Going inside the “haze of dust”:

The emergence of Boko Haram 2002-2009

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Abstract

Boko Haram emerged in Northern Nigeria around 2002 under the leadership of Mohammed Yusuf, and has evolved into one of the deadliest terrorist organizations in the world. However, everything about Boko Haram is mired in controversy; from the meaning of their name, how they emerged and how they became radicalized. Different scholars have mainly focused on one-dimensional factors when trying to explain the emergence of the group, which has led to monocular explanations that fail to address the root causes of their emergence.

This thesis thus seeks to understand and explain why Boko Haram emerged and what factors that facilitated mobilization into the group by using social movement theory. It identifies the initial group that later came to be ascribed the name Boko Haram, as a social movement that was seeking to implement Sharia in order to end the moral and economic grievances experienced by the northern Muslim population.

The analysis shows that the group had enormous potential when it came to both money, personnel and organization due to Yusuf’s popularity, Islam’s place within the Northern Nigerian context and the huge number of youth without employment opportunities. By the involvement of political allies the group received further funding and could operate as political thugs with the state’s protection. The mobilization around Sharia became possible due to the political “window of opportunity” that opened when the country returned to democracy in 1999 after the end of military rule. The repressive capacity of the Nigerian government and their brutality in their plan to crack down the group, only fueled the rhetoric employed by the group that the Nigerian government was targeting Muslims. By using these injustice frames, Yusuf sold the movement as the only alternative for people if they wanted to live a better life. By taking advantage of the experiences the Muslim population in the north had, in addition to playing on the historical anxieties present in this population, Boko Haram managed to mobilize people into the movement. These factors would have been hard to identify through a one-dimensional theory, and it thus illustrates the importance of applying a more complex theoretical framework when investigating the emergence of such groups.
Acknowledgements

I have long been interested in East Africa, but it was a course in International policy and foreign policy in sub-Saharan Africa that ignited my interest for West Africa, and Nigeria in particular. Triggered by the chance to get to travel to Nigeria for my fieldwork, my mind was made within the blink of an eye.

Having the privilege of having a supervisor that is an expert on Africa made this journey all the more exciting. I therefore wish to thank my supervisor, Karin Dokken, for sharing with me your knowledge, and for long conversations not only about the thesis, but about experiences on the African continent.

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All mistakes and errors in this thesis are mine alone.

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17.05.2017
Map of Nigeria showing the Sharia-compliant states in the northern region (Pérouse de Montclos 2014a)
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1 Introduction

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, it has massive wealth and resources, and the second largest economy in Africa (Davies 2016). However, the northeastern part of the country is also home to Boko Haram, an Islamist group that was ranked the world’s deadliest terrorist organization by Global Terrorism Index in 2015.\(^1\) The group has killed more than 20,000 and displaced 2.3 million people from their homes since the insurgency started in 2009 (The Associated Press). Despite of this, Boko Haram did not get the international community’s attention until April 2014, with the kidnapping of 276 girls from a school in Chibok town (Idahosa 2015: 7). The kidnapping spawned a massive campaign in the West with the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls. But in its early days, the group was a social movement more interested in articulating the collective interest of the Muslim population in the north, than they were in leading Muslims into violent jihad. Paradoxically enough, the group conducted its operations relatively peacefully during their first years of existence (Idahosa 2015: 6).

Virtually everything about Boko Haram is contested; the meaning of its name, the reason for its emergence and how they became radicalized. It is therefore suiting that Pérouse de Montclos (2014b) argues that with Boko Haram, there is “some evidence and a lot of confusion”. The biggest challenge when analyzing how Boko Haram emerged is therefore going inside the “haze of dust”. This metaphor refers to the way the Tuareg rebels cover combatants and confuse victims by creating an artificial sandstorm (Pérouse de Montclos 2016: 888). As such, my main goal with this thesis, is to give a clearer understanding of the emergence of the group by applying social movement theory; a theoretical framework focusing on resources available to the group, the political opportunities and how the group framed themselves to the local population.

Boko Haram is not a name chosen by the group themselves, it was a nickname given to them by the local population and the media. Many scholars have stated that Haram comes from Arabic, meaning “unlawful” or “forbidden”, and the Hausa term boko is believed to be derived from the English word “book”. The meaning would thus be that Western education is sin, and this is also the most popular assumption regarding their name (Thurston 2016: 5; See: http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Global-Terrorism-Index-2015.pdf)
Tonwe and Eke 2013: 235; Iyekekpolo 2016: 2212; Onuoha 2014: 3) However, the last couple of years, more scholars and specialists have contested the perceived meaning of Boko Haram. According to Newman, boko is not derived from English, but is rather an indigenous Hausa word meaning “sham, fraud, deceit, or lack of authenticity” (Newman 2013: 2).^{2}

Loimeier (2012: 138) adds that the Christian concept of “sin” does not exist in Islam, and that the term haram in Arabic should rather be translated as “forbidden” or “prohibited”, with a connotation of “shame”. As such, even the meaning of the nickname ascribed to the group is not agreed upon.^{3} The misperception of the name has also led to misunderstandings regarding the real motive of the group, and Boko Haram has been perceived to simply be opposed to Western education (Walker 2012: 7). However, Boko Haram’s motives and ideology is much more complex than this. This becomes clearer with the alleged statement from the previous acting leader, Mallam Sanni Umari, in 2009:

“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 Civilizations’ is forbidden. The difference is that while the first gives the impression that we are opposed to formal education coming from the West...which is not true, the second affirms our belief in the supremacy of Islamic culture (not education), for culture is broader, it includes education but not determined by Western education” (Umari, cited in Onuoha 2010: 57).

This statement shows that Boko Haram oppose a much broader notion of the West than what is popular belief. The group have also persistently rejected the name of Boko Haram and demanded to be called by the name “Sunni Community for the Propagation of the Prophet’s Teachings and Jihad (Jama’atu Ahlis-Sunna Lidda’awati Wal Jihad) (Pérouse de Montclos 2016: 878). As such, to the group, those calling them Boko Haram, do so simply to discredit them and their ideas. To them, it is rather the totality of Western culture that is responsible for the situation in Nigeria (Onapajo et al. 2012: 26-27).^{4}

Different scholars have divided the emergence and evolution of Boko Haram into different

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^{2} For a detailed etymological analysis of the meaning of boko, see Newman (2013).

^{3} Brigaglia argues that the nickname Boko Haram “captures all stereotypes that have daily currency in islamophobic discourses”; such as the ferocity of Muslims (2012: 38).

^{4} I will use the name Boko Haram in this thesis for simplicity, as the name is well known. I also use the terms ‘movement’ and ‘group’ interchangeably when referring to Boko Haram.
phases.⁵ They all tend to agree that the first phase starting in 2002 under the leadership of Mohammed Yusuf was relatively peaceful, with focus on *dawah* (proselytization and preaching), in order to recruit new members into the movement. According to both Bøås and Pérouse de Montclos, the second main phase started with the extrajudicial killing of Mohammed Yusuf by Nigerian security forces and led to the group going underground in 2009, remerging in 2010 as a full blown terrorist organization (Bøås 2012: 2; Pérouse de Montclos 2016: 879). In this thesis, my focus will be on the phase starting with the emergence of the group in 2002 until the death of Yusuf in 2009. I will thus look at the movement’s emergence and how they managed to mobilize their followers in the span of these seven years. As such, the group’s radicalization and evolution into a terrorist organization after Yusuf’s death is outside the scope of my thesis.⁶ I also concentrate on North-East Nigeria in the analysis, because that is where the group emerged, however, the whole of Nigeria has been affected by the violence.

This chapter is organized as follows: Section 1.1 will contextualize and present the research question guiding this study. Section 1.2 provides an overview of theories and concepts important for the thesis. In section 1.3 I present my choice of methodology, while section 1.4 will illustrate the need to study Boko Haram. The final section, 1.5, will outline the structure of the following chapters in this thesis.

### 1.1 Research question

In a well-known book from 1960, sociologist Daniel Bell proclaimed the “end of ideology”. The next decade, many social scientists also came to believe that society had reached a level where ideological conflict would gradually be replaced by a more pluralistic and pragmatic consensus. They could not have been more wrong. Instead, the trend the following decades showed that social movements had emerged as a common feature of the political landscape (McAdam et al. 1996: 1). There is no clear consensus on the definition of a social movement. McCarthy and Zald defines s social movement as “a set of opinions and beliefs in a

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⁵ Bøås traces the first phase back to 2002, and the second phase, labeled Boko Haram II, as the one starting in 2010 after the death of Mohammed Yusuf (2012: 2). Pérouse de Montclos has divided the group into four principle phases of recruitment (2016: 879) and Mohammed identifies three distinct and overlapping phases (2014: 10).

⁶ To read more about how Boko Haram developed after Yusuf’s death, see for example Agbiboa 2015; Comolli 2015; Idahosa 2015; Higazi 2015; Pérouse de Montclos 2016.
population which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure” (1977: 1217-1218). They have employed an inclusive definition in order to embrace as widely as they find necessary (ibid). However, more fitting to my thesis, is Scott’s definition of a social movement:

“A social movement is a collective actor constituted by individuals who understand themselves to have common interests and, for at least some significant part of their social existence, a common identity. Social movements are distinguished from other collective actors, such as political parties and pressure groups, in that they have mass mobilization, or the threat of mobilization, as their prime source of social sanction, and hence of power” (1990: 1).

The small Islamic sect that would be known as Boko Haram was created in the beginning of the 2000s by Mohammed Yusuf. By then he had a few dozen followers in Borno and Yobe state (Chouin et al. 2014: 213). As already mentioned, the first years the group’s activity was mainly peaceful. During this period, they were an association of Sunni Muslims seeking to return to a more “pure” Islamic practice (Higazi 2015: 314). The group operated as a “state within a state” the first years, with their own cabinet, its own religious police, and a large farm. They attracted more and more followers as they were offering people welfare handouts, food and a place to sleep. Many of these people were jobless Nigerian youth (Walker 2012: 3). Boko Haram created their own isolated community where they lived without the grievances inflicted on them by the corrupt regime and the political elite. In this new society, people were promised there would no political corruption and moral deprivation (Onuoha 2010: 57). As such, the Muslim population was drawn towards the group in the early stages, as they promised them a way out of their misery. They had a common interest of implementing Sharia in the country, in order to free themselves of the situation they found themselves in. The Muslim identity in the north is also strong, as it is common to consider oneself Muslim first and Nigerian second (Falola 1998: 16). The failure of the Nigerian nation-state have enhanced the importance of religion. Religion has thus become an efficient tool in order to create and consolidate group identity (ibid: 44).

Regarding the potential of mass mobilization or the threat of mobilization, Boko Haram seemed to have a never ending pool of recruits. With Nigeria being the most populous country in Africa, with a huge population in the northeastern parts of the country, the mobilization
potential in the region was enormous. Moreover so due to the fact that Boko Haram actually offered certain state like functions that seemed to present many northerners with an alternative. Pérouse de Montclos describe the group as a movement exactly because of the social basis the group had (2014c: 137). This view resonates with that of Olagunju, who reported that many observers saw the group as a social movement meant to front the collective interests of the poor in North-Eastern Nigeria (Idahosa 2015: 4). As I will thus argue that Boko Haram initially was a social movement, the research question I seek to answer is:

*To what extent can social movement theory explain the emergence of Boko Haram?*

I wish to explore whether social movement theories that have traditionally been applied to movements in the West, can also shed light on the emergence of Islamic activism, such as that of Boko Haram in Nigeria. As I am fully aware of the complexity of the emergence of such movements, I ask to what extent social movement can help explain such a phenomenon, and as such it is a question of degree rather than offering a complete explanation.

### 1.2 Theories and concepts

Understanding the mix of factors that give rise to a movement is the oldest, and maybe the most important question in the field of political science (McAdam et al. 1996: 7). In order to answer my research question I will draw upon social movement theories, more especially those of political opportunity structures and processes, mobilizing structures and framing processes. According to McAdam et al. these three sets of factors are all important in order to analyze the emergence and development of social movements (1996: 5). It is worth noting that I will apply all these three theories in one single framework, rather than attempting to analyze which one is a better fit. This will thus not make the theoretical framework particularly parsimonious, as I will not single out the simplest theory with the most explanatory power, but rather apply them together in a more complex framework.

However, George and Bennett argue that parsimonious theories rarely offer rich explanations of a particular case, and as such, it is common for researchers to sacrifice this parsimony and broad applicability in order to develop contingent generalizations that will apply to well-defined types of cases (2005: 31). Rather, I will explore the emergence by a more eclectic
analysis, contributing to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon that is Boko Haram and their emergence. While eclecticism is normally referred to as research drawing on a variety of existing research traditions, this thesis focuses on different types of social movement theory, and does not cross the border into a separate tradition (Sil and Katzenstein 2010: 2). However, the three social movement theories have rarely been used on Islamic movements on the African continent, and will thus expand the theory’s traditional area of application.

1.2.1 Theories emerging out of western society – relevant or irrelevant to explain Boko Haram

Boko Haram has been described as a terrorist organization, a violent insurgency, a criminal gang, a cult, a political tool and a religious sect (Pérouse de Montclos 2014a: 7). However, the Anglican bishop of Kaduna, Josiah Idowu Fearon, called the group “a resistance movement against misrule, rather than a purely Islamic group (Pérouse de Montclos 2016: 878). This statement is also in line with my argument in the previous section, which states that Boko Haram could be defined as a social movement in its early days. Many theories have been applied in order to understand why Boko Haram emerged, but many of them have failed to comprehend the complex nature of the group. Social movement theory, however, make valuable contribution to understanding the Nigerian context and the group itself. However, applying social movement theory to groups such as Boko Haram is a rather new phenomenon. During the 1960s, when the number of social movement increased, so did the number of scholars trying to understand why. But even if many scholars now turned to social movement theory in order to explain the new social movements, the theory building has been contextualized by Western societies and liberal democratic policies, making generalizations of findings and conclusions difficult (Wiktorowicz 2004: 4).

Bøås and Dokken (2002: 25) claim that one of the biggest challenges when it comes to which theoretical tools to apply to the African reality, is whether ideas and theories developed in the West can also be applicable to the rest of the world. Different theories emerging from the West, including social movement theory, are more or less based on the ideal type of the state, which is the Westphalian state. With the end of the Thirty Years’ War, the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 embraced the notion of states’ sovereignty (Mingst 2004: 25). Other characteristics of the Westphalian state is that it is autonomous; it has control over its

7 The most employed theories applied to the Boko Haram phenomenon, will be addressed in chapter 2.
resources; the ability to defend itself; monopoly on coercive power and the administration is organized according to Weberian principles (Bøås and Dokken 2002: 36). Weber identified the monopoly of violence as the foundation of the state, however, many states in Africa lack the monopoly of violence, and hence their capacity to govern effectively is weakened (Acemoglu et al. 2012: 5). Bøås and Dokken (2002: 36) argue that this ideal type is quite different from the states we see in Africa, as the African state rarely distinguishes between person and office, and politics and economy. All spheres of the state are closely entangled through trade-offs between patrons and clients. This does not mean that African states are without logic, but simply that they follow a quite different logic than those in many states in the Western world. As such, both scientists and students should reflect on this and to a larger degree customize their theoretical frameworks to fit the reality on the African continent (ibid: 38).

As already mentioned, the different social movement theories have evolved from Western social movements, aiming to explain mainly non-violent, broad-based movement organizations. This has led to social movements on the African continent remaining “under-researched and “under-theorized”, and it is only recently that debate of whether these theories are applicable to Africa has come up (Engels 2015: 108). Even though a number of empirical studies are dealing with mobilization in the African context, the theory of social movement has hardly been explored within studies of Africa. As such, the research combining social movement theory and movements in Africa is limited (Brandes and Engels 2011: 3).

This is also true for the study of Islamic activism, which is defined as “the mobilization of contention to support Muslim causes” (Wiktorowicz 2004: 2). Wiktorowicz proposes social movement theory as a unifying framework for the research on Islamic activism and argues that this would be efficient in terms of a shared language for comparative analysis and theory building. Wiktorowicz argues that a broad definition of the term is useful, as it accommodates a variety of contentious actions that emerges under the banner of Islam, including propagation movements, terrorist groups and collective action rooted in Islamic symbols and political movements that seek to establish an Islamic state, among others. He further claims that by applying social movement theory to this kind of activism, one can further the research on the topic. While the majority of studies on Islamic activism assume that there are certain sets of grievances, social movement theory can add to the picture (Wiktorowicz 2004: 3-4). Beunin and Vairel salute the development of using social movement theory to analyze Islamic
activism, though they argue that the deployment of it is instrumental and limited, rather than an effort to participate in the general discourse of social science. As a result of this, despite the empirical richness of the cases and the wish to normalize the study of Islam, many instead limit themselves to an assertion that the cases in question simply confirm the predictions of the theory. Wiktorowicz and several others scholars are criticized for the same, as they are accused of not going beyond summarizing the literature on social movement theory and arguing that it is applicable to Islamic activism (Beunin and Vairel 2011: 3). However, in this thesis, I will do just that; apply the social movement theory on the emergence of the social movement that was Boko Haram in its early years. I argue both in this chapter and in chapter 2 that social movement theory has important contributions to understanding how social movements like Boko Haram emerges and mobilizes.

An important note is that while the emergence of Boko Haram can indeed be seen as the mobilization of contention to support Muslim causes, it is important to distinguish between the vehicles the group have used in order to mobilize the Muslim population and the underlying factors resulting in the emergence of the group. Pérouse de Montclos has argued that despite the group’s religious background, Boko Haram is political in nature as they challenge Western values, the secularity of the state and the rampant corruption by the political elite in the country (2014a: 5). However, other scholars have claimed that Boko Haram is religious in nature, such as Onyebuchi and Chigozie, who sees the driving force of Boko Haram as religion. They further claim that what we have been witnessing in Nigeria is in fact what Huntington termed the “clash of civilizations”, due to Islam violently opposing Western values (Onyebuchi and Chigozie 2013: 44). As I will get back to this in section 3.2.3, it suffices to say that I agree with the view of Hoogvelt, who posits that this kind of Islamic activism is better understood as politics of identity in response to exclusion (2001: 1999).

1.3 Methodology

In this thesis, I will employ qualitative research in order to answer my research question, more specifically a case study approach. Here, I briefly present the main characteristics of this method. A more thorough discussion of the research design, including the main strengths and weaknesses related to reliability and validity, will be discussed in chapter 4.
Even though qualitative research historically have been treated like second-rate methodology, this type of research has seen a renaissance the last decades. Levy argues that the research we see now is more theory driven and methodologically aware than earlier. As such, qualitative research has a lot of potential for contributing to the culmination of knowledge. This is also true for the case study research, which has been wrongly believed to lack a method (Levy 2008: 2). However, despite the fact that case study methods are employed throughout the social sciences, there is no consensus on a proper definition of a case study (ibid). George and Bennett’s define a case as “an instance of a class of events” (2005: 17). They further define case studies as “the detailed examination of an aspect of a historical episode to develop or test historical explanations that may be generalizable to other events” (2005: 5). Levy then poses what he believes to be a central question to ask of any case study; “what is this a case of?” (2008: 2). In this thesis, the case of Boko Haram is a case of a social movement that emerged in the context that is North-Eastern Nigeria. What initially started as an ideological non-violent organization fighting against corruption, has now turned out to be one of the most dangerous terrorist organizations in the world. Even though Boko Haram’s transition into a terrorist organization is outside the scope of my thesis, it is an important aspect as to why this case study is of importance. My case study is further an ideographic study, as it aims to “describe, explain, or interpret a particular “case”. Moreover it is theory-guided, as I will employ a conceptual framework that will “focus attention on some theoretically specified aspects of reality and neglect others” (Levy 2008: 4).

In qualitative research, as is case studies, it is common for researchers to define their scope of theory so narrowly, that inferences are only generalizable to a limited range of cases (Mahoney and Goertz 2006: 237). Lijphart argues that as case studies are intensive but uncontrolled examinations of a single cases, they cannot result in empirical generalizations (1975: 160). Ragin and Amoroso (2011: 115) claim that there are many ways to advance theory, but that in-depth knowledge coming from case studies, provides especially rich raw material for advancing theoretical ideas. However, according to Levy, theory-guided case studies are not able to generalize beyond the data. Instead, the strength of this kind of case study is to interpret a particular phenomenon (Levy 2008: 4-5). George and Bennett (2005: 22) claim that it is possible to generalize from one case study to another under the same contextual preconditions. However, these typological theories will rather be characterized as “middle-range” theory, meaning it will only be relevant to contexts and situations similar to
the case in question. As I am concerned about a particular movement in a specific context, my aim with this thesis is not to be able to make broad generalizations. Rather I would argue that my findings can be able to make contingent generalizations to cases similar to mine. This will be further addressed under validity in section 4.3.

1.4 Why study Boko Haram?

The Boko Haram crisis has been an integral part of the Nigerian society since the sect returned with a vengeance after the killing of Mohammed Yusuf in 2009. Thousands of people have been killed, and millions forced to internal refuge (Idahosa 2015: 8). Nigeria is an oil-rich country, and the fifth largest OPEC producer, exporting oil to the U.S. and several other Western countries (Aghedo and Osumah 2012: 861). Nigeria is also the leading country for most of the activities in West Africa and the fourth largest troop contributor to UN peacekeeping missions (Meehan and Speier 2011: 23). Nigeria contributes with large numbers of troops to the United Nations in addition to other peacekeeping operations. The country is also one of the founders of the African Union and the Economic Cooperation of West African States’ (ECOWAS) headquarter is based in Abuja. Nigeria has thus been seen as a stable regional hegemon and important ally for Western countries (Campbell 2010, vii).

However, the government has not been able to prevent the spiraling of Boko Haram into an insurgency in North-Eastern Nigeria and border areas of the Lake Chad basin. This has resulted in one of the most serious humanitarian crisis in the world today (Higazi 2016: 104).

Boko Haram has also redefined the way jihadists challenge the post-colonial state, and this is not new only in Nigeria, but in Africa as a whole (Chouin 2014: ix). With Nigeria being a relatively stable hegemon in a West African region mired with conflict, it is important to understand the emergence of such groups. With the establishment of the Multinational Joint Taskforce (MNJTF) in 2015, much of the group’s territory was lost and many of their abductees released. The leadership of Boko Haram was weakened, with new divisions appearing. But despite of this, Boko Haram is still very much alive and able to operate in four countries, as is evident from the ongoing crisis around Lake Chad. The group has also carried out attacks across the borders, which have threatened to destabilize the neighboring countries of Cameroon, Chad and Niger (Idahosa 2015: 8). The vicious tactic of children and female suicide bombers is still being employed, and with internal splinters there is no way to predict
the possible violence ahead (Sæbø 2017: 12). There is thus an urgent need to understand Boko Haram, and movements of its kind, both in order to create policies that prevent these movements from emerging in the first place, and to fight them effectively when they have already appeared.

When assessing the research on Boko Haram and its emergence, it also became clear that there are gaps in the literature. Higazi is of the same opinion, and argues that even if there is some excellent works on Boko Haram, these are the exceptions rather than the rule in the existing literature. As there is an over-dependence on reports from the media, other sources of contextualization and analysis should be applied more (Higazi 2015: 311). Adibe claims that much of what is known about Boko Haram is still in the realm of speculation rather than facts, and that there is a need for empirical research to fill this knowledge void (Adibe 2013: 14). Akinola also highlights the monocausal approaches to the explanation of Boko Haram, and consequently the lack of comprehensive explanations and interaction between the factors involved (Akinola 2015: 2). It thus becomes clear that writing about Boko Haram is of importance, and I will fill a small part of this void in the literature by applying a framework of social movement theory to the emergence of Boko Haram.

1.5 Outline of the thesis

The thesis consists of six main chapters, the first chapter being this introduction. The second chapter deals with the historical background of both Nigeria and Boko Haram, in addition to Islam’s place in the Nigerian history. Chapter three provides a brief introduction to the characteristics of the African state and the literature reviewed, before presenting the theories and concepts applied in the thesis. The fourth chapter presents the methodological framework and the challenges tied to both validity and reliability. In the fifth chapter I analyze the empirical findings in light of social movement theory, which will be structured in three different sub-chapters; political opportunities and processes, resource mobilization and framing processes. I conclude my thesis with a summary of the main findings and a discussion as to what extent social movement theory has explanatory power when it comes the emergence of Boko Haram.
## 2 Background

Nigeria is multiethnic, multicultural and multireligious (Falola 1998: 1). A federation state consisting of 36 states, Nigeria has been described as many nations within one (ibid: 45). The northern part of the country is predominantly Muslim while the southern part is predominately Christian. However, the southern part also has a substantial Muslim population, and there are numerous minorities living in both regions (Mohammed 2014: 11). The biggest ethnic groups are the Hausa-Fulani in the north, the Yoruba in the southwest and the Igbo in the southeast (Agbiboa 2014: 50-51). The last two decades, the country has also seen the emergence and rise of Boko Haram. This chapter urges to provide an overview of the history of Nigeria and Islam’s place within that history. Understanding Nigeria’s complex history is important in order to understand how historical legacies are affecting the political situation of today. Nigerians seem to be a people highly sensitive to religion and the country has seen a steady growth of religious fundamentalism, starting from the 1980s. Religious fears and the use of religion for propaganda has thus been an important feature of the Nigerian society (Adesoji 2011: 99). It is in light of the historical, cultural and religious backdrop in the country one can best analyze the numerous radical Islamist groups that have emerged in the northern part of Nigeria, the most violent of these being Boko Haram (Comolli 201: 25).

Therefore, in this chapter, I will do as follows: In section 2.1 I will give a presentation of Nigeria’s background and Islam’s place within that history. In section 2.2 I give an introduction to the different narratives employed to explain the emergence of Boko Haram, the group’s ideology, and their activity under the leadership of Mohammed Yusuf. It is important with regard to the later analysis, that the reader is familiar with some of the historical context that Boko Haram has evolved within. The view of Bøås and Dunn (2007: 14) support the presentation of historical and social contexts, as “monocausal perspectives and broad-brushed explanations tend to obscure more than they reveal”.

### 2.1 Nigeria: A historical background

Islam has a long history in Nigeria, longer than that of Christianity. This is especially true for the north, where there has been a steady growth of Nigerian Islam (Falola 1998: 24). The region we know as Northern Nigeria is made up of 16 states, with the two major ethnic groups
being the Hausa and the Fulani. In the far northeast of the country, the main group is Kanuri. While the Hausa is indigenous to the area, the Fulani migrated to Hausa areas in the thirteenth century from areas that today comprise Senegal. There are around 160 different groups in the area, including Christian minorities from the southern part of the country (Sæbø 2017: 4). Up until the nineteenth century Northern Nigeria was dominated by city-states and kingdoms. The leaders here largely belonged to the Hausa ethnic group, and wars were common among them as the different kings wished to expand their territory. These kingdoms were hierarchical and bureaucratic structures (Campbell 2010: 1).

Islam was introduced to the northern region between the tenth and seventeenth centuries, due to the merchant caravan routes crossing the area (Sæbø 2017: 4). By offering protection to isolated Muslim merchant communities due to a wish to control the merchant routes across the desert, the elites were exposed to Islam and gradually converted. But the new religion was mainly perceived to be for the upper class, as the majority of the population were pagan (Comolli 2015: 13). This came to change when the Hausa-Fulani sultanate of Sokoto was founded in 1804 by Fulani preacher Usman dan Fodio (Campbell 2010: 1). Dan Fodio is perceived to be the founder of Islam in the country, and he helped spread Islam in the northern parts of Nigeria by initiating a holy war against infidels the same year (Comolli 2015: 13).

Dan Fodio and his followers used Islam as an instrument in trying to suppress the Hausa population and assert the ethnic supremacy of the Fulani. As such, they used the growing resentment among the population in order to mobilize against what they described as despotic Hausa kings and corrupt systems. He portrayed the Hausa leaders as not living up to the ideals of Islam, and as such making them legitimate targets of jihad. However, dan Fodio was not after converting pagans as much as he was after reforming lax Muslims (Kenny 1996: 339). The religious rhetoric and social backdrop escalated the conflict and led to the five-year Fulani war and eventually the ousting of the Hausa kings. In 1809 dan Fodio founded the Sokoto Caliphate and became the first Sultan (Comolli 2015: 15). The Caliphate was divided into emirates, with a single sultan responsible for overseeing all the emirs (Falola 1998: 25). An Islamic judge made sure Sharia was used as the rule of law. Islamic law thus spread fast over the whole region (ibid: 26). However, the rise and fall of the British colonial power has led to important changes in the role of Islam in Nigeria (Falola 1998: 27). Several scholars
have found that the attempt to examine Boko Haram in the historical context of Northern Nigeria, has highlighted the jihadist movement of dan Fodio in the nineteenth century. This movement still carries widespread inspiration and appeal to many Nigerian Muslims (Azumah 2015: 48).

2.1.1 The British

As the British fought their way into the territory, the city-states fell one after the other. When they finally managed to conquer Kano in 1903, Northern Nigeria was at their feet. The British now controlled one protectorate in the north and one in the south of what is today Nigeria (Sæbø 2017: 5). The British soon discovered that the northern region was different from the south of the country. The British colonialists often found themselves ambivalent towards Islam, but they also understood that irrational treatment of this northern part of the population would not be helpful in order to reach their goals (Falola 1998: 27). Keeping in mind past colonial experiences and the fact that the Caliphate was strong, the British allowed the Fulani administrative system to stay in place, and with it Sharia law as the recognized legal system of the region (Comolli 2015: 17). However, the hudud penalties that involved “capital punishments and severance of extremities” as punishment for crimes committed under the laws of Sharia law were abolished. As such, there was only a partial implementation of Sharia law (Akinola 2015: 6).

The cooperation based on indirect rule through the emirs and sultans strengthened the Fulani administration’s Islamic influence across the region, even to places where the tribes were seen as pagan (Comolli 2015: 17). The colonial officers viewed the Muslim elite as more intelligent and civilized than the pagans, and they were also preferred over the Nigerians with Western education considered to be arrogant and impatient. As such, by promoting the Islamic cause and the elite in the north, the British managed to reduce the influence of the Western-oriented elite (Falola 1998: 27). During this time, Islam was both able to consolidate under British rule and the increased competition seen from the Christian south. Falola (1998: 28) argues that “Islam spread to new areas at a rate that has been described as unprecedented”. This was a result of better infrastructure such as roads, railways and communications that enabled missionaries to travel to places that had seemed inaccessible earlier (ibid). The political power of the country was also in the hands of the Muslims (ibid: 29). Contrary to the situation in the north, the south lacked indigenous state structures, leading to the British
introduction of Western institutions to the south. As most of the people in the south adopted Christianity, the British were also able to promote modern education and business. As a result of this, the Igbo early mastered these practices and got involved in trading and mechanics. Since the British ruled the north through the emirate system they found in place, they discouraged Christian missionary activity in the region. This resulted in few Western schools in the areas up north, in addition to few hospitals and clinics. Campbell argues that this has in fact “perpetuated much of the North’s premodern backwardness” (2010: 2). As there were very few graduates from the north, the official positions were given to those from the south, and mainly to those belonging to the Igbo. The northerners became worried that their traditional way of living would be threatened by the educational shift, in addition to their economic underdevelopment (Comolli 2015: 17). In addition to this, many Muslims felt threatened by the modern Weberian bureaucratic system introduced by the British, that they saw as a representation of the Anglo-Christian state structure. This state structure led to security concerns and fueled the demands for political Islam in the northern region (Akinola 2015: 6). The British’ policies of divide and rule played on the separateness between the north and the south, which resulted in “fossilizing” the differences and also helped avert resistance from a united Nigeria (Mohammed 2014: 11). This created a further division between the north and the south of the country that would eventually pave way for the Biafran war that lasted from 1967-1970 (Comolli 2015: 18).

2.1.2 The Biafran War

The British had high hopes for Nigeria’s independence, and articulated what has been called the “Nigeria Project”. Their vision was that this enormous country with numerous ethnic groups and religions could be united by “democracy, pursuits of economic development, governance according to the rule of law, and the occupation of an important place on the world stage” (Campbell 2010: 5). However, Falola argues that colonial rule fostered the consolidation of the different ethnic groups, and that this was further promoted through the administrative units based on cultural and linguistic differences. This encouraged struggle for privilege and resources between the various ethnic groups (1998: 52). This meant that even if Nigeria’s future seemingly looked bright on Independence Day, October 1 in 1960, unresolved ethnic rivalries and the competition for resources soon pushed the newly independent nation into civil war. Numerous military coups with different factions demolished parliament institutions and the rule of law. The Sardauna (sultan) of Sokoto,
Alhaji Ahmadu Bello, who was a descendant of dan Fodio, was killed in the first coup in 1966, in addition to the federal prime minister and four senior military officers from the north. This, among other events, led to a popular perception that the coup was in fact an Igbo conspiracy. A northern countercoup later in 1966 led to the killing of many prominent Igbos. Because of the coups, widespread violence towards Igbos and Christians that had settled in the north took place, and they were forced to flee back to Igboland (Comolli 2015: 18-19).

Under the leadership of the governor of the southeast, Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu, the Igbo proclaimed secession of the eastern part of Nigeria from the rest of the country on the 30th of May 1967. The predominately Christian state of the Republic of Biafra was born (Campbell 2010: 6; Comolli 2015: 19). Falola argues that both the existing regionalism and intraclass rivalry had a lot to do with the decision of the eastern region to secede from the rest of the country (1998: 55). The secessionists and the government failed to agree and war broke out between the Biafran forces and the federal government. The Biafran forces had little equipment, while the government forces were backed by the British. The conflict endured until 1970, when Colonel Olusegun Obasanjo led an offensive that split the new Republic into two areas in 1969 and a final twist of the knife in January 19710, when the Biafran forces surrendered (Comolli 2015: 19).

2.1.3 The Sharia debates

What has been referred to as the Sharia debates started in Nigeria back in 1960 and the conflicts have mainly revolved around the differences between the Muslim north and the Christian south over the appropriate status of Sharia in the country (Suberu 2009: 549). However, according to Falola, the debates have been politically manipulated in addition to being religiously motivated (1998: 93). Suberu (2009: 549) claim that “the Sharia issue has become a marker and driver not only of Muslim-Christian conflict, but also of North-South, inter-ethnic, majority-minority and centre-states socio-economic and political competition in the Nigerian federation”. The issue has sparked debate in the Nigerian society from the time of independence, but in 1999 a new drive to introduce Sharia came from Ahmed Sani. Sani was the new governor of one of the northern states, Zamfara, and he wanted Islamic law to be fully adopted. The Christian community in Nigeria feared future developments and criticized the move. However, soon eleven of the other states in the northern region followed suite. The Sharia system aimed to free society of so called un-Islamic practices, such as drinking alcohol
and prostitution, and State Sharia Courts were established (Comolli 2015: 20-21). Zamfara’s reintroduction of Islamic criminal law came into being after several decades of pressure from the Muslim population and there were multiple outbreaks of violence related to Sharia in many of the northern states (Suberu 2009: 552). Muhammadu Buhari, who is now the president of Nigeria, was one of the most prominent politicians in the north at that time. He supported Sani and assured his followers by saying that he would die for the cause of Islam (Harnischfeger 2014: 34).

2.1.4 The Maitatsine uprisings

Nigeria has a long history of religious conflict, however, it was the Maitatsine uprisings starting in 1980 that led to the first major manifestation of Islamic fundamentalism in the country. The Maitatsine movement was led by Muhammad Marwa, a Cameroonian residing in the northern state of Kano. The first chain of the Maitatsine riots thus broke out in the same state. Such riots also took place in Kaduma and Bulumkutu in 1982, in Yola in 1984 and in Bauchi 1985. The group’s objective was the purification of Islam, and Marwa declared himself the prophet of this group (Adesoji 2011: 101). Marwa’s follower became known as “Yan Tatsine” – those who reject, and they rejected everything they considered “Western”; such as bicycles, watches and even some types of clothing. After an attempt to storm the biggest mosque in Kano in 1980, the ‘Yan Tatsine clashed with the military and some suggest that as many as 6000 lost their lives, including their leader (Sæbø 2017: 7). Many scholars have compared the emergence of Boko Haram to that of the Maitatsine uprisings. I will discuss this further in chapter 3.

2.2 The story of Boko Haram

The exact date Boko Haram came into being is disputed. However, it is widely acknowledged by scholars that the group first emerged in 2002 (Weeraratne 2015; Walker 2012:3; Comolli 2015: 45; Onuoha 2014: 159). Most media reports also indicate that 2002 was the founding year of the sect, under the leadership of Mohammed Yusuf. The group has been known under the popular nickname of Boko Haram, given to them by the media and the local population (Newman 2013: 2). In fact, the name was first coined by a journalist in Northern Nigeria.

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8 Many scholars have written extensively on the Maitatsine, see for example Isichei 1987; Danjibo 2009; Hickey 1984.
during the uprising in 2009, and before this, the sect had been referred to as *Yusufiyyah*, after its founder. It was not until after Mohammed Yusuf’s death that the group under leadership of Abubakar Shekau claimed its name to be “Sunni Community for the Propagation of the Prophet’s Teachings and Jihad (Jama’atu Ahlis-Sunna Lidda’awati Wal Jihad) (Pérouse de Montclos 2016: 878).

2.2.1 Different accounts of the emergence of Boko Haram

Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf was born in Girgir village in Yobe state in 1970. He has both been credited graduate-level education and no education at all (Thurston 2016: 10; Comolli 2015: 48). However, his early years are difficult to trace and there are various accounts of how he became the leader of Boko Haram. Comolli argues that the story does not begin with Yusuf’s leadership, as there are several other people that were important for the emergence of Boko Haram (2015: 45-46). Regardless, pinpointing the exact date of the movement’s emergence has proven impossible, as there are numerous conflicting and overlapping narratives as to explain how the movement emerged.

According to the Nigerian Security forces, the true origins of Boko Haram goes back to 1995 when *Ahlulsunna wal’jama’ah hijra* (Muslim Youth Organisation) was established by Abubakar Lawan at the University of Maiduguri. When Lawan left Nigeria in 2002 in order to enhance his Islamic studies in Medina, Mohammed Yusuf was appointed the leader of the sect. From this time, the sect was labeled with different names; the most common being *Yusufiyyah* and “Nigerian Taliban”, a nickname they got from the Nigerian press comparing it to their Afghan counterparts (Comolli 2015: 46; Onuoha 2010: 55; Brigaglia 2012: 21).

A second account traces the emergence of the group to the most radical worshippers at the Alhaji Muhammadu Indimi Mosque in Maiduguri. These young men started voicing critical questions towards how the city administration was run, in addition to criticizing the religious establishment for being corrupt and not following true Islamic values (Walker 2012: 3; Comolli 2015: 46). The group then declared that they would embark on a *hijra*⁹, and they left Maiduguri and set up a community in Kanama, Yobe state, where they followed strict Islamic principles. The leader of the group, Mohammed Ali, called on other Muslims to come and

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⁹ Refers to the migration by prophet Muhammed and his followers from Mecca to Medina. Used to describe the retreat from society to build an Islamic state.
join them in living as true Muslims in a better society. However, when a disagreement in the community over fishing rights broke out in 2003, the police got involved. This led to the group attacking the police and managing to steal their weapons, and as a consequence the Nigerian army sieged their mosque. Shooting between the group and the army took place, and most of the group’s members, included their leader, were killed. The few of those that survived the shooting, went back to Maiduguri to re-join the youth group that had grown out of the Indimi mosque. Mohammed Yusuf became the leader of this group, and set out to establish the group’s own mosque, Ibn Taimiyyah Masjid, on land owned by his father-in-law (Walker 2012: 3).

Other accounts of the emergence of the group narrate that a man called Aminu Tashen Ilimi managed to influence students to leave the University of Maiduguri in order to follow the teachings of a preacher from abroad who was arguing that Islam was against Western education. Mohammed Yusuf were one of the youth influenced by the group, and he left the Indimi Mosque in 2000 to start teaching himself. He managed to get a lot of youth to his classroom, but Aminu Tashen Ilimi and others accused him of being too liberal. This resulted in them breaking off the collaboration with Yusuf, and moving to Yobe state where they established a base named “Afghanistan”. They led an isolated life here, without interacting with the rest of the population in the area. In 2004 they attacked police stations, which consequentially led to retaliations from the military. After two days, numerous members of their group had been killed. Several attacks followed, which resulted in a military deployment that killed twenty eight members and resulted in the group going into hiding until 2007 (Comolli 2015: 48).

A final account of how Boko Haram came into existence, describes Yusuf as a student under Sheikh Ja’afar Mahmud Adam in Kano (Thurston 2016: 10; Comolli 2015: 49; Brigaglia 2012: 21; Loimeier 2012). In 2003, the relationship between Yusuf and the Sheikh came to a sudden stop, as they had ideological differences. Their ideologies were both rooted in that of the Salafi dawah, but their strategies were divergent (Comolli 2015: 49; Brigaglia 2012: 22). While Adam discouraged any action against the Nigerian state, Yusuf “advocated the necessity of a radical withdrawal from anything related to the Nigerian state, including working for the police, participating in the government, working in the administration of Sharia within the framework of the state, and studying in formal educational institutions…”
Yusuf also opposed the notion of the Sultan of Sokoto being “the nominal head of all Nigerian Muslims”. This is believed to be one of the main reasons for the “irreconcilable differences” between Yusuf and the religious establishment in Northern Nigeria. Just before the presidential elections in 2007, Adam was assassinated while in Kano administering a mosque. It is believed that the assassination was ordered by Yusuf (Comolli 2015: 49).

All the early accounts of the emergence of the group are to some extent overlapping, but also plausible, and is worth noting. However, what is relevant to this analysis is that in all the accounts, Yusuf takes over leadership and this thus marks “…a defining moment for the group” (Comolli 2015: 49).

2.2.2 Boko Haram’s ideology

Boko Haram’s religious roots come from the religious landscape that Northern Nigeria is. Their theology is similar to other “Salafi-jihadi” movements elsewhere in the world (Thurston 2016: 9). Salafism is a movement within Sunni Islam and followers of this ideology are literalist and puritanical in their interpretation of the Quran. It is at the core of Salafism to free Islam of all external influences, such as western education and western culture all together (Comolli 2015: 47). Followers of Salafi Islam look at all the foundational Islamic texts not as texts open for interpretation, but rather as manuals that should be applied literally. As such, Boko Haram, in their view, has the right to rebel against those they label as infidel states, using force to impose these strict Islamic laws even on civilians (Thurston 2016: 9). Salafism and radical interpretations are fundamentalist and it is thus not capable of promoting co-existence with other religious communities or more moderate Islamic forces (Comolli 2015: 48). The Salafi Islam advocated by Boko Haram represents a minority in Northern Nigeria, as most Muslims follow the Sufi traditions (Akinola 2015: 4). For the last two hundred years, the region has been characterized by Sufi Islam, and this has had a particular influence in the cities of Maiduguri and Kano (Thurston 2016: 9). The Sufis had accommodating doctrines

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10 Brigaglia questions this hypothesis, as she argues that there is no real motive for the murder, as Adam was not one of the group’s worst enemies. Her hypothesis is rather that the murder of Adam might be due to intrigues within his own ranks, and that those who killed him might have been his friends, rather than his enemies (Brigaglia 2012: 23).
that allowed many Muslim traders and clerics to settle around their cities. Many Africans
embraced Islam, able to combine their newfound religion with their indigenous African
culture and beliefs. As a result, scholars talk of a peaceful “Islamization of Africa”, which
could be argued to have become more successful because of the “Africanization of Islam”
(Akinola 2015: 4). However, Salafists have managed to gain popularity through their presence
in the media, their schools and mosques, and by using rhetoric claiming they are the
protectors of true Muslims in a corrupt society (Thurston 2016: 9).

The history of Islamic radicalism in Northern Nigeria
Salafism in Northern Nigeria can be traced back to Abubakar Gumi that lived from 1924-
1992. After graduating from an elite school, he questioned whether the Nigerians who had
been traditionally trained in Islam, could properly understand it. As a result, Jama‘at Izalat al-
Bid‘a wa-Iqamat al-Sunna (The Society for the Removal of Heretical Innovation and the
Establishment of the Prophet’s Model) was established by Gumi’s followers in 1978. This
society would be known as the Izala, and their mission was to spread anti-Sufism in the
northern region. This has fueled an ongoing conflict between the Salafis and the Sufi orders of
Tijaniyya and Qadiriyya in Northern Nigeria. The Sufi practices involves the inner aspects of
Islam, which is the submission to God, including both mysticism, spiritual transformation and
character development. As such, Boko Haram’s Salafi ideology, represents a sharp contrast
from the moderate practice of Islam that had been prevailing in the whole of West Africa
(Akinola 2015: 4).

After Gumi’s death, the Izala became divided. However, some of the students that came back
after studying in Saudi Arabia, used their international education to build a following outside
that of the Izala. They were eager to recruit young preachers into this new society, and one of
these recruits are said to have been Mohammed Yusuf (Thurston 2016: 9-10). The group had
fallen out with the more moderate Muslims of the Izala and probably been involved in the
killing of Sheikh Ja‘afar Adam. Walker describes the killing as a key point in the
development of the sect, as it was now impossible to reintegrate Yusuf and his followers into
the “northern Islamic establishment” (Walker 2012: 4). As a result of ideological differences
and now the assassination, the Izala wanted nothing to do with Boko Haram, and Thurston
argues that Boko Haram should not be looked at as an extension of the Izala, “…but rather as
a result of fierce intra-Salafi competition for audiences” (Thurston 2016: 9-10). This point is
strengthened by Mohammed that emphasizes that the Izala in Borno state labeled Boko
Haram as *Kharijites*, referring to the group as a sect on the outside of the Islamic community (Mohammed 2014: 18).

### 2.2.3 Boko Haram under Mohammed Yusuf

As already mentioned in the introduction, scholars have divided the evolution of Boko Haram into different phases, where most of them places the group under leadership of Yusuf in one phase and a new more violent phase starting after his death in 2009. While the first phase is characterized by relative peace, we are seeing increased violence and radicalization in the second phase. During the group’s initial years, Yusuf established the group’s mosque in Maiduguri, built on his father-in-laws land near the railway station in the northern part of the city. The group was mostly left alone by the security agencies and was thus able to expand their operations unto the states of Bauchi, Yobe and Niger. The group established their own cabinet, religious police, a farm, and thus became a “state within a state”. They were also in charge of the welfare of their members and gave them loans, food and housing (Walker 2012: 4). Yusuf was advocating for the Salafi ideology, as he blamed Western culture for the miserable situation in northeastern Nigeria. At that particular time, he fit neatly into the bigger debate taking place in the whole country regarding Islam’s place in politics. Due to this, Yusuf was able to get large audiences and followers (Thurston 2016: 10).

However, Yusuf also had support from certain politicians in North-Eastern Nigeria, the most prominent one being the aspiring governor of Borno state, Ali Modu Sheriff. While some governors in Northern Nigeria embraced Sharia, others were more hesitant. In Borno state, the sitting governor, Mala Kachalla, was more reluctant towards the implementation of Sharia, which also led to him being defeated in the 2003 elections. Yusuf formed a partnership with Ali Modu Sheriff who was running for governor against Kachalla in 2003 (Thurston 2016: 11). One of Yusuf’s disciples, Buji Foi, became the commissioner of Religious Affairs under Sheriff, while Yusuf was made a member of the Borno State Sharia Board, and thus responsible for overseeing the implementation of full Sharia in the state. The relationship soon turned sour, as Yusuf realized that Sheriff was not really committed to the full implementation of Sharia. As he fell out with his former political allies, he now started criticizing the system he was once part of (Akinola 2015: 9).

The first signs that Boko Haram would develop into an insurgent group came when they attacked local government institutions and killed around 30 people in December 2003. Police
captured most of the members, claiming that only seven had managed to get away. After this event, several attacks on police stations followed, but the first years of operations was largely peaceful.\(^{11}\) (Uzodike and Maiangwa 2012: 102; Idahosa 2015: 5). However, the group’s development into a full-fledged insurgency group came in July 2009, following *Operation Flush\(^{12}\)*, that led to arrests of nine Boko Haram members and more than 700 killed (Idahosa 2015: 5).

The confrontations had started with the enforcement of a newly introduced motorcyclist helmet law, which the sect refused to adhere to (Uzodike and Maiangwa 2012: 102). They were stopped by traffic police on the way to a funeral of a fellow member, and reportedly fires were shot against the police, which again retaliated. The group then went on to attack several police stations in Bauchi and Yobe, killing numerous police officers. These attacks led to the Bauchi government’s crackdown of the group. In Maiduguri the consequences of this confrontations were grave, as members of Boko Haram went on a killing spree around town, killing both Muslims and Christian civilians. When the police managed to get in control of Maiduguri again, they were after anyone they vaguely suspected being a member or sympathizers of the group, many of them executed without trial (Walker 2012: 4). Yusuf was also arrested and was killed within hours, according to the police he was killed in a shootout while trying to escape. However, the Human Rights Watch in Nigeria immediately called for an investigation, labeling the killing both “extrajudicial” and “illegal” (BBC 2009). By killing their leader, the government was sure they had seen the end of the group. Isa Yuguda, governor of Bauchi state, expressed the same:

> “*Today we are celebrating that we have been able to see the end of the problem*[the death of Yusuf] ... we pre-empted them [Boko Haram sect] right and we struck at the right time; that was why we were able to get them*” (Yuguda, cited in Onuoha 2010: 61).

To the government’s surprise, this was not the end, it was just the beginning. There is no doubt that the crackdown of the group and the killing of Yusuf was a turning point for the

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\(^{11}\) For a thorough review of all the attacks Boko Haram has been involved in, see [http://www.ffi.no/no/Rapporter/13-01680.pdf](http://www.ffi.no/no/Rapporter/13-01680.pdf) or [http://www.irinnews.org/news/2012/01/20](http://www.irinnews.org/news/2012/01/20)

\(^{12}\) An operation launched by the security agencies with support from governor Ali Modu Sheriff to flush out the members in order to crack down the group.
group, as they now developed into a terrorist organization (Cook 2011: 4; Uzodike and Maiangwa 2012: 103; Idahosa 2015: 5; Adibe 2013: 11). In the aftermath of the Boko Haram revolt in 2009, the group went underground and emerged more violent and furious than ever before in 2010 under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau (Thurston 2016: 11). The leadership and violence employed by Boko Haram under Shekau has led to the emergence of a new splinter group more interested in foreign interests. The group Jama`at Ansar al-Muslimin fi Bilad al-Sudan (Supporters of Islam in the Land of Sudan), commonly known as Ansaru, announced the split from Boko Haram in January 2012 due to the inhumane killings of innocent Muslims (Zenn 2013: 1-2; Agbiboa 2013: 6). The splinter group has pledged to defend the interests of the Muslim population on the continent and noted that “the rampant massacre of Muslims in Nigeria will no longer be tolerated” (Agbiboa 2013: 6). However, the activities of Boko Haram under Shekau and the splinter group of Ansaru is outside the scope of my thesis, and will thus not be dealt with in this study.
3 Theory and Concepts

This chapter lays out the existing theoretical literature on the emergence of Boko Haram as well as the theoretical framework employed in this analysis. In section 3.1 I present the characteristics of the African state. How the Nigerian state works is crucial to understanding the context of which a social movement like Boko Haram could emerge. In section 3.2, I present the existing theoretical frameworks when it comes to the emergence and evolution of Boko Haram, and argue why these are not offering sufficient explanations. I continue by laying out the theoretical framework of social movement theory applied in this thesis in section 3.3. The last section of 3.4 will look at the critique directed at the applied framework and argue that while it is not perfect, it is better than many of the theories previously applied to explain the emergence of the movement.

3.1 Characteristics of the African state

Africa is commonly characterized by strong regimes and weak states (Bøås and Dokken 2002: 163). Nigeria is no exception. Furthermore, African regimes are often labeled as neopatrimonial13, as they have patronage-based clientelistic networks operating in the shadows of the Weberian façade of statehood (Uzodike and Maiangwa 2012: 96). These elements have eroded the African state’s legitimacy and led to a state that is becoming irrelevant to its population (Alozieuwa 2012: 2). However, not all states are the same, and there will be levels of “patrimonialism” versus the levels of “bureaucratic rationality” (Bøås and Dunn 2007: 22). Or as Huntington points out; “the most important political distinction among countries concerns not their form of government but their degree of government” (1968: 1). Many scholars working on Africa will argue that states can function in different ways, though some with worse outcomes for the common citizen. Chabal and Daloz (1999) argue that ‘Africa works’, and that it will continue to work through the neopatrimonialist networks. Bøås and Dunn also argues that neopatrimonialism can be remarkably stable, by creating states that are “strong” and “weak” at the same time, as “the logic of neopatrimonialism can produce weak states with remarkably stable regimes” (2007: 22).

13 What characterizes a neo-patrimonial state is that the states’ rule of law is not properly enforced, the ability to implement public policy is weak and the modus operandi is informal (Uzodike and Maiangwa 2012: 96).
Nigeria’s renown novelist and critic, Chinua Achebe, wrote that Nigeria is “an example of a country that has fallen down; it has collapsed (1983: 1). Rather than a collapsed state, Tonwe and Eke describes Nigeria as a fragile state. They argue that understanding what makes a state fragile might seem simple, but that it constitutes “a complex cocktail of cause and effects”. They also point out how remarkable it is that while all stable countries in fact resemble each other, each unstable country is unstable in different ways. A state is fragile when it is either incapable of or there is no political will to provide essential services to its citizens, and thus render the state unable to ensure the well-being of the population. Consequently, they emphasize that it is the issues regarding the inability of the political elite to ensure better living standards for the Nigerian people, despite the vast resources within the country, that has deepened the legitimacy crisis of the central authority that was already in existence (Tonwe and Eke 2013: 234). In 2016, Nigeria was ranked the thirteenth most fragile state in the world, and the trend is worsening since 2014 (Fund for Peace).

It is within these states that Big Men and networks thrive. However, the existence of these Big Men is not simply an African phenomenon, “but rather a very human enterprise” (Utas 2012: 1). Conflict on the African context does not imply emergence of total anarchy, but rather the establishment of alternative forms of control when the formal governance is challenged. As such, weak states in Africa has seen an opening up of new alternative sources for sovereignty (ibid: 2-3). This does not mean that Big Men are a system opposed to the state. In fact, politicians and other elites use the position they have within the state to create these relationships. The less checks and balances in place within a state, the easier it is for the Big Men to maneuver. As such, “it is the informality and inaccessibility of these networks which on the one hand make them difficult to discover and address, but on the other render them so effective (Jörgel and Utas 2007: 8). Sahlins attaches a number of characteristics to these Big Men;

“But the indicative quality of big-man authority is everywhere the same: it is personal power. Big-men do not come to office; they do not succeed to, nor are they installed in, existing positions of leadership over political groups. The attainment of big-man status is rather the outcome of a series of acts which elevate a person above the common herd and attract about him a coterie of loyal, lesser men. It is not accurate to
speak of “big-man” as a political title, for it is but an acknowledged standing in interpersonal relations - a "prince" among men...” (Sahlins 1963: 289)  

As such, the gathering of power, and of maintaining it, are built on reciprocity, and if the Big Man does not distribute enough out to his followers, he will lose the support (Utas 2012: 8). There is a common saying in Africa that the fastest way to get rich, is to get involved in politics. Daloz (2003: 271) also argues that enrichment in Africa is primarily based on politics. Following from this, it could also be argued that the state can be seen as illusory and substantial at the same time. It is illusory because the laws are not enforced properly and the implementation of public policy almost nonexistent. However, it is also substantial in the way that access to public institutions is seen as the way to personal enrichment (ibid: 276). The Big Man needs to accumulate wealth in order to redistribute his gains in order to secure political support. As such, the political capital gained, will allow him to extract more resources from the state (ibid: 280). There is thus no surprise that the then aspiring governor of Borno state, Ali Modu Sheriff, got involved with Yusuf and Boko Haram. He gave them money and the promise of implementation of Sharia, while he got protection and support from their followers. Sheriff first used his informal power to get elected into office in Borno, and then he used his formal power to try to get rid of the group when they fell out.

3.2 Existing literature on Boko Haram

Although the emergence and development of Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria has elicited multiple publications, there is yet to be developed a common framework as to explain why the group came into existence. There are also numbers of conspiracy theories aiming to explain why the group has emerged. One of the popular theories in the north was claiming that disarray in the northern region would work in favor of southern politician Goodluck Jonathan and his supporters, as it would depopulate the northern region ahead of the elections in 2015. As such, Boko Haram was seen as a political construction. Contrastingly, in the areas where Goodluck Jonathan had his support base, the dominant narrative was that Boko Haram was made up or sponsored by northern elites in order to undermine the government. According to these accounts, Boko Haram was simply a vehicle for the northern Muslims to take back political power and spread Islam (Agigboa 2015: 428; Walker 2012: 7; Higazi 2015: 328).

14 Sahlins was the first to write about Big Men in Melonesia and Polynesia in an article from 1963.
Boko Haram was thus perceived of many as a Muslim movement aiming to attack Christians. However, it is worth noting that though accounts are conflicting, most of them agree that Boko Haram emerged in between 2002-2003, which would thus be years before Goodluck Jonathan came into power. Moreover, it would hardly make sense for the northern elite to devastate their own region and putting their lives at serious risk just to regain power in Abuja (Higazi 2015: 328). Lastly, Boko Haram has killed more Muslims than they have Christians, in addition to attacking religious and political leaders in the north (Akinola 2015: 10). Regardless, politicians have found use for these conspiracy theories, as they have been widely employed in order to shift the focus from lack of proper governance and state capacity in the country (Agbiboa 2015: 428; Walker 2012: 7).

Different scholars have narrated different accounts for the emergence and development of Boko Haram. Agbiboa (2015: 428) mentions a feeling of alienation among the northern population towards the Christian south, widespread corruption by the government, incompetent and violent state security services, and the belief that relations with the West are corrupting the country. Thurston (2016: 7-8) also summarizes what he calls inadequate treatments of how to explain Boko Haram. The first portrays Boko Haram as the inevitable result of poverty in the northern region, the second as the consequence of perceived marginalization of the northeast, thirdly Boko Haram as an extension of al-Qaida and lastly that Boko Haram is explained as what Thurston calls the “second coming” of the Maitatsine sect. Uzodike and Maiangwa (2012: 95) also mentions different accounts that have been used to explain the emergence of the group, and lists the Islamic extremism in the country blossoming through the activities of both the Izala and the Maitatsine uprising, the sect’s aversion towards Western education and modern civilization, in addition to the cocktail of bad governance in Nigeria as a trigger for Boko Haram (Uzodike and Maiangwa 2012: 95). Based on the literature review I have made, I will in the continuation of this sub-chapter present the most widely employed theories used to explain the emergence of the group.

### 3.2.1 Relative poverty in the north

Relative poverty and the inequality in the north of the country has been a recurrent issue in the literature on Boko Haram (Agbiboa 2015: 428). The level of both economic and social development in Northern Nigeria cannot compare to that of the other regions in Nigeria. Northern Nigeria has remained the most underdeveloped part of the country, and there is
extremely high both unemployment and poverty rates. This situation has led to relative poverty and inequality being perceived as an argument that it is the socioeconomic situation in the north that has fueled Boko Haram (ibid: 52). Kwaja (2011: 2) claims that “the ethnic or religious dimensions of the conflict have subsequently been misconstrued as the primary driver of violence when, in fact, disfranchisement, inequality, and other practical fears are the root causes”. Governor of Borno state, Kashim Shettima, has called the emergence of Boko Haram the result of the government’s inability to address the issue of poverty in North-Eastern Nigeria. Similarly has the former governor of Nigeria’s central bank, Sanusi Lamodo, argued that Boko Haram is a function of a failed allocation of the country’s resources (Asuelime and Adekoye 2015: 6). Onuoha (2014: 5) has found that unemployment and poverty as socioeconomic challenges in Northern Nigeria has made youth vulnerable to radicalization. However, he emphasizes that this is not to say that unemployment and poverty are directly causing youth to become radicalized, but rather that when faced with such a frustrating situation, youth are vulnerable to manipulation by such extreme ideologies as that forfeited by Boko Haram (ibid: 6).

Thurston argues that even though it is true that the Muslim north lack the infrastructure and educational development seen in the Christian south, and that 60% of Nigerians live on less than one dollar a day, this cannot in itself explain why violent movements grow there and not elsewhere. He adds that the “analysis of Boko Haram should not discount demography, but neither should it make demography destiny; demography is only one factor in a more complicated matrix of drivers of violence and dissent” (Thurston 2016: 7). This perspective is shared by Pérouse de Montclos, who agrees that while Boko Haram took root in a society in poverty, this cannot explain why it emerged in Borno state rather than Kaduna or Kano states, “which were the epicenters of radical Islam and religious violence in the 1980s and 1990s”. The fact that one did not see this kind of violence in Diffa in the Republic of Niger, which is the neighboring region to Borno state, also proves a point. Especially because this region is much poorer (Pérouse de Montclos 2014a: 9). Agbiboa (2014: 52) admits that the link between the rise of violent groups, such as Boko Haram, and socioeconomic “underdevelopment” is unclear and that the debate is still ongoing. However, he claims that even though population, ethno-religious diversity and the structure of party politics are important factors for understanding the development of groups such as Boko Haram, he still points out that we cannot rule out the socio-economic factor when trying to understand the
group (Agbiboa 2015: 429). Clearly, the socio-economic situation in Nigeria is of great importance when looking at the emergence of Boko Haram, but more important is it to understand the other complex factors against this backdrop.

3.2.2 Bad governance and failure of government policies

Theories concerning bad governance and rampant corruption have also been recurrent. As mentioned above, Uzodike and Maiangwa argue that “Boko Haram terrorism is triggered by the cocktail of bad governance in Nigeria, including the widespread failures of state policies, inefficient and wasteful parastatals, and endemic corruption, poverty, unemployment and extensive underdevelopment” (2012: 91). It follows from this that Boko Haram cannot be separated from the failure of the Nigerian government to deliver basic services to its population, thereunder infrastructure, human security and social justice, jobs, and transparent and accountable governance (ibid: 98). Clapham’s argument is in the same line of thought, as he argues that it is the breakdown of law and order in African states that has resulted in a legacy of bad governance (2004: 200). Hillary Clinton also gave a similar reason when she visited Nigeria as a US Secretary of State in 2009. She argued that “the most immediate source of the disconnect between Nigeria’s wealth and its poverty is the failure of the governance at the federal, state, and local levels…Lack of transparency and accountability has eroded the legitimacy of the government and contributed to the rise of groups that embrace violence and reject the authority of the state” (Clinton 2009). Mustapha’s (2012) view resonates with this, as he argues that Boko Haram’s emergence is a symptom of the Nigerian state’s nation-building and democratic politics in the country. The well-known Nigerian author Adibe is also of the same opinion:

“... the Nigerian state, contrary to the media hype, is regarded as the enemy, not just by Boko Haram, but by several Nigerians and groups, each attacking it with as much ferocity as Boko Haram’s bombs, using whatever means they have at their disposal: politicians entrusted to protect our common patrimony steal the country blind, law enforcement officers see or hear no evil at a slight inducement, government workers drag their feet and refuse to give their best while revelling in moonlighting, organised labour, including university lecturers in public institutions go on indefinite strikes on a whim while journalists accept ‘brown envelopes’ to turn truth on its head or become uncritical
champions of a selected, anti-Nigerian state identity. What all these groups have in common with Boko Haram is that they believe that the premise on which they act is justifiable and that the Nigerian state is unfair to them, if not an outright enemy” (Adibe, cited in Uzodike and Maiangwa 2012: 98).

Adibe’s statement shows how the Nigerian authorities have completely failed to take care of its own population, and thus also neglecting the state building project. Adibe is not alone. Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Sokoto and northern scholar, Matthew Hassan Kukah, describes Boko Haram as a reaction to the inefficiency and violence perpetrated by the Nigerian state. He argues: “clearly, Boko Haram is the failure of governance and it’s a symptom of what happens when the architecture of state are weighed down and destroyed by corruption and inefficiency. A weak state leaves itself open to these dangers” (Kukah 2012). The failure of the Nigerian state to take care of the population in North-Eastern Nigeria is of course of importance when analyzing why Boko Haram emerged. But rather than looking at it as a single cause, this perspective is implemented into the framework of political opportunities and processes. I will thus address these issues in section 5.2.

3.2.3 Boko Haram as a second coming of the Maitatsine uprising

Adesoji highlights the causes and drivers of Boko Haram as a result of religious fundamentalism and draws parallels between the group and the Maitatsine uprising in the 1980s. Religious sentiments have often been offered to justify both common and politically motivated situations, and more worrisome, the use of religious fears and propaganda have been important features of Nigeria (Adesoji 2011: 99). The Maitatsine uprisings lasting from 1980-1985 were not the first manifestations of Islamic fundamentalism in the country, but they were the first of such a major extent. Both a hardline position on religious beliefs and political patronage of religion have resulted in a growing fundamentalism in the country (ibid). According to Adesoji, Boko Haram thus built on the precedence of the Maitatsine and other later Islamic uprisings (ibid: 96). Alao argues that the history of Islamic radicalization in Nigeria is a phenomenon that transcends that of socio-economic deprivation. Alao traces Boko Haram back to the Maitatsine uprising, which he argues was the first phase of radical Islam in Northern Nigeria. Boko Haram follows other Islamic radical movements, and is classified by Alao as the fourth and last phase of Islamic radicalization in the country (2013: 132-136). Francis (2011) also dates Boko Haram’s story back to the 1970s, when the leader of
the Maitatsine uprisings arrived in Kano. Francis claims that after the death of Marwa, and the deaths of dozen of Nigerian Taleban members hailing from the Maitatsine, Yusuf took up again the Islamic cause (Francis 2011). Thurston agrees that valuable comparisons can be made by looking at Boko Haram and the Maitatsine uprisings. He argues that Boko Haram has indeed followed some patterns that also characterize some of the earlier Muslim movements, “such as strategic withdrawal from mainstream society”. However, the claims that Boko Haram is similar or feeding on the Maitatsine, are according to Thurston based on assumptions rather than evidence, as Boko Haram’s theology is not comparable to that of Maitatsine (2016: 8).

### 3.2.4 Boko Haram as an extension of al-Qaida

Several scholars and international media also report of Boko Haram being an extension of al-Qaida, with links to other jihadi networks in both the Sahel region and in the Middle East. There have been sources in the religious establishment in Maiduguri reporting that there might have been funding from Salafist groups in Saudi Arabia in the early years of Boko Haram. It is also possible that members received some kind of training in camps in the Sahel by al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and that this influenced the group’s capabilities (Walker 2012: 13; Thurston 2016: 7). Thurston argues that this was a perfect opportunity for former president Goodluck Jonathan to downplay the group’s political messages by calling them “an al-Qaida of West Africa” (2016: 7). However, Boko Haram’s violence seems improvised and there is no evidence of it being directed from abroad. If there was at some point any relationship between Boko Haram and al-Qaida, Thurston argues it is more likely it was “patchy, informal, and marginal to its overall development” (ibid: 8).

According to one of the members of Boko Haram, the group’s first international connection was with Mauritania in North Africa after the country experienced the fall of the democratic government in 2005. Yusuf was then approached by warlords from Mauritania, seeking to recruit members of Boko Haram as mercenaries under the excuse of traveling to the country for Islamic studies. This request, however, was rejected by Mohammed Yusuf (Onapajo et al. 2012: 346). Pérouse de Montclos argues that narratives about terrorist links are popular in the international media and that possible consequences of this can be that corrupt regimes use this wrong narrative in order to get financial support for their war against terrorism from the international society. Moreover, Boko Haram did not need foreign influence in order to take
action against the Nigerian state, and it is important to remember that it is a conflict that sprung out from and is embedded in local dynamics (Pérouse de Montclos 2016: 888). It is therefore not possible or expedient to place the group in the same global jihadist category as AQIM (Walker 2012: 1). The narrative of Boko Haram being an international terrorist group is unhelpful, as there are no facts to support this assertion (ibid: 9). This also becomes clear in section 5.1.4, where I argue that Boko Haram did not receive any external support from jihadi networks.

### 3.3 Social movement theory

Although all the theories highlighted in this subchapter do indeed bring in new insights to understanding the emergence of Boko Haram, it is misleading to focus on a one-dimensional explanation. Rather, this thesis goes beyond these parameters to examine the interaction between political structures, resources and how the ideas where framed by Boko Haram in order to get support from the local population. In light of this, the next sub-chapter will lay out the theoretical theory most beneficial when studying the emergence of Boko Haram. Although social movement theory consist of a broad set of theories, I will simply give a brief overview of the traditional paradigm, as I will make use of what is characterized as contemporary social movement theory. I will start with an overview of the traditional theory and its shortcomings, before I turn to the three theories that will be central to my thesis.

#### 3.3.1 The origins of social movement theory

The traditional social movement theories had their heyday in the 1960s and 70s. These theories were built on strong assumptions that shared grievances and generalized beliefs about these causes were important preconditions for the emergence of social movements. One would therefore see an increase in extent or intensity of grievance prior to the emergence of a social movement (McCarthy and Zald 1977: 1214). For Blumer (2004: 49), collective behavior was seen as largely spontaneous group activity, both unregulated and unstructured. He also claimed that this behavior was triggered by some disruption in the daily lives of people. This disruption would then cause social unrest that would again lead to collective behavior. In what follows, the traditional theories of social movements will be addressed first.
3.3.2 Structural-functionalist theory

Theories about collective behavior is one of the traditional approaches to the study of social movements, and hereunder structural-functionalism is one approach. The structural functionalist theory’s analyzes of social movements offer explanations for social movements seen as manifestations of changes in the society (Furseth 1999: 38). One of the first scholars to front the structural-functionalist theory was Neil Smelser. He emphasized the importance of collective behavior when it came to societal change. Smelser defined collective behavior as “…mobilization on the basis of a belief which redefines social action” (1962: 8). His theory was based upon structural strain as the main factor to explain collective behavior. Because of conflict, what he described as “disequilibrium”, is inevitable in social systems, and situations where people experience strain is therefore bound to happen (ibid: 67). Therefore, social actors are forced to seek for both causes and solutions in the form of collective behavior within their own societies. As such, Smelser looks at collective behavior as a reaction to or effect of external influences, and does not consider the reasons for action (Furseth 1999: 39).

Critics of this approach have posed several important questions. Firstly, the assumption that the goal of social sciences is to establish universal laws is problematic, as identifying the causal conditions for collective behavior will be difficult. According to Smelser, this can be solved by simply combining a number of variables in order to get a determinate result. However, it is widely agreed that one single theory cannot account for all the complex factors in a society. Scott (1990: 43) argues that even if one managed to produce an analysis that succeeded in somehow producing a universal law out of a historical event, it would greatly reduce our understanding of these events. Secondly, Smelser’s causal explanation of collective action cannot explain why in fact a social movement emerges, the structure of it and how it maintains these structures. Hence, his theory cannot account for collective action and the actors involved in this, but rather explain potential conflicts (Furseth 1999: 39). Lastly, Smelser looks at collective behavior as irrational or non-rational. The possibility then, that the action is actually based upon practical reasoning is ruled out, and thus fails to explain mobilization (Scott 1990: 45).
3.3.3 The relative deprivation theory

The relative deprivation perspective became popular and was widely employed to explain social movements in the late 1960s and early 1970s. One reason for this was that it was seen as an improvement of earlier approaches, such as functionalist-structuralism, which emphasized the irrationality of participants in social movements (Gurney and Tierney 1982: 44). During this time, many studies were published highlighting the link between urban civil disturbances and various deprivations (ibid: 35). Relative deprivation “…is produced by a discrepancy between what people think they are entitled to and what they are actually getting (Oberschall 1978: 299-300). This could be relative to their own past, another person, groups, ideals or other social factors (Walker and Pettigrew 1984: 302).

According to Gurr (1970: 29), there are numerous situations that can lead to a feeling of relative deprivation among groups of people, thereunder the decline of the group’s status relative to that of its reference group. Though many of the scholars employed different definitions of relative deprivation, they all focused on the connection between people feeling relatively deprived in one or several spheres of their lives. The link between relative deprivation and social movements is grounded in the longstanding principles of social psychology. When people experience relative deprivation, they are inclined to search for alternative goals through collective action. This relative deprivation could be of both economic, social and cultural character. Two of the most popular approaches were frustration-aggression theory and cognitive balance approaches (Gurney and Tierney 1982: 35). They both assume that an underlying state of individual psychological tension is relieved by participating in a social movement (ibid, 36).

The challenge with these approaches is that they assume a state of tension that is released through the participation in a social movement. This argument is built on assumption rather than empirical research (Furseth 1999: 42). Guerney and Tierney (1982: 36) argue that there might actually be other responses to frustration than that of joining a social movement. Moreover, Koopmans claims that the work of scholars such as Tilly and others have in fact highlighted that the empirical findings do not reveal the assumed direct connection between socio-structural changes and contention. This link is rather an indirect one, influenced by changes in “political alignments and relations of power” (Koopmans 2004: 22). Additionally, studies show that those who protest are in fact often better off and less deprived than those
who do not engage in social movements, and as such contention is connected to the social networks people belong to, rather than “random contagion” (ibid).

### 3.3.4 Reactions against the traditional paradigms

During the 1960s, new social movements were emerging and, as a result of this, a reorientation of the study of those social movements. The problem with the traditional theories in the field had been to explain individual participation in social movements. The traditional theories had the assumption that participation in movements was a relatively rare phenomenon, movement and institutionalized action were two completely different things and actors in movements were irrational (Jenkins 1983: 528). The so-called new social movement theories tried to fill the gap left by the traditional approaches, and the main approaches that developed in this period were resource mobilization theory, political process theory and framing theory.

### 3.3.5 Resource mobilization theory

As new movements emerging in the 1960s helped stimulate a shift in theoretical assumptions, it resulted in the resource mobilization theory being born. In opposition to the grievance-based conceptions, the new strand of social movement theory emphasized the rationality of the movement actors, the continuities between institutionalized action and movement and highlighted the role of movements as agents for social change (Jenkins 1983: 528). Scholars now started to analyze how different movements organize internally to allocate the resources available in order to reach their goals. This shift led to a focus on how movements were organized internally to take advantage of available resources and how they organized externally to gain support from the outside community (Jenkins 1983: 528). Engels (2015: 109) argues that resource mobilization theory “examines the variety of resources that must be mobilized, the linkages of social movement to other groups, the dependence of movements upon external support for success, and the tactics used by authorities to control or incorporate movements”. As such, this approach was the first to highlight how important the structures within an organization were, in addition to accumulating resources for mobilization. Not only did the organization need to acquire resources such as money, they also had to get resources in terms of personnel, organization and external support (McCarthy and Zald 1977). Resources are thus not necessarily only material but can also be moral, cultural, socio-
organisational or human (Edwards and McCarthy 2004: 117). As we will see in the analysis, Boko Haram managed to mobilize resources both in terms of money, personnel and organization. The organizational resources a social movement have, are greater if they manage to socially appropriate the already existing organizational resources in the society. I will thus argue that Boko Haram managed to use the Muslim associations in North-Eastern Nigeria to mobilize into the initial movement. Mobilization refers to the process of which the group members are gathered and used to fight to obtain the common goals of the group. It is therefore very important to have an internal organization that does not hinder the facilitation of mobilization. As we will see in chapter 5, Boko Haram’s internal organization is in large part explanatory as to why they were able to mobilize the local population. According to Oberschall’s understanding of the theory of mobilization, resources are the most important. When a group of people is dissatisfied, they will collect and invest their resources in order to reach a collective goal (Oberschall 1993: 56; Furseth 1999: 46). This is also evident in the emergence and mobilization of people into the movement of Boko Haram.

In the 1980s, political process theorists criticized resource mobilization theory, on the basis that it only addressed the internal parts of social movements. Snow argued that resource mobilization theories shared three fundamental shortcomings regarding people’s participation in social movements; they neglected the process of grievance interpretation, they suggest a static view of participation and they over-generalized participation-related processes (Snow et al. 1986: 465). Tarrow (1988: 422) argued that as social movements emerge in an environment that is either welcoming or hostile towards them, one cannot treat them as isolated units. Moreover, movements also exist within the context of other movements in the same society (Furseth 2002: 2).

### 3.3.6 Political opportunity/process theory

American scholars were the first to develop a more political approach to movements, a concept that would come to be known as “political opportunity structure” (Tarrow 2011, 26-27). Lipsky was one of the first to assume that the levels of protest were a result of changes that made the political system either vulnerable or more receptive to the demands of particular groups in society. This approach argues that political protest cannot be explained in a vacuum, but rather one has to look at the context from which a social movement emerges (Tarrow 1996). Political opportunity structures are consistent dimensions of the political structure that
provide people with incentives to undertake collective action (Tarrow 1998: 19-20). These opportunity structures are thus features of regimes that affect the likely outcomes of collective action. Features that should be included are the multiplicity of independent centers of power within the regime; the regime’s openness to new actors; the instability of current political alignments; availability of influential allies or supporters; and the repressiveness of the regime towards collective claims (McAdam et al. 2009: 263). However, these are not necessarily formal, permanent or national, which we will see with the Nigerian case where the neopatrimonial state is also run in a large informal space. Several scholars also argued that social movements are likely to emerge when “windows of opportunity” open. However, if social movement actors fail to perceive that there is an opening or an opportunity in the system, they will fail to take advantage of this (Smith and Fetner 2010: 17). These openings of opportunities, can be temporary, an event can open up these windows of opportunity for mobilization. As we will see in the analysis, the return to civil rule and democracy in Nigeria in 1999, was such an event. As such, people engage in social movements when there are certain patterns of enabling and hindering structures are changing, which result in people strategic deployment of different repertoires of collective action, resulting in new opportunities for contentious collective action (Engels 2015: 109). These are thus so called processes of “cycles of contention” (Tarrow 1998: 19-20).

Several scholars participated and added to the theory about political opportunity structure, but it was McAdam who synthesized the development of social movement mobilization by tracing the American Civil Rights movement back to “political, organizational, and consciousness change”. He argued that with shifts in the structure of political opportunities, one see increased social protest and thus also the emergence of social movements (Tarrow 2011: 26-27; McAdam 1982). In his book that followed this work, McAdam introduced the term “political process”. Within the next decade, the theory was now referred to as the “political process” model of social movements (McAdam et al. 1996: 24). Political process theory derives from resource mobilization theory, but the emphasis here is on the interaction between the movement and the greater society. McAdam emphasizes the importance of understanding the contextual factors, as social movements develop in response to other movements in the society in addition to the sociopolitical reality of its epicenter (McAdam 1982: 39-40).
Although the political process theory did manage to answer questions that had been left unanswered by previous approaches, the issues of a lack of consensus regarding the definition of the term has certainly been a problem. McAdam also emphasizes the challenges with differentiating political process from other facilitative conditions, specifying the dimensions of political opportunity and specifying the relevant dependent variable (McAdam 1996: 24). In 2001, McAdams, Tilly and Tarrow, three of the most prominent scholars in the field, published a book called *Dynamics of Contention*. The book aimed to invoke a paradigm shift in the field of social movements (Tindall 2003: 481), by using contentious politics that they define as:

Episodic, public, collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when (a) at least one government is a claimant, an object of claims, or a party to the claims and (b) the claims would, if realized, affect the interests of at least one of the claimants (McAdam et al. 2001: 5)

A critique of the dominant existing frameworks, they argued that the purpose was to bridge the gap between the analyses of social movement and those of other forms for contentious politics. Tarrow and Tilly (2007: 439) continue on the same note by addressing the fragmentation of the study of political contention. By acknowledging that social movements only form a subset of contentious politics, they argue to get rid of artificial boundaries between this type and other types of political contention.

### 3.3.7 Framing Theory

The supporters of resource mobilization had downplayed the importance of grievances relative to resources and political opportunities (McCarthy and Zald 1977). However, this was challenged during the 1990s “cultural turn”, when movement actors were suddenly viewed as agents that were actively engaged in producing and maintaining meaning for its constituents (Snow & Benford 2000: 613). By the end of the decade, the cultural turn had also been absorbed into the contentious politics research agenda. Scholars soon integrated the concept of “framing”, and combined with opportunities and mobilizing structures, it formed a triad of explanatory factors for social movements and collective action (Tarrow & Tilly 2007: 445).
Snow and his colleagues were the first to talk of frame alignment, of which they referred to as the linkage of individual interests with that of the social movement, such that the set of values and beliefs and social movement activities, goals and ideology are congruent and complementary (Snow et al. 1986: 464). Snow et al. borrowed the framework and the term “frame” from Goffman, which had denoted it a “schemata of interpretation”, that would make individuals able to “locate, perceive, identify, and label” circumstances in one’s own life and in the world. They argued that by looking at events as meaningful, frames helped to organize different experiences and guide action. It thus follows that without frame alignment; there will be no movement (Snow et al. 1986: 464). In other words, how people interpreted their grievances was critical to whether they would choose to participate or not. Due to this, movements would have to spend time working on various “frame alignments” in order to link individual interests, values and beliefs to those of the movement (ibid). Boko Haram framed themselves as the vanguards of pure Islam, and promised the Muslim population the reintroduction of Sharia. As we will see in the analysis, this was a very efficient way of framing themselves.

From this perspective, instead of looking at social movements as carriers of ideas and meanings, one rather focus on the movement actor’s as agents of production of ideas and meaning for its members and observers (Benford and Snow 2000: 613). By using the word “framing”, scholars have given a name to the construction of meaning. According to Benford and Snow, this wording implies “an active, processual phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction” (ibid: 614). This is thus an active process, where the work of social movements evolves and where contentious frames are developed. When we have such a process of framing, it can be referred to as “collective action frames”. And where frames help people to make sense of situations or events happening, collective frames simplify the “world out there”. This is a chosen strategy in order to get support, mobilize supporters and demobilize antagonists (ibid).

Frames combine a diagnosis of the social condition that needs reformation, a prognosis for how to effect this reformation, and a rationale for action. These are also referred to as “diagnostic framing”, “prognostic framing” and “motivational framing”. When movement actors perform these tasks, they try to solve the challenges of “consensus mobilization” and “action mobilization”. Benford and Snow writes: “simply put, the former fosters or facilitates agreement, whereas the latter fosters action, moving people from the balcony to the
barricades” (2000: 615). In order for frames to be effective, the diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational components must be specified, developed, and well-integrated. Moreover, they must also make a compelling case for the “injustice” experienced and the likelihood that collective agency will change that condition. The identities of contenders must be made clear, distinguishing “us” from “them” (Snow and Benford 1988). Key to mobilization is then, whether the movement’s view on reality resonates with those in the potential constituency (Snow et al. 1986). The way that Boko Haram has used the injustice frame to play on the historical grievances held by the Muslim population in the north illustrates this.

3.4 Challenges with the theoretical framework

The theoretical framework chosen for this thesis is not above criticism, and some of it has already been presented in the previous section. The triad of mobilizing structures, political opportunities and collective action frames has been labeled the “classic agenda” (McAdam et al. 2001: 14). These concepts seem to hold a less central position today, with all of these theories having been reviewed, critiqued and adjusted the last couple of decades (Roggeband and Klandermans 2010: 8). The expansion of the field has indeed been a result of what is seen as an important internationalization of social movement studies (ibid: 2). However, complaints have come from McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2009: 260) that with expertise on social movement theory divided across “a patchwork of disciplinary boundaries”; such as geographic areas, historical eras and different types of contention, the field of social movement studies itself, has become very much fragmented. There is also increased attention to the processes of globalization and transnationalization and the question then posed is how useful these concepts are with a new world order. Globalization, culture and identity are themes that have emerged and now also hold a dominant place in the social movement field (Roggeband and Klandermans 2010: 8). Smith and Fetner continue this argument, and hold that both the political context and mobilizing structure model have considered the nation-state as the primary arena where social movements operate (2010: 15). However, the global structure has changed quite drastically and there is thus a need to redefine these concepts to see how this development has affected the nation-state. Roggeband and Klandermans also argue that it seems as if the framing theory has been substituted by other concepts, such as those of identity and culture (2010: 4).
Of course, all of these criticisms against the new social movement theories have truth to them. However, I will argue that in the case of explaining the emergence of Boko Haram, the critique above is not a valid reason as to why one should not make use of the insights social movement theory has to offer. Firstly, as globalization and transnationalism is indeed true to every state in the world, I will argue that this is not something that has affected the emergence of Boko Haram to any noticeable degree. Most scholars tend to agree that the group did not initially respond to transnational grievances, even national ones, as their aim was to address local problems. As Boko Haram has evolved, one can of course question the transnational character of their role in the neighboring countries and their connections to other jihadi groups, including possible funding from terrorist organizations, but this is not relevant for the research question in my thesis. The critique towards the structural approaches of mobilization of resources and political processes by Smith and Fetner, are not as relevant either, as the Nigerian state has never been what one would refer to as a Westphalian state ruled by Weberian principles. Rather, as I argue in chapter 3, the Nigerian state is influenced by neopatrimonialism and follows a quite different logic than that of the Western nation state. However, social movement theory would be greatly beneficial as a unifying framework to study Islamic activism (Wiktorowicz 2004; Beunin and Vairel 2011: 3). Lastly, the theory of framing still has a lot of validity and is gaining increased influence when it comes to Boko Haram. Several of the scholars I interviewed for this thesis, were currently working on articles where they looked at different types of framing types related to Boko Haram. I will argue that the way the organization managed to frame themselves to the local population, was indeed one of the main reasons they managed to mobilize support in the northern region. Roggeband and Klandermans have a valid argument that concepts such as identity and culture are important. However, when looking at how Boko Haram framed themselves to the local population, both identity and culture are important aspects of why the group’s rhetoric resonated with the local population, and they are thus an integral part of the framing processes.
4 Methodology

Yin claims there is no formula to find out whether a case study is the correct method to use when doing research. However, he argues that the more one’s questions seek to explain some present phenomenon, the more relevant a case study will be. More so if answering the research question require a deep and extensive account of the same social phenomenon (Yin 2014: 4). Understanding why Boko Haram emerged does indeed require a deep and extensive account of the phenomenon, some of which have already been given in the background chapter. As the introduction outlined the main strengths and weaknesses of a case study, this chapter will present the research design for this study as well as highlight the methodological challenges. Section 4.1 lays out the challenges that arose both prior to, during and after my fieldtrip to Abuja. Section 4.2 and 4.3 assess the methodological weaknesses and strengths of my thesis by discussing reliability and validity in light of the research methods employed.

4.1 Respondents

In order to gain more insight on Boko Haram and the Nigerian society, I conducted a two weeks fieldwork in the capital of Nigeria, Abuja, in February 2017. I considered it too dangerous to travel to the northern region of Nigeria in order to either interview the local population or members of Boko Haram themselves. I therefore chose a research question that could be answered by assessing secondary sources as well as interviewing “key informants”, as they have extensive knowledge about Boko Haram and the situation in Nigeria (Andersen 2006: 279). Through the initial literature review and contact with scholars in Norway with knowledge of Nigeria, I identified academics, religious leaders, journalists and NGOs that I contacted before going to Abuja. I was also in touch with the Norwegian Embassy in Abuja that gave me a list of people that had knowledge about Boko Haram and the Nigerian society.

Getting in touch with potential respondents in Nigeria was a challenge. I contacted possible respondents in good time before my departure from Norway, but only received very few replies even after several friendly reminders. This was partly due to it being very difficult to get appointments scheduled before I actually found myself in the same city as those I was requesting an interview with. To my experience, this is a common feature of the African society, where one don’t plan too much, but rather call in the morning to get an appointment.
or find people at their office. I am tempted to call this “the African way”. However, I had four lose appointments when I set off to Nigeria, with respondents that had granted me an interview if I called them when I reached Abuja. This is partly due to the fact that many of the respondents I have interviewed are people in important positions with hectic schedules filled with traveling and meetings. As soon as I arrived in Abuja, I started calling the respondents that had already granted me an interview. The first days in Abuja, I was not able to get any appointments. The next week I got more and more interviews confirmed as I was reaching out to my respondents and informing them that I had arrived in Abuja. I applied purposive sampling, which means that I did not seek to sample the research participants on a random basis, but rather sample respondents that had relevant knowledge in order to answer my research question (Bryman 2012: 418). After each interview, I asked the respondents to identify other possible respondents it would be relevant for me to interview. This is called snowball sampling. However, the snowball method can introduce serious selection bias, as the respondents might refer me to respondents with the same viewpoints as themselves (Beckman and Hall 2013: 202). As such, “different informants will represent different groups of constituents; they provide access to some people and at the same time leave out access to others” (DeCompte and Goetz 1982: 38). In order to avoid this selection bias I had several starting points of different respondents that then referred me further.

The key informants in this study were interesting because they had extensive knowledge about the overall situation in Nigeria, most of them also having worked on Boko Haram for years. As such, they could have information and insight that could lead to “unifying descriptions and interpretations” (my own translation, Andersen 2006: 281). Most of my initial contacts were Nigerian academics, and they referred me to other Nigerian academics, residing both in Nigeria and abroad, in addition to both international diplomats and NGO-workers. Another bias could have been introduced if I had gotten respondents mainly from either the Christian or the Muslim community in Nigeria or mainly from one of Nigeria’s dominant tribes. I was lucky enough to get respondents from both the Christian and Muslim communities within the country, in addition to Nigerians from different tribes and regions of the country. This ethnic diversity, in addition to interviewing both expatriates and international academics, give a more nuanced picture and I have not been able to find any systematic discrepancies between their views. Still, it is worth noting that many of the respondents are part of a larger milieu with expertise on Boko Haram, and that they often
referred to the same names and the same articles when asked for referrals. Moreover, as their own subjective experiences in Nigeria could also influence their answers, it is important to understand respondents on their own premises. Respondents are particularly helpful if they have a certain distance to the case and what has happened (Andersen 2006: 282). This will obviously not be the case here with the Nigerian key respondents, as they are all affected one way or another by the actions of Boko Haram. However, as they are all well informed about the situation and work with these issues on a relatively frequent basis, I am inclined to believe that they were able to present a more nuanced picture than others would have been able to.

All the interviews have been conducted in English, as it is Nigeria’s official language. Even though Nigeria has a wide range of different languages, all the respondents interviewed were comfortable speaking English, including the international respondents. Ideally, the fieldwork should have been conducted in northern Nigeria, as that is where Boko Haram both emerged and has had their epicenter. However, due to security concerns, I was advised to limit my traveling and do interviews from Abuja. One of the respondents asked why I had not gone to Maiduguri to talk to respondents, as he claimed that it was both relatively safe and easy to get there. However, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs advise against all travel to northeastern Nigeria. Moreover, my research question was not dependent on getting access to Boko Haram members or the local population, as I was relying on key informants that had extensive knowledge of the topic at hand.

4.2 Reliability

Reliability refers to the extent to which research studies can be replicated. This means that researchers using the same methods will be able to obtain the same results as those of a prior study. This can pose a challenge for qualitative researchers that are often concerned with unique phenomena (DeCompte and Goetz 1982: 35). In other words; “reliability is about the confidence we can place in a given instrument of measurement” (Mosley 2013: 24). Bryman further distinguishes between intra-reliability and inter-reliability. Intra reliability is regarding whether the same researcher can get the same answer when a question is repeated to the same respondent and inter-reliability concerns whether different researchers can get the same answer from the same respondent (Bryman 2004: 111).
Another criterion of good research, closely knit to reliability, is that of replicability, namely that a study is replicable by someone else (Bryman 2012: 47). Ideally, researchers should strive to present their methods so clearly that other researchers can use the original report as an operating manual when they replicate the study. Replicability is impossible without thorough description of the strategies used to collect data (DeCompte and Goetz 1982: 40). George and Bennett argue that researchers should assist their readers in evaluating whether their case study has met methodological standards and thus agree with King, Keohane and Verba that “the most important rule for all data collection is to report how the data was created and how we came to process them” (George and Bennett 2005: 106; King et al. 1994: 21). This transparency will thus enable others researchers to assess the replicability and reliability of the study and thus increase reliability. However, due to the uniqueness and complexity of case studies of phenomena, qualitative social science research may approach rather than attain complete reliability (DeCompte and Goetz 1982: 37).

The interview is probably the most employed method within qualitative research. The flexibility of the interview is what makes it so popular. It is common to distinguish between three types of interviews; unstructured, semi-structured and structured interviews. A structured interview is characterized by a standardized administration of the interview schedule by the interviewer. The aim with this type of interview is that all respondents are to be given the exact same context of questioning and the interviewer read out the questions in the exact same way and in the same order to all the respondents. The question asked are often very specific and offer the respondent a range of answers, and for that reason these types of questions are often called closed ended (Bryman 2012: 210). Survey researchers typically prefer this kind of interview, as the interview is structured to maximize the reliability and the validity when measuring the key concept. On the other extreme end you have the unstructured interview, which is more or less like a conversation in style. Here the researcher might just ask a single question and the interviewee is free to respond, with the interviewer following up certain points of interest. In the middle of the two extremes, we find the semi-structured interview that will be employed in this thesis. A semi-structured interview still has a lot of leeway, but the researcher has a list of fairly specific topics to cover. Even though the process is flexible, it is structured through the topics to be covered, this list of questions is referred to as an interview guide (ibid: 470-471).
There are several benefits of using semi-structures interviews. It allows me to gather a much deeper set of responses, and I will be able to ask questions that allow for open-ended response, ask follow-up questions and also go deeper into the matter if needed. As the key informants I interviewed, are all highly educated, being asked open-ended questions is often their preferred way to express and explain their beliefs and knowledge (Aberbach and Rockman 2002:674). In order to accurately capture the information that I got from the respondents, it is important to ensure effective means of recording the data from the interviews. I recorded each interview, with a few exceptions where I was not allowed to carry electronic equipment. This strengthens the reliability of the analysis, as the respondents answers will not be colored by the researchers own beliefs and values or time. It also ensures that other researchers can cross-check the findings in my analysis (Bryman 2012: 482; Leech et al. 2013: 220). After I asked for permission to record and received informed consent, I guaranteed confidentiality (Mosely 2013: 24). For the interviews that I did not record, I took detailed notes that I wrote down in its entirety immediately after (Leech et al. 2013: 220). The respondents that were not recorded, have not been quoted directly in the thesis.

I had informed all the respondents about full anonymity in the thesis in the initial contact made, due to the sensitive issues covered in the thesis. As some would might not have minded being named in the thesis, I found it better if all the respondents were anonymized. This can of course reduce the reliability of the thesis, as it will not be possible for other researchers to replicate the study with the same respondents. However, as some of the respondents were a bit critical to my initial approach, they might not have agreed to grant me an interview if they were not anonymized. One example of this was a high standing member of the academia in the northeast, who wanted the Norwegian Embassy to call him in order to confirm who I was and what I was doing. Moreover, with the promise of being anonymous, the respondents were able to talk openly and freely about the real issues regarding the topic. To further ensure the confidentiality of the data I gathered, I sent my research plan to the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD), the official authority for data protection in relation to research in Norway, and they approved my plan in January 2017. In addition to that, all recordings, notes and transcripts will be deleted after I have defended this thesis.

Before I left for Abuja, I had prepared the interview guide. I did this to secure that the topics I was most interested in were covered, in addition to ensuring that the theoretical backbone of the thesis was secured. As my thesis is theory-guided, it was important to link the theory and
the analysis, and this could best be done by asking questions that were operationalization of the theory. This is closely connected to validity, as validity refers to whether I am measuring what I have intended to measure. The interview guide is therefore important, as it will show whether I have managed to capture and measure what I intended to measure, in order to answer my research question. The next section will handle the further discussion about validity. I quickly discovered that I had included too many questions in the interview guide, as most of the respondents quickly answered several of the questions within each bracket, without me asking them more specifically. However, this was something I was aware of when writing my interview guide, as I would only ask follow up questions if they were not addressed by the respondent in their initial response. When the respondents were briefer in their answers, I asked more questions in order to get more detailed an in-depth information. On some occasions, I also asked questions that fell outside the interview guide, something that will affect reliability negatively. I also experienced what has been referred to as unexpected respondent behavior, when one of the respondents that I had finally managed to get a meeting with, answered my first question with a shrug and said he did not know anything about the topic of Boko Haram. I was a bit put off, but when I asked the following questions, however, he did have knowledge and opinions to share.

This kind of behavior may as well be due to the different cultural context in Nigeria. As cross-cultural interviews are those in which the interviewer and the respondent come from different cultural settings, the interview process can be affected by this. It can also be affected by the meaning that the respective culture, in this case the Nigerian culture, attribute to for example age, gender and status (Shah 2004: 553). This was not a big challenge for me, however, I did have difficulties getting many of the interviews scheduled as I was told to keep calling back at a later point, without getting an appointment confirmed. Some of the respondents that had promised me an interview, simply stopped answering my phone calls or emails during the course of my field work. I found it easier to get a quick reply and a set appointment when I talked to expatriates and the younger Nigerian respondents, with some exceptions. These challenges could be caused by what Shah describes as “culture-related codes of distribution of power in interactional contexts” that is arguably quite different in Norway than in Nigeria (ibid). In Nigeria the hierarchy in the society is much more visible, and a master student might not be the respondent’s top priority. The boundaries between being an insider and an outsider when doing research in the field are not clear, and each position has its advantages and disadvantages. Cammett argues that the status of an insider is not always superior, especially
with elites. In fact, when interviewing elites in a foreign country, a researcher might benefit from being perceived as an outsider, both regarding gaining access to informants and interpreting the data from a neutral perspective (Cammett 2013: 127). This could also be true in my regard, as I was able to get a hold of most of the respondents I had reached out to. This might not have been the case had I been a Nigerian master student.

The interviews conducted on my fieldtrip to Abuja were mostly one-on-one interviews that were done face-to-face with the respondent. For some of the respondents that were located in the northeastern part of the country, I had to conduct phone interviews. As it was not safe for me to travel there, and the internet connection in the country, especially in the north, is at best unstable, this allowed me to include people living and working in the northeastern region where Boko Haram emerged. Phone interviews can be challenging as they do not allow observation of body language and it is easier for a respondent to terminate a phone interview than an interview conducted face to face (Bryman 2012: 488). As the mobile networks in Abuja are also somehow unstable, I was unsure of whether I would be able to finish the interviews without being cut off. However, the interviews went smoothly and I was able to get viewpoints from a more diverse group of respondents. I have also done interviews over Skype from Oslo, as several of the most acknowledged scholars on Boko Haram live outside Nigeria.

The challenges related to these kinds of virtual interviews coincide with those of phone interviewing. A virtual interview lack contextual information that the researcher can get by observing the respondent in their environment and so forth. This will probably be more important if the respondents are not key informant respondents, as these are experts on a topic that they are used to talking about. Their body language thus mean less than the actual information they give orally. Skype interviews can also limit the presence of interviewer effects, which is my personal characteristics influencing the type of information I will get. This could be both an advantage and a disadvantage to the process of gathering information. In addition to this, there are ethical considerations that one should be mindful of when doing virtual in-person interviews. As it is conducted electronically, the risk of the interviewee might be greater if there is a chance that an Internet connection is not secure (Mosley 2013: 8). Although these are all relevant issues, all of the respondents interviewed via Skype are familiar with this technology, and use this as a part of their work tools. As these are all living
outside Nigeria, and are well-known scholars writing about the topic, it is less likely that this would pose a security threat for them.

Reviewing the literature on Boko Haram has also posed quite a challenge. Since the extrajudicial killing of Yusuf in 2009 and the group’s reemergence as a terrorist group in 2010, the number of scholarly articles and news reports have boomed. However, the academic literature is fragmented. Even though the literature has increased the last couple of years, I find that there are conflicting narratives, especially when it comes to the emergence of the group. As discussed in the background chapter, there is a number of different accounts as to why and how Boko Haram initially emerged, in addition to discrepancies in the literature reviewed. The different accounts also make it difficult to double-check the information and ensure that it is completely reliable. Walker argues that due to there being so little information about Boko Haram that can actually be verified and that solid and dependable information is hard to come by in Nigeria, this has created a barrier to our understanding of the group. Pérouse de Montclos agrees with this, and claims that many jump to conclusions because “they rely on unverifiable information, believe in gossip, and do not have access to Borno” (2016: 878). Moreover, Comolli argues, speculations are often repeated so many times that they become facts, even though there is no evidence to support this (2015: 7). In addition to this, many narratives on the international arena are clouded by Western security concerns and the conception of an Islamist terrorist threat (Mustapha 2014: 147)

The local media cannot be said to be entirely reliable either, as they often reprint military officials’ statements verbatim, which is obviously influenced by what message the Nigerian government wants to convey, which is not always reliable (Comolli 2015: 8). The Nigerian police are often corrupt or led by incompetent officers trying to secure their own piece of the cake, thus rarely providing useful information to the public (Walker 2012: 7) Many communiqués of Boko Haram announced in Hausa or Arabic have not been properly translated by the media, and thus their content can be misleading or misunderstood. Secondary sources and oral testimonies can also be contradictory, as was the case with what happened at the burial in 2009 that led to the Boko Haram uprising in July 2009. At the time it happened, the press reported that the police had not killed anyone, even though they had shot at the Boko Haram members. Later analyses of the happening, however, have pointed to a number of fatalities during the burial (Pérouse de Montclos 2014: 3). The nature of the

15 See the background chapter or Of tedal 2013 and Roelofs 2014 for more on the conflicting narratives of Boko Haram’s history.
conflict has also resulted in many officials and local people being reluctant to disclose information about the group, for numerous reasons including the fear of retaliation (Comolli 2015: 9). It is also worth noting that there is a bias in the international media’s coverage of the attacks on Christian minorities and the massacres of Muslim communities, where the latter go largely underreported. This bias is also evident within Nigeria, where the majority of the press is located in the south, and where narratives from the north and the south confuse the story due to conflicting narratives (Pérouse de Montclos 2014b: 4). All these different narratives and misperceptions makes it difficult to ensure that all the information is reliable. However, in this thesis I have chosen to base myself on the most agreed upon accounts of the formation of the group in addition to cross checking the accounts coming from the most cited scholars on the topic, in addition to also mentioning the competing narratives. All this result in it being difficult to assess reliability of the information given and there is thus a need to use multiple different sources in order to ensure that the information is correct. I have found it problematic to cross check the academic articles with the newspapers, as most of the commonly cited Nigerian news agencies do not have online archives going as far back as the beginning of 2000. This has made it difficult to cross check news articles cited in articles reviewed, in addition to searching for relevant information. I have therefore mainly based the review of secondary literature on articles and reports. Due to these challenges, the triangulation of the collection of data becomes even more important.

4.3 Validity

LeCompte and Goetz (1982: 31) argue that the value of scientific research is based in part on the ability of each researcher to demonstrate the credibility of one’s findings. The discussion about validity in this chapter is structured according to Cook and Campbell’s general system of validity (Cook and Campbell 1979: 37). To every validity type, there is also a number of threats, so called possible error factors that will make valid conclusions more difficult (Lund 2002: 105). As the system was initially developed for quantitative research, the system includes four types of validity (ibid: 247). Statistical validity will be left out of this chapter, as statistical conclusions is impossible in a case study. Bryman (2012: 389) argues that criteria developed for quantitative methods are based on measurement, which is not a preoccupation among qualitative researchers. According to him, the issue of validity thus seems to have little to provide in order to assess qualitative research. However, I agree with King et al. that posit
that as both qualitative and quantitative research are scientific activity resting on the same underlying logic, there is no reason they should not be evaluated based on the same criteria (1994: 4). However, it is important to remember that the designation of “good validity” must not be seen as absolute, but rather as something that will be approximately fulfilled. Certain times the different types of validity will be in conflict with each other, and optimizing one will be at the expense of another (Lund 2002: 108).

4.3.1 Concept validity

Concept validity concerns whether one actually measure what one intended to measure (Lund 2002: 120). George and Bennett argue that case studies allow the researcher to achieve high levels of conceptual validity, because they give room “to identify and measure the indicators that best represent the theoretical concepts the researcher intends to measure” (George and Bennett 2005: 19). Semi-structured interviews with their open-ended question allows the respondents to articulate their answers in full within their own frameworks. This means one can get a more in-depth answer that captures more of the information relevant to the concepts than one might get if one had chosen a structured interview. However, this also makes coding and the analysis of the findings more difficult (Aberbach and Rockman 2002: 674). However, instead of running the risk of “conceptual stretching”, which means putting together dissimilar cases in order to get a larger sample, I have the possibility to ensure that the questions asked cover what I need it to (George & Bennett 2005: 19).

In order to ensure that the operational measures for the concepts I study in this thesis are correct, the questions I have used need to be accurate. I am arguing that the social movement theories about political opportunities, resource mobilization and framing processes can better explain the emergence of Boko Haram. All these three social movement theories must thus be “broken down” and included in the interview guide as my aim is to see how these different aspects have played their part in the emergence process. Appendix 2 show the interview guide used, and illustrate how I have used elements from each of the different theories. The interview questions are not theoretical in form, and the theoretical perspective was only briefly mentioned when I introduced myself and the work prior to the interviews. However, they contain what I found to be the most important concepts within each theory, and together, they form a basis for understanding each of them.
The biggest challenge regarding formulating the interview questions, was to include the right questions in order to capture the concept of the theories. As the three theories are all somehow vague, particularly those of political opportunities and resource mobilization, I did not know how widely I should cover these. I tried to ensure the questions’ relevance by making sure I had captured the most relevant parts of the theory by asking questions that were not so broad it would be meaningless, but also not so narrow that it would miss out on important aspects. It was also important that the questions were understandable to the respondents. As my respondents are all key informants with considerable knowledge of both Boko Haram and the political and economic situation in Nigeria, I was mostly worried about the topic of how Boko Haram had framed themselves to the local population. This was a topic several of the respondents were not as familiar with, however, I managed to get more information from some than others.

Lastly, in order to guard against “hearing what I want to hear”, which can reduce the concept validity of this study, as already mentioned, I have employed various triangulation strategies in order to evaluate the data in light of empirical material (Mosley 2013: 22).

4.3.2 Internal validity

According to Lund, internal validity refers to whether the relationship between the variables in the analysis can be interpreted causally (2002: 106). As my research question is to what extent social movement theory can explain the emergence of Boko Haram, the internal validity of my study is hinged on whether the factors I have identified in my analysis, have had an impact in the emergence of the group. Since case studies allow in-depth studies of the processes and identifications of causal mechanisms that that connects causes to effects, they are considered to have strong internal validity (Gerring 2007: 43). However, this must be seen as a trade-off between parsimony and richness, as achieving high internal validity is dependent on deep historical explanations of a particular case which will again make it harder to generalize to broader populations (George and Bennett 2005: 22). Case study research is thus weaker with respect to external validity (Gerring 2011: 12). Statistical methods are not well suited when it comes to the testing of causal mechanism in the context of particular cases, while a case study can test whether every aspect of the case is consistent with the perceived causal process (George and Bennett 2005: 44). For the case study research however, the corresponding virtue is its internal validity (Gerring 2011: 12). The case study
thus allows me to study a single case where I can conduct in-depth interviews with key informants in order to follow the process to see whether social movement theory, and the underlying factors, played in on the emergence of Boko Haram, and as such I have prioritized depth over breadth and insight into causal mechanisms rather than insight into the causal effects (Gerring 2011: 26).

A threat to the internal validity of my study is the attribution problem (Lund 2002: 117). This is the challenge of controlling for all possible causes, which is impossible when one is dealing with a group like Boko Haram that has emerged and developed in a complex historical and political setting. When explaining an individual case, it requires the researcher to demonstrate that the hypothesized explanation fits both the evidence in the case and that it fits better than the other alternative explanations. This, according to Levy, “is logically equivalent to controlling for extraneous causes” (2008: 7). When that is said, proving that the outcome in question, in this case the emergence of Boko Haram, is the causal effect of the explanatory variables (which is included in social movement theory), and not of other factors, is a very difficult task (Ray 1995: 134). Consequently, it is impossible to control for all potentially relevant causes for the emergence of Boko Haram. Regardless, the more a case study is guided by theory, the more explicit the underlying analytical assumptions will be, with fewer logical contradictions, hence they are also easier to empirically validate or invalidate (Levy 2008: 5). As I have been guided by the theory throughout this thesis, and my questions are derived directly from it, this poses less of a threat to the internal validity of this study.

4.3.3 External validity

A study has a high level of external validity to that extent it makes it possible to make non-statistical generalizations to or across relevant individuals, situations and times with reasonable certainty (Lund 2002: 121). In other words, a study has external validity to that degree the findings can be generalized across social settings. External validity can be problematic for qualitative researchers due to their tendency of employing case studies and small samples (Bryman 2012: 390). George and Bennett argue that findings in case studies are not applicable to other populations, except in contingent ways, as statistical methods with larger samples of cases open up for. As case studies involve a trade-off among different goals, such as that those of “…attaining theoretical parsimony, establishing explanatory richness, and keeping the number of cases to be studies manageable”. In that regard, one can say that
case study researchers sacrifice this broad applicability in order to “develop … contingent generalizations that apply to well-defined types or subtypes of cases with a high degree of explanatory richness” (George and Bennett 2005: 31). Gerring (2007: 43), on the other hand, defines a case as “the intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that study is, at least in part, to shed light on a larger class of cases”. Clearly, in this definition there is no limitation for case studies to generalize to a broader universe of cases. However, there is need for caution here, as researchers employing case studies focus on the thorough investigation of one or a few cases, with an aim to uncover or refine theory about a particular causal mechanism (George and Bennett 2005: 30-31). It is also important to keep in mind that a critique of case studies as a research design, is that the researcher can be biased to the selection of case based on the dependent variable. Whereas quantitative researchers are likely to understate the relationship between the independent and dependent variables, case study researchers are prone to understating or overstating that same relationship (ibid: 24).

To be clear, the case study for this thesis is the emergence of Boko Haram in North-Eastern Nigeria. Social movement theory is applied to the case that is Boko Haram in order to analyze whether it has explanatory power. As such, the group I am studying is located in a particular historical, political and cultural context that will not be similar in any other country in the world. This makes the generalizability of the findings from this thesis limited. However, I will argue that contingent generalizations are possible to movements who take up Islamic activism in a similar environment. The aim of the thesis is therefore not to make broad generalizations, but rather to produce some main findings that can serve as a framework for other situations with similar context. In addition, the lessons from Northern Nigeria can also be valuable in order to enhance government responses to avoid similar groups emerging in the future.
5 Analysis

The purpose of this chapter is to answer the research question presented in the introduction of this thesis: “To what extent can social movement theory explain the emergence of Boko Haram?” In order to answer my research question, this thesis will analyze the emergence in light of social movement theory. Even though earlier theory deal separately with the theories of resource mobilization, political process and opportunity structures and framing, they are inseparably entangled in the empirical world (Engels 2015: 110). The analysis is divided into three main parts, structured in accordance with the theoretical framework. In section 5.1, I analyze the resources available to Boko Haram in terms of money, personnel, organization and external support. The political opportunities and processes in Nigeria are laid out and contextualized in connection to the group’s emergence in section 5.2, looking at both the openness of political institutions, political allies and the repressive capacity of the Nigerian government. Lastly, the processes of framing are discussed in terms of diagnostic, prognostic and motivational aspects in section 5.3. As previously stated, the empirical data used in this analysis is based on the semi-structured interviews I conducted on my fieldtrip to Abuja in February and Skype interviews conducted in March in Oslo after my return. As noted in the previous chapter, the informants are all key respondents with knowledge and experience of Boko Haram and the situation in North-Eastern Nigeria. Secondary literature on the topic will supplement the interviews. A list of the interviewees can be found in Appendix 1, while the interview guide is in Appendix 2.

5.1 Resource mobilization

In order for a social movement to succeed, the organizational structures and the resource accumulation are important. Boko Haram had to acquire resources in terms of both money, personnel, organization and external support (McCarthy and Zald 1977). Resources are not necessarily material, but could also be moral, cultural, socio-organizational or human (Engels 2015: 109). Oberschall argues that resources are the most important when it comes to mobilization (1993: 56). Boko Haram had substantial support initially, including from the Big Men in the northern region. This will become evident in the further analysis.
5.1.1 Money

As with the other aspects of Boko Haram, the stories are not completely overlapping regarding the finances of the movement. According to one of my respondents, one of the most important resources that was available to the group from the beginning, was Yusuf’s popularity, which he then “traded” into money. His preaches were very popular, and all the cassettes he made with his preaches, sold out like candy in northern Nigeria and in the border areas in the neighboring countries (Diplomat 1, 24.02.17). Another respondent that used to live in the neighboring country of Niger, confirms this;

“...I was living in Niger and knew Yusuf already, cause everyone knew Yusuf at that time. He was very popular, before he got killed, he was very popular in Niger” (INGO 1, 22.02.17).

Yusuf’s charisma and following enabled the group to collect a lot of financial aid from their followers, especially from the Kanuri and Hausa people that were familiar with the grievances that Yusuf was preaching about. They also had several businesses, they were involved in both trade and stealing cattle that they would later sell in the markets. They also attacked the police on several occasions, stealing weapons from them. Onuoha claims that members of the group had to pay 100 naira daily to their leader, which provided the basic income for the sect, in addition to donations from individuals, politicians, government officials and organizations within the country (Onuoha 2010: 56). Boko Haram also got involved in protection schemes, and forced several northern politicians to pay protection money to avoid verbal or physical attack (Diplomat 1). One of the northern politicians that Yusuf and Boko Haram received a lot of funding and support from, was the already mentioned Big Man and former governor of Borno, Ali Modu Sheriff (Akinola 2015: 9; Alozieuwa 2016: 58). The late Buji Foi, who was working as a Commissioner of religious affairs under Sheriff, was also a major financier of the group (Akinola 2015: 9; Tonwe and Eke 2013: 237). This resonates with the information provided by one of my respondents:

“In the beginning, they got money from donations at the mosque. Yusuf invested into small scale trade, like public transport and selling pure water, as they call it. And they also got some money from Ali Modu Sheriff, there is no doubt about it, cause he wanted to win the elections in 2003 and 2007. So that was the major income of the
group. Let’s say three major incomes; donations, investment in petty trade and donations or some kind of support from the government so that Ali Modu Sheriff could win the elections” (Researcher 1, 10.03.17).

As such, Boko Haram was able to mobilize resources in terms of money, because the people believed that Yusuf could provide them with an alternative. As mobilization refers to the process where the group members go together to fight for the obtainment of the common goals of the group, it is important to have an internal organization that doesn’t hinder the mobilization (Oberschall 1993: 56; Furseth 1999: 46). In the case of Boko Haram, it was paradoxically enough the members and followers of the movement who in its initial days provided the movement with money. These resources were then again re-distributed to the followers in terms of handouts, such as sums of money, jobs and funding to get married. As such, one could argue that the movement in its initial days worked almost like a welfare state within Nigeria. This is supported by one respondent’s view:

“And they attracted people, not only because they would give them money, it is not true, cause at this time, it was quite the contrary; the members of the group would give all their money to Yusuf as a kind of a guru of a sect” (Researcher 1, 10.03.17).

Yusuf had an enormous benefit from his persona and his charisma; allowing him to finance the movement in the early years. However, while the initial support coming from his followers characterized the funding of the movement at first, the use of force in order to secure funding came at a later point in the emergence of the group. One respondent compares Boko Haram’s activities with organized crime:

“Available evidence suggest that they got funding from a host of sources. They had funding from politicians, there is very little debate about whether they got funding from politicians, that’s a fairly settled point in the literature. Modu Sheriff for instance. And there is also of course the attack of businesses. There is evidence suggesting that they would approach wealthier individuals and their domain of operation and ask them for support, financial support, if they refused, they would deal with them. So essentially, you have a miniature level of organized criminal activity going on, that is not different from what say, the Russian mafia, would do in Moscow or St. Petersburg. That’s quite similar actually. So they were in fact engaged in that, basically asking people to donate. What that suggest is that not everyone donated or
financially supported Boko Haram of their own free will. ... They didn’t want their businesses destroyed, they didn’t want to be described as somehow as non-supportive of Islam or having failed to support the cause of the spread...” (Researcher 2, 07.03.17).

This statement makes it evident that not all funding or donations of money were voluntarily. Moreover, it highlights the importance of Boko Haram’s connections to the political elite. One of my respondents describe Sheriff as a mega rich man, but also one that is extremely corrupt. He is still involved in national politics in Nigeria today, and more of a political thug. Sheriff thus employed these militias consisting of young, unemployed men to intimidate and get him votes (Diplomat 1). These statements show that Boko Haram made use of already existing structures of political thuggery in northern Nigeria, in addition to allowing a partnership with Sheriff, where they would get financial support and influence, and he would be elected governor in Borno state.

Social movements are not always based on the grievances of the beneficiaries of that same movement. You also have cases where supporters provide money and facilities, who have no commitment to the values that underlie that specific movement (McCarthy and Zald 1977: 1216). This was evident when it came to the support Yusuf and Boko Haram received from the northern politicians, and more especially from Ali Modu Sheriff. According to Bøås, Nigeria is a country where Big Men have been manipulating violent discontent for their own purposes for long, which was exactly what Sheriff was doing. He had no interest in the reimplementation of Sharia, but was eager to get into position as governor of Borno state. As one of my respondents pointed out; the local politicians liked Boko Haram, not because they believed much in their cause, but because they could use them for political gain (Researcher 3).

This section has highlighted all the resources Boko Haram had in terms of money. They ventured into several businesses, while having a support base among parts of the Muslim population in the area. Later they also used threats as a method of securing their livelihoods and the state-like functions they had taken on. However, it is important to remember that this was, from the beginning, a low cost insurgency. Most of the initial money came from their members and followers, as people donated money, sold their houses, shops, land and so forth (Researcher 3). There is also no doubt that there are good money to be made from a big Muslim community in northeast Nigeria. In a region with a huge population, each and every
person will not have to donate huge amounts in order for it to add up to quite a substantial amount. There are also speculations regarding whether Boko Haram received financial and organizational support from external sources, namely Saudi Arabia. This will be discussed further under section 5.1.4.

5.1.2 Personnel

“So he got a huge following. I know people that were in university, you know, or graduates that didn’t have jobs and were frustrated, they tore up their diplomas and were saying “yes”; it was like a revolution. He was starting a revolution and people were following. So it wasn’t even violent at that time, you know, it was more about starting this revolution against the government, and using religion to justify it” (NGO worker 1, 16.02.17).

In the movement’s beginning, many youth saw Yusuf and Boko Haram as starters of a revolution that they wanted to join. However, it has been challenging for scholars to pinpoint who exactly these people were and what motivated them. Higazi claims that Boko Haram have attracted people from a wide social spectrum to join the group, as members were both school dropouts together with graduates who tore up their certificates. As such, some of the educated people joined due to the group’s ideology, while others who joined had less or no education at all (Higazi 2015: 338). Onuoha argues that the group has drawn members mainly from “disaffected youth, unemployed high school and university graduates, and destitute children, mostly from but not limited to Northern Nigeria (Onuoha 2014: 3). Some of these destitute children are normally called almajirai.16 The phenomenon of almajirai in Nigeria dates back centuries and is the tradition where young children are sent from the rural setting to the cities in order to study Islam under renowned teachers (Tonwe and Eke 2013: 235). Onuoha states that “these almajiris live and study in very appalling conditions, making them vulnerable to recruitment into extremist sects like Boko Haram, largely through indoctrination (Onuoha 2012: 2-3). However, Onuoha also acknowledges that some of the members of Boko Haram have indeed been both wealthy, educated and influential (Onuoha 2014: 3). Alozieuwua posits that most of the members were made up from those belonging to the army of political militias in certain parts of the North. He argues that Boko Haram started off as political thugs

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16 The single noun is almajiri and the plural term is almajirai.
The views of the respondents largely coincide with that of the reviewed literature:

“Most of his followers were the younger people, who are easily impressionable, looked at Yusuf as a champion. Most of his people were younger people. They were easily influenced, illiterate, something that meant they would not ask questions, and in the beginning, the followers joined the group voluntary” (CSO leader 1, 28.02.17).

Another respondent reflects around the member structure of the group:

“It is hard to tell the membership structure of Boko Haram. But one thing is for sure, the majority of Boko Haram members are jobless, uneducated northerners. There are a few sympathizers, I wouldn’t say foot soldiers, there are a few members that are children of the elite. ...Of course that makes them indirectly members of the group, but as for foot soldiers...I can assess from what I see, that those people are the group you can refer to as marginalized” (Researcher 4, 06.03.17).

So both a big part of the literature and the respondents I interviewed, seem to be of the opinion that those recruited into the early movement were young, uneducated youth from the northern region, especially the almajirai. It is estimated that there are around 7 million almajiri children in Northern Nigeria, and according to Tonwe and Eke (2013: 239) “this provides a large pool of disenchanted individuals from where extremist sects like Boko Haram can draw foot soldiers”. Hoechner discusses the almajirai and their role as members of Boko Haram. She claims that there is no systematic evidence that can substantiate claims of the almajirai being used as foot soldiers for the group. She states that the scholarly works on the link between this group of youth and violent groups, are often referencing their upbringing, but that this argument does not hold water because “in terms of skills and future prospects, little differentiates the almajirai from other poor undereducated youth from rural households” (Hoechner 2014: 63). Though she does agree that some almajirai probably are followers of Boko Haram, no evidence can substantiate this. Moreover, Anon argues that the empirical evidence available actually refutes the “simplistic application of economic deprivation theory” (Anonymous 2012: 118).

The situation in the northern part of the country has been characterized by extreme poverty, high illiteracy rates, above 70% of children from the age 6-16 have never attended school in
Borno state, and in the capital of Maiduguri, most residents live on less than two dollars per day (Higazi 2015: 315). Maier (2000: 144) argues that in such a context the population start nourishing a “quiet rage over the falling of living standards, their lack of clean water, decent schools, health clinics and jobs”. Due to the region’s colonial history with Western education and the preference for Quranic education, the north has the worst Western education indicators in the country with educational institutions “producing graduates who are virtually unemployable” (Uzodike and Maiangwa 2012: 112). One of my respondents also highlights the problem with the youth lacking formal skills:

“And so, you had the unemployed, the underemployed, you had almajiri young boys...growing up into adulthood with zero skills, zero education. They are not simply unemployed, they are almost unemployable because they have not learned anything. The society has not been able to get them involved in anything that is of economic worth in the system” (Researcher 2, 07.03.17).

The situation in Northern Nigeria is thus very serious, as the region lacks employment opportunities for those who have not received a formal, quality education. It is a societal problem that the government cannot offer employment or possibilities for a huge percentage of the young population in Nigeria, and especially in the north. This created an enormous mobilization potential for Boko Haram. With increased frustration over the situation, combined with unemployment and no way out, the large youth population in the country becomes a huge resource for groups such as Boko Haram. Boko Haram thus have a seemingly enormous mobilization potential in terms of personnel, as many in the north was tempted by having a job, having one or several women, being a part of something and belonging to a community, in addition to be able to fight for what was perceived the right cause.

One of my respondents interviewed a man who said that he joined Boko Haram in order to live in peace, however ironic that might sound (Diplomat 1). It seems like those who first joined the movement were more ideologically influenced than those that joined later. As such, it might be useful to distinguish to some extent between those who were a part of the initial movement and those who came onboard later on, still under the leadership of Yusuf, but more interested in the economic incentives offered by the group. This argument is strengthened by a story told by one of my respondents:
“The people who had been arrested were members for a very long time. They explained to us that they joined the movement for ideological and religious reasons. But the ones we met that joined the movement later, explained to us that they had no choice cause there were absolutely no economic opportunities and job opportunities in their area for them. So they started to work for them [Boko Haram], just as mechanics for example, because it was the only job that they could find” (INGO 1, 22.02.17).

Another respondent told me about going to an internally displaced settlement in Abaji, where they met internally displaced people from the southern part of Borno, around the Chibok area. The respondent was interviewing a group of Christian women sitting in a group, asking them whether they thought this was a religious movement:

“And they all said no. When it started, they thought it was Muslims that were attacking Christians, but in their community they lived Muslims and Christians, same language and everything, they were just divided based on religion, but they live peacefully together. And they said that the young men that had joined the movement in their village, were both from the Muslim and the Christian community. And they said that most of them were known in the community to be just jobless young men doing nothing” (NGO worker 1, 16.02.17).

These statements give validity to the argument that there seems to have been two phases of recruitment, whereas the latter one mobilized people more in terms of economic incentives than the ideological ones. As such, the recruitment pool and resources in terms of personnel got even bigger, as the group could mobilize not only Muslims who believed in their ideology, but also manage to draw into the movement young, both Muslim and Christian men who lacked employment opportunities. This is in line with Higazi’s argument that the dynamics of individual and collective mobilization also need to be distinguished. Each individual might have their own motives for joining the group, this might be specific and not necessarily in line with the leadership objectives. Some members might have joined due to their convictions and own moral, but equally important are the material motives (Higazi 2015: 315). One of my respondents emphasized the access to power, and notes that when you have been powerless your whole life, the ability to now control life and death is enticing. The access to women was also very important, as Boko Haram helped people that would usually not afford it, to get married (Researcher 3). This had immense importance, as it also attracted young men unable to pay the traditional dowry (Pérouse de Montclos 2016: 879). The group
also provided a place to sleep at night, offered low level social benefits, and as such, gave people the sense of belonging to a community (Researcher 3).

So even though there seems to be a common misconception both among my respondents and the literature reviewed that the *almajirai* was more prone to join Boko Haram, there seems to be agreement that the young, unskilled and unemployed population in the north is a great resource for the recruitment of personnel by groups such as Boko Haram. With an economic situation in the country that forces these young men into the urban areas where there is no formal employment, they are excluded from taking part in the country’s economy. With Yusuf’s huge following, the resources in terms of people available to the group were great. Boko Haram had what seemed like a never-ending pool of recruits (Diplomat 1).

### 5.1.3 Organization

Azumah (2015: 33) has looked at the development of Boko Haram from a historical perspective and with this, attempted to locate the group within “a historical pattern of dissent and factionalism in Northern Nigerian Islam”. He argues that the jihadist legacy of Usman dan Fodio and his rejection of all things non-Islamic, still has an appeal to northern Muslims today. Although I have argued in section 3.2.3 that the emergence of Boko Haram cannot be reduced to the simplistic assumption that they are a continuation of other Islamic movements in the country, the past is not without importance either, especially when looking at the organizational resources available to Boko Haram in terms of previous movements and the space for radical Islam in northern Nigeria. According to McCarthy and Zald (1977: 1217), social movements whose relations are highly organized internally, are more likely to spawn into organized forms. This is an important point, as Boko Haram has emerged in a region with a history of organized protest and high levels of internal organizations in terms of religious associations.

Murray Last suggests that Boko Haram follows “…a pattern that goes back at least some 200 years in northern Nigeria, and has a logic to it…” (2009: 11). He continues to outline these patterns, and concludes that the Maitatsine uprising have several similarities with Boko Haram, one important one being that they both had their headquarters in a major city. Previously, the radical groups had been based in rural areas, where they could live beyond the government’s reach. And this is an important point; when Yusuf decided to establish their
base in a big urban city, as had the Maitatsine, they challenged the legitimacy and policies of the government in a much more direct way (ibid). This is thus one example of Boko Haram making use of already existing “organizational inspirations”, dating back to the Maitatsine in the 1980s. However, while the organizational form can be said to be similar to other Islamic movements in northern Nigeria, Boko Haram has also taken on a militancy never before witnessed in the Nigerian society (Bøås: 2012). But when the emergence of Boko Haram is analyzed within the region’s historical and ideological context, it could be argued that they represent a “cycle of contention”, which is linked to the former Islamic movements and the struggle for Sharia and the anti-Western views in the region.

Oberschall’s has argued how important communal associations can be for mobilization and claimed that “the collectivity might be integrated and organized along viable traditional lines based on kinship, village or tribal organization, or other forms of community, with recognized leaders and networks of societal relations extending to its boundaries” (1973: 119). This argument is highly relevant when looking at the organization of Muslim associations in Nigeria. There are hundreds of Muslim associations and societies within Nigeria (Kenny 1996: 343). There are also numerous umbrella organizations with the goal of propagating Islam, included the Muslim Students Society (MSS) which was founded in 1972 (ibid: 344). The MSS became radicalized and rejects the Nigerian Constitution, and has also taken to the streets burning copies of the constitution in order to protest the secular nature of the Nigerian state (Kenny 1996: 344; Umar 2001: 138). This is an example of how widespread the antipathy towards the secular Nigerian state actually has been in Northern Nigeria. The Izala, that Yusuf and his followers had a falling out with, might also have functioned as both an organizational inspiration and as a place to recruit new members into the organization, as it is argued that many of Boko Harams members came from the Izala (Walker 2012: 4). Moreover, as former members of the Izala and other associations propagating the Muslim cause, one could argue that both Yusuf and other Boko Haram members had training in grassroot mobilization.

The Izala led the way in establishing clinics and small businesses, in addition to making use of media such as radio, television, audio and video cassettes in order to propagate their tenets (Umar 2001: 134). This is also true for Boko Haram, where Yusuf’s audio cassettes were sold in numbers to the local Muslim population in the north and to the neighboring countries of
Cameroon and Niger (Diplomat 1; INGO 1). This shows that both the historical context of Islam in the country, and the number of other Islamic movements before, have both, in part, worked as an organizational resource for the group. This is especially true if one look at the numerous Muslim organizations, Muslim networks and countless mosques in the northeast. Some scholars have studied movements in modern societies by looking at the importance of preexisting “clusters of solidarity that are organized associationally” for their emergence (McCarthy and Wolfson 1992: 278). Social infrastructure is therefore important, as these preexisting networks makes mobilization both more likely and reduces the costs (ibid). This is not to say that there are not ideological differences between many of the Muslim communities, such as the Sufi orders and the Salafist Izala for example, but there are common meeting places for Muslims and many places where one is allowed to speak about religion and meet like-minded. As such, there are many potential meeting places for people that can be used to recruit into such a movement. This I argue, is the mobilizing potential of the organizational structures in the northeast of Nigeria.

However, it is not only important which organizational resources that were already in place for the group in the region, but also the organizational form the group took itself. It is crucial for an organization to have an internal organization that will not hinder the facilitation of mobilization, as mobilization refers to the process of where the group members are used to fight to obtain the common goals of the group (Furseth 1999: 46). Salkida, the only journalist who has ever been allowed to follow Boko Haram from the inside, give us an idea of how Mohammed Yusuf and Abubakar Shekau began to work on the group’s organizational format in Ibn Taimiyya Masjid:

“Together they set up Laginas (departments). They had a cabinet, the Shura, the Hisbah, the brigade of guards, a military wing, a large farm, an effective micro finance scheme, and the late Yusuf played the role of a judge in settling disputes. Each state had an Amir (leader) including Amirs in Chad and Niger that gave accounts of their stewardship to Yusuf directly” (Salkida 2009).

By setting up what Salkida describes as “a government within the government”, Boko Haram gave many people an alternative to the corrupt Nigerian state that had failed to take care of them and offer them opportunities. According to Muhammed Yusuf himself, the purpose of
the group was to withdraw from a society that was corrupted by Western values. The group would thus set up a whole new community where they could be close to Allah and live according to the tenets of Islam. Boko Haram thus wanted a state-like organization, where they could grow and grow until it had many of the “state-like” functions, be it job training, actual jobs, welfare handouts in addition to a moral police to oversee the community (Walker 2012: 9).

Taking all this into consideration, the organizational resources to Boko Haram seem many. Firstly, they made use of preexisting attitudes and cycles of contention against Western education in a region that has a long history of protest, demand for Sharia and religious associations. As such, Boko Haram draws on the former Islamic movements seen in the north and their organizational structure. For example, there are organizational similarities between Boko Haram and both the Maitatsine movement and the Izala. The members of Boko Haram are believed to have come from these other Muslim organizations, especially the Izala, and thus already had training in grassroot mobilization and organizational administration. The organizational form the group took itself also worked to their advantage, as their presented themselves as an alternative to people deeply frustrated with the status quo.

5.1.4 External support

As I have already argued in the two previous sections, it is obvious that Boko Haram has received external support from the political elite in northern Nigeria. However, whether or not Boko Haram has received external support from outside of Nigeria is mired in controversy. Walker argue that according to sources in the Maiduguri religious establishment, it is possible that the group has received funding from Salafist groups in Saudi Arabia during its initial years. He adds that it also appears that members of the group have received training in the Sahel (Walker 2013: 13). In 2005, shortly after the Nigerian security forces announced that they had destroyed Boko Haram and their operational capabilities in the country, there was intelligence received by the U.S. government that the group was being trained in Mali by al-Qaida through the regional branch of al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). This was later confirmed by the U.S. ambassador to Nigeria, Terence McCulley, who said that members of Boko Haram had been traveling to northern Mali for training since 2005 (Gray and Adeakin 2015: 191). Onuoha also posits that the group allegedly received funds from outside Nigeria, and that in 2007, Mohammed Yusuf and a Muslim cleric involved with him, were on trial for
offences related to terrorism (2010: 56). Yusuf was arraigned on five charges, including that of allegedly receiving funds from al-Qaida in Pakistan, in order to recruit terrorists who could attack foreign residences. However, Yusuf was acquitted, and though he was later arrested again by security personnel, he was released on bail in 2009 (ibid: 57). These views also resonate with some of my respondents, where several mentions links with external organizations (Researcher 2; Researcher 5; Researcher 6). One of them argues:

“We have no way of verifying that quite frankly, but there is a fairly strong belief out there that they were getting money from the Middle East, particularly from Saudi Arabia as a way of spreading Islam, especially Wahhabism, which of course has its origins in the holy land (Researcher 2, 07.03.17).

Yet another respondent argue that we cannot rule out external support, but there is no clear evidence (CSO leader 1). However, most of my respondents argued that there is no tangible evidence to link Boko Haram under Yusuf to external support from Saudi Arabia or other countries in the Middle East. The allegations against Yusuf in Nigeria have fallen through, as no evidence has been produced to prove the supposed links between Islamists in Mauritania or Pakistan (Pérouse de Montclos 2016: 887; Uzodike and Maiangwa 2012: 104). Pérouse de Montclos argues that the analysis of Boko Haram is spoiled by the linking of global jihad to al-Qaida, as Boko Haram’s mission is deeply embedded in the local dynamics of Northern Nigeria (ibid: 888). One of the respondents also reflects around this, and argues that the discourses from Boko Haram have always been local. It is a very local conflict, and a low-cost insurgency (Researcher 1; Researcher 3). This is further backed by the fact that state institutions and their officials have been the primary targets of the group. The attack on 24 December 2004, was an attack on the local government heads, regional officials and divisional police in Yobe state. The following attacks have shown the same pattern (Tonwe and Eke 2013: 236). According to one of my respondents:

“First of all, their agenda has always been local despite what you can read in the newspaper; that they want to connect with AQIM in the Sahel, because they have a global jihad agenda, that’s rubbish. The discourses have always been local, the targets have always been local, targets of Boko Haram have always been The Federal Republic of Nigeria” (INGO 1, 22.02.17).
It can be argued that the Nigerian government has a vested interest in presenting Boko Haram as a part of an international terrorist network (Adibe 2013: 13). One reason for this can be to attract international support, especially from the U.S. that is very concerned with terrorist groups linked to al-Qaeda. Secondly, by linking Boko Haram to al-Qaeda, the focus will be shifted from the Nigerian government’s continuing failure to manage the national economy and the security threats created by such groups. Lastly, the link between Boko Haram and al-Qaeda might lead to US involvement that will pressure the group to the negotiation table (Uzodike and Maiangwa 2012: 106). However, it has also been a motivation for the group to portray themselves as linked to other terrorist organizations, and this is also confirmed by the view of Salkida (2009), who argues that “In the past few years the relationship with al-Qaida has been about ‘capacity building’”. This is in line with the view of one of my respondents who simply calls the linking of Boko Haram to other terrorist group the ‘communication of war’, as it is nothing more than a strategy to appear stronger and more connected than they really are (Researcher 1).17 What seems to hold more truth to it, is the mobilization of members in the neighboring countries of Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Sudan. Nigeria has long and porous borders, and with people from the neighboring countries easily blending into the local population, these can go largely undetected by the security forces (Uzodike and Maiangwa 2012: 105). As such, the mobilization of personnel across borders are unlikely to gain attention and is enforced by the limited capacity of Nigeria’s security agencies. Boko Haram has been able to mobilize resources and personnel from the neighboring countries much due to the historical and ethno-linguistic linkages between the people of Northern Nigeria and the people in Mali, Cameroon, Chad and Niger (Onapajo et al. 2012: 345).

As such, the common misperception that the early movement of Boko Haram was linked to al-Qaeda and other international terrorist networks seem to hold no value. However, the movement did manage to mobilize support externally from the neighboring countries that we see have historical linkages. Regardless, as emphasized already in this section and previously, the movement was a local one with local ambition. Consequently, I have found no evidence that there was a strategy from the initial movement of Boko Haram to mobilize resources from terrorist networks outside Nigeria.

17 Boko Haram’s branding of themselves as a terrorist group with international networks is not as interesting for the initial phase of the movement, but more so for the group under leadership of Abubakar Shekau. However, this phase is outside the scope of this thesis.
5.2 Political opportunity structures and processes

Political protest cannot be explained solely by the different resources available to Boko Haram. The political context of which a social movement arise is just as important when explaining their emergence. Boko Haram thus developed its strategy, aim and forms of protest as an answer to the Nigerian context. Falola makes the argument that “religion and politics have been bedfellows throughout Nigerian history” (1998: 1). As it is thus impossible to understand the political situation in Nigeria without also taking into regard the religious aspect, these will both be a part of the further analysis. This is because strategies and forms of protest are not chosen in a vacuum, but rather influenced by different structural conditions. In Nigeria, the political structures and processes and the religious ones are hard to untangle. Despite its religious background, I will argue that Boko Haram is political in nature. This because “it contests Western values, challenges the secularity of the Nigerian state, and reveals the corruption of a “democracy” that relies on a predatory ruling elite” (Pérouse de Montclos 2014c: 135).

5.2.1 Openness of political institutions

In order to understand why a social movement emerges, it is important to understand the contextual factors and the sociopolitical reality on the ground (McAdam 1982: 39-40). When I asked my respondents how the political situation was in Nigeria, and more specifically in Northern Nigeria at the time of the emergence of Boko Haram, several of them mention the return to democracy three years earlier and the new demand for Sharia (Researcher 1; Researcher 2; Researcher 3; Researcher 5; NGO worker 2). After a number of military coups and countercoups in Nigeria after independence in 1960, the country finally saw a return to democracy and constitutional politics in 1999 (Akinola 2015: 7; Comolli 2015: 19). This thus seems an important development in order to understand the emergence of Boko Haram. Even though the Muslim demand for Sharia dates back to 1960, with return to democracy in 1999 it got new resonance, as the new democracy failed to deliver what it had promised. After being under strict military rule for decades, one now saw political opportunities opening up in Nigeria. One respondent’s view is consistent with this when he talks about the return to democratic rule and claims that “...there was an opening of the political space that was not there before” (Researcher 6).
Social movements are likely to emerge when windows of opportunity open (Smith and Fetner 2010: 17). With the opening up of political space, the demand for Sharia also became stronger, and it was out of this demand that Boko Haram would later emerge. This resonates with the view of one respondent who told me that Sharia has always been a part of the Nigerian system, long before the British colonized the country. When the British came, they stopped the *hudud* penalties, but allowed Sharia to remain as part of the civil system. However, since then there has been a wish within parts of the Muslim population in the north to bring Sharia back (Researcher 6). The newfound openness in the political sphere of Nigeria under democracy facilitated the demand for Sharia that had been suppressed under the military regime.

As such, the return to democracy, presented a “window of opportunity”, a change in the political structures, that favored mobilization and also advanced the demand for Sharia law. In order to understand the demand for Sharia within the political opportunities that opened after 1999, it is important to understand the historical role of religion in gaining power, both politically and economically. Falola argues that it is key to understand the role Islam has in the Nigerian society in order to understand how the political institutions work. He claims that even in the precolonial era, “…it was part of identity construction, a means for power legitimation, and a determiner of economic might (Falola 1998: 1-2). As such, religion is used as a tool by those aspiring to get into positions, in order to gain power and political legitimacy (ibid: 2). Due to this, there is a deliberate attempt of using the demand for Sharia as a tool in order to control politics through Islamic law (Falola 2009).

In a society where religion and politics are so intimately intertwined, access to the political institutions thus goes through religion. However, under the rule of General Sani Abacha from 1993 to 1998, the military regime repressed the religious organizations to mobilize politically (Villaón 2013: 12). Elections in Nigeria are very competitive, with the citizens having little impact on the process, due to the important decisions being taken by political elites behind the scenes. However, when the campaign for Sharia was going on, it seemed as if the normal people of the north could also be able to have an effect on government policies. One example of this was when the sitting governor lost to Ali Modu Sheriff, due to his promise to be serious about the implementation of Sharia. The high hopes that the northern population had for his abilities to implement strict Sharia fell through, as he turned out to have used the promise of implementation to get elected (Harnischfeger 2014: 39-40).
As the demand for Sharia became the most important aspect of Boko Haram’s plan to end corruption and moral decay in the northern region, the return to democracy is important in their emergence. Many Nigerian Muslims draw on Islam for solutions to Nigeria’s challenges, something that became evident with the popular demand for Sharia (Falola 1998: 16). Without the relative openness of the new regime, their mobilization around the demand for Sharia and a more pure society would not have been possible. Additionally, when people realized that democracy would also not be able to solve their difficult situation, the demand for Sharia just got stronger. This is thus two important factors when looking at the emergence of Boko Haram.

And so the situation in Northern Nigeria at the time Boko Haram emerged was characterized by the end of a military regime and a lack of trust to the secular institutions among the Muslim population. The failure of the political leadership both under military rule and the new democratic government to reform the country, have made religion into a powerful actor in the country’s politics. In fact, the failure of the secular institutions represents the limitations of secular institutions to many Muslims (Falola 2009). With a declining economy, religion becomes an alternative or source of opposition to a state that is not working. As such, this was the situation in Nigeria at the time Boko Haram emerged. Moreover, religion is also used as a means of mobilization for political actors as politicians turned to Islam for legitimizing power (ibid). The next section thus deals with the existence of political allies.

5.2.2 The existence of political allies

“…the political aspect of the insurgency is very important, cause politicians actually played a role in the spread of the movement.” (NGO worker 1, 22.02.17).

After the return to democratic rule in 1999, a new drive to introduce Sharia came from governor of the northern state of Zamfara, Ahmed Sani. Sani was clearly a populist politician, still is, and he sort of tapped into the popular agitations for Sharia in the region. That was a key moment in the ascendance of Boko Haram and says something about the environment in which the movement was bred (Researcher 2). Soon eleven of the other states in the region followed suite. With the reintroduction of Sharia in 12 northern states, there was a wish to free society of so called un-Islamic practices (Comolli 2015: 20-21). The introduction of Sharia was thus linked to local politics as it helped many governors connect with the deeply
religious Muslim communities. Speculations have also been aired as to whether governor Sani actually implemented Sharia to avoid impeachment, as his party’s representatives were in minority. However, fighting for the implementation of Sharia, he was instead seen as a “defender of faith”. The rest of the northern politicians who supported the cause of Sharia are thought to have done so because of either political opportunism, personal conviction or a sense that they wanted to represent those who elected them. However, it is a rather common belief that the implementation of Sharia was more an act to attain political gains than a wish for a more pious living (Alao 2013: 139). With this development, all of a sudden Sharia became some sort of commodity that the politicians could trade against people’s votes and support. As one respondent told me about the situation in Nigeria after 1999:

“You have northern politicians faced with a new set of political incentives. Gone were the days of military rule, you now have popular elections and you have to uphold your base. Around the world for years, religiosity has been a very strong campaign mechanism, so you get these governors who campaign on Sharia. But essentially you had these new coalitions arise, where the northern governors presented themselves as apostles of Sharia” (NGO worker 2, 21.02.17).

This meant that northern politicians campaigned for votes based on the promise of implementing Sharia in full. These promises turned out to be valuable, and produced enormous support for the politicians (Akinola 2015: 7). In Borno state, former governor Ali Modu Sheriff has been said to have been instrumental to the prominence of Boko Haram. With the appointments of both Buji Foi and Yusuf into positions within the local government, the links between the group and some of the northern politicians become evident (Alozieuwa 2016: 58-59). However, the support from Sheriff and other northern politicians did not come out of sympathy for the group’s ideology. Rather, in order to win elections at all costs, the politicians found Boko Haram and Yusuf useful in order to intimidate opponents. By aligning their campaigning for office with some of the demands posed by the group, they now had a mutual agreement. An important point in this regard is the pattern of Nigeria’s zero-sum democratic politics. Being desperate to win elections, politicians fear no means, even the backing of radical groups to intimidate their political opponents and harass unsympathetic citizens (Akinola 2015: 9). This resonates with information being communicated from all of my respondents. One of them narrated:
“Yusuf had a lot of followership among the urban poor, so what the politicians did was to recruit Yusuf to become the armed wing of certain political structures. And so what the northern politicians did, was to rely on Yusuf to indulge in intimidation of political opponents, stuff like that. So there is the argument that the relationship with the northern political elite... gave Yusuf the needed political structure to morph into an insurgent group” (Researcher 4, 06.03.17).

Another respondent continues on the link between Boko Haram and governor Sheriff:

“Yes, he needed Yusuf and Boko Haram for two reasons. So, regular elections were in 2003 and 2007 and he needed him [Yusuf] to not name him as being a corrupt governor, it’s like buying the silence. Cause the preaching of Yusuf in his sermons were criticizing the ruling Muslim class as being very corrupt, but he did not mention Ali Modu Sheriff until he separated from him in 2007 or so. Ali Modu Sheriff would pay him for not mentioning his name... ” (Researcher 1, 10.03.17).

Politicians supported and financed Boko Haram, and by using them as a local militia in order to win elections it shows that winning elections and consequently the access to power, becomes so important that the politicians are even willing to harass those opposed to them (Akinola 2015: 9). Alozieuwa (2016: 56) therefore argues that while the emergence of the sect has been attributed to Boko Haram opposing westernization and secularity, it can actually be attributed to the culture of political thuggery in the Nigeria. This culture of using political thugs in their fierce struggle for political power, results in militia groups existing across all regions and states of Nigeria. These groups are able to assume different forms and commit criminal behaviors on behalf of their benefactors (ibid). According to Bøås (2012: 3), Nigeria is a country where Big Men have long played on discontent for “their own selfish purposes”. One of my respondents reflects around the situation in Northern Nigeria at the time:

“...Because I didn’t live in Maiduguri at that time and I hadn’t been there for several years, and another thing I noticed was a lot of what they call “majlisa” in Hausa, which is basically locations that were set up, strategic locations around the town where there would be young men, there would be pool tables, like outside, flat screen TV, you know, apparently funded by the state government. Young men would just be
hanging out, political thugs, you know some of them would even be smoking weed. And whenever there were some sort of political rally going on, pick-ups would come and take them to these rallies and they would just create all sorts of chaos” (NGO worker 1, 16.02.17).

The resources which Yusuf received due to the relationship with the political elite in the north, and the political cover he got from the same network, even enabled him to commit some crimes that were pardoned by the state’s government (Researcher 4). As such, it becomes obvious that the role of partisan politics and political patronage was important for the sustenance of Boko Haram (Adesoji 2011: 107). However, Boko Haram’s beneficial relationship with the governor Sheriff would not last forever. Sheriff did not hold up on his promise to effect the full implementation of Sharia in Borno state, something that strained their relationship. As a result of this, Foi wished to resign his office, as this was the only way he would be able to make it to paradise. After Foi was released of his duties, he now called for Sheriff’s resignation due to the issue of corruption and the helmet legislation that he felt affected the poor people of society most. Foi was known for his “sense of fairness” and could not let this go (Alozieuwa 2016: 59). This is coherent with the view of one of my respondents that worked with Foi and knew him personally. According to him, Foi was a nice man, but he was deeply religious (Local government 1). Akinola (2015: 9) claims that the fallout between Sheriff and Yusuf can explain part of the radicalization of Boko Haram. When Yusuf and Boko Haram fell out with their political allies, they now became the biggest critic of the system they had been part of. As such, the importance of political patronage and partisan politics in helping sustain the Boko Haram movement, cannot be understated. “The political underpinnings that supported the rise of the group are unassailable in the face of the group’s involvement in the politics of parts of Yobe and especially Borno state in the 2000s (Akinola 2015: 9). This is also resonating with the view of one of my respondents:

“Some of this was high handed elite politics, and some was what we see in a number of Nigerian contexts, which is where you have a governor who has his boys. And the boys go out, and they will pay bribes, or will intimidate people to garner votes. ...But as these relationships wound to do, the boys eventually get angry at their men, or the men have no use for their boys” (NGO worker 2, 21.02.17).
The emergence and evolution of the group was thus highly dependent on two things; firstly the support and impunity given to the group by their political allies and especially governor Ali Modu Sheriff. The reintroduction of Sharia in the northern states would not have been possible without the northern politicians taking up the cause. Secondly, the development of the group went into a more radical direction after the cooperation with Sheriff and the political leadership went sour. As such, the emergence of Boko Haram cannot be analyzed without understanding the political aspects and the existence of political allies.

5.2.3 The government’s repressive capacity

For decades the relationship between the local population in Northern Nigeria and the security forces has been characterized by mistrust. Before independence, one colonial governor in Borno described the local police as smiling and polite while serving their communities. However, this would come to change soon. After Nigeria got its independence, experiencing its first military coup in 1966 and the bloody Biafra War ending in 1970, the security agencies seemed to have “a free license to kill” (Pérouse de Montclos 2016: 884). To the northerners, the police was known as a dan sanda in Hausa, meaning a “man carrying a baton”. When the police was later provided with guns, Kalashnikovs, they became more brutal towards the local population.

This is not only true for the security officers in the northern part of the country, but also for the rest of Nigeria. Pérouse de Montclos argues that the Nigerian police are both trigger-happy and don’t shy away from using torture (2016: 884). This has resulted in the security agencies being incapable of holding up law and order in a professional way (ibid). However ironic it might sound, Nigeria Watch database on violence actually shows that when security forces get involved, the bloodier the fighting will be, and that security agencies were the main actors involved in the killings reported in Nigeria in 2016 (Nigeria Watch 2016: 8). Big Men and patron-client relationships protect the police, soldiers and army officers from prosecution when they have injured citizens. On the contrary, if someone who is picked up by the police lacks a patron, they run the risk of being executed without trial. If you are a young man accused of robbery, you are likely to endure the same destiny. According to Pérouse de Montclos (2016: 884), extrajudicial killings are not a collateral damage in conflict, but rather a norm. Due to this structural violence within the society, performed by the security officers, there exists a fear within the people, a distress that makes it unlikely that a person would file a
complaint to the same agency (Ifeka 2010: 39). For the local population living in the areas where Boko Haram operates, they find themselves between a rock and a hard place (Diplomat 1). This resonates with what one of my other respondents told me:

“I have lived in Nigeria for a long time, and nobody would tell you positive things about the police, we all know they are very corrupt, they are not very useful in terms of protecting civilians” (INGO 1, 22.02.17).

But despite of this government’s usual security strategy of violence and repression, there was ironically no measures taken against Boko Haram until 2009. There are two main reasons for this; the Nigerian security forces were already overwhelmed by other crises in the country and they only perceived Boko Haram as a local problem. When Nigeria saw the end of the military rule in 1998, there was an increase in clashes of communal, religious and ethnic character. The military rule had been able to suppress aggression between the different groups in the Nigerian society, but now it all came for a day. This is exemplified by more than 200 violent conflict clashes only in 1999. Under the military rule, the public sphere had been strictly constricted and as such preventing both interest and political groups from expressing their views. These grievances all came up to the surface, and even the city of Jos in Plateau state, which was known for its peaceful relations between various ethnic and religious groups, saw the outbreak of extensive violence (Akinola 2015: 18). The situation became so serious in the Plateau state, that there was announced a state of emergency lasting for six months in 2004 (IRIN 2004). The enormous amount of conflict in Nigeria in the beginning of the 2000s, were overwhelming to the police force in the country, more especially since their ability to police a democratic country had been weakened under the military rule (Akinola 2015: 18). This resonates with the arguments of one of my respondents who posits that due to the inter-ethnic and religious crises in the country at that time, these conflicts were the top priority for the security forces:

“So even though...Sharia and poverty and religion were going on in the north, the priority all over the country was to quell the violence of religious and ethnic clashes. So the security forces did not place emphasis on solving Boko Haram issues... Nobody paid attention to them” (Researcher 6, 08.06.17).
A key moment of the Boko Haram, was thus the response, or rather lack thereof, from the government. It was not as if the authorities did not know about the group’s existence, as there is indications that the Department of Security Services had been receiving intelligence from as far back as 2002-2003. The director within the department in Borno state had sent numerous reports to the headquarters, warning them about what was going on, but the reports were never acted on (Researcher 2). According to Onuoha (2010: 61), as many as 21 security threats and reports had been forwarded by the State Security Services to the government, but the government paid deaf ears to the information they received. Instead, the security agencies focused their attention on the militancy in the Niger Delta, and Boko Haram did not become a priority until 2009, when their violent activities exceeded that of other movement’s at the time. Additionally, an agreement had been made in the Niger Delta securing relative peace and amnesty for those involved, thus freeing security resources. This is not to say that Boko Haram had not engaged in violence before 2009, as they had already back in 2003 had occasional clashes with the police (Researcher 2). The difference with Boko Haram was that it was considered a “local problem”, and with no resources in the north, the government did not perceive it to be of importance. It is therefore tempting to conclude that there was a lack of political will to “nip a condition propitious to crisis in the bud” (Onuoha 2010: 61). Another respondent also airs his frustration over the lack of response from the government. However, he argues that there are also internal mechanisms that would have kept the army from intervening effectively:

“The chain within the Nigerian army is so weak that even if you had a strategy, they would not implement it, because local commanders do whatever they want, and there is total impunity. Rape a girl, no problem. Kill a civilian, no problem. Come on, carry on, it’s been like that since the Biafra war and especially during the military regime. ...I have interviewed very high ranking officers in the army, they admit they don’t control the rank and files” (Researcher 1, 10.03.17).

With commanders not being in control of their rank and files, there is no wonder the tactics seen when the Nigerian government finally decided to address Boko Haram, were brutal and counterproductive (Walker 2012: 12). It was not until the group’s existence became too embarrassing for the Nigerian government that they warranted a crackdown of the group (Akinola 2015: 19). As such, the weakness in the institutions of politics and the security
services in Nigeria resulted in such threats as those posed by Boko Haram, not being taken seriously until violence was a certainty. Walker (2012: 2) thus argues that “only when a politician in control of a state is convinced that such a threat cannot be bent to his advantage will he order any action to be taken against it”. This kind of institutional weakness results in the use of violence towards such threats. Walker claims that it was under these circumstances that Boko Haram was created (ibid). After neglecting the evolvement of Boko Haram in the north for so long, when the government finally decided to address the group, instead of looking at it as a “northern problem”, it was now viewed as a “military problem”. Thus, instead of looking for ways to address the key root causes having led to the group’s emergence, the Nigerian security agencies looked for a military solution. Combating Boko Haram from this perspective led to an inadequate and ineffective counterstrategy, which instead seems to have been counterproductive as it fueled the movement’s radicalization. As many perceived members were detained without trial and the Nigerian security services were carrying out gross human rights abuses, it created more resentment and distrust towards the security services in the Muslim population (Gray and Adeakin 2015: 197). The killing of several hundred of the group’s members, including the extrajudicial murder of Mohammed Yusuf in 2009, also further escalated the conflict (Mohammed 2014: 25). Boko Haram had since its inception based its legitimacy on the corrupt police and how they were after the Muslim population. This views were reinforced by the killing of Yusuf and the crackdown of the group.

The killing of Yusuf, which was believed by the security agencies to be the end of Boko Haram, ended up being the complete opposite. The brutal measures taken by the security agencies only seem to have created further resentment and distrust towards them, while generating sympathy and recruits for Boko Haram (Gray and Adeakin 2015: 197). The murder of Yusuf marks the end of the relatively peaceful period of the movement, and also a lost opportunity for the Nigerian government to solve the issue. Several of my respondents mentioned the extrajudicial killing of Yusuf being a shame, as one will never get solid answers about some of the underlying causes of the emergence. One of them noted:

“The fact that he got killed destroyed all the possibilities for the Nigerian authorities to negotiate; he was close to Sheriff, and he was not against talking to secular authorities. And I think it would have been possible to negotiate, or to avoid, the
violence that spread later. Once he was dead, this possibility was gone” (INGO 1, 22.07.17).

One last point worth noting regarding the repressive capacity of the Nigerian government is the challenges between the federal government and the state levels. When twelve of the northern states implemented Sharia in 2001, this resulted in a crash with the constitutional provision stating that “the Government of the Federation or of a State shall not adopt any religion as State religion” (Adesoji 2011: 110). The adoption of Sharia meant the introduction of dual legal systems in the affected states, something that created confusion as to which authority would be responsible for legal matters. After the country got the new constitution in 1999, it also kicked off a range between the states and the federal government regarding what are the states’ rights vis a vis the federal government (NGO worker 2). The federal government had done little or nothing to address the conflict from the outset. The state government was ruled by the opposition, while the federal government was ruled by the ruling party, something that also made it problematic for the president to address the issue. This resulted in constant allegations towards the government’s perceived unwillingness to handle the issue (INGO 1). This view resonates with one of my other respondents, who claim that the conflict simply did not get much attention at the federal level. The north was looked upon as no man’s land, far from the booming business areas of Lagos and the oil in the southeast, as there was no resources of interest in the north. The federal government probably never understood the magnitude of the clashes, and as such, the conflict was never seen as a national issue (Diplomat 1). For practical issues, this becomes a problem relating to the personnel and infrastructure in Nigeria. The police, for example, are controlled at the federal level, and not by the various states (Marchal 2012: 4). The promotion of deploying police officers outside the region they originate from, and rather placing them in regions where they do not speak the local language or know the traditional customs, has resulted in the police being unable to build grassroots connections with the population in order to maintain law and order. This practice has led to clashes between the local population and the police, and led to animosity between them (Pérouse de Montclos 2016: 884; Marchal 2012: 4). This resonates with the view held by one of my respondents:

“In Nigeria, when you are from the southern states, you are very likely to be posted in northern Nigeria. This is how many Christians from the South, South East, are posted as policemen or soldiers in northern Nigeria where they don’t know anything about
It is surely a paradox that you have a situation where the police officers in charge of the security of a population, cannot relate to the same people. If the police is not able to contain the public, the Nigerian army takes over. However, the army is not trained in riots in urban settings, and thus often employ too heavy-handed tactics. This again led to the sympathy for Boko Haram increasing among a local population exposed to these violations (Marchal 2012: 5). As such, the security agencies mismanaged the situation with Boko Haram from the outset (Mohammed 2014: 24).

It thus becomes clear that it was both the lack of repressive capacity of the government in Boko Haram’s early years that allowed the movement to grow, and the brutal force used in 2009 that radicalized the movement further. With security agencies that are involved in human rights abuses against the local population, it is not surprising that the Nigerian people are very skeptical towards the police and army. Boko Haram’s initial activity was first looked upon as a local problem, in addition to the Nigerian authorities being occupied with conflicts in other parts of the country. This indifference shown by the federal government is most likely also affected by the lack of resources in the northern region.

5.3 Framing

Framing refers to how Boko Haram has presented the problems through their discourses and practices: the causes, solutions and means of action that they have derived from the perceived problem and how they have used these frames in order to mobilize (Benford and Snow 2000). Framing theory focuses on how movements, such as Boko Haram, construct, produce and disseminate meaning (Borum 2011: 18). Frames provides the link between the structural conditions and the mobilization of protest. As such, the mobilization of resources and political opportunities are not enough to mobilize the population, there is also the need for a master frame that resonates with the local population (Snow and Benford 1992: 143). In order to mobilize, people must feel both aggrieved by something and have trust in the potential of collective action in solving this problem (McAdam et al. 1996: 5). Boko Haram’s worldview fuses two broader ideas; the religious exclusivism that opposes all other value systems, such
as democracy, westernization and secularization. Second, there is a politics of injustice and victimhood, where Boko Haram frames their fight as a mission for emancipation from a historical persecution against Muslims in Nigeria (Thurston 2016: 5). This, I argue, explain why the movement was able to mobilize as many followers as they did.

5.3.1 Boko Haram’s diagnosis of the Nigerian society

One of the core framing tasks is that of diagnostic framing, which is problem identification and attributions (Benford and Snow 2000: 615). Numerous studies have called attention to the ways movement identify the “victims” of a given injustice and seek to amplify this victimization. This results in what has been conceptualized as “injustice frames” as a mode of interpreting the actions of an authority as unjust (ibid). This is also true for Boko Haram, where one has seen the employment of these injustice frames. Boko Haram’s narratives were framed within the Islamic discourse that was seen worldwide at the time, but with a Nigerian twist. Mohammed Yusuf outlined the sect’s narratives through his sermons, and these narratives built on the rejection of Western education, democracy, secularism and Westernization as a whole (Mohammed 2014: 14).

Since social movements seek to change or alter problematic issues within the society, it follows that their action is contingent on the identification of causality, blame and culpable agents. As such, this part of diagnostic framing, focuses on placing blame or responsibility (Benford and Snow 2000: 616). As I argue in the introduction, Boko Haram’s critique against Western education encompassed in their rhetoric is about more than just Western education in itself. It is also a rejection of the whole Western civilization, and with it, Boko Haram does not only hold the Western educational system responsible for the deplorable situation in Nigeria, but rather the totality of Western culture and civilization. Contrary to popular belief, Yusuf did not actually oppose all Western knowledge, as he asserted that seeking knowledge is permissible as long as it does not contradict the teachings of Islam. To Yusuf then, “any knowledge that contradicts the [principles of] Islam is not allowed by Allah…” (Yusuf, cited in Onapajo and Uzodike 2012: 27). However, in a debate with a well-known Sheikh, Yusuf was asked what his views on Western education were and he responded:

“Western education is the body of knowledge that came to us through European colonialists, and includes medicine, technology, geography, physics and so on. And of
course the English language. They can all be used if they do not clash with the teachings of the Prophet Mohammed (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and we can teach these subjects to our own children in our own schools, so long as they do not contradict Islamic teachings. If they do, then we should discard them” (Yusuf, cited in Mohammed 2014: 16).

Hence, this is in line with the argument that Yusuf and Boko Haram did not completely reject Western education, as long as it was not in accord with the Islamic teachings. However, many subjects were considered haram, and were according to Yusuf categorically forbidden:

“I have a book that discusses the knowledge of geography, geology and sociology. These branches of knowledge are not knowledge but full of unbelief. Even those studying it are aware if they are fair to Allah, except if they haven’t studied Islam. If you have read geography, you’ll know that in geography there is danger. If you have studied Islam, you’ll know, whoever you are, that in sociology there is danger” (Yusuf, cited in Mohammed 2014: 18).

One of Yusuf’s main points was that Western education amounts to unbelief, and as such, Western education is destructive to a society that is supposed to be built on Islamic values. Yusuf and Boko Haram rejected schools that blended the government curricula with the religious teachings. He also argued that the schools would lead Muslim children to become more similar to the Christian and Jewish children, and with children of the opposite genders mixing at school, this would function as a promotion for “fornication, lesbianism, heterosexuality, and other [corruptions]” (Yusuf, cited in Thurston 2015: 15). Yusuf argued that the “Christianizing schools” that came out of colonialism, had a possible material gain that had blinded the Muslim population. This love for the schools had made Muslims blind to the fact that they contradicted Islamic law, claimed Yusuf (ibid). As such, this is in line with Boko Haram’s injustice frames, where they blame Western education and civilization for the corruptions in the Northern Nigerian society. Consequently, they portrayed the Muslim population in the north as victims of these injustices. The same criticism was directed at the democratic rule in Nigeria:
“We see a state in which Muslims are living, but they refuse the Islamic shari’a in its totality, and put in its place the system of democracy. And we see people with the name ‘ulama’ [scholars] calling for democracy and defending it, and making ugly refutations against the people who call others to follow the law of Allah” (Yusuf, cited in Thurston 2016: 15-16).

Yusuf warned his followers of the dangers of democracy, such as the fact that democracy positions the people as an authority and that this put them in rivalry with God. Moreover, he argued that while Islam demands obedience to the scriptures, majority rule allows for agreement on an error. With democracy, Yusuf argued, multiple evils came about, cloaked as freedoms, such as “freedom of belief”, which would just result in more people leaving Islam. As such, not only was it a must for a Muslim to condemn democratic rule; rather, the true Muslim had to oppose it, as democracy “is the school of the infidels” (Yusuf, cited in Thurston 2016: 16). Yusuf held the view that the social system in Nigeria was an imposed one, and when asked a question regarding the coexistence in the history of Islam, he argued:

“Kafirci [unbelievers’ social system] was never imposed on the Prophet (SAW), he came and met it and gradually turned it into an Islamic state but our land was an Islamic state (Northern Nigeria) before the colonial masters turned it to a Kafir land. The current system is contrary to true Islamic beliefs” (Yusuf, cited in Onapajo and Uzodike 2012: 27).

This statement also refers to the injustice experienced by the Muslim population, as the colonial powers brought with it Christianity, secularism, Western education and democracy, resulting in the change of the political and economic structures in the country. This resonates with the views of one of my respondents:

“I would say that they more or less propose an alternative to the story of the nation state...And it’s all hinged on theological provisions, and they say that the nation state is not eternal in the same way that the brotherhood is eternal. It is really hinged on finding any alternatives to the idea of Nigeria. And stating there that we can do better if we do it ourselves” (NGO worker 3, 21.02.17).
As a result of this, the members of Boko Haram did not want to be involved with the government or any structures of modern establishments, as they blamed them for working against Islam. They claimed that the whole structure of the modern establishment was against Islam, as it prevented Muslims from observing their prayers. As a continuation of this, earning a living from these establishments were also considered forbidden, as was various technological gadgets. The state employees were seen as Western agents, promoting Western culture, as the state was perceived as the major promoter of Western ideas in the Nigerian society (Onapajo and Uzodike 2012: 27). To Yusuf, by being faithful to the constitution of Nigeria, one was subjecting oneself to a secular institution, something that amounted to unbelief. Thus, in his view, all the people who abided by the Nigerian constitution and laws within the secular system, was an unbeliever. As a necessary continuation, anyone who work to serve such a government that is not based on Sharia, is illegitimate (Mohammed 2014: 16).

Boko Haram also saw the ‘yan boko, the educated political elite in Northern Nigeria, as not being real Muslims (Higazi 2015: 313; Walker 2012: 7). Rather, these were looked at as Muslims “…who had their head turned away from Allah by easy money and corrupting Western values” (Walker 2012: 7) According to Boko Haram, these elites were simply a product of an educational system influenced by Christianity. In addition they were seen as a part of a non-Islamic system of government and politics, where secularism was the rule (Higazi 2015: 313). As such, being ‘yan boko refers to a person that is both morally and spiritually corrupt and guilty of neglecting the umma (community), in the process of criminally enriching themselves (Walker 2012: 7). The behavior of the elitist political class in the north of the country did not make it hard to argue that they were defenders of a political and economic system that forfeited a secular world view, as they were involved in rampant corruption and mismanagement of funds (Higazi 2015: 313). This fits well with the assumption that movements diagnose problems and place responsibility, in this case on the government and the political elites in the Nigerian society.

With this in mind, it might seem like a paradox that Yusuf and Boko Haram were closely knit to the former governor of Borno state, Ali Modu Sheriff, and that they also received financing and support from him and possibly other northern politicians. Moreover, while the sect abhorred the Western world and all that came out of it, the lifestyle of Yusuf featured many Western goods, and Onuoha argues that “his life was Western in all but name” (2010: 62).
While his followers lived in poverty, he lived in affluence, and it was reported that food found in his house were imported canned foods (ibid). The group’s use of video cameras, mobile phones and cars show that they are more than willing to use “the fruits of Western education” when it was beneficial for them. As such, Walker argues, Boko Haram, as a group, is clearly not rejecting the modern world completely (Walker 2012: 7).

This shows that Boko Haram diagnosed the Nigerian society and put blame on those they deemed responsible for the situation in the country; the political elite, those with a Western education and the Western civilization as a whole, the democratic institutions and the secular Nigerian government. The next section analyzes what Boko Haram was going to do to solve these problems.

5.3.2 Prognostic framing and suggested solutions

The second core framing task, prognostic framing, involves the proposed solution to the problem, a plan of attack and the strategies for carrying out the plan. In other words, it poses the question of what is to be done (Benford and Snow 2000: 616). As such, where diagnostic framing is concerned with problem identification, the prognostic framing tackles the problem resolution (Snow and Benford 1992: 137). Yusuf argued that carrying out the “plan of attack” would in no way be easy, as only a few people rightly guided by Allah would make it. Yusuf told his followers:

“In the process they will abuse you, call you names and some of you may even die. They will shoot some of you, and we will just pray “may Allah give you aljanna” [Paradise] and proceed without any qualms. Can we endure? We ought to endure. May Allah give us the will to endure? This is how our dawah is. Patience: this is what we need, brothers. And perseverance upon the truth. Allah is watching us. Victory is certain. What we lack are the helpers. We are not yet primed for victory, but we are working towards getting ready for victory. This is what we are looking for, brothers. This is an incipient dawah, but it cannot be crushed. It cannot be killed. If we really stand by what the Prophet says we should stand by, even if we die in the process, this dawah will continue – even after a hundred years. Once the truth comes out, you are in trouble” (Yusuf, cited in Mohammed 2014: 15).
It thus seems that Yusuf was by no means ignorant about the fight the group had ahead of them. The proposed solution to the moral and economic deprivations that Boko Haram saw in the Nigerian society, was the gradual implementation of an Islamic state. The group insisted on a unitary view of society, where there is no difference between the state and the religion. To Boko Haram, all Muslims belong to the same *umma*, and thus perceive the idea of a secular state as atheistic (Adesoji 2010: 111). As such, the group’s mission can also be seen as cleaning up a Nigerian society that is polluted by Western education and values. Where Western society had gone wrong, Yusuf would lead his followers on the right path (Walker 2012: 8). Or as one of my respondents called it; they would do the “walk of Allah” (Local government 1). Moreover, since the society had become morally bankrupt, devout Muslims should rather migrate to an isolated area and establish an Islamic society. Here there would be no political corruption and moral deprivation. Those who were not members of the movement would thus be considered *kuffar* (disbelievers; those who deny the truth) (Onuoha 2010: 57). The failure of the governance was also addressed, and this was thus a system that had to be discarded (Adesoji 2010: 111). It follows from this that Boko Haram in its early days promoted a secluded and isolated community where their followers could live according to the tenets of Islam, while their organization would grow and grow until it would replace the actual state (Walker 2012: 9).

In addition to Yusuf’s proposed solution to the moral deprivations in the Nigerian society, he also consistently addressed the economic situation in Northern Nigeria. Yusuf saw democracy as having inflicted poverty onto the Muslim population, and this was also due to the country having adopted the Western education system and Western values. A solution to this, was also the employment of a strict Sharia system. If only such a system came into place, he argued, prosperity would flow naturally for the members of the group, something that would allow them to finally take over mainstream society (Walker 2012: 8). As such, Boko Haram did a prognosis on the Nigerian society, and decided that the plan of attack would be the implementation of strict Sharia. They further argued that this would rid the Northern Nigerian region of both moral and economic grievances. This made a compelling case for the “injustice” experience that many of the Muslims in northern Nigeria had, and the group was thus able to create identities were they separated “themselves” from the “others” (Snow and Benford 1988). They had laid out a solution to the problems experienced by the Muslim population, which resonated well with the local people.
The solution to the situation that the Muslim population found themselves in, was according to Boko Haram, the implementation of Sharia. And not the partial implementation that was seen in 2000, but rather the strict and full implementation of Islamic law. Although Boko Haram certainly had a clear vision of what they did not want, it was less clear how they were going to solve these problems (Researcher 3, Researcher 5). In fact, most my respondents agree in terms of Boko Haram lacking a master plan in order to fix all the wrongs they saw with the Nigerian society. Regardless, the implementation of Sharia and the gradual development into an Islamic state seem to have been Boko Haram’s vision for the future.

5.3.3 Motivational framing and the battle for the hearts and minds of the people

Whereas the first framing task of Boko Haram was to diagnose the Nigerian society and the second task was to offer solutions to the problems, the last core framing task, provides a “call to arms” or a reason to engage in collective action. This also includes the construction of vocabularies of motive (Benford and Snow 2000: 617). The process of motivational framing is important, without giving people a reason to engage in collective action, there would be no social movement. In order to mobilize people, Yusuf understood that his rhetoric would have to appeal to the political, social and economic situation in northern Nigeria. He therefore, consequently, criticized the corrupt politicians and those in the region loyal to the federal government. Boko Haram presented itself as a victim of an oppressive state, and as voice for the neglected Muslim community (Thurston 2016: 17). Yusuf thus created a recursive process where Boko Haram framed their messages in ways that would better resonate with the interests, attitudes, and beliefs of the people in the north (Borum 2011: 18). Boko Haram tried to convey a story about how it felt to be a Muslim in Nigeria, and this story narrated how Muslims were losing ground due to immorality in the population (Thurston 2016: 17). This story activated fears among the Muslim population that from a historical perspective had experienced big changes in their communities. One of my respondents reflects around why people joined the movement:

“...you have this movement that was going on where people were sick and tired and frustrated with everything that was going on in the country. So more and more people were becoming anti-government, right, and then you had people like Mohammed Yusuf, who would come and lecture, you know, talk along those lines, being very anti-
government. And talking about taking our country back, changing the system...So he’s saying we are adopting cultures that are not our own, we are adopting systems of governance that are not our own, and the systems of governance are corrupt, and this is why we are in the situation we’re in. So for the average Nigerian, this is what you want to hear, right?” And because you already have affiliation to a particular religious movement, you’re now saying yes, this is what the Sharia says, this is what we should do” (NGO worker 1, 16.02.17).

To many of the people in northern Nigeria, democracy had not delivered on its promises, and the concept of Western modernization had reached a “dead end” when it came to securing the wellbeing of the population. There was also a harsh competition over resources amongst the elite, excluding the majority of the population from taking part in the formal economy. Sharia could be a viable alternative since it was the law of God, and thus is the same all over the world and affects rich and poor the same (Harnischfeger 2014: 36). This also resonates with the view of one of my respondents:

“There was a strong sense that the Muslim ‘umma was being misled by leaders, at various levels of government; federal, state and local in Nigeria, so they considered themselves as individuals putting together a vanguard for the defense of Islam and the practice of a puritanical version of Islam within their enclave...And keep in mind that the idea of the ummadi, of an individual coming in every 100 years to renew Islam, is central to their belief system. So they saw that as evidence of what was promised, so they are drawing on fairly well-established doctrinal beliefs within the faith” (Researcher 2, 07.03.17).

And this is an important point when looking at how Boko Haram managed to frame their message on the basis of already existing beliefs. Anxieties in the Nigerian Muslim communities have a well-established intellectual basis, due to two aspects. Firstly, there is a belief that every century a mujaddid (reformer) will appear and transform the Muslim community. Secondly, towards the end of time a Mahdi will appear and lead the Muslim population to triumph over the enemy of Islam and mankind (Last 2008: 41). As such, there is

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18 In Islam there is a popular belief that a spiritual and temporal leader, the Mahdi, will rule before the end of the world and restore both religion and justice.
also a belief among Muslims that one should not wait, but actively prepare oneself for this
day and for the “revolution”. The many changes in Northern Nigeria and what some have
called the “modernization shock”\(^{19}\) have led to a greater sense of self-preparation.
Consequently, many Muslims have an urge to alleviate these anxieties, which many sought to
do with the introduction of Sharia (Last 2008: 58). One of my respondents clarifies:

> “Boko Haram is drawing on a trans-historical, trans-generational angst against
> Western education...The way that they are able to harness those grievances, some of
> them quite legitimate, particularly the failure of the state to provide for its citizens,
> they have been able to tap into that” (Researcher 2, 07.03.17).

This anxiety within the Muslim population became important for Yusuf and Boko Haram. Yusuf argued that Europeans were destroying Islam and its values, and that Western
civilization had in fact created the situation they were now facing in Northern Nigeria. He
described their predicament as a consequence of the northern region having betrayed God,
and as a result of this, they were living in a society “visited upon by poverty, jealousy, fear
and Muslim chiefs who are also wicked politicians” (Yusuf, cited in Zenn 2014: 103). The
only solution to this was an Islamic state, administered according to the principles of Sharia.
According to Boko Haram, all Muslims belong to the same umma, which will redeem them
from the imposition of secularity that reduces them to second-class citizens (Adesoji 2011:
111). Since the citizens in Nigeria has never found a way to hold their rulers accountable to
the people, the only hope they have is that the politicians will leave the authority to God
(Harnischfeger 2014: 36). Yusuf preached about how the Europeans secularized Nigeria:

> “European Scholars came and completely changed the history of Islam, claiming that
> even the Prophet of God came not to establish Islam or a political State, but to fight a
> tribal war. As such, they abolished the Caliphate and confused the unintelligent and
> unfaithful...When Europeans were withdrawing from most Muslim countries and
> handing over power to the citizens, they separated religion from politics, arguing that
> religion has no role in the administration of political power. This became the faith of
> those who took power from the colonialists. They insisted on the secular nature of the

\(^{19}\) Loimeier (2012: 139) argues that this modernization shock was brought on by several factors, such as colonial
rule, the introduction of Western education and the economic situation that followed the colonial period.
contemporary state and established democracy and human rights of all sorts in different places. Islamic flags and symbols were replaced with national flags and symbols. The Shari’a, Qur’an and Sunna were replaced with secular law” (Yusuf, cited in Zenn 2014: 103).

These arguments got resonance in the northern population, as they had seen for themselves the consequences of secularization. To them, this was evidence that a secular state could not provide for them economically or morally. This becomes understandable to everyone when looking at the challenges facing the region. With high rates of poverty and unemployment, extreme population growth, low levels of literacy, rampant corruption and inadequate service delivery a widespread disaffection had spread among the population. The existence of endemic political corruption at all levels also led to a populace increasingly hostile towards the Nigerian government (Tonwe and Eke 2013: 237). In times of crisis and uncertainty, Mohammed argues that “…Muslim societies naturally react in religious terms” (2014: 23). This is in line with the argument of Falola, who claims that many Nigerian Muslims draw only on Islam for suggested solutions to the problems they see in the country. To the poor, who constitute the majority of the Muslim population in Nigeria, Islam is seen as the most effective vehicle they can use to express dissent and ideological and political cleavages (Falola 1998: 16). Consequently, Muslims gathering around the role of religion is not uncommon when they experience a situation of strain.

Yusuf played his cards right, and the initial social movement, was a movement that took care of orphans, widows and the vulnerable (Mohammed 2014: 23). By operating as a “state within a state”, with its own cabinet, religious police and offering welfare handouts such as food and shelter, it was easy for Boko Haram to mobilize people into their movement (Walker 2012: 3; Mohammed 2014: 23). Yusuf was able to activate the feelings of the Muslim population, that different groups, such as the state, the West and the Christians, had humiliated them, both inside Nigeria and around the world (Thurston 2016: 17). As such, this was a very successful way of clarifying the identities of the Muslim population in opposition to the “others”. Moreover, in difficult times it is easy to mobilize those who are vulnerable, especially by a charismatic leader such as Yusuf who preaches the brotherhood of all Muslims while fighting against the system that has excluded them. This message thus have a “natural appeal” (Mohammed 2014: 23). As such, Boko Haram framed their movement as the only alternative to the northern population.
Yusuf also accused the government of Borno of anti-Muslim violence, and argued that “…the government of Nigeria has not been built to do justice…It has been built to attack Islam and kill Muslims” (Yusuf, cited in Thurston 2016: 17). This kind of rhetoric played out well with the Northern Nigerian population, who had seen firsthand the brutality of the Nigerian security forces. This got even more resonance with the extrajudicial killing of Yusuf and numerous other members of the group. This argument is backed by one of my respondents:

“…the way he was killed was kind of a prophecy, cause he said it in one of his speeches. He said: they don’t respect us, they treat us like animals, they kill us like animals, and one day it’s gonna be me. And then he got killed like an animal. Because it is true, he was killed like a dog. He was assassinated, which is really humiliating in the Northern Nigerian context. He was wearing handcuffs, the image of his body where he was laying down on the street, blood everywhere. So it actually gave more strength to his discourse. His figure, his aura, had been reinforced by this assassination.” (INGO 1, 22.02.17).

As a result, after his death, the feeling among Muslims that the state systematically victimized them was enforced (Thurston 2016: 17). One could argue that the Nigerian security forces thus played right into the hands of Boko Haram with its actions, and amplified the whole injustice frame. When looking at the success of a movement to mobilize people, the empirical credibility of the framing is important, as it refers to whether there is an apparent fit between the framing and the events in the world (Benford and Snow 2000: 620). The whole motivational framing process by Yusuf and Boko Haram played on the perceived injustice and victimhood that the Muslim population in the north had endured both from the corrupt politicians on state and federal levels, in addition to the brutality shown by the security agencies. These injustices took place within a region that was caught in a vicious cycle of poverty, largely overlooked by the federal government due to there being no natural resources in the area. Boko Haram also framed their discourse according to historical anxieties within the Muslim population relating to exactly some of the developments they were seeing in Nigeria at the time. The motivational frames where thus both empirically true and relevant to the northern people, and it gave an extra push to mobilization. Yusuf and Boko Haram had given the Muslim population the most important reason of all to engage in collective action; namely the survival of the Muslim population – both in terms of economic power and their
ideological existence. As loyalty to religion is often more important than is loyalty to the state among many Nigerians, this was an easy choice. Especially since the northern Muslim population felt that the government had done nothing for them since the return to democracy.

The way Boko Haram used the injustice frames thus captured a wide following in Northern Nigeria, mostly because they were able to find scapegoats for all the problems in the north; Western education corrupted their Islamic morals, secularized Muslims had hegemony of Muslims and the Nigerian government was just a new representation of the old colonial power. As such, Boko Haram was able to “pin all of the economic, social and political troubles that people in the northeastern Nigeria faced on the Nigerian government” (Zenn 2014: 104). The creation of these injustice frames thus became successful in mobilizing people in the Northern Nigerian context.
6 Conclusion

This thesis has discussed to what extent social movement theory can explain the emergence of the movement that would later become known as Boko Haram. In order to answer this question, I have applied the theoretical framework, which includes the resources available to the group, the political opportunities in the country at the time the group emerged and how they framed themselves in order to mobilize the local population. In this chapter, I will first summarize the main findings in this thesis in section 6.1, and answer the research question by looking at the main findings in section 6.2. Additionally, some reflections around the generalization of the study and other possible causes relevant to the emergence of Boko Haram will be addressed briefly in section 6.3 and 6.4.

6.1 Summing up the study

This study has analyzed the emergence of Boko Haram by answering the research question: To what extent can social movement theory explain the emergence of Boko Haram? The theoretical framework for my analysis is that of social movement studies. Hence, in the introduction of thesis I argue that as the initial movement that was to be ascribed the name Boko Haram, was a social movement that had a common goal - the introduction of Sharia - and a common Muslim identity. Applying social movement theory to groups such as Boko Haram is a rather new phenomenon. The theory has come out of the West and is thus contextualized by Western societies, making generalizations and conclusions difficult. It is therefore important to customize the theoretical framework to fit the African reality.

In chapter two, I presented the historical background of Nigeria and the different narratives explaining the emergence of Boko Haram. The third chapter laid out the characteristics of the African state, and argued that Nigeria with its neopatrimonial networks follow quite a different logic than that in the West. I then go on to review the literature in the field on the emergence and evolution of Boko Haram, before I present the theoretical framework for the thesis; social movement theory. In chapter four I further contextualize the research design of the study, by presenting the respondents from my field trip to Abuja where I made use of semi-structured interviews. This was considered the best methodological approach, as I would get in-depth information from key respondents having excessive knowledge of Boko Haram. This was needed due to the limited and divergent secondary literature on the emergence of the
movement. However, the in-depth study of this case limits my ability to generalize my findings beyond the scope of this study.

The analysis in chapter 5 was divided into three main parts according to the theoretical framework. First, I consider the various resources available to the group, both in terms of money, personnel, organization and external resources. I then proceeded to investigate how the political situation was in Nigeria at the time of the emergence, and whether there were any “windows of opportunity” open at the time. This was done by looking at the openness of political institutions, the existence of political allies and the repressive capacity of the government. Lastly, the core tasks of framing in diagnosing, giving a prognostic and motivating people into collective action was applied. My empirical findings and secondary literature was then used to see whether the theories had any explanatory power. This far, these different social movement theories have been dealt with separately. However, the various factors are largely interlinked, as it is impossible to separate these three in the empirical world. In the continuation of this chapter I will thus discuss to what extent these three social movement theories together can give a clearer picture as to why Boko Haram emerged.

6.2 Main findings

What are then the main findings of this study when applying the theoretical framework to the semi-structured interviews and the secondary literature?

Firstly, it is important to keep in mind the historical legacy of Nigeria and how religion has played a major role there. Equally important is it to understand the socio-political and socio-economic situation in the country at the time of the emergence, especially in the northern region. Being aware of the history and challenges in North-East Nigeria, is key to understanding the theoretical implications. When analyzing the resources available to Boko Haram, it becomes evident that Yusuf and the rest of the group had multiple cards at hand. The analysis showed that Boko Haram had enormous potential when it came to both money, personnel and organization. Not only did they get financial support from Big Men of the political elite in the northeast, more especially then aspiring governor Ali Modu Sheriff, but they also received substantial sums of money from donations at the mosque, people selling off their land, house or shop, in addition to involvement in petty trade. Yusuf’s popularity also
saw the fruits of his popularity in terms of the mobilizing of personnel into the movement. The deplorable situation in the northeastern part of the country and the huge youth population without employment in the region, certainly did its part here. The mobilization of both funds and personnel was possible due to the fact that Nigeria had seen the end of military rule and the introduction of democracy in 1999. Even though the group did not have access to external resources from Saudi Arabia or other Muslim countries, the group did benefit from the porous borders to Cameroon and Niger, where several of their members came from. With a historical demand for Sharia in the north, Boko Haram could draw on several organizational resources within the region. Not only had numerous Islamic movements seen the light in the area, but the members also had experience with grassroot mobilization through earlier involvement in the Muslim associations and organizations. With the opening of political space that had been shut down by the military, the longstanding demand for Sharia resurfaced. As such, with the opening of contentious space, the northern politicians also took advantage of the situation in order to mobilize voters. The Muslim population was promised the implementation of strict Sharia, and as Muslim societies naturally react in religious terms in times of uncertainty and crisis, this had great appeal to the population (Mohammed 2014:23). The government did nothing to address the movement either, until 2009 when their activities became too embarrassing for the authorities. Once they did decide to address the movement, it came with a brutality that only resulted in the further radicalization of the group.

Due to the mobilization potential Boko Haram had, both in terms of resources they had, but also the political situation in the country at the time, it was easy for the group to establish a rhetoric that would resonate with the Northern Nigerian people. Boko Haram did not reinvent a Muslim cause in northern Nigeria, rather they drew on a lot of issues that predated their origin. Such as the antipathy to Western education and culture and the demand for Sharia, those were already present in the society. As such, the group managed to reactivate the fears and anxiety of the northern Muslims, and draw on Islam for the solutions to the country’s problems. In a country where the state is largely looked upon as “alien” to the people, and where it is more common to identify oneself in terms of tribe or religion, Boko Haram managed to offer an alternative to the population. In their diagnosis of the Nigerian society, Boko Haram held up Western education and civilization as the reason that the Muslim population was experiencing moral grievances. The adoption of Western values by the political elite in the country was blamed for the region’s rampant corruption and lack of
development. The solution was thus a society run completely by strict Sharia, where prosperity would come naturally to those belonging to the movement. With the historical experiences of the people, it was not hard for Yusuf and Boko Haram to employ these injustice frames. They were perceived by many as being empirically true, and thus they resonated well with the local people.

In order to understand the emergence of Boko Haram, it is important to understand that many factors are interlinked and play back at each other. As such, each theory simply give a glimpse into the emergence of Boko Haram. However, when analyzed together as a unified framework, the theories manage to shed light on the real causes of the emergence of the group. Applying the three different social movement theories on the case of Boko Haram, it becomes obvious that they all have explanatory power in various aspects regarding the movement’s emergence. A movement cannot function without any resources, and the resources became available to the group partly due to the opening of political space that the country saw with the opening after the end of military rule in 1999. However, the opening of political space would not have benefitted Boko Haram had it not been for the fact that Yusuf made use of the opening and framed the group’s goals in a matter that resonated with the local population of Northern Nigeria. Yusuf again would not have been able to gain the huge following he did without the organizational resources that enabled him to distribute his sermons throughout the northern region and the neighboring countries, which would again have had implications for the resources in terms of both money, personnel and external resources. The group’s initial fight against corruption and the political elite in the region, resonated with a population who had experienced economic, social and moral deprivations for decades. The will to get out of their current situation, coupled with Boko Haram playing on the existential angst present in the Muslim population, I argue is crucial in order to explain the emergence of Boko Haram.

6.3 Broader relevance of the results

Regarding the generalizability of my findings, I already argued in the methodological chapter of this thesis that case studies are less equipped to make broad generalizations. However, I will argue that although limited, this case study can make contingent generalizations to movements similar to that of Boko Haram. As this thesis has shown, social movement theory
is able to explain and contextualize the Nigerian situation where the group emerged. As the group is embedded in local dynamics, the understanding of the complex environment within Nigeria has been of utter importance. However, this is not unique to social movements emerging in the Nigerian context, and will also apply to all other movements who take on Islamic activism in a similar environment. While a social movement in Senegal might not necessarily have access to the same resources in terms of money and personnel, they might make use of stronger organizational resources and a government with a less repressive capacity. By applying the theoretical framework, the work of Islamic social movements will be further highlighted. The most important lesson from the Boko Haram case is that the emergence of the initial movement is extremely complex, with many important aspects to be taken into consideration. The case of Boko Haram also illustrates how dangerous it is when the sufficient measures are not taken in order to address the root causes of the emergence, even those root causes that predates the existence of the group. Additionally, it shows how in meeting a social movement with violence, it can lead to a further radicalization of the group.

The analysis of this case study has shown that resource mobilization, the political context and opportunities and Boko Haram’s framings, are interwoven. As these factors would have been very difficult to identify through a one-dimensional theory, it thus illustrates the importance of applying a more complex theoretical framework when investigating the emergence of such groups. Consequently, there is a need to “go inside the haze of dust” to reveal the true underlying causes of the emergence. Moreover, this study has shown and confirmed that social movement theory is indeed both suitable and useful when it comes to analyzing the emergence of social movements on the African continent. Thus, the theoretical framework would also serve as a good starting point for the studies of similar social movements. While social movement theory cannot explain the emergence in its entirety, it is more capable than monocausal theories to shine a light on the real causes of Boko Haram’s emergence.

6.4 Other factors influencing the emergence

There are many competing theories trying to explain the emergence and sustenance of Boko Haram. Through the literature review on Boko Haram in section 3.2, I have shown that the existing literature on the emergence of the group largely make use of monocausal theories that fail to consider the complexity of the emergence of this movement. These works deal with Boko Haram as a result of widespread poverty and relative deprivation in the north; as malfunctioning government services and corruption; an extension of the earlier Islamic
movement of Maitatsine and as a part of al-Qaida. By reducing the emergence of what later came to be one of the world’s most violent groups to one single factor, one fails to comprehend the emergence of new movements of similar types, and consequently implementing the right policies to avoid radicalization of members and escalation of violence.

That being said, the applied framework is not perfect and will certainly not allow us to understand all the underlying aspects as to why this movement emerged in Northern Nigeria. By choosing this triad of social movement theory, I might have missed out on other important factors, such as the importance of tension between the Sufi and Salafist doctrines. As I have simply chosen to analyze Islam as a vehicle which Boko Haram has used to mobilize the local population, and not as a root cause, it is possible that I have missed certain underlying factors. I have also not focused specifically on the poverty aspect in the region. I argued in section 3.3 that the poverty experienced in the northern part of Nigeria is certainly part of the emergence, but I have chosen to treat it more as a contextualization of the Nigerian society, rather than a root cause for the emergence. This is also true for the North South divide and the conflict between Muslims and Christians within Nigeria. The climate change and the battle over scarce resources in this aspect have also not been considered in this thesis, which is something that will obviously have a large impact on the northern society now with the humanitarian crisis in the north and around Lake Chad. The conflicts between herdsmen and farmers have also been a major cause of conflict in Nigeria that has been left out of this thesis. Lastly, as I have argued that the emergence and continuing conflict is of local character, I have not placed emphasis on the transnational aspect of the movement, and as such, I might have missed out on these.
References


Appendix 1: Respondents

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<td>Respondent 6: NGO worker 1</td>
<td>16.02.2017</td>
<td>Abuja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 7: CSO leader</td>
<td>28.02.2017</td>
<td>Abuja - Phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 8: NGO worker 2</td>
<td>21.02.2017</td>
<td>Abuja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 9: Researcher 4</td>
<td>06.03.2017</td>
<td>Oslo - Skype</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 10: Researcher 5</td>
<td>28.02.2017</td>
<td>Abuja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 11: Researcher 6</td>
<td>08.03.2017</td>
<td>Oslo - Skype</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 12: Local government</td>
<td>27.02.2017</td>
<td>Abuja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 14: INGO 2</td>
<td>24.02.2017</td>
<td>Abuja</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(The respondents’ reference numbers have been assigned according to their order of appearance in the text).
Appendix 2: Interview guide

(Questions in parenthesis only to be used if the issue is not addressed by the respondent in his/her initial response):

1. **On the respondent**
   - Full name (only seen by me before anonymization)
   - Work place, title/position, tasks
   - How long worked on Boko Haram?

2. **Resource mobilization:**
   - Who were the first members to join Boko Haram and from which layer of society did these come from? Has this changed in later years?
   - Do you think the members of Boko Haram have made a rational choice to become a member in the organization?
   - Can you make some generalizations about the people willing to join Boko Haram?
   - Do the people who join Boko Haram understand themselves to have a common interest or a common identity?
   - Which resources were available to Boko Haram in the beginning?
   - How was Boko Haram organized internally to take advantage of available resources?
   - How have they organized externally in order to gain support from the outside community?
   - What was the group’s mobilization and movement tactic in the beginning? Has this changed?
   - Was the group linked to other social movements or groups in the society?
   - How has the Nigerian government responded to the group?

3. **Political opportunities:**
   - How was the social and political situation in Northern Nigeria at the time Boko Haram emerged? In the whole of Nigeria?
   - Were there moments of closing-down or opening-up of political opportunities before or when the group emerged?
   - Were there any changes in Nigeria socially or politically before the group emerged?
   - How did these changes affect political opportunities in Northern Nigeria?
   - How can the political system in Nigeria be seen as an obstacle or a facilitator for Boko Haram?

4. **Framing processes**
   - How did Boko Haram portray themselves to the Nigerian people in the beginning?
   - How do they portray themselves to the Nigerian people now? Has anything changed?
- Has Boko Haram’s rhetoric changed from the beginning until now?
- How does the Nigerian people look at Boko Haram? (Difference in the perception in the north and the south?) Do they have any support in the North?
- Did the group’s beliefs and values resonate with the local people in the beginning? Has this changed?
- How did Boko Haram portray themselves in the media? What causes were they engaged in?
- Which strategies do they make use of in spreading their values?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Is there anyone else you think it might be useful for me to meet and interview?
Appendix 3: Glossary

Almajiri (pl. almajirai): Students of Islamic schools that are sent from their homes to study under Islamic teachers. The word itself means “immigrant”, and refers to the children coming from far away to study the Quran (Hoechner 2014: 63).

Dawah: The proselytizing or preaching of Islam (Mohammed 2014: 9).

Hijra: Refers to the migration of the Islamic prophet Muhammed and his followers from Mecca to Medina in 622. Today, this term is used as a term describing the necessary retreat from society to build and Islamic state (Store Norske Leksikon).

Hudud: is an Islamic concept where the punishment under Islamic law, Sharia, are mandated by God. The Hudud punishments range from public lashing, public stoning and amputation (Store Norske Leksikon).

Kharijites: The literal meaning being “those who went out”. This is a generic term for Muslim dissenters in the early history of Islam (Mohammed 2014: 19).

Salafism: Is often referred to as Wahhabism, as it is closely aligned to Wahhabism. However, Salafists do not like this comparison. Salafism is a movement within the school of Sunni Islam that is characterized by its literalist and puritanical interpretation of the Quran. Salafists study the basic sources of Islam, and wish to get rid of non-Muslim and external influences. Salafists are thus more prone to radical and fundamentalist ideology (Comolli 2015: 47-48).

Sharia – Arabic Islamic law based on both the teachings of the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet (Hadith and Sunna) (Store Norske Leksikon).

Sufi: This movement within Islam encompasses a set of rituals as well as certain beliefs; for example the belief in the existence of saints and gaining direct knowledge of God. The Sufi orders today are organized around a spiritual leader or sheikh (Pew Research Center 2012: 116).

Umma – Refers to the whole community of Muslims bound together by Islam (Store Norske Leksikon).
‘Yan boko: children of the book, used to refer to the educated elite created by the British
(Walker 2012:7)