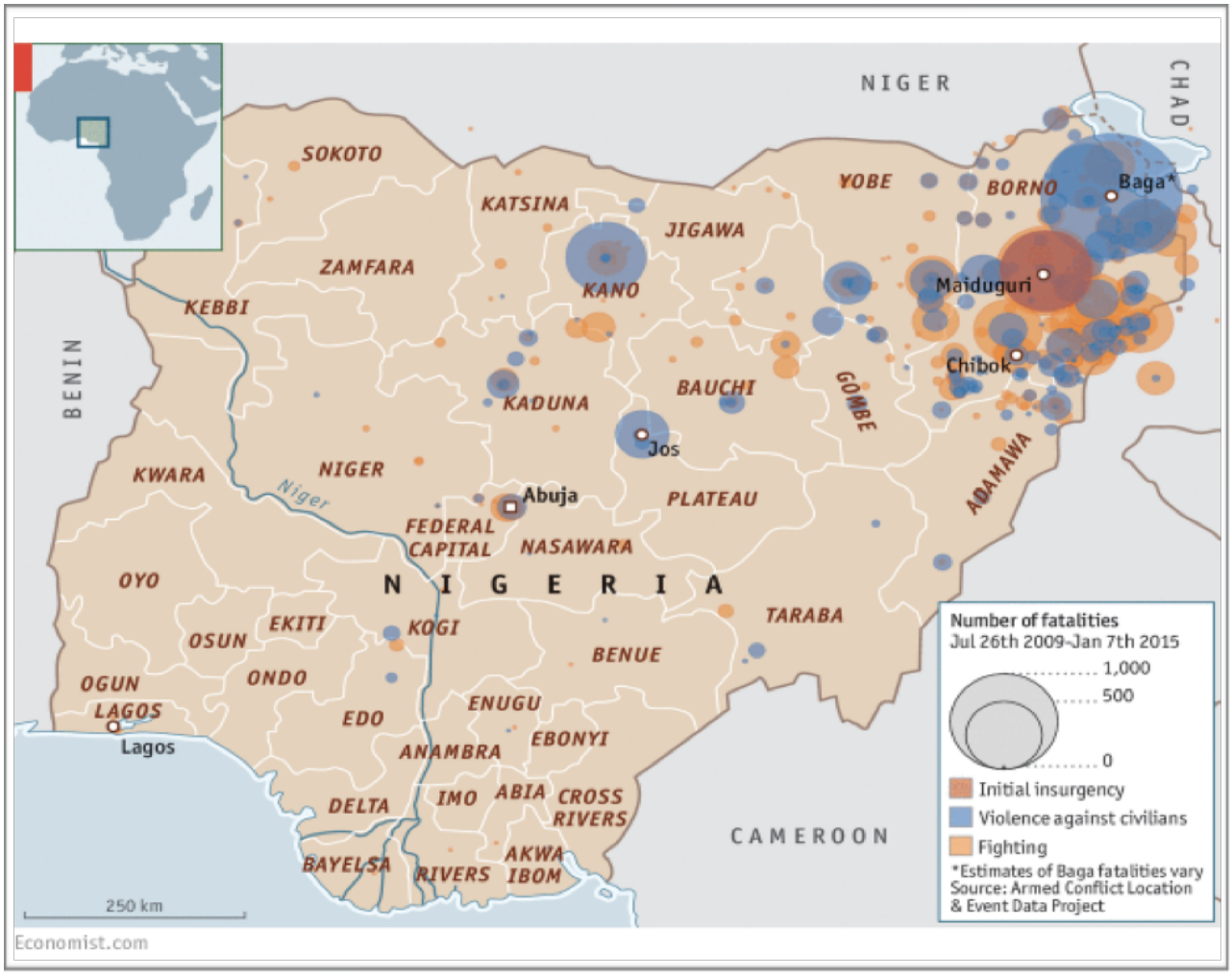
Source: http://www.stampworldhistory.com/country-profiles-2/africa/northern-nigeria

FIG.4 – ECONOMIC AND RELIGIOUS NORTH/SOUTH DIVIDE



Source: https://africaresearchonline.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/wo-aw037_twonig_16u_20150405182727.jpg

FIG.5 – BOKO HARAM ATTACKS



Source: http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2015/01/daily-chart-10

FIG.6 – BOKO HARAM TERRITORIAL CONTROL

Source: http://static5.businessinsider.com/image/54ee00576bb3f7eb26fb10ea-597-920/boko%20haram%20nigeria%20map.png

Fig. 7 – Shar'ia Law in Nigeria

Source: http://canng.org/images/Picture_1.png

II. Chronology of Key Events

*c.*1085	Kanem-Bornu Empire becomes officially Muslim under Mai Hummay.
c. 1349	Kano becomes first state in Hausaland to have a Muslim king.
1804	Usman Dan Fodio and followers of his Muslim reformist movement migrate to Gudu, marking the start of a *jihad* in Hausaland that would lead to the creation of the Sokoto Caliphatet across much of what is today northern Nigeria.
1903	A military assault on Kano begins the final conquest of northern Nigeria and the Sokoto Caliphate for the British.
1914	Northern and southern Nigeria are amalgamated by the British into a single entity, creating the outlines of the nation that exists today.
1956	Nigeria strikes oil in commercial quantities in the Niger Delta in the south.
1960	Nigeria gains independence from Britain.
1967	Civil war begins after the south-east declares itself an independent Republic of Biafra.
1970	Civil war ends with the defeat of the Biafrans. Nigeria remains one nation, but deep divisions persist.
1980	Deadly riots break out in Kano involving members of a radical Islamist movement known as Maitatsine.
1999	Northern politicians push to institute *shar'ia* law for criminal cases. Some 12 northern states later adopt some form of criminal law, though it is selectively enforced

2003	The beginnings of Boko Haram begin to take shape when followers of radical cleric Mohammed Yusuf retreat to a remote area of Yobe state and clash with authorities.
2009	Boko Haram under Mohammed Yusuf launches an uprising in north-eastern Nigeria after a clash with authorities in Maiduguri. Around 800 people are killed in five days of violence. Yusuf is shot dead by police after being captured.
2010	Boko Haram re-emerges after more than a year in hiding with a series of assassinations and a prison raid under the leadership of Yusuf's deputy, Abubakar Shekau.
2011	Boko Haram claims responsibility for a suicide car bomb attack on United Nations headquarters in Abuja that killed 23 people.
2012	A series of coordinated assaults and bomb attacks leave at least 185 people dead in Kano, Nigeria's second-largest city. Shekau claims responsibility.
2013	Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan declares an emergency in three north-eastern states after Boko Haram seizes territory in remote areas of the region.
2014	Boko Haram attackers raid the north-eastern town of Chibok and kidnap 276 girls from their dormitory, sparking global outrage.
February – March 2015	A military campaign against Boko Haram bears fruit, as the group is pushed out of territories under its control.
March 2015	Boko Haram pledges allegiance to Islamic State.
May 2015	Muhammadu Buhari is sworn in as Nigeria's new president.
December 2015	President Buhari declares that Boko Haram has been 'technically defeated'.

Source: (adapted) Smith, Mike (2016), Boko Haram, Inside Nigeria's Unholy War, London/New York, I.B. Taurus & Co