

Framing Non-Violent Protest and Insurgency

Boko Haram and MASSOB in Nigeria

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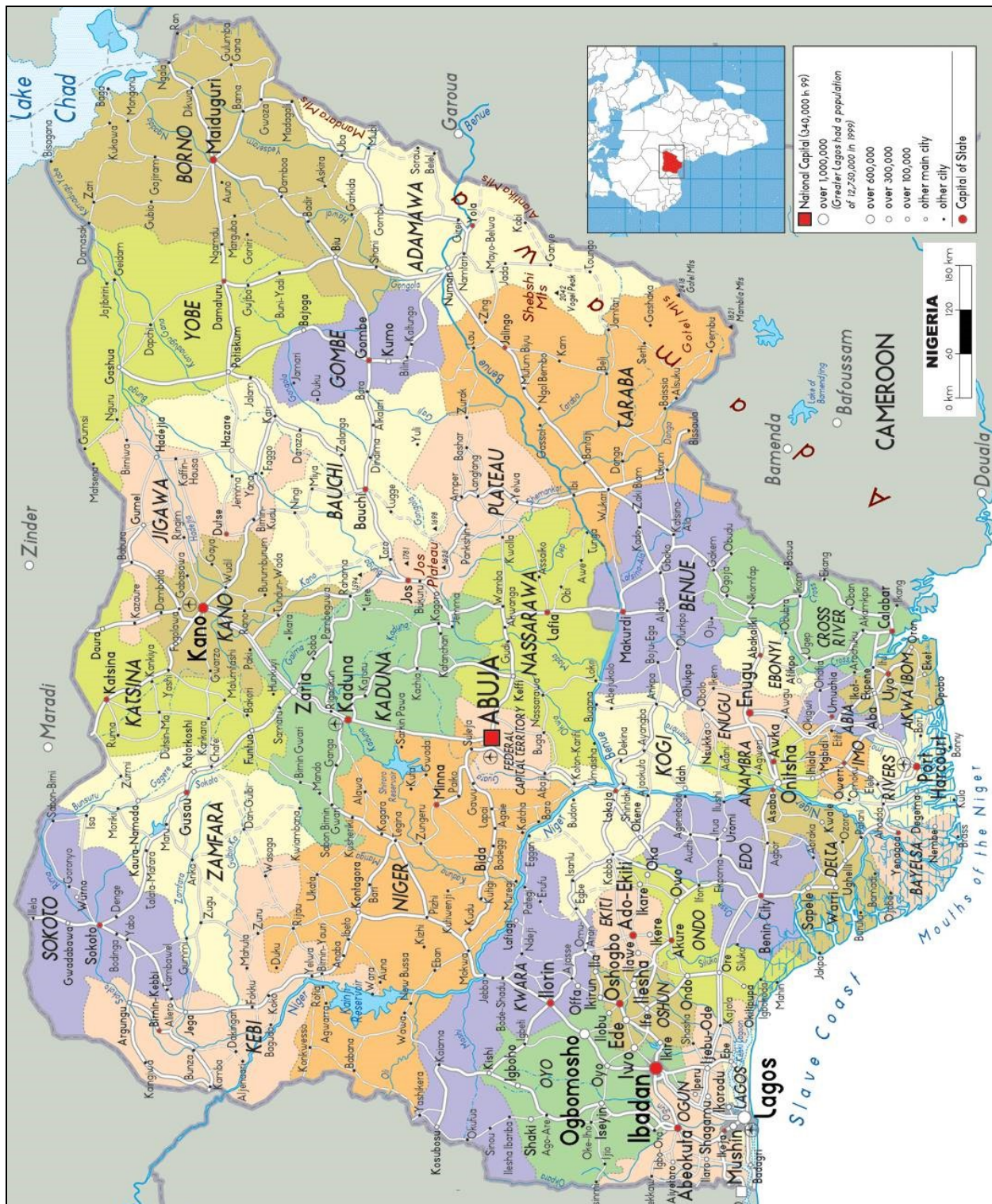
List of Abbreviations

AFP	Agence France Presse
AI	Amnesty International
AIYO	Association of Igbo Youths
APC	All Progressives Congress
AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
BAF	Biafra Actualization Forum
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BF	Biafra Foundation
BHRI	Bilie Human Rights Initiative
BIAMUBS	Biafra Must Be Society
BILIE	Biafra Liberation in Exile
BNYL	Biafra National Youth League
BZM/F	Biafra Zionist Movement/Federation
CAN	Christian Association of Nigeria
C-JTF	Civilian-JTF
DCCN	Da’wah Coordination Council of Nigeria
DHS	Demographic and Health Surveys
ESBS	Enugu State Broadcasting Service
FMG	Federal Military Government
GTD	Global Terrorism Database
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICG	International Crisis Group
IDP	Internally displaced person
IISS	International Institute for Strategic Studies
IMN	Islamic Movement in Nigeria
IPOB	Indigenous People of Biafra
IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Networks
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
JNI	Jama’atu Nasril Islam
JTF	Joint Task Force
MASSOB	Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra
MEND	Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta
MOSOP	Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People

MSS.....	Muslim Students Society
NARTO.....	Nigerian Association of Road Transport Owners
NBS.....	National Bureau of Statistics
NPC.....	National Population Commission
NST.....	Nigeria Security Tracker
OPC.....	O’odua People’s Congress
PDP.....	People’s Democratic Party
P-MASSOB.....	Progressive MASSOB
PRIO.....	Peace Research Institute Oslo
SCAD.....	Social Conflict Analysis Database
SCSN.....	Supreme Council for Sharia in Nigeria
SPSS.....	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SSS.....	State Secret Service
START.....	National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism
UCDP.....	Uppsala Conflict Data Program
UN.....	United Nations
UNDP.....	United Nations Development Programme
VOBI.....	Voice of Biafra International
VOPF.....	Voice of the People Foundation
YIM.....	Yusufiyya Islamic Movement

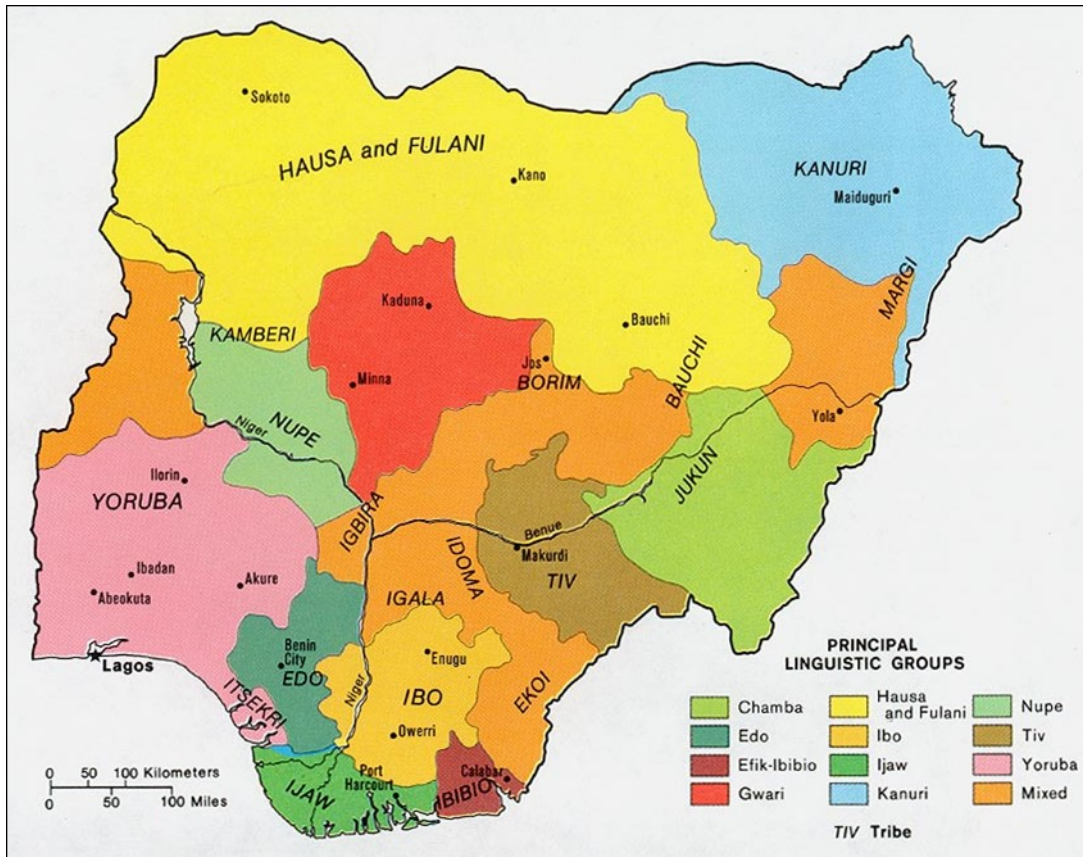
Maps

Figure 1: Political Map of Nigeria¹



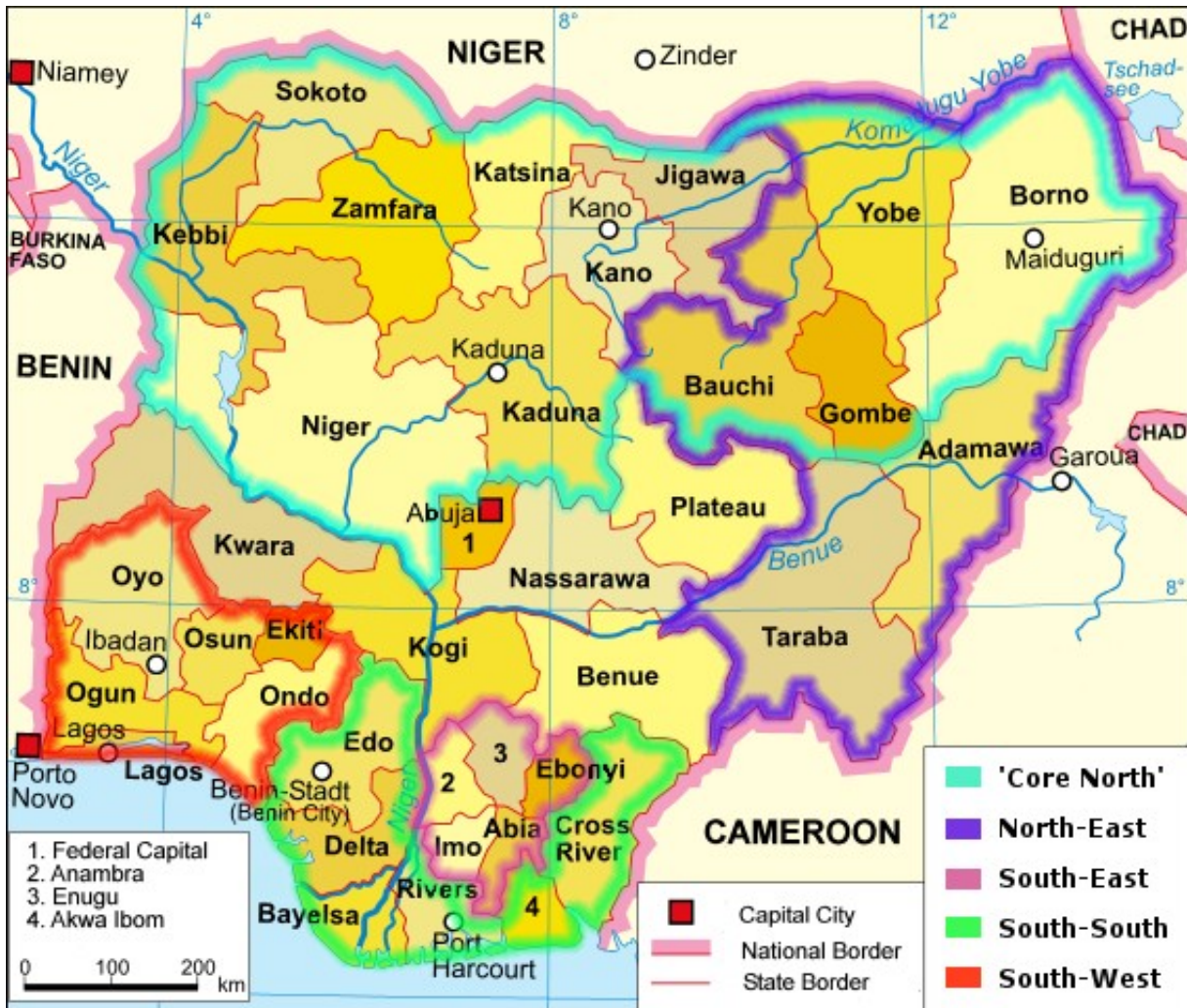
¹ The map was modified to re-place the legend. The original file was downloaded from: <http://www.ezilon.com/maps/images/africa/political-map-of-Nigerian.gif> (access date: 25 July 2015)

Figure 2: Linguistic Groups in Nigeria²



² This linguistic map gives an approximation of the spread and territorial concentration of the main ethnic groups in Nigeria. It was produced by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in 1979 and downloaded from: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/nigeria_linguistic_1979.jpg (access date: 25 July 2015)

Figure 3: Nigeria's Federal Structure (since 1996) and Main Regions of Interest³



³ The main regions of interest of this study were added to the map. Originally, the map was downloaded from: <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/5d/Nigeria-karte-politisch.png> (access date: 25 July 2015)

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1. Introduction

1.1. Theories on Rebellion Onset and Goal of this Study

Why does rebellion occur? Despite considerable research, this seemingly simple question has not yet been thoroughly answered. The dominant perspectives in explaining the onsets of civil wars are mostly structuralist and in many parts rationalist. In their understanding, rebellion occurs almost automatically once certain structural conditions are given and if an armed struggle can be assumed to be beneficial in the views of political-economic entrepreneurs. Three main approaches from this group of theories can be identified.

Rebellion Onset in Theory

The first of these research strands identifies Opportunity as the key factor driving the formation of armed groups and the occurrence of rebellion. The main argument is that rebellion is feasible and will occur if states lack the capacity to fend off opponents (e.g. due to state weakness), if the costs of organizing rebellion are low (e.g. because of weak economic structures, rough terrain, and external support for rebellion), and if there are even “spoils of war” to be made (Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Collier et al. 2009; Fearon and Laitin 2003).

Another strand of research, Grievances, has taken people’s motivation for rebellion into focus. It investigates structural circumstances that are frustrating to people and aggrieve them to the point of pursuing rebellion. This is mainly a social-psychological approach, which has also often been applied in rationalist reasoning, however. Grievances approaches have focused on (either “objective” or perceived) inter-group disparities in the distribution of wealth, access to political offices, and social and cultural rights as a driver of armed conflict (Stewart 2008a; Buhaug et al. 2014; Wimmer et al. 2009). Moreover, if groups and protest movements are violently repressed, this may – depending on the specific patterns of the repression and previous level of mobilization – reinforce frustration, cause anger, and get people ready to wage an armed struggle (Cronin 2009: 142-144; Della Porta 2013: 32-69; Wiktorowicz 2004b: 68-71).

Finally, with a particular focus on Sub-Saharan Africa, protest movements have often been violent – or refrained from it – depending on their integration into Patronage Politics (Chabal and Daloz 1999; Reno 2011). If co-opted or otherwise enmeshed into these networks, protest movements follow political-economic calculations of how to obtain patronage and act upon the directives of their “Godfathers.” Such co-opted protest movements maintain the

façade of a liberation struggle but are in fact “parochial rebels” who use violence when it is economically beneficial to them and their patrons (Reno 2011: 206-241).

Explanatory Strengths and Weaknesses of these Theories

The vast literature on these theoretical approaches has certainly contributed immensely to explaining when, where, and why armed groups form and fight by violent means. For instance, one look at Sub-Saharan Africa, which is typically seen as war-prone, shows that most countries on the continent, have indeed been at high risk of rebellion: The common risk factors of opportunity theory such as state weakness, mass poverty, and low counterinsurgency capacity are widely prevalent in the region. Also, many societal groups and protest movements share grievances about factual or perceived inequalities and have often been repressed in violent and arbitrary ways that are likely to escalate conflict. While some of these protest movements may have been co-opted and compromised, this does not necessarily predispose them towards non-violence. On the contrary, patronage networks set incentives for the use of violent means and reproduce other risk factors of armed conflict, in particular state weakness and mass poverty. Hence, most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are at a high risk of rebellion.

It is therefore unsurprising that such violent conflicts have occurred frequently in Sub-Saharan Africa and caused several millions of deaths in the past decades: No less than 81% of the countries in the region have experienced a smaller armed conflict and 44% even full-scale civil war at some point since their independence (UCDP/PRIO 2014b). In no fewer than 21% of the country-years either an armed conflict or civil war occurred.⁴ In many ways, this high incidence of warfare can be explained by the above-mentioned widely prevalent risk factors of armed conflict on the continent (Collier and Sambanis 2005; Williams 2011).

At a second look, however, the explanatory power of these theories can be doubted because, after all, violent conflict has still been relatively rare. For most of the time, most of the countries have been at peace: 79% of the country-years were peaceful years in which neither civil war nor minor armed conflicts took place; in even 93% of the country-years, no civil war took place (for sources, see footnote 4). The majority of the countries on the continent (56%) have never even experienced major internal warfare. Without doubt, there have been several devastating and tragically long violent conflicts, e.g. in Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Sudan. Fortunately, this has still been the exception rather than the rule: In most

⁴ The UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset (UCDP/PRIO 2014b; a: 15-19) does not record country-years. To obtain these numbers, the dataset was recoded into 2339 country-years (including all countries in the region since their independence).

cases, if armed conflicts occurred, they affected pockets of countries rather than the entire territory and population. Presently, most armed conflicts in the region are “Small Wars” (Straus 2012: 200): They involve “factionalized insurgents operating on the peripheries of states” who “rarely hold substantial territory” and only “involve small numbers of fighters.” The relative rareness of rebellion and the fact that most (especially recent) armed conflicts have been minor in scale and lethality has been puzzling from the theoretical perspective of rebellion research. Although the economic and political conditions in the region have certainly improved in many countries over the past few years (Lindberg 2008; Devarajan and Fengler 2013), this hardly provides an explanation. Overall, the mentioned common risk factors for rebellion – state weakness, extreme poverty, large unemployed youth populations, inter-group inequalities, arbitrary repression, and patronage politics – are still all-too-common on the continent. These observations suggest a need for theoretical refinement of rebellion research.

Evidently, under circumstances that make conflict escalation highly likely, movements’ protests have often been non-violent. Some of these non-violent struggles in the region have become widely-known, e.g. the mostly peaceful campaign against Apartheid in South Africa and the wave of protest against military rule during the early 1990s (Clark and Worger 2013; Bratton and van de Walle 1997). However, there have also been many more recent cases. Some of them have attracted international attention, e.g. the non-violent anti-government protesters that toppled rulers in Burkina Faso and Madagascar (and almost succeeded in Burundi) in the past few years. Other, ethnically-based ones have attracted less attention, for example the mostly non-violent liberation movements among the Anglophones (Cameroon), Katanga (Democratic Republic of Congo), Malinke (Guinea), Coastal people (Kenya), Ogoni (Nigeria), Zanzibari (Tanzania), and Lozi people (Zambia). The observation that there are plenty of such non-violent protests under circumstances that make conflict escalation probable, again, is puzzling from the perspective of the introduced theories on rebellion onset.

Research Question and Goal of this Study

The goal of the present study, therefore, is to refine the existing research on rebellion. It addresses the research question of *why rebellion occurs*. More precisely, *under circumstances in which conflict escalation is probable, why do some protest movements pursue their protest by violent means, whereas others protest peacefully?* Since the dominant theories take a largely structuralist perspective and tend to (over)emphasize rationalism, this study seeks to complement these theories by a micro-level perspective that investigates ideational aspects, in particular how protest movements construct meaning and mobilize people. One major difficulty in this regard is that these processes at the level of the movements are influenced in

many ways by the wider and structural circumstances. Therefore, this study places much emphasis on showing that there is *additional explanatory value in investigating these ideational micro-level processes in the context of the existing theories on rebellion onset.*

1.2. Cases and Research Puzzle

To investigate meaning-making at the micro-level in the face of the dominant explanations of rebellion research, this study analyzes two cases from Nigeria: Boko Haram and the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB). These protest movements provide great opportunities for testing and developing theories on rebellion: They have emerged in a similar political and economic setting in which conflict escalation has been highly likely; yet they have clearly protested using different strategies. While Boko Haram has waged an armed struggle since mid-2009, MASSOB has constantly propagated and pursued protest by non-violent means.

Key Terms

Before outlining the cases and the research puzzle in more detail, several key terms need to be briefly defined:

- *Rebellion, insurgency, armed/violent conflict, and civil war* (see also 2.1) all denote a sustained armed contestation between an organized non-state group and the state government, which leads to the loss of substantial numbers of lives on both sides (Sarkees et al. 2003: 58; UCDP/PRIO 2014a: 1-3). Some of these terms also have a more specific meaning:
 - Rebellion, insurgency, and civil war (used interchangeably in this study) describe forms of intense warfare, which is statistically defined by a minimum of 1,000 battle-related deaths per year (Sarkees et al. 2003: 58);
 - *armed conflict* refers to smaller violent contestations that cause 25-999 deaths from battle per year (UCDP/PRIO 2014a: 8);
 - *terrorism* is a tactic of an armed non-state (“terrorist”) group that operates clandestinely, perpetrates hit-and-run attacks, hides among the civilian population, and primarily targets civilians in place of government forces (LaFree and Ackerman 2009: 348; Hoffman 2006: 35-42).

- The concept of *conflict escalation* grasps the often extended process in which peaceful protest transforms into sustained violence (Ramsbotham et al. 2005: 11). It can be distinguished from rebellion onset, which treats the beginning of rebellion as point rather than process.
- *Protest*⁵, used here synonymously with (*contentious*) *collective action*⁶, denotes the sustained claims-making vis-à-vis the state government by non-state groups, organizations, and activists through non-institutionalized avenues (e.g. public rallies, sit-ins, consumer boycott, non-violent resistance, petitions, graffiti, etc.). While “protest” often implicitly means non-violent forms of contention, this study applies it as a cover term for *both* unarmed and violent protest (rebellion, armed conflict, terrorism, etc.).
- The study focuses on collective action in the name of and by *identity groups* (e.g. ethnic, religious, and communal groups). These can be defined as “people who share a distinctive and enduring collective identity based on a belief in common descent and on shared experiences and cultural traits” (Gurr 2000: 5).⁷
- Finally, borrowing from social movement research, *protest movement* is understood here as “collectivities acting with some degree of organization and continuity outside of institutional or organizational channels for the purpose of challenging or defending extant authority” (Snow et al. 2004: 11; emphasis removed). I use protest movement as cover term for both armed and unarmed activist groups.

Case Study Introduction

To outline the research puzzle, the cases need to be briefly introduced. Boko Haram is a Salafist group, which has its territorial base in Maiduguri (Borno State) and which has been

⁵ Della Porta and Diani (2006: 165, 191) define protest as “nonroutinized ways of affecting political, social, and cultural processes.” The expression “non-routinized” may be confusing considering that protest techniques can become established and routinized as well (so-called “repertoires of contention”). Thus, protest refers to tactics of claims-making other than the “conventional” forms of expressing political will (e.g. voting, litigation).

⁶ Contentious collective action encompasses the varied ways of claims-making “by people who lack regular access to representative institutions, who act in the name of new or unaccepted claims, and who behave in ways that fundamentally challenge others or authorities” (Tarrow 2011: 7). As broad category, this includes social movements, rebellion, riots, strike waves, revolutions, and so on.

⁷ In reality, the focus on groups is only an approximation as people are complexly interconnected based on varied shared beliefs and belongings (Brubaker 2002).

operating through a loose network of activists in many places across Northern Nigeria (for details, see 3.2 and Comolli 2015; Pérouse de Montclos 2014; ICG 2014). Founded around 2002 by the radical preacher Mohammed Yusuf as offspring of the broader *sharia* movement, Boko Haram has sought to mobilize the Muslim population of approximately 70 million in Northern Nigeria. It has aimed at imposing Islamic principles on the society and state. Initially, Boko Haram protested by non-violent means – with the exception of the small and short-lived violent uprising of the related “Nigerian Taliban” group in late 2003/04. In late July 2009, however, Boko Haram started an uprising. The protest was “crushed” within a few days by the Nigerian security forces. Sect founder Yusuf and hundreds of members were killed in the counterinsurgency. Yet this did not discourage the movement: In 2010, Boko Haram re-organized as an underground terrorist group led by Abubakar Shekau and has been waging a continuous insurgency since September 2010. The insurgency gradually evolved from the open uprising of July 2009 (first stage) via local hit-and-run attacks and increasingly coordinated terrorist assaults (second stage, mid-2010 to early 2013) to a phase of open, rural warfare in which Boko Haram occupied large parts of Borno State (third stage, early 2013 to early 2015). The insurgency and the counterinsurgency operations have created terrible devastation and human suffering in the North-East (for these regional geographic expressions, see Figure 3, p. xiii): About 17,000 people have already been killed and more than one million people displaced in the ongoing warfare (AI 2015b: 5).

MASSOB, in contrast, has been protesting by non-violent means on principle. The movement was founded amid Nigeria’s democratic transformation in 1999 by the young Igbo lawyer Ralph Uwazuruike (for details, see 3.3 and Onuoha 2011; Okonta 2012; Harnischfeger 2011). The movement strives for the renewed breakaway of the East in the name of Biafra, i.e. the former secessionist state, which already existed for about 2.5 years during the Nigerian Civil War (1967-70). MASSOB has sought to mobilize foremost the Igbo, who as Nigeria’s third largest ethnic group are counting about 30 million and have a high territorial concentration in the South-Eastern region. It has also sought to mobilize the minorities in the South-Southern region, which historically is a part of Biafra too, to join the renewed struggle, albeit with little success. Among Igbos, however, MASSOB has become widely popular. Its typical non-violent protest activities comprise public rallies (although this has become rare in recent years), hoisting the Biafran flag in public, calling on the Easterners to stay at home and boycott public life on a designated day of the year, and engage in advocacy at the international level. Also, several other Biafran organizations have emerged both in Nigeria and abroad, but at the time of writing this dissertation, the organization of MASSOB proper and the founder Uwazuruike

have still remained the key players. In spite of a few very minor incidents of violence over the years, MASSOB's protest has clearly been non-violent overall.

Research Puzzle

As can be seen, these movements clearly differ in their protest behavior: Boko Haram's protest has escalated into rebellion, whereas MASSOB's protest has not. This is puzzling and relevant regarding the identified gaps of rebellion research because the movements have risen and adopted these different protest strategies under similar structural circumstances that have made rebellion highly likely.

Regarding the typical risk factors of armed conflict, Nigeria is "ripe" for rebellion in many ways. In terms of Opportunity, rebellion is highly feasible due to the weak state structure, corrupt and undisciplined security forces, high poverty rate, low levels of general education, and large and youthful population that lacks adequate employment. Therefore, at least in theory, protest leaders could easily mobilize people for rebellion to fight for social justice or other goals. In fact, Zinn (2005) even suggested that in Nigeria it is not the incidence of civil war but its *absence* that needs to be explained. Also, Grievances about inequalities abound in Nigerian society and politics: Most importantly, the corruption of the political class has been a strong source of frustration to virtually every citizen in the country. Moreover, decades of Northern dominance under military rule created persisting grievances among Southern-based ethnic groups. Conversely, the higher level of economic development in the Southern part and perception of Southern political dominance have been sources of frustration to many in the Northern part. A main paradox of Nigeria is that – irrespective of the actual distribution of offices, wealth, and patronage – every major identity group seems to complain about being the most disadvantaged of all. In addition, the heavy-handed approach by the Nigerian security forces to repress discontent and nascent protest movements tends to further aggrieve the protesters and rather escalate protest than prevent it. Finally, Nigeria is a typical case for Patronage Politics. Many of the movements in the country pursue economic interest, rather than ideological aims, and often use violence for the purpose. All in all, there is much reason to assume that protest movements that emerged under these circumstances – such as Boko Haram and MASSOB – would turn to violent means.

Thus, it is puzzling that *under otherwise similar circumstances Boko Haram and MASSOB have differed in their protest behavior*. This observation is the starting point here to address the identified need for refinement of the existing theories on rebellion. In principle, there are two possible solutions to this puzzle:

- (1) A more detailed and micro-level analysis of the structural circumstances in which these protest movements emerged may identify important sub-state variation in terms of Opportunities, Grievances, and Patronage Politics. In fact, it has often been criticized that these theories were developed and tested mostly on indicators at the national level. Yet, opportunities for action, the grievances felt, and the shape of patronage networks may vary widely from one locality to another (Collier et al. 2005: 19; Dixon 2009: 722).⁸ In the end, these structuralist explanations may turn out to be entirely sufficient for what appeared puzzling at first sight.
- (2) Alternatively, the answer to the puzzle may lie in aspects these theories have disregarded. By strongly emphasizing structural circumstances and rationalist reasoning, these theories have neglected ideational aspects and especially the micro-level processes of meaning-making in the mobilization for protest. Yet, there is reason to assume that these aspects could contribute substantially to the explanation of why rebellion (or peaceful protest) occurs. Research on social movements has found that the processes of meaning-construction within and around movements influence the course of collective action in important ways (Benford and Snow 2000; Snow et al. 2014). Scholars in this field, however, have neglected to study these processes with regard to conflict escalation and armed movements so far (for a notable exception, see Hafez 2004). Still, such meaning-making probably matters as much to social movements as to armed campaigns. In other words, rebellion requires leaders who explain the cause and the necessity of using violence. These leaders typically embody the struggle and influence the campaign through their agency. At the same time, their actions are also guided by the broader culture of the identity group they seek to mobilize and they themselves are part of. Surprisingly, these plausible assumptions have hardly been tested for their explanatory power regarding the escalation of protest into violence.

For assessing the first of these possible explanations, this study relies on theories and concepts from the existing research on rebellion (chapter 2). For the second, the framing approach from social movement research is introduced into the study of rebellion (chapter 5).

⁸ This assumption has been the main driver of the recent “micro-level turn” of quantitative rebellion research (Cederman and Gleditsch 2009).

1.3. The Framing of Peaceful and Violent Protest

This dissertation proposes that in order to explain why protest movements either wage rebellion or pursue peaceful protest, it is necessary to complement the existing structural and rationalist perspectives of armed conflict research by micro-level processes of meaning-making, the agency of protest leaders, and the cultural context of protest movements.

For this investigation, I use the framing approach from social movement research. *Framing* analyzes strategic communication efforts by protest leaders who act as framers when they develop and use simplified schemes of interpretation (so-called frames) to mobilize people for collective action (Benford and Snow 2000; Noakes and Johnston 2005). The framing perspective investigates not only the content of such collective action frames (CAFs), but also their development. Put simply, framers craft frames based on their perception of the wider political, social, cultural, and economic context, their strategic interests, and their personal experiences and beliefs (Benford and Snow 2000: 623-629). Framing thus combines relevant structural circumstances, as identified in rebellion research (i.e. obvious opportunities, widely-known grievances, and available patronage opportunities), with the cultural background of both the framer and the audience. This brings group culture into the focus, which has been neglected in rebellion research (see also 5.3). At the same time, framing does not treat culture as all-determining, but as a repertoire from which protest leaders may borrow elements to creatively develop calls for collective action. In this process, the ideas, experiences, interests, and convictions of the framer also matter, which implies that agency is involved. Finally, to effectively mobilize people for collective action, these mobilization efforts also have to appeal to the audience and convince people to engage in time-consuming and possibly risky protest activities. For assessing why frames resonate and mobilize people for protest (or not), the framing approach provides a set of success criteria (Noakes and Johnston 2005: 11-16).

This study thus investigates the micro-level process of meaning-making by Boko Haram and MASSOB from a framing perspective and against the broader political and cultural background. The focus of the case studies of Boko Haram and MASSOB is placed on the questions of how the movements' leaders have sought to mobilize their audience for collective action, how they have influenced the framing through agency, and what role the structural circumstances, in particular the cultural context, have played in shaping the mobilization efforts. Moreover, the question is whether the framing has succeeded in rallying people for collective action, or whether alternative explanations for protest participation solve the puzzle.

1.4. Methodology and Data

The study proceeds in a qualitative analysis based on a two-case comparison within a most-similar-systems-design (Van Evera 1997: 57; George and Bennett 2005: 151-160). This common research strategy compares cases that are similar in context, but differ precisely in the value of the independent and dependent variables of interest. This allows assessment of whether the value of the independent variable (e.g. strong versus minor grievances) coincides with the expected value of the dependent variable (e.g. rebellion respectively non-rebellion).

On these grounds, I conduct a within-country and synchronic comparison. Put simply, I examine two movements that pursued their protests around the same time and within the same country. This research strategy brings considerable advantages for theory-testing: A priori, it guarantees a high level of similarity in the structural circumstances surrounding these movements. This makes it possible to identify with high precision how differences and changes in opportunities, grievances, and patronage networks at the sub-state level impact the protest behavior of the movements. If the sub-state structural circumstances also turn out to be very similar in both cases, they cannot explain the different protest strategies of the movements. This provides a consistent background for the assessment of how differences in the framing have shaped the protests. Thereby, a strong case for framing as an explanation of conflict escalation can be made.

The case study analysis employs the framing methodology and a huge stock of data: For identifying the CAFs of Boko Haram and MASSOB, a total of 207 documents comprising statements by the movements' leaders were collected. This encompasses only statements through which key protest leaders addressed the audience in order to mobilize for collective action (e.g. through speeches, video and audio messages, and media interviews). To extract CAFs, these documents were analyzed in a three-step qualitative approach (as defined in 5.4.2).

For assessing frame resonance, 114 interviews and five focus group discussions were conducted during two field research visits of one month each to Nigeria and during two short stays to collect information from diaspora-based Biafran organizations in London and Chicago (for a list, see Annex C). Most of the interview respondents were people from the general Muslim public in Northern Nigeria and the Igbo public, i.e. the respective audience of the movements. In addition, I interviewed political and religious leaders from various levels, NGO personnel, and journalists. While no active or former Boko Haram members could be interviewed due to the ongoing state of the insurgency, 14 MASSOB activists were interviewed and one focus group discussion with another dozen MASSOB members was held. In addition,

virtually the entire leadership of the renewed Biafran struggle was interviewed. This includes Ralph Uwazuruike (leader and founder of MASSOB), Benjamin Onuegbu (MASSOB), Uchenna Madu (Progressive MASSOB), Benjamin Onwuka and Edeson Samuel (both Biafra Zionist Movement/Federation), Nnamdi Kanu (Radio Biafra), and Justin Akujieze (Ekwe Nche, based in the US).

To achieve more general validity, the interview findings were triangulated extensively by news reporting, academic studies, and available surveys. With regard to the Muslim North, 230 newspaper articles from Nigerian media sources were collected and analyzed to assess the public opinion on Boko Haram and its goals. This was similarly conducted for MASSOB based on 250 newspaper articles. These news sources also provided much information on relevant events. To cross-check the findings on frame resonance, the study also draws on surveys by established research institutes including Afrobarometer, the PEW Research Center, and Gallup/NOI. In total, 15 survey datasets were examined by the use of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). This allowed disaggregation of the data, usually reported at the national level, to assess public opinion on relevant issues at the sub-state level.

To include this large stock of data and ensure readability, the study comprises three annexes from which sources are quoted. The first two annexes contain overviews and references on the documents used to identify the CAFs of Boko Haram and MASSOB. The third annex lists the interviews and focus group discussions. For quoting, I use short IDs, as defined in the annexes.

1.5. Structure

In this study, I proceed as follows: Chapter 2 outlines the field of rebellion research and the three main theoretical approaches (Opportunity, Grievances, and Patronage Politics) for explaining the incidence and absence of rebellion. Chapter 3 provides background information on the cases under analysis: Nigeria, Boko Haram, and MASSOB. In chapter 4, I test whether the three mentioned theoretical approaches explain the observed pattern of Boko Haram's conflict escalation and the continued non-escalation of MASSOB. Having identified the extent to which these theories solve the puzzle, I introduce the framing approach from social movement research in chapter 5. Herein, I define the key concepts of framing for the case study analysis, discuss how framing complements and differs from existing ideational approaches of rebellion research, and describe the methodology of the framing analysis. In chapter 6 and 7, the framing approach is applied to the cases of Boko Haram and MASSOB. These case studies are each subdivided into three parts: In the first section, the CAFs are

identified; in the second section, their resonance among the broader movement audience is assessed; in the last section, it is examined whether these CAFs, indeed, have resonated with the movements' activists and, if so, to what extent this explains their protest participation. The subsequent chapter 8 reviews the cultural context and agency of the framers to understand the processes of frame development. Finally, in chapter 9, I summarize the main findings, discuss limitations of the study, and give an outlook on the theoretical implications for future civil war research.

2. Theory: Research on Rebellion

In this chapter, I briefly map the research field of political violence research and define some of the relevant terms and temporal aspects for the analysis (2.1), before outlining the three main theoretical strands of Opportunity (2.2), Grievances (2.3), and Patronage Politics (2.4).

2.1. Mapping the Research Field

Rebellion research is one of several subfields of the broader political violence research. Political violence can be defined as sustained and organized violence carried out by state or non-state actors to achieve political goals, e.g. access to political offices and power, control over territory and resources, enforcement of rights, etc. (Gurr 1970: 3-4). Over the past two decades, the study of political violence has been increasingly segmented into subfields, such as research on armed conflict, civil war, interstate war, rioting, terrorism, ethnic and religious conflict⁹, and anti-civilian violence and genocide (Boyle 2012: 527-528). The present study draws on research from various such subfields (except for research on interstate war, rioting, and genocide). They are relevant here because Boko Haram is a political-religious movement, which started an *armed conflict* in July 2009. At first, this was a local *uprising*¹⁰, followed by a wave of *terrorist* attacks, and finally the movement waged full-scale *civil war*, also perpetrating severe *massacres*.¹¹ MASSOB as *ethnically*-based movement would have pursued an *ethnic* rebellion, if its struggle had escalated into violence.

Research on political violence has often distinguished three temporal dimensions: onset, dynamics, and resolution of violent conflict. The main interest of this study concerns the onset. Statistical approaches, which are common among the studies cited in 2.2 and 2.3, typically define onset as the point (i.e. the year) in which the violent confrontation first surpasses a defined minimum number of battle-related deaths. In contrast, the present study focuses on the process in which violence escalates by using the concept of conflict escalation (see also 1.2). This comprises both a period before the “point” of onset and an ensuing phase of

⁹ To briefly define these concepts, ethnic and religious conflicts are violent contestations either amid non-state actors, or between state and non-state actors. The terms apply only if the contestants are organized along ethnic or religious lines and/or make identity-based demands.

¹⁰ An uprising refers to a short and armed contestation with comparably low intensity in which an armed non-state actor attacks the state.

¹¹ Massacres are severe attacks on civilians that cause dozens or hundreds of civilian deaths, perpetrated either by state actors or rebel groups (also referred to as one-sided violence, see UCDP 2014a).

consolidation of violence. Herein, this encompasses the period between Boko Haram's foundation around 2002, the uprising of July 2009 and resurgence of the fighting in late 2010 (both of which are "points of onset"), and the further escalation into full-scale civil war until late 2014. With regard to MASSOB, the entire time frame from 1999-2014 is assessed, because the protests could have turned violent virtually at any time. Although such a long time frame can be analytically challenging, the advantage is that a political crisis can build up for years before violence breaks out (Sambanis 2005: 323-324). Thus, my approach follows Florea (2012: 81-82) who argued that "it may be more useful to think of civil wars as longer processes involving escalation and de-escalation rather than onset, termination, and reoccurrence."

2.2. Opportunity

The Opportunity approach holds that "where a rebellion is feasible it will occur" (Collier et al. 2009: 2; Fearon and Laitin 2003). Grounded in rationalism, the theory assumes that structural conditions influence the cost and benefit of organizing rebellion and that people can correctly identify such opportunities. In this logic, people's motivations are disregarded because there are always enough discontented people in every society who would take up arms and pursue rebellion as soon as this was financially and militarily feasible for them.¹² A variant of this approach, known as the "*greed*"-thesis, assumes that actors are economically motivated and therefore organize rebellion whenever it promises higher income than 'conventional' ways of employment. Rebellion promises such economic benefit if people are poor and unemployed and if "lootable" natural resources (such as diamonds or timber) can be easily plundered by warlords and their combatants (Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Reno 1999). This "greed"-argument has been prominent, in particular among journalists and policy makers who seek to make sense of warfare in Sub-Saharan Africa (Keen 2012; Gettleman 2010; Berdal and Malone 2000).

Opportunity theory assumes that rebellion is feasible under certain conditions: if the state, military, and police lack capacity, if poverty and youth unemployment are high, if the general level of education is low, if there is rough terrain and foreign military support, and if "lootable" natural resources make rebellion profitable on its own (Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Collier et al. 2009; Fearon and Laitin 2003; Salehyan 2009; Sambanis 2005). Under these circumstances, political leaders find it feasible – and perhaps even economically beneficial – to

¹² For Collier, "motivation is indeterminate, being supplied by whatever agenda happens to be adopted by the first social entrepreneur to occupy the viable niche, or itself endogenous to the opportunities thereby opened for illegal income" (Collier et al. 2009: 24).

mobilize unemployed and disaffected youths for waging rebellion. Accordingly, rebellion is relatively rare not because people are reluctant to fight by violent means (e.g. for ethical reasons), but because rebellion rarely is feasible and economically beneficial. Most of the time, most states have the military means to sufficiently discourage challengers from attempting to organize rebellion. Yet in some instances states may be unable to deter challengers and prevent them from forming an armed group. Does rebellion necessarily occur in these moments? Some key proponents of this research strand answered “yes.” Yet most scholars have treated opportunity theory as probabilistic. Thus, it points to “risk factors” that make rebellion more (or less) probable. Both understandings will be examined in the case studies.

To test opportunity theory, I compiled the following set of indicators. This draws on the already cited key work, two useful literature reviews (Dixon 2009; Hegre and Sambanis 2006), and a large number of quantitative and qualitative studies from the research field. I included only those variables found broadly relevant across many studies and only those that can be meaningfully interpreted from the perspective of opportunity theory. These indicators were then grouped into six categories (see Table 1). Considering that the recent quantitative “micro-level turn” has produced few reliable and robust findings so far, I excluded such work. In the remainder of this section, these indicators are briefly introduced, their explanatory power with regard to rebellion onset is assessed, and causal mechanisms are specified.

Table 1: Indicators of Opportunity Theory

CATEGORY	INDICATORS
Politics and Military	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ State Weakness and Failure, Low Policing and Counterinsurgency Capacity ▪ Political Instability and Crisis ▪ Oil-Exporting State, “Failed Rentier State”
Socio-Economic Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poverty and Economic Decline ▪ High Youth Unemployment* ▪ Low Level of Education*
Demographic Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Youth Bulge” (High Population Share of young Men) ▪ Territorial Concentration
“Greed”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Lootable” Natural Resources* ▪ Organized Crime*
Geographic Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rough and Mountainous Terrain ▪ Remoteness ▪ Cross-border Sanctuary
External Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Foreign Arms, Military, and other Supply ▪ Sanctuary (as provided by External Actor)
* weak indicator due to contested findings	

Political and Military Opportunity

In terms of political and military opportunity, rebellion clearly becomes more likely if states are weak: *Low state capacity* and in particular *low policing and counterinsurgency capacity* reduce the risks and costs of organizing an armed struggle. While the typical measurement of state capacity by GDP per capita (to assess “administrative, military, and police capabilities”, see Fearon and Laitin 2003: 76) is imprecise, studies with refined indicators confirmed that states with higher number of military troops, indeed, have a lower risk of experiencing rebellion (Bussmann 2009; Hegre and Sambanis 2006: 526, 528). Besides the quantitative literature, qualitative researchers have complemented this theoretical strand by studying “*failed states*.” They argue that states, which lack structures and capacity to deter challengers,

are prone to rebellion and other forms of political violence (Rotberg 2003b; Reno 1999; Spanger 2007): “Failed states are tense, deeply conflicted, dangerous, and contested bitterly by warring factions” (Rotberg 2003a: 5). Thereby, the “failed states research” also demonstrates that state weakness needs to be assessed more broadly with regard to states’ inability and/or unwillingness to provide goods and services, particularly concerning security. If states fail in these respects, non-state groups (such as vigilantes, militias, or rebel groups) often fill in the gaps to provide basic services or may even challenge the state by violent means.¹³

Besides the more long-term state weakness, sudden *political crisis and instability* also increase the opportunity of rebellion (Fearon and Laitin 2003; Hegre et al. 2001; Hegre and Sambanis 2006:526; Dixon 2009: 718). Quantitative studies typically measured such crises by drastic changes in the democratic or autocratic character of a political regime or by the time since the last regime change. In contrast, qualitative studies rely on finer measures such as observing political debates or the role of the military. Evidently, in such situations of political upheaval, rebellion becomes particularly probable. At this point, states lack not only the capacity to oppose their challengers, but power struggles also occur, which set incentives for armed means. What remains contested for now is whether a general link exists between regime type and rebellion. Many studies suggested that “anocracies” (i.e. regimes in-between full democracies and full autocracies) are rebellion-prone (Fearon and Laitin 2003; Hegre et al. 2001; Hegre and Sambanis 2006:526; Dixon 2009: 718), but this became refuted due to measurement error (Vreeland 2008). Considering the lack of consensus on the impacts of regime type on the occurrence of rebellion¹⁴, I excluded this indicator.

In terms of political-economic opportunities, *oil-exporting states* have been associated with rebellion (Fearon and Laitin 2003; Dixon 2009: 714; Hegre and Sambanis 2006:528; Ross 2004b: 342-344). There are two main explanations here: Oil resources make secession attractive for oil-rich regions (Ross 2006: 288-290).¹⁵ Alternatively, in countries with large populations, oil dependence also implies low per capita oil revenues, which can produce “failed rentier states” (Basedau and Lay 2009). These shallow states are based on the distribution of

¹³ Their presence does not only indicate, but possibly also create an opportunity for rebellion. A state that already fights against an armed group may lack troops and resources to deter other groups from starting insurgency.

¹⁴ Recent research that draws on refined measures suggests that democracies are less war-affected than authoritarian regimes (Gleditsch and Ruggeri 2010). Yet, scholars of terrorism research find that democracy increases the risk of terrorism (Eubank and Weinberg 2001; Kurrild-Klitgaard et al. 2006). Thus, there is no clear-cut connection between regime type and political violence.

¹⁵ However, oil is hardly “lootable” due to the necessary investment for exploitation.

patronage but remain susceptible to economic shocks and lack sufficient oil income to satisfy the demands of patronage networks. Therefore, these states are at a high risk of failure and violent power struggles.

Socio-Economic Opportunity

With regard to socio-economic opportunities, *poverty* (typically measured by GDP per capita) and *negative economic growth* at the country-level are considered some of the most robust indicators of opportunity (Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Collier et al. 2009; Dixon 2009: 715; Hegre and Sambanis 2006: 526).¹⁶ One of the first micro-level statistical analyses confirmed this finding by showing that within countries civil war onset is more probable in places with lower absolute income (Buhaug et al. 2011). As mentioned, such poverty is often interpreted as indicator for state weakness. From the socio-economic perspective, however, it is treated as evidence of low economic opportunities, which could make rebellion comparably attractive for people that otherwise “have little to lose” and may even profit from rebellion if it produces income (e.g. as a result of plundering natural resources, see Collier and Hoeffler 2004).

Low levels of education (measured by male enrollment in secondary education and literacy) and *high unemployment* also increase the risk of civil war onset (Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Bussmann 2009: 273, 275; Dixon 2009: 715). Under these circumstances, rebel recruiters may more easily find people who are frustrated about their limited economic opportunities and who may be willing to engage in an armed struggle, either for political change or economic benefit. The empirical evidence, however, remains rather thin (Hegre and Sambanis 2006: 522).¹⁷ A qualitative sociological analysis of 80 armed groups found that not only the uneducated and unemployed join armed groups (Schlichte 2009: 38): About 81% of these rebel groups have followers from the rural peasant population, 52% from a student milieu, and 41% from the urban subclasses.¹⁸ Similarly, terrorism research demonstrated that those who are *better* educated and positioned with regard to employment are even *more* likely to become

¹⁶ Early studies may have been affected by endogeneity: They used civil war as dependent variable, which may have missed preceding armed conflict that causes economic decline (Sambanis 2005: 307). Recent studies, however, confirm that negative economic growth is a predictor of such armed conflict as well (Collier et al. 2009: 18).

¹⁷ The strong correlation between these socio-economic measures and GDP per capita may reduce their significance in statistical models (Bussmann 2009: 276; Fearon and Laitin 2003: 76).

¹⁸ As armed groups may have followers from more than one social milieu, these numbers do not add up to 100%.

terrorists (Berrebi 2007; Krueger and Malečková 2003; Sageman 2004: 69-77).¹⁹ Hence, lack of education and unemployment is treated as weak risk factor of rebellion here.

Demographic Opportunity

In terms of demography, opportunity theory argues that the higher the share of young men (roughly aged 15-30) in society, the more feasible and probable rebellion is (Collier et al. 2009). Such “*youth bulges*” (i.e. large youth cohorts) increase not only the risk of rebellion but also of other forms of political violence such as terrorism and rioting (Urdal 2006). These statistical findings are highly plausible: In the context of widespread poverty, “*youth bulges*” indicate a large share of youths who lack economic opportunities and may find the (expected) economic benefit from an armed struggle sufficiently promising to participate.²⁰ Considering that youths make up a disproportional number of combatants among rebel groups and that recruiting a few thousand would be sufficient for waging insurgency, “*youth bulges*” are a strong risk factor.

Territorial concentration also contributes to making rebellion feasible: Identity groups, which are relatively homogenous and concentrated in a region, are more likely to wage rebellion (especially for separatist aims) than dispersed and urban-based groups (Gurr 2000: 75-76; Toft 2002; Weidmann 2009).²¹ A minimum of territorial concentration can even be seen as necessary pre-condition for organizing rebellion. Otherwise, population groups lack the necessary cohesion for collective action at all.²²

Two further demographic indicators have been discussed in the literature, but are not used as indicators of feasibility in this study: Firstly, many studies find that population size at the country-level increases the risk of rebellion (Dixon 2009: 720; Hegre and Sambanis 2006: 524-525). High population numbers could be interpreted, similar to “*youth bulges*”, as evidence for a larger pool of people from which rebel leaders can recruit combatants. However, it would

¹⁹ However, this finding is typically interpreted from a Grievances rather than Opportunity perspective: Education and socio-economic status are often seen as proxies of people’s political engagement, which also make terrorism as a form of political engagement more probable (Krueger and Malečková 2003: 142).

²⁰ At the same time, grievances-based explanations may also matter here: Being part of a large youth cohort may create feelings of frustration among youths because of the difficulty of finding employment (Urdal 2006: 611).

²¹ Some statistical studies have also not found support for the correlation of territorial concentration and rebellion onset, but this may be largely due to the use of imprecise measures (Dixon 2009: 710).

²² From a sociological perspective, territorial concentration may also make rebellion more probable by influencing social mechanisms such as group pressure and socialization (McDoom 2013: 454). Moreover, it may foster grievances due to environmental degradation and resource scarcity, thereby leading to violence (“Neo-Malthusian” argument, see de Soysa 2000).

be an imprecise measure, if compared to “youth bulges.” Secondly, in line with key scholars on the opportunity approach, this study does not use societal diversity (i.e. the number of identity groups in a country) as indicator of feasibility. Although some studies found that societal diversity increases the risk of rebellion (Dixon 2009: 710), this shapes grievances rather than opportunities.

“Greed” and Organized Crime

The “Greed”-strand argues that rebellion is particularly feasible and even profitable if there are – so-called “lootable” – natural resources (Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Collier et al. 2009). These resources comprise timber, drugs, and such minerals (including diamonds, coltan, and gold) that are close to the surface (Ross 2003: 54).²³ Such “lootable” natural resources can be planted or extracted even by unskilled workers at low prior investment. Studies on “Warlord politics” and “New Wars” have made strong claims that “blood diamonds” and other such natural resources are key drivers of armed conflict (Reno 1999; Kaldor 1999). Some journalists argued even that rebellion in Sub-Saharan Africa has generally turned into “opportunistic, heavily armed banditry” (Gettleman 2010): “Most of today’s African fighters are not rebels with a cause; they’re predators.” Indeed, armed groups may act as and cooperate with criminal groups in many ways. Yet, the “Greed”-strand only provides a weak indicator of rebellion *onset*: Most studies do not find that “lootable” natural resources motivated or financed the beginning of rebellion (Ross 2006: 290; Humphreys 2005).²⁴ Rather, economic opportunism seems to prolong ongoing civil wars and increase the level of violence (Ross 2004a: 50-51; Lujala 2009; Ballentine 2003: 260-269).

²³ In contrast, the extraction of “non-lootable” natural resources (e.g. oil, gas, and deep-shaft minerals) requires high start-up investment, perhaps even off-shore installations. Although the prospects of controlling such resources may make rebellion attractive, they neither promise “fast money”, nor do they cover the start-up costs of rebellion; thus, they do not contribute to make rebellion feasible.

²⁴ Collier and his colleagues who proposed the “Greed”-thesis used the unspecific and highly interpretative measure of primary commodity exports. In fact, this includes many non-“lootable” natural resources (e.g. oil, gas, deep-shaft minerals), which hardly provide fast revenue (Ross 2004b: 340-342).

Geographic Opportunity

Research on geographic conditions shows that rebellion is more feasible in remote and mountainous areas. *Rough and mountainous terrain* as well as large forests²⁵ allow armed groups to hide out and build training camps (Buhaug et al. 2008; Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Fearon and Laitin 2003; Weidmann 2009; Hegre and Sambanis 2006: 526).²⁶ Moreover, studies that investigate discriminated identity groups find that their probability to rebel increases with the distance to the capital, i.e. *remoteness* (Buhaug et al. 2008; Cederman et al. 2009: 517; Weidmann 2009). Indirectly, remoteness may measure state capacity to control territory and distribute services, which is commonly lower on the fringes than in the center of states. Finally, *cross-border sanctuary* in neighboring countries increases the feasibility of rebellion (Salehyan 2007): No fewer than 55% of the rebel groups at least sporadically used foreign places for hiding and organizing their fighting (Salehyan 2007: 239). Such sanctuary may be available to rebel groups due to the lack of state capacity to control borders, but also from active external support.

External Support

Finally, *external support* (especially in terms of arms, funds, and fighters), either from third-party states or the diaspora, makes armed conflict more probable (Salehyan 2009; Collier and Hoeffler 2004).²⁷ More often than the faraway diaspora, it is the kin in neighboring countries who sponsor armed groups that fight on behalf of their common aims (Gleditsch 2007; Salehyan 2007: 237; Sambanis 2005: 311-312, 322). In addition, governments have often provided support and sanctuary to rebels. This occurs especially in situations of inter-state rivalry when they tend to support insurgents that fight against their rivals (Salehyan 2007: 235-236; Gleditsch 2007: 303-304).

Motivation Missing?

Most scholars in the field have (often implicitly) treated the opportunity approach as probabilistic. Thus the identified indicators should be considered relevant (and perhaps necessary) but non-sufficient for the occurrence of armed conflict. The main point of

²⁵ The quantitative literature has not yet found strong support for the intuitive link between forests and warfare, which is likely due to measurement difficulties (Dixon 2009: 712; Collier and Hoeffler 2004: 587).

²⁶ In his literature review, Sambanis finds that rough terrain is associated less with civil war onset than with its prolongation (Sambanis 2005: 311).

²⁷ Vice versa, governments that receive external support face lower risk of rebellion (Collier et al. 2009).

contention between those who favor a probabilistic understanding versus the proponents of a deterministic reading concerns the question of *motivation*. The “probabilists” argue that opportunity theory has downplayed the role of people’s motivation by using weak indicators of grievances (Sambanis 2005: 319-321; Cramer 2002: 1850-1854). These weak indicators comprise the level of democracy, societal diversity, and measures of inter-personal income inequality, which do not adequately measure societal cleavages and inequalities. The rationalist reasoning of opportunity theory, especially of the “*greed*”-strand, has also been challenged: The idea that “Homo Economicus Goes to War” was described as “extremely reductionist, highly speculative, and profoundly misleading” (Cramer 2002: 1849). Many of these critics advocated the mostly social-psychological perspective of grievances.

2.3. Grievances

There has been a long tradition of research on grievances and their relationship to political violence (Gurr 1970; Horowitz 1985). The basic assumption in this literature is that relative deprivation – i.e. the discrepancy between people’s expectations and their actual living conditions – causes frustration which may lead to aggression and ultimately political violence (Gurr 1970: 24). Unfulfilled expectations, though, may not necessarily cause frustration, aggression, and ultimately violence; instead, people may also evade frustration by adapting their expectations to their actual achievements, or they may find non-violent ways to vent their anger (e.g. peaceful protest, humor, withdrawal, see Berkowitz 1989: 69). Nevertheless, research on armed conflict has shown that the more disadvantaged and threatened societal groups are (or feel to be) by other groups, the more likely they are to use violent means against their (perceived) oppressors. Two main sources of such grievances are distinguished in this study: Inequality and repression.

Inequality

Research on the inequality-violent conflict nexus finds that inequality in the distribution of resources, power, and rights is a major risk factor for the application of political violence (Gurr 2000; Stewart 2008a). Two major forms of inequality, differing in their impact on the probability and types of political violence, can be distinguished: Vertical and horizontal inequalities (Stewart 2008b: 12). While *vertical inequality* measures how unequal income, land, and other resources are distributed among individuals in society, *horizontal inequality* refers to inequalities that exist between different societal groups.

Scholars on armed conflict have been skeptical on whether vertical inequality increases the risk of rebellion. Most quantitative studies, which commonly rely on the GINI coefficient

as a measure of inter-personal inequality of income, do *not* find that vertical inequality increases the risk of rebellion (Dixon 2009: 715). This finding is compelling, considered that rebellion is a group activity and that high income inequality between individuals may undermine intra-group solidarity, which would make it more difficult to organize rebellion (Sambanis 2005: 327-328). Yet, it may be too early to close the research on vertical inequality and violent conflict. The existing quantitative studies have suffered from the limited quality and availability of data on income disparities, and they have also not yet investigated vertical inequalities at the sub-state level (Østby 2013: 211-212). Vertical inequalities may also lead to rebellion in more specific and complex ways than assumed so far. For example, one recent study finds that vertical inequalities increase the risk only of one type of rebellion, namely of “popular” rebellion which is fought by national, class-based, and non-ethnic liberation movements (Bartusevičius 2014). Although the present study does not investigate such broad but more narrow identity-based protests, the role of vertical inequalities still is assessed in the following case study analysis. This is because in Nigeria, as in most countries of the Global South, income inequality and awareness about this problem is very high, which makes it likely that this almost always also influences the formation and strategic choices of protest movements.

Rebellion research has clearly found that, rather than vertical inequality, horizontal inequality is a key risk factor for violent conflict. Such inter-group inequalities can be differentiated into four main domains (Stewart 2008b: 13): *Politics* (e.g. unequal access to political offices and the bureaucracy, discrimination in elections), *economic affairs* (disparities in economic assets, employment opportunities, and average income), *social concerns* (discrimination in the access to education, health, and other state services), and *cultural regards* (discrimination in cultural practices such as religion, language, traditions, and clothing). In practice, however, discrimination within these domains is often inter-connected and results from the political dominance of some groups (Østby 2008: 152-153).

It has been shown in both qualitative and quantitative rebellion research that such horizontal inequalities make conflict escalation probable. Based on detailed case studies of many countries, qualitative research finds that ethnic groups who are collectively disadvantaged with regard to their living conditions, political participation, and cultural status by “higher ranked” groups often fight violently for their liberation from oppression (Gurr 2000: 71; Horowitz 1985: 30-32; Petersen 2002: 256-257; Sambanis 2005: 321). Recently, quantitative rebellion research confirmed these findings: Focusing on political discrimination at the executive level and using data that covers all years since 1946, these studies consistently show

that politically excluded and underrepresented ethnic groups are more likely to wage rebellion than included groups (Wimmer et al. 2009; Cederman et al. 2010; Buhaug et al. 2014). Both qualitative and quantitative studies also find that risk of rebellion is high if politically dominant identity groups lose their privileged position (Petersen 2002: 256; Buhaug et al. 2014: 425; Cederman et al. 2010: 104-105). Through rebellion, “downgraded” groups often seek to restore their dominance.

The study of these horizontal inequalities adopts a probabilistic formulation and assumes that group discrimination is a necessary condition but not a sufficient explanation for violent inter-group conflicts. In his seminal qualitative study, Gurr (2000: 65-95) proposes a comprehensive framework of variables to explain why discriminated identity groups engage in “ethnopolitical action” (such as rebellion). His framework encompasses variables on identity group characteristics, political opportunities, and processes of mobilization. The quantitative studies similarly contextualize group discrimination by variables that capture available political and economic opportunities. These studies show that rebellion is most probable if an identity group is discriminated in a setting in which rebellion is also feasible because of state weakness and poverty, and because of the relative group strength, territorial concentration, and remote location of the discriminated group (Wimmer et al. 2009: 332; Cederman et al. 2009; Weidmann 2009).

Besides these political inequalities, also economic, social, and cultural discrimination has been shown to matter for conflict escalation. Recent studies used complex measures of economic inequality (as measured by the gap between the poorest ethnic group and the national average) and socio-economic inequality (as measured by disparities in the average income, household assets, and level of education of ethnic groups). These social and economic inequalities significantly increase the risk of armed conflict (Buhaug et al. 2014; Østby 2008; Østby et al. 2009). Similarly, quantitative research on terrorism concludes that the risk of domestic terrorist attacks increases if minority groups in a country are disadvantaged with regard to their average income and employment opportunities (Piazza 2011). Qualitative studies on terrorism have complemented these findings: People become much more likely to form, join, and support terrorist groups and perpetrate attacks (even suicide bombings) if they feel that they belong to an oppressed and disadvantaged identity group (Kruglanski et al. 2009; Sageman 2008). Assessing cultural discrimination poses challenges of statistical measurement and conceptual separation from other forms of inequality. Nevertheless, cultural status inequalities can be considered particularly “explosive” because, unlike many political and socio-economic inequalities, these forms of discrimination are often immediately linked to

particular identity groups and disadvantage them in their entirety (Langer and Brown 2008). Typical examples are the non-recognition of a group's language or bans on their cultural practices.

When assessing such horizontal inequalities in the case study analysis, three suggestions from the literature are taken into consideration. Firstly, the quantitative indicators of inequality (e.g. from the Ethnic Power Relations or Minorities at Risk datasets) give only rough approximations of the type and extent of inequality. They may even be fundamentally misleading because people obviously act upon "*perceived* injustices rather than on the basis of data of which they might not be aware" (Stewart 2008b: 18). The present study, therefore, uses a broader set of data to grasp grievances. This comprises reports by human rights groups and think tanks, academic studies, and economic data about the political, socio-economic, and cultural status of the analyzed identity groups in Nigeria. Secondly, I analyze these identity groups rather broadly within their political, economic, social, and cultural context. Inequalities may be symptoms of larger social "illnesses", which can easily be overlooked if a too narrow focus on economic and other measures is taken. This follows Cramer (2003: 404) who argued that "historically established social relations that lie behind observable manifestations of inequality are more important, for understanding the consequences of inequality, than those manifestations themselves." Finally, Gurr reminds us of taking time seriously (Gurr 2000: 69): People can feel deprived and engage in collective action not only about losses already suffered, but also about impending losses, the lack of prospects, or rising expectations. Hence, the case study analysis focuses not only on the past and present but also the likely near-future scenario when assessing group discrimination.

Repression

Another typical source of grievances, which often drives discontented people and protest movements into rebellion, is repression. Repression denotes the "actual or threatened use of physical sanctions against an individual or organization (...) for the purpose of (...) deterring specific activities and/or beliefs perceived to be challenging to government" (Davenport and Inman 2012: 620). Throughout history, states have used repression almost as default when being challenged by citizens and movements. Only democratic regimes have shown restraint (Davenport 2007).

The main analytic finding – and problem – is that repression can produce all kinds of responses by the repressed: It may aggrieve people so much that they decide to "fight back", it may paralyze and discourage them to the point of abandoning the struggle, and it may have no effect upon them at all (Lichbach 1987). Analyzing the effects of repression, thus, is far from

straightforward. Davenport and Inman (2012: 624) conclude that, even after two decades of scholarly investigation, “we know very little about how repressive behavior influences behavioral challenges from citizens against political authorities, whether protest, violent attacks, insurgency, or some other form.” What complicates the analysis is that repression typically co-occurs with other government efforts of undermining protest movements, e.g. co-optation, legitimation (e.g. through counterframing), amnesty offers, and concessions (Davenport 2007: 9).

Repression affects both the opportunity and motivation for continuing protest, but is treated here with regard to motivation and is therefore, subsumed under Grievances. Regarding opportunities, severe repression may disrupt the organizational structure of protest movements and also make it difficult for the adherents to continue protesting. However, unless repression also effectively discourages protesters, this rarely puts an end to protest and insurgency. For example, even the very widespread and violent repression against the Kurdistan Workers’ Party in Turkey and the Lord’s Resistance Army in Uganda did not lead to the termination of their armed campaigns; instead, both found opportunities to “survive” in neighboring countries and to continue their violent campaigns (Cronin 2009: 128-129). Since rebellion occurs most often in weak states of the Global South, some opportunities for protest movements almost always persist, even amid very violent and large-scale repression. Consequently the effect of repression on people’s motivation is more crucial to explain conflict escalation (or non-escalation) than the effect that it takes on opportunities for protest.

To explain the circumstances under which repression sustains and escalates protests (possibly into rebellion), or de-escalates and puts an end to protest, it is necessary to investigate the effect of the specific repression most importantly on the activists and the sympathetic audience (the so-called “constituency”). Invariably, repression aggrieves both the activists and many among the constituency, and it also makes them more radical in their demands and more violence-promoting in their views. Therefore, the key question with regard to conflict escalation is whether the repression also encourages movement participation or whether it discourages it: If repression encourages (discourages) participation, conflict escalation is (not) likely to occur.

Three arguments, which seek to explain the effect of repression on protest and conflict escalation, can be found in the literature. Firstly, the target of the repression matters: If the repression is applied in an arbitrary (indiscriminate) rather than selective way, it sustains protest movements, helps them enlarge their followership, and ultimately escalates their protest into rebellion (Della Porta 2013: 67; Wiktorowicz 2004b: 70-71). Such indiscriminate

repression refers to the use of repressive means against people who were largely or even entirely uninvolved in the protest movement²⁸. Selective repression, in contrast, implies the targeting of more involved activists and especially the movement's leaders. States often use arbitrary repression as they assume this to frighten people and discourage them from supporting protest movements.²⁹ Yet, this repressive tactic often "backfires" because it reduces the relative risks of participating vis-à-vis non-participating – either way, one can become victim of repression. This may encourage people among the constituency to join the struggle, especially since the repression also aggrieved them. In the case of severe repression, joining a movement that is already armed (or on the verge of arming itself), may even be attractive because such a protest movement may be able to provide protection. In contrast, if the repression is applied in a selective way against committed members and key protest leaders only, this discourages the less committed members and the constituency from (further) participating because such selective repression clearly signals the risks involved in movement participation and even further increases these risks. At the same time, it guarantees those who do not participate the absence of any suffering from the repression. In summary, it punishes participation and rewards non-participation.

Secondly, repression curtails protest if it is preventive, i.e. applied before movements have mobilized a substantial followership that is highly committed to the cause (Wiktorowicz 2004b: 68-70; Cronin 2009: 142). At such an early point of the protest, the activists and the constituency are not yet committed to the extent of favoring the struggle over abandoning the protest, especially in light of the heightened risks of repression. In ideational terms, their commitment to the struggle is not (yet) so high that they would be willing to give up much (or even their lives) for the cause. In economic terms, they have not yet invested much time and money into the movement's struggle, so their sunk costs are relatively low and almost certainly lower than those of continuing the struggle in the face of the costs imposed by repression. In contrast, if repression is applied only after a movement has developed a more complex organizational structure and won a large and committed group of followers, it is highly likely to sustain people's commitment to the struggle, make them ready to invest more, and aggrieve them so severely that they are ready to pursue a violent struggle.

²⁸ This understands protest participation not as a binary category of participation and non-participation, but as a gradual concept.

²⁹ Another reason for the frequency of arbitrary repression, despite its often counterproductive results, is the fact that organizing selective repression is very costly because it requires high-quality information (Kalyvas 2006: 145). Especially in the context of Sub-Saharan Africa, most states and security agencies simply lack the capacity for applying selective repression against protest movements.

Finally, legality matters: Repression tends to escalate protest into rebellion if it transgresses the rule of law (Della Porta and Diani 2006: 198-200; Daxecker and Hess 2013). Arbitrary arrests, detention without trial, and the killing of protesters and bystanders typically drives protest movements into violence. Such disrespect for the rule of law signals to the activists and the movement's constituency that the state is threatening and perpetrating injustice and that violent means may be necessary and legitimate. Moreover, such brutal forms of repression may move regime supporters to defect and join the opposition. Killing protest leaders has escalating impacts even if the loss of the leader may organizationally weaken the protest movement (at least for some time, see Cronin 2009: 18-24).³⁰ In contrast, arresting protest leaders and putting them on trial signals the state's respect for the rule of law. This can de-escalate protests and discourage people to join the movement. Such brutal measures, however, may not lead to conflict escalation if the movement grossly lacks legitimacy and popularity. In this situation, even means that contravene the rule of law may be considered widely justified among the public (Cronin 2009: 143-144; Parker 2007).³¹

When analyzing these arguments in the following case study analysis, repression is not understood as a one-sided or even one-time event. Instead, it is treated in its dynamic interactions between the government and its challenger. "Spirals of escalation" may occur in which both sides mutually adapt their behaviors towards the ever increasing justification and use of violence (Della Porta 2013: 68; Garrison 2008; Carey 2006).

2.4. Patronage Politics

Besides feasibility and grievances, the incidence of violence in Sub-Saharan Africa has also been linked to the continent's complex governance systems and economic interests pertaining to patronage politics. African politics are based on formal (legal-rational), informal and personal, and traditional forms of rule (Hydén 2006; Mehler 2004). This has often been summarized as neopatrimonialism (Bayart 1989), which encompasses two main components: patronage and legal-rational bureaucracy (Erdmann and Engel 2007: 104-106): Neopatrimonialism denotes a form of rule in which power, resources, and loyalty is traded as

³⁰ As with many of these theoretical findings, there are also studies that come to different conclusions. For instance, in their analysis of targeted killings perpetrated by Israel during the *Intifada* (2000-05), Hafez and Hatfield (2006) found that these killings neither increased, nor decreased the armed conflict.

³¹ As argued here, whether or not a protest movement is seen as legitimate depends in large part on the success of its framing.

patronage in patron-client networks, which intertwine with the *legal-rational* structure of the state and its rules and norms of how offices and resources ought to be distributed and used. Although legal-rationalism is winning increasing relevance (Posner and Young 2007), “patronage politics” still persist widely and often dominate legal-rational logics in the region.

Patronage Politics can be understood as a state-centered version of the “*Greed*”-argument. It assumes that political leaders seek and maintain rule through informal, personalized, and patronage-based forms of governance that mainly serve their economic interest and at the extreme, lead to the “Criminalization of the State” (see Bayart et al. 1999). The “Big Men” of Patronage Politics typically form vigilantes for protection and militias to intimidate their opponents and co-opt existing protest movements and opposition groups to prevent them from challenging their rule (Chabal and Daloz 1999; Reno 2011: 206-241). Consequently, this impacts on why non-state groups form, which demands they make vis-à-vis the government, and how they pursue their activities. Following Reno, Patronage Politics answers the question of why armed conflict has been relatively rare in Sub-Saharan Africa (see 1.1), in spite of the wide presence of typical risk factors of conflict escalation (Reno 2011: 209): “A key reason for this scarcity of broad-based rebel warfare organized around a shared political agenda in Africa lies in the capacity of incumbent political authorities to exploit the dichotomy between people’s ideas about politics and their short-term interests in finding ways to survive in a political system that many dislike.”

In short, through “buying off” opponents, African rulers have prevented the rise of protest movements in the first place and have compromised many of the already existing opposition groups. While many among the ordinary population on the continent would certainly aspire for broad political and social change, in this reasoning their protest movements are assumed to only maintain a façade of liberation struggle, whereas they really seek to profit from available patronage opportunities.³² Tragically, such co-opted protest movements – also referred to as “parochial rebels”³³ – thereby even reproduce the patronage-

³² Reno, however, seems to overemphasize the centrality of economic interest as driver of Patronage Politics (for example, see Reno 2011: 3). Instead, socialization may also matter significantly: Since protest movements often mirror the political systems that they seek to challenge and since the protest leaders were socialized within these systems, socialization processes are also likely to help explain the forms, demands, and behaviors of these movements.

³³ Reno only implicitly defines the concept of the parochial rebel. It seems to consist of three aspects (Reno 2011: 206-241): Parochial rebels (1) are led by political-economic entrepreneurs that strive for making profit from patronage opportunities, (2) are “subordinate actors who do not fight to seize control of the state and set up their own regime” (p. 209), and (3) are “protecting a bounded community, usually defined in parochial ethnic or sectarian terms” (p. 207).

based systems of rule that they proclaim to fight against, also by occupying the social space in which more ideologically committed groups could emerge (Reno 2011: 246). Such parochial rebels certainly have ideologies and develop forms of movement culture, but these are held to merely influence the views, discussions, and attire of rank-and-file members, whereas the real power over these organizations lies in the hands of their opportunistic leaders, and ultimately the “Godfathers” (Reno 2011: 208).

The impact of patronage politics on protest movements is straightforward in theory; investigating it in practice is often difficult, however. The hypothesized relationship is that a “perfectly co-opted” protest movement (i.e. a parochial rebel) entirely follows the directives given by its “Godfather”, which would even encompass the use of violent means.³⁴ While the movement’s followers would certainly have to be convinced of the chosen pathways of collective action, this would most likely be achieved through “trickling down” some of the received patronage from the movement’s leadership. To analyze the extent of co-optation in the following case study analyses, the movements are examined within their political-economic context, with a focus on the connections fostered between the protest leaders and the political elite. The key determinants are whether the protest leaders were part of the political elite in the past, whether they plan to maintain or develop new connections with the political leadership, and whether these connections are based on trading patronage for loyalty (Reno 2007: 326). While the first of these three determinants is easy to examine, the other two remain difficult. This is not only because the exchange of patronage and loyalty are typically covert processes, but also because the reward may be given in various forms (of which money is only one) and at a much later point in time. Instead of attempting to trace flows of money, then, it is more feasible to find out whether there is a context of neopatrimonialism and if, within this context, the leaders of the protest movements engage or align themselves with some politicians, parties, or other elite networks. Also, the ensuing behaviors of the protest movements – e.g. who are they criticizing, who are they attacking – give clues on possible co-optation, or efforts of building political-economic alliances.

Before these theories on rebellion onset can be applied to the case studies (see chapter 4), some background information on the cases needs to be given in the following.

³⁴ Neopatrimonialism can also lead to violent conflicts in other, more indirect ways. These systems are at high risk of break-down, typically due to their over-dependence on receiving resource rents. If neopatrimonial systems collapse or if elite groups become permanently excluded, violent conflicts often occur (Schlichte 2009: 42-48). This alternative explanation, however, is not assessed in the present study because a brief glance at the case of Nigeria suffices to note that the neopatrimonial systems in the country have been existing for decades and have been stunningly stable ever since then.

3. Background Information on the Cases

This section provides background information on Nigeria (3.1), Boko Haram (3.2), and MASSOB (3.3). Rather than giving extended accounts of Nigerian history and the movements' activities, however, this part is limited to information necessary for the case study analysis.

3.1. Background on Nigeria

In common parlance, Nigeria is often described as an “accident of history”, a “geographical expression rather than a nation”, and a “failed state.” Osaghae (1998: x) considers Nigeria a “crippled giant”: “It was crippled from the beginning by the nature of its colonial creation and integration into the global economy, and has remained crippled by corrupt and authoritarian regimes [and; JS] the inability to overcome its divisions.” This quote already summarizes some of the main structural weaknesses of Nigeria, namely the combination of a divided society with a political-economic structure that is based on resource extraction and neopatrimonialism. These key aspects are further explored in the following two sections.

3.1.1. Divided Society

Nigeria's society, which is by far Africa's most populous at about 181 million, is complexly divided, most importantly along ethnic, religious, and regional lines (The World Factbook n.d.).³⁵ There are two major religious camps: About 50% of the society are Muslim, 40% are Christian, and some adhere to traditional religions (which are often combined in syncretism with Islam or Christianity), whereas atheism is practically inexistent (Hock 2009: 281-283; The World Factbook n.d.). The actual numbers, however, remain highly contested because no population census recorded religious affiliation since 1963. The two main religious camps are also regionally divided between a “Muslim North” and “Christian South”, but these remain approximations: There are large Christian minorities in some states of the North, millions of Muslims among the Yoruba in the South-West, and religiously mixed areas in the “Middle Belt”, which stretches across Nigeria between the “Muslim North” and the “Christian South.” Religious identity generally plays a strong role in people's lives: Surveys show that more than 90% of both Christians and Muslims describe themselves as very religious, which makes the Nigerian society one of the world's most religious (Hock 2009: 285).

³⁵ There has been (and still is) tremendous population growth in Nigeria, which is creating much pressure on the economy and social affairs. Only half a century ago, the Nigerian society stood at a population of 56 million (in 1963, see UN 1972: 488).

Concomitantly, the Nigerian society is highly fractionalized along ethnic lines. There are an estimated 250 ethnic groups in the country, which comprises several large groups with strong regional concentration (for an approximation, see Figure 2, p. xii): The Hausa-Fulani³⁶ in the Central and Western part of the “core” North (around 29% of the population), Yoruba (21%) in the South-West, Igbo (18%) in the South-East, Ijaw (10%) in the South-South, and the Kanuri (4%) in the far North-East (The World Factbook n.d.). Again, these are estimates only because ethnicity has not been recorded in population censuses since 1963.

The complex societal map primarily results from Nigeria’s artificial creation by the British colonizer. When British missionaries settled on the Southern shores of Nigeria during the early 19th century, there had been the vast Sokoto Caliphate in the North, the declining Oyo Empire in the West, and various smaller kingdoms and other political entities in other parts of the country (Falola and Heaton 2008: 85-109). During the late 19th and early 20th century, the British colonial forces conquered vast areas, defeated the Sokoto Caliphate in 1903, and finally “amalgamated” (i.e. united) their protectorates of the South and the North in 1914. The decision to unite these various identity groups into one country was taken in spite of the many historical, cultural, political, and economic differences between these identity groups. Especially the Southern and the Northern part of the country were largely distinct in cultural regards.

The British not only created Nigeria’s North-South divide through the amalgamation, but also reinforced it by differing colonial policies in the two regions (Falola and Heaton 2008: 110-130): In the North, they relied largely on the pre-existing political structure of the Hausa emirate system and local paramount chiefs for exercising rule, retained the Quranic education system, and banned missionaries from entering the area. In the South, in contrast, more modernizing influence was taken through direct interference into the traditional power structure, through creating transport infrastructure, and through allowing missionaries to build thousands of schools and churches for spreading education and Christianity. As a result, the two parts of the country, which had already been distinct in many regards, grew further apart.

These societal divisions are an important background condition of Nigeria’s tormented politics. By themselves, however, such divisions are not necessarily problematic. There are

³⁶ Based on their shared history during the past two centuries the Hausa and Fulani are often treated as a united group, but they have remained culturally distinct in many regards. The Hausas are the larger of the two groups making up about three-quarters of the “Hausa-Fulani.”

many well-governed multi-ethnic countries in the world. Nigeria, in contrast, has never been well-governed. Instead, the ethnic, religious, and regional divisions have been politicized and instrumentalized, which has led to many of Nigeria's continuing political and societal problems.

3.1.2. Oil, Federalism, and Neopatrimonialism

Nigerian politics revolve around the distribution of state revenues within neopatrimonial networks within a federal state. The federal state was introduced in the 1950s to manage the societal divisions. Since independence in 1960, it has sought to guarantee equal representation and access to resources to the many societal groups that lack an overarching national belonging. Yet, right after independence Nigeria tumbled into a political crisis.

Nigeria's post-independence polity lasted only from October 1960 to January 1966. It collapsed over the destructive "ethnic zero-sum game" played by the major groups and over the structural imbalances in the federal structure (this part draws on Osaghae 1998: 31-47). The initial federal system was based on three regions, which immediately came to represent their respective dominant ethnic groups: Hausa-Fulani in the Northern Region, Yoruba in the Western Region, and Igbo in the Eastern Region. In the struggle for power and resources the North soon monopolized the federal government. It used the "demographic advantage" of the region, which was larger and more populated than the others. Moreover, through vote rigging and divide-et-impera strategies, the Northern leadership marginalized the Southern-based parties. In response, the Southern groups with the Igbo at the forefront demanded the replacement of the federal structure by a centralized state. This would have allowed them to control the administration based on their higher education levels vis-à-vis the impoverished North. Meanwhile, over the frustration about Northern dominance, rampant corruption, and lack of political vision of the political class, a group of young army leaders carried out a coup in January 1966. The coup had a strong Southern and in particular Igbo hand-writing, as most, but not all, victims were from the North. The coup plotters killed, amongst others, the Premier Ahmadu Bello and Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa from the North and Premier Samuel Akintola from the West (Osaghae 1998: 56-60). This created a situation in which Major General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi, who was Igbo, seized power. However, this only deepened the crisis: His regime soon became Igbo-oriented, which led to an escalatory spiral in which the North reclaimed power through another coup in July 1966, Biafra declared secession in May 1967, and the Civil War broke out (further detailed below, see 3.3.1).

The failure of the civilian regimes and especially the Civil War bolstered the grip of the Nigerian military on the country's politics (Falola and Heaton 2008: 180). The military remained in power from 1966-99 with the exception of a short-lived interplay of civilian rule from 1979-83. During the long years of military rule, the Nigerian federal state was reformed by repeated rounds of state creation: In this process the federal structure was extended from the three initial regions and 301 local governments to a total of 36 states, 774 local governments, and the capital state of Abuja at the center (this structure has been in place since 1996, see Figure 3, p. xiii). Through this state creation, not only demands for representation and resources by many of the smaller ethnic groups were met, but the land map of political conflicts also changed: The structural reform transformed the initial macro-level contestation between the three largest ethnic groups into more complex inter-group and intra-group conflicts for power and resources, fought at multiple levels including the local, district, state, regional, and still also the federal level (Hill 2012: 62-64).

Under military rule, Nigeria became a textbook case of the detrimental effects of the "resource curse" and neopatrimonial politics. In fact, Nigerian politics were based on neopatrimonialism already before the beginning of the "oil boom." Yet the hundreds of billions of US-Dollar Nigeria received from oil exports since the early 1970, as well as the mentioned creation of hundreds of new federal units immensely extended the neopatrimonial system. In a seminal study on the subject, Joseph observed that Nigerian politics are fundamentally based on the "justifying principle" that political "offices should be competed for and then utilized for the personal benefit of office holders as well as of their reference or support group" (Joseph 1987: 8). Rampant corruption has led to the loss of huge development opportunities. According to the estimate by Nuhu Ribadu, former Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, no less than US\$ 440bn of state revenues were stolen by Nigerian officials from 1960 to 1999 (Ribadu 2009, 19 May). The economy's sole focus on oil (and few other natural resources including gas) also led to the almost complete neglect of other industries. As a result, the country is highly oil-dependent with oil exports accounting for virtually all export earnings (95% or more), approximately 70% of the state's budget, and about 40% of the GDP (Bach 2006: 69). The continued military rule until 1999 was foremost an effort by the mostly Northern generals to maintain their access to oil rents. When the "Third Wave of Democracy" swept across Sub-Saharan Africa and led to the end of military rule in many countries (Huntington 1991), the Nigerian military rulers clung to their power and even turned particularly predatory: The military heads-of-state Ibrahim Babangida (1985-93) and Sani Abacha (1993-98) each transferred billions of US-Dollars from state revenues to their foreign

private bank accounts (Bach 2006: 73-74). Under Abacha's rule Nigeria even increasingly became an international pariah for the many severe human rights abuses.

The basic neopatrimonial logic has been largely retained also since the long-awaited democratic transition took finally place in 1999. The end of military rule brought major improvements in terms of political participation and rule of law. Since 1999, five general elections were held, which have constantly improved in terms of technical conduct and fairness, especially since 2011 (Akhaine 2011). At the federal level, presidency alternated twice between the South (Olusegun Obasanjo, 1999-07; Goodluck Jonathan, 2010-15) and the North (Umaru Yar'Adua, 2007-10; Muhammadu Buhari, since 2015). In this regard, Nigeria passed the "two-turnover test", which as a basic measure indicates a certain stability of a democratic polity.³⁷ However, underlying the seeming democratic stability is Nigeria's persisting neopatrimonial structure. The political-economic playing field did not change fundamentally as a result of the democratization, which was characterized as transition without real democratization (Obi 2011: 367). Behind the scenes, the military still maintains much influence: Obasanjo, the first post-transition president, was the selected candidate of the Northern generals who trusted him – a retired general and former military head of state (1976-79) who had returned power to the North once before in 1979 – not to deprive them of their privileges and patronage opportunities (Harnischfeger 2008: 85-86). Moreover, Nigeria's most powerful political platform, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), was created by the military rulers to serve the economic interest of the corrupt political class. The PDP has been so successful at this task, mostly by bribing its way into offices, that it monopolized the federal and many state governments for most of the time since 1999. This monopoly was powerfully challenged for the first time, when the All Progressives Congress (APC) won the 2015 presidential elections.

So far, Nigerian politics are still largely organized according to the fundamental logic of neopatrimonialism. Power, resources, and loyalty are traded like in a business transaction between "Godfathers" and their clients. These patrons use their network, influence, and financial resources to bring "their candidates" into political offices to be remunerated from state revenues in return (Albert 2005). In this system, it is even difficult to achieve a political or any public office without the financial or moral support of a powerful sponsor, who then expects "his share" (Hoffmann 2010). More generally, corruption has been such a common

³⁷ The two-turnover test assumes that a democracy is consolidated if both the initial post-transition government (first turnover) and its elected successor at a later stage (second turnover) accept electoral defeat through ballots without resort to violence (Huntington 1991: 266-267).

practice in Nigeria that many aspects of people's daily lives are organized through informal payment (Smith 2007: 4-5).

Nigeria's neopatrimonial politics have also fueled many small outbreaks of violence. Since about the early 1980s, armed conflict and rioting occurred frequently and caused the deaths of tens of thousands: About 5,000 people died in the Maitatsine uprising in the North (1980-85), more than 10,000 were killed in repeated rounds of inter-group violence along ethnic and religious lines in the Middle Belt (mostly in Plateau and Kaduna, since about 1992), and several thousand died in violent fighting between ethnic militias and gangs and in election-related violence (Zinn 2005; HRW 2013; Obi and Rustad 2011). Many of these violent incidents, especially in the Middle Belt and the Niger Delta, are directly linked to the competition for political offices and patronage (Hasenclever and Sändig 2014: 183-186; HRW 2007). Ruthless politicians have often used political thugs, gangs, or even the police to attack their opponents. While most of the violence now is localized, the heated election campaigns at the federal level and the existence of regional and identity-based political organizations such as the O'odua People's Congress (OPC), Arewa Consultative Forum, Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), and also Boko Haram and MASSOB suggests that there still is a high risk of country-wide violent confrontations over power and resources.

3.2. Boko Haram

The group that widely became known as Boko Haram was formed by local Imam Mohammed Yusuf in Maiduguri (capital of Borno State) around 2002. For the first years, the group was also known as Yusufiyya. It was transformed into an insurgent group in mid-2009 and has since been calling itself Jama'atu Ahlus Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad ("People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad"). It was given the catchy (yet derogatory) nickname of "Boko Haram" by its opponents from other Islamist groups. This name alludes to the movement's main message, namely that Western influence and education (*boko* in Hausa) is religiously forbidden (*haram* in Arabic) for Muslims. Although the sect has always rejected the nickname Boko Haram, it has become known and referred to almost exclusively by this name.

In the present study, I subdivide the analysis of Boko Haram into two phases: The initial phase is termed *non-violent phase*, even though it was not entirely non-violent. It lasted from around 2002 to mid-2009. The ensuing *rebellion phase* began in July 2009 and is still ongoing at present. Before detailing Boko Haram's activities during both phases, I give a brief general background on Islam in Nigeria.

3.2.1. Background: Islam in Nigeria

Islam, more precisely Sunni Islam, has a long history in Nigeria, but became the dominant religion in the North only during the past two centuries. It was brought to the region across Trans-Saharan trade routes in the 10th century already, but remained secondary to traditional religions until the Islamic revolution of the early 19th century. Through fighting a *jihad* (1804-12) against the Hausa emirates, which had only formally adopted Islam but hardly practiced the religion, the Fulani leader Usman Dan Fodio (1754-1817) entrenched Islam firmly across the North (Falola and Heaton 2008: 62-67). He established the Sokoto Caliphate, which further promoted Islam to unify the disparate ethnic groups in the North for holding the vast and structurally weak empire together. Although the British abolished the Sokoto Caliphate in 1903, their colonial policies sought to protect and even support the spread of Islam in the North, which until today is seen as a political instrument to achieve Northern unity (Ibrahim 1991: 116).

The importance of Northern unity arose within the North around the time of independence to gain a stronger political position in the face of the more developed Southern part of the country. For this purpose, the first Northern Premier Ahmadu Bello (1954-66) implemented an Islamization campaign and political reforms. Under his governments, civil servants were obliged to convert to Islam, government buildings were built in Islamic style, and conversion campaigns were launched in the Middle Belt (Harnischfeger 2008: 68). Also, as a step towards unity, towards what he perceived as modernity, and towards sustaining the power of his formal government, he sought to eradicate the traditional power structure of the syncretistic Sufi brotherhoods and the related Hausa emirates. This was largely achieved by developing a secular legal code that effectively limited the jurisdiction of Islamic law (*sharia*) to personal and family affairs, founding the umbrella group Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI) that is dedicated to Islamic unity and education, and facilitating the pilgrimage to Mecca (Loimeier 1997b: 111-117). These efforts resulted in a marked further spread of Islam across the North. Although some syncretism persists at the beginning of 21st century, virtually all Northerners (except for the Christian minorities) very strongly identify with Islam (Hock 2009: 281-285).

Inspired by the example of Saudi Arabia and as part of the attack on the power basis of the Sufi brotherhoods, Salafism was promoted in Nigeria under Bello. He had made Sheikh Abubakar Gumi the Grand Khadi of the North. Gumi became the forerunner of Salafism in the country and thereby contributed to the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Nigeria. During the 1970s, Gumi achieved mass popularity for criticizing continued military rule and the corruption of the "disbelieving" political class. He also sharply attacked the traditional Sufi

brotherhoods for failing to live up to the strict reading of the Quran, mostly by their veneration of saints (Hill 2010: 18-19). Such idolatry contradicts the Salafists' doctrine of the "Oneness of Allah" ("There is no god but God"). Gumi's radical preaching inspired the foundation of the Izala movement in Jos in 1978.³⁸ Izala was founded in explicit opposition to these un-Islamic "innovations" by the Sufi brotherhoods and took a radical stance against their adherents. After its stunning rise, however, Izala's popularity immediately declined when its spiritual leader Gumi suddenly accepted a government post as religious advisor of the highly corrupt administration of Shehu Shagari (1979-83, see Loimeier 1997b: 220). Gumi now worked against the further rise of Islamism and for this sake even gave up his long-standing opposition to the Sufi brotherhoods in 1988 (Loimeier 1997b: 308).

The promotion of Salafism and Gumi's inflammatory preaching led to the rise of several radical Islamist groups in the North during the 1980s. In 1980, the small Kano-based sect Maitatsine, led by the self-proclaimed Prophet Mohammed Marwa, even started an uprising against the "unbelievers" (Isichei 1987: 195-197). Subsequently, Maitatsine-related violence flared up in various northern cities for several years. Around the same time, also the Muslim Students Society (MSS) grew. The group, which had been inspired by the 1979 Iranian revolution, was based mostly around Northern university campuses (Loimeier 1997a: 8-11). MSS adherents have demanded the restoration of the *sharia* and repeatedly threatened to wage *jihad*. The key figure of the MSS had been Ibrahim Zakzaky who then founded the Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN) in 1985. At first glance, the IMN appears as a Shia movement, but is Sunni as well. It draws some inspiration from the Iranian religious leaders, but seems to maintain the links with them mostly for obtaining financial support. Like Gumi before him, after years of radical preaching, Zakzaky as well soon disappointed his radical followers. He dismissed their demand for leading a violent Islamic revolution when rioting occurred between Christians and Muslims in Kafanchan (Kaduna State) in 1987 (Loimeier 1997b: 302). This readiness to abandon radical preaching in the face of the escalation of violence suggests that some of these Islamist leaders used the radical preaching only to win followers and for obtaining financial support, among other sources from foreign sponsors (Ibrahim 1991: 125). Indeed, foreign funding for the spread of Salafism has been provided to Izala from religious organizations in Saudi Arabia and to the IMN from the Iranian government. Besides such

³⁸ Izala is formally known as Jama'atul Izalatul Bid'ah Wa'ikhamatul Sunna ("Association for the Removal of the Innovation and for the Establishment of the Sunna"). As the name expresses, Izala calls for the eradication of "un-Islamic innovations" such as the veneration of saints and for a literal reading of holy texts, most importantly the Sunna.

funding, people's disappointment at the failed socio-economic development as well as the concomitant rise of Christian fundamentalism also contributed to the rise of Islamism in the North (Marshall 2009: 219).

Islamic activism in the North achieved a highpoint around 1999/2000 when the Northern governors suddenly announced to re-introduce the *sharia* in criminal law (Harnischfeger 2008). This led to a heated national controversy over whether the *sharia* can be reconciled with the secular state of Nigeria. As a result, severe riots (the so-called "Sharia riots") broke out between Christians, who feared to be oppressed under the *sharia*, and Muslims in Kaduna State in early 2000 (about 2,000 deaths, see HRW 2013: 87-88). Nonetheless, all 12 "core" Northern states adopted the *sharia* within a short time from 1999 on. The general population expected this to finally bring the rampant corruption of the political class to an end and improve their living conditions. Yet, these expectations remained unfulfilled. Only a handful of minor criminals were harshly punished under the Islamic law, but the Northern leaders have been entirely spared (HRW 2004: 4). The general public, thus, was disappointed about the lack of implementation of the *sharia*.

3.2.2. Boko Haram's Non-Violent Phase (2002 until mid-2009)

Boko Haram was formed over the discontent with the non-implementation of the *sharia* in Northern Nigeria around 2002. The group's founder and leader Yusuf (born in 1970) was a young Imam who originated from a village near Jakusko (Yobe State). He had been the Maiduguri leader of the Ahlus Sunna, which itself is a breakaway of Izala, and a member of the Borno State Sharia Implementation Committee under Governor Mallah Kachallah (1999-03, see ICG 2014: 7). However, when realizing that the state government lacked commitment for implementing Islamic law, he became critical of his involvement with the government and also started challenging the Ahlus Sunna leader Sheikh Ja'far Mahmoud Adam in this regard. At some point in 2003/04, his group also broke away from Ahlus Sunna organizationally. The official name of the breakaway faction around the time was Ahlus Sunna Wal Jama'a Hijra, which means (in a contextualized translation): "The people of the Sunna [of the prophet] and the community [of Muslims] as well as [those who accept the obligation] to emigrate [from the land of unbelievers]" (translation from Loimeier 2012: 151).

Around the same time, a more radical group formed in Northern Yobe State, which was in some ways (although details remain unknown) connected with Yusuf's group. The so-called Nigerian Taliban was led by Abubakar Shekau (the later insurgent leader of Boko Haram), Aminu Tashen-Ilimi, and Mohammed Ali. The group went on *hijra* (migration) to live a pure

and ascetic life dedicated to praying in a base of makeshift tents, which locally became known as “Afghanistan.” It has been assumed that there were a few hundred followers among the group, including former university students and sons of wealthy families (Daily Trust 2003, 31 December). The group soon came into conflict with local communities over fishing rights and resettled to a new location nearby Kanamma, where, however, a similar conflict with local communities erupted (ICG 2014: 9-10). Over the dispute, security agencies seem to have asked the group to abandon their camp, which led the group to start an uprising.

The Nigerian Taliban pursued a small uprising in late 2003 which lasted for a few days. It began when about 200 armed group members attacked police stations and government buildings at Kanamma, Geidam, and other places in Yobe State. In the fighting, which led to several police officers being killed and about 10,000 people displaced, the insurgents brought Kanamma and Geidam briefly under their control and allegedly hoisted the Afghan flag (IRIN 2004, 6 January). According to leaflets distributed in Geidam, their goal was to establish an Islamic state following the example of Afghanistan’s Taliban leader Mullah Omar, kill the “unbelieving” policemen and soldiers, and encourage Muslims throughout the country to rise up for a *jihad* for justice (Weekly Trust 2004, 3 January). The Nigerian military, however, quickly quelled the uprising, killed and arrested dozens of Taliban fighters, and demolished the group’s base. In reprisal, some of the Nigerian Taliban who had regrouped, attacked two police stations in Bama and Gwoza (both Borno State) killing several police officers in September 2004 (IRIN 2004, 24 September).

The Nigerian Taliban uprising had an important impact on Yusuf and his Maiduguri-based group. For evading arrest over his connections with the Nigerian Taliban, Yusuf fled to Saudi Arabia. Reportedly, his preaching became more radical after his return (Brigaglia 2012: 38; ICG 2014: 10). Around 2004, he also moved with his group to the newly-built Mosque, which was named after the Salafist Islamic scholar Ibn Taymiyya (13th/14th century).

In the following years, the sect openly propagated its political-religious views through preaching at its headquarters as well as local branches and through selling tape recordings of their sermons at many markets across Northern Nigeria (Salkida 2010). Concomitantly, the sect established an extensive organizational structure, which was hierarchically organized: At the top were Yusuf as leader, two deputies (Abubakar Shekau and Mahman Nur), and the Council (*shura*) as the highest decision-making body (Onuoha 2012a: 163). Furthermore, in each state and major city the group had a commander to guide the local followers, and in larger cities there were even sub-commanders for smaller sectors. At the headquarters, the organization established an entire “state within a state” (Salkida 2010): It created its own religious police

(*hisba*) and ran a farm, micro-credit scheme, and *sharia* court. There had also been some arms build-up during these years, which became visible during the uprising when the group had at least some sophisticated weapons (including AK-47s, hand grenades, bomb-building material) besides mostly basic weapons such as cutlasses, swords, and bows and arrows.

In early June 2009 a local crisis began in Maiduguri that ultimately led to Boko Haram's major uprising of July 2009. The trigger of the crisis was a minor traffic incident between sect members and security officers of the Operation Flush (OP Flush), which had been a joint police and military mission deployed to Borno State for combatting crime. According to the common account, on 11 June 2009 OP Flush officers shot at some Boko Haram followers and injured about 17 of them (Daily Trust 2009, 12 June). Although no one died, Yusuf was furious and demanded the authorities in Borno State for an apology and for the withdrawal of OP Flush (Umar 2012: 128-130). When his request was ignored and when some Boko Haram members were arrested in Biu and Bauchi in late July 2009, the situation quickly escalated. On 26 July 2009, about 60 sect followers attacked a police station in Bauchi (Daily Trust 2009, 27 July-a). The next day, Boko Haram fighters attacked police stations, prisons, and government buildings in several further Northern cities including Potiskum (Yobe State), Wudil (Kano State), and Maiduguri; yet, these attacks were quickly repelled by the security agents who then immediately raided the group's places (Daily Trust 2009, 28 July). The most severe fighting occurred in Maiduguri between 28 and 30 July when the Nigerian armed forces used heavy weapons to shell the sect's compound. The uprising ended when the military stormed the sect's headquarters on 30 July. Hours later, security agents killed Yusuf extra-judicially. Also, several extra-judicial killings were perpetrated against other sect leaders and some followers. Overall, an estimated 800 were killed in the fighting, mostly sect members (HRW 2012: 32). With Shekau and Nur, however, at least two senior figures had survived and soon reappeared as insurgent leaders.

3.2.3. Boko Haram's Rebellion (since mid-2009)

After the July 2009 uprising, Boko Haram regrouped as an underground terrorist group and started fighting a sustained insurgency around September 2010. Since then, the violence has constantly escalated until early 2015, when it declined markedly. The death toll after about six years of the insurgency from mid-2009 to mid-2015 stands at 17,000; most of the victims were civilians and about 7,000 alone died from the severe detention conditions in military prisons (AI 2015b: 4-5). In addition, in March 2015 around the height of the insurgency about 1.2 million people were internally displaced in the North-East, most of them from Borno State (IRIN 2015, 4 March).

Almost nothing is known about how Boko Haram regrouped between the July 2009 uprising and the group's first attack on a prison in Bauchi, where it liberated detained members in September 2010. In this phase, Boko Haram's followers most likely went into hiding and some even fled to neighboring and other countries (ICG 2014: 14, 23). Also, Shekau and Nur seem to have competed for the sect leadership at the time. Initially, Nur took the lead, but then Shekau took over when he had recuperated from the injuries suffered in July 2009 (ICG 2014: 19). Nothing is known about Shekau, except that he is Kanuri, i.e. he belongs to the dominant ethnic group of the North-East. For his many video messages, in which other persons were typically hiding their faces, Shekau became the figurehead of Boko Haram. Still, much speculation persists about him: It is almost certain that Shekau became a pseudonym at some point, which means that imposters took over, possibly after the killing of the "original Shekau." In fact, Shekau had been declared dead by the Nigerian military at least three times and it is possible that the "real Shekau" was already killed in the July 2009 uprising.³⁹ Therefore, when referring to Shekau in this study, this means the pseudonym rather than necessarily the actual person.

Stages of the Insurgency

For analytic purposes, the insurgency is subdivided into three stages in the present study: Boko Haram evolved from an "open uprising" (July 2009) to an "underground terrorist group" (mid-2010 to early 2013) and finally engaged in "open warfare" (early-2013 to early 2015). In the first stage Boko Haram pursued an open uprising from a clear territorial basis, namely its headquarters at Maiduguri and its local branches in various other cities (as detailed above). The fighting during this phase was spontaneous and little-coordinated and the group had only been lightly armed, which made it easy for the security agencies to disrupt most of the sect's organizational structure.

In the second stage (mid-2010 to early 2013) Boko Haram's operations followed terrorist tactics. The group operated from the underground, perpetrated hit-and-run as well as bomb attacks, and went into hiding among the civilian population. The absence of a clear territorial basis made it very difficult for the Nigerian security agencies to disrupt the activities. There has also been a constant evolution of Boko Haram's fighting techniques and capacity within this

³⁹ In most recent videos (published since March 2015), the figure of Shekau has disappeared.

stage: The attacks became ever more frequent, professional, and deadly.⁴⁰ The initial attacks were basic drive-by-shootings in which individual security agents, Imams (who had criticized the sect), and politicians in Maiduguri and Bauchi were killed.⁴¹ From late 2010 on, the sect carried out a series of heavy bomb attacks against churches, beer gardens, army barracks, markets, and police stations. Several of these bombs exploded in Abuja, among other places at the national police headquarters (June 2011) and the UN headquarters (August 2011). The attack on Abuja's national police headquarters was also the first suicide attack in Nigerian history. From late 2011 on, several so-called multi-part attacks occurred in which the number of deaths was as high as 100-200 *per* attack. In these attacks, multiple targets in a Northern city were attacked simultaneously by armed fighters, by suicide bombers, and by using improvised explosive devices (IEDs, see START 2013: 3). Since about 2012, Boko Haram attacks have even become an almost daily occurrence, especially in the North-East.

Finally, in the third stage (early-2013 to early 2015) Boko Haram's tactics shifted towards open warfare in which the rebels operated from rural bases, captured territory, and established (at least rudimentary) governance structures in the North-East. During this phase the intensity of the fighting increased tremendously, the weaponry available to the rebels became heavy, and several severe massacres against civilians occurred. In what may have been the height of the insurgency, around late 2014 the rebels controlled large parts of Borno State, Northern Adamawa State, and Eastern Yobe State, i.e. an area of at least 20,000 km² with a population of about two million (Daily Trust 2014, 3 November). Following the example of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), at this point Shekau declared the region an Islamic Caliphate (Daily Trust 2014, 25 August). Boko Haram's Islamic state, however, did not reach into the region's two main strategic cities (i.e. Maiduguri and Damaturu), which the rebels did not capture, despite repeated attempts.

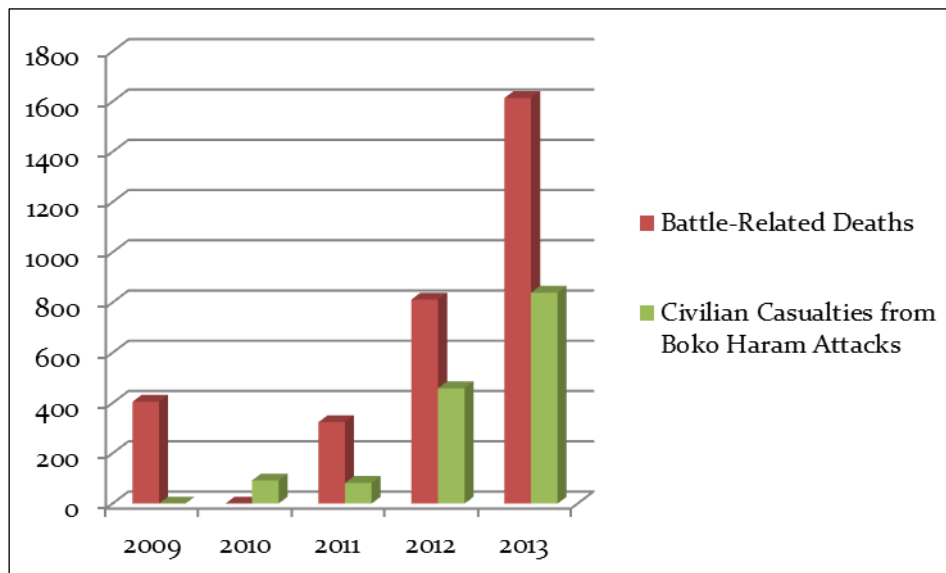
⁴⁰ Information on Boko Haram attacks described in the present study was drawn from the useful timelines provided by IRIN (2012, 20 January, 2013, 22 February, 2013, 12 December).

⁴¹ These attacks on the police (who had killed Yusuf in custody) and politicians (belonging to the party of Borno State Governor Sheriff, whom the sect made responsible for the killing) were mostly reprisals for Yusuf's killing (ICG 2014: 14).

Patterns of Violence

There has been a constant increase in the lethality of the rebellion since 2011 (see Figure 4).⁴² In total numbers, around 3,150 died in battle between Boko Haram and the security forces and 1,500 civilians were killed by Boko Haram from 2009-2013 alone (for sources, see footnote 43). Lethality data for the year 2014 and the first half of 2015 has not yet been available at the time of writing, but it is clear from media and human rights reports that the year 2014 (and the third stage more generally) has been by far the worst in terms of the human suffering of the rebellion (so far). Most of the about 7,000 civilian deaths due to the brutal counterinsurgency operations occurred during this time (AI 2015b: 4-7).

Figure 4: Lethality of Boko Haram's Rebellion (UCDP's Data)⁴³



At the beginning of the rebellion, Boko Haram's attacks largely spared Muslim civilians, which, however, changed markedly during the third stage. The initial attacks were largely discriminate with Boko Haram targeting mostly the Nigerian state by attacking the military and police (34% of the total attacks), government offices and representatives (13%), and

⁴² The UCDP's data puts the number of battle-related deaths of the 2009 uprising only at 405. This is considerably lower than the above-cited number of 800 deaths, which also includes civilian casualties, but which (probably) still assumes a higher number of battle-related deaths than UCDP. The estimate of 800 is based on body counts by the Nigerian Red Cross and police (HRW 2012: 32).

⁴³ Own depiction based on best estimates by UCDP (2014b, c). While "battle-related deaths" also encompasses civilians who die in the cross-fire between Boko Haram and Nigerian security agencies, "civilian casualties" comprises the number of victims from direct attacks on civilians by Boko Haram only. These estimates generally are conservative and most likely still underestimate the real lethality of the warfare due to the lack of proper reporting from battlefields in places as remote as North-Eastern Nigeria (Eck and Hultman 2007: 236).

education facilities (8%), according to the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) (data from 2009 to mid-2013, see START 2014).⁴⁴ An important share of 28% of the attacks were carried out against religious institutions and civilians, but most of the victims were Christians who were legitimate targets in Boko Haram's view.⁴⁵ Muslim civilians, however, were no longer spared during the third stage when they even became the main victim of Boko Haram's attacks.⁴⁶ From early 2014 to March 2015, the sect carried out hundreds of attacks directly against civilians, killing an estimated 5,500, mostly Muslim (AI 2015a: 3). When initially the group destroyed empty schools, now they torched dormitories that were full of pupils and students, thereby killing dozens in each attack (AI 2013). In addition, during this phase the rebels kidnapped about 2,000, including the estimated 200 "Chibok Girls" that made international media headlines (AI 2015a: 3). In their severest massacre in January 2015, the rebels completely destroyed the small town Doron Baga and killed up to 2,000 civilians (AI 2015, 15 January). Some of the reasons for this clear shift towards indiscriminate attacks are discussed in the case study analysis below.

Structure and Followers

Boko Haram has been a diffuse phenomenon. Since the sect went underground, it has been operating through loosely-connected local cells, which are somewhat autonomous with their own commanders but which are also given directives from the top leadership around Shekau and the still-existing *shura*, as the highest decision-making body (ICG 2014: 18). These cells probably comprise low numbers of members and span across all major Northern cities and also into Abuja. The most visible faction within this network has been Ansaru⁴⁷, which has a territorial focus on the North-Central area around Kano and which even was a relatively independent splinter group for some time around 2012/13. Little is known about the financial resources that have been available to the movement for forming and maintaining this organizational structure. This aspect, which has been subject of much controversy, will be explored in more detail in the case study analysis.

⁴⁴ For analytic clarity some of the overly specific codes of the GTD were merged into broader categories. As with conflict event data in general, due to underreporting these are probably underestimates (LaFree and Dugan 2007: 188).

⁴⁵ The remainder comprises attacks on business (8%) and other/unknown targets (9%).

⁴⁶ At the time of writing, GTD data for 2014/15 was not yet available.

⁴⁷ Ansaru is formally known as Jama'at Ansar al-Muslimin fi Bilad al-Sudan ("Supporters of the Muslims in the Land of the Blacks").

What has contributed to make Boko Haram appear diffuse and difficult to understand is that most likely there have also been violent incidents that were falsely attributed to the armed group. Since the beginning of the insurgency, any violent event in the North-East (and even beyond) has automatically been interpreted as a “Boko Haram attack.” Yet, some of these incidents may, in reality, have been organized by other actors. For example, criminal gangs may have used the cover of Boko Haram and the region’s disorder to pursue bank robberies and local kidnappings; private acts of violence may have been misunderstood as Boko Haram attacks⁴⁸; the Nigerian military itself may have attacked villages to fuel the insurgency (for economic interest), to punish civilians (e.g. for hiding rebels), or to discredit the rebels (by making it appear as a Boko Haram attack); finally, Christians may have acted as “agents provocateurs” attempting to incite a wider Christian-Muslim confrontation. Evidence for these assumptions is generally thin, but the complex insurgency situation in the North-East makes them plausible.

Information about who the Boko Haram followers are, especially with regard to their socio-demographic profile, is still almost entirely missing. Most journalists and scholars assume that the followers encompass people from all segments of the Northern Muslim population, including civil servants, students and university graduates, sons of wealthy families, and impoverished, uneducated, and unemployed youths including quranic students (Galtimari Commission 2012; Harnischfeger 2012: 498). Most followers in Borno and Yobe probably are Kanuri, like Shekau (Higazi 2013: 148). In contrast, the Ansaru faction has a foothold among the Hausa-Fulani. While there seems to have been discontent within the armed group over the sparing of Kanuri from suicide bombings (The Nation 2012, 9 February), the role of ethnicity for recruitment and the armed struggle in general still remains an open question. The involvement of foreigners from neighboring countries (in particular from Cameroon, Chad, and Niger Republic) has also often been assumed, yet this should be treated with caution because people from these countries are common scapegoats in Northern Nigeria (Last 2012, 30 January). Finally, in terms of numerical strength, only rough estimates can be given: The group may have counted as little as a few hundred combatants and a support network of a few thousand during the second stage. This seems to have grown to about ten thousand combatants alone and wider support networks of another several tens of thousands during the third stage.

⁴⁸ For example, in January 2012 assailants killed 17 people at a funeral congregation in Mubi. The location and the victims’ identity as Christians made this appear as Boko Haram attack. Yet, it soon turned out as private feud (Last 2012, 30 January).

Counterinsurgency

The Nigerian government and military has made many efforts to bring the rebellion to an end, almost entirely by the use of force. In response to the rising insurgency, in June 2011 the Joint Task Force (JTF) Operation Restore Order was established in the North-East. Such JTF missions combine military, police, and other security agencies including the State Secret Service (SSS). In addition to the JTF deployment (troop numbers are unknown), in December 2011 a State of Emergency was declared for some parts of the North-East and the borders to neighboring countries were closed. Yet, the JTF was no effective response to Boko Haram. Therefore, after two brief and unsuccessful attempts to hold peace talks and to possibly even offer amnesty to the insurgents (Daily Trust 2013, 11 April), President Jonathan strongly reinforced the counterinsurgency operations. In May 2013, he declared a major counteroffensive by deploying thousands of further troops, by declaring the State of Emergency for Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa entirely, and by even commanding air strikes for the first time since the Civil War. The Nigerian military does not publish any information on the deployed troops and materiel. One media estimate, however, suggests that there were 8,500 soldiers deployed to the North-East during the third stage, which is a relatively low number and could mean that the military was outnumbered by the insurgents (The Guardian 2015, 12 January).⁴⁹ However, as part of the counteroffensive, also thousands of youths were encouraged to form civil militias, the so-called Civilian-JTF (C-JTF).⁵⁰ These youths have been much more effective in combating Boko Haram than the military. Within weeks in mid-2013, they drove Boko Haram from its urban hideouts to rural places. Besides this forceful approach, in March 2014 also a “soft” counterterrorism strategy (as based on typical elements such as de-radicalization, socio-economic assistance, relief to affected communities) was announced (Daily Trust 2014, 19 March). However, there have been no signs whatsoever that the government has shifted towards “softer” strategies. On the contrary, in early 2015 another military counteroffensive was undertaken, which even involved foreign mercenaries and which was complemented by Chadian troops. Finally, for the first time, this seems to have reduced Boko Haram’s fighting capacity.

⁴⁹ President Jonathan, however, referred to the considerably higher number of 20,000 deployed troops during one security summit (Jonathan 2014, 17 May).

⁵⁰ Officially, as part of the Borno Youth Empowerment Scheme about 1,700 were trained as militias and paid about US\$100 per month, but the actual number of C-JTF members may run into thousands (IRIN 2014, 11 August).

3.3. MASSOB

MASSOB – the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra – was founded in September 1999 by the lawyer Ralph Uwazuruike (Okonta 2012; Onuoha 2011). It is an ethno-nationalist movement seeking the secession of Eastern Nigeria in the name of Biafra. Historically, the Eastern Region comprises both the South-East and the South-South (except for Edo State), but MASSOB has a strong Igbo orientation and, therefore, is analyzed within this context here. As one interviewed Igbo politician put it, “Biafra is a patent owned by the Igbo” (C12).⁵¹ Before investigating how MASSOB was formed and how it has pursued its protest, a brief overview on the history of the Igbo in Nigeria is given.

3.3.1. Background: Igbo in Nigeria

The Igbo, who today count about 30 million, had not existed as a unified ethnic group until the early 20th century. Before, the various groups in the South-Eastern area were united only by their common language, while remaining diverse in many cultural and political regards (Harnischfeger 2011: 14-15). The region was characterized by rather egalitarian societies and a few small kingdoms. This differs from the North and West with a long history of empires. The traditional rulers, chiefs, and kings among the Igbo, instead, were a foreign invention by the British who needed a local elite for their system of indirect rule (Harneit-Sievers 1998: 60-62). Igbos quickly embraced these titles and other colonial “imports” including Western education and Christianity. They became increasingly Western-oriented, wealthy, unified, and educated, thus ready to compete for power at Nigerian independence in 1960 (Harnischfeger 2011: 16-17).

Yet, in the post-independence polity the Igbo, and the South more generally, was excluded from the federal government by the powerful North (as described in 3.1). After the coup in January 1966, Aguiyi-Ironsi used the political vacuum to create an Igbo-dominated regime. In May, he fulfilled the Igbo’s core demand of replacing the federal system with a unitary state. This would have given Igbos, but also Southerners more broadly, privileged access to political positions and resources. Yet, anger ran high in the North which led to a counter-coup in July 1966, the restoration of the federal structure and Northern hegemony, and a series of massacres. Tens of thousands of Easterners, mostly Igbos, were killed in the North and Middle Belt between May and September 1966 (Falola and Heaton 2008: 174). This triggered a wave of repatriation towards the East. There, Lieutenant Colonel Chukwuemeka

⁵¹ In a news report, one Igbo trader from Lagos similarly expressed that “Igbo is Biafra and Biafra is Igbo” (Newswatch 2000, 30 May).

Odumegwu Ojukwu had remained Military Governor despite of the counter-coup. In January 1967 the Eastern leadership and the Federal Military Government (FMG) concluded the Aburi Agreement after peace talks. It failed, however, when the FMG imposed a state of emergency in March 1967, which heightened demand for secession in the East. On 30 May 1967, Ojukwu finally declared secession. The FMG unsurprisingly rejected the bid for independence, in part because of the increasing economic relevance of the region with its oil sources, and sent troops to quell the rebellion.

The Republic of Biafra was short-lived (1967-70) and between 1 and 3 million died in the Civil War. Biafra was overwhelmed by federal troops and essentially had lost the war within months, but the fighting continued for another two years. The rebellion was weakened by several factors (Osaghae 1998: 65-67): The Yoruba's decision not to join the East dealt a major blow to the struggle. By cutting the Eastern Region into three states, the FMG also set strong incentives for smaller ethnic groups in the region not to ally with the rebels. Effectively, this reduced the Biafran breakaway attempt to an Igbo rebellion in the relatively small and landlocked East Central Region. While Nigeria received strong international support, paradoxically by both the UK and the Soviet Union, Biafra's allies were few. Only Israel, France, Portugal, and a few African countries supported the insurgents. Due to the sea blockade, however, they could hardly provide military supplies. In spite of the desperate military position and ongoing mass starvation, Biafra did not surrender quickly. This was partly due to the perception among Biafrans of the FMG as *jihadist* regime bent to eliminate the Igbos, and Christians in Nigeria more generally, if the war was lost (Omenka 2010). Humanitarian aid that was flown into Biafra by some international NGOs and the Catholic Church also sustained the rebellion that, however, only prolonged the mass suffering in Biafra.

No genocide occurred after Biafra's surrender in January 1970, but Igbos have been punished silently ever since then. Officially, the FMG took a reconciliatory position: As Head of State, Yakubu Gowon announced that there would be "no victor, no vanquished" from the "war of brothers" but a federal policy of "Reconstruction, Rehabilitation, and Reconciliation" (Osaghae 1998: 69). As part of this, a general amnesty was granted to the secessionist leaders and revenge killings were prevented. Such conciliatory steps were not self-evident considering the probably hundreds of thousands dead federal troops (Last 2000: 315-316). Behind the cover of reconciliation, however, the Northern military rulers covertly sanctioned the Igbos for the attempt for secession in the name of Biafra (see 4.2.2). There has clearly been no *rehabilitation* in political regards and also the FMG's promise of *reconstruction* has not been fulfilled. The fast post-war reconstruction of the war-shattered South-Eastern infrastructure was done

largely by self-help among Igbos (Harneit-Sievers and Emezue 2000: 119-121). Finally, *reconciliation*, in the sense of narrating the war's stories, discussing questions of guilt, possibly even granting forgiveness, and developing positive inter-group relationships has not been undertaken at all.

The continued Northern dominance of the post-war setting and side-lining of the Igbos, however, also resulted indirectly from Southern rivalry between the Igbo and Yoruba. The non-support for Biafra during the war created a deep-running suspicion against Yorubas among Igbos (Osaghae 1998: 68). Many see Yoruba as "betrayers", especially because the key Yoruba leader Obafemi Awolowo had declared the Yoruba's support for secession in early May 1967, but then aligned with the North against Biafra (Harnischfeger 2011: 23). On two occasions, this rivalry prevented the South, especially the Yoruba, from reclaiming power within the federation, which may have ended Northern dominance and also improved the Igbo's political position: In the 1979 presidential elections, Awolowo would probably have won against Shagari, if the Igbo had supported Awolowo rather than sending Nnamdi Azikiwe into the presidential race at short notice (Harnischfeger 2011: 28). Subsequently, Alex Ekwueme became Vice-President under Shagari, which until today has been the highest political office held by an Igbo since the war's end. However, this hardly improved the situation of the Igbo because Shagari's government has been a corrupt, ineffective, and short-lived democratic interplay between Northern military rule (Falola and Heaton 2008: 201-205). In 1993, again, the Igbo's non-solidarity with the Yoruba helped Northern military regimes to cling to power. At the time, the Yoruba-candidate Moshood Abiola had won the presidential election, but the Northern generals annulled the results and repressed the Yoruba's protests, which had no support from the Igbo (Harnischfeger 2011: 28).

After about three decades of continued political marginalization, hopes about improvements were high among Igbos during the 1999 democratic transition. Yet, again these expectations remained unfulfilled. Although Igbos had not boycotted the presidential elections, in which two Yoruba candidates competed for power, but had even voted for Obasanjo in large numbers, they received little in return. Obasanjo's cabinet was dominated by Yoruba and Northern politicians and only two rather insignificant positions were given to Igbo

politicians⁵², which can be seen as a continuation of the silent policy of post-war discrimination.

3.3.2. MASSOB's Structure

MASSOB was formed amid this disappointing democratic transition. The movement has sought to overcome the described post-war discrimination of the Igbo through renewing the secessionist demand for Biafra. Its founder Uwazuruike has been the leader of the movement since 1999 and even became the embodiment of the renewed demand for Biafra. He was born around 1958 in Okwe (Imo State) and studied law in India for about ten years during the 1980s (Uwazuruike 2004). In 1991 he passed the Nigerian bar exam and in the following years worked as a lawyer and little-known Igbo politician on the platform of the Lagos-based Igbo Council of Chiefs. With about 70 followers from this platform, Uwazuruike formed MASSOB and used his private place in Lagos as the movement's first office, which became known as the "Temple of Peace Secretariat." From there on, MASSOB quickly grew into a vast movement.

Structure

The term MASSOB is typically used both to describe the organization by this name (called "MASSOB proper" here) and the broader movement comprising numerous organizations and activists (occasionally referred to as "Neo-Biafra Movement", see Omeje 2005; Onuoha 2013a). MASSOB proper is the core of this broader movement. It encompasses a large and hierarchical organizational structure which mirrors the Nigerian state (this draws on Duruji 2010: 114-117): At the top is the leader Uwazuruike, there are three regions (as from 1960-66 in Nigeria), and ten areas per region, which are again subdivided hierarchically into provinces, districts, and wards. At each of these levels, there are chief administrators, ministers, deputies, and assistants. This makes up thousands of official positions within MASSOB alone. At the top, there are also about 20 different ministries (e.g. finance, security, health, education, industry, agriculture, transport, cultural affairs, etc.). In addition, MASSOB runs a public affairs department ("Biafra Directorate of Information"), secret service ("Biafran Intelligence Agency"), courts, and the Biafran police. Most of these institutions, however, are merely symbolic, have few little organizational capacities, and therefore provide only few services. Yet, some have fulfilled basic tasks for the movement such as providing education to members, assistance to imprisoned followers, and security from state harassment during meetings of the

⁵² In Obasanjo's initial federal cabinet (formed in 1999), Ojo Maduekwe became Minister of Culture and Tourism and Kema Chikwe became Minister of Transport (both are originally from Abia State).

organization. In 2011, MASSOB also opened a home for Civil War veterans at its Freedom House headquarters in Okwe and currently builds the Ojukwu Memorial Library in Owerri.

The size of MASSOB's followership has been difficult to estimate. Probably, the movement has hundreds of thousands of activists including thousands of registered followers and a number of sympathizers that runs into millions. Nevertheless, the numbers presented by the movement officials are overestimates. They typically refer to 6, 15, or even 20 million adherents (Duruji 2010: 241; Onuoha 2011: 93; Adekson 2004: 90). MASSOB has attracted people also by making the registration and participation free from charges (Duruji 2010: 117). The followers, though, are commonly invited to contribute (also financially) when organizing protests such as car and motorbike convoys.⁵³ Applicants are also screened for criminal records and may be rejected from membership.

MASSOB proper has been the pioneer in the struggle and has become very visible. Therefore, many interviewees automatically subsumed any engagement for Biafra under the label of MASSOB. Nevertheless, there is an important number of other Biafran organizations in the Igboland such as the Biafra Zionist Movement/Federation (BZM/F) led by Benjamin Onwuka, Coalition of Biafra Liberation Groups by Prince Orjiakor, Biafra National Youth League (BNYL) by Comrade Obuka Chimezie, and Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB).

Furthermore, diaspora-based Biafran organizations have become vocal, especially in the US and UK. In the US, Biafra activism was strong during the 2000s, encompassing several organizations including the Biafra Foundation (BF), Voice of Biafra International (VOBI), Ekwe Nche, Biafra Actualization Forum (BAF), and Biafra Liberation Movement/Council. Yet, several of them including BF and VOBI ceased to exist around 2009/10 and others have become relatively inactive since then. Presently, Biafran organizations from the UK and other European countries are the most visible and outspoken movement organizations outside of Nigeria. Radio Biafra with its daily broadcasts from London by the director Nnamdi Kanu has risen to become one of the most influential groups. The radio station also hosts the main Biafran online platform: Its Facebook group was founded in March 2012 only and already counted more than 600,000 members by July 2015. It is a lively forum in which users, including many from the Igboland, post dozens of new posts and countless images about the Igbo's present situation, security threats, Biafran commemoration, and protest activities every day. Biafran organizations also exist in Germany, Austria, Spain, Australia, and other European and some

⁵³ This information on the application procedure was obtained from local leaders and followers in several interviews (C56, 101, 108).

Asian countries. Some of them also have local branches and intermediaries in the Igboland. For example, the Austrian-based Biafra Liberation in Exile (BILIE, meaning “Arise!” in Igbo) is connected with the Bilie Human Rights Initiative (BHRI) in Owerri. Similarly, the Enugu-based IPOB is part of a network of groups and activists which also includes Radio Biafra.

Competition

As with most organizations, there has been some contestation over power within MASSOB proper. Repeatedly, factions sought to disempower Uwazuruike from the movement’s leadership. For example, in December 2001 two senior members, Uche Okwukwu and Prince Orjiakor, staged an unsuccessful coup against Uwazuruike (MASSOB 2001, 17 December). During Uwazuruike’s long detention from 2005 to 2007 also attempts have been made to replace him at the top of the movement, but all of these failed. Around 2009/10 several of the US diaspora-based organizations sought to challenge him. In what appears as an effort to preempt this, MASSOB allegedly briefly kidnapped Pascal Okorie, the leader of this US alliance, when he came to the South-East. In response to the kidnapping some of the US-based organizations (including the BF, BAF, and newly-founded Biafra Government In Exile) distanced themselves from Uwazuruike and ended their cooperation with MASSOB (Biafraland 2010, 11 January). Having withstood these coup attempts, MASSOB has remained a highly cohesive organization, especially if compared to other movement organizations in Nigeria such as the OPC (Duruji 2012b: 545). It was only recently in August 2014 that for the first time a major and seemingly lasting split occurred when the Progressive MASSOB (P-MASSOB) separated from Uwazuruike’s MASSOB (The SUN 2014, 16 August). The faction has been led by the former Director of Information Uchenna Madu and has been in control of MASSOB’s headquarters at Okwe since then.

There have also been some attempts of challenging MASSOB proper by the formation of other Biafran organizations. Several previous MASSOB figures (e.g. Benjamin Onwuka, Edeson Samuel, Prince Orjiakor) founded their own organizations after failing to achieve their aspirations within MASSOB proper. At some points these various Biafran organizations in the South-East engaged in heated debates, but overall their relationship has been largely peaceful. As expressed by Onwuka, “this campaign for Biafran independence belongs to all of us” (YouTube Video 2013, 12 May). In contrast, since about 2010 the diaspora-based organizations have all taken a very critical stance towards MASSOB proper and Uwazuruike. Especially Radio Biafra’s director Nnamdi Kanu has fervently criticized Uwazuruike in his radio broadcasts. Also, there has been competition between MASSOB proper and the Association of Igbo Youths (AIYO). The AIYO was partly formed as a MASSOB breakaway, but denounced the struggle for

Biafra and became a typical Igbo youth group (Vanguard 2012, 6 October). The reasons for the breakaway remain unclear, but the AIYO has been led by shady Igbo politicians who may have sought to undermine MASSOB's activities in Anambra State (Vanguard 2013, 5 June).

3.3.3. MASSOB's Non-Violent Protest

Protest Activities

Unlike the past struggle for Biafra, MASSOB has sought to achieve secession through non-violent protest. The main protest activities of the movement comprise public rallies, "sit-at-homes", hoisting the Biafran flag, and calling on the international community for support. The movement began the struggle by organizing a series of public rallies in Lagos that attracted thousands (Newswatch 2000, 30 May). Around May 2000, MASSOB moved its protest activities towards the South-East. The movement achieved wide prominence, albeit also notoriety, when Uwazuruike announced to publicly hoist the Biafran flag and re-declare the independence of Biafra in late May 2000. The plan was to hold an entire week of activities dedicated to protest and Biafran commemoration, e.g. in remembrance of victims of the 1966 massacres, Biafran soldiers, Aguiyi-Ironsi, Ogoni leader Ken Saro-Wiwa, the Odi massacre among the Ijaw (1999), and the "Sharia riots" (Newswatch 2000, 30 May). Due to police repression, few of these activities were held, but the announcement alone created much controversy. In a hasty event on 22 May 2000, Uwazuruike also symbolically re-declared Biafra in the Aba Declaration (Vanguard 2000, 23 May).

Over the years, MASSOB has held many protest rallies and repeated "stay-at-home" events. Unfortunately, no comprehensive documentation has been available on when and where MASSOB has protested.⁵⁴ Initially, there have been large protest rallies in which thousands of people marched through the streets of major cities in the South-East and Lagos, waved Biafran flags, and sang songs about Biafra and MASSOB. Assessing news reports, video recordings, and other documents suggests that such rallies have been held by MASSOB and other Biafran organizations throughout the movement's existence and that they have occurred in all the major cities of the South-East and in Lagos.⁵⁵ However, when asking interviewees in

⁵⁴ The Social Conflict Analysis Database (SCAD), which records protest events, provides such information, but for MASSOB merely nine events are recorded from 1999 to 2013. This is only a negligible fraction of MASSOB's hundreds (or even more) of protest activities during these years.

⁵⁵ To give a few examples, such rallies that each involved hundreds or even thousands of MASSOB members and sympathizers were held in Owerri (9 May 2001, see Newswatch 2001, 10 May), Lagos (15

many places about what MASSOB activities they have observed, virtually everywhere people stressed that MASSOB has held many public rallies in the past, but that this has declined in recent years. Obviously, for the risks associated with such protests in the context of severe repression, public marches by MASSOB have become relatively rare (but still exist). As a safe alternative, since 2004 MASSOB has regularly called on Easterners to stay at home and not go about daily business on a designated day. On this day the movement expects schools, offices, and motor parks to remain closed and places of public life to be deserted as an expression of discontent. As another safe alternative to public marches, the movement organized motorcades in which MASSOB members rent buses and use motorcycles to drive through major cities, wave the Biafran flag, and cheer. This makes it much easier for the participants to evade arrest. At some times and in some places the relationship between MASSOB and the local security agents has even been relatively relaxed, which allowed the movement members to openly wear Biafran uniforms or clothes with MASSOB's inscriptions.

Some of the protest activities have also been more militant. It has been a typical activity by MASSOB members and sympathizers to hoist the Biafran flag in public. This has been reported as a cat-and-mouse game: When the police confiscates the Biafran flags, almost immediately another Biafran flag is hoisted (IRIN 2005, 19 April). One scholar even noted his own surprise about how ubiquitous these flags were in every major city in the South-East around 2010 (Okonta 2012: 39).⁵⁶ To express the discontent over the continued marginalization of the Igbos in Nigerian politics, the movement has also commonly threatened to disrupt the exercise of Nigerian elections and in 2006 announced to undermine the holding of the Nigerian population census in the South-East (Vanguard 2002, 29 May, 2005, 26 August; Daily Champion 2007, 27 February; The SUN 2015, 14 March). Ultimately, the movement seems to have refrained from interfering with the elections and population census, but making such threats and having them reported in all major Nigerian newspapers itself can be seen as a form of protest. In 2008 MASSOB activists, indeed, disrupted the Igbo Day festivities in Enugu, in which many prominent Igbo leaders were gathered. The protesters stormed the event, sang Biafran songs, and chanted "We Want Biafra" (Daily Independent 2008, 15 October).

March 2003) and Okigwe (29 March 2003, both see Rising Sun Productions n.d.), Onitsha (7 November 2005, see YouTube Video 2008, 25 November-a), Afikpo (Ebonyi State)/Enugu/Onitsha/Umuahia (10 March 2010, see Daily Independent 2010, 10 March), Enugu (5 November 2012, see Vanguard 2012, 6 November), Onitsha (2 June 2013, see Vanguard 2013, 3 June), and Aba/Awka (Anambra State)/Enugu/Onitsha/Umuahia (13 March 2015, see The SUN 2015, 14 March).

⁵⁶ Yet, this seems to have changed in the meantime. When I visited Enugu, Onitsha, and Owerri in November 2014, I did not come across any Biafran flag in public.

There have also been some protest activities with a strong international orientation, although these have become fewer in recent years. Already in November 1999, MASSOB sent the “Biafra Bill of Rights” to the United Nations (UN, see Okonta 2012: 23-24). In July 2000 Uwazuruike attempted to participate in a summit of the Organization of African Unity in Lomé (Togo) to represent Biafra. While news reporting suggests that he was arrested already when entering the premises, in his biography a heroic story is told about how he attracted the attention of many statesmen on the summit (Vanguard 2000, 12 July; Uwazuruike 2004: 149-153). On invitation of the BF, in September 2001 Uwazuruike alongside Ojukwu opened the Biafra House in Washington D.C., which the movement depicted as the Biafran Embassy in the US (Uwazuruike 2004: 163-168). In October 2003, the BF even organized an International Conference on Biafra in Maryland, USA. From 2002-09 VOB also publicized MASSOB’s activities towards the international audience, mostly in the US. Around the late 2000s MASSOB proper largely discontinued these internationalized protest activities, but some other organizations such as BILIE and individual lawyers in the diaspora have filled the void. They have sent several requests and complaints about crimes against humanity and genocide against Igbos in Nigeria to the UN Human Rights Commission and the International Criminal Court (for an example, see BILIE 2012, 10 March).

Other Biafran organizations in the South-East have also engaged in some noteworthy protests. For example, in October 2012 the BHRI filed a lawsuit at the Federal High Court in Owerri to achieve Biafra’s independence on a legal way (BHRI 2012, 14 October). About the same time, the BZM was formed. Its leader Onwuka followed the example of MASSOB’s Aba Declaration, when he again publicly re-declared the independence of Biafra. On the event in Enugu, he was arrested with an estimated 500 followers when they started marching through the streets (Vanguard 2012, 6 November). Onwuka and his followers also undertook two activities, which were much more militant than those by MASSOB proper, when they broke into Enugu’s Government House and the Enugu State Broadcasting Service (ESBS) in March respectively June 2014 (Vanguard 2014, 6 June). At the Government House they hoisted the Biafran flag and at the ESBS they sought to make a public announcement over Biafra’s liberation. However, at least one security agent was killed in the incident at the ESBS, which led to the arrests of Onwuka and his followers. They have been charged of treason and presently remain in prison.

Popularity

Through these protest activities, MASSOB has become widely popular among Igbos. There is much evidence for this popularity of the movement and the demand of Biafra: For example,

within short time after the foundation, Biafran newspapers appeared widely in the South-East (Harnischfeger 2011: 2). Also, the rise of further Biafran organizations both in the South-East and the diaspora indicates Biafra's popularity. Finally, in 2012 even one international brewing company sought to exploit Biafra's popularity when introducing the brand of HERO beer. The name coupled with the rising sun in the logo clearly alludes to Biafra, which is also known as the "Land of the Rising Sun."

Of all the protest activities, the "stay-at-home" event of 26 August 2004 has clearly been the most successful (Okonta 2012: 48; Duruji 2010: 122). Journalists reported from the day that, "[l]ike in a strike situation, the South-East, parts of the South-South zones of the country and Plateau State were literally shut down yesterday as millions of residents complied with an order to stay in-doors" (Daily Champion 2004, 27 August).⁵⁷ The 2005 sit-at-home still attracted huge participation across the South-East (Daily Champion 2005, 6 December). In contrast, subsequent "stay-at-homes" were only partial successes: While they again brought public life to a standstill in some cities, in others people went about their daily businesses as usual (Daily Champion 2008, 29 August; Premium Times 2013, 8 June). However, a decline in participation is not necessarily evidence for a decline in MASSOB's popularity because the South-Eastern state governments have also commonly made harsh threats to prevent people from participating. For example, in 2008 the Ebonyi State Government announced to "permanently close down and seal any firm, market or business organisation that obeys or complies with the MASSOB order" (This Day 2008, 29 August). To make the threat credible, the state governments typically deployed large numbers of police officers and even soldiers to the streets of South-Eastern cities. As further shown in the case study analysis, overall MASSOB and the demand for Biafra is still hugely popular with the Igbos.

MASSOB and (Non-)Violence

The renewed struggle for Biafra has been non-violent to a very large extent, but not entirely. According to relevant datasets, MASSOB has never waged an armed conflict (UCDP/PRIO 2014b), but both the GTD (three violent incidents, 16 casualties) and SCAD (seven violent occurrences, 13 casualties) contain entries on violent attacks by MASSOB (data from 1999-2013, see START 2014; SCAD 2014). Six out of these ten incidents were presumed attacks by MASSOB on the police. Information on what exactly happened is scarce. While such attacks are entirely

⁵⁷ These "stay/sit-at-home" events have often been termed as "order" or "directive", also by MASSOB itself. Yet, in contrast to an order, the movement has clearly emphasized that the participation in these events is voluntary (MASSOB 2004, 26 July).

possible, there is reason to remain skeptical and not immediately take such reports at face value. Considering the many attacks by police agents on MASSOB (see 4.2.5), it remains difficult to define, based on the little available news reporting, whether these violent incidents occurred and were attacks by MASSOB on the police, self-defense against police attacks, or reprisals. Some activists may have also acted on their own, “agents provocateurs” may have been at work⁵⁸, and violent actions may have been falsely attributed to MASSOB – either intentionally by opponents⁵⁹, or for lack of information. However, at least two violent events are certain: In June/July 2006 followers of MASSOB clashed with members of the Nigerian Association of Road Transport Owners (NARTO) and the police at Onitsha (Daily Champion 2006, 27 June). Moreover, in March/April 2013 MASSOB members fought with the already-mentioned AIYO, again at Onitsha (Premium Times 2013, 16 April).

Hence, the conflict data shows that there is a clear variation in the protest behavior of Boko Haram and MASSOB. While the former has been engaged in a sustained violent confrontation with the Nigerian government since mid-2009, the latter has not. In the case of MASSOB, there were only a few violent incidents, which suggests that the movement has been close to conflict escalation on a broader level. This makes it even more interesting and relevant to explain why this has not occurred.

⁵⁸ For example, one journalist commented the NARTO-MASSOB-police clashes of June/July 2006 at Onitsha as follows: “It is not out of place to surmise that MASSOB may have been infiltrated by other faceless people masquerading as MASSOB members” (Daily Champion 2006, 27 June).

⁵⁹ As discussed below (see 5.4.3.2), the Nigerian news reporting is of high quality but there is some pro-status quo bias. Thus, media houses may seek to discredit MASSOB by framing it as violent. In fact, some allegations made in the news appear strange: For example, in November 2005 MASSOB members were accused of having torched the Onitsha residence of Azikiwe (Daily Champion 2005, 8 November). Yet, in MASSOB’s view Azikiwe is one of the most revered Igbo leaders.

4. Applying Civil War Theories to the Cases

This chapter investigates whether the three theoretical approaches on rebellion, as outlined above (in 2), explain the varying protest behavior of the two movements and also why Boko Haram's protest turned violent in mid-2009 of all times (from 4.1-4.3). Following the theory application, brief summaries are given. The main findings are also highlighted at the end of the chapter (in 4.4). An overview on the political-geographic expressions used in this chapter can be found in Figure 3 (p. xiii).

4.1. Opportunity

For assessing whether structural circumstances that make rebellion feasible solve the puzzle, this part draws on the outlined 15 indicators and six categories of the opportunity approach (as summarized in Table 1 below). These indicators (emphasized in italics in the following) are applied to the core area of operation of both movements⁶⁰: This is Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe State, or the entire North-East in the case of Boko Haram (depending on data availability); in the case of MASSOB, it is the South-East. Besides assessing the impact of these risk factors, in this section I also investigate whether Boko Haram's rebellion unfolded according to the storyline of opportunity theory. Existing studies on Boko Haram, so far, have been very unspecific in these regards. They often highlight structural circumstances without connecting them to observed patterns of behavior. As a case in point, Agbiboa argues that "the cocktail of political corruption, chronic poverty, and youth unemployment in northern Nigeria continues to fuel members and supporters of Boko Haram" (Agbiboa 2013: 148). This leaves unclear if these structural circumstances are understood as opportunities or grievances. Hence, in the following these variables are assessed more specifically and from the perspective of opportunity-related explanations.

4.1.1. Politics and Military

Nigeria has been a typical case of a *weak or failed state* (Bach 2006; Hill 2012; ICG 2006). The state is failing in virtually all its core tasks such as providing security, education, health, and infrastructure. The basic underlying structural problem is that of corruption, which, in turn, is

⁶⁰ Using the following regional categories is a slight simplification considering that there are also parts of the organizational structure of both movements that operate outside of these regions (e.g. parts of Boko Haram in the North Central, and parts of MASSOB in the South-South). Yet, by and large, this captures the core areas in which these movements were formed and have operated.

the result Nigeria's neopatrimonial structure and character as a "*failed rentier*" system. Nigeria makes a perfect case for the argument by Basedau and Lay (2009) that oil-dependent-yet-overpopulated countries are structurally weak and at high risk of rebellion. Such states depend on the generation and distribution of patronage, but lack in sufficient per-capita-patronage to accommodate everyone, which then results in shallow statehood and fierce resource competition. In Nigeria this has been a country-wide phenomenon and it has been existent for decades.

As part of the state weakness, Nigeria's *security forces lack capacity* (and perhaps more importantly willingness) to confront nascent non-state groups. Throughout the country, thousands of local vigilantes and some larger identity-based militias exist (Ikelegbe 2005; Kirschner 2011). Especially the Nigerian police is notorious for corruption and indiscipline. The force is underpaid, but it is also lacking in morale. The Nigerian Armed Forces, in contrast, are more disciplined and relatively well equipped. At about 85,000 active personnel they are the fifth largest army in Sub-Saharan Africa and by far the largest in West Africa (IISS 2007: 261-299). Yet, corruption and low morale also undermines the military. This became particularly visible during the third stage of Boko Haram's rebellion. When Boko Haram moved to vast rural places by mid-2013, the Nigerian military often failed to engage them in combat or was even overpowered. Corruption within the military seems to be a major source of this problem too. In spite of a huge rise in the defense spending⁶¹, the military operations on the ground remained under-resourced (resulting in a hurting lack of maintenance), possibly under-staffed, and certainly underpaid. In fact, "there is little sign of the money reaching the frontline" (AI 2015b: 23). The low fighting morale among many soldiers, however, also resulted from their often over-extended stays in the battlefield (Premium Times 2014, 12 November). This shows that even the relatively powerful Nigerian military suffers from structural problems that undermine its capacity to oppose rising armed groups such as Boko Haram.

Besides the general failure of the state to provide basic services, there have been no particular instances of *political instability/crisis* in the context of the analyzed protest movements (although Boko Haram's rebellion certainly caused a political crisis in the country). Boko Haram's campaign escalated into violence over the above-mentioned "June/July 2009 crisis", but this is was a local and minor crisis, which is further analyzed below with

⁶¹ In the face of the insurgency the defense spending rose by no less than 70% from US\$ 1,4bn in 2009 to about US\$ 2,4bn in 2013 (World Bank 2014: code MS.MIL.XPND.CN). In 2014, the defense budget (7.3% of the total federal budget) was the second largest after education (Budget Office of the Federation 2014: 10-11).

regard to repression. In contrast, there was a major constitutional crisis around early 2010 when President Yar'Adua died and the parliament made Vice-President Jonathan his successor in an extra-constitutional move. This, however, was mostly a political debate at the center and did not affect Nigeria's state capacity and, hence, feasibility of rebellion for Boko Haram.

Finally, there is oil in Biafra. Interpreting the influence of the oil and natural gas resources with regard to MASSOB's protest behavior, however, is not straightforward. In principle, these natural resources could be considered a strong incentive for rebellion because an independent country of Biafra – within the borders of the independence declaration from May 1967 – would be economically well-endowed. Yet it is widely evident that the federal government would not accept to lose the oil access and, therefore, would again use heavy military means to prevent secession. Thus, the costs of rebellion would be excessive, which could have discouraged MASSOB. Taking a closer look, finally, these natural resources almost entirely lie outside of the Igboland and belong to the South-Southern ethnic groups. Hence, considering MASSOB an Igbo-based movement, these natural resources cannot be assumed to influence the movement's considerations about the feasibility and attractiveness of a rebellion for Biafra. In fact, this seems to have been the case as the movement has hardly referred to the oil in its claims-making. Therefore, oil is treated here as an irrelevant factor concerning MASSOB's feasibility of rebellion.

In short, no major variation in the regional or temporal patterns of Nigeria's statehood, which could explain the varying protest behavior of both analyzed protest movements, can be identified. Considering the weakness of the state structure and relatedly of the security forces, rebellion has been highly and constantly feasible in both cases.

4.1.2. Socio-Economic Conditions

There are plenty of opportunities to organize rebellion from a socio-economic perspective. Nigeria has been marked by wide-spread poverty, low economic prospects, and a long-lasting economic decline. The level of *poverty* is very high: At rank 156 out of 179 in the 2011 Human Development Index, Nigeria remains one of the world's poorest and least developed countries (UNDP 2011: 129). There has been a huge *economic downturn* under military rule during the 1980s and 1990s: While about 27% of the population were living from US\$ 1.25 or less per day in 1980, this rose tremendously to about 66% in 1996 and has remained at this high level since then (NBS 2012: 11). Concomitantly, also due to the high population growth, the number of people living in such poverty rose from 17 million in 1980 to 67 million in 1996 (NBS 2012: 11). In 2010, a staggering 112 million people (69% of the population) was living from US\$ 1.25 or less

per day (NBS 2012: 11).⁶² This economic downturn, however, has been gradual rather than sudden. In other words, this is not the typical version of economic decline as proposed by opportunity theory, which assumes a sharp decline that creates immediate unemployment, which suddenly makes people recruitable for rebellion at low cost.

Looking at Nigeria's *poverty and education* rates at the sub-state level, it is clear that there is a gap in the level of socio-economic development between the North and the South, and that the North-East is particularly disadvantaged. In contrast to the largely unreliable official Nigerian statistics, the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) provide credible information on such socio-economic patterns; for example, the Wealth Index by DHS measures poverty through the structures and assets of households (NPC 2009: 25-26). This shows major economic variation between the core regions of both movements: In 2008, in the North-East about 70% of the population lived in households that were ranked in the two lowest quintiles of Wealth Index, whereas only 15% in the South-East were similarly poor (NPC 2009: 26). A survey on household income from 2001 confirms that the core region of Boko Haram is among Nigeria's poorest parts: The average household income stood as low as US\$ 0.65 per day in Borno State, whereas it was considerably higher at around US\$ 1.80 per day in the South-East (calculations based on Appendix 3 in Legg et al. 2007).

With regard to general levels of education, the North and especially the North-East is similarly disadvantaged: In 2008, only about 23% of the children in Borno State attended primary and 18% secondary schools; in contrast, in the South-East the rate was 83% respectively 69% (NPC 2009: 18, 319). Unsurprisingly, there is also a huge gap in literacy rates: Only 38% of the male population in Borno State is literate – in contrast: 94% in the South-East (NPC 2009: 36, 337; similar finding: UNDP 2009: 144). Finally, there is even a societal segment in the North-East that is particularly poor, uneducated, and disadvantaged: There are millions of quranic students (*almajiri*), who receive only quranic education, who roam the streets and beg for alms on a daily basis, and who, therefore, appear easily recruitable for small sums of money.

Assessing *unemployment* rates as indicator of opportunity is notoriously problematic for both conceptual and data problems. It is clear that there are serious problems of employment throughout Nigeria. Yet, the main problem is not unemployment but the

⁶² These numbers should be seen as rough approximations only. Official population and income data has been highly politicized and presumably often manipulated because federal revenue distribution depends on them.

difficult-to-measure *underemployment*. Almost every male adult has some formal or informal occupation, but hardly anyone is adequately employed and sufficiently paid. Even school teachers, police officers, and soldiers merely earn about US\$ 200-250/month, which is little considering that they often are the sole breadwinner in an extended family. Assessing sub-state differences in such levels and types of unemployment is impossible for lack of data.⁶³

In short, the identified socio-economic circumstances make organizing rebellion highly feasible. Poverty rates in the North-East are much higher and the level of education is much lower than in most other parts of the country, including the South-East. At first, this seems to suggest that there was an opportunity for Boko Haram to recruit poor, uneducated, and unemployed people including *almajiri* for rebellion, which was non-existent for MASSOB. Yet, this argument remains unconvincing. By international standards the South-East is also a very poor region with generally low levels of education. Moreover, as mentioned, rebellion research suggests that it is not necessarily those who are socio-economically worst off that pursue rebellion but the relatively better endowed. Indeed, *almajiri* have not made up a disproportionate number of Boko Haram's adherents. Their recruitment for rebellion may even be more difficult than often assumed because of their firm quranic education and the common teachings of humility and acceptance of hardship (Comolli 2015: 71-76). Many among the several million poor and underemployed Igbo youths in the South-East are probably as easy (or as difficult) to recruit as *almajiri* and other youths in the North-East. Hence, the variation in these socio-economic patterns does not explain the different protest behavior of Boko Haram and MASSOB.

4.1.3. Demographic Conditions

Like most developing countries, Nigeria has a “*youth bulge*”: There were about 19,3 million men in the age category 15-29 in 2006 (NPC 2006: 5-23). Due to the high population growth, this number may have already increased by about 25% in 2015. In regional comparison, in 2006 there were about 6,6 million male youths (of this age segment) in the 12 “core” Northern states (including half a million in Borno alone)⁶⁴, and about 2,5 million in the South-East. There is thus a huge reservoir of young men for rebel recruitment in both regions. This indicates a high

⁶³ For example, the DHS as the probably most reliable data source finds that – counterintuitively – the number of males who were unemployed (during the past 12 months) is much lower in the North-East (7.6%) than in the South-East (26%, see NPC 2009: 40, 372).

⁶⁴ It is noteworthy, however, that this also includes a major share of Christian youths.

risk of rebellion considering that recruiting a few thousand of them would already be sufficient.

There is also a high level of *territorial concentration* in both cases. In 2015, there were an estimated 72 million Muslims in Northern Nigeria as well as the Middle Belt, and about 32 million Igbos in the country (The World Factbook n.d.).⁶⁵ Most of the “core” Northern states are almost entirely Muslim-populated. There are important Christian minorities only in Bauchi, Borno, and Gombe, and especially in Kaduna State, which is evenly divided between Christians and Muslims. There are also about 15 million Muslims among the Yoruba in the South-West, but typically Yoruba-Muslims see themselves as politically and in many regards also culturally distinct from Northern Muslims. Thus, Muslims in the North have a high level of territorial concentration. What undermines their mobilization capacity to some extent, however, are the many ethnic and religious divides among them. Igbos, similarly, have a high territorial concentration in the South-East. The Igboland is almost entirely Igbo-populated. Hundreds of thousands (or even more) Igbos also live in other parts of the country, yet they generally maintain close ties with their kin in the densely-populated Igboland. In short, the capacity of mobilization for collective action is high among the constituencies of both movements.

4.1.4. “Greed” and Organized Crime

“Greed” assumptions related to the presence of “lootable” *natural resources* can be dismissed for the analyzed cases. This is simply because none of the typical “lootable” natural resources (e.g. close-to-the-surface minerals) can be found in Nigeria. Instead, in a country as notorious for crime as Nigeria, it is more relevant to assess both case studies as forms of organized crime.

Boko Haram as Organized Crime?

There has been much rumor among Nigerians that Boko Haram is a criminal enterprise and that people participate because this allows them making huge amounts of money. Some sources suggest that, indeed, some forms of organized crime have formed around Boko Haram’s rebellion. For example, a series of bank robberies occurred after the onset of the insurgency in the North-East (Forest 2012: 70-71). Also, according to some journalistic accounts, Boko Haram occasionally paid local youth gangs and individuals for perpetrating

⁶⁵ Unfortunately, exact data on the demographic patterns described in the following is missing because, as mentioned, Nigerian censuses have not recorded group identity anymore since 1963.

attacks, burning schools, spying on soldiers, and providing other logistics (The Punch 2013, 1 June). One news report about a youth gang from Diffa (Niger Republic, nearby Borno State) suggests that those involved did not even share Boko Haram's political-religious demands, but engaged merely for economic interest (BBC 2014, 22 April). Allegedly, Boko Haram recruiters even offer an equivalent of hundreds or even a few thousands US dollars to everyone who joins the *jihad* (IRIN 2015, 3 March; BBC 2014, 22 April).

However, these news reports seem to exaggerate the extent to which Boko Haram has been run as a criminal enterprise. It is hard to see where such large amounts of money could come from in the poverty-stricken North-Eastern region. Boko Haram has probably received some money from patronage networks (see 4.3.1) and also ransom for kidnappings of foreigners. The single-largest amount of ransom was an estimated US\$ 3,15 million for the kidnapping of a French family in 2013 (Reuters 2013, 26 April). Also, in some places under the rebel's control during the third stage, people were extorted, occasionally kidnapped for small ransom, and taxed (Foreign Policy 2015, 5 March; BBC 2013, 7 June). Unlike other armed groups (e.g. in Algeria, Colombia, Liberia, or Sierra Leone), however, Boko Haram never got specialized in such criminal activities. Kidnapping foreigners for ransom has been relatively rare because parts of the movement's leadership seem to have been opposed to this strategy. In March 2012 the speaker Abu Qaqa declared that "[w]e have never been involved in hostage-taking and it's not part of our style, and we never ask for ransom" (AFP 2012, 9 March). At the time, the group even seems to have lacked organizational routines to share larger amounts of money. A quarrel about how to split a quarter million US dollars (in ransom share from Ansaru) "almost tore Boko Haram apart" (ICG 2014: 27).

To sum up, Boko Haram cannot be well understood as a criminal enterprise. The amounts of money generated from the mentioned economic activities have remained small and some of the revenues may have even been used for sustaining the struggle rather than for profit. In fact, instead of making fast profits, many rebels have endured severe hardship and immense deprivations (e.g. from mal-nourishment, see The Punch 2013, 24 August). Finally, these criminal activities also seem to have begun only *after* the start of the rebellion. They may have sustained some of Boko Haram's violent activities, but this does not explain the rebellion in the first place.

MASSOB as Organized Crime?

MASSOB, too, has been understood as "criminal enterprise" by some observers: "Biafran separatist groups have been linked with the unprecedented incidences of armed robbery and kidnappings that have been on the increase in recent times" (Onuoha 2012b: 45). While such a

broad accusation is clearly unfounded, some economic and possibly criminal activities by MASSOB can be identified. The movement has engaged in economic activities, e.g. through selling Biafran regalia such as uniforms, books, DVDs, license plates, pins, and clothes. In some markets in the South-East, MASSOB also re-introduced the Biafran Pound (i.e. Biafra's former currency), which allowed the organization to make money from essentially worthless bills (Owen 2009: 589-590). In some places MASSOB members (either on the directive of the movement or on their own) also seem to have operated as local vigilantes and engaged in local transportation businesses. These are typical economic opportunities in the South-East and they allow generating money in multiple ways, some of which may be criminal. For example, the violent clashes involving MASSOB, NARTO, and the police in June/July 2006 in Onitsha seem to have been "turf battles" over the control of a bus station and the related economic opportunities (Daily Champion 2006, 27 June). Again at Onitsha, MASSOB was also accused of using Biafra as a cover to collect taxes and to even to coerce people into paying them (The Punch 2013, 3 May; similarly: Daily Independent 2014, 21 February). My interviews with three traders at Onitsha's central market confirm this accusation (C92-94). These traders stated to have seen themselves how, though for some time only, people who were clearly identifiable as MASSOB members coerced traders and customers to pay fees for Biafra.

However, as with Boko Haram, these economic and partly criminal activities have only been a fraction of MASSOB's entire activities and provided only a small share of the movement's total revenues. MASSOB has not been involved in high-revenue generating crime such as kidnapping foreigners for ransom or any oil-related criminal activities (e.g. kidnapping oil workers, stealing oil, sabotaging oil pipelines).⁶⁶ There were hardly any opportunities for MASSOB to even use the oil installations as a "lootable" resource because these lie almost entirely in the South-South. While MASSOB seems to have been involved in some of the mentioned criminal activities, there is some need to be cautious again. The South-East generally is a crime-infested area, in which accusations over who perpetrated crimes are often unsubstantiated. Also, again it may be that political leaders seek to discredit the movement by making crime allegations, or that criminals operated on their own and that their activities have been falsely attributed to MASSOB.

Clearly, MASSOB has not been run as a criminal enterprise and also lacked the necessary financial means to distribute money to its followers. For the latter, economic

⁶⁶ While oil is treated commonly as a "non-lootable" resource, the oil-related industry in the South-South clearly is "lootable" in the mentioned regards (Onuoha 2008).

expectations have been a negligible motivation of joining the struggle (see also 7.3.2). In fact, many of these economic and possibly even some of the criminal activities are largely symbolic and part of the protest. For instance, when MASSOB sells Biafran currency, books, and DVDs, and collects Biafran taxes (which were generally framed as voluntary by the movement), this raises awareness among people and expresses discontent over the status quo. Also, some of the alleged kidnappings may have had strategic rather than economic reasons: For example, when some Biafran activists abducted a wealthy businessman in Anambra State in February 2007, this was an attempt to pressurize the government into releasing Uwazuruike rather than obtaining ransom (Daily Champion 2007, 2 February). Some these economic (and partly criminal) structures certainly set incentives for MASSOB to evade conflict escalation. If the struggle escalated, these revenue opportunities would be immediately lost. Nevertheless, this is a relatively small incentive and no sufficient explanation for the movement's non-escalation.

4.1.5. Geographic Conditions

Regarding feasibility from geographic conditions, the core area of both movements provides both opportunities and constraints. A major constraint in both regions is the *flatness of the terrain*. Still, in comparison, the North-Eastern geographic conditions are more favorable to organizing rebellion than those in the South-East: The North-East as Nigeria's least densely populated area (about 50-55 people per km² in Borno and Yobe) is characterized by vast stretches of uninhabited land (NPC 2010: 9). Although this flat and arid terrain makes relatively poor hide outs for rebel bases, the vastness of the region, the mountains along the border with Cameroon, the Sambisa Forest, and some other locations gave Boko Haram refuge during the third stage. Finally, the available cross-border sanctuary in regions of Niger Republic and Northern Cameroon that are very remote and hardly under the control of the respective state government would be another geographic advantage of the region.

In contrast, the South-East lacks many of these geographic opportunities. The Igboland is by far Nigeria's most densely populated area (566 people per km², see NPC 2010: 9). In between the many villages, there is little space where rebels could hide and build training camps. Also, hardly any cross-border sanctuary would be available to MASSOB: The region of Southern Cameroon is nearby and has an important Igbo population, but it does not necessarily make useful rebel sanctuary. This is because the Cameroonian government has a huge security presence in the region to suppress the secessionist movement of the Southern Cameroons Nation Council and for historic reasons many in Southern Cameroon have strongly negative views about Igbos (Dicklitch 2011; Konings 2005: 278-283). The densely populated and ethnically-diverse riverine parts of the South-South also hardly provide geographic

opportunities for organizing an armed struggle. Yet, there is rough and little-populated terrain in Cross River State and there are forested stretches of the Niger River in the largely Igbo-populated parts of Delta State. These places could provide at least some geographic opportunities for organizing an insurgency by MASSOB.

While not overly favorable, the geographic conditions in the North-East still are better suited for organizing and pursuing rebellion than those in the South-East. This, however, does not explain why Boko Haram has waged an insurgency, whereas MASSOB has not. Boko Haram has started its armed struggle from urban hideouts and has made substantial use of these rural places – especially the Sambisa forest (Borno State), Mandara mountains (along the border with Cameroon), and cross-border sanctuary – only during the third stage of the rebellion. These geographic conditions clearly contributed to making the severe further escalation of the violence during the third stage possible, but they do not explain why rebellion occurred at all. The South-Eastern geographic opportunities may make rural insurgency difficult, but they would not impede MASSOB from starting an armed struggle by using terrorist tactics – like Boko Haram during the second stage.

4.1.6. External Support

Especially Christians in Nigeria commonly see Boko Haram as the local branch of the Al-Qaeda network, which would imply that external support has broadly sponsored the movement and made *jihad* feasible. President Jonathan nurtured this view when repeatedly warning the international community that “global terrorist networks are deeply involved in the recent activities of Boko Haram, which has now turned into an integral part of the Al Qaeda network as the West African Branch” (Jonathan 2014, 17 May). Finally, Boko Haram itself sustained this image, among other occasions when interim leader Sani Umar made the following statement: “Boko Haram is just a version of the Al Qaeda which we align with and respect. We support Osama bin Laden, we shall carry out his command in Nigeria until the country is totally Islamized which is according to the wish of Allah” (Vanguard 2009, 14 August).

From Boko Haram’s very beginning, indeed, there have been connections with foreign Salafist organizations and jihadist networks. For instance, Yusuf’s group probably have received some of the US\$ 3 million that Osama Bin Laden provided to Mohammed Ali, one of the later leaders of the Nigerian Taliban, for sponsoring the creation of an armed group in Nigeria around 2000 (ICG 2014: 23). Also, the Al-Muntada Trust from Saudi Arabia, which had sponsored the Ahlus Sunna by Adam, as well as other foreign Salafist organizations may have partly funded Boko Haram’s early activities (Brigaglia 2012: 40; Nigerian Tribune 2012, 13

February).⁶⁷ Already during the non-violent phase, there seem to have been some further connections, which reached as far as Afghanistan and the Taliban. Before the July 2009 uprising, presumably a group about 30 sect followers had received bomb building training in Afghanistan (BBC 2009, 2 September; ICG 2014: 23). Following the uprising, some sect followers found refuge with the Taliban, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM, Algeria), and Al-Shabaab (Somalia), from which they also probably received combat training (ICG 2014: 23-24).

Since the beginning of the rebellion, these transnational connections have become visible in some further aspects. For example, Boko Haram seems to have “imported” the strategy of suicide attacks from Al-Qaeda; before 2011, such attacks were not in the repertoire of Islamist groups in Nigeria. Also, the target selection and the attack planning of the August 2011 UN bombing seems to have occurred in some cooperation with AQIM and Al-Shabaab (Vanguard 2011, 3 September). When the Malian Islamist groups Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa and Ansar-Dine were formed, Boko Haram quickly developed links with them. Shekau even briefly fled to Northern Mali for recovering from wounds in January 2013 (Vanguard 2013, 19 January). It was Ansaru, however, that took the strongest orientation towards such transnational jihadism, both in their messages and actions. Five of the group’s six attacks were perpetrated against international targets and especially the tactic of kidnapping foreigners follows Al-Qaeda’s typical approaches (START 2014).

There clearly has been transnational cooperation between Boko Haram and other Salafist and jihadist organizations. This allowed Boko Haram to access some financial resources, possibly arms, some sanctuary, and some military training, and this seems to have influenced some of the mentioned patterns of the fighting. Yet, the extent and influence of these transnational links should not be overestimated. The external support has been of relatively small extent and is clearly not comparable to the major support that some rebel groups – who engaged as “proxy forces” –received from third-party countries. Unlike the thousands of young Europeans who recently joined ISIS, few – if any – foreign jihadist fighters have joined Boko Haram. Only Ansaru has taken a strong orientation towards transnational jihadism, but the faction accounts for less than 1% of the total number of Boko Haram attacks (mid-2009 to 2013, see START 2014). When stressing the sect’s connections to Al-Qaeda, President Jonathan mostly seems to have attempted to deviate from the many local causes and

⁶⁷ Loimeier, in contrast, finds connections between Yusuf and the Al-Muntada Trust unlikely because of their differing views on Western education (Loimeier 2012: 147).

local manifestations of the rebellion. In short, Boko Haram has neither been a branch of Al-Qaeda⁶⁸, nor a “proxy” of any third-party government.

MASSOB, too, has some external support. It has been connected to the large Igbo diaspora in Europe, the US, and even Asia. Although MASSOB proper has not been a local branch of this broader network and the latter also rose only in response to MASSOB’s foundation, these transnational connections could be used for rebel fundraising. My interviews with Igbos from London and various places in the US showed that the diaspora activists and other Igbos in these places entertain strong family, business, and other connections to their fellow Igbos in South-Eastern Nigeria.⁶⁹ The interviewees were generally very favorable to the struggle for Biafra and some even found rebellion legitimate to achieve Biafra. Hence, it is well conceivable that MASSOB could mobilize broad diaspora support for a violent struggle. This could be facilitated through the numerous already existing Biafran organizations in the diaspora. Such supplies would differ from those that Boko Haram has obtained; instead of weapons, fighting skills, and training facilities, this would most likely be financial support only. While this is not as directly useful for rebellion as Boko Haram’s supplies, in Nigeria there are plenty of opportunities to buy weapons. Thus, such external financial support would contribute immensely to making an armed struggle by MASSOB feasible.

To sum up, external support has been available to both movements. Boko Haram used some of the opportunities provided by transnational jihadist networks for organizing its armed struggle. Yet, the overall extent of the sect’s transnational cooperation has remained limited and external supplies (mostly of financial means) would have also been available to MASSOB from the large Igbo diaspora. Hence, such external support neither explains why these two movements have pursued their protests by different strategies, nor why Boko Haram began its rebellion in July 2009 of all times.

4.1.7. Brief Summary

The opportunity approach points to many relevant background conditions that made the formation of both protest movements possible, but it does not explain the variation in their protest behavior. Rebellion has been highly feasible in both cases from available political,

⁶⁸ In early 2015, Boko Haram re-framed itself as a branch of ISIS. There had been efforts of winning ISIS’ attention since early 2014 and these seem to have been successful. For the first time, in a recent Boko Haram video the sect appears as the “West African branch” of ISIS (Jihadology 2015, 2 June).

⁶⁹ These interviews with Igbos in the diaspora were conducted in London from 8-19 August 2013 and in Chicago from 21-24 May 2014.

military, socio-economic, and demographic opportunities. In the context of widely prevailing risk factors such as state weakness, low counterinsurgency capacity, widespread poverty, low levels of education, the “youth bulge”, territorial concentration, and high youth underemployment, both movements could have been expected to organize an armed struggle.

The opportunity assumptions, however, do not correctly capture why and how Boko Haram’s rebellion occurred. At first glance, it seems promising as explanation: The North-East has been particularly poor and disadvantaged, the region’s geographic conditions are relatively favorable for rebel warfare, and there has been external support for Boko Haram from transnational jihadist networks. This certainly contributed to make the rebellion feasible, but it does not explain why it occurred. In contrast to the theoretical assumptions of opportunity, the rebellion was not caused by a structural shift that created an opportunity which the Boko Haram leaders immediately identified and used for rebellion. In fact, the opportunity for a violent struggle preceded the escalation of Boko Haram’s protests for years. Some motivational factors other than economic interest and possibly also broader ideational aspects, therefore, must have driven Boko Haram to seize the opportunity and pursue an armed struggle.

Similarly, the opportunity approach fails to explain why MASSOB’s protests did not escalate into violence. The theory points to some structural circumstances that have constrained the movement: The South-Eastern geographic conditions make rebel warfare relatively difficult and MASSOB has also engaged in some economic and criminal activities which make it beneficial to maintain the present structure as a non-violent movement. However, this is no sufficient explanation for non-escalation because MASSOB never transformed into a mostly or purely economic organization (e.g. of organized crime), but has always remained a protest movement. Moreover, the geographic constraints would not have prevented MASSOB from transforming into a clandestine and urban-based terrorist group (much like Boko Haram at the onset of its violent struggle). MASSOB, thus, clearly could have organized a violent struggle if the movement and its leaders had *wanted* to. This, again, suggests that some further motivational and possibly ideational aspects play a central role for the continued non-violent protest. Therefore, typical motivational aspects for rebellion related to grievances are investigated in the following part.

4.2. Grievances

From the theoretical perspective, grievances related to inequalities and repression clearly matter to explain why, when, and where armed conflict occurs. This section draws on the above-identified theories and arguments that seek to elucidate processes of conflict escalation

(see 2.3). To test whether these theories and arguments explain the puzzling variation of protest behavior of Boko Haram and MASSOB, the section proceeds in a tripartite structure by investigating the role of horizontal inequalities (4.2.1-4.2.2), vertical inequality (4.2.3.), and finally repression (4.2.4-4.2.5) with regard to both cases.

4.2.1. Horizontal Inequalities: Muslims in Northern Nigeria

The main political-economic grievance among Muslims in Northern Nigeria was arguably created by the loss of power in 1999. The region had held a privileged position for most of the time since Nigeria's independence. Under Bello's governments from 1959-66 and from the July 1966 counter-coup until the democratization in 1999, the North dominated the Nigerian federation. With the exception of only two presidents from Yoruba origin (Obasanjo, 1976-79) and Ernest Shonekan (three months in 1993), all Nigerian Presidents from 1966-99 were Northerners, all were Muslim (except one), and almost all of them were military rulers.⁷⁰ Even during the short democratic interplay of the Shagari government (1979-83), the North retained its powerful position in the federal executive. Hence, the ascendance of a Southerner to the presidency in 1999 meant an important loss of power. Although Obasanjo was the selected candidate of the former Northern power holders and although they retained many key positions under his government, his presidency meant an important decline in power for the North and created fears among their political elite. They feared Southern dominance and the loss of the vital access to federal allocations from the oil revenues (Harnischfeger 2008: 120-121). To maintain control, the Northern state governors rallied around the popular demand for *sharia* law and introduced "God's laws" as a source of criminal law across the "core" North. Thus, they used the *sharia* as "political weapon" to take Southerners in the North as hostages who could be subjected to harassment if the Southern leaders dared to disempower the North (Harnischfeger 2008: 32-33).

In terms of "objectively"-existing inequalities, however, since 1999 the North has not been discriminated against in any major political regard. At the federal level, the presidency has rotated back to the North already twice in 2007 (President Yar'Adua) and 2015 (President Buhari). At the state level, the "core" Northern states with their pre-dominantly Muslim populations have all been governed by Muslim state governors and most cabinet positions,

⁷⁰ The list includes Yakubu Gowon (1966-75; Christian from Plateau State), Murtala Mohammed (1975-76; Hausa from Kano), Shehu Shagari (1979-83; Fulani from Sokoto State), Muhammadu Buhari (1983-85; Fulani from Katsina State), Ibrahim Babangida (1985-93; Gwarri from Niger State), Sani Abacha (1993-98; Kanuri from Borno State), and Abdulsalami Abubakar (1998-99; Hausa from Niger State).

local governments, and civil service positions in the region have been held by Muslims. Christian minorities have even complained about lacking political representation, which has become particularly visible in Kaduna State. Even though about half of the population of Kaduna is Christian, there had been never been a Christian state governor in Kaduna since the state's creation in 1967 (Angerbrandt 2011: 19); it was only in 2010 that a Christian, Patrick Yakowa, for the first time became state governor (yet, he died after only 2.5 years in office). Northern "settlers", however, have clearly been discriminated against in many parts of Nigeria, most severely in Plateau State. In many states non-indigenes are banned from civil service employment, cannot obtain academic scholarships and pay higher fees at state-run universities, and receive fewer services by the state government for their communities (HRW 2006: 18-19). This discrimination against Northern "settlers" has been most severe in several places of Plateau State, especially in the Jos North local government, where Hausa-Fulani are politically powerless even though they make up the vast majority of the population (Krause 2011).

Although the North has hardly been discriminated against in the federation since the democratization in 1999, there exists a strong sense of being politically and economically disadvantaged in the region. A key reason for this is the long-standing socio-economic disparity between the extremely poor Northern and the only relatively poor Southern part of Nigeria. In contradiction to the actual historical dominance of the North in political affairs, thus, many find that the region has been historically *disadvantaged* by the Southern part of the country (see also 6.2). In this sense, the 1999 loss of power sustained and reinforced socio-economic grievances among the Northern political elite and general population. This perception of socio-economic discrimination underlies much of the *sharia* activism of the early 2000s (Lubeck 2011: 253). Hence, it has also been an important background condition for the formation of Boko Haram. By themselves, however, these underlying and perceived inequalities do not explain why Boko Haram rose and escalated into rebellion. At the point of the escalation of violence in mid-2009, power at the federal level had already rotated back to the North for the first time and Nigeria even had a president from Northern and Muslim origin. Hence, the key question is not so much which objective or perceived inequalities existed, but how Boko Haram interpreted them and used them for its mobilization.

4.2.2. Horizontal Inequalities: The Igbo

In contrast to the Muslim North, the Igbo have been considerably disadvantaged in political and economic affairs, both historically and recently. As described in the historical account, the Igbo were in a powerless political position before the Civil War and this was reinforced due to

their defeat in the war and the continued Northern dominance (see 3.3.1). Even though the Igbo are Nigeria's third largest ethnic group with an immense population of about 30 million, they are the only major ethnic group that has never held the Nigerian presidency. In contrast, the Hausa, Fulani, Yoruba, and even smaller ethnic groups (the Ijaw, Kanuri, and Gwarri) held the presidency at some point in time (or even repeatedly). Also, in the regard to the shape of the federal system, the Igbo have been disadvantaged: From 1976-91 the Igbo-dominated region of today's South-East comprised only two states, whereas the Hausa-Fulani had four states (five states from 1987-91) and the Yoruba five states.⁷¹ The imbalance has been reduced somewhat in 1996, but strikingly the South-East has still been Nigeria's only geo-political zone consisting of five instead of six states. Being disadvantaged in the number of states means that the Igbo have lacked access to federal allocations and investments, political representation at the center, and patronage opportunities vis-à-vis other ethnic groups. Finally, since the war's end Igbos have had limited access to high-level positions in the armed forces and state-owned enterprises (Duruji 2009: 56). In short, probably no other ethnic group in Nigeria was as much disadvantaged by the continued Northern military rule as the Igbo.

Since the democratization in 1999 the political-economic status of the Igbo has improved in some regards. The main improvement has been the return to civilian governments at the state and local level. Thereby, military administrators in the South-East, who were Igbo but who in reality sought to maintain the interest and rule of the Northern clique, were replaced by democratically elected Igbo politicians. Although many elections at the state and local level were marred by rigging and the Igbo's political elite has been corrupt and self-centered (Hoffmann 2010), the democratization improved the legitimacy and accountability of politics. Also, for the first time Igbos achieved top positions in the Nigerian Armed Forces when Paul Dike became Chief of Defense Staff (2008-10) and Azubuike Ihejirika even rose to the highest military position as Chief of Army Staff (2010-14). At least within the armed forces, today the Igbo can be seen as rehabilitated. Yet, in some key political-economic regards the discrimination has continued: Igbos are unlikely to hold the presidency at any time in the near future because of the strong role that the North and Yoruba play in the selection process. Moreover, the creation of a sixth federal state for the Igbos is unlikely as this would trigger demands by other ethnic groups for further states. The "settler" problem, which probably disadvantages the Igbos most of all ethnic groups in Nigeria, is also likely to persist. Hundreds

⁷¹ Given the lack of precise ethno-demographic data from Nigeria, this is based on the rough ethno-linguistic patterns (see Figure 2, p. xiii).

of thousands (and possibly more) Igbos who live in various parts of the federation remain subjected to the above-mentioned typical forms of discrimination against non-indigenes (Harnischfeger 2004: 444-445).

These political and economic inequalities have created a strong sense of frustration among the Igbo. Several Afrobarometer surveys from the 2000s constantly showed that the Igbo have felt considerably more disadvantaged (on ethnic grounds) than Yoruba and Hausa-Fulani⁷²: 53-64% of the Igbo respondents – in contrast 22-38% (Hausa-Fulani) and 26-33% (Yoruba) – saw their ethnic group as often or always treated unfairly by the government. Similarly, 49-72% of the Igbos – in contrast 12-24% (Hausa-Fulani) and 17-27% (Yoruba) – considered their ethnic group having less or much less political influence than other ethnic groups in Nigeria. Finally, also with regard to economic affairs, a much higher share of Igbos (43-61%) than Hausa Fulani (20-30%) and Yoruba (17-23%) considered their group disadvantaged vis-à-vis other ethnic groups in Nigeria.

Hence, due to the identified objective inequalities there are strong reasons for Igbos to feel highly disadvantaged as an ethnic group in Nigeria. In fact, the survey findings and much of the case study evidence (as discussed below, see 7.2) suggests that the perception of these inequalities even surpasses the real extent of the problem of discrimination. In other words, many Igbos feel more disadvantaged due to the mentioned inequalities than they really are. It is also clear that MASSOB's rise has been a direct response to the continued discrimination and to the 1999 democratization, which brought disappointingly few improvements for the Igbo. However, considering that both the objectively existing inequalities and the frustration about them has been stronger in the case of the Igbo than of Muslims in Northern Nigeria, it becomes puzzling that Boko Haram rather than MASSOB has pursued a violent struggle. From this perspective, MASSOB would have been expected to pursue rebellion. There is, thus, the need to investigate further forms of grievances to explain why, puzzlingly, MASSOB has remained non-violent in spite of these multiple forms of discrimination.

4.2.3. Vertical Inequality

Vertical inequality in the distribution of income is very pronounced in Nigeria. The country has some of the highest income inequality in the world. Everyone in Nigeria is aware of the self-serving elite that exploits the country's oil wealth for its own benefit. About two-thirds of

⁷² Findings from Afrobarometer surveys in 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2008 (for citations, see footnote 113).

the Nigerian population live in extreme poverty, but the elite travels around the country in convoys and private jets, sends its children for education overseas, and uses health clinics abroad for treatment. In between the elite and the masses, only a small middle class is slowly emerging in major cities. Common indicators such as the GINI coefficient hardly capture these evident facts of the extremely unequal income distribution in Nigeria. Also, sub-state data of income inequality is missing. Nevertheless, these vertical inequalities can hardly explain protest behavior in Nigeria because the inequality has hardly varied across the different parts of the country. Moreover, it has existed for decades and has long been despised by average Nigerians.

The frustration about the corruption has been an important grievance that contributed to the formation of both Boko Haram and MASSOB. Although both pursue a broader political agenda and identity-based goals, both movements are also expressions of people's discontent over the corruption of the political class. Yet, as this indicates, the corruption is neither their only, nor their main concern. Rather, they have framed corruption as part of their religious and ethno-nationalist agendas, respectively. Hence, the crucial question is how the movements made their claims through framing and exploiting the discontent over corruption and other social concerns. By the help of the framing approach, this will be analyzed with regard to both case studies below. Before that, in the following it is assessed if grievances related to repression rather than inequality explain why Boko Haram's protests escalated into violence.

4.2.4. Repression against Boko Haram

Nigeria's effort to overcome Boko Haram by repression has "backfired" in many regards and contributed to drive Boko Haram into rebellion. The repression against the movement began already early during the non-violent phase. Except for the already described fighting between security forces and the Nigerian Taliban on two occasions in late 2003/early 2004 and September 2004, initially it was based almost entirely on little-coercive measures: Yusuf was arrested at least twice and brought to court at Abuja for his inciting preaching (but was granted bail every time), the group was not allowed to hold public rallies in Bauchi State, Yusuf was denied TV and radio appearances in Borno, and around late 2008 Boko Haram was asked twice to stop its inciting preaching (Daily Trust 2009, 27 July-a, 2009, 10 August; Salkida 2010).

The repression then became highly coercive in response to Boko Haram's July 2009 uprising. About 800 people were killed in the crackdown on the sect by the military and police. Most of the victims were sect members, but at least dozens and possibly more people who had been unconnected to the movement were shot by the security forces. Moreover, the sect

leaders Yusuf and several other sect leaders were killed extra-judicially by police officers (HRW 2012: 60-65). Also, the sect's headquarters was entirely demolished, the movement's local cells in various places across the North were disrupted, and the followers arrested. The extent of violence used in the process was excessive.

Since Boko Haram returned in 2010, a further spiral of violence and counter-violence between the sect and the security forces occurred. The counterinsurgency operations of the JTF from mid-2011 on were criticized by human rights organizations for arbitrary arresting civilians, injuring and raping people, destroying property, perpetrating further extra-judicial killings, letting people disappear, and torturing those held in military custody (AI 2012; HRW 2012: 64-74). In one particularly severe incident, JTF soldiers cordoned off Maiduguri's Kaleri neighborhood, conducted door-to-door searches, burnt down several houses, and killed at least 18 people in response to a Boko Haram attack on 9 July 2011 (AI 2012: 21-23).⁷³ It is only in retrospect, considering what happened at the third stage, that these gross rights abuses appear few and minor.

Since about 2013, the Nigerian military acted as brutal towards civilians as Boko Haram in many of its attacks. At least 20,000 people were arrested, often on flimsy accounts for allegedly supporting the rebels (AI 2015b: 40). Those arrested have generally been held in prison conditions that amount to ill-treatment and many have even been tortured (AI 2014b). About 7,000 people have died from such ill-treatment in military prisons, about 1,200 people were extra-judicially executed, and possibly a few thousand became victim of enforced disappearances (AI 2015b: 40). Also, at least two larger massacres were also perpetrated in which the Multinational Joint Task Force killed about 185 people (mostly civilians) in Baga and destroyed large parts of the town on 16 April 2013, and on 14 March 2014 security forces killed about 640 young men and boys who had been liberated from a notorious prison in Maiduguri by Boko Haram earlier the day (AI 2015b: 42-45, 56-57). The C-JTF has been involved in many of the recent abuses of these brutal counterinsurgency operations (AI 2015b: 5).

From a theoretical perspective, a process of mutual adaption towards violence in ever higher levels seems to have occurred between Boko Haram and the security forces (as also

⁷³ The Nigerian military has always dismissed such accusations. For instance, after a similar incident in which JTF soldiers allegedly shot randomly at civilians killing about 30 people in retaliation for a Boko Haram bomb attack in Maiduguri on 8 October 2012, Lieutenant Colonel Sagir Musa expressed the following: "There is no established or recorded case of extra judicial killings, torture, arson and arbitrary arrests by the JTF in Borno State. (...) Very few cases of unprofessional conduct by some personnel are documented and those concerned were punished while others are undergoing legal processes and Court Marshal" (Daily Trust 2012, 13 October).

observed by: HRW 2012). The starting point of this spiral was not the disruption of the Nigerian Taliban by the Nigerian security forces in early 2004 (because Boko Haram did not respond violently anymore after one reprisal attack in September 2004), but the July 2009 crackdown. In fact, most of the repression during the July 2009 uprising (and also throughout the second stage of the rebellion) was *discriminate* and, therefore, rather de-escalating. However, some of the mentioned abuses of the July 2009 crackdown were clearly escalating: This includes the killing of uninvolved civilians (*arbitrary and illegal*) and of movement's leaders (*illegal*) as well as the fact that the repression was applied against a highly mobilized movement (*reactive*). While most of the repression ceased with the end of the uprising, some continued in the weeks and months after the uprising. At this point even followers of other Islamist groups including Izala were targeted (*indiscriminate*) and even shaved their beards and started wearing long trousers to avoid being falsely taken for Boko Haram followers (Daily Trust 2009, 5 August-c).⁷⁴ Such patterns of relatively arbitrary repression lowered the costs of participation relative to non-participation because the repression hardly distinguished between civilians and Boko Haram members. The underlying problem for the military was the lack of intelligence and difficulty to identify Boko Haram followers from civilians, which gave the military little alternatives than to apply indiscriminate repression (IRIN 2009, July 31).

The many shocking atrocities perpetrated during the counterinsurgency operations of the third phase most certainly made matters worse. At this stage, the repression was escalating in all major regards: It was *grossly indiscriminate*, still *reactive*, and broke Nigerian law in thousands of cases (*illegal*). At this point, almost anyone in the North-East could have become targeted for supporting Boko Haram, which set strong incentives for people to join the rebels, even if only for protection by being armed. Hence, unsurprisingly the repression led to the further escalation of the rebellion.⁷⁵

The observed and in many regards escalating patterns of repression contribute to explain why Boko Haram has been fighting by violent means and especially why the violence escalated so severely during the third stage of the rebellion. However, there are two major reasons why the analysis should not stop here, but why this still provides an incomplete explanation for Boko Haram's conflict escalation.

⁷⁴ Unsurprisingly, this angered many among Izala, as expressed by its leader Sheikh Sani Yahaya Jingir: "If beard is the criterion for identifying the culprits, it then means millions of Muslims, not only in Nigeria but around the world, would be killed innocently" (Daily Trust 2009, 5 August-c).

⁷⁵ However, after many of the mentioned severe human rights abuses, in early 2015 the fighting intensity declined markedly.

Firstly, in most regards the repression was a response, which then further increased the war readiness of Boko Haram and its followership, but it was hardly the reason for why the movement began an armed struggle in the first place. The uprising by the Nigerian Taliban in late 2003 and by Yusuf's group in July 2009 both occurred after minor confrontations with the security forces, which can hardly even be understood as repression. In the former case, security agents seem to have made a request for the Nigerian Taliban to move the camp, which then triggered a several day violent uprising by the faction (Weekly Trust 2004, 3 January). Similarly, the shooting incident between some police officers and Boko Haram members of early June 2009 was a minor argument that had gone violent rather than repression. According to common accounts, police officers had only enforced traffic regulation, namely the obligation of wearing motorcycle helmets. This resulted in a shooting in which several Boko Haram members were injured by police officers, although no one seems to have died. Such incidents are not infrequent in Nigeria. It was Yusuf's *interpretation* that this constituted an attack on the sect and its freedoms (Umar 2012: 128-129). To understand his view, Boko Haram's core tenets need to be taken into consideration. The group considered wearing motorcycle helmets a violation of Muslims' obligation to wear Islamic caps. It symbolized the imposition of secularism over Islam and meant an attack on the movement's freedom of expression. This gave the comparably small incident such strong meaning and contributed to the ensuing conflict escalation. Thus, to fully understand the occurrence and its implications, it is insufficient to examine "objective" patterns of repression, but the worldview of the movement and its framing need to be considered.

Secondly, the repression could also easily have discouraged Boko Haram and led the movement to abandon the struggle. At some point, repression can become so overwhelming that it discourages and prevents further protest. Both the July 2009 crackdown and the repression at the third stage of the rebellion were highly brutal and could easily have led Boko Haram to abandon its struggle. The July 2009 crackdown seems to have been overwhelming: The security forces destroyed the main mosque, closed other places of assembly, and killed almost the entire leadership, except for Nur and Shekau. At this point, the costs and risks of re-organizing the violent struggle were extremely high. This makes it relevant to study the meaning-making and mobilization processes of the movement to understand how the commitment to "fight back" was nurtured.

Finally, another way to show that the repression against Boko Haram does not provide a sufficient explanation for the sect's conflict escalation is through comparing the case with MASSOB. As shown in the following, Nigeria's security forces also applied strong and violent

repression against MASSOB, but this did not escalate the movement's protests into an armed struggle.

4.2.5. Repression against MASSOB

MASSOB has been severely repressed ever since its foundation. On many occasions, activists were arrested, injured, or even killed, even though MASSOB's campaign has been pursued by peaceful protest. According to common estimates by the movement's leaders, since 1999 Nigerian security agents have killed several thousand MASSOB adherents and arrested thousands more. One interviewed key MASSOB figure put the death toll at "over 3,000" (C48). As the movement does not provide any solid documentation of the repression, however, these numbers appear as guessing. They may reflect the actual extent of the repression, but MASSOB's leaders may also exaggerate to win attention and make Nigeria appear more brutal.

Hence, for a more detailed, independent, and reliable assessment in this study, I analyzed news reporting on repression against MASSOB. For this purpose, more than 2,000 news reports from the *allafrica.com* archive were reviewed for the reported number of arrested, injured, or killed members of MASSOB.⁷⁶ This data is far from perfect for a number of biases. News reporting on repression against MASSOB is full of claims, counter-claims, and impossible-to-verify numbers. Therefore, only news reports that describe incidents in sufficient detail were included and multiple sources were searched to verify occurrences (more than one media source was available for 44% of the events).⁷⁷ Still, further limitations on data quality pertain to reporting bias, unequal distribution of news sources over time, and the problem of identifying MASSOB's members from non-members. Therefore, the following numbers should be seen as rough estimates, but they likely are *underestimates*.

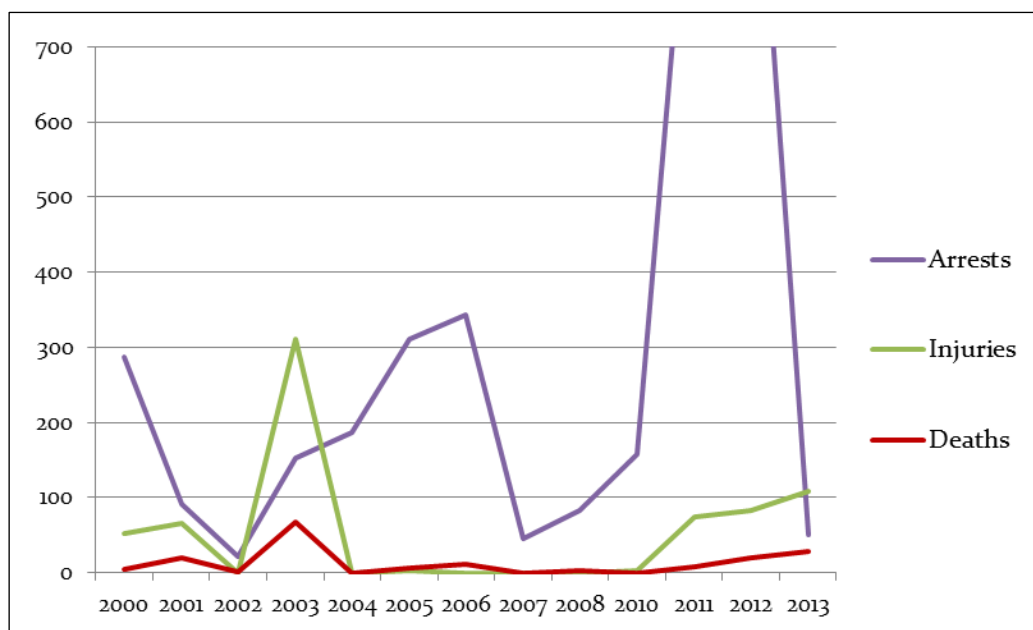
Between 2000 and 2013 at least 166 MASSOB followers were killed by security forces, about 650 injured, and 3,900 arrested and detained for some time (which may range from hours to years). Analyzing the distribution over time shows that MASSOB has been constantly repressed but also that there is a pattern of three waves of repression (see Figure 5): The first wave started right with the beginning of the movement's struggle and lasted from around 2000

⁷⁶ A total of 2,312 news reports that contained the notion MASSOB and were published in Nigerian newspapers between 1999 and 2013 were reviewed. They were selected based on keywords searches (e.g. "arrest(ed)", "detain(ed)/detention", "prison", "injuries/injured", and "killing/killed").

⁷⁷ Means were calculated if numbers differed.

to 2001.⁷⁸ It was followed by a short period of reduced repression in 2002. From 2003 to about 2006 there was a second wave of repression (in which around 2005/06 large numbers of followers and also leaders were arrested). From 2007-2009 the repression was considerably lower than before (yet, at this point many of the previously arrested MASSOB members were also still in prison). Finally, there was a third wave of repression from about 2010 until 2013 (which may even still be ongoing). During this wave, the number of arrests reached a maximum of little above 1,000 for 2011 and 2012 each.

Figure 5: Repression against MASSOB (no. people per year)⁷⁹



The repression obstructed many of the movement’s activities and threatened those involved. This becomes clear if taking, for instance, a snap-shot at the movement’s first 1.5 years: Within weeks of MASSOB’s foundation in late 1999, Nigeria’s secret service had taken an eye on the movement and interrogated the founders. When MASSOB only started to win prominence in April 2000, already about 50 members were arrested at a peaceful protest rally (The Post Express 2000, 20 April-a). In the heated run-up to Uwazuruike’s public re-declaration of Biafra in May 2000, there was reportedly even an attempt on his life by “unidentified gunmen” (P.M. News 2000, 18 May). For precaution, the Aba Declaration finally was only a small and hasty event that was held ahead of the planned date (The Post Express 2000, 28 May). Police agents

⁷⁸ It is, however, likely that the number of repression incidents for these earlier years is underestimated vis-à-vis the more recent years due to the unequal distribution of news sources over time in the allafrika.com archive.

⁷⁹ Own depiction.

similarly obstructed MASSOB's ceremonies for the first year anniversary of the Aba Declaration when they arrested between 22 and 126 in a crackdown (The News 2001, 30 May-a). There is a long list of such relatively small incidents in which the movement's offices were raided, in which followers were arrested (or even immediately shot), and in which MASSOB's activities were obstructed in other ways (for documentation on the years 2000-06, see Dike 2006; PARAN 2006)

In addition to these many small incidents, there were also some considerably larger and (even) more severe attacks on MASSOB by the security forces. The following incidents mark the most likely turning points ("triggers") at which MASSOB could have transformed into an armed group: In February 2001 police agents used massive force to storm the MASSOB's headquarters at Okigwe; in the process they killed about 10, wounded 50, and arrested 10 including Uwazuruike ("Okigwe Massacre I", see Tempo 2001, 22 February). Again in Okigwe, on 29 March 2003 the police stopped a convoy of allegedly 5,000 MASSOB followers on the way to a protest rally and killed about 7-68 movement followers, injured many more, and arrested about 300 ("Okigwe Massacre II", see IRIN 2003, 31 May). In October 2005, after months of reinforced repression, Uwazuruike and other leaders were arrested and brought to Abuja on the likely charge of treason (IRIN 2005, 19 April; Daily Champion 2005, 8 November). In another of the many raids of MASSOB's offices, security forces killed 16 members, injured 83, and arrested many more at Onitsha on 6 June 2012 (Leadership 2012, 6 June). Finally, in February 2013, 20 dead bodies were discovered in a river in Anambra State ("Edu River Corpses"). It is commonly believed, although MASSOB's statements on the subject were contradictory, that these were Biafran activists that had been secretly arrested and extra-judicially killed by the police (The Punch 2013, 8 February).

Virtually all of the movement's leaders were arrested at some point of the struggle (often repeatedly), were held under bad prison conditions, and have been threatened by treason charges. The analyzed media reports suggest that Uwazuruike was arrested at least ten times (though often only briefly detained). He served two full years in prison from mid-2005 to late 2007 and again about five months in the first half of 2010. Onuegbu, MASSOB's Western Regional Representative, recalled in the interview that he was in prison five times for his activism (C48). Treason charges were filed against Uwazuruike and other MASSOB leaders after their arrest in 2005. They are presently free on bail only and could be rearrested at any moment. In April 2013, the Supreme Court dismissed their appeal against the treason charge, which is punishable by death penalty (Vanguard 2013, 20 April). Moreover, Onwuka and his supporters from the BZM/F already are at court and charged with treason (The Nation 2014, 20

November). Besides the threat of treason, leaders and followers face terrible prison conditions if arrested. In the interview, Uwazuruike described the detention as “horrendous”, stressed that the prisons was “worse than a place where animals are kept”, and recalled his permanent fears because “they can kill in prisons, anything can happen” (C111).

From a theoretical perspective, at first look the repression appears relatively de-escalating. It has been rather *selective* because most of the repressive action was carried out at MASSOB offices and against people who belong to the movement. This signaled to MASSOB’s constituency that there are high risks and costs involved in participating but that non-participation is safe. Hence, this could have discouraged people from among the audience to join MASSOB and those within the movement to engage more deeply and possibly by the use violent means (which would invariably have attracted reinforced repression). It also appears as de-escalating from the theoretical perspective that the movement’s followers were much more often arrested rather than immediately killed and that the leaders were put on trial and not extra-judicially killed. Thus, more often than not the repression was based on *legal* means.

At second look, however, the repression against MASSOB has been highly escalating from the theoretical perspective. Although it was applied from the very onset of the movement’s struggle, MASSOB managed to evade the discouraging effects of the repression and to grow into a highly mobilized movement with members who are strongly dedicated to the cause. The constant further *reactive* repression against this movement is, from the theoretical view, only likely to further aggrieve those committed followers and to drive them towards war readiness; it is unlikely to discourage them because they have already invested too much time and money to give up. Although the repression has been mostly *selective*, there have also been instances in which it was rather *indiscriminate*. In fact, whenever common MASSOB activists have been arrest, injured, or killed, it is impossible to identify whether these people were registered and highly committed movement followers, or merely uninvolved civilians or only loosely connected participants. Hence, drawing the line between participation and non-participation is often difficult, which means that the Nigerian security forces may have often targeted MASSOB’s constituency rather than the actual movement adherents. This has probably lowered the relative costs of movement participation over non-participation and, thereby, set incentives for people to become (more) engaged in MASSOB. In some cases at least, the repression has even been clearly *arbitrary*. For instance, in September 2004 security forces arrested around 50 people who participated or merely watched a football tournament that was organized by MASSOB at Lagos; those arrested were held in prison for six months and charged with death penalty for treason (IRIN 2005, 19 April).

The most escalating element of the repression is the fact that it involves the use of excessively coercive means against unarmed protesters. Nigerian security forces have perpetrated thousands of crimes when repressing MASSOB (*illegal*). Even if activists are arrested and legal charges are filed, the rule of law is rarely respected. Legal procedures in Nigeria are so arbitrary that they infringe people's rights in many instances. Therefore, putting Uwazuruike on trial would aggrieve many within MASSOB and among the Igbo, because no fair trial can be expected in the broader legal context. Moreover, MASSOB's activists and even bystanders can be subjected to prison sentences for minor activities such as participating in or only observing non-violent rallies. Considering the severity of the prison conditions, such arbitrary and severe punishment can easily encourage people to support MASSOB and the activists to use more forceful means. For example, one MASSOB adherent recalled in the interview that he once had been locked up in prison merely for owning a MASSOB membership card and had to remain standing day and night for an entire week in an overcrowded cell (C56).

Considering these patterns of repression that can be assumed as largely protest escalating in the cases of both MASSOB and Boko Haram, it is, one more time, puzzling that the two movements have pursued their protests by different strategies. MASSOB has clearly been radicalized by the repression, as discussed in the case study analysis below (and similarly found by Duruji 2012a: 19). The repression also led the movement to shift its tactics towards more clandestine activities and especially to discontinue major protest rallies. As MASSOB's Western Representative Onuegbu explained, "[p]rotest rallies are how we started the struggle on 13 September 1999, but that was a chance for Nigeria to attack us and kill our members" (C48). As pointed out above, there have even been some key moments of heightened repression, which would make typical triggers for conflict escalation. In direct comparison with the above-discussed – very minor – shooting incident between Nigerian police officers and some Boko Haram members of early June 2009, incidents such as the Okigwe Massacre I-II or the "Edu River Corpses" situation are, in fact, much more severe and clear forms of repression than the incident over which Boko Haram began its July 2009 uprising. Yet, none of these key moments triggered a rebellion by MASSOB, which again suggests that it is necessary to investigate the meaning-making behind and around these incidents in more detail. The mostly objective categories of whether repression is selective or discriminate, preventive or reactive, legal or illegal, and the related overly rationalist assumptions do not seem to explain well why the two movements have differed in the initial decision of waging rebellion or not. Instead, the key seems to be whether protest leaders are ready to declare rebellion (or not),

which broader discursive and cultural context they were part of, and whether they successfully mobilized people for their propagated protest behavior.

4.2.6. Brief Summary

Grievances due to inequalities in Nigeria point to major sources of discontent in both cases. These are important underlying reasons for why both Boko Haram and MASSOB were formed and why they have been continuously protesting. There has been strong discontent among many Muslims in the North and Igbos about disparities in political and economic regards. In the case of the Muslim North, however, these inequalities are perceived rather than factual. As the North hardly is discriminated against within the Nigerian federation, such “objective” measures can neither explain Boko Haram’s rebellion, nor the timing of its beginning. The North has lost much power within the federation in 1999, but Boko Haram’s rebellion started an entire decade later. In contrast, Igbos in Nigeria have probably been the most disadvantaged of all ethnic groups in the country, especially in political and economic affairs. From this theoretical perspective it remains puzzling that Boko Haram has used armed means, whereas MASSOB has not. In short, such inequalities certainly point to important background conditions for the rise and persistence of both movements but cannot explain their protest choices.

Explanations related to repression as a source of grievances, too, fail to elucidate the varying protest behaviors. While the heavy crackdown on Boko Haram of late July 2009 and the ensuing spiral of violence and counter-violence certainly contributes to the ever further escalation of Boko Haram’s violence, this still leaves important aspects unexplained: It does not explain why the group became ready for rebellion in the first place. After all, the July 2009 uprising was not a response to repression but it was begun by Boko Haram. For some time before, the group had already started mobilizing its followers for an armed struggle. As a result, a very minor incident was sufficient to spark the uprising. At the same time, it remains puzzling why the excessively violent crackdown on the sect over the July 2009 uprising did not overwhelm Boko Haram and led the movement to abandon the violent struggle. This suggests that ideational aspects and the group’s strong commitment to its cause may again play a central role for them to further pursue violent protest in spite of the extreme costs and risks involved for (re-)organizing and pursuing an armed struggle after July 2009. Hence, one of the main questions is where this commitment came from in the first place and how it became so strong (by factors other than repression) that Boko Haram started and continued to fight its rebellion. The relevance of investigating such ideational aspects becomes even clearer if the case is compared to MASSOB. MASSOB, too, was confronted with patterns of severe and

excessively violent repression, which have made conflict escalation very probable. There were at least five potential trigger moments, all of which were more severe than the trigger that led Boko Haram to begin its violent struggle, but none of them led MASSOB to declare war. Before assessing the role of ideational aspects and the meaning-making in the protest mobilization for this varying protest behavior, however, Patronage Politics as another typical explanation for protest behavior, which is particularly relevant in the Nigerian context, is assessed.

4.3. Patronage Politics

Nigeria is a paradigmatic case for Patronage Politics, as described above (see 3.1.2). In fact, Reno developed the concept based on several cases from Nigeria (e.g. the OPC, Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force, Niger Delta Vigilante Service, and Bakassi Boys, see Reno 2011: 206-215, 226-237; 2005). Although he takes a narrow economic perspective on these groups, he makes a valid point: Behind the façade of the liberation struggle, many of these movements have pursued economic agendas and operated as parochial rebels, often "rented" by "Godfathers" for dubious political purposes (HRW 2007). This raises the question, whether Boko Haram and MASSOB are different from this typical Nigerian pattern?

4.3.1. Boko Haram

Boko Haram's leader Yusuf held a close relationship with some Northern politicians, mostly those from Borno State, for some time around the early and mid-2000s. In 2000 under Governor Kachallah, Yusuf was appointed as member of the Borno State Sharia Implementation Committee. In the gubernatorial elections of 2003, Yusuf then supported the election bid of Sheriff, the opponent of Kachallah (Galtimari Commission 2012). In exchange, Sheriff financed some of the activities of the sect and made Alhaji Buji Foi, a senior Boko Haram member, his Commissioner of Religious Affairs (ICG 2014: 12). When Yusuf had fled to Saudi Arabia for evading arrest over the Nigerian Taliban uprising in 2004, it was the Deputy Governor of Borno State, Adamu Dibal, who facilitated his return to Maiduguri (Reuters 2009, 4 August). However, the relationship between Yusuf and Sheriff reportedly became tense already soon after the latter took office in 2003. Sheriff had allegedly promised Yusuf to implement *sharia* law in Borno in exchange for Yusuf's support, but then reneged (ICG 2014: 12). As a result, the alliance with Sheriff fell apart. Yusuf also seems to have been in contact with a rivalling group of PDP politicians from a Northern Christian background. The group around the prominent politician Jerry Gana seems to have been involved in bailing out Yusuf from the court in Abuja in late 2008 (and possibly already in the year before). Details about this possible cooperation remain unknown and are subject of much speculation.

Following the beginning of the armed struggle, again, there have probably been some connections between members of Nigeria's corrupt political class and the sect. Although details remain unknown, such political connections are widely assumed among the Nigerian public.⁸⁰ President Jonathan himself openly expressed in early 2012 that Boko Haram has sympathizers who protect and support the movement from within many parts of the state apparatus (BBC 2012, 8 January). What sustains such conspiracy theories is that Boko Haram has perpetrated few violent attacks on Nigerian political leaders, which could indicate existing political alliances or efforts to build such (Harnischfeger 2012: 504). Also, the rebels seem to have always been well-funded and highly armed in a region that is marked by extreme poverty. Especially during the third stage, the movement was capable of arming thousands of combatants and providing logistics for them over vast territory. Assuming that many of these military capabilities were built based on war material stolen from army barracks, still it seems that for the movement to achieve such strong fighting power in short time there must have also been some financial support from somewhere.

It is unlikely that Boko Haram has been directly and continuously controlled by some "Godfathers." Rather, varied conspiracy theories exist, which may all be true to some extent, yet the evidence remains scarce: Firstly, some Northern politicians may have sought to fuel Boko Haram and use it as instrument to put pressure on President Jonathan (Harnischfeger 2012: 496-497). When Jonathan was elected in May 2011, as with Obasanjo in 1999, fear and discontent arose among Northern politicians that again a Southerner had become President.⁸¹ On the day of Jonathan's inauguration several bomb blasts occurred, which some attributed to Boko Haram. In the first months of his presidency, Boko Haram was targeting in particular Southerners by attacks against churches. Secondly, local politics may matter. Around 2011/12, two Borno State senators from different parties, Ahmed Zanna and Ali Ndume, were interrogated over alleged support to the armed group (ICG 2014: 15-16).⁸² Thirdly, especially during the third stage of the rebellion, some within the Nigerian military may have sabotaged

⁸⁰ Rumor abounds about who is supporting Boko Haram – and how and why. My Christian interviewees (mostly Igbos) tended to put the blame on Northern leaders including Buhari, Ibrahim Babangida, Atiku Abubakar (Vice President, 1999-07), and Sheriff. Muslim interviewees, in contrast, put the blame mostly on President Jonathan himself, Theophilus Danjuma (General and former Chief of Army Staff, 1979-80), Ayo Oritsejafor (CAN President), and Jerry Gana.

⁸¹ These Northern leaders were also upset that again a Southerner had become president after Yar'Adua had only one – and even an incomplete – term in office following the two terms by Obasanjo.

⁸² Yet, such accusations over support for Boko Haram should be treated with some caution. It has been a "political weapon" to discredit opponents (Last 2012, 30 January).

counterinsurgency operations. In some instances, troops seem to have withdrawn immediately ahead of Boko Haram attacks and despite warning by civilians (AI 2015a). While many reasons may exist for this (e.g. low fighting morale, lack of coordination), some among the armed forces may have had economic interests in prolonging the warfare. After all, hundreds of millions of US-Dollars have been made available to the Nigerian military for the counterinsurgency (see also footnote 61). Finally, the controversial run-up to the 2015 presidential elections may have created further adverse incentives for some political groups to support the rebels or undermine the counterinsurgency operations.⁸³ The incumbent PDP may have had an interest in preventing the elections from taking place in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa, where the mostly Muslim population has tended to overwhelmingly vote for the opposition.⁸⁴ At the same time, the APC could have sought to sustain the insurgency to signal people in the North that only a Muslim president will be able to solve the pressing problem of insecurity. For the time being, these remain conspiracy theories, but the history of Nigerian politics shows that such conspiracies do occur (Harnischfeger 2008).

Boko Haram has probably maintained some cooperation with the political class and exploited opportunities from patronage networks. Still, Patronage Politics and related economic interest do not sufficiently explain Boko Haram's actions and especially the conflict escalation. When Yusuf cooperated with Sheriff, this was not (or at least not only) for economic interest. He fell apart with Sheriff foremost over the broken promise of the *sharia* implementation. At the precise point of the onset of the fighting in July 2009, there even seem to be no such political connections anymore (which was probably also the reason for why Yusuf and other sect leaders were executed, presumably on Sheriff's order). Hence, the rebellion did not begin because some "Godfather" or elite interest group directed Boko Haram to use violent means. Rather, it was *after* the beginning of the armed struggle that, again, some political leaders seem to have used the rebellion for their purposes. This has certainly created opportunities for the violent struggle, which Boko Haram has used for organizing the further escalation of violence. Nonetheless, as discussed above, even at the height of the insurgency during the third stage, Boko Haram does not mainly appear as a criminal enterprise but as an ideologically committed armed group. The lure of patronage money probably motivated some,

⁸³ It is striking that, indeed, there was a marked decline of the fighting intensity after the elections in late March 2015 (yet, also already in the weeks immediately before them, see NST 2017).

⁸⁴ Yet, at the same time the insurgency also threatened his re-election because his popular image in the North had suffered immensely from the failure to defeat the rebels. Moreover, for being elected he required a minimum of 25% of the votes in two-thirds of the states.

but as discussed in the following framing analysis the sect's political-religious vision has been the main reason for why people led, joined, and continued the armed struggle.

4.3.2. MASSOB

Some scholars suggested that MASSOB operates as an “unofficial” ethnic militia within Nigeria's neopatrimonial politics. Following Harnischfeger (2011: 40), from 2000 on the struggle for Biafra has been a “political weapon” to win attention and obtain patronage for the Igbo:

Separatists posing as Biafra police are a bizarre masquerade, meant to impress politicians from other parts of Nigeria. By displaying more and more symbols of national sovereignty, they are trying to give the impression that Igboland is in fact drifting towards secession. For Igbo nationalists, this is the only way to force Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba politicians to pay attention to the plight of the Igbo.

Another scholar even saw MASSOB as part of the “emerging pattern (...) of a tripodal ethnic terror machine represented by the OPC, MASSOB and [Arewa People's Congress], that may turn out to be the greatest threat to Nigeria's unity in this millennium” (Agbu 2004: 8). Relatedly, some argued that MASSOB's leadership has used the struggle for Biafra for obtaining patronage for self-enrichment (Okonta 2012: 33). For example, in a coup within MASSOB in December 2001, the plotters complained about secret meetings between Uwazuruike and the Igbo politician Orji Uzor Kalu (Governor of Abia State, 1999-07, see MASSOB 2001, 17 December). Similarly, Nnamdi Kanu, the vocal leader of Radio Biafra who recently became Uwazuruike's sharpest critic, expressed the following in the interview (Co8):

The leader of MASSOB goes to Abuja, the capital of our perceived enemies. I have never seen a freedom fighter who goes to a ceremony and dinner with the enemy. (...) If you are a freedom fighter will you be in a suit in Abuja when your people are being killed on a daily basis? He went there for a festival and not to negotiate with the government about the freedom of his people. This is not our understanding of freedom fighting.

For clarification, in Nigerian parlance “Abuja” stands for the corruption and self-centeredness of the political class.

There is, indeed, evidence for such political connections between MASSOB's leadership and the Igbo elite as well as other high-level politicians in the country. Since about the early 2010s, MASSOB's leadership and especially Uwazuruike have been increasingly integrated into such networks, at both the state and federal level. While the movement had boycotted several elections and population censuses during the 2000s, in the 2011 presidential elections MASSOB

gave support to both the presidential candidacy of Goodluck Jonathan and to the governorship candidacy of Ikedi Ohakim at Imo State (both PDP, see The SUN 2011, 4 February; YouTube Video 2013, 19 August-b). In January 2012, Uwazuruike received the high-ranking title of the Igbo king (Eze Igbo Gburugburu II). Perhaps more than the title itself, the fact that he received it as successor of Ojukwu, who is a God-like figure to Igbos, endows him with an unprecedented legitimacy among the Igbo leadership. As a result, he has also been involved more openly than before in activities of the main Igbo interest group Ohanaeze Ndigbo and the Igbo-based party All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA, see The SUN 2013, 18 January, 2013, 4 June). He also sided MASSOB with the re-election campaign of President Jonathan in 2015, called on the Igbo to vote for Jonathan, and even organized MASSOB rallies to put pressure on Nigeria's election commission to guarantee fair elections (Vanguard 2014, 28 January; The SUN 2015, 14 March). As part of this, Uwazuruike hosted a dubious group of typical Nigerian "Big Men" in September 2013. He received two Northern leaders with connections to the Abacha regime, the OPC leader, and the key figure of the Niger Delta armed groups.⁸⁵ The seeming purpose of the meeting was to form an alliance for supporting Jonathan's 2015 re-election effort. As Jonathan accepted the electoral defeat, however, it remains unknown whether Uwazuruike would have gone as far as mobilizing MASSOB for a violent struggle alongside these militant organizations to keep Jonathan in power. These activities suggest that MASSOB, indeed, has become increasingly integrated into patronage networks and politics.

A closer look, however, reveals a more complex image of the extent and aims of such political networking. For most of the 2000s, there is little evidence for such political connections between MASSOB and the political class. Even if looking at the more recent phase, Uwazuruike has certainly risen in acceptance among the Igbo leaders but still remains an outcast. He explained his present position as follows in the interview (C111):

I have my own friends today who are ambassadors and senators. But I cannot be any of them because of the struggle. Some of my friends can come here in the night but they would not come here in the afternoon because people will see them. In the public, they may not like to embrace me because they see me as somebody anti-government or a rebel.

As this indicates, the idea of Biafra clearly stands as an obstacle between Uwazuruike/MASSOB and their integration into Nigeria's patronage networks. The Igbo leaders have taken a

⁸⁵ The guests included Frederick Fasehun (OPC leader), Mujahid Asari Dokubo (former leader of the NDPVF), Hamza Al-Mustapha (former Chief Security Officer under Abacha), and Abacha's son Mohammed (VOPF 2013).

principled stance against MASSOB for the demand of Biafra. Governor Achike Udenwa (Imo State, 1999-07) stressed that MASSOB's "name itself make it a treason" (Newswatch 2003, 21 July). Similarly, in the interview Benjamin Nwabueze, one of the most prominent Igbo leaders and past Secretary-General of Ohanaeze Ndigbo (1976-2004), expressed the following (C45):

We told Uwazuruike that the name of MASSOB, the name alone – Actualization of the Sovereign State – implies treason. We want the group to be an active source in Ohanaeze, so please change the name. We cannot support you with a name so treasonable. He refused, until today he still goes on with that name.

In the language of patronage politics such an offer of becoming an "active source" of a political organization as powerful as Ohanaeze Ndigbo is a coded expression for patronage and protection. In other words, by and large Uwazuruike *declined* patronage by continuing to propagate Biafra.

Dismissing Biafra from MASSOB's agenda would not only have created many (more) ways of enrichment for the movement's leadership from patronage networks, it would most likely also have ended the permanent and violent repression against the movement. This repression largely results from the tense relationship between MASSOB and the Igbo elite as well as the treasonable character of the goal of Biafra. Hence, if MASSOB simply abandoned Biafra and transformed into one of the many Igbo youth movements that strive for the "cause of the Igbo Nation" within Nigeria, the repression would most likely cease quickly and entirely. Any reasonable profit-seeker at the top of the movement would have discarded Biafra from the name and agenda of the movement years ago. Yet, MASSOB and Uwazuruike have even provoked Igbo leaders by calling them "stooges" that are part of the problem of oppression of the Igbo in Nigeria (The SUN 2011, 4 February). This has certainly alienated them and limited MASSOB's access to patronage networks. Also, rather than abandoning Biafra, the movement has gone through great lengths of severe state repression, which suggests that there is much idealism involved in the struggle. In short, the explanation for why MASSOB has remained non-violent cannot be found in the political-economic calculation of how to maximize patronage.

4.3.3. Brief Summary

In the context of Nigeria's pervasive neopatrimonial politics it would be unrealistic to expect that the analyzed protest movements or even any political group could be entirely disconnected from patronage networks. As shown, at times both Boko Haram and MASSOB

were integrated into some elite networks, which has also influenced their activities to some extent, but which does not explain why they have differed in their protest behavior.

For Boko Haram, the extent and character of the integration into patronage networks still remains difficult to identify. However, Boko Haram clearly received some support through illicit networks both during the early 2000s and after the rebellion onset. This has probably contributed to making the extreme escalation of violence during the recent third phase of the rebellion possible. In the beginning of the armed struggle, however, the movement has been largely disconnected from such elite networks. Hence, patronage-related calculations do not explain why Boko Haram's struggle escalated into violence. The movement has certainly not been directed to use armed means by any "Godfathers." Also, assumptions about economic interest generally need to be treated with caution. During the early 2000s, Boko Haram seems to have supported Borno State politicians mostly to achieve the political-religious goal of enforcing the *sharia*. Hence, there is again much reason to assume that Boko Haram's struggle has been fought not for economic considerations and patronage, but for ideational aims.

As with Boko Haram, MASSOB's leaders have also maintained some connections with the political class, but the movement's leadership has not mainly been driven by economic interest and the prospects of patronage. For most of the 2000s, MASSOB has not even been integrated into such patronage networks. Recently, however, the leadership around Uwazuruike cooperated with some high-ranking politicians. Nevertheless, the overall relationship with the Igbo's political class has remained tense and MASSOB has remained constantly and severely repressed. The movement's leaders have even declined offers of patronage and protection because this would have required them to renounce the aim of Biafra. Thus, the goal of achieving independence has clearly trumped more short-term economic interests. The answer to the question of why the struggle for Biafra has been pursued by non-violent means, therefore, seems to lie in the movement's framing rather than Patronage Politics.

4.4. Summary: Explanatory Gap in Rebellion Research

The analysis of Boko Haram and MASSOB along the three theoretical approaches of Opportunity, Grievances, and Patronage Politics identifies some important background conditions that help explain the rise and some of the observed dynamics of the analyzed movements. For example, both have been motivated by perceived or actual inequalities, fueled by people's discontent over corruption, and repressed through coercive measures that

encouraged the followers to increase their commitment. Moreover, both have made use of resources that were available from patronage networks for organizing the protests.

Yet, none of these theories has provided a clear-cut explanation for why these movements have pursued their protest by different strategies. An armed struggle would have been feasible for both, but only Boko Haram seized the opportunity for rebellion. Grievances due to inter-group disparities in political and economic affairs cannot explain why Boko Haram has pursued an insurgency, whereas MASSOB has not – even though the Igbo have been considerably more discriminated against than Muslims in Northern Nigeria. Grievances about repression, similarly, do not provide an explanation because Boko Haram's protest escalated into rebellion over incidents of repression that were comparably minor. There has been severe and potentially more escalating repression in the case of MASSOB, which did not drive MASSOB towards violence. Finally, both movements have made use of patronage opportunities. As far as the limited evidence allows conclusions, however, none of them had their strategic considerations “dictated” by “Godfathers.” Thus, these theories cannot explain their different protest behaviors.

As mentioned, the limited explanatory power of these theories may result from their overemphasis on structural conditions and rationalist reasoning to the neglect of ideational aspects and micro-level processes of meaning-making. These theories disregard how the protest movements have interpreted the status quo, which problems and opportunities they have perceived, which avenues for political change they have found appealing and appropriate, which ideas and convictions the leaders have brought into the struggle, how group culture has shaped the collective action, and finally why they have succeeded in mobilizing people for protest. Although these theories identify relevant structural conditions, they do not consider that “protest is what movements make of them.” Therefore, the remainder of this study takes an ideational perspective on the mobilization of Boko Haram and MASSOB and discusses whether the framing perspective can solve the puzzle of the varying protest behavior.

5. The Framing Approach

In this chapter, I briefly define framing (5.1), introduce the key concepts of framing alongside other approaches from social movement research (5.2), propose how to integrate framing into rebellion research (5.3), and present the methodology for the following case study analysis (5.4).

5.1. What is Framing?

Framing is “the process by which a communication source constructs and defines a social or political issue for its audience” (Nelson et al. 1997: 221). At the core, framing means the process in which signifying agents (i.e. framers) “select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (Entman 1993: 52). Framers thus develop and use frames, which can be defined as schemes of interpretation that “enable individuals ‘to locate, perceive, identify, and label’ occurrences within their life space and the world at large” (Snow et al. 1986: 464). In a basic understanding, the analytic concept of the frame works like a magnifying glass, which focuses the viewer’s attention on some particular aspects of a broader setting by highlighting these aspects. Framers, however, not only magnify some aspects but also name and explain them. They can use framing as an instrument (again like a magnifying glass): Political leaders, activists, and journalists develop and disseminate frames to point to particular aspects of a diffuse and otherwise difficult-to-understand social reality and to explain “what is going on” and “what needs to be done about it.”

Framing research, thus, is the study of which frames are being used, how these were constructed, how they are being disseminated, how the audience receives and understands them, how the frames impact on the audience, and how the audience responds (if it does). Originating from sociology (Goffman 1974), framing has become one of the most prominent research approaches in political sciences during the past 2-3 decades. It is one of the current “buzzwords” (Vliegthart and van Zoonen 2011: 101-102) in political communication and media research, which broadly investigates the frames used in news reporting and their effects on the audience (D’Angelo and Kuypers 2010; Iyengar and Simon 1993). Furthermore, there has been extensive framing research on the psychology of choice (Tversky and Kahneman 1981), negotiations (Donohue et al. 2011), and various fields of policy-making (Hoffman 2011; Smith 2003; Paris 2002).

Framing is similar but still partly different from the related concepts of propaganda, persuasion, and ideology. Unlike propaganda and persuasion, framing refers to a soft psychological approach. Framers do not seek to manipulate people or persuade them to adopt new beliefs, but rather to activate and amplify beliefs, values, and orientations which people already have (Nelson et al. 1997: 225). They may partly re-shape the views and identity of the audience, but do not seek to impose new beliefs, which is what propaganda attempts.⁸⁶ Framing also resembles ideology, which is a “cover term for the values, beliefs, and goals associated with a movement or a broader, encompassing social entity”, and which gives “the rationale for individual and collective action” (Snow and Byrd 2007: 120). Although framing also provides “rationales for action”, it takes a different perspective than ideology. Framers often use bits and parts of ideology, but they also adapt ideology to the specific situation and creatively mix it with other cultural elements and political ideas to make their aims resonant among their specific audience. Thus, framing often relies on ideology but does more than merely putting ideology into action (Oliver and Johnston 2000b: 50-52; Snow 2004: 401).

5.2. Framing in Social Movement Research

Framing arguably left its strongest footprint in research on social movements. In this section, I give a brief overview on the main research perspectives from this field, locate framing among them, and define the key concepts as well as theoretical assumptions of framing.

5.2.1. Framing and other Theoretical Approaches

In social movement research, scholars have extensively used framing to investigate how movements interpret events, how they make claims, and whether their mobilization efforts resonate and successfully mobilize the audience for protest participation (Snow and Benford 1988; Noakes and Johnston 2005: 2-5).⁸⁷ This research perspective has become one of the key

⁸⁶ Propaganda can be defined as “the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist” (Jowett and O'Donnell 2012: 7). Unlike the soft psychological mechanism involved in framing, this implies persuasion, i.e. efforts to *change* people's attitudes, beliefs, and ultimately behavior (Jowett and O'Donnell 2012: 32-37). When the verb “to propagate” is used in the present study, this does not imply the strict meaning of the concept of propaganda but merely uses the term as a synonym of promoting an idea.

⁸⁷ Following a much cited definition, framing denotes the “signifying work” by which movements “assign meaning to and interpret relevant events and conditions in ways that are intended to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists” (Snow and Benford 1988: 198). While the concept *framing* clearly refers the active process of

theoretical approaches to analyze protest movements.⁸⁸ As the result of an extensive scholarly debate that has been ongoing since the mid-20th century, a fairly standardized approach to analyze protest movements has emerged. According to this standardized approach, typically four dimensions need to be investigated to explain the rise and dynamics of protest movements: Social change, threats and political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and culture and framing (Della Porta and Diani 2006; McAdam et al. 1996; McAdam et al. 2001; Tarrow 2011).⁸⁹

The oldest of these four approaches holds that long-term processes of social change create the grievances that drive people to collective action. From a psycho-cultural perspective this early research assumed that protest, riots, and other forms of collective behavior are an emotional and largely irrational response (e.g. of anger, anxiety, frustration, and disorientation) that results from the effects of social change such as deprivation, modernization, and social breakdown (Cantril 1941; Gurr 1970; Smelser 1962). The basic idea that underlying social change creates grievances, which motivate people to protest, has been retained until today. However, with the emergence of “New Social Movements” in the 1960s/70s, social movement research became a field of its own, initially with a strong rationalist stance. In the 1970s, protest movements were commonly understood as organized, purposeful, and rational response to social change (Oberschall 1973). These scholars argued that social change and grievances are too common to explain the rare occurrence of protest. Instead, they proposed that, on the one hand, threats and political opportunities are crucial. Some treated these political opportunities as structural, e.g. available institutional avenues for political change and existing political alliances (Eisinger 1973; Kitschelt 1986). Others contended that an interactionist perspective is necessary (“political process theory”), which investigates the dynamic interplay between the protest movement and the regime (Tilly 1978; McAdam 1982; Della Porta 1995). On the other hand, these rationalist scholars emphasized the importance of mobilizing structures (also known as “resource mobilization theory”) for the rise of protest. More precisely, they focused on the organizational structure of movements, their resource access, and the different characteristics of resources (McCarthy and Zald 1977, 1973; Jenkins 1983; Edwards and McCarthy 2004).

constructing meaning, however, most studies apply the approach by examining frames as temporarily fixed products of framing (Oliver and Johnston 2000a: 62).

⁸⁸ For a definition of social movements, see 1.2.

⁸⁹ In addition, social movement scholars have also put emphasis on two aspects that are not further examined in this study: networks and repertoires of contention (Della Porta and Diani 2006: 114-137, 168-192; Tarrow 2011: 119-139, 195-214).

As critique on rationalism, since the mid-1980s scholars have emphasized the importance of culture for protest.⁹⁰ The “cultural turn” began when David Snow and various colleagues imported “frame analysis” from sociology to social movement research (Snow et al. 1986; Snow and Benford 1988). They proposed to investigate the meaning-making and mobilizing efforts of movements with a strong emphasis on strategic communication, agency, and a sender-receiver relationship between the framer and the audience. Numerous case studies on the framing of protest movements have shown that framing matters (Snow et al. 2014: 35): “[F]raming plays a pivotal and influential role in social movement activism and that the meanings articulated by activists and the framing of their core claims have a decisive impact on building movements, winning positive outcomes, and shaping the overall trajectories of movement efforts.” Other scholars within the “cultural turn”, however, have criticized framing. They argue that the instrumentalist character of framing falls short of grasping the complexity of culture (Williams 2004). In their view, movements make meaning and become culturally produced in more complex and dialogic discursive processes, activists are driven more by emotion than cognition, and protest is about collective identities⁹¹ (Fine 1995; Jasper 1998; Polletta 1998; Polletta and Jasper 2001; Steinberg 1998).

The state-of-the-art in the research field has been to combine these theoretical approaches to explain why protest movements form, persist, and eventually decline. This implies that framing should not be analyzed in isolation of broader structural circumstances such as processes of social change, opportunities, threats, and mobilizing structures. These variables have an impact on protest dynamics both through influencing the framing and also through processes that go beyond framing. Furthermore, framing should be treated in the context of other cultural approaches: “The cultural turn is a refreshing departure from the heavy structuralism that had weighted down previous accounts of contentious politics, but if it fails to connect framing, identity, and emotion to the political process, it risks becoming every bit as deterministic as its structuralist predecessor” (Tarrow 2011: 156).

⁹⁰ Following the classic definition by Geertz (1973: 89), culture are “historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which [people; JS] communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life.”

⁹¹ Collective identity can be defined as “an individual’s cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution” (Polletta and Jasper 2001: 285).

5.2.2. Collective Action Frames

In the process of framing, protest movements construct and use CAFs. These give condensed answers to the three key questions of “what is happening here”, “what needs to be done about it”, and “why it needs to be done.” According to the classic definition by Benford and Snow (2000: 615-618), CAFs (1) identify a problem and assign responsibility for the problem (*diagnostic framing*), (2) propose a solution to the problem and an action plan (*prognostic framing*), and (3) call emotionally on followers to mobilize them for implementing the proposed solution (*motivational framing*). In a slightly alternative conceptualization, Gamson (1992: 6-8) proposed that CAFs comprise the following three aspects: They denounce *injustice* (“we are being treated unfairly”), highlight *agency* (“we can change this”), and define *identity* (“it is us versus them”).⁹² The present study draws on both conceptualizations, which can be combined (see 5.4.2). Successful frames often combine these various elements in short, catchy, or laden terms. For example, the single term of genocide combines all the three dimensions of CAFs. The “Genocide” frame identifies the problem of mass killings, it urges the international community to act (as it even *obliged* to do by international law), and it invokes emotionally powerful images, e.g. of the Holocaust.

An important share (especially of the early) framing literature in the field has identified CAFs by protest movements (Benford 1997: 414-415). These studies have revealed that such frames typically vary in terms of content, flexibility, inclusiveness, and interpretative scope (Benford and Snow 2000: 618). While most frames are specific to particular movements and situations, others have been broad and common. These so-called “master frames” are “sufficiently elastic, flexible, and inclusive enough so that any number of other social movements can successfully adopt and deploy it in their campaigns” (Benford 2013); typical examples comprise the (in)justice, oppositional, hegemonic, (anti)imperial, and market choice frame. In the past years, the framing literature also went significantly beyond merely identifying CAFs towards assessing more complex and analytical questions about how frames work and which effects they take (Snow et al. 2014: 33-35).

One of the key strengths of the concept of CAFs is that it encompasses appeals both to cognition (i.e. beliefs, values, and attitudes) and emotion.⁹³ CAFs point to problems and

⁹² While the injustice component is a common part of CAFs, there are also movements (e.g. religious and self-help movements) who do not complain about injustices (Benford and Snow 2000: 615).

⁹³ In general, emotion and cognition should be seen as highly interconnected and complementary rather than opposed. Emotions may trump cognition (e.g. when people are overwhelmed by affection or

propose solutions (*cognition*) and also draw on terms, images, and comparisons through which framers seek to create outrage, fear, or hatred among the audience (*emotion*). Emotion is seen as central to make people act (Goodwin et al. 2001b): Even if they agree with a problem description and proposed solution, it is foremost the emotion about the issue which produces action. Hence, to be successful, CAFs also need to arouse people emotionally through images, comparisons, and other cultural elements. For instance, if framers liken a political leader to “Hitler”, this is more likely to create a strong emotional response among the audience than the description as “oppressive, authoritarian ruler.”⁹⁴ Even if the latter description is more accurate to the situation, among most people the comparison with Hitler invokes stronger historical images, feelings of outrage, and sense of urgency. Thus, it is relevant to also investigate emotional components as part of CAFs.⁹⁵

Finally, CAFs do not necessarily mobilize people for immediate collective action, but may also seek to prepare people for taking action in the future. In this regard, a useful analytic distinction has been between consensus and action mobilization: The former refers to the “process through which a social movement tries to obtain support for its viewpoints”, whereas the latter is the “process by which an organization in a social movement calls up people to participate” (Klandermans 1984: 586). In terms of CAFs, the main difference between consensus and action mobilization is that only the latter encompasses a call for action (as part of both the prognostic and motivational framing).

5.2.3. Frame Development

Where do frames come from? This seemingly simple question is difficult to answer because, once constructed, frames are reproduced and shifted in complex processes involving framers, counterframers, various audiences, and manifold structural circumstances. According to the state-of-the-art, frames are developed through strategic, discursive, and contested processes, as detailed in the following (Benford and Snow 2000: 623-627).

Firstly, in strategic processes movement’s leaders develop and disseminate CAFs. This is the core idea of framing. The strategic goal of these framers typically is to convince as many

rage), but most of the time the two are congruent. Moreover, most of those emotions such as moral outrage, hope, joy, shame, and pride, which are central to participation in protest movements, are to a large extent culturally constructed and cognitive (Goodwin et al. 2001a: 13).

⁹⁴ This intuitive example is borrowed from Paris (2002: 428).

⁹⁵ Following Jasper (1998: 412-414), however, much framing research has neglected this aspect and treated frames as if they were entirely cognitive.

people as possible to engage in collective action. To achieve this, they seek to develop frames which align with the political attitudes, cultural orientations, and social aspirations of the audience (Snow et al. 1986: 464). Such frame alignment is one of the main success conditions of framing (see 5.2.4). To make frames more resonant, over time framers may also seek to reconstruct the initial frames, which can be conceptualized as frame shift.⁹⁶ Obviously, the framers are not entirely free to frame. Instead, they are influenced by structural circumstances, their personal convictions, and their strategic goals. Among other factors, “the larger cultural context, political opportunities, movement collective identity, and interactions with other actors in the movement field (such as coalition partners and countermovements) all matter in shaping activist framing” (Snow et al. 2014: 35).

Secondly, frames are developed and re-shaped in more complex and largely unorganized discursive processes involving various actors. This refers to conversations held by movement participants, the media, and people among the wider audience who articulate, amplify, and (re-)construct the movement’s CAFs. These processes have been analyzed by the help of peer group discussions, participant observation, interviews, and news frame analysis (Gamson and Modigliani 1989; Gamson 1992; Benford 1993b; Polletta 1998).

Finally, frames are developed and re-developed in contested processes. Such frame contestations can occur within a protest movement between various leaders, factions, or organizations that engage in a discursive struggle over how to interpret the situation and how to achieve social change (also called frame disputes, see Benford 1993a). Alternatively, there can be contestation between the framers of a movement and counterframers who are external to the movement (see 5.2.4). These counterframers may influence the movement’s protest leaders to make them shift their framing (even if only to address the counterframing).

Scholars of the various strands in the “cultural turn” of the research field have disagreed on the question of how free framers are to frame. In the purest version, framing takes a strong *instrumentalist* stance that treats “culture as a “tool kit” of symbols, stories, rituals, and world-views, which people may use in varying configurations to solve different kinds of problem” (Swidler 1986: 273). Thus, when developing frames, the framers select, creatively combine, and partly re-shape existing symbols, rituals, and beliefs from the existing cultural

⁹⁶ Snow and his colleagues proposed an (overly) elaborate framework to assess frame shifts by differentiating between frame bridging, amplification, extension, and transformation (Snow et al. 1986: 467-476). However, for the present study, the more encompassing concept frame shift is sufficient.

stock of their identity group. They draw on those cultural elements that they consider promising to achieve frame resonance.

Proponents of *culturalist* perspectives, however, have disagreed. To them, the culture-as-tool assumption “underplays the affective, moral, and even unacknowledged ways in which culture holds and shapes those within it” (Williams 2004: 96). They argue that instrumentalists have failed to show that agency truly matters for frame development, that they have overemphasized the importance of framers’ strategic interest, and that they have assumed a simplistic sender-receiver relationship instead of more complex forms of discursive interaction (Polletta 1998; Steinberg 1999). Thus, from the culturalist perspective it is not (so much) the framers who develop frames, but the culture – i.e. the existing discourses, narratives, symbols, myths, and ideologies in a society – which gives meaning to movements and also shapes their demands and goals. Some within this camp even advocated (almost) entirely abandoning the idea of framing. For instance, proponents of discourse analysis hold that the movement (i.e. its organizations, leaders, and activists), audience, media, and power holders form a discursive field in which meaning and, therefore, also movements’ demands, goals, and emotional appeals are culturally produced through dialogic interaction (Steinberg 1999: 743-754). In this logic, the discursive field constrains the framer to the point that the whole idea of framing becomes (close to) pointless (Steinberg 1998: 856).

In between these extremes, some scholars explored the middle ground. In their view, the cultural context (of discourses, narratives, symbols, and ideologies) enables and constrains the framing. Nevertheless, the framers possess some agency and strategic orientation, they (re-)shape frames, and thereby they direct the movement’s protests in important ways (Ellingson 1995; Koopmans and Statham 1999; McCammon et al. 2007; Coy et al. 2008). This position takes culture seriously as opportunity and constraint of framing, but – through respecting agency – also makes it possible to understand how movements develop new ideas, how personal convictions by framers influence mobilization, and how elements from distant cultural contexts can become integrated into a movement’s framing. The present study is located at this middle ground position between the instrumentalist and culturalist camp.

5.2.4. Frame Resonance

The concept of frame resonance assesses whether frames succeed in convincing people of a propagated course of collective action. In technical terms, it investigates the relationship between the frame, the framer, and the audience. Frame resonance is given in this triangle if the audience finds the expression of grievances and the vision of political change, as provided

by the frame and the framer, convincing and emotionally appealing (Noakes and Johnston 2005: 11).

There is a need for methodological clarity considering conceptual and empirical challenges of assessing frame resonance. No straightforward instrument for measurement exists so far. Instead, the following two indicators have typically been used (Snow and Benford 1988: 209; Noakes and Johnston 2005: 16): Firstly, frame resonance can be assessed by the mobilizing potency of movements, e.g. the number of protesters at events or their level of commitment. However, this provides a rough and problematic indicator because people may participate in protests not only out of conviction but also because of economic interest, coercion, peer pressure, and other motivations. Alternatively, movement participants (and non-participants) can be asked in interviews and focus group discussions for why they participate (or not). This provides a closer approximation of frame resonance, but comes with other problems: This strategy can rarely be applied to historic cases, it is time-consuming and impractical in the case of armed movements, and there is a self-confirmation bias. The latter refers to the problem that researchers typically become aware about protest movements only when they have existed for some time and achieved some mobilization successes, which makes a minimum of frame resonance probable (Noakes and Johnston 2005: 16). The present study applies this strategy and addresses this bias in several ways: I complement the framing analysis by studying alternative motivations for movement participation and also examine frame disputes within the movements to understand why some frames have resonated, whereas others have not (for further discussion, see 9.2).

The framing literature provides success conditions of CAFs. Snow and his colleagues proposed six variables to explain frame resonance, which were divided into two broader categories of credibility and salience (Snow and Benford 1988: 205-211; Benford and Snow 2000: 619-622). Pointing out that this initial framework was partly redundant, Noakes and Johnston (2005: 11-16) proposed a simplified and more intuitive version. The present study has further revised the framework by Noakes and Johnston, which still seemed somewhat imprecise and redundant. More problematically, their framework has been difficult to work with because it focused on characteristics of the frame, the framer, and the frame receivers, as if these could be assessed in isolation. In practice, however, frame resonance needs to be assessed precisely at the interaction between these categories.

The revised framework used for assessing frame resonance in the present study (see Table 2) provides six success conditions of framing, which can be grouped in three categories: The first group encompasses three success conditions, which operationalize the above-defined

concept of frame alignment. Firstly and most importantly, frame resonance depends on the variable of *compatibility*. Frames are compatible with the audience and resonate if their content corresponds to the beliefs, values, attitudes, and aspirations of the target group (e.g. if the frames use known narratives, discourses, myths, and symbols). Secondly, frames resonate if they address issues that are of high importance to the audience (*relevance*) and if empirically observable occurrences, either in people's immediate surrounding (*experiential commensurability*) or more generally (*empirical credibility*) seem to support the frame. Thirdly, counterframing may decrease the frame resonance among the audience. Counterframing refers to public statements by political leaders, the media, or others who seek to undermine the movement's mobilizing efforts. With regard to framers' qualities, fourthly, frames resonate if framers are credible, either as persons or institutions. For example, well known organizations and protest leaders a priori have a discursive advantage over small and little known groups and their protest leaders. Fifthly, the exceptional and rare *charismatic qualities* of framers increase frame resonance. Finally, considering the logic of a frame, frame resonance also depends on whether frames are both *internally consistent* (absence of major logical flaws) and *consistent with regard to the movement action* (absence of movement activities that obviously contradict the frame).

Table 2: Success Conditions of Framing

ALIGNMENT BETWEEN FRAME AND AUDIENCE	
▪ Compatibility	Frame addresses and corresponds to the political, social, and cultural orientations of the audience (i.e. their attitudes, values, beliefs, and aspirations)
▪ Relevance and Empirical Credibility	Frame addresses issues that are <i>relevant</i> to the audience, and/or refers to occurrences that are empirically observable (<i>empirical credibility</i>) and/or which even occur in people's immediate lives (<i>experiential commensurability</i>)
▪ Counterframing	Frame resonance is reduced if there are successful framing efforts by opponents who propagate counterframes that effectively undermine the movement's frames
QUALITY OF FRAMERS	
▪ Credibility	Quality of the framer (either as person or organization) to appear credible and authoritative to the audience
▪ Charismatic Quality	Rare personal quality of being able to win the attention and support of audiences through strong personal appeal
LOGIC OF FRAME	
▪ Frame Consistency	Frame is <i>internally</i> logical (i.e. it is not self-contradictory) and/or <i>externally</i> logical (i.e. the movement's actions are congruent to the frame)

Frame resonance is not a sufficient explanation for movement participation and perhaps not even a necessary condition. Movements can also mobilize people through providing selective incentives, they can coerce people into participating (or at least apply social pressure), and they can recruit friends and others who learn about the movement's demands and vision only after joining. Thus, to explain movement participation, it is necessary to also assess these alternative explanations for frame resonance, as this study does with regard to both cases (see 6.3 and 7.3). Furthermore, as explained above, structural circumstances such as opportunities, threats, and the position of individuals within networks also matter if people even come into contact with a protest movement and if they decide to participate. Framing, thus, is not enough: Besides developing compelling CAFs, protest movements also need to build broader movement structures and create collective identities in order to persist (Ryan and Gamson 2006: 13). For the explanatory power of frame resonance, this means that the concept is best understood as probabilistic: If the framing of a protest movement resonates, not everyone from the audience automatically joins the protests, but they become much more likely to participate and, thereby, collective action becomes much more probable to occur.

5.3. Framing in Rebellion Research?

While framing has been one of the main theoretical approaches in social movement research since about the mid-1980s, surprisingly the approach has been almost entirely overlooked in the study of rebellion. There are certainly important differences between social movements and rebel groups: Social movements mostly protest by non-violent means (whereas rebels are violent by definition), they are often unbounded and allow people to join and leave at will (whereas rebel groups are bounded and often strictly forbid combatants to leave), and the individual costs of participation are low (at least if compared to participation in rebellion). At the same time, however, there are also striking similarities, which make it promising to draw on the theories of social movement research to investigate armed groups and processes of radicalization (Gunning 2009): At the core, both social movements and rebel groups gather aggrieved people who, if the political opportunities allow, develop an organizational structure, mobilize resources and participants, create a collective identity, and ultimately engage in collective action against the government. For these similarities, some scholars have already investigated armed groups against the background of social movement theories (Della Porta 1995; Bosi et al. 2014). Very few, however, have used the framing approach (see 5.3.2) to study conflict escalation and rebellion. This is surprising in light of considerable academic interest in ideational aspects of rebellion.

5.3.1. Ideational Approaches in Rebellion Research

Rebellion research has investigated ideational aspects of armed conflict mostly from a *social constructivist perspective* and has almost entirely dismissed *primordial* approaches of identity and violence (Fearon and Laitin 2000). Such primordialism holds that identity groups have a long-standing and hardly changeable cultural essence. Because people are born into these groups, they adopt the ethnic, religious, and others beliefs and values of the group (Geertz 1973: 259). Their identities are seen as largely fixed in terms of content (“who we are”) and borders (“who is one of us”), and they are understood as internally homogenous (“we are one”). This simplistic understanding of identity groups receives hardly any scholarly support, but many outside of academia hold such views and they have been frequent in news reporting. For example, during the 1990s the violent conflicts on the Balkans, in Somalia, and in Rwanda were often interpreted as outburst of “ancient tribal hatreds” (Kaplan 1994). Similarly, in recent “Islamophobia” Islam has been understood as an inherently violent religion (Gottschalk and Greenberg 2008): “Islam's borders *are* bloody, and so are its innards” (Huntington 1996: 258).

In contrast to primordialism, social constructivism as the mainstream approach of the research field assumes that identities are not fixed but changeable and that violence results from the construction and invocation of violent identities, symbols, and narratives. In countless studies, social constructivists have revealed the weaknesses of primordialism. They have shown that identity groups can change tremendously in their self-understanding, that they often have fluid borders, and that they are far from internally homogenous but that people have multiple and often contradicting identities (Eller and Coughlan 1993; Fearon and Laitin 2000: 857-860; Smith 1984). Furthermore, if assuming that identities are fixed and groups homogenous, the enormous variation in the incidence of violence over time and space (even *within* civil wars) could not be explained. Finally, social constructivists have shown that ethnic conflicts often have roots which go back far in history, but it is “modern hatreds” – which politicians construct out of ethnic nationalism, economic interest, and security fears – that lead to ethnic war (Kaufman 2001).

Within rebellion research, social constructivism can be further sub-divided into two broad strands (Desrosiers 2012, 2015): *Rationalist* and *social-psychological* approaches. Rationalism assumes that strategic considerations by political leaders or by entire identity groups drive them into violent conflict. Focusing on identity groups, some rationalist approaches have shown that security concerns between these groups can spiral into violence, especially if there are information failures, commitment problems, and ambiguous political leaders (Posen 1993; Lake and Rothchild 1996; De Figueiredo and Weingast 1999). In a leader-led rationalist reading, it is group leaders (“manipulative elites”) who intentionally incite their constituency by using pre-existing symbols, rituals, and discourses to fuel ethnic antagonisms, aggrandize nationalism, and prepare groups for political violence, often in a narrow-minded effort to stay in power (Fearon and Laitin 2000: 864-868; Lemarchand 1995; Brass 1997). This rationalist approach resembles framing by assuming that leaders engage in strategic communication to mobilize the constituency, e.g. for ethnic rebellion. Yet, this approach takes a very light and entirely instrumentalist perspective. It treats culture as a tool-kit and thereby again misses how culture shapes the interests and decisions of political leaders, how it constrains their options of mobilization, and how these leaders may have also drawn on some aspects of their cultural context for reasons that lie beyond strategic considerations.

Addressing these gaps of rationalism, social-psychological approaches argue that discursive formations, symbols, narratives, and other ideational elements influence how identity groups understand situations, how they see themselves in relation to others, and how they respond to perceived challenges. In this perspective, culture provides the “script” that

largely (or entirely) drives action. It turns people into “pawns or products of discourses that exist and move independently of the actions of any particular individual” (Fearon and Laitin 2000: 851).⁹⁷ Most of these approaches leave some, but only very limited room for agency. For instance, some scholars including Ross argued that narratives are central to understanding inter-group conflict and that they strongly constrain agency (Ross 2007: 315-316; similarly: Bar-Tal et al. 2014; Ferhadbegović and Weiffen 2012):

Narratives matter because they are the lenses through which groups and individuals view themselves and their opponents. They structure expectations and provide readily available interpretations for the meaning of action and the motives of different actors. Narratives define interests, often in mutually exclusive terms, and in so doing limit and direct the action possibilities that parties consider to achieve their goals.

Symbolic politics as another prominent social psychological approach in the field stresses the importance of myth-symbol complexes as driver of inter-group conflicts (Kaufman 2001: 12; 2006: 51-55; 2011). This approach holds that the emotional power of such myth-symbol complexes and the constructed fear about other identity groups leads to conflict escalation.⁹⁸ Other social-psychological approaches similarly stressed the importance of emotion for the participation in rebellion and ethnic conflicts (Wood 2003; Petersen 2002). Also studies from terrorism research showed that narratives and discourses provide much of the reasoning and worldview that motivates terrorists. For instance, religious terrorists (of all denominations) typically emerge within “cultures of violence” and see themselves as fighting a “cosmic warfare”, which encompasses both worldly and spiritual goals (Juergensmeyer 2003; Fierke 2009). Terrorism is commonly embedded in social and cultural systems, which give meaning to the act and which may even be at the level of small subcultures (Hamm 2004). Finally, also some recent quantitative studies show that terrorist tactics diffuse mostly to places where people already share narratives that make terrorism culturally legitimate (Mullins and Young 2012; Braun and Genkin 2014).

Regarding their basic assumptions, these two strands of ideational research on rebellion mirror the instrumentalist-culturalist divide from social movement research. As with the instrumentalist position, the rationalist perspective within rebellion research falls into the

⁹⁷ If these discourses are treated as static and lasting rather than changeable and dynamic, this approach resembles the analytically weak primordial position (Fearon and Laitin 2000: 860). Therefore, discourse needs to be treated as evolving and agency to be considered.

⁹⁸ This is not a purely social-psychological approach because it also encompasses several typical aspects of rationalism including manipulative elites, political opportunity, and the security dilemma.

trap of adopting a culture-as-toolkit perspective, which is simplistic and fails to take seriously how culture pre-structures the worldviews of political leaders and their audiences. The social-psychological strand, in contrast, is at the other extreme: It provides a thorough understanding of how people are part of culture and how this shapes their beliefs and behaviors, but this view (largely) disregards agency and strategic interest. As a result, the social-psychological strand finds it difficult to explain “how these discourses are sustained and why, on the brink of violence, they are not abandoned or reinterpreted” (Fearon and Laitin 2000: 852). Thus, in the study of rebellion, as in social movement research, there is the need for a position at the middle ground between rationalism and the social-psychological perspective.

Framing can provide such a middle ground approach (Desrosiers 2012, 2015). It allows the analysis of how protest leaders draw on elements from the cultural stock to mobilize their constituency for collective action, also taking into consideration that the cultural context strongly constrains these framers. Because these are part of the cultural context, their worldviews and strategic considerations are partly pre-configured. Within these constraints, however, still some important agency can be assumed. This allows framers to also think outside the box of their narrow cultural context and to draw on ideas which are derived from more distant cultural contexts, which express their personal convictions, and which seek to achieve their strategic interests. Framing, thereby, shifts the focus from the “manipulative elites” of the rationalist strand towards the model of a more complex social actor. Furthermore, it shifts the focus from the structuralist perspective in which discourses and narratives determine action towards the processes in which framers develop calls for protest mobilization by making use of selected elements from these discourses and narratives. Some of these considerations can even already been found in the research field, as discussed in the following.

5.3.2. Traces of Framing in the Study of Rebellion

So far, there are only traces of framing in the existing ideational research on rebellion. For instance, studies from a sociological perspective have often emphasized the need for armed groups to win the support of the population to sustain the struggle and ultimately win. The difficulty that these groups face, however, is that the use of violence inevitably also has delegitimizing effects (Schlichte 2009: 86; Malešević 2010: 206-207). Following Schlichte, in this situation these groups can seek to win traditional legitimacy through using pre-existing social authorities, strive for basic legitimacy by providing services such as security, and use charismatic authority and legitimizing discourses, which essentially is framing (Schlichte 2009: 85-115): “Armed groups draw on norms and values of their social context, and they create narratives of the past and present in order to justify their political claims, thus framing the

ongoing conflict” (Schlichte 2009: 87). However, besides this general statement, his comparative study of 80 armed groups does not investigate such legitimizing efforts through framing any further.

While the bulk of the research on ethnic conflict and rebellion has entirely disregarded framing processes (as discussed above, see 5.3.1), a few and mostly recent studies on rebel groups have already started addressing this gap. In their pioneering study, De Juan and Hasenclever (2009) showed that the framing approach helps explain dynamics of mobilization and rebellion in Thailand and the Philippines. Kaufman recently proposed to integrate several aspects of framing – namely the credibility of framers, salience of group identity, and absence of counterframing – as success conditions for symbolic appeals into his symbolic politics theory (Kaufman 2011: 956). When investigating the social construction of fear among Serbs and Croats during the dissolution of Yugoslavia, Arfi (1998) also already drew on many of the core propositions of framing: He analyzed how political leaders – embedded in social structures that constitute, enable, and constrain their agency – constructed myths and fears, which in further discursive processes involving the audiences on both sides led to the escalation of war.

Besides these exceptional studies which explicitly or implicitly applied framing, some other studies relied on related concepts to investigate similar mobilization efforts. For example, some scholars analyzed political education efforts by rebel groups (Eck 2010; Pearce 2012). This refers to rebels’ efforts of teaching the local population about their causes and aims and to legitimize actions through ceremonies and other rituals. A few of these studies already borrow some theoretical expectations of framing. Recently, there has also been a strong interest in investigating the ideology of rebel groups. Several studies argue that the opportunity approach has seriously downplayed the importance of ideology by making it merely an instrument of recruitment, whereas, in reality, ideology matters profoundly for rebel behavior, e.g. as a restraint to killing civilians (Gutiérrez Sanín and Wood 2014; Thaler 2012; Ugarriza and Craig 2012). Some recent studies also started investigating countermobilization efforts by governments (Pearce 2012; Pokalova 2010; Warren 2015). Hardly any of these studies, however, has applied framing systematically to make full use of its potential.

In contrast, some of the research on terrorist groups has applied framing more systematically, but almost exclusively with regard to Islamist groups and with a strong descriptive focus. In several case studies, the CAFs by groups such as Hezbollah, HAMAS, and

Al-Qaeda as well as its many local affiliates were analyzed (Holbrook 2013; Karagiannis 2009; Page et al. 2011; Snow and Byrd 2007; Wiktorowicz 2004a).⁹⁹ Only very few of these studies have also investigated framing processes and the effects of framing on the audience as well as dynamics of armed conflicts (Hafez 2004; Wagemakers 2010).

To sum this up, framing research on armed groups is only about to begin. Research in the field, so far, has largely disregarded how armed groups have sought to mobilize people for collective action. The few studies, which have investigated these aspects with regard to rebel groups, mostly have not adopted the framing approach and, therefore, have not assessed the processes of meaning-making in their full complexity. Only some of the research on Islamist groups has applied framing in more systematic ways and thereby highlighted the CAFs that these movements use. However, these studies have been overly descriptive, which resembles the early framing research on social movements around the 1990s. This still leaves major research gaps: The manifold framing processes and in particular the question of how and why these armed movements develop particular CAFs (rather than others) have been neglected so far. Moreover, the relationship between CAFs and the occurrence of violence and especially conflict escalation has remained disregarded. The present study addresses these research gaps by examining not only which frames Boko Haram and MASSOB have used, but also how they were constructed and which effects they take on the audience and on the dynamics of armed conflict. To prepare this analysis, the framing methodology first needs to be defined further.

5.4. Framing Model and Methodology

Based on the aforementioned introduction of framing, in this section I specify how the framing model is applied in the following case study analysis. Since the existing research on armed groups has hardly used framing, it is necessary in the following first step to review the relationship between framing and the main theoretical approaches of rebellion research.

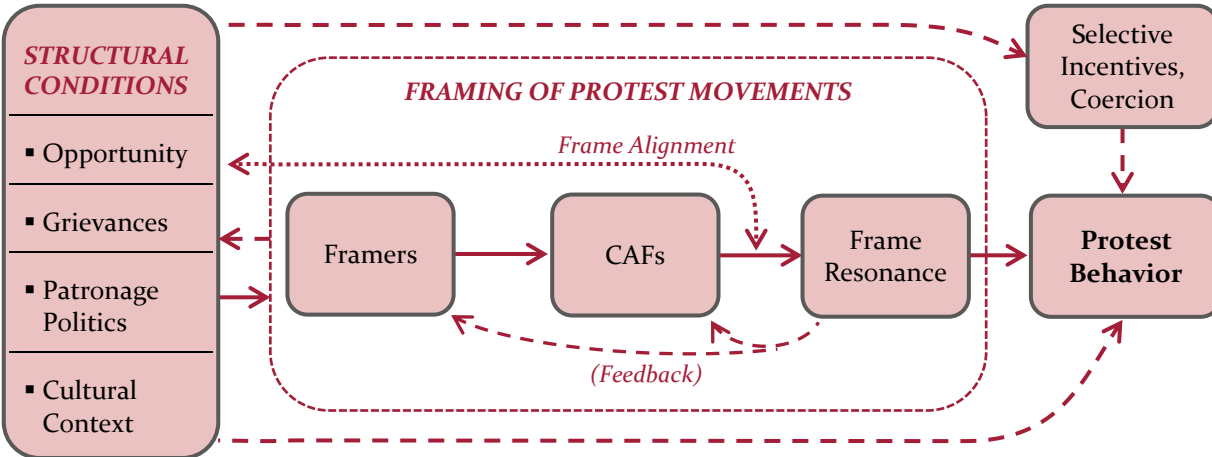
5.4.1. Integrating Framing into Rebellion Research

The present study applies framing as a micro-level mechanism that connects structural circumstances with the protest behavior of movements (see Figure 6). In theory, as the dashed line at the bottom of the figure indicates, *structural conditions* can directly impact on *protest behavior*. This occurs in situations when structural circumstances are very powerful. For

⁹⁹ Furthermore, similar aspects of the communication efforts by Al-Qaeda have been investigated by the use of the concepts of propaganda and narratives (Payne 2009: 111-1116; Torres et al. 2006).

example, in absence of opportunities and grievances, the formation of a protest movement would be impossible respectively unnecessary. Yet, more often than not, structural circumstances do not determine protest behavior, but leave room for micro-level processes to unfold in-between structural conditions and protest action. This was demonstrated in chapter 4, which showed that Boko Haram and MASSOB have protested by different strategies despite similar structural circumstances. Nevertheless, as the model indicates, protest movements and framing processes are not independent from structural circumstances, but influenced by them. Obvious opportunities, widely-known grievances, patronage networks, and established cultural understandings influence the framers and the framing processes. Nevertheless, movements also engage in active meaning-making by socially constructing opportunities, interpreting grievances, and drawing on elements from various cultural backgrounds to develop rallying calls for protest. This occurs within the box of *framing*.

Figure 6: Integrating Framing into Rebellion Research¹⁰⁰



The basic assumption of the framing model used in this study is that *framers*, i.e. protest leaders, construct CAFs. They are treated here as social actors who may also pursue strategic, economic, and other interests. When developing frames, the framers draw on elements from the political, economic, social, and cultural context (*structural conditions*). They frame, however, in creative ways and also based on their own perceptions, convictions, and personal experiences. The constructed *CAFs* warn people about existing societal problems, propose a feasible and promising solution, and give reasoning and emotional appeal for why protest is needed. For these frames to resonate (*frame resonance*) and effectively mobilize people for

¹⁰⁰ Own depiction of the model inspired by the work in the research team of the project “Threatened Political Orders in African Developing Countries” (2011-2015) at the Collaborative Research Centre 923 “Threatened Order – Societies under Stress”, University of Tübingen.

collective action, they need to align (*frame alignment*) with structural conditions, in particular the cultural context, grievances, and opportunities. Analytically, this includes agency but also constrains it by the close connection between the framing and the structural circumstances. In other words, framers are not entirely free to discursively (re-)invent the world but are part of the group's culture and broader context. They may be inclined to use some ideas, symbols, and narratives rather than others. Nevertheless, to achieve resonance, they also need to ensure that their frames connect to widely shared grievances, visible opportunities, and pre-existing narratives and symbols. As mentioned, this reflects the middle ground position between the instrumentalist and culturalist framing understanding from social movement research.

Protest then results from framing that resonates with the audience and/or alternative explanations such as selective incentives and coercion. Certainly, not everyone with whom the movement's framing resonates also participates in collective action. Since the latter always entails costs and often risks (especially in the case of violent protest), this is unsurprising. Yet, if frames achieve resonance, it becomes highly likely that at least some people participate and that as a result protests occur.¹⁰¹ Alternatively, protest movements may use *selective incentives* such as most importantly security and financial rewards to mobilize people. The capacities of protest movements to provide such selective incentives or even to *coerce* people into participation, again, depend much on structural conditions. For instance, protest movements that are part of patronage networks have the necessary means for paying people for participation, and available political opportunities and grievances influence whether movements can build the necessary organizational structure for providing selective incentive and enforcing participation.

Due to data constraints, the present study hardly examines *feedback mechanisms*. In reality, the framing, protest action, and the structural circumstances are constantly and complexly interacting. For instance, radical claims-making and actions often provoke harsh repression, which can reinforce grievances and curtail opportunities. The use of selective incentives and coercion can also undermine the movement's framing by creating inconsistencies between the movement's words and actions. In addition, there often are feedback processes within the framing box: Most importantly, framers may re-frame the struggle if they do not achieve resonance among their audience. Over time, resonant frames are also likely to develop a life of their own, thereby constraining the framers towards

¹⁰¹ It is a major further research need to conduct micro-level studies to specify the circumstances under which people, with whom a movement's CAFs resonate, participate in collective action.

reproducing such “successful messages.” These feedback mechanisms certainly matter, but require extensive and high quality data, which is not necessarily accessible for researchers. For this reason, the present study hardly explores these feedback processes in the case of Boko Haram and MASSOB.

Having highlighted the main theoretical assumptions taken with regard to framing and having elucidated how the present study integrates framing into rebellion research, it is necessary to further define the methodology taken for identifying CAFs and for assessing frame resonance in the following.

5.4.2. Methodology: Collective Action Frames

To identify the CAFs of the movements, corpora of statements by the respective movement’s leaders have been collected. This seeks to assess which CAFs these protest leaders, as framers, have developed and used to mobilize people. The corpora encompass public statements by these leaders through public speeches, the media, press releases, books, leaflets, radio broadcasts, and video messages. Crucial selection criteria were that the document comprised direct quotes by the movement’s leaders and that the statement has been aimed at and accessible to the activists and movement’s audience. To ensure authenticity, only direct quotations were used when analyzing the documents. Further selection criteria of documents, potential biases concerning the sources, and possible translation inaccuracies (regarding Boko Haram documents) are discussed at the beginning of the respective case study chapters (see 6.1.1 and 7.1.1).

The approach chosen to identify CAFs from these corpora has been qualitative but also made use of keyword searches in digitalized documents to identify general patterns of framing. The following three steps were taken to identify the CAFs. In the first step, the corpora were read carefully with a particular look for text segments that can be classified into the three main dimensions of CAFs: diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing (see 5.2.2). As mentioned, the basic conceptualization of CAFs by Benford and Snow was extended by aspects of identity and agency along Gamson. This resulted in the following set of questions, which was used to classify text segments into framing dimensions:

- Diagnostic Framing: Which problems that affect the broader identity group and the movement are identified? How are they articulated (by which notions, historical references, images, etc.)? Who is described as responsible for the problems? How is the own identity group defined in relation to the opponent?

- Prognostic Framing: Which solutions and strategies to alter the problems are proposed? How can these strategies be implemented, what needs to be done? How are these solutions framed as adequate and feasible?
- Motivational Framing: Which textual, visual, and other sensory elements are used to address the audience on an emotional level? How are the need for action, the sense of urgency, and the power of agency activated (“we shall overcome”)?

Based on these questions, a large number of possibly relevant text sections were identified from the corpora.

Thus, in a second step, it was necessary to narrow these text segments to the main arguments, symbols, and expressions that have been used most frequently (at least over a certain time span) to define the central elements of the CAFs of both movements. This was mainly done through keyword searches in the digitalized documents. As almost all of the documents (94%) were digitalized, this provides a thorough analysis of the corpus. The keyword searches are a quick and useful method to identify which of the identified elements (claims, demands, historical references, emotion-laden terms, etc.) have been sufficiently frequent to consider them central parts of the movement framing and which were too rare to be treated as relevant. Also, this method allows to track changes in the framing over time, e.g. if certain terms disappear from the framing at some point. Such keyword searches do not help analyzing graphic elements, which, however, was no major problem since the corpora are based largely on text.

In the final step, the CAFs identified in the previous two steps were documented by drawing on typical examples from the corpora. At this point, a particular focus was placed on the interlinkages between the proposed protest strategy (as part of the prognostic framing) and the other parts of the framing, and also how this may have changed over time. This assumes that there is structure within framing and that parts of various dimensions of a movement’s CAFs mutually sustain and reproduce each other, at least if the CAFs are coherent (Johnston and Alimi 2013). Moreover, it was examined if different framers consistently use different frames and in particular if movement-internal frame disputes can be found. The case studies highlight both such interlinkages and differences between various framers.

The method chosen for identifying CAFs combines key advantages of qualitative and digital research opportunities. It allows, on the one hand, a detailed analysis of the content of the CAFs, but, on the other, assessment of patterns within the movement’s framing. This proved very useful, but, as any research method, also has its disadvantages. It falls short of a

“thick” qualitative approach, as typically applied in ethnography (Geertz 1973: 5-10). Therein, the researcher would immerse her-/himself into the world of the activists to study how they make sense of the protests, how they perceive and understand the leaders and the movement’s opponents, and how the movement relates to their identity, worldview, and aspirations. This can give great insights but remains difficult, dangerous, and stressful in the case of clandestine and armed movements (Orsini 2013). At the other end of the divide, the method chosen falls short of a more quantitative analysis that tracks the frequency and changes of textual elements. This has become increasingly common in social movement research (Snow et al. 2014: 31-32). Yet, the difficulties of developing neat and clear categories, dealing with ambiguity of meaning and the relevance of context, and applying codes coherently to large numbers of documents must not be underestimated. For instance, the terms “*boko*” and “infidel” used by Boko Haram have multiple and shifting meanings, as discussed below. Therefore, I chose a methodology at the middle ground between detailed analysis and the identification of patterns.

The corpora used comprise little graphical content, especially for the early years of both movements. The available videos also center largely on the movement’s leaders and hardly show activists in protest. As far as such graphical content was available, I examined it in close relationship to surrounding text, established images, and the cultural context. Therein, I follow media and political communication studies which have emphasized the need to treat images in their textual context because the latter significantly influences the images’ meanings and conveys much of the message (Hansen 2011: 53-55; Mitchell 1994).

5.4.3. Methodology: Frame Resonance

To assess the resonance of the identified CAFs, the present study relies mainly on interviews but also media sources, surveys, and secondary literature by Nigerian and other scholars.¹⁰² By triangulating these sources, data problems from individual sources can be counterbalanced to increase the validity of the findings (Ayoub et al. 2014). This approach is necessary because of the many difficulties involved in conducting field research on both Boko Haram and MASSOB, especially regarding data access and quality. From these data sources, I sought to extract the views of people among the audience of both movements. This encompassed in particular their assessment of the political situation of their identity group, their perception and opinion of the

¹⁰² Regarding research from Nigeria, I relied almost entirely on work by scholars from the respective regions of interest.

respective movement, and their visions about political change. The findings were then compared to the movements' CAFs and, by the use of the success conditions of framing (see 5.2.4), the degree of and reasons for resonance were assessed. In addition, at least in the case of MASSOB, interviews with activists gave valuable further insights into why people joined the campaign and what role framing played for this decision. To gather the necessary data, I pursued the following research strategies for conducting interviews, analyzing media sources, and using surveys.

5.4.3.1. Interviews

The main source of data for assessing frame resonance in the present study were interviews which I conducted during two field research visits to Nigeria. Details on the field research and the interviewees are presented at the introduction of the frame resonance analysis of the cases (see 6.2.1 and 7.2.1). Casual chats with taxi drivers, market sellers, office personnel, or staff at hotels or restaurants also provides valuable further information and insights on people's views. In general, only people from among the movements' audience were interviewed, which means Muslims in Northern Nigeria in the case of Boko Haram and Igbos (from the South-East and beyond) regarding MASSOB. Interviewees were selected in such a way as to encompass all major segments of these identity groups, but the focus was placed on assessing the views held by ordinary people because these are the most disadvantaged and therefore the most likely to join the protests.

For finding interviewees, I relied on "cold calling", used peer networks, and applied "snowballing." For first interviews or at least making appointments, it often worked to simply show up at the office of politicians, NGOs, media houses, etc. ("cold calling").¹⁰³ Also, the peer network of my local research partners provided valuable entry points for interviews.¹⁰⁴ Further appointments were often made based on the contacts provided by the initial interviewees ("snowballing"). While this strategy has the obvious problem that the interviewees are interdependent, it was necessitated by the circumstances: Both movements are widely considered as sensitive topics that people are reluctant to talk about unless they feel safe by knowing who they talk with.

¹⁰³ Other scholars used this strategy as well for field research on sensitive issues in difficult contexts (Salmon 2006: 9).

¹⁰⁴ The local research partners also provided valuable support by facilitating research logistics and translating some interviews from Hausa.

In light of these reservations to talk about MASSOB and Boko Haram, one of the major challenges for the interviews was winning the confidence of the interviewee. I applied a five-part approach to address this problem: Firstly, at the beginning of each interview I emphasized that the study is carried out for purely academic interest and that there is no connection whatsoever to any security agencies. Explaining this point in some detail seemed important because most Nigerians automatically assume that academic researchers (as it is often the case in Nigeria) are part of the political elite and stand in close relationship with security agencies. Secondly, except for interviews with prominent political and religious leaders (who are used to being interviewed), interviewees were generally guaranteed confidentiality. Therefore, the list of interviewees (see Annex C) provides few names but mostly only a rough characterization of the occupation or age (and in the case of Boko Haram also the origin) of the interviewee. Thirdly and relatedly, most interviews were not tape-recorded. Only notes were taken and mind protocols were produced immediately after the interview. The decision not to tape-record interviews inevitably leads to loss of information, but again was necessitated by the circumstances. If tape-recording, most interviewees would feel highly uncomfortable and only give socially appropriate answers. In these regards, the present study followed the experiences and the approach taken by Loimeier who reported from his field research on Islamist movements in Northern Nigeria that his “interlocutors were usually more forthcoming in informal talks (without tape recorders) than in formal interviews” and that “[a]n informal atmosphere helped much to overcome the initial reserve or mistrust” (Loimeier 1997b: x). To achieve such an informal atmosphere, fourthly, the interviews were mostly conducted in private places, offices, or in such public places, which were calm and not exposed to many passers-by (e.g. backyards, empty restaurants, unused office rooms). Finally, to evade creating the image of an interrogation, the interviews were conducted in a relatively open way leaving much room for the interviewees to talk about issues that they consider relevant and feel comfortable with.

The interviews with people from the movements’ broader audience usually lasted about 30-75 minutes and were structured along the three following steps: In the first part, broad opening questions were asked about the political situations and the respondent’s main concerns. These questions provided valuable information on the perception of the status quo, but, even more importantly, they allowed the interviewee to get comfortable with the interview situation by talking about themes that s/he feels confident with. This approach proved very useful: Within the first 10-20 minutes many of those interviewees who had initially

appeared uncertain and skeptical opened up when realizing that the interview is not a strict questioning but an open talk about political questions that are very central to their lives.¹⁰⁵ In the second and core part, I gradually navigated the subject towards the preferred solutions to the identified problems, attitudes towards the use of violence as a strategy for political change, and the views on the respective protest movements. At this part of the interview, I also sought to identify what people know about the examined protest movements, especially with regards to their demands, goals, activities, and key figures. In the final part, I generally asked for an outlook (“best and worst” future scenario), for whether they think that the protest movement will improve or worsen the situation, and for their view on the state’s response to the protests. This question about “what will happen” provides a useful indirect way to assess the respondent’s support or opposition to protest movement and their activities (a similar strategy was adopted by Shapiro and Fair 2010).

Besides interviews, I also conducted focus group discussions. In this research method, a group of people is invited for discussing a subject, which is given by the researcher who also observes the discussion and as moderator ensures that it remains on-topic (Della Porta 2014: 290-291). In contrast to interviews, this method seeks to create a conversation between the participants, which, especially if they adopt opposing positions, allows obtaining deeper insights into their reasoning, beliefs, and identities (Vogl 2014: 582). While there are various techniques on how to organize and conduct focus group discussions, I followed the typical approach that the participants (who ideally number about six to ten) should be from the same social and cultural background, roughly have the same age, and should not know each other (Della Porta 2014: 296-298).¹⁰⁶ Regarding the topic, I sought to engage them to talk on very similar questions as the interviewees, namely their opinion on the present political situation and their main political concerns, on possible avenues for political change, and on the examined protest movements. Taking into consideration peoples’ reservations to publicly discuss the subject of Boko Haram and MASSOB, I framed the subject on the invitation for the focus group discussions as a general political conversation rather than an investigation of these

¹⁰⁵ Time and again, interviewees even seemed happy that a foreign researcher, who appeared “somehow important” to them, took interest in their lives.

¹⁰⁶ While I sought to achieve homogeneity in the selection of participants, social hierarchy often works in hard-to-predict ways in Nigeria. It often occurred that one or two of the participants dominated the discussion as the result of some close-to-invisible hierarchy. To ensure that others could also participate, as moderator I often addressed them asking for their views.

movements.¹⁰⁷ When conducting two focus group discussions in close proximity to Boko Haram at Yola, however, the participants automatically assumed that the research interest would lie in Boko Haram since this has been the most pressing political concern in the region. Also, to make the participants feel comfortable, I tended to invite rather small numbers of participants. This was based on the assumption that a large group size could create suspicions among participants (e.g. that information is passed on by someone to security agents) than a more intimate setting with fewer participants.

5.4.3.2. Media Sources

As a second source for the analysis of frame resonance, this study draws on media sources, most importantly newspapers. From these sources, statements both by people quoted in the media and by journalists, either explicitly (in opinion pieces and editorials) or implicitly as part of the news reporting, were collected. Again, only direct quotations were used for the analysis to minimize the potential problem of inaccurate transcription. The collected statements served as a rough indicator to assess public opinion, to validate or critically discuss the interviews findings, and to identify processes of counterframing.

The main media source used here were newspapers. Nigeria's newspapers are lively, the quality of journalistic reporting is good, and there is little state interference. In fact, the newspapers are very outspoken in criticizing the government and the corrupt elite for the persistent failure of improving people's living conditions. Several of the main national dailies (including Daily Champion, Daily Independent, Daily Trust, This Day, The SUN, and Vanguard) were used extensively for this study. They are readily accessible through allafrica.com and Nexis.com. In contrast, smaller regional and local newspapers have hardly been accessible. The news reporting should generally be seen as indicating public opinion more than impacting on people's views. Although the reach of the newspapers is growing fast, it still remains low¹⁰⁸: In 2013, only 20% of the male population read a newspaper once per week, which is much lower than the access rates to TV and radio (40% respectively 55%, see NPC 2014: 41). Transcripts for TV and radio broadcasts, however, are unavailable, which makes newspapers a practical and promising "second-best" choice.

¹⁰⁷ In contrast, in the two focus group discussions with MASSOB members it was made explicit that the research interest lies in the movement.

¹⁰⁸ These major national dailies each have a daily print-run of only about one hundred thousand.

From the mentioned news archives, I collected and used 230 newspaper articles on the Muslim North and Boko Haram as well as 250 on the Igbo and MASSOB.¹⁰⁹ When selecting and interpreting them, two biases were considered. Firstly, newspapers and other news sources typically have a regional background and related bias. Southern Nigerian newspapers were described as “extremely biased regarding developments in northern Nigeria” (Loimeier 2012: 148)¹¹⁰, and Northern newspapers often report negatively on Igbos and MASSOB. Therefore, I relied only on news sources that originate from the respective regions. With regard to the North, the high-quality Northern-based newspaper Daily Trust (from Abuja) was used as preferred source for insights into Northern public opinion and Boko Haram. In addition, the online news platforms Desert Herald (from Kaduna) and Sahara Reporters (from New York) provided valuable sources regarding Boko Haram. With regard to Igbos, various prominent newspapers from the South and two from the South-East (The SUN, The Advocate¹¹¹) were key sources. Within them, I preferred to use articles that appear to have been written by Igbo persons who often are recognizable by their names.

Secondly, although Nigerian newspapers are largely free in their reporting, some pro status quo bias exists. Most of them are owned by politicians, business persons, and other “Big Men.” These have strong interests in maintaining the present political order and a united Nigeria. Stunningly, they generally allow the journalists to fervently criticize the corruption of the political class and its failure to improve Nigerian governance. Their still may be some bias in their reporting on protest movements, especially on movements as controversial as Boko Haram and MASSOB. Journalists may exaggerate negative views or hide their sympathies. I sought to reflect this probable bias when assessing the sources as evidence of public opinion.

Besides newspapers, various internet sources were also used herein. This encompassed TV broadcasts and videos that were accessible online as well as blogs, websites, and Facebook groups. Generally, the internet provides for a rich stock of material for framing research on Nigeria and the two movements. The internet has been “booming” in Nigeria, which at 70 million persons had the largest number of internet user in Africa by 2014 (Internet World Stats 2014). However, during the 2000s Nigeria was still almost entirely offline, which is why internet sources from these years were used sparsely.

¹⁰⁹ Many but not all of these newspaper articles are also cited in the bibliography.

¹¹⁰ Vanguard with its country-wide network of journalists is a credible exception.

¹¹¹ They are produced from an Igbo background: The SUN is owned by the high-ranking Igbo politician Orji Uzor Kalu; and The Advocate is published at Enugu.

5.4.3.3. Surveys

Finally, to achieve a more general image of the public opinion among Igbos and Northern Muslims, surveys were used. For the sensitive character of rebellion and secession, no own surveys were conducted. Fortunately, high quality and representative surveys by Afrobarometer, the PEW Research Center, and Gallup/NOI have been available. They cover some of the political attitudes of key interest to this study. However, the survey findings published in these institutes' reports are too aggregated for this study. They overlook important regional variation. For instance, the views of Northern and Yoruba Muslims often differ strikingly.¹¹² Similarly, Igbos and other Southern ethnic groups often have very different political attitudes. To get closer to the areas and groups of interest, I disaggregated the data into ethnic, religious, and regional breakdown by the use of SPSS. This required access to full datasets, which were available for all seven surveys conducted by Afrobarometer in Nigeria (from 1999-2013)¹¹³ and for eight surveys by the Global Attitudes Project of the PEW Research Center (from 2002-2013).¹¹⁴ Such disaggregation lowers the numbers of surveyed respondents, but this was unproblematic. At a sample size of 300-600 persons from either South-Eastern/Igbo or Northern-Muslim background, the numbers were still high enough for accurate assessments of political attitudes. Moreover, the availability of surveys from different years and institutes allowed cross-checking to eliminate outliers. Adopting this method, the survey data provides for a valuable complement to assess whether the political attitudes and beliefs found in interviews and media sources have general validity for the examined identity groups.

Based on this research method and outlined framework to examine CAFs and their resonance, the following two chapters conduct the framing analyses of Boko Haram and MASSOB.

¹¹² To give a striking example, the opinions of Muslims in the North and Yoruba-Muslims from the South-West often vary strongly: In the 2006 PEW survey, 69% of the interviewed Muslims in the North – as opposed to merely 16% of the Muslims in the South-West – expressed to have confidence in Osama Bin Laden (Pew Research Center 2006). Therefore, using broad aggregates or even national averages would be highly misleading.

¹¹³ The surveys used are Afrobarometer (1999, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2013).

¹¹⁴ The surveys used are Pew Research Center (2002, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010a, 2013).

6. Case Study: Boko Haram's Framing

This chapter analyzes Boko Haram's framing in three steps: Firstly, the CAFs are identified from the movement's public statements (6.1); secondly, I review the resonance among the Muslim population in Northern Nigeria and discuss the reasons of frame resonance (6.2); finally, it is assessed if the movement participants joined because of frame resonance, or whether selective incentives and coercion solve the puzzle (6.3).

6.1. Collective Action Frames

In this section I identify the CAFs used by Boko Haram's leaders. This is subdivided into another three steps: Firstly, I give a brief overview on the corpus of Boko Haram documents used for the analysis (6.1.2); secondly, I provide an overview on the main elements of the CAFs (6.1.3), and finally these frames are defined in more detail along the three outlined dimensions of diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing (from 6.1.3 to 6.1.5).

6.1.1. Introducing the Boko Haram Corpus

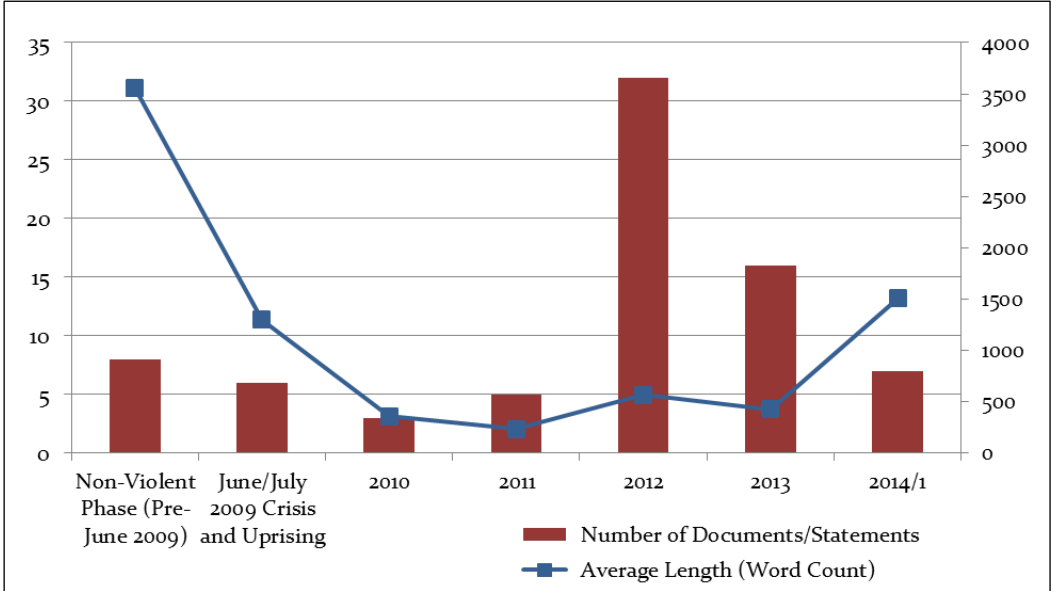
To identify the CAFs, the present study draws on a corpus of 77 documents that comprise about 74,000 words – counting direct quotations only – of statements made by Boko Haram's leaders or speakers (for an overview, see Annex A). These statements cover the time from around 2008¹⁵ to July 2014. As a caveat, no documents from the earlier years were available. Therefore, it is not possible to identify Boko Haram's CAFs for these earlier years of the non-violent phase and assess more long-term changes in the movement's framing. However, the phase of central interest here, namely the phase of conflict escalation, is covered thoroughly.

The distribution over time is relatively unequal, but not as much as the red bars in Figure 7 suggest. Although only eight out of 77 documents cover the non-violent phase, these are considerably longer than the documents for later phases (as indicated by the blue line in the figure). The average length of the statements from the non-violent phase is about 3,600 words (whereas it is on average 660 words for the insurgency). Thus, the pre-rebellion phase accounts for only 10% of the documents but for 38% of the words in the corpus. In short, both

¹⁵ Unfortunately, the three presumably earliest documents in the corpus are undated (A01-03), but probably date from around 2008.

phases are sufficiently well covered.¹¹⁶ As Boko Haram has attracted much more attention since the rebellion onset, “naturally” also more statements by the sect have been recorded since then. For a total of 30 (out of these 77 documents), also original video material was available and reviewed for the framing analysis.¹¹⁷

Figure 7: Number and Average Length of Boko Haram Statements in the Corpus



The documents were collected mostly from media sources and other scholars. The bulk of the documents (51 out of 77) were obtained from media sources.¹¹⁸ As outlined above (see 5.4.3.2), several media houses were preferred because of their Northern Nigerian background and relatively unbiased news reporting. Thus, an important share of the Boko Haram statements was collected from Sahara Reporters (10 documents), Daily Trust (9), and Desert Herald (6). Moreover, Agence France Presse (AFP, 12 documents) has been another key source for Boko Haram statements because the sect has released many of its videos through the agency. For collecting Boko Haram media statements from the year 2012, Eveslage’s study on Boko Haram (including its online appendix) provided a useful starting point for document searches (Eveslage 2013b, a). Besides these media sources, 19 complete transcripts of Boko Haram videos

¹¹⁶ Yet, at such relatively low numbers of documents, there is the risk of having outlying cases. For now, this is impossible to verify or solve for it requires additional documents that have not been available.

¹¹⁷ These documents were marked by an asterisk, see the “Type of Document” rubric in Annex A.

¹¹⁸ To collect these documents, keyword searches were performed in the allAfrica.com archive, the Nexis.com archive, YouTube, and common internet search engines. For these searches, various combinations of some of the following keywords were used: “Boko Haram”, “(Mohammed) Yusuf”, “(Abubakar) Shekau”, “(Abu) Qaqa”, “claims”, “message”, “statement”, “transcript”, “translation”, and “video.” In general the many very short statements (less than 50 words of direct quotations) by Boko Haram reported in Nigerian media sources were excluded from the corpus.

and other messages were produced by experienced and locally-versed Nigeria researchers who speak Hausa, and partly Arabic and Kanuri.

The corpus reflects the various forms of communication by Boko Haram and some changes in the communication pattern. It comprises various types of documents, including most importantly long audio and video messages by the sect (40% of the documents in the corpus), shorter statements to journalists (31%), video recorded preaching (12%) and letters and leaflets (10%). It also encompasses the main speakers of the movement: Shekau (40% of the documents in the corpus), Abu Qaqa (18%)¹¹⁹, Yusuf (13%), various Ansaru speakers (13%)¹²⁰, and other speakers and official releases (16%). Also, it reflects some of the “natural” changes in the communication pattern of Boko Haram: For the non-violent phase, most of the documents are transcripts of video-recorded sermons; for the time around 2011/12, it is mostly short statements to journalists by Qaqa; and for the years 2012-14, it is foremost longer video and audio messages by Shekau. While the year 2012 appears overrepresented in the corpus (see Figure 7), this reflects the pattern of Boko Haram’s communication. At the time, the speaker Qaqa made almost daily statements to the media.

As in any sample, there may be biases. Since about 66% of the documents were collected from media sources, reporting bias and inaccuracies in news reporting are the most likely data concerns. To minimize these problems, as mentioned, documents were collected mostly from media sources with a Northern-Muslim background. They most likely have the necessary language skills and cultural knowledge for producing accurate transcriptions. This, however, does not address the problem that some parts of Boko Haram’s messages may have remained systematically non-reported. Most Nigerian media and especially AFP have commonly only published segments of Boko Haram’s messages rather than complete transcripts. Strikingly, quranic citations by Boko Haram are hardly ever transcribed in media sources.¹²¹ Therefore, few quranic citations are analyzed here and other unobserved gaps may exist in the corpus. The problem of reporting bias, however, was reduced in the sample by the inclusion of 19 complete transcripts from Boko Haram’s sermons. These transcripts were

¹¹⁹ From November 2011 to September 2012 Abu Qaqa was the main speaker of Boko Haram. As with Shekau, Qaqa was most likely a pseudonym used by several persons.

¹²⁰ Ansaru’s statements are earmarked under the “speaker rubric” in Annex A.

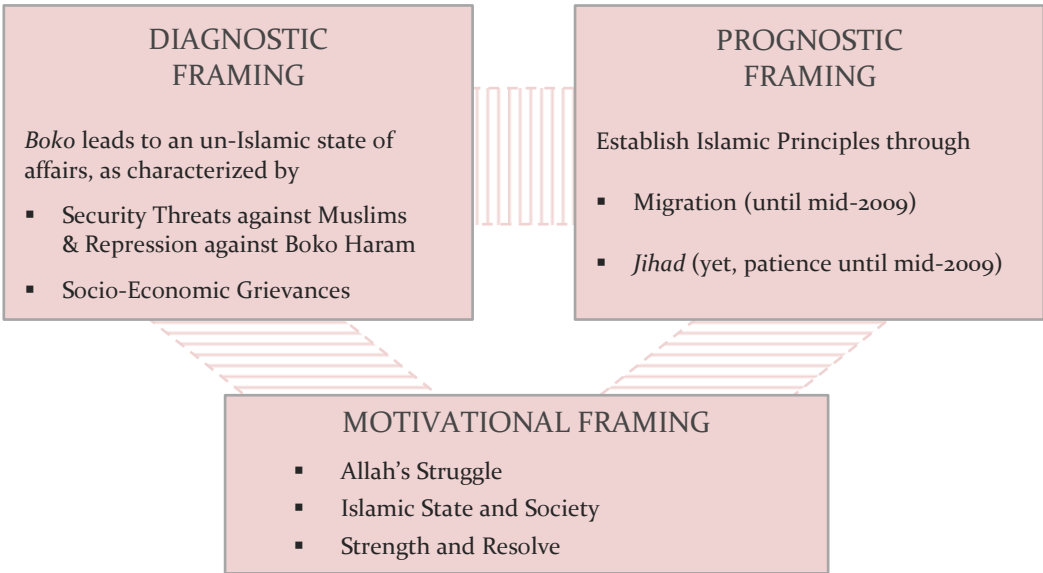
¹²¹ Quranic citations and other theological elements also seem to have been more common in the practices and books of the movement (Umar 2012: 118) rather the sources obtained for this study, which are mostly media statements and videos.

produced by experienced local researchers and also served as baseline to assess statements from the media.¹²²

6.1.2. Overview: Boko Haram’s Collective Action Frames

For a snapshot, the analysis of Boko Haram’s framing in this chapter shows that the movement’s CAFs center on the concepts of *boko*, *hijra*, and *jihad* (see Figure 8). In broad terms, *boko* has referred to the problem analysis that Islam and Muslims in Nigeria (and beyond) are suppressed by a long-standing Western/Southern-Nigerian/Christian conspiracy. As a result, Muslims have felt insecurity and suffered from socio-economic disadvantages and Boko Haram has been violently repressed. The movement’s leaders have argued that these problems can be overcome by *hijra*, i.e. the “migration” from the un-Islamic status quo and creation of an enclave in which the religious beliefs are respected. Moreover, they have propagated the need for a *jihad*, i.e. a violent battle for worldly and spiritual renewal by adopting Islamic principles and imposing them on the Nigerian state and society. To mobilize followers, the speakers have defined the movement’s mission as godly, shaped the image of an Islamic state, occasionally referred to the historical example of Usman Dan Fodio’s *jihad*, and stressed its strength and resolve in fighting. In the following parts of this chapter, these CAFs are defined in more detail.

Figure 8: Overview on Boko Haram’s Collective Action Frames



¹²² In contrast, comparing transcripts from various media sources rarely improves accuracy as different media houses have tended to copy quotes rather than producing their own transcripts from original Boko Haram material.

6.1.3. Diagnostic Framing

Boko Haram's diagnostic framing has been based on the notion *boko*. Epistemologically, *boko* is not related to the English term book but derived from Hausa and originally meant "sham" and "fraud" (Newman 2013). During the 20th century, the term has taken the meaning of Western education, which is thereby framed as derogative. When the movement's leaders have condemned *boko*, however, they went beyond condemning Western schools and curricula as un-Islamic but encompassed Western influence more broadly. According to one speaker, Boko Haram opposes "western style of life which includes constitutional provisions as they relate to, for instance, the rights and privileges of women, the idea of homosexuality, lesbianism, (...) drug trafficking, rape of infants, multi-party democracy in majority Muslim countries like Nigeria, blue films, prostitution, drinking beer and alcohol and many others that are opposed to Islamic civilization" (A14). In this understanding, *boko* has captured multifaceted political and societal problems. These can be grouped into three main elements of the diagnostic framing: The "*boko* conspiracy", security threats against Muslims and repression against Boko Haram, and socio-economic grievances.

6.1.3.1. The "*boko* Conspiracy"

At the core of the diagnostic framing, Boko Haram's leaders have argued that there has been a historical and ongoing conspiracy against Muslims by the "infidels." In this view, the "infidels" have encompassed a broad alliance of Western powers, Southern Nigerians, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Christianity in general, and also Muslims who collaborate with them to suppress the general Muslim population. The presumed goal of the conspiracy has been to dominate Islam and to ensure that it cannot "live up to its glory" but is subjected to its dismal present state of political and social affairs. Shekau expressed this as follows in a preaching before the rebellion (A02):

Followers of western education have usurped our hearts with a philosophy and method of thinking that is contrary to the demands of Allah. They have destroyed our style of life with a system that has not been instructed to us by the Prophet of Allah. They have imposed upon us laws that are not of Allah. (...) [T]hey brought upon us secular symbols and laws like the national pledge, the national anthem, annual holidays, day to day celebrations and Christian holidays. (...) How can someone tell us that democracy is not associating something with Allah? What is the meaning of 'government of the people, by the people and for the people'? The meaning is that whatever the people want, even if it's contrary to Allah's demand, it will be done. (...) [T]he government rejects the Qur'an, the Prophet of Allah and the religion of Allah in public life. It replaces these with the concept of the new world order and globalization

as a new system of directing world affairs. How can you as a Muslim live in this new world order and gain the paradise? This is precisely what we, the Muslim ummah [i.e. the Islamic community worldwide; JS], is fighting.

In this interpretation, the present state of political and social affairs in Nigeria has deviated from the Islamic ideal. Democracy, secularism, sorcery, and sciences have infringed key Islamic tenets, most importantly the principle of *shirk*. The latter means that nothing must be associated with Allah, that Allah is the ultimate authority, and that no one else must be worshipped (A02, 03, 04, 10, 11, 12). Yet, democracy and secularism elevate human beings into the positions of decision-makers, sciences seek to explain the universe and existence of human kind, and sorcery assumes that there are powers other than Allah. All of this is “disbelief” which Boko Haram has sought to eradicate, according to its speakers.

Following the leaders, the perceived imposition of such Western practices in the name of *boko* has also infringed the Islamic morals. It has led to un-Islamic practices such as mixing sexes in public institutions, encouraging women to travel without their husbands, and adultery as well as homosexuality (A04, 11, 12, 72, 75, 77). Moreover, it led to blasphemy, because “infidels” have been denigrating the Quran and ridiculing Prophet Mohammed, as Boko Haram’s leaders repeatedly lamented (A01, 04, 38, 74, 75). In one sermon Shekau asked rhetorically, “if Islamic religion was respected in the government, how can the Qur’an be turned into a toilet paper in a place like Borno State?” (A02). Thus, such questions of appropriate Islamic morals are partly linked to political motives.

This perceived anti-Islamic conspiracy is depicted to have been ongoing for decades and even centuries. The suppression of Islam started already during colonialism, as Yusuf explained in one of his sermons (A01; similarly A32):

Suppressive and neo-colonial western governments including their collaborators, the infidels, and the associationists have all been writing, publishing books and lying to denigrate and suppress Sunni Islam. These infidels are Europeans from England, France and other European countries brought into the Arab and Muslim world to read and study Islam in order to destroy it. These European scholars came and completely change the history of Islam. (...) [T]hey abolished the Caliphate and confused the unintelligent and the unfaithful. (...) Unfortunately, the best of guidelines contained in the Qur’an have been rejected and replaced with democracy.

The movement’s speakers, thus, have shaped Western education, secularism, democracy, and the broader imposition of Western values as part of the conspiracy against Islam. For Yusuf, “[t]he first and biggest of their poison they spread in the Islamic nation were schools” (A11). The oppression has been facilitated by the “ignorant” European-educated Muslims that have

played part in it. According to Yusuf, they were and are taught the false belief that “democracy is compatible with Islam” and that “Jihad should only be for self-control” (A01).

When the speakers have denounced *boko*, they have not opposed everything modern and all forms of education and technology. This impression could be gained because of the extremely broad use of the term *boko*. There have clearly been efforts to explain why some forms of technology are still allowed even though *boko* is forbidden (A02, 10). It may appear to be hairsplitting, but the sect’s leaders proposed argued only “knowledge that goes against the teachings of Islam” is forbidden (because it infringes the concept of *shirk*). In contrast, Islamic education is allowed and so is any product that can be produced by the use of Islamic education. For instance, the speakers have not seen it as a contradiction to oppose Western education and influence but use guns. The latter is allowed, as Shekau explained, because these can be produced under Islamic education (A16). The logo of Boko Haram (and also of Ansaru) also suggests that the movement finds guns and Islam compatible; it has depicted the Quran in between AK-47 machine guns and the Arabic inscription *shahada* (“There is no god but God. Muhammad is the messenger of God”, see Figure 9).¹²³

Figure 9: Logo of Boko Haram



6.1.3.2. Security Threats and Repression

Security Threats

As a result of this “boko conspiracy”, according to the movement’s leaders, Muslims have been severely threatened. The government and the security forces, both of who are Christian-dominated from the sect’s view, have oppressed Muslims and killed them in large numbers to maintain dominance over Islam. As expressed by Yusuf in one of his sermons (A01):

Infidels embezzle public funds and – assisted by local government chairmen, state governors and retired military officers – they buy weapons and kill scores of Muslims. It is only when they are tired of the killing that the government will respond by sending in the police and military to keep the peace. Yet, when Muslims, overpowered by the anguish and the agony of what has happened to their brothers and sisters react, they are arrested by the military and

¹²³ Downloaded from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Logo_of_Boko_Haram.svg (accessed 25 July 2015)

police, while being branded as terrorists. (...) [I]t is a policy of the infidels to eliminate Islam and Muslims from the land.

To illustrate the severe problem of insecurity, the movement's speakers have often referred to several violent incidents from Northern Nigeria, in particular from Plateau and Kaduna states. They have hardly recounted these incidents but merely invoked them through mentioning the names of key places such as Jos, Kaduna, Kafanchan, Zangon Kataf, Yelwa Shendam, and a few others. These allegedly stand for relentless and one-sided massacres perpetrated by Christians against Muslims in Nigeria, as expressed by Shekau in the following typical statement: "Everyone knows how our muslim brothers and sisters were massacred in different towns in this country; Lagos state has witnessed it, so has Ibadan, the town called Zangon Kataf in Kaduna has also witnessed it, Bauchi has witnessed it and so has the town Suldaniyya known as Plateau or Jos" (A17; similarly A02, 04, 19, 23, 24, 64, 75). Similarly, Ansaru's speakers highlighted these violent incidents as a key reason for its foundation (A32; similarly A43, 52):

The establishment of ANSAR is a consequence of injustice, the increasing violence and the brutal acts of terrorism against Muslims in this country. Every one knows that the infidels in this country, especially the Christian Association of Nigeria and its supporters, are (...) terrorizing Muslims and conspiring against Islam. (...) If such groups maintain a mission of fighting Islam and terrorizing Muslims and the government is not ready to take care of our rights, because it is not an Islamic government, then it is an obligation of the Muslims to establish their own anti-terrorist squad.

Furthermore, Shekau and other leaders referred to presumed acts of cannibalism: "You Christians cheated and killed us to the extent of eating our flesh like cannibals, you did all you wanted to us" (A24, see also A26, 32, 60).

The insecurity Muslims suffer from in Nigeria has been interpreted in some statements made since around 2012 as part of the presumed global conspiracy and perceived "Western War on Islam." The speakers have made in particular the US, Israel, France, and the UK responsible for suppressing Muslims throughout the Islamic world in places such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Mali, Pakistan, Syria, and Yemen (A15, 57, 74). For example, Shekau stressed that "the Americans have always been fighting and destroying Islam" (A29) and complained that "the Jews of Israel (...) are killing the Muslims in Palestine" (A54). Ansaru's statements, reflecting the group's stronger international orientation, even saw this as a global effort of suppressing Islam by forceful means (e.g. A55, 56, 64). Some statements also implied a direct connection between attacks on Muslims in other countries and the local oppression in Nigeria. Yusuf once asked rhetorically, "what is happening in Iraq, Palestine, Kashmir and in this nation

in different places, Zangon Kataf, Kafanchan and the rest, are you not angry?” (A13; similarly A04, 74).

Repression

Boko Haram’s speakers have complained that, as part of this broader oppression and insecurity, the movement has also been severely repressed. Before the rebellion, around 2008/09 the leaders have condemned in particular the OP Flush mission for chasing the group’s followers and leaders, obstructing the sect’s activities, and harassing the general Muslim public (A01, 02, 04, 08, 12). For instance, in March 2009, Nur criticized OP Flush in strong words by telling his followers that “it is better for us to be crushed by a car rather than go through the kind of torture the general public constantly endures in the hands of the [OP Flush] security officers” (A04). Yusuf called the soldiers a “bunch of crazy, senseless drunks, and drug abusers” (A08) and saw them as deliberate “obstacles for our brothers or for our preaching, and to humiliate ordinary people” (A07). For the police’s actions, he commonly blamed Governor Sheriff of Borno.

Following the July 2009 crackdown and Yusuf’s killing, unsurprisingly, the condemnation of repression has become even more pronounced in the framing (A14-17). Only a few days after the incident, for example, an interim leader denounced the killings of “over 1000 of our martyred members” and called Yusuf’s murder “callous, wicked and malicious” (A14). For the Yusufiyya Islamic Movement (YIM) faction of Boko Haram, the killing of Yusuf and other leaders “in cold blood” by Sheriff, President Yar’Adua, and Borno’s police commissioners was even a central motive for the rebellion (A20). In most statements, however, Shekau and other sect leaders link the killing of Yusuf and other sect leaders and members with the more general problem of oppression, insecurity, and conspiracy in the name of *boko* (A26; similarly A16, 19):

You all saw on AL-JAZEERA TV how unarmed men, youths, women, cripple and even under age were asked to laid on the ground and were shut on the head and chest by security agents. You all saw our leader MALLAM MUHAMMAD YUSUF with handcuff and shot severally. You all saw how both MASJID (our Mosque; JS) AND THE HOLY QUR’AN were being destroyed. What are our crime? (...) Is sticking to the teachings of the Holy Qur’an and Hadith a crime?

The repression against Boko Haram, thus, is often framed as being part of the general attack on Muslims in Northern Nigeria (A24; similarly A17, 32, 60):

Everyone knows what Christians did to Muslims, not once or twice. (...) Everyone knows what happened to our leader. Everyone knows what wickedness was meted out to our members and

fellow Muslims in Nigeria from time to time in Zango Kataf, Tafawa Balewa, Kaduna, Langtang, Yelwa shendam.

Indirectly, the repression was also framed as a general attack on Muslims through the frequent emphasis that it is not a radical outsider but part of the Islamic community in Nigeria: “Nigerians, our name is not Boko Haram, we are Muslims, Ahlis Sunnah” (A38).

During the second and third stage of the rebellion, Boko Haram’s leaders have continued to denounce repression and frame the JTF as part of the broader oppression against Muslims. In the sect’s view, the soldiers “kill innocent people and thereafter claim that they had killed Boko Haram sect members” (A34; similarly A41, 45, 48). Similarly, Qaqa denounced the declared state of emergency: “We find it pertinent to state that soldiers will only kill innocent Muslims in the local government areas where State of Emergency was declared. We would confront them squarely to protect our brothers” (A23). Since about 2012, the arrest and continued detention of relatives of Boko Haram’s followers and the destruction of their property has become another grievance. For example, after the January 2012 attack on Kano, Qaqa declared that “[w]e attacked the securities base because they were arresting our members and torturing our wives and children” (A29, similarly A38, 51, 59, 61, 62, 74, 75, 76). Several times, sect’s speakers declared its kidnappings, including the “Chibok Girls” in 2014, as a “just reprisal” for such continued detention of their families.

6.1.3.3. Socio-Economic Grievances

As part of broader oppression against Muslims, the sect’s leading figures have criticized socio-economic grievances such as the bad living conditions, widespread poverty, and rampant corruption. This has been less pronounced, however, than the insecurity and repression frames. The ICG (2010: 38) found that “it would be incorrect to think that Yusuf was a social reformer or was overly concerned with corruption.” Still, numerous statements contain implicit or even explicit condemnation of corruption and related socio-economic problems, as the following example illustrates (A14):

We summon all northerners in the Islamic territories and states to quit the followership of the wicked political parties leading the country, the corrupt, irresponsible, immoral, criminal and murderous political leadership and join the struggle for the law of Allah to be enshrined in the Nigerian society, where it will be corruption free, Sodom free and the security of lives and properties are guaranteed, with peace under Islam.

Such socio-economic grievances have been interpreted as the direct result of the un-Islamic beliefs held by many Muslims: “All the sufferings you are undergoing now is because the path

of righteousness has been abandoned. (...) [W]hen you are living in sin and immorality, then Allah will send down upon you poverty, sickness and disease” (A04; similarly A01, 05). In this regard, Yusuf also sharply attacked other Islamist groups including Izala and IMN for having been compromised and having accepted government positions (A01). Ansaru’s speakers emphasized that its mission is to fight against “the totalitarianism, poverty, and degradation of living conditions which these tyrant have brought you into” (A64; similarly A32). The sect’s leaders have not only condemned such behaviors, but also depicted the movement as offering an alternative. As Shekau expressed, “[y]ou are ready to die for money, I am ready to die for God” (A75; similarly A72). In another statement, Qaqa argued that “[p]oor people are tired of the injustice” and that Boko Haram has been their “savior” (A28). Hence, the condemnation of corruption and poverty can clearly be found in the sect’s framing.

There have even been some more implicit references to such socio-economic grievances. For instance, when the sect’s leaders denounced that the status quo is characterized by “immorality”, “wicked ways”, “humiliation”, and “sins” (without specifying what this means, see A04, 05, 06, 32, 67), in the Nigerian context this can easily be understood as criticism of the very imminent bad living conditions. Even the sect’s slogan that “*boko is haram*”¹²⁴ implies condemnation of corruption because Western education is the key to obtain political offices, which then are commonly used for self-enrichment. These are, thereby, condemned as fraud and sham, and framed as religiously forbidden (*haram*) to Muslims, which relates them to the broader identified problem of disbelief.

6.1.4. Prognostic Framing

The solution to these multifaceted problems, according to Boko Haram’s speakers, is for Muslims to become devout believers and impose Islamic principles on the society and the state. For achieving this purpose, they should first of all migrate from the un-Islamic society and ultimately also pursue a violent struggle.

6.1.4.1. Islamic Principles

Boko Haram’s leaders have propagated that adopting Islamic principles on the individual, societal, and state level is the solution to the multifaceted problems that have resulted from

¹²⁴ Although the speakers have denounced the nickname Boko Haram, it is based on the slogan “boko is haram”, which they have used frequently (Brigaglia 2012: 37).

the un-Islamic status quo. Shekau expressed this as follows in a typical statement from his many video messages (A18):

We will never accept any system of government apart from the one stipulated by Islam because that is the only way that the Muslims can be liberated. We do not believe in any system of government, be it traditional or orthodox except the Islamic system and that is why we will keep on fighting against democracy, capitalism, socialism and whatever. We will not allow the Nigerian Constitution to replace the laws that have been enshrined in the Holy Qur'an, we will not allow boko to replace Islamic teachings (...) We do not believe in the Nigerian judicial system and we will fight anyone who assists the government in perpetrating illegalities.

The cornerstone of the campaign has been the *sharia*. Following the sect's speakers, the problems of Muslims in Nigeria began when secular constitutions were put in the place of the *sharia* in the North. At this point, "Allah took away the comfort and peace Muslims used to enjoy, replaced it with suffering and poverty" (A04). The movement's leaders have therefore demanded Muslims to return to the original state when both politics and the society were guided by the *sharia* (A09). Following Yusuf, "Allah will take care of corruption, embezzlement and torture that litter our land (...) [but in order; JS] to be saved from this corrupt secular government, we must return to the path of Islamic religion" (A05).

This call for Islamization draws a clear line between the present secular and aspired Islamic order. For Yusuf, there was "no middle way, no negotiations between Islam and secularism" (A01). He defined democracy and secularism as "system of unbelief" for several reasons (A11: 3-4): Democracy elevates "tyrannical, ignorant, weak man to be partners with God", allows apostasy and blasphemy (which in his view is punishable by death), and legitimizes majority rule "even if the majority agrees on corruption and deception." The solution lies in establishing the rule of Allah: "With the authority of Allah, there will be no democracy; there will be no government of the people, by the people and for the people. There will only be government of Allah, by Allah and for Allah" (A67). The movement's speakers have proposed two major strategies to achieve such a society and political order based on Islamic principles: migration and *jihad*.

6.1.4.2. Migration

The reviewed documents suggest that the sect's leaders called for *hijra* ("migration") mostly during the non-violent phase. At the time, they argued that Muslims should strictly withdraw themselves from the society, join the sect's community, and start living according to the pure Islamic beliefs as guided by the Quran and Sunna (i.e. the teachings by Prophet Mohammed).

Presumably at some point in late 2008/early 2009, Shekau preached to his followers why migration is necessary (A02):

The Prophet himself instructed us 'to live according to the Qur'an and the Sunna' and not according to the sayings of judges who associate other things with Allah. (...) Consequently, my dear Muslim brothers, I will finally reiterate to you what Abu Hussaimin said, 'reject western education, and even if you are the only Muslim in a town where western education is about to be established, flee from that town to another.' (...) I am talking to all Muslims who desire paradise not to oppose Islam and its principles. Let no Muslim support an infidel against a fellow Muslim. Whatever the situation, let Muslims collaborate to fight the infidels and when victory is achieved, the Muslims can now confront each other. Allah himself said, 'Those who believe but have not gone on hijra should have nothing to do with Muslims but if they ask for religious help from you, you should help them. If you do so, you are not helping them but helping Islam.'

The idea of migration employs the example of Prophet Mohammed's *hijra*, when he fled from pagan-ruled Mecca to Medina in 622 AD to establish an ideal Islamic society, free from paganism. For Yusuf, as mentioned, Islam has been oppressed for centuries and many un-Islamic innovations (*bida*) have been made such as secularism, democracy, idolatry, and science. In his view, the solution for Muslims is to renounce this corrupt and un-Islamic order and proceed on *hijra* (A01):

Presently, there is nothing but secular law and the law of ignorance. (...) Muslims should proceed on hijra or search for the strength to succeed. This is a duty upon all Muslims, none is excluded, both men and women. (...) Allah revealed to us that to work under a secular government or collaborate with it is a sin. It does not matter the type of work, every type of work under the secular government is a sin and in this case, there is no big or small sin – sin is sin. (...) As far as we are concerned in this group, there is no one working with the secular government that can help advance this religion of Allah, except to destroy it.

For some time before the rebellion, the movement also seems to have been referred to as, or called itself, "Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a Hijra." This carried the notion of migration (Onuoha 2012a). The sect practiced *hijra* at its Maiduguri headquarters and through the Nigerian Taliban at Northern Yobe State. In these places, the members reportedly lived according to their Islamic beliefs and the *sharia*. For the Nigerian Taliban, Afghanistan under the rule of the Taliban and *sharia* seems to have been a source of inspiration, but insights into the "Afghanistan" camp of Boko Haram are almost nonexistent.

Theologically, *hijra* and *jihād* are related (Masud 1990: 32). Several quranic verses refer to both concepts: "Indeed, those who have believed and emigrated [i.e. *hijra*; JS] and fought

[*jihad*; JS] with their wealth and lives in the cause of Allah and those who gave shelter and aided – they are allies of one another” (Quran 8:72).¹²⁵ Yet, in the above-cited sermon Shekau cited this verse without the rallying call for *jihad*. Nevertheless, around late 2008/early 2009 the main leaders seem to have already mobilized the followers for an armed struggle.¹²⁶

6.1.4.3. *Jihad*

Early Calls for Rebellion

Boko Haram’s core leaders have called on Muslims to wage *jihad* for liberating Muslims from oppression and unbelief already during the non-violent phase. The corpus does not allow an identification of when they started propagating *jihad*, but the call can be found already in the presumably oldest preaching transcript from Yusuf (A01):

Every time there is a massacre of Muslims, nothing happens, no prosecutions or punishment. Based on this, Allah revealed to me, this cannot continue, something has to be done. The only thing that can stop the killing of Muslims and the insults against their Prophet is Jihad. (...) We are for jihad, and our jihad is to put an end to democracy, to western education and western civilization. The Jihad is intended to make us return to our basics and the original state of Islam.

In principle, *jihad* can be fought through non-violent means (“struggle against the self”) or violent means. In this sermon, however, Yusuf clearly rallied for an armed struggle. He also declared that their aim is to “destroy” the government, cited Allah proclaiming “I will bring upon them war and they will be defeated”, aligned his struggle with proponents of violent *jihad* (including Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and Bin Laden), and dissociated his struggle from “compromised” movements (such as Izala and the IMN).

In other recorded sermons from this phase, similar calls for *jihad* can also already be found. In March 2009, thus several months before the July 2009 uprising, Nur preached very belligerent messages to the movement’s followers: “You have a responsibility to reject this government and destroy it” (A04). In this sermon, Yusuf and Nur framed the violent struggle (*jihad*) already as a religious duty of committed Muslims: “Why do you worship Allah

¹²⁵ This example is borrowed from Masud (1990: 32). Other quranic verses quoted in the present study were drawn from quran.com (accessed 12 July 2015).

¹²⁶ The call for *hijra* has become rare but not abandoned since the beginning of the rebellion. Shekau once propagated in 2014 that “everyone that calls himself a Muslim should stop obeying the constitution, should leave democracy, should stay away from western education” (A74).

according to the Qur'an only to avoid carrying out Jihad in the manner demanded by the same Qur'an? There is no need for you to pray and fast following the injunctions of the Qur'an while neglecting to carry out jihad" (Ao4, similarly Ao6, 13). In another preaching from around the same time, Yusuf detailed his understanding of the "soldiers of Allah" (*mujahideen*) as someone who gives alms, fasts and prays, is honest and patient, follows Allah's instructions, and who donates for *jihad* (Ao6).

Patience and running out of it

The early rallying for *jihad*, however, was still connected with calls for patience. Yusuf and other sect leaders stressed that the followers should prepare themselves for *jihad* but remain patient until the time was ripe for rebellion. The *jihad* would start only when commanded by Allah and when the group had acquired sufficient fire power (Ao1; similarly Ao6): "In what ways will Jihad be carried out and against who? Allah revealed to me to organize the group with a mission. However, the group must exercise patience till there is the strength to carry out the jihad." As Nur preached in March 2009, "when the time comes, let us sacrifice everything otherwise suffering will visit us" (Ao4).

The documents in the corpus suggest that the time for rebellion came in June/July 2009. Yusuf framed the incident between some of the sect's members and security agents of 11 June 2009 (see 4.2.4) as an attack on the movement and argued that his patience was over (Ao7). He told his followers that the movement now had acquired the necessary fire power (Ao8):

Allah has made it possible that our teachings have gotten far and wide (...) Initially we were of the thought that we will concentrate on writing of books and lectures for training, teaching you the truth as well as building your courage. This is because we were thinking that the time is still not ripe, but now, however, we have gained and have achieved a lot. (...) [L]et it be known that even if [the Nigerian government; JS] will pour their venom from a plane above, not all will perish and those who survive will still fight the jihad.

In this heated situation, another minor incident sparked the violence: According to news reporting, the ban on holding public rallies or the arrest of some of the movement's adherents led some members to attacking a local police station in Bauchi on 26 June 2009 (Daily Trust 2009, 27 July-a; This Day 2009, 27 July). This reportedly led to the killing of 40 members of Boko Haram, which moved Yusuf to declare war (Ao9):

What I said previously that we are going to be attacked by the authorities has manifested itself in Bauchi, where about 40 of our brothers were killed, their Mosque and homes burnt down completely and several others were injured and about a hundred are presently in

detention. Therefore, we will not agree with this kind of humiliation, we are ready to die together with our brothers and we would never concede to non-belief in Allah. (...) Therefore, we are ready to fight to die.

This re-framing from patience towards fighting seems to have triggered the attacks by the sect in Maiduguri and other places, which provoked the heavy military response and the ensuing further escalation of the conflict and violence

Fighting for Jihad

In the aftermath of the July 2009 uprising and Yusuf's killing, no more calls for patience were made by the movement's leaders. Instead, since then they have constantly sought to mobilize Muslims for the rebellion. Although it took more than a year for the group to re-surface with their first attacks, a few days after Yusuf's killing an interim leader already emphasized that they now are more committed than ever (A14):

[W]e have started a jihad in Nigeria which no force on earth can stop. The aim is to Islamize Nigerian and ensure the rule of the Majority Muslims in the country. (...) The bombing will not stop until Sharia is established and western civilization is wiped off from Nigeria. (...) We shall make the country ungovernable, kill and eliminate irresponsible political leaders of all leanings. Hunt and gun down all those who are in opposition to the rule of sharia in Nigeria and ensure that the infidels are punished wherever they are.

Similarly, another of the sect's speaker stressed in mid-2010 that the repression of July 2009 "have made us more determined and committed in our struggle" and that the movement has been "undeterred" by the killing of Yusuf (A15).

Since the beginning of the insurgency and contrary to the common perception of the violence as incomprehensible, the leaders have made many efforts to explain their aims and strategy. After major attacks speakers commonly justified the actions and explain the target choice. In other cases (e.g. the January 2012 attack on Kano) leaflets described the sect's mission (A26, 30). Generally, the movement's speakers have consistently framed the rebellion as a *jihad* against the "infidels", explained the goal of liberating Muslims from oppression and establishing the rule of the *sharia*, and called on people to join. They have clearly sought to evade the image of fighting purely for revenge or only for religious goals (such as conversion, martyrdom, and paradise). Instead, the speakers have emphasized the social agenda, in which the religious vision serves as blueprint for overcoming worldly problems. As Shekau expressed, "We are not out to cause destruction, but correct the ills of the society" (A58).

The leaders have also aligned the struggle with transnational jihadist groups. They have declared Al-Qaeda (with its leaders Abdullah Azzam, Osama Bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri,

and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi), the Taliban (Mullah Omar), and recently ISIS (Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi) as “brothers” and role models of *jihad* (A01, 11, 14, 15, 25, 54, 75, 77). A few of these statements have referred more broadly to the various jihadist groups from the Al-Qaeda network: “We are with our mujahideen brothers in the Cause of Allah everywhere, in Afghanistan, Chechnya, Pakistan, Kashmir, Iraq, the Peninsula of Muhammad, Allah's peace and prayer be upon him, Yemen, Somalia, Algeria, and other places” (A54; similarly A62, 74). While such references can already be found in documents from the non-violent phase, since about late 2012, the movement’s leaders seem to have made increased efforts of aligning the struggle with these transnational jihadist groups. When Shekau sent “words of thanks and glad tidings” to “our mujahideen brothers in the Cause of Allah” in his video message from 29 November 2012, this was the first message that was entirely dedicated to addressing other groups and leaders from the transnational jihadist network (A54). For what appears as the first time, in May 2013, he requested their assistance for *jihad*: “We call to us our brethren in these countries I mentioned. Oh! Our brethren, come to us” (A62). The leaders of Boko Haram still have foremost addressed the local audience and centered the framing on grievances from within Nigeria.

Frame Disputes

The framing seems to have been relatively coherent and to have comprised few frame disputes only. Since the beginning of the rebellion, however, two factions have partly contested the framing of the Shekau-leadership.

The first of the two is Ansaru. Its leaders seem to have justified the breakaway from the Shekau-led group over discontent about attacks on Muslim civilians. They declared that Ansaru “will not call any Muslim an infidel or accuse him of blasphemy unless there is proof and unless all of the conditions of such a case exist” (A25). Thus, the group’s leaders have not questioned the legitimacy of the *jihad* but only of attacking Muslim civilians. They have generally put more emphasis on transnational jihadism and the legacy of Dan Fodio’s *jihad*. Overall, however, Ansaru has hardly sought to compete with Shekau or take control over the movement but largely acted as part of Boko Haram’s network.

The second faction is the YIM, which appeared only through one public statement, but strongly challenged the strategy of *jihad* and advocated dialogue and reconciliation. In July 2011, the group, whose speakers and members have remained unknown, expressed their concern about “the mass suffering of innocent citizens caught in the cross fire between our members and the Nigerian troops” (A20):

This concern has again brought to the fore, the daunting issue of reconciliation, through dialogue, with the Nigerian authorities and individual leaders involved in the naked abuse of our birthright to the peaceful propagation and practice of our religion as we understand it. (...) We therefore distance our group from all the bombings targeted at civilians and other establishments and equally condemn them and pray that Allah expose those who perpetrated them and attributed them to us. (...) We are concerned that some people with evil motives have infiltrated our genuine struggle with a false holy war that is outright un-Islamic. We call on this evil group to desist, failing which we shall have no option than to expose and hunt them.

For lack of information on the YIM, the frame dispute can hardly be further explored. The statement still demonstrates that at least in mid-2011 parts of Boko Haram preferred the return to non-violent claims-making. Yet, the fact that this is the only such public call suggests that overall the legitimacy of the *jihad* has hardly been contested from within the movement, at least not openly or explicitly.

Nevertheless, the sect's leaders have sought to de-legitimize peaceful conflict resolution on several occasions. They argued at least twice that, considering the gross injustices by the government, "we are the ones that should give amnesty to the Borno State Government" (A19, similarly A60). Furthermore, as a precondition for dialogue, the speakers demanded concessions such as the unconditional release of arrested members (A28, 34).¹²⁷ After the failure of pre-talks in March 2012, Qaqa immediately declared that "we have closed all possible doors of negotiation" (A36). Shekau re-confirmed this position in March 2013: "I want the world to know that we have no dialogue with government. (...) How would we have had dialogue with the government when our members are being killed and detained in cells, both women and children? Do you call this dialogue?" (A58). To sum up, the reviewed documents suggest that since the beginning of the rebellion only relatively minor frame disputes have occurred within Boko Haram and that a relatively strong consensus has existed among the leadership on the legitimacy and need of rebellion.

¹²⁷ In January 2012 Qaqa even argued that the sect would "consider negotiation only when we have brought the government to their knees (...) [and; JS] see that things are being done according to the dictates of Allah" (A28). Similarly, another sect speaker stressed that the group would accept an apology from Governor Sheriff only if he abandoned his "anti-Islamic activities such as democracy" (A19).

Defining Enemies

Following the statements, Boko Haram's declared enemy is the "infidels."¹²⁸ This term is broad and has referred not only to Christians and other non-Muslims but to everyone who, from the sect's view, has been opposing Islamic principles and the movement. Again, the focus has been mostly on domestic instead of foreign military targets (which have rarely been mentioned, see A15, 66, 74, 75). The list of military targets, as defined by the leaders, has encompassed "government functionaries, security agents, Christians and anyone who pretends to be a Muslim but engage[s] in assisting security agents to arrest us" (A45; similarly A17, 18, 24, 26, 29, 30, 37, 42, 44).¹²⁹ Many times the leaders have argued that the group does not fight against the general Muslim population but on their behalf and that it targets only those who oppose the movement: "We never kill ordinary people, rather we protect them. (...) We are not fighting civilians. We only kill soldiers, police and other security agencies" (A29). Following Shekau, "God knows that we don't kill unjustly except those that conspired against us or those that directly fight us, or the government that is waging war upon Allah and His Prophet" (A58). Even during the third stage of the rebellion, when Boko Haram massively attacked civilians irrespective of their religion, Shekau still emphasized that Boko Haram protects Muslims from oppression and fights for their liberation (A65, 71, 75, 76).

Regarding Christians, the sect's speakers generally defined them as "infidels" but advocated different behaviors. Most statements stressed that "Christians are enemies of Islam and Muslims; therefore we will find them, fight them and kill them whenever we have the chance" (A40; similarly A42, 44, 45, 66, 72, 75). Other statements emphasized that Christians do not necessarily need to be killed, but that they have to be converted or to abide by the *sharia* at least: "[O]ur Creator has ordered us to wage war on everyone who does not embrace the religion of Islam after preaching to them" (A17; similarly A24, 28, 30, 44, 75, 76).

6.1.5. Motivational Framing

In their motivational framing the leaders of Boko Haram have mostly made three appeals: They have depicted the rebellion as godly struggle, religious duty, and pathway to spiritual

¹²⁸ Boko Haram's enemy image has been shaped by religion. Only one reviewed statement designated particular ethnic groups as enemies (A14).

¹²⁹ The set of enemies has hardly changed over time. Yusuf already declared the following groups as enemy: "the security services, the government, western education, western civilization, and any institution aligned with them" (A01).

renewal, invoked the idea of an Islamic state and historical predecessors, and emphasized the movement's strength and resolve.

Firstly, the leaders have framed the struggle as a religious mission. They have propagated the need to fight a holy war in which "soldiers of Allah" (*mujahideen*) strive for enforcing "God's laws" (*sharia*) against those fallen into disbelief. As constantly emphasized, the *jihad* has been guided by Allah: "We are carrying out Allah's command" (A65). Moreover, it has aimed at imposing Islamic ideals: "The Quran teaches that we must shun democracy, we must shun Western education, we must shun the constitution" (A64). In this vein, participation has been portrayed as a duty upon the true believer: "This jihad is a duty for all of us Muslims. The world and the religion will not be good without it" (A25).

The sect's speakers have also created emotional appeal by making the struggle appear promising and denouncing non-participation. They explained that the *jihad* is nothing less than an avenue for spiritual renewal and for a glorious future: "Through [jihad], injustice is lifted from Muslims and through it we fight tyrants and save the weak and battle the infidels. It heals the hearts of the believers and helps them be calm and peaceful inside" (A25). The *jihad*, thus, leads both to a better life and even to paradise in the afterlife, as promised already by Yusuf: "[A]ny believer who lives a moral life will be rewarded both on earth and in paradise, he will be given the best of life and be rewarded for all his good works" (A05; similarly A06). Some of the early preaching also threatened that non-participation in Boko Haram leads to "hellfire and misery" (A03).

In addition, religious justification for *jihad* and appeal for participation has been created by citations from the Quran. For instance, Ansaru's speakers repeatedly used the following quranic verse to address those who feel oppressed but have remained reluctant to fight (A25, 32, 52): "And what is [the matter] with you that you fight not in the cause of Allah and [for] the oppressed among men, women, and children who say, 'Our Lord, take us out of this city of oppressive people and appoint for us from Yourself a protector and appoint for us from Yourself a helper?'" (Quran 4:75). The quranic notion of *taghut* was also invoked repeatedly (A11, 25, 34, 64, 74, 76). This refers to tyrants and ungodly rulers that, according to the Quran, need to be defeated through *jihad* and replaced by an Islamic government (Umar 2012: 127; Mohammed 2014: 15-18). For instance, one Ansaru speaker re-cited the following quranic verse (A64): "Those who believe fight in the cause of Allah, and those who disbelieve fight in the cause of Taghut. So fight against the allies of Satan. Indeed, the plot of Satan has ever been weak" (Quran 4:76).

Secondly, the leaders of Boko Haram have sought to motivate people to join by declaring an Islamic state and society as the goal of its struggle. This state has been framed as “heavens on earth” and as a place free from injustice, insecurity, and corruption (A14). To depict its vision and to mobilize people for the *jihad*, the sect has repeatedly – though not extensively – referred to the past *jihad* by Usman Dan Fodio and the Sokoto Caliphate (A27, emphasis original; similarly A01, 04, 27, 36, 75):

We the Jama'atu Ahlisunnah Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad are MUSLIMS and are from the NORTHERN part of the country who spent eight years agitating for ISLAMIC STATE, STR[I]IVING TO BRING BACK THE LOST GLORY OF UTHMAN DAN FODIO. WHAT IS WRONG WITH THAT? [It is; JS] just to go back to the ways of ALLAH where justice, discipline, good morals, love and care, peace and progress etc will prevail.

Ansaru's speakers have drawn on these examples more extensively. This is because Ansaru has emerged within the North-Central region, which was the core of the Sokoto Caliphate, whereas the Shekau-led parts of the movement in the North-East are outside of the Caliphate's historic area. Ansaru's speakers defined the goal of their struggle as restoring “the divinity and sanity of Muslims as during the known Islamic empires, such as the empire of Sheikh Usman Bin Fodio” (A32). The image of Dan Fodio was invoked by them also to shape the image of the courageous jihadist in his struggle for justice and peace against the tyrannical leaders (*taghut*, see A64)¹³⁰:

O sons of Bin Fodio and Umarul Futy arise! (...) There will be no good in us when we are molested, our religion is badly characterized and its signs are rejected, the good one and the children among us are killed, and yet we remain motionless. (...) We must unite and work together with the Mujahidin in order to have a meaningful revolution on these tyrannical leaders, high rated thieves, who do not allow people religion that give them hope in the hereafter talk less of their worldly matters. Life in molestation and degradation is worse than dying with pride.

Finally, Boko Haram's speakers have put much emphasis on conveying the image of a committed and powerful militant group. They have argued that the main source of the movement's strength and success lies in Allah: “How many times will our enemies come searching for us, the servants of Allah but cannot find us? They are not able to find us because of our worship of Allah. If we were not praying, fasting, reciting the Qur'an and propagating

¹³⁰ Al-Hajj Umar (al-Futi) Tall (1797-1864), who is mentioned here, was a Senegalese leader of the Tijaniyya brotherhood. Like Dan Fodio, he fought a holy war against “infidel” regimes (The Tariqa Tijaniyya 2015). By invoking him, Ansaru probably sought to emphasize its regional Western African orientation.

the faith, our enemies will certainly have victory over us” (Ao6). As the leaders argued, however, with Allah’s support Boko Haram will win: “We are not in doubt that we are going to win this war. (...) History has shown that when you are fighting in the cause of Allah there will be a divine intervention, which we have so far seen with the ongoing war with security agents” (A19; similarly A36, 57). Allah’s grace can also prevent losses and inflict casualties on the opponent (A62, 67): “[O]ur jihad is a jihad in the Cause of Allah, because it is impossible that we kill everyday and not get killed” (A54). In some of his latest video appearances, which were uncommon and even strange in some regards, Shekau even boasted that Boko Haram now is powerful enough even to win against the US (A66, 70, 73, 74, 75).¹³¹

Figure 10: Comparison of Shekau (2012) and Osama Bin Laden (2011)¹³²



Figure 11: Typical Militant Appearance of Shekau around 2014¹³³



The image of commitment and strength has also been conveyed symbolically. When the sect’s speakers publicly renounced dialogue, it dismissed lucrative amnesty offers. This signaled the group’s commitment to its struggle. Moreover, in many videos, Shekau portrayed himself as committed and ascetic religious scholar who dismisses self-serving attitudes. He typically wore

¹³¹ These videos took a strong international orientation towards the US and the West and Shekau’s appearance was almost clownish at some points (in particular A75, 77).

¹³² Images from YouTube Video (2012, 11 January) and from <http://www.abc.net.au/news/image/2870876-3x2-940x627.jpg> (accessed 15 July 2015).

¹³³ Image from YouTube Video (2014, 13 July).

simple clothes (in some cases military fatigue), sat next to machine guns, and directly addressed the viewers (see Figure 10). As indicated, this resembles the iconography of Al-Qaeda and Bin Laden. Yusuf similarly demanded humility and selflessness: “All you need to do is to submit yourself unconditionally to Allah. Do this in humility, simplicity, seeking for power and strength from Allah, following the path of righteousness and Allah will support you” (A04). More recent videos by Shekau have been more militant, however. They showed him with other combatants in full combat gear in front of military vehicles (A72, 75, 77, see Figure 11). Although this still is somewhat ascetic, it mainly pronounces military might. In this vein, videos that appeared between late 2012 and 2015 often showed the group’s arms caches and footage from military training and combat (A54, 69, 70, 73). Through such video appearances, the downplaying of the losses suffered, and the emphasis on the godly mission, Boko Haram’s propagandists sought to convey strength, resolve, and legitimacy in order to motivate people for participation.

6.1.6. Brief Summary: Migration and *Jihad* for Imposing Islamic Principles

Boko Haram’s leaders and speakers have propagated the vision of a radical re-orientation of Nigerian politics and society along Islamic lines. They have mobilized for the imposition of the *sharia* over the present political and societal order that they see as marred by un-Islamic institutions, moral decline, and religious practices that infringe the Islamic ideals. In their view, the root cause of these problems has been an ongoing oppression by the “infidels” who have allegedly acted in the name of *boko* to dominate Muslims and subject them to tyranny, insecurity, and misery.

To overcome these problems, the leaders initially mobilized people mainly for migration from the “sinful” society into the movement’s enclaves. Already for some time before the rebellion, however, the call for migration was coupled with the rallying for *jihad*. The leaders have depicted an armed struggle as legitimate and necessary and, although they first emphasized the need for patience, declared war after two relatively small incidents with the security forces in June/July 2009. The fighting has not mainly been a campaign for revenge or conversion of Christians but foremost a struggle to address various political and social grievances. This framing has been consistent in many regards as few frame disputes can be found in the reviewed documents. This has given a strong impression of commitment to the rebellion.

In motivational regards, the speakers have sought to depict the campaign as religious mission and even duty upon the “true Muslim.” They have nurtured the image of a committed,

militant, and powerful movement that wins battle “by the grace of Allah.” Ansaru’s leadership has also aligned the struggle with Usman Dan Fodio’s *jihad* and used the image of the Sokoto Caliphate to argue that the movement seeks to “restore the lost glory of Islam.”

6.2. Frame Resonance

In this part, I analyze if and why the CAFs have resonated with Muslims in the North. For this aim, I give a brief overview on the interview sources and potential biases in the data (6.2.1), highlight the difference in the resonance between the elite and general population (6.2.2), and discuss sources of the resonance regarding the various elements of the CAFs (6.2.3-6.2.5).

6.2.1. Overview on Interviews

The main source of information for assessing frame resonance were 48 interviews (in total 55 interviewees) and two focus group discussions with Muslim respondents from the North. The focus groups gathered local imams (FG1) and young market sellers (FG4). These interviews were carried out during two field research visits of about one month each, undertaken in late 2013 and late 2014 (see Annex C).¹³⁴ For security concerns the interviews were conducted mostly at Yola, the relatively safe capital of Adamawa State, and Abuja. At the time of the field research, the core area of the insurgency (Borno, some parts of Yobe, and Northern Adamawa State) could not be visited. Also, other parts of the North (including Kano, Kaduna, Bauchi, and Gombe) were not visited due to the general rise of insecurity and kidnappings in the region.

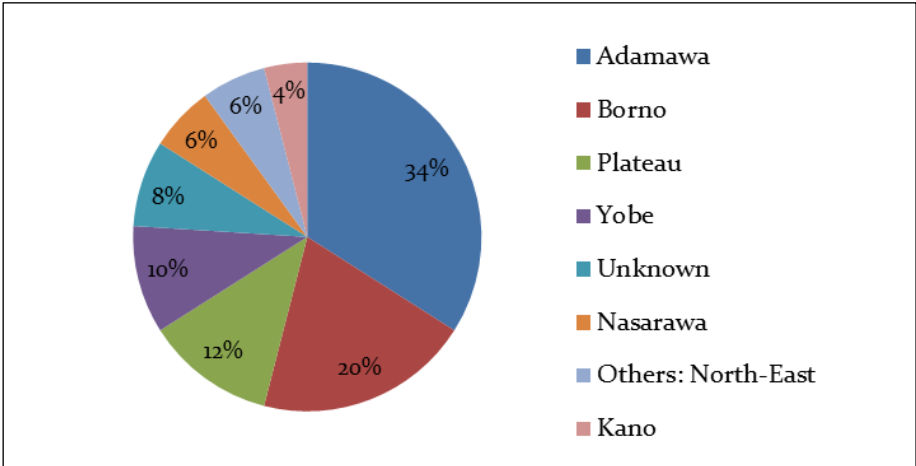
Safety was an important concern also regarding the setting and quality of the interviews. I conducted the field research at what may have been the height of the insurgency. At the time, most people in Borno State, other parts of the North, and even Abuja were careful who they talk to about Boko Haram. There has been a risk of becoming targeted not only by Boko Haram but also by the security forces. As a journalist from Maiduguri expressed, “sealed lips is the only guarantee of staying alive” (Salkida 2012, 24 September). In this context, Abuja and Yola seemed promising places for interviews because of their relative safety. Despite the

¹³⁴ In addition, I rely on six interviews which I conducted in Jos (Plateau State) in September 2011 during field research for the project “Mediation and Peace-building through Churches and Church-related Organizations in the Context of Conflict and Violence” (2010-2012), conducted by the International Relations/Peace and Conflict Studies Cluster, Institute of Political Science, University of Tübingen. For the financial support, I am grateful to the Church Development Service (Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst).

closeness to the insurgents, few attacks occurred at Yola. Nevertheless, during my second stay, the frontline was only a one-hour drive away and there was a general feeling among people of “being in a war zone” and that “Boko Haram is already here.” Abuja has been further from the insurgency but was attacked repeatedly by Boko Haram. Unsurprisingly, therefore, even in these relatively safe places, I encountered reluctance to discuss about Boko Haram and some people completely declined interviews.

To get as close as possible to the views of people from the “core North” without entering the insecure region, I sampled interviewees by state origin: A combined 64% of the interview respondents was originally from Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe (see Figure 12). An important share of 12% was from Plateau. Having stayed mostly at Yola, respondents from Adamawa State are overrepresented in the sample (34%). While respondents from the Middle Belt (Plateau and Nasarawa; combined: 18%) are well represented, Muslims from the North-Western States are largely missing in the sample (except for Kano, 4%).

Figure 12: Origin of Muslim Respondents¹³⁵

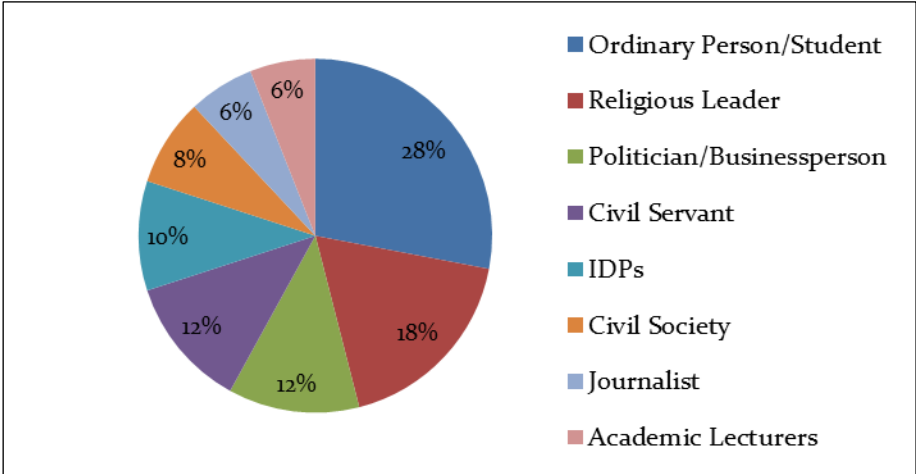


To achieve a relatively representative sample of the Northern society, emphasis was placed on interviewing people from various occupational backgrounds (see Figure 13): The largest share of the respondents (28%) is ordinary people (including university students). This group comprises mostly men around the age of 18-45 who have basic jobs (e.g. as market sellers, security guards, taxi drivers, etc.). The interviewed IDPs (10%) were ordinary people too. Civil servants, NGO personnel (“civil society”), and journalists (combined 26%) are three other

¹³⁵ Considering that in interviews with multiple respondents the participants rather confirmed than challenged the views of the other(s), the few interviews with more than one and up to four respondents were counted as single interviews. The two focus group discussions were also included here as single interviews. Coincidentally, the participants of the group discussions and these interviews with multiple respondents all originated from the same state and had similar occupations.

major groups who also reflect rather “common people’s views.” In contrast, a 30% share was religious leaders (both local Imams and high-level Muslim leaders) and political leaders or businesspersons. These reflect more “official” positions. Since their views can generally also be obtained from media reporting, I focused mostly on interviewing ordinary people. These also constitute the main target of Boko Haram’s mobilization efforts. In terms of groups neglected in the sample, women were clearly underrepresented (only five interviewees were women). This takes into account that women hardly engage in political talk in the patriarchal Northern Nigerian society, which also creates challenges for interviews. Moreover, military personnel are missing from the sample as interview requests at Abuja and Yola were declined.

Figure 13: Occupation of Muslim Respondents¹³⁶



There are two probable and problematic biases in the data, which were considered when interpreting the findings in the following. Firstly, there is presumably a pro-Christian and pro-Western bias in the interviews, i.e. those interviewed are likely to hold more positive views about Christians and Westerners than many others in the North. It is likely that I – as white, European, and seemingly Christian researcher working on such a controversial subject as Boko Haram – would be treated with much suspicion by Muslims who have negative views about Christians. In this regard, probably the main limitation of the interview data is the fact that all interview requests with members of radical groups such as Izala and the IMN at Yola and Abuja were declined. Also, those who were ready to talk to me may have given socially acceptable answers in the interviews while hiding their real views.

Secondly, there is probably a “condemnation bias” in the interview findings. Interviewees tended to dissociate themselves strongly from Boko Haram and often expressed

¹³⁶ See footnote 135.

negative views about the group, even if their opinions and beliefs resembled Boko Haram's framing. In principle and as pointed out in the following, it is credible that most people truly have negative views about Boko Haram¹³⁷, yet many might also *overemphasized* their opposition in the interviews. For the mentioned and, at the time of the interviews highly arbitrary, counterinsurgency operations by the Nigerian military, it is reasonable to assume that people over-stated their opposition to Boko Haram. Again, there may have been a self-selection process in which only those who hold relatively negative views about Boko Haram were available for interviews at all. Finally, the views expressed at the time of the interviews may be more negative than people's earlier views. After all, the interviews were conducted during the third stage of the rebellion when Boko Haram had perpetrated many attacks on Muslim civilians. It is well possible, and some respondents even indicated this, that the general views on the insurgents were more positive at the two earlier stages of the armed struggle.

To address these two potential problems of bias, besides the interview data secondary sources (as defined in 5.4.3) were used extensively in the following frame resonance analysis.

6.2.2. Overview: Elite-Mass Divide

At first look, almost everyone in the Muslim North seems to oppose Boko Haram. Most interviewees, journalists, and survey respondents (cited below) strongly condemn the sect and its struggle. Furthermore, virtually the entire political and religious elite declared Boko Haram as outright "un-Islamic" and a threat. Boko Haram's framing has hardly resonated among them and they have unsurprisingly not joined the struggle. For many of the political and societal leaders, Nigeria's patronage politics "work." Irrespective of the country's many failings, about which they are generally aware, they profit from the economic opportunities and have little incentive to strive for a radical and armed renewal. Furthermore, many of them also seem unconvinced by Boko Haram's political-religious claims, as discussed below. A closer look in this chapter, however, suggests that there is an elite-mass divide in the resonance of Boko Haram's framing. Many among the general population seem to have been more favorable to the movement and its goals than the elite. Before examining the resonance in more detail, the general level of awareness and knowledge about the sect is analyzed.

In light of the very low levels of education in the North-East, the first and basic step of the analysis of frame resonance is to assess to what extent the general Muslim population

¹³⁷ For instance, with regard to the interviewed IDPs, it is obvious that, having *fled* from the rebels, they are – almost by definition – opposed to Boko Haram.

knows Boko Haram at all. In this regard, the interviews have clearly shown that people in the North-East are highly aware about the movement and that virtually every interviewee described the insurgency as the most pressing political concern in Nigeria today. This was confirmed by a representative country-wide survey from mid-2011, which found that already by then 91% of the Nigerians had heard of Boko Haram (NOI Polls 2011). However, with regard to the non-violent phase the public awareness about Boko Haram had been much lower. Most interviewees stated to have heard about the movement for the first time when the July 2009 uprising occurred. Especially the respondents from Borno, however, generally had heard of the movement already before then.

Interviewees from the general and little-educated Muslim population generally had only a basic but good knowledge about who Boko Haram is and what the movement is striving for. Again, this is not self-evident in light of the very low average level of education in the region (see 4.1.1), the limited access to media sources¹³⁸, and people's fears about being caught with any Boko Haram material in their hands.¹³⁹ However, if assessing their views against the identified CAFs, it becomes clear that most interviewees correctly recounted the basic elements of the sect's framing: Broadly, in their view Boko Haram stands in opposition to the secular and Christian-dominated government, condemns *boko* as well as the poor living conditions of ordinary people, challenges the state through a *jihad*, and seeks to establish an Islamic state in Nigeria. Most interviewees had also heard of Yusuf and Shekau, as the two key figures of the struggle.¹⁴⁰ Hence, the movement has been successful insofar as that the audience is aware of who is in the struggle and what it is being fought for.

6.2.3. Diagnostic Framing

Boko Haram's diagnostic framing has identified problems that are relevant and pressing to many Northerners, and therefore has resonated with many among the general population in the region.

¹³⁸ In 2008, only about 10% of the male population in Borno read a newspaper once per week, 25% watched television, and 48% listened to radio (rates among women are considerably lower, see NPC 2009: 338-339).

¹³⁹ The availability of audio recording has also decreased since the beginning of the armed struggle. Tape recordings, which were originally sold in markets across the North, have not been available in these places anymore, at least not openly (Umar 2012: 118).

¹⁴⁰ In contrast, most interviewees were not aware that there had been, at least for about two years in 2012/13, a major split between the Shekau-led and the Ansaru faction.

6.2.3.1. The “boko Conspiracy”

The interviews suggest that many in the North have reservations about Western influence and especially about the federal government of President Jonathan, which they see as favoring Christians and the South. Several interviewees denounced western influence in sharp words for bringing immoral behaviors to Nigeria such as indecent dressing, drug use, lying, and corruption.¹⁴¹ One interviewed young man from Plateau argued furiously: “The corruption, the culture in which women work, and the alcoholism are Western practices that have to be corrected” (C01). Many interviewees expressed strong negative views about the government of President Jonathan. They often suspected the government to fuel Boko Haram’s rebellion in order to suppress Muslims and maintain power. One interviewee also pointed out that in his place of origin in Bauchi, conspiracy theories about a Western conspiracy to decimate Muslims through contaminated vaccines are widely believed (C22). Yet, these have been sensitive issues for which secondary sources seem to provide more reliable assessment.

“We are Boko Haram”, the Northern blogger Dr. Aliyu Tilde pointedly stated after the July 2009 uprising (Tilde 2009, 20 August). He was referring to the common Northern hostility towards many aspects of Westernization and modernization, e.g. monogamy, family planning, Western clothing, technology, reading, and even knowledge in general. The argument about a Western conspiracy against Islam and the use of contaminated vaccines seems widely believed in the region. Around 2003-04, even a protest movement over these contamination fears rose. The movement was spearheaded by Ibrahim Datti Ahmed (President of the Supreme Council for Sharia in Nigeria, SCSN) and encompassed prominent religious leaders, Northern politicians, and civil society groups. They raised alarm about the presumed Western anti-fertility plot and reportedly found much resonance among the Muslim public (Daily Trust 2004, 28 April). This reinforced already existing suspicions about non-traditional and Western-imported medicine in the North and briefly brought Nigeria’s Polio Eradication Initiative to a halt in several Northern states (Yahya 2007).

Surveys clearly show that suspicions about the West and its allies are widely shared in the North. Following repeated rounds of PEW surveys from the mid-2000s, no less than 58-77% of the Muslims in the North have somewhat unfavorable or very unfavorable views about

¹⁴¹ This was, for example, the consensus view in the focus group discussion with Imams and their *almajiri* from Adamawa State (FG1).

the US, about Americans (67-86%), Jews (73-83%), and the UN (32-51%).¹⁴² Especially, the US “War on Terror” damaged the image of the US in the region: Close to half of the Northern Muslim population (47%) does not believe into the official version of 9/11 (Pew Research Center 2006). Instead, many of them hold that the attacks were staged by the CIA to legitimize the war in Afghanistan and Iraq, which is fought to suppress Muslims (Weekly Trust 2004, 1 May).

Boko Haram’s framing taps into these suspicions about Western foreign policy, reservations about Western influence on the Northern society and culture, and the widely held view that the federal government favors Christians. Thus, the framing has been *culturally and politically compatible*. These suspicions rose against the background of the short history of Western education in the North. While Islamic education has existed for centuries in the region, Western influence and education came only with late British colonialism and the independence in 1960. At the time, many rejected it and considered only Islamic education as appropriate (Loimeier 2012: 139). As Brigaglia (2009: 50) noted, pupils of Western schools were commonly mocked by *almajiri* who sang that “children of the modern school, they do not pray nor recite the Qur’an: they only learn to disrespect our scholars.” Although the acceptance of Western education has been growing, many suspicions persist. As mentioned, the notion *boko*, which has a derogative connotation, is used to describe western education (Newman 2013: 8). Thus, by denouncing *boko*, the sect has expressed widely shared opposition, or at least reservations, about Western influence and education.

6.2.3.2. Security Threats and Repression

Security Threats

The condemnation of the federal government as Christian-dominated and as threatening to Muslims is shared by many among the Northern population. It was a common theme among the interviewees to point out that Jonathan’s government has been disadvantaging Muslims and may have been deliberately using the security forces to create unrest and instability in the North. This was most sharply pronounced by one interviewee, who was a graduate from one of the northern universities that is known for Islamist activism. His views on the government closely resemble those of Boko Haram (C69):

¹⁴² Findings for the US and Americans from PEW surveys (in 2006, 2007, 2009), findings for Jews (2006, 2009), and for the UN (2006, 2007, 2009; for citations, see footnote 114).

'Badluck Ebola Jonathan' as we call him is in power and he is organizing state terrorism. All the service chiefs and all the security operators are largely Igbos and most operational officers are all from the south. They have this agenda to govern the state and perhaps to secede. For this they have to weaken the North, which is larger in number than the south. (...) You have to see that the security network of Jonathan is all in the hands of America and Israel.

Also, interviewees from Plateau State complained about the insecurity under which they have been living for years. Belonging to the Hausa community in Jos, they feel politically underrepresented and unfairly treated by security agents (Co3, o6).

Some news reporting confirms such Northern suspicions that the Nigerian government has been favoring Christians and the South and that the security forces have been exerting arbitrary violence against Muslims. With regard to both the crackdown on the Nigerian Taliban (2003/04) and the July 2009 uprising, some journalists, NGOs, and religious leaders complained about what they perceive as unequal treatment: In their eyes, the federal government protects and possibly even supports southern militias (such as MEND and the OPC), but uses violence against similar movements from the North (Weekly Trust 2004, 1 May; Daily Trust 2009, 31 July, 2009, 3 August; Leadership 2009, 7 October).

With a focus on Plateau State, other sources confirm that there is a broader sense of insecurity and discrimination among Muslims in the state. Academic publications by Muslim scholars complain about a “perennial ethnic cleansing of Hausa and Muslims by a cabal of corrupt and decadent politicians in Plateau state supported by a Christian terrorist militia” (Adarawa 2008; similarly: Ishaq 2008). Online videos show gruesome footage of bodies and frame them from a radical perspective as “incessant, openly-exercised, and government-backed oppression on Muslims in Jos and its environs” (YouTube Video 2012, 6 July-a). One of the videos argues that “Christians are in charge of security, education, economic, and political sectors in Nigeria” and suggests that “[b]ecause of this, Muslims are being killed like animals whenever Christians have clash with them” (YouTube Video 2012, 6 July-b).

Repression

While most interviewees only lamented the failure of the Nigerian security agencies to protect them from Boko Haram, some also complained about the injustice of the repression carried out against Boko Haram as well as about the related atrocities perpetrated against civilians as part of the counterinsurgency operations. These interviewees typically argued that a huge injustice has been perpetrated when Yusuf was killed extra-judicially. One interviewee from Maiduguri recalled that many in the city found Yusuf's killing and the very violent effort by the

security forces to suppress the sect unfair (C31). More interviewees, however, expressed concern about the failure and the arbitrary violence by the heavy-handed and brutal counterinsurgency operations against Boko Haram (C80):

The military, which came in to impose the State of Emergency, just oppresses us. They create logjams on the roads, they insult us, and they punish us for an offense that we are not even told what it is. So, how can I cooperate with that kind of oppressive army? If I go to the police and give them information on the insurgents, the police and military will likely go after me, not after the insurgents. So, we – the people – are not with the authorities.

Similarly, one interviewed journalist from Borno State recounted the negative views that people in Maiduguri held about the counterinsurgency operations by the JTF around 2012 (C79):

When the Boko Haram managed to attack some military convoy or so, the next thing that happens is that the military will come and cordon off. Then they will arrest every, every man! And most of them, you will never see them alive again. Because they will come with that madness that you have killed one of their officers and then they will flatten the houses, burn them down, and kill people. Because of this, some people sympathize with Boko Haram.

Such negative views about police and military brutality can similarly be found in news reporting from the region. The security forces have commonly been seen as corrupt, ineffective, and brutal. Around late 2008/early 2009, besides Boko Haram, also many ordinary people felt harassed by OP Flush: The Nigerian Bar Association collected numerous complaints by citizens about extortion and severe maltreatment of people by the security agents (Daily Trust 2009, 7 February, 2009, 19 April). The June 2009 shooting incident, in which OP Flush agents shot at several Boko Haram members, was interpreted in one news editorial as evidence of the “continuing gulf of mistrust between security agencies and the public they are meant to watch over and protect” (Daily Trust 2009, 22 June). The prominent human rights activist Shehu Sani, albeit clearly denouncing Boko Haram, also expressed his concern about the “excessive, disproportionate and arbitrary use of force” against Boko Haram in the crackdown of July 2009 (Daily Trust 2009, 31 July).¹⁴³

¹⁴³ Similar views on the security forces were expressed by other journalists too, although they criticized Boko Haram for the violence as well. One condemned the “corrosive and grossly over-killing method used by Umaru Musa Yar’Adua’s government” (Leadership 2009, 7 October), another argued that “[t]his cold-blooded extra-judicial murder of Yusuf deserves the harshest condemnation and the massacre of the Boko Haram followers makes it necessary to thoroughly re-examine the trigger-happy approach of our security forces” (Daily Trust 2009, 5 August-a).

The analysis of media reporting on the public perception of the JTF brutality similarly confirms what has been found in the interviews: There has been much frustration and anger about the brutal and arbitrary operations by the security forces during the counterinsurgency operations. Almost immediately after the JTF was formed and in relation to the violent incident at Maiduguri's Kaleri neighborhood (see 4.2.4), the prominent Borno Elders and Leaders of Thought already asked for the entire withdrawal of the troops, stressing that the soldiers were merely "burning down cars, killing innocent passer-by, looting private property, (...) and even raping young girls" (Daily Trust 2011, 15 July, 2011, 17 July). One school principal from Maiduguri told journalists that some people consider the army "enemy" since the soldiers would "arrest whoever they see, or open fire, or burn shops and houses in revenge" for Boko Haram attacks (IRIN 2014, 11 August). While such frustration does not necessarily make people support Boko Haram, there has been some evidence that at least some people have found Boko Haram appealing in the face of state brutality. As Shettima Khalifa Dikwa (Chairman of the Voters Forum, University of Maiduguri) told journalists, "[y]ou can't have JTF searching your house, invading your privacy, mistreating people without you having sympathy for Boko Haram" (Reuters 2011, 14 November).

Explaining Frame Resonance

Boko Haram's condemnation of insecurity, an anti-Muslim conspiracy, and the brutality of the security agents seems to have resonated with some people in the North. They similarly see anti-Muslim bias in the conduct of the federal government and security forces. For some, this even constitutes the oppression of Muslims in Nigeria. Boko Haram's framing connects to these views of its audience (*compatibility*). With regard to Plateau State, the repeated incidents in which security forces targeted Muslim ("settler") youths, while they spared Christian "indigenes" (HRW 2009), gave *relevance* and *empirical credibility* to Boko Haram's claim that Muslims are suppressed and threatened. The complaint about cannibalism by Christians also has some *cultural compatibility* in the North: There has been a long-running perception of Southerners as pagans, who follow occult practices such as ritualistic killings and cannibalism (Krings 2005: 202).

The condemnation of the status quo as a conspiracy against Muslims can be assumed to have strong resonance among those who have been already part of the more radical segment of the Northern population. Organizations such as Izala and the IMN have argued for many years that there has been an ongoing oppression against Muslims in Nigeria by the Christians, the West, and the "infidels": For IMN leader Zakzaky, 9/11 was "planned and executed by the American intelligence network in collaboration with Israeli intelligence, Mossad, in order to

turn the world against the Muslim world” (Daily Trust 2001, 27 September). More generally, he considers the US and Israeli governments as the “worst terrorists on earth today” (Zakzaky 2009). This position is reflected by many IMN followers whose typical protest slogans comprise “Death to America/Israel”, “Death to the Enemies of Islam”, and “Killing of Muslims – Enough of World Silence”, and who typically burn US and Israeli flags during protest marches (Daily Trust 2002, 23 April, 2012, 24 September). When members from these groups arbitrarily came under increased scrutiny by security agents after the July 2009 uprising, this may have given strong empirical credibility to Boko Haram’s claim and their pre-existing suspicion of state brutality and Christian dominance. Hence, the state harassment may have driven them towards joining the rebellion.

Boko Haram also seems to have exploited the crackdown of July 2009 for its mobilization for rebellion. As the ICG noted, the sect “used martyrdom videos of the events to radicalise its membership” (ICG 2010: 37). It is highly likely that this refers to three videos that appeared after the uprising and which show the full brutality of how the security agents targeted sect members and civilians. In fact, it is intuitive to assume that it was not so much the above-discussed “objective” pattern of repression and the related cost-benefit calculations that made people support Boko Haram in the months after the July 2009 crackdown – after all, at this point the risks of supporting the movement were excessive. Instead, three shocking and emotionally arousing videos from the crackdown may have helped Boko Haram’s mobilization for the rebellion. One video shows Yusuf, how he was only slightly injured and unarmed in police custody before his extra-judicial killing; this video can easily be seen as proof that he was alive and murdered by the police (YouTube Video 2009, 3 August). Another video shows the cold-blooded execution of Foi, another senior sect member, who had also already been arrested and unarmed when he was shot by security agents (YouTube Video 2010, 5 July). Finally, one disturbing video that was released by Al-Jazeera in February 2010 documents in detail how police officers arrested civilians after the uprising (in what appears as a random procedure) and how these civilians were executed in plain daylight in Maiduguri and even with macabre comments being made by police officers (Al-Jazeera 2010, 9 February). Especially for people who may have already shared some or many parts of Boko Haram’s visions and goals, watching these videos, possibly as part of a recruitment process, certainly provides a powerful emotional driver for supporting the insurgency.

Finally, the arbitrary arrest of thousands of people, especially during the third stage of the rebellion, is likely to have further strengthened Boko Haram’s frame resonance. In light of widely shared suspicions about a pro-Christian bias by the federal government, these arrests

may have given *relevance* and *empirical credibility* to Boko Haram's condemnation of repression and insecurity. Although Boko Haram itself has been a major source of insecurity in the North-East, for some the rebels may have still appeared as a protector and liberator. This probably is not only the result of their constant emphasis that they fight for the liberation of Muslims rather than against them, but also of their action that has been accordingly (*consistency*). During the second stage of the rebellion, much of the violence was discriminate and thereby can sustain the view that the rebels protect and fight for civilians. Also, more recently there has been at least one major incident, which is likely to have shaped the public view of Boko Haram as liberator and of the security forces as oppressors: In March 2014, Boko Haram liberated up to 2,000 people from the Giwa barracks, the place which has locally become known as "Guantanamo" for the many human rights abuses committed in the military prison. A video released by the sect shows how hundreds of people were liberated and how they were marching towards freedom (YouTube Video 2014, 28 March); yet, later in the day, the Nigerian troops killed about 640 of the men and boys who had been liberated by the sect. It is likely that this video and especially the surrounding events gave *credibility* to Boko Haram's framing and thereby increased the movement's frame resonance.

6.2.3.3. Socio-Economic Grievances

Socio-economic grievances have been the key concerns held by virtually all interviewees from the general Muslim population in the North. While not everyone agrees with Boko Haram's interpretation that the root cause of the problem is *boko* and an anti-Muslim conspiracy, several respondents expressed that they find the sect's critique of poverty and corruption highly justified and appealing. For example, one interviewee who had listened to Yusuf's preaching before the July 2009 uprising recounted his views as follows (C29): "Mohammed Yusuf has a point. The government is very corrupt. We have oil and wealth and everything, but the people are poor and begging. The opportunities are only for the upper class, the leaders are just loyal to their sponsors, and the whole system is rotten." Another interview respondent argued that "even I would join them in as much as my status in this society is downtrodden"¹⁴⁴ and further explained that (C68):

Boko Haram's cause is justified in the sense that the gap between the rich and the poor in the society is too wide. If you are elected as a governor of a state, instead of developing the entire

¹⁴⁴ It is worth mentioning that the interviewee was relatively well-educated and well-employed; most among the Northern population are far worse off, much more "downtrodden" than him, and therefore perhaps also much more ready to engage in rebellion.

state, you started developing yourself and your family, as if the society was just within yourself and the circle of your family. That is where Boko Haram comes from. (...) This fight is a just fight. Gentlemen, Nigeria needs to wake up! We have been rejected and relegated to the background, so we need to change the system!

What underlies the resonance of Boko Haram's condemnation of socio-economic grievances is that virtually all interviewees put the blame for the bad living conditions entirely on the corrupt political class: "There is no education, no work, no read and write – all of this is because we do not have good leaders" (C33). While interviewees typically preferred non-violent pathways for political change, several expressed to find an armed struggle legitimate (C61):

Our leaders always rejoice themselves at Abuja for big-big offices, moving with flashy cars, owning each and every one of them an oil well to enrich themselves at the detriment of the masses. (...) Toppling the government is not enough. If you topple the government, those who are ruling the government are still in the military, they are still in the country. So, the only way out is that any political holder who is ruling this country – whether from the state, lower house or upper house – should be killed.

Such views of Boko Haram as a legitimate uprising of the dispossessed can also be found in media and other sources: Opinion pieces on the July 2009 uprising in the main Northern newspaper Daily Trust interpreted the uprising as an almost "natural" response to "an inhumane status quo [in which; JS] 92% of the Nigerian people live on less than \$1 per day" and in which "we have a venal and absolutely corrupt ruling class whose conduct has completely discredited the state" (Daily Trust 2009, 6 August; similarly: Daily Trust 2009, 20 October).¹⁴⁵ In an academic publication, Kyari Tijani (Professor at the University of Maiduguri) explained that "progressive academics" like him and Boko Haram fight for the same struggle, albeit through different means, against Nigeria's "gluttonous corruption and politics of deceit" (Tijani 2009: 13).

Boko Haram's condemnation of socio-economic problems resonates because it taps into the omnipresent frustration among ordinary people about these problems. This frame has huge *relevance* to the audience: When asking interview respondents about the most pressing concerns in their lives, the typical answers included the lack of employment and income. Moreover, this frame corresponds to the common Northern (and even Nigerian) narrative of lamenting that "common people suffer from poverty and corruption because of bad leaders" (*compatibility*). PEW surveys confirm that 76-89% of the Northerners consider corrupt

¹⁴⁵ The authors of these opinion pieces, however, also condemned Boko Haram's violent struggle.

political leaders, the gap between the rich and the poor, and lack of employment “very big problems”; moreover, hardly any survey respondent differed (only 1-3% consider these “small problems”).¹⁴⁶ Still, the resonance of this frame remains somewhat limited because not everyone agrees with the assertion that the root source of the problem is an anti-Muslim conspiracy in the name of *boko*, as also described in the following.

6.2.3.4. Non-Resonance

While many of these aspects of the sect’s diagnostic framing connect to cultural orientations, social concerns, and political views held by Muslims in the North, the frame alignment has remained partial only in at least two regards. This has reduced the resonance of the framing to some extent.

Firstly, while many in the North share some suspicious about Christian dominance in the political affairs and the security agencies and also feel somewhat disadvantaged and threatened, for most people this “boko conspiracy” has not been a main and pressing concern in life (*lack of relevance*). In places other than Plateau and Kaduna, the massacres stressed by Boko Haram – many of which, in fact, occurred years ago – are rather distant and unimportant phenomena. These incidents seem to have occurred on a too infrequent basis to create such permanent and widespread feeling of insecurity (*lack of resonance and empirical credibility*), which would make Boko Haram’s condemnation of insecurity more resonant.

Secondly, there is the relatively common perception of Boko Haram as creating insecurity, deepening socio-economic problems, and even being part of the “*boko* conspiracy.” Many interviewees suggested that they assume that some political leaders – especially President Jonathan and others within the ruling PDP – have somehow been fueling the insurgency to punish the opposition stronghold of the North-East for their non-support to the PDP in the 2011 elections, or for preventing the 2015 elections from taking place in the region. Repeatedly, interviewees even suggested that in reality many of the Boko Haram attacks have been perpetrated by Christians who attack Muslim villages or burn down their own churches to provoke the further escalation of violence.¹⁴⁷ Some went as far as arguing that Boko Haram

¹⁴⁶ Findings from PEW surveys in 2002, 2006, and 2013 (for citations, see footnote 114).

¹⁴⁷ A similar view has been expressed by the NGO Muslims Against Terror, which in an online article suspects that “Christians have been behind many so-called Boko Haram bombings”: “Boko Haram’ could possibly be a mix of some Christian and Muslim psychopaths, mercenaries who work for money without conscience in the same fashion as there are gangs of armed robbers” (Muslims Against Terror 2012, 21 June).

does not even exist: “Boko Haram is nothing but a government setup to achieve some political goal” (FG1). This view can also be found in other sources: For example, IMN-leader Zakzaky repeatedly described Boko Haram as a scam created by the Nigerian government and military on behalf of the US government to maintain its hold over Nigeria’s oil resources (IMN 2009, 6 August, 2011, 29 August; The Nation 2014, 9 September).¹⁴⁸ While the underlying argument here, again, is that the federal government is being dominated by Christians who oppress Muslims, still Boko Haram would not benefit from the depiction as being part of the “*boko* conspiracy.” This undermines the sect’s resonance: If Boko Haram is perceived as part of the problem, the movement *lacks credibility* for identifying and solving the oppression of Muslims.

6.2.4. Prognostic Framing

Boko Haram’s call for withdrawal and for a *jihad* to impose Islamic principles on the state and society finds mixed resonance with the Muslim audience in the North. In principle, the sect’s aims and the strategy of *jihad* have much legitimacy among the general population. Thus, there is considerable resonance of the prognostic framing. Still, most people disagree with the violent ways of Boko Haram’s campaign.

6.2.4.1. Islamic Principles

Many Northerners share Boko Haram’s demand for overcoming the secular state and Islamizing Nigeria (or at least the North) by making the *sharia* the main (or even sole) source of law.¹⁴⁹ To ordinary people the *sharia* has a strong appeal as divine and incorruptible solution to the many social and economic injustices in Nigeria, which the secular state has failed to solve or which it has even created (Harnischfeger 2008: 28). Since Nigeria’s independence as a secular state, the restoration of the *sharia* and the Islamization of politics has even been a central demand by virtually all Muslim religious organizations including both the Sufi brotherhoods and their Salafist challengers (Umar 2012: 127; Harnischfeger 2012: 509).

¹⁴⁸ Similar views can also be found in journalistic accounts (e.g. with regard to the Boko Haram related Nigerian Taliban, see Weekly Trust 2004, 1 May) or public statements made by more mainstream clerics including Sheikh Ahmad Gumi (Sahara Reporters 2012, 11 August; Premium Times 2014, 24 October).

¹⁴⁹ The analysis of frame resonance in this part hardly relies on the interviews but mostly on secondary sources. In light of the security situation, hardly anyone of the interviewees (would have) openly expressed support for goals such as an Islamic state or *sharia* rule which as widely-known are key demands by Boko Haram.

The demand for the *sharia* and the Islamization of politics has been made most fervently whenever Nigeria transitioned from military rule to democracy. During the 1977/78 Constituent Assembly, which drafted the constitution for the Second Republic, a large array of Northern politicians, Islamic scholars, and radical activists of the Izala and MSS advocated a constitution based on the provisions of the *sharia*. When their demand had not been met, these radical groups held many protest rallies during the 1980s propagating “Down with the Nigerian Constitution”, “Islam only”, and “the Quran is our Constitution” (Loimeier 1997a: 12; 1997b: 297). The demand for the *sharia* reappeared during the 1988 Constituent Assembly and again during the democratic transition around 1999.

In 1999 a broad wave of *sharia* activism arose, which was reinforced through the loss of power to the South that created a “pervasive anxiety over insecurity felt on both a physical and a spiritual plane” among Northern Muslims (Last 2008: 41). Although mostly driven by selfish political interest, when political aspirant Ahmad Sani Yerima promised to introduce the *sharia* in late 1999, he raised many people expectations. He even – much like Boko Haram in the following years – presented the *sharia* as a duty upon the true believer when he declared that “in Islam to you cannot be a partial Muslim but you have to be a total Muslim and without Sharia, you wouldn't be described a Muslim because Allah has declared in the Koran that for you to be a Muslim you must embrace Sharia and that is what we are doing” (The News 1999, 18 October). Within short time, all other northern Governors followed Yerima's example and also introduced the *sharia* as the source of law. This gave important legitimacy to the whole project of Islamizing the Northern politics and society.

Once adopted, some Islamist leaders started pressuring for implementation. The SCSN leader Datti was at the forefront of this effort. He repeatedly suspected and denounced a plot by Southern Nigeria, the US, and the UN to obstruct the *sharia*, which he framed as an attack on Islam and other aspects of the Northern culture (Daily Trust 2002, 17 January, 2002, 23 October).¹⁵⁰ Izala's leadership council unequivocally defined *sharia* implementation as “a right that all Muslims must enjoy” (Daily Trust 2002, 9 April). The IMN, in contrast, officially opposed the political effort of introducing the *sharia* in the early 2000s, but this was rather for mistrusting the Northern political leaders than for any opposition towards the idea of *sharia* implementation. Transforming Nigeria into an Islamic state has always been the main cause of

¹⁵⁰ At one point, Datti even threatened a harsh reaction: “We consider this an attempt to damage the image of Islam, and its adherents in Nigeria are ready to sacrifice their lives, money and all other things in an effort to defend the practice of their religion” (Daily Trust 2002, 17 January).

the IMN (IMN 2005). For instance, in 2009 one IMN leader declared that “it is the goal and aspiration of every Muslim to establish and live in an Islamic state. This is a fact and a divine ordinance” (IMN 2009, 6 December).

The public support within the *sharia* campaign has been immense. When Kano State announced that the *sharia* would be adopted, hundreds of thousands of people celebrated in the streets (BBC 2000, 21 June). Surveys confirm that many Northerners find Islamic law highly desirable. In 2007, 74% of the Muslims in the 12 Northern states were supportive or strongly supportive of the adoption of the *sharia* and expected that this would reduce crime (73%), physical and sexual assault (71-72%), and political violence as well as ethnic or religious conflict (64-65%) (Afrobarometer 2007).¹⁵¹ Considerable shares of the Muslim population throughout Nigeria also support *sharia*-based forms of harsh punishment including whippings and cutting off hands for stealing (45%), stoning in case of adultery (37%), and the death penalty for conversion (29%, see Pew Research Center 2010b: 291-293).¹⁵²

Boko Haram’s call for an Islamic state and the implementation of Islamic principles, thus, taps into the pre-existing popularity of these ideas. Many Muslims in the North find the demand, as made by Boko Haram, for a political and social order that is guided by the *sharia* highly desirable. This appears as adequate solution to the detrimental Western influence, rampant corruption and poverty, and discrimination and oppression.

6.2.4.2. Migration

Boko Haram’s call for withdrawal from the corrupt, sinful, and un-Islamic status quo and for joining the movement at its enclaves, which was made mostly during the non-violent phase, can also be assumed to have had some resonance. Assessing this retrospectively by the use of interviews is difficult, because interviewees from the general population would hardly recount their views on Boko Haram’s prognostic framing for the non-violent phase and most had not even heard of Boko Haram before the July 2009 uprising. Still, there is much evidence for some resonance of this frame in secondary sources.

Boko Haram has not been the only sect that was on migration in the Northern history. There has even been a long history of movements that go on *hijra*. Already Dan Fodio had

¹⁵¹ The 2009 PEW survey even found that *nationwide* 71% of the Muslims would want the *sharia* to apply to the entire Nigeria (Pew Research Center 2010b: 289-290). The support in the North is probably even above this national average (see footnote 112).

¹⁵² These national averages again probably are lower than the support in the North (see footnote 112).

called on his followers to migrate, shortly before he declared *jihad*. Similarly, after the defeat of the Sokoto Caliphate, Sultan Muhammadu Attahiru I mobilized his followers for migration (although this remained short-lived only). Also other recent Islamist organizations that were not directly connected to Boko Haram, such as Maitatsine or Darul Islam, withdrew to their enclaves to live secluded from the rest of the society. For years during the 2000, Darul Islam had lived in an enclave comprising about 3,000 people in Mokwa (Niger State) before the security forces disrupted the group's activities as part of the repression against Boko Haram in August 2009. The views shared by the faction are strikingly similar to the ones by Boko Haram. In interviews, the Darul Islam leader Amrul Bashir Abdullahi explained that his group had "decided to create a camp for ourselves outside the community because of the problems in the larger society. These are problems of corruption, drunkenness, prostitution and so on which Allah forbids" (Al-Jazeera 2009, 17 August). In another interview, he explained his opposition to the present secular order and Western education, which even closely resembles Boko Haram's framing (Daily Trust 2010, 16 August):

We believe what obtains in [conventional schools] is haram. Take for instance, children in common schools are taught that man was originated from an ape, this differs from the knowledge we believe in, i.e. that man was created by God, through Prophet Adam. (...) We will certainly not participate in the elections, and this is because we don't believe in the leadership, and the whole system as well. (...) We have already cast our votes and we have elected Allah. If we will have our way, let everyone abolish the so called election and join us in propagating the words of the Almighty. Let us be led by the provisions of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Hence, in this cultural context in which such calls for migration have been frequently made, Boko Haram's propagation of *hijra* can be assumed to have resonated with at least some among the Northern population. At the same time, such withdrawal is a very radical demand that clearly does not resonate broadly (as further discussed below).

6.2.4.3. *Jihad*

The idea of *jihad* also has important appeal to many Northerners. Again, unfortunately, interviews are not the best source to assess the resonance of this part of the prognostic framing; under the present circumstances, most people would hide rather than express their real views on an issue as controversial as *jihad*. However, a broad range of secondary sources strongly suggests that the call for a "holy war" has much legitimacy and even popularity in the North.

Historically, the idea of a *jihad* to impose Islamic principles has been a cornerstone of the Northern culture. The historical example of Dan Fodio's *jihad* through which the Islamic state of the Sokoto Caliphate was established are historical reference points in the region: Virtually all Islamic organizations from the traditional Sufi brotherhoods to their radical challengers and also many prominent Northern politicians (including Bello and Shagari) have cast themselves in the footsteps of Dan Fodio and have nurtured the image of Dan Fodio's *jihad* as a just war against corrupt and tyrannical leaders (Loimeier 1997b: 4). For the Quadiriyya brotherhood, Dan Fodio is a key representative since it was his *jihad* that vastly extended the spread of the Quadiriyya. However, also Izala, the MSS, and the IMN have drawn on Dan Fodio's legacy. Sheikh Gumi, as forerunner of Izala, sought to borrow Dan Fodio's understanding of un-Islamic innovations to challenge the Sufi brotherhoods for their mystic and "impure" Islamic beliefs (Loimeier 1997b: 179).¹⁵³

Several Islamist groups that rose during the 1980 initially sought to wage a renewed *jihad*, much like Boko Haram today. At the beginning of the 1980s, Maitatsine, the Izala, and the MSS were at the forefront of such inflammatory and rebellion-promoting activism. Especially the northern university campuses of the Bayero University (Kano) and the Ahmadu Bello University (Zaria) became hotbeds of Islamism. In April 1980, the MSS student leader Zakzaky called for a renewed *jihad* to topple the secular government and Islamize the state (Loimeier 1997b: 299). About the same time, the Kano-based Maitatsine sect started its "holy war" against the "infidels", by which the group mostly meant the adherents of traditional Muslim organizations (Hickey 1984). The idea of the *jihad* has achieved much resonance among this Islamist segment of the Northern society. By the end of the 1980s, Zakzaky, who had become more moderate in the meantime, found it difficult to appease the radicalized students and prevent them from pursuing *jihad* (Loimeier 1997b: 302).

Since the early 2000s, also foreign Islamist groups, some of which stand for *jihad*, achieved much popularity in the North. Many in the region were outraged about the US invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq after 9/11, which they saw as an unjustified attack on Muslims. For instance, the author of a Daily Trust opinion article argued that the US were attacking the Taliban, who were merely insisting "on practicing pure Sharia" (Daily Trust 2001, 15 October-b). Considering the US invasion in Afghanistan as an "assault on the entire Islamic World", one MSS state chapter even called "on all Muslims of the world to rise and fight to defend their

¹⁵³ There is a tension, however, in the reliance on the example of Dan Fodio by Salafist preachers including Gumi since Dan Fodio had been adherent to the Quadiriyya.

faith against the crusade of America and her allies” (Daily Trust 2001, 15 October-a). As a result of the outrage, groups such as Al-Qaeda, HAMAS, and Hezbollah achieved much prominence and popularity among Muslims in Nigeria. After 9/11, the Kano-based Islamic scholar Ibrahim Daurawa even stated that “all muslims are bin Ladin's associates because they are against the double standards of the Americans in the Middle-East and developing countries generally” (Daily Trust 2001, 4 October). Indeed, Bin Laden became a people’s hero: His posters have been widely circulated and reportedly his name was given to many new born babies in Kano (BBC 2002, 3 January). For many Northerners the icon of Bin Laden represents the struggle against corrupt and oppressive rulers; by circulating his image, thus, people expressed their anger and signaled the readiness to fight for social justice against the corrupt political class (Krings 2009).

Surveys confirm this stunning recent popularity of Bin Laden and even people’s readiness for a violent struggle. From 2003-2010, *consistently* the majority (50-71%) of the Muslims in the North expressed to have confidence or much confidence in Bin Laden.¹⁵⁴ Moreover, many people have similarly positive views about other Islamist groups and even their violent tactics: 69-76% have a somewhat or very favorable opinion of HAMAS and Hezbollah.¹⁵⁵ While certainly not everyone who has a favorable view of Bin Laden, HAMAS, and Hezbollah would find *jihad* legitimate, surveys suggest that many did: In repeated surveys during the 2000s constantly about 33-51% of the respondents from the “core” North considered suicide bombings “sometimes/often” legitimate strategy to defend Islam.¹⁵⁶

Boko Haram’s call for *jihad* taps into the widely shared Northern admiration of Dan Fodio’s *jihad* and the legitimacy of Al-Qaeda and other Islamist groups. Although Islamist organizations in the North have rarely openly called for *jihad*, they have constantly nurtured the historical legacy of Dan Fodio. Therein, they have framed *jihad* as appropriate strategy for achieving social justice in the face of oppression, corruption, and disrespect to Islamic principles. Moreover, the corruption, injustice, and insecurity in present-day Nigeria can easily be read as repetition of the failing Hausa states of the late 18th century, which Dan Fodio replaced through a *jihad* and the creation of the Sokoto Caliphate. This gives appeal and historical justification, which make *jihad* and an Islamic state appear as culturally appropriate responses to such problems of social justice and the infringement of Islamic ideals (Loimeier

¹⁵⁴ Findings from PEW surveys in 2003, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010 (for citations, see footnote 114).

¹⁵⁵ Findings from PEW surveys in 2007 and 2009 (for citations, see footnote 114).

¹⁵⁶ Findings from PEW surveys in 2002, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010 (for citations, see footnote 114).

1997b: 4). Although Boko Haram has not extensively invoked Dan Fodio and Al-Qaeda, the mere emphasis on *jihad* seems to have aligned the sect with these widely-known and appealing examples, which has contributed to the resonance of the prognostic framing.

6.2.4.4. Non-Resonance

Most people in the North, however, have rejected the sect's call to arms. This was found in interviews (as detailed in the following), media reporting (which generally condemns Boko Haram), and also surveys. According to a Pew survey, in 2013 about 81% of the Muslims in the North held somewhat or very unfavorable views of Boko Haram and only 2% had positive views (Pew Research Center 2013). These numbers should be treated with caution as they may over-state the opposition to Boko Haram.¹⁵⁷ Still, most among the Northern population have disagreed with Boko Haram for the following four reasons.

Firstly, many Muslims in the North have remained unconvinced that the sect's *jihad* is legitimate and that violence is even compatible with Islam. An important share of the interviewees argued that they understand Islam as a religion of peace that does not allow the killing of people at all. Others emphasized that *jihad* can be legitimate but that Boko Haram has infringed the rules of *jihad*. They expressed that the sect neither is a legitimate authority to declare *jihad*, nor that it has respected the rule of restraint towards killing civilians and Christians.¹⁵⁸ Still others, who see Boko Haram as conspiracy by the government of President Jonathan, dismissed the *jihad* by questioning its Muslim background. As one argued (C60), “[w]e do not classify Boko Haram as Muslims – they are terrorists from the Federal Government of Nigeria!”

The *counterframing* efforts of religious and political leaders have strengthened the condemnation of the *jihad* and the image of Boko Haram as “un-Islamic.” Already in the Adam-Yusuf debate of the mid-2000s, Ahlus Sunna leader Adam criticized Yusuf's calls for migration and overthrowing the government by violent means. While sharing the aim of Islamizing Nigeria, he advocated a non-violent struggle from within the system (Umar 2012:

¹⁵⁷ It is striking that in PEW surveys conducted before the rebellion, very few refused (commonly only about 1-8%) to give answers on controversial issues such as the US, HAMAS, Hezbollah, and Al-Qaeda. Yet, since the beginning of the rebellion this has risen significantly to about 15-40% of answers that are refused on the very same questions. People thus withhold many of their views now, possibly for having sympathies with the rebellion and fearing state harassment.

¹⁵⁸ This was pointed out by several interviewed clerics, among others by a high-ranking religious leader of Adamawa State (C64).

133-134). Since the beginning of the rebellion, local religious leaders have often shied away from openly condemning Boko Haram for fear of reprisal.¹⁵⁹ As a journalist argued, “[t]he fear of Boko Haram by nearly everyone has led to an unprecedented lack of public debate amongst politicians, traditional and religious leaders, especially in Northern Nigeria and in the National Assembly” (Salkida 2011, 2 December). Yet, this disregards that high ranking leaders have made many statements to publicly condemn the movement and its violence.

Following Boko Haram attacks, religious and political leaders have often publicly dissociated Islam from the rebellion.¹⁶⁰ For example, after the July 2009 uprising key religious leaders and organizations unequivocally denounced the sect’s violent struggle. The Sultan of Sokoto Alhaji Sa’ad Abubakar III, as Nigeria’s highest cleric, defined the sect’s agenda as “devilish”: “Islam cannot advocate intolerance and violence and will never condone the activities of any group which promote murder and arson” (Vanguard 2009, 7 August). At the time, the Da’wah Coordination Council of Nigeria (DCCN), which gathered 41 member organizations in an emergency meeting, also dismissed the call for *jihad*: “Fighting anyone should always be the last resort, even if it is justified. The *jihad* (striving) of self-restraint and patience (*jihad bin nafs*) is the first priority” (DCCN 2009: 12). Even representatives of other Islamist groups such as Izala publicly expressed that they oppose the *jihad* (Daily Trust 2009, 5 August-b). Since the beginning of the rebellion many more such public statements have been made, in which the Northern religious and political leaders dismissed the call for *jihad* and framed Boko Haram as “un-Islamic.”¹⁶¹ The strong counterframing, especially by Islamist groups who share ideological similarities with Boko Haram, has probably reduced the resonance of Boko Haram’s call for *jihad*.

Secondly, many have differed with Boko Haram over the legitimacy of declaring civilians, both Christian and Muslim, as “infidels” and killing them. None of the interviewees

¹⁵⁹ This was found in many interviews, but came out most clearly in the interview with an Imam from Kano State (C38).

¹⁶⁰ The counterframing efforts by the federal government have not been extensive and are not studied here. President Jonathan’s government (2010-15) largely lacks credibility in the North, which makes counterframing unlikely to resonate.

¹⁶¹ To mention one of the many available examples, after Boko Haram’s bombing of a church at Madalla, near Abuja, killing 40 on Christmas Day 2011, a broad range of religious leaders condemned the violence. This includes Alhaji Sa’ad Abubakar III (Sultan of Sokoto), Khalid Abubakar Aliyu (Secretary General of JNI), Sheik Abdurrahman Ahmad (National Missioner of the Ansar ud-deen Society), and the representatives of several faith-based organizations including the Muslim Public Affairs Centre, Muslim Rights Concern, and the Sokoto chapter of Izala (This Day 2011, 27 December; The Moment 2011, 27 December).

considered it justified to kill Muslims who do not follow Boko Haram's religious beliefs. They also questioned the legitimacy of converting or killing Christians, who they generally held in high esteem and saw as friends rather than enemies or pagans. My interview respondents were probably more favorable to Christians than the average Northerner. Nevertheless, surveys confirm that about half of the Northern Muslim population (48-59%) has rather favorable views of Christians.¹⁶² Even inflammatory preachers like Zakzaky, who called for *jihad* during the 1980s, also made conciliatory statements: "It has never been the aim of the Muslim to eradicate any other religion; the aim of the Muslim is to live according to the Islamic perspectives, not to impose their religion upon others or even force conversion upon others" (Zakzaky 2004, 8 June). While the historical idea of Dan Fodio's *jihad* has sustained the resonance of Boko Haram's call for *jihad*, it has hardly legitimized the killing of non-Muslims. Dan Fodio's struggle has been a reform campaign *within* the Muslim community, not an effort of converting people to Islam. Hence, Boko Haram's agenda of converting Christians seems to resonate far less than other parts of the prognostic framing.

The killing of civilians on a large scale during the third stage of the rebellion has alienated people from Boko Haram.¹⁶³ At the time, the movement used the label "infidel" in arbitrary ways to designate virtually the entire civilian population as opponent. This undermined Boko Haram's claim of fighting on behalf of Muslim civilians. For example, one interviewee complained that "[t]hey are not killing the governors, senators and members of the House of Representatives. It is the poor people that are still bearing the brunt of their action" (C68). Another respondent argued that "you do not challenge the political class by killing rampantly and by denying people the right to live" (C23). This *inconsistency* between word and action has undermined the resonance of the sect's call for *jihad*. This may have been different during earlier stages of the rebellion, when Boko Haram was more careful to avoid civilian casualties among Muslims. Some sources suggest that the public perception was more favorable at the time. For instance, after the July 2009 uprising one journalist noted that "[i]n virtually all instances, there are no indications that members of the Boko Haram sect have

¹⁶² Findings from PEW surveys in 2006 and 2009 (for citations, see footnote 114). The findings are confirmed by another representative survey of Muslims in Nigeria, which in 2009 found that 61-78% perceive Christians in a positive way, i.e. they do not associate Christians with intolerance, immorality, selfishness, arrogance, dishonesty, and violence (Pew Research Center 2010b: 121-127); yet again, these numbers reflect Muslim views of Christians nationwide, whereas the views in the "core North" are certainly less positive (see also footnote 112).

¹⁶³ Boko Haram has faced the common dilemma of how to take a clear stance against other Islamist organizations but to still treat the followers of these other organizations with respect to win them over (see also Loimeier 2012: 142).

interest in attacking the civilian population; rather, their targets are basically security forces and government establishments” (Daily Trust 2009, 17 August).

Thirdly, many people have differed with the sect over the claim that *boko* is *haram* and needs to be overcome. Numerous interviewees understood *boko* literally as meaning western education and curricula. Yet, the sect has used the notion more figuratively to define a broad conspiracy against Islam and the social ills that it causes. The literal understanding seems to result in large part from the *counterframing* efforts by other Islamist groups who have sought to discredit the movement through the label “Boko Haram” (Brigaglia 2012: 38; ICG 2014: footnote 36).¹⁶⁴ This label has strongly emphasized the movement’s opposition to Western education, whereas the group itself has always stressed its belonging to the Islamic community of Ahlus Sunna and its struggle for the established goal of reforming the Muslim community and the state through migration and *jihad*.

This literal interpretation by many interview respondents has been to the disadvantage of the rebels. The general population seems to have been more opposed to un-Islamic practices, the oppression of Islam by Western powers, and the socio-economic failings of Nigeria than to Western schools and curricula. The latter have been gaining increasing acceptance in the recent decades (Brigaglia 2009: 50) and most interviewees considered Western education a promise for improved living conditions, but not a problem or threat that needs to be eliminated (*lack of compatibility and relevance*).

Religious leaders in the North have also argued that Western education is compatible with Islam. In the interviews, time and again they referred to the *hadith* according to which Prophet Mohammed called on his followers to seek non-Islamic education in places “as far as China.”¹⁶⁵ Prominent Northern religious leaders have made similar public comments. For instance, in August 2009, the Sultan of Sokoto expressed: “We also take exception to the misguided philosophy of the Boko Haram group which have a primeval abhorrence for all aspect of education and is bent on evolving a society based on ignorance and terror. Islam is a religion based on knowledge and the Muslim ummah is necessarily a knowledge-based society” (Vanguard 2009, 7 August). Even some Islamist leaders stressed the importance of Western education. For example, during the Adam-Yusuf debate, the former opposed Yusuf’s stance by

¹⁶⁴ However, Boko Haram also contributed to shaping this image when the group started attacking schools in 2012 (AI 2013). No fewer than 60 schools were attacked by Boko Haram in 2012/13 (START 2014).

¹⁶⁵ Interestingly, the frequently cited hadith is theologically weak because of its unclear origin (Halstead 2004: 521).

the argument that Muslims need Western education, even if only to Islamize Nigeria (Umar 2012: 132-133). The frequent understanding of Boko Haram's mission as effort to abolish Western education, thus, has reduced its resonance.

Finally, several interviewees highlighted the contradictions between the sect's propagation of a struggle against Western influence and the use of modern and often Western products (*inconsistency*). The latter include machine guns, video cameras, cars, mobile phones, the internet, etc. The police officer who interrogated Yusuf before his execution also pointed to this contradiction (A10). It seems that the above-mentioned differentiation by the sect between its understanding of *boko* (i.e. any knowledge that contradicts the rule of Allah) and purely technological products (that could also be produced under Islamic education) has been missed or unconvincing.

6.2.5. Motivational Framing

Boko Haram's motivational framing has some important emotional appeal, especially from the religious framing, the self-depiction as powerful and courageous, and the charismatic qualities and credibility of Yusuf. At the same time, again, some of these motivational aspects have also failed to resonate for the reasons discussed in the following.

Many components of the religious framing by Boko Haram can be assumed to have a strong emotional appeal to Muslims in Northern Nigeria, even though this, again, was difficult to analyze based on interviews. In particular the demand for the *sharia* and, to a lesser extent, also the call for *jihad* have huge historical meaning to Muslims in Northern Nigeria. This results in strong symbolic and emotional power that may drive people towards collective action. In the North the *sharia* is widely seen as nothing less than the almost "natural" form of government (Falola 1998: 79). Some of the interviewees accordingly expressed that they found the proposed liberation theology, struggle for social justice, and vision of an Islamic society by Boko Haram highly appealing (e.g. C31). Such emotional appeals clearly exist on a broader level. According to a 2002 survey, about 94% of the Muslims in Northern Nigeria find that religious leaders should play a larger role in politics (Pew Research Center 2002). Deep emotional attachment to the role of religious leaders and the rule of the *sharia* has already been part of some of the above-mentioned: When the *sharia* adoption was announced hundreds of thousands of people celebrated in Kano, Northern activists have framed presumed Southern attacks on the *sharia* as an attack on the Northern identity, and for decades *sharia* activists have considered the Islamization of the state and politics indispensable. Certainly not everyone in the North considers joining Boko Haram and fighting violently to impose Islamic

principles. However, considering the wide popularity and strong emotional attachments that many Northerners have to some of the core demands by Boko Haram, it is plausible to assume that a sufficient number of people found joining the rebellion sufficiently attractive to also do so.

Boko Haram's appeals to strength and resolve clearly have strong resonance. The sect has conveyed the image of a courageous and highly committed armed movement through both word and action. It has been reported that before the July 2009 uprising youths in Maiduguri had admired "the bravado which many [Boko Haram] members usually displayed against security agents, especially the police" and therefore "wanted to join them, in order to enjoy whatever immunity that made them seemingly untouchable" (interview with an analyst of religious groups from Maiduguri, cited in ICG 2010: 38). Similarly, the leaked report of the commission of inquiry of the July 2009 uprising found that Yusuf won popularity for provoking the government yet repeatedly evading arrest: "[T]he discharge of Mohammed Yusuf on two occasions by an Abuja Court made a hero out of him, as the reception accorded him upon his return to Maiduguri attracted a mammoth crowd that temporarily undermined State authority, and served as an avenue for him to attract additional membership into the sect" (Galtimari Commission 2012).

Similar evidence for the emotional appeal of Boko Haram as a committed, and courageous armed groups was found in the interviews. One interviewee from Mubi who had lived under Boko Haram for two weeks recounted the following in great admiration (C74):

When the Boko Haram reach the army barracks they go there confidently, no anguish. The soldiers have already taken cover and then they start exchanging fire. And then, jets start striking. Anyhow, those soldiers cannot resist and run away and throw all their weapons away. (...) The Boko Haram are not afraid, they have confidence. They face the Nigerian army. They are extraordinary confident. It is the kind of people that sacrifice, whether they would die or not. Even when the army shoots, they still come, they still advance, and they slaughter soldiers with the knife.

The interviewee had clearly been exaggerating Boko Haram's fighting capacity and courage¹⁶⁶, which, however, would only increase the rebel's appeal. In Yobe State, Harnischfeger similarly observed that youths "may have secretly admired Boko Haram's courageous attacks on the

¹⁶⁶ For example, according to news reporting there had been no major combat (not to mention air bombardment) when Boko Haram captured Mubi in late October 2014 (Daily Trust 2014, 6 November-b). While certainly exaggerating, however, his eyewitness report was very detailed and credible.

hated authorities” (Harnischfeger 2014: 41). Such views on the strength and courage of Boko Haram create an important emotional (but also rational) appeal for joining. If the audience assumes that the rebels are extraordinarily powerful, this makes participation considerably more attractive, also because it lowers the perceived risks of doing so. Hence, it seems that for both the non-violent phase and the rebellion phase, Boko Haram’s emotional appeal of strength and resolve resonated with many among the audience, which also results from the *consistency* between word and many of Boko Haram’s actions.

Finally, the personality and credibility of Yusuf seems to have been an asset for the movement. None of the interviewees had attended Yusuf’s preaching, but those who had listened to his words from tapes or videos described him as great and convincing speaker. One interviewee recounted that people in Borno State were saying about Yusuf that “there is an Imam in Maiduguri who preaches very well” and that, unlike opportunistic clerics, “this is a real one, not a fake one” (C31). Even the Deputy Governor of Borno State, Adamu Dibal (2003-11), once expressed that Yusuf was “brilliant”: “He had this kind of monopoly in convincing the youth about the Holy Koran and Islam” (Reuters 2009, 4 August). Yusuf had also established some credibility and authority through his debates with Adam and other Islamic scholars. These debates reportedly strengthened Yusuf’s appeal and credibility, also because his opponents occasionally resorted to personal attacks which “gave some the impression that there was no effective and authoritative intellectual opposition to the BH ideology” (DCCN 2009: 22). However, high-ranking religious leaders did not take Yusuf seriously at the time due to his lack of proper theological education. The latter is seen as indispensable to participate in theological and political debates in Northern Nigeria (Loimeier 2012: 139). Nevertheless, locally the movement seems to have profited and won many people for the struggle through Yusuf’s *charismatic appeal* and *credibility*.

Assessing Shekau’s credibility and charismatic appeal remains difficult at the moment. The interviews suggest that Shekau has lacked such qualities. As Mannir Dan-Ali, chief editor of Daily Trust, put it in the interview (C15):

Muslims consider Abubakar Shekau as somebody beyond the pale. Whoever claims credit for the things he has been claiming, that person cannot be a Muslim. There are laid-down rules for taking life, but Shekau has not been a constituted authority. So, on what basis is he authorizing people? There are videos of how he himself slaughtered people – you have to be crazy to do that! (...) You cannot be killing people in that bloodthirsty way and still be a normal human being, talk less of being a Muslim.

Nevertheless, the fact that Shekau has become the key figure and main symbol of an otherwise often “faceless” movement suggests that he had some authority and credibility. His authenticity and charismatic appeal as preacher, however, still need to be explored in further research.

6.2.6. Brief Summary

This part showed that in its framing Boko Haram has addressed relevant and pressing concerns of the Northern population, invoked culturally established solutions, and used emotionally powerful symbols to mobilize people for collective action.

In terms of the grievances, the movement has aligned with typical concerns of ordinary people in the North who generally feel disadvantaged. Although not everyone finds the armed struggle an adequate response to this problem, the interviews suggest that some people consider rebellion justified (*relevance*). Many also expressed suspicions that the federal government has been favoring Christians, has been using the security agencies to treat Muslims unfairly, and has been part of a Western effort of suppressing Islam (*compatibility*). These political views closely resemble core parts of Boko Haram’s diagnostic framing. The sect has also successfully exploited instances of insecurity and repression for its mobilization. The repression and especially the arbitrary arrests of civilians in the struggle against Boko Haram created strong local discontent. In the light of the common suspicion that the federal government and the security forces serve a Christian agenda, this seems to have confirmed important parts of Boko Haram’s problem diagnosis about the violent oppression of Muslims (*empirical credibility*).

In the eyes of many, Boko Haram’s propagated solution of imposing Islamic principles on politics and the society has been a logical and promising answer to the dismal state of affairs. Especially the goal of *sharia* implementation has been immensely popular in the North. This has been a long-standing demand by virtually all Islamic organizations in the region, and many people strongly believe that the *sharia* would improve their living conditions. The aim of an Islamic political and social order and the strategies of migration and *jihad* also find considerable resonance. These historically well-established strategies are seen as legitimate responses for situations – like the present one – in which corrupt and “infidel” leaders betray the Islamic ideals and tyrannize the population (*compatibility*). Concomitantly, foreign jihadist groups (including Al-Qaeda) achieved much popularity in Northern Nigeria. For years before the conflict escalation of Boko Haram, people drew on the image of Bin Laden to signal their discontent and demand for radical change and the Islamization of Nigerian politics. In this

context, Boko Haram's rallying calls for *jihad*, which the movement also partly aligned with Dan Fodio's legacy and these foreign jihadist movements, have resonated with people.

Many of these frames also have important resonance in motivational regard. The calls for the *sharia*, an Islamic state, migration, and *jihad* have strong emotional power. The *sharia* and the Islamic state are seen as almost "natural" form of government, whereas democracy and secularism remain strange to many people. In addition, the sect's framing has successfully conveyed the image of a strong and committed group, which can appeal to people and motivate them for participation. Finally, the sect leaders have successfully established themselves as local authorities and Yusuf also had strong *charismatic appeal* and *credibility* in the eyes of his audience.

Although the framing has resonated in important ways, in other regards it has failed to convince many among the audience about the legitimacy, aims, and strategy of Boko Haram. The main weakness has been that most Muslims in the North have disagreed about the necessity of migration and *jihad*. Migration is the opposite of what many strive for, considering that Western education is seen as avenue for improving living conditions. Despite the strong cultural compatibility of *jihad*, the call for action has also been widely dismissed. It is foremost the high number of civilian casualties, both Muslim and Christian, that has discredited the violent struggle (*incompatibility*). The strong *counterframing* by religious and political leaders has also undermined the resonance by shaping the image of the sect as "un-Islamic." Moreover, it has contributed to the common understanding of the movement as opposing Western education in the narrow sense (which few Northerners would support), whereas the movement actually argues to fight for political-religious reforms (which many would support). Finally, there have been *inconsistencies*: The high civilian death toll and the use of technological and Western products has seemed to contradict basic tenets of Boko Haram's framing.

While the extent of Boko Haram's frame resonance certainly has its limitations, the analysis showed that key parts of the movement's framing have significant resonance with the general population in the North. This assertion still needs further research, but it is likely that the collection action frames have resonated to the point that people have joined the movement, thereby making the campaign possible. The following section assesses the reasons for movement participation in more detail.

6.3. Movement Participation

This section assesses the relevance of frame resonance versus other explanations for participation in Boko Haram. As a caveat, the availability and quality of data on the inside of Boko Haram and motivations for participation has been low at the time of writing.

6.3.1. Frame Resonance

Assessing resonance among Boko Haram members and the audience has been difficult for lack of access, as point out above. It was impossible to interview any active or former Boko Haram members for the present study due to the ongoing status of the insurgency. Therefore, the following draws on media and other sources. The available evidence suggests that frame resonance has indeed played a major role for motivating people to join the movement and pursue its struggle.

Non-Violent Phase

During the non-violent phase, according to news reporting, hundreds or perhaps a few thousand Muslims from various places across the North abandoned their previous work, life, and sometimes even family in order to join Yusuf's group at Maiduguri (Daily Trust 2009, 17 August; Weekly Trust 2009, 8 August; Vanguard 2009, 4 August). Following these news reports, those who migrated to become sect followers saw their mission as a religious struggle. For example, one young man stated his reason for joining as follows: "I believe in their teaching and that is what I read in the Quran due to that we desire that everybody should be practicing muslims" (Vanguard 2009, 31 July). Similarly, one woman who had joined the movement alongside her husband recounted that they had gone to Maiduguri for "studying the holy Quran" (Weekly Trust 2009, 8 August). These news reports also commonly explain that those who joined Boko Haram during this time did so for waging *jihad*; however, it remains unclear if this reflects the self-understanding by those who became movement adherents or merely the journalist's perception of them. Another main storylines also is that many of those who joined Yusuf's movement had been university graduates who had "torn their university degrees apart to give up everything for *jihad*" (for instance, see Harnischfeger 2012: 498). In light of the described radicalization of many at Northern university campuses, this has been a highly plausible assumption.

Besides this resonance of the call for migration and *jihad*, there is also much evidence to suggest that the personality, charismatic appeal, and credibility of Yusuf motivated many to follow him. After the July 2009 uprising one young movement member told journalists that

“[i]t was the mood of Mohammed Yusuf’s teaching – the energy that helped me to join him” (BBC 2009, 2 September). The journalist Ahmad Salkida, who had become very close to Yusuf, recounted a similar view on the sect leader: “I admire his depth of knowledge, oratorical prowess and apparent willingness to emulate Prophet Muhammad (SAW). In early 2002, Yusuf was seen by many as a likely heir to the renowned late Sheik Ja’afar Mahmud Adam in Maiduguri on account of his brilliance and closeness to the late renowned scholar” (Salkida 2010). Finally, also news reporting from Katsina at the time of the July 2009 uprising suggests that the sect leader commanded immense power over his followers (Daily Trust 2009, 27 July-b).

Rebellion

The call for *jihad* seems to have resonated and mobilized people also since the beginning of the rebellion. Available sources suggest that the sect has used its CAFs for rebel recruitment and that the combatants have developed a self-understanding as being *mujahideen* in a *jihad*.

While the statements by the movement that have been analyzed above are certainly aimed at mobilizing people for rebellion, it is necessary to take a closer look at the actual recruitment efforts. Unfortunately, at the moment, the recruitment processes remain largely unknown. None of the interviewees had observed recruitment by the sect other than the public preaching. Especially at the beginning of the rebellion, when the movement acted clandestinely, much of the recruitment of new members was probably done through the group’s peer networks. According to news reports, during the third stage of the rebellion, the movement also recruited people through itinerant preachers (IRIN 2014, 16 April). These preachers commonly explained the sect’s beliefs and goals to people. As one villager told journalists, “Boko Haram men came and told us to stop wasting our lives here and join them in the holy battle to save our faith and the lives of our families, who are living in abject poverty here” (IRIN 2015, 3 March). In the training camps of the sect, new recruits have also commonly been lectured about the sect’s mission. A young man who had dropped out from military training told journalists that “[w]e were reading the Koran and they would preach to us about fighting for the Muslim faith” (IRIN 2014, 16 April).¹⁶⁷

Besides the recruitment, the leaders and commanders also seem to have used the CAFs when preparing the sect’s adherents for battle: For example, in the run-up to the July 2009

¹⁶⁷ Such lecturing during military training, however, puts pressure on the recruits and may resemble indoctrination, propaganda, and persuasion more than framing (see 5.2.3).

uprising, Yusuf reportedly preached to his followers (Ao8): “Allah said that if you went into an agreement with anyone and he later breached it, and we had an agreement with the law enforcement agents not to touch us and now they have dared even to kill some of us, the Quran says you should kill them!” Besides such religious justification, martyrdom and paradise was also promised. At one point, the sect’s deputy leader Abu Sa’ad seems to have addressed the combatants by the following words: “You should look for victory or martyrdom, which is victory in the eyes of God (...) A martyr knows he is going to die, knows there are enemies, but goes to the battlefield anyway, without fear of death because he loves God and he knows God will smile on him” (cited in: Perry 2014, 18 July). Similarly, a young girl who fled from her assignment as suicide bomber recounted that Boko Haram’s recruiters had promised her and others to become martyrs and enter paradise (Daily Trust 2014, 25 December).

This suggests that the CAFs have been used for recruitment and battle preparation. In absence of direct contact to active or former members, I cannot present strong evidence that the frames have also resonated. Nevertheless, three observable aspects of the behavior of the sect and its combatants make it plausible that many adherents have developed a self-understanding as being *mujahideen* and fighting for *jihad*.

Firstly, in their attacks Boko Haram’s combatants have constantly been shouting “Allahu Akbar” (“God is Great”), which may indicate a self-understanding as fighting in the name of Allah and which would mirror a core part of the movement’s framing. The shouting has been reported from eyewitnesses that I interviewed, by human rights organizations, and can also be heard in Boko Haram’s videos (e.g. AI 2014a: 10; YouTube Video 2014, 28 March). Reports from the attacks by the Nigerian Taliban in late 2003 and from the July 2009 uprising of the movement similarly mention the shouting of “Allahu Akbar” during battle (Daily Trust 2003, 31 December, 2009, 28 July). Such shouting may have served different purposes (including coordination and attack warning), but appears foremost as expression of the common cause and justification of the fighting. Thereby, it may have also created resolve for *jihad* and adherence to the movement’s agenda among the combatants.

Secondly, some of the violence has been performed in symbolic ways. Especially the beheadings that occurred mostly at the third stage of the rebellion were carried out as almost religious ceremonies. Although videos of such beheadings may be staged for propagandistic purposes, they may still give insights into the sect’s worldviews and justifications. In the video of the decapitation of an air force soldier by suspected Boko Haram members, they explain

that the soldier will be given the “prescribed punishment by Allah” for “worshipping the state and anyone doing that is against Allah” (YouTube Video 2014, 22 July).¹⁶⁸ The video ends with quranic recitations and the chanting “Allahu Akbar.” While it is impossible to read the minds of those involved, the justification given and performance of the violence closely resembles the movement’s political-religious agenda, as encapsulated in the CAFs. This makes frame resonance among them likely.

Finally, news and eyewitness reports from cities and towns occupied by Boko Haram around 2014 suggest that in these places the movement has sought to establish an Islamic order by imposing the *sharia*. One interviewed eyewitness from Mubi expressed that Boko Haram’s rebels brought order to the city, enforced rules at markets (e.g. to prevent people from being overcharged when buying goods), and asked people to seek Islamic education only. In his view, the fighters presented themselves as role models: “You see them reading the Quran; they are always reading the Quran” (C74). News reporting from other places in Borno confirms that local Boko Haram operatives told people not to read any other book than the Quran and asked them to dedicate themselves entirely to Islamic education (Daily Trust 2014, 3 April; BBC 2013, 7 June). Moreover, in several places under Boko Haram’s control efforts of implementing the *sharia* were made (Daily Trust 2014, 21 August; Premium Times 2014, 4 November). Although produced for propagandistic purpose, one video released by the sect shows how *sharia* law was imposed in one place by public lashings and other harsh punishments (YouTube Video 2014, 5 October). An eyewitness recalled that a Boko Haram commander explained to her that she was now living in an Islamic state: “You are no longer in Nigeria. You are now in an Islamic kingdom. Here, women’s rights are respected, not like in Nigeria where women are made to work, farm, fetch water and firewood, and where you have all types of discrimination” (HRW 2014: 1). In this vein, under Boko Haram’s control, Mubi was also renamed *Madinatul Islam* (i.e. “City of Islam”).

Although this needs further research, the available evidence suggests that Boko Haram’s combatants and commanders have been seeing themselves as fighting for *jihad*. It is unlikely that they would constantly shout “Allahu Akbar” during attacks, perform some of the violence in such symbolic ways, and establish Islamic governance structures, if none of this

¹⁶⁸ In another video that shows the beheading of two police agents, the deputy leader Abu Sa’ad seems to have explained the violence as follows: “We are punishing in terms of what Allah prescribes. I want to tell Nigeria and the world that we give them the gift of these two policemen, this sergeant and corporal. We want to give these men the judgment of Allah. (...) Let the world know that we will never compare anyone to God. No government, no constitution, can compare to God” (cited by: Perry 2014, 18 July).

had meaning to them. Thus, a strong resonance of the CAFs among the members is likely. It is still possible, however, that they joined for other reasons and adopted the movement's beliefs only later. Therefore, other common explanations for protest participation are reviewed in the following.

6.3.2. Selective Incentives

As described above, Boko Haram seems not to have generated substantial amounts of revenues to distribute them or provide security and services to any major extent (see 4.1.4). During the non-violent phase, the group provided some services such as Islamic education, micro-credits, and shelter to its members. Yet, if compared to the vast services provided by Islamist movements such as HAMAS (Robinson 2004), this was negligible. It may have attracted some people locally but is certainly not the main reason why people joined the movement under Yusuf. It was only during the third stage of the rebellion, when Boko Haram controlled large parts of Borno State, that the armed group had some capacity to provide such services. Yet, even at that point, the group had difficulties to control territory and establish Islamic governance structures, which undermined their capacity to provide social services and security. The many massacres even signaled to the audience, as found in the interviews, that Boko Haram is no security provider.

Nevertheless, the widely shared assumption that Boko Haram operates on behalf of some patronage networks may have created the image that money can be made from joining. This could have appealed to some people who may have joined for economic expectations. I found this logic in interviews. For example, one young man angrily argued (C59):

There is no employment in town. Some people that are doing the insurgency, they gave them money, like five hundred thousand Naira [about US\$ 3,000; JS]. (...) Me, I no have money. How will I go to school and find knowledge? I have no work. If someone gives me five hundred thousand and say 'go, kill the chairman of the local government', I will kill him.

Several reviewed news reports suggest that people may have joined for such economic expectations. For example, a young man from Borno State told journalists that “[s]ome of them join because they are interested in handling guns because that's new to them, and some are aware that it is a way of getting some money” (BBC 2013, 7 June). Such economic expectations can also co-occur alongside ideational explanations related to framing. For instance, another young man explained to journalists that the preacher recruiting for Boko Haram had “told my father that I would come back rich and a great Muslim, so he allowed me to go. We were reading the Koran and they would preach to us about fighting for the Muslim faith” (IRIN 2014,

16 April). By this account, sending the son to the rebellion may have aimed at both economic and ideational aims. Presently, it is too early to draw any solid conclusions on the role of such selective incentives including economic expectations for Boko Haram's recruitment. Still, for the shortage of funding and the movement's difficulties to provide security, selective incentives are unlikely to explain much of the participation.

6.3.3. Coercion

Coercion has also played some role in the sect's recruitment, but again mostly during the third stage of the rebellion. Regarding the non-violent phase and early insurgency, Boko Haram has largely lacked the organizational capacity to coerce people into joining. Although a first report about coerced participation of 30 persons exists concerning the Nigerian Taliban uprising in late 2003 (BBC 2004, 14 January), this was probably an exception. The participation in the movement seems to have been voluntary at the time. As one member of the group told journalists after the July 2009 uprising, "[t]hey do not force anybody to join" (Vanguard 2009, 31 July).¹⁶⁹

During the third stage of the rebellion, however, at least 2,000 people have been forcibly recruited (AI 2015a: 59). Most of those abducted were unmarried women and girls, including many Christians, some of who were forced to convert (HRW 2014: 2). They were recruited mostly to become wives of members. Some hundred boys and men were also recruited by force at this stage. Nevertheless, the movement does not seem to have resorted to coercion as alternative to efforts of convincing people to join voluntarily. Even at the height of the insurgency, when coercive recruitment became frequent, the movement still showed restraint towards civilians on many occasions. In other words, in some situations when the rebels could have recruited people by force, they refrained from it. A striking example is the Giwa barracks attack in March 2014. The rebels liberated up to 2,000 people from prison and invited them to join but also let people leave at will (AI 2015b: 43). An eyewitness from Mubi under Boko Haram-control made a similar observation (C74):

The Boko Haram members will come and greet you and start preaching. They tell you that 'the government is cheating us' and that 'please, stand up and fight for your right.' The way they do their things is well organized. They are not coercing people. Some people even come to them and ask them 'we want to follow you.' But they said that they had to seek permission from their superiors first.

¹⁶⁹ Interviewees from Maiduguri who had witnessed the movement under Yusuf confirmed this (C31, 32).

Another eyewitness report from a village in Jigawa State similarly suggests that Boko Haram only forced people to listen to them but not to join them, even though there was an opportunity for coercive recruitment (Daily Trust 2014, 24 May):

We were forced to listen to their preaching after Jumma'a prayers. (...) Those not preaching were stationed outside the mosque premises with their machine guns and others stayed in strategic locations until the end of the session. They don't force anybody to join them. At the end, they succeeded in recruiting one boy from our village. He followed them and never came back.

In other places, according to news reports, the movement used force for recruitment if the mobilization through preaching and political education had failed. In an early example, one person reportedly was abducted by the Nigerian Taliban following mobilization efforts by the use of the movement's CAFs: "They tried to convince me to join their movement. They said we would pray together and get to paradise together. (...) They said their wanted to establish a new system of sharia law, different from the one practiced now" (BBC 2004, 14 January). Similarly, in 2014 Boko Haram operatives occasionally used violent means at the end of preaching sessions if they had failed to convince people to join (AFP 2014, 3 April; Daily Trust 2014, 6 November-a). Nevertheless, during the third stage when the rebels had the military means to abduct people in even larger numbers, they did not rely on coercion only but still made many efforts to justify actions and convince people to participate voluntarily.

Coercion, however, seems to have been common to maintain the cohesion of the rebel group.¹⁷⁰ Qaqa, the former speaker, gave insights into how this worked in February 2012 (This Day 2012, 21 February):

Once you are in, you are in. If you attempt to leave, you are seen as a traitor who must die. (...) Most of us were tired of fighting but we couldn't come out to say so because of fear of reprisal from Shekau on dissenting members. Several of our members that denounced the violent struggle were slaughtered in front of their wives and children.

According to his account, persons selected for suicide bombing also had no choice: "They are usually handpicked. Once you are handpicked, it is death either way; if you refused, you would be killed on the orders of the leadership" (The Nation 2012, 9 February). Furthermore, he stated that within the insurgent group "[e]veryone lived in fear more of leadership of the group even more than the security agencies" (Daily Champion 2012, 14 February). Such fears were also

¹⁷⁰ This typical for armed groups who commonly seek to prevent members from exiting due to the security risks that this entails for everyone in the struggle (Bjørge and Horgan 2009).

reported by former combatants who stated that “any of us found missing will be looked for and if he is found to have fled would be slaughtered if caught” (This Day 2013, 27 October). Besides instilling fear, however, the movement’s cohesion was likely also created through efforts of political education and of motivating the members for collective action, which have never ceased. To sum up, coercion has clearly played a role for recruitment and maintaining cohesion, especially at the later stages of the rebellion. Even then, however, it has never replaced mobilization efforts by the use of the CAFs.

6.3.4. Brief Summary

To summarize, as far as the available evidence suggests, people seem to have joined Boko Haram foremost because they found the CAFs convincing. Boko Haram has propagated its beliefs, demands, and emotional appeals not only via media and other statements to the wider audience, but also more immediately to combatants and prospective members during the recruitment process and battle preparation. This seems to have resonated considering that the combatants appear as committed fighters in the struggle for an Islamic order. The DCCN’s report from 2009 also confirmed this impression based on information from Islamic scholars and organizations that had been in direct contact with Boko Haram’s leaders and members. The report found (DCCN 2009: 23):

[T]he [Boko Haram] group, like many other religious extremist groups is not out to commit robbery, rape, or other such materialistic or non-ideologically motivated crimes. Members are usually morally upright people of integrity with wrong interpretations about important issues in Islam, but who are convinced that they are absolutely right and others are wrong. Consequently, their actions and motivations come from their faith-based ideology and interpretation of Islamic religious texts.

The finding that the movement’s CAFs have resonated with people and have convinced them about participation is also sustained by the absence of strong alternative explanations. Only at the third stage of the rebellion, Boko Haram had the organizational and financial capacities to provide some selective incentives and to use coercive recruitment on a large scale. Hence, this cannot provide an explanation for why the rebellion occurred in the first place. Moreover, even during the third stage of the insurgency, Boko Haram has been rather a provider of insecurity than security, and the group has also lacked financial capacities to pay most of the members. The prospects of money still may have motivated some people to approach the movement. Finally, even though coercive recruitment was used in thousands of cases at this stage, the group did not abandon their efforts of mobilizing people through the use of CAFs. Looking at

the entire existence of Boko Haram, thus, there is strong reason to assume that people have joined the struggle mainly because they have been convinced by the sect's framing.

6.4. Case Study Summary

This chapter shows that the CAFs, as shaped by the leaders and speakers of Boko Haram, have successfully mobilized people for a *jihad* to impose Islamic principles on the Nigerian politics and society. The movement's leaders have declared the present state of affairs in Nigeria as "un-Islamic": In their view, the status quo has been marked by democracy, secularism, corruption, and many other forms of political and social behavior that infringe the Islamic ideals. According to the speakers, this has resulted from a long-standing conspiracy organized by the "infidels" – who are Christians, the Western world, and Muslims who collaborate with them – in the name of *boko*. To overcome these grievances and impose Islamic principles, including most importantly the *sharia*, the movement's leaders have rallied people initially for withdrawing from the corrupt and "un-Islamic" order by joining the movement in migration (*hijra*) and ultimately by also calling for rebellion (*jihad*). The call for *jihad* can be found in documents that already precede the onset of the violent fighting in July 2009. Thus, the July 2009 uprising was not a spontaneous outburst of violence or merely a response to repression. Instead, the movement's leaders had been preaching the need for rebellion to the followers already for some time (possibly years) before the escalation of violence. There has been only a minor frame dispute within the movement: A smaller faction urged the sect's leadership to return to dialogue and reconciliation. This indicates that overall the movement's leaders have very consistently and constantly mobilized followers for rebellion since mid-2009.

The condemnation of the status quo and the call for withdrawal and rebellion has resonated with at least an important share of the general population in the North. The framing by Boko Haram's leaders has successfully aligned with people's shared grievances, their social aspirations, and pre-existing narratives and shared values. It has addressed their typical grievances about the bad living conditions, nurtured and drawn on the widely prevailing suspicion about the federal government and security services as Christian-dominated, and exploited outrage over repression. For solving these problems, Boko Haram's speakers have relied on some historically well-established responses. The idea of creating an Islamic order based on the *sharia* through migration and *jihad* has much cultural legitimacy in the North. The movement most likely also profited from the wide popularity of foreign jihadist groups that they partly aligned with. These framing elements can be assumed to have resonated also because of their strong emotional power: People have been very aggrieved about some of the

addressed political problems (in particular the bad living conditions), the *sharia* is widely revered as the divine and incorruptible solution to these problems, and also the idea of *jihad* is highly powerful as emotional appeal. Therefore, Boko Haram's CAFs have much resonance.

At the same time, there clearly are limitations of the frame resonance. The Northern political and religious elite has remained unconvinced about the propagated *jihad*. This is foremost the result of their economic interest in maintaining "One Nigeria", which allows them to benefit from the many corruption opportunities. Yet, core parts of the CAFs have also been unconvincing to them. In their view, Boko Haram has not been credible as a religious movement because of the many attacks on civilians (both Christians and Muslims). Also, some have understood Boko Haram as foremost opposed to Western education and schools, which they generally find acceptable and compatible with their religious understanding. Finally, to them the sect has appeared to be inconsistent in various regards of the framing and to operate merely as another "parochial rebel" that proclaims *jihad* but only fights to make money from patronage networks. For these reasons, many people have not found Boko Haram's CAFs convincing and therefore have also not considered joining the struggle.

However, most of those who have joined the movement seem to have done so because they have been convinced by the CAFs. Available statements by movement followers as well as the observation of many symbolic acts by Boko Haram show that the followers, indeed, see themselves as pursuing a migration and *jihad* for imposing an Islamic order. This finding was sustained by testing alternative explanations too: Yet, for most of the time of the rebellion, selective incentives and coercion have not played any substantial role in the mobilization of followers for the struggle. It was only during the third stage of the rebellion – i.e. more than three years after the beginning of the armed conflict – that Boko Haram developed capacities to generate and distribute selective incentives and to coerce people into participation. However, even at this point there is much evidence that coercion has never replaced framing-based recruitment efforts. Instead, the convincing calls for protest by Boko Haram's speakers, which align with many parts of the cultural orientations and political attitudes of the movement's audience, have been the main reasons for how the movement has been able to mobilize people for the struggle.

7. Case Study: MASSOB's Framing

This chapter analyzes MASSOB's framing following to same steps as the previous case study: Firstly, the CAFs are identified from the movement's public statements and publications (7.1). Secondly, the resonance of the CAFs among the Igbo audience is assessed along the outlined success conditions of framing (7.2). Finally, it is assessed whether the movement members joined the struggle and pursue it as non-violent because of frame resonance, or whether selective incentives and coercion solve the puzzle (7.3).

7.1. Collective Action Frames

This section identifies the CAFs propagated by MASSOB's speakers. The movement is understood here as encompassing MASSOB proper and several other Biafran organizations whose statements have generally been accessible to Igbos in South-Eastern Nigeria. The analysis is subdivided as follows: At first, a brief introduction of the sources is given (7.1.1), thereafter, the main parts of MASSOB's CAFs are highlighted (7.1.2), and in the subsequent parts the CAFs are defined along the three dimensions of diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing (7.1.3 to 7.1.5).

7.1.1. Introducing the MASSOB Corpus

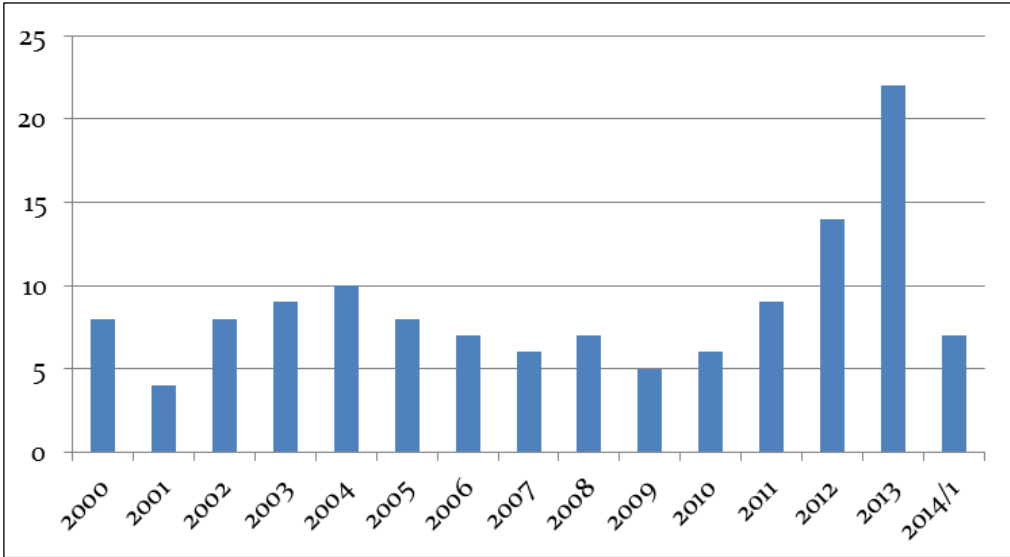
In identifying the movement's CAFs, the present study draws on a total of 130 documents consisting of recorded speeches, short statements and interviews (as published in Nigerian newspapers), and other publications by MASSOB and other Biafran organizations (for an overview, see Annex B). These documents cover relatively evenly the time frame of the analysis from 2000 to the first half of 2014 (see Figure 14).¹⁷¹ I did not conduct a word count considering that some of the books and newspapers by the movement were not available as digital copies. Yet, it is evident that the collected documents comprise more text in terms of direct quotes by the movement's leaders than the Boko Haram corpus.

The documents in the corpus were collected from the media (55%) and directly from sources related to the movement (45%). The former were obtained from keyword searches in

¹⁷¹ Documents from the first months of MASSOB's existence (September 1999-March 2000) were not available. It seems that the movement has attracted public attention only from February 2000 on.

online news archives¹⁷², and the latter from the movement’s websites, activists themselves, and MASSOB’s office at Lagos.¹⁷³ In contrast to Boko Haram, in the case of MASSOB seemingly countless public statements have been made by the movement’s leaders. Therefore, documents have been searched and selected in a manner to build a relatively representative corpus of movement statements.

Figure 14: Distribution of Documents and Statements by MASSOB in the Corpus



To build a relatively representative corpus, the documents and statements selected for the analysis encompass various document types, movement organizations, and movement representatives. Several key Biafran organizations from Nigeria and the diaspora are represented in the corpus: Since MASSOB proper has been the main player in the struggle, no fewer than 64% of the documents in the corpus comprise statements by its various leaders. Besides MASSOB proper, the corpus comprises an important share of radio broadcasts by VOBI (19%), statements by the BZM/F (7%), and publications and statements by various other Biafran organizations (combined 10%), which includes the BILIE, BHRI, BNYL, and Ekwe Nche. This includes five issues of the Eastern Pilot newspaper, which seems to be a collaboration of

¹⁷² As in the case of Boko Haram, keyword searches were performed in the allafrica.com archive, the Nexis.com archive, YouTube, and common internet search engines. Typical keywords used in these searches included the following: “MASSOB”, “Biafra”, “Ralph Uwazuruike”, “Uchenna Madu”, “Benjamin Onwuka”, “Ekwe Nche”, “Biafra Zionist Movement/Federation”, “Bilie/Bilie Human Rights Initiative/BHRI”, “claims”, “message”, “statement.” Again, very short statements (less than 50 words of direct quotations) in Nigerian media sources were generally excluded from the corpus.

¹⁷³ The archive on Biafraland.com (2011) has been a particularly valuable source for collecting press releases by MASSOB proper, transcripts of VOBI’s broadcasts, and other movement-related documents.

some of these organizations.¹⁷⁴ With regard to the diaspora-based organizations, only such statements that have been relatively accessible to the Biafran audience in Nigeria were included.¹⁷⁵ For instance, the VOBI radio broadcasts, although produced in the US, were available in the South-East on shortwave radio.¹⁷⁶ The more recent radio broadcasts by Radio Biafra (accessible both online and on shortwave) are excluded from the analysis. This was not for their lack of importance – in fact, Radio Biafra has attracted huge attention and listenership since it went on air in April 2012 – but because the years since 2012 have already been relatively overrepresented in the corpus. In general, when selecting documents for the corpus, emphasis was placed on obtaining a relatively equal distribution of documents over time. Overall, the distribution of documents is relatively even, except for the years 2012/13 (see Figure 14, p. 185). These years are relatively overrepresented due to the inclusion of several vocal Biafran organizations (including the BZM, BILIE/BHRI, and BNYL), which only emerged around the time.

The corpus reflects not only the main organizations in the struggle, but also their various speakers and the several different media types through which they addressed the audience. These media types encompass statements to journalists (as published in Nigerian newspapers, 32% of the documents in the corpus), VOBI radio broadcasts (19%)¹⁷⁷, press releases (17%), interviews with movement's leaders published in newspapers (11%), public speeches by movement's leaders (8%), activist newspapers (4%), and others (9%), including books, booklets, leaflets, and websites published by movement organizations.¹⁷⁸ These documents represent various speakers of the movement: Again, MASSOB's key figures Uwazuruike (25% of the documents in the corpus) and the Director of Information Uchenna Madu (13%) make up the largest share of the speakers in the corpus. Besides them, there is a broad range of other speakers who appear only once or twice in the corpus (33%). Finally, the speakers of VOBI (19%), Benjamin Onwuka (BZM, 6%), and Obinna Okoro (MASSOB, 3%)

¹⁷⁴ The Eastern Pilot is sponsored by the Movement for Outright Discontinuation of the Exploitation and Annihilation of Easterners (formed at New York). The newspaper features articles mostly by and on Bilie, BHRI, and Radio Biafra, and is printed and distributed from Lagos.

¹⁷⁵ Considering the shortage of internet access of most people in the Igboland during the early 2000s, except for the VOBI radio broadcasts I included online sources from the diaspora only for the 2010s.

¹⁷⁶ In general there have been relatively high access rates to radio transmission in South-East Nigeria: In 2004, about 73% of the male population in the region listened to the radio at least once per week (NPC 2004: 30).

¹⁷⁷ I randomly selected statements by four-month periods throughout VOBI's broadcasting (2002-2009).

¹⁷⁸ Strikingly, MASSOB proper has had neither an official website, nor a Facebook group.

represent important shares of the documents in the corpus. Comprising these various types of documents, organizations, and speakers for the whole period from 2000 to mid-2014, the corpus provides a broad and varied, and thus relatively representative, look at the public communication efforts of the movement.

Concerning data quality, there probably is some reporting bias and inaccuracy in some transcriptions in the corpus, but these problems appear much less pronounced than in the case of Boko Haram. As all of the statements collected for the corpus were made in English originally, no translation was involved. Still, some of the statements contained in the media may be inaccurate and inauthentic. On some instances, MASSOB's speakers discounted statements by self-proclaimed movement figures as "false, malicious, ungodly and abominable" and as being "sponsored by desperate, disgruntled, faceless agents of darkness" (B83). To address these issues, the many publications that were directly collected from the movement (45% of the sources) were used as a basis against which the authenticity of media statements was assessed. Moreover, to ensure accuracy, I relied only on high-quality news sources from Southern Nigeria¹⁷⁹ and, as far as available, from the South-East (21% of the media sources). Still, MASSOB once complained that the Southern press, which is largely based at Lagos in the Yorubaland, is biased against the movement (B21: 6). However, all in all these are minor data concerns only and the corpus can be seen as a largely reliable source of statements by the Biafran organizations.

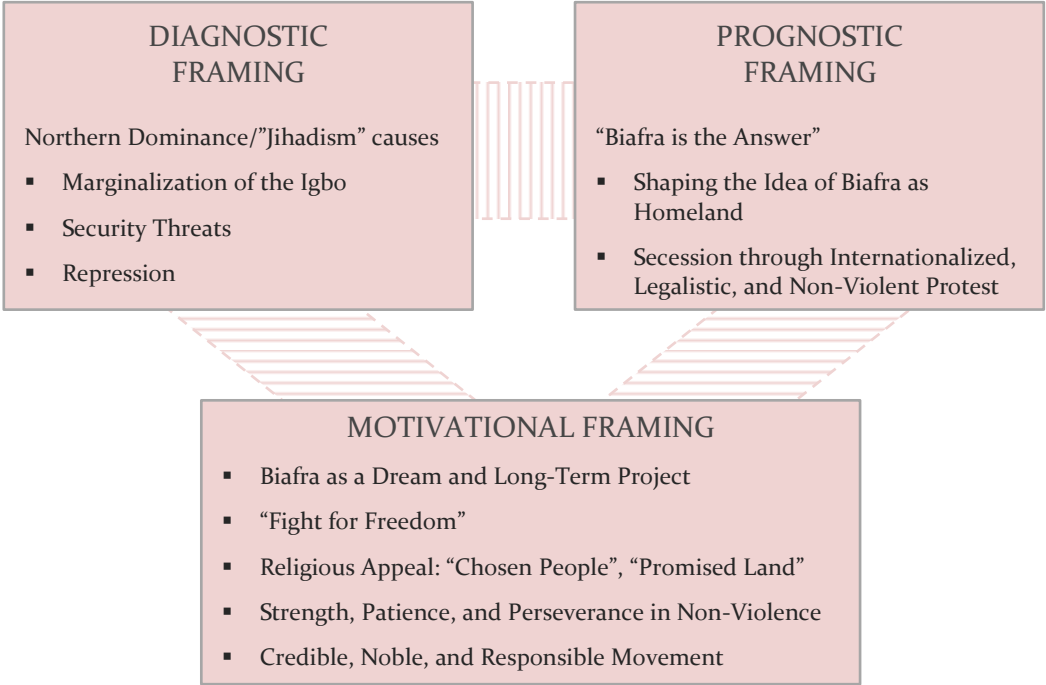
7.1.2. Overview: MASSOB's Collective Action Frames

MASSOB's CAFs revolve around the notions of Biafra and non-violence (see Figure 15, p. 188). The movement's leaders have framed the Biafrans, which mostly means the Igbo, as a disadvantaged and threatened identity group. In this view, the Muslim North and the co-conspiring Yoruba have suppressed Igbos to maintain power in Nigeria, prevent the East (which harbors the country's oil sources) from breaking away, and impose Islam on them. The discrimination against the Igbo has also partly been portrayed as punishment for the past Biafran struggle. Nevertheless, the leaders of MASSOB have propagated that Biafra still is the answer to these problems. The renewed struggle, however, should be pursued through non-violence and an internationalized and legalistic approach. To motivate people for joining, the leaders have made many emotional appeals, most importantly by shaping the image of Biafra

¹⁷⁹ This encompasses Vanguard (25% of the media sources), Daily Champion (10%), The Nation (7%), Daily Independent (6%), The Post Express (6%), and others (25%).

as a safe and prosperous alternative to the misery of Nigeria. They have also called the activists for patience and have aggrandized Biafra as long-term and almost biblical quest to sustain non-violence and commitment.

Figure 15: Overview on MASSOB's Collective Action Frames



The leaders have often addressed the "Easterners" and "Biafrans" as audience but have essentially spoken mostly to the Igbo. Such pan-Eastern identity, which encompasses both the Igbo and the South-Eastern minorities, was invoked, for instance, by Uwazuruike in 2001 (B10):

We salute our great brothers in the Niger Delta. We support the Ijaws, the Ogonis, the Kalabaris, the Ikwerres, the Efiks, the Ibibios, and others in their struggle for emancipation and resource control. We assure them that in Biafra, every community will control its resources as it is done in other civilized countries where true federalism is practiced.

The BZM's leader even extended the historical understanding of Biafra by also including Benue, Edo, and Kogi states (B97, 98, 104, 127). For the BNYL's leadership, "it will be a mockery of sort if this new Biafra is seen as an Igbo affair" (B118). Unsurprisingly, diaspora-based organizations and those parts of MASSOB located in the South-South have taken a stronger pan-Eastern view (B16, 19, 20).

However, much more frequently, the leaders have invoked the name and history of the Igbo, highlighted typical Igbo grievances, and framed Biafra as future homeland of Igbos, as shown below. Thus, within the movement's CAFs, the notions of the "East", "Easterners", and "Biafrans" have mostly meant the Igbo only.

7.1.3. Diagnostic Framing

In their diagnostic framing, MASSOB's leaders have stressed that the Easterners and in particular Igbos have been oppressed by a Northern conspiracy. This conspiracy allegedly already began at the time of Nigerian independence, culminated in the pogroms of 1966 and the war against Biafra, and has continued ever since the war's end, in part to punish Igbos for the attempted secession of Biafra. The leaders have argued that the North (led by the Hausa-Fulani), the Yoruba in the West, and self-serving Igbo elites are behind this anti-Eastern conspiracy. The latter has three main facets: The "marginalization" of the East and foremost the Igbo, threats to their security and physical survival, and the repression against MASSOB.

7.1.3.1. Marginalization of the Igbo

MASSOB's main diagnostic frame has been the condemnation of various instances of political, economic, and social discrimination. By using the notion of "marginalization", the movement's leaders have framed in particular the Igbo as disadvantaged group. Accordingly, Igbos lack access to political offices, federal allocations, and basic infrastructure. The blame has been attributed to the Muslim-North, in particular the Hausa-Fulani, who have allegedly marginalized the Igbo as punishment for the past Biafran struggle. In a typical statement, BZM's leader Onwuka expressed the following (B114):

We, the Biafrans, felt that since 1970 we were defeated militarily. Although they say there was 'no victor, no vanquished', but from the actions of the federal government of Nigeria, it has shown that the Biafrans are still being reminded that we were defeated. There is nothing to show that we are part of Nigeria. There is no federal government presence in the entire Eastern region of the Republic of Biafra. Nothing, no industry, we do not have roads, airports, seaports, there is nothing infrastructure-wise to show that this country, this part of the world, is part of Nigeria.

In another typical statement, the situation was denounced as the "calculated marginalisation, humiliation, dehumanisation, pauperisation of Ndigbo by the pre-and post-war political/military alliance of the Hausa/Fulani/Yoruba hegemony" (Bo4):

Ndigbo have made too many sacrifices for the boondoggle called Nigeria. We do not deserve to and will not sacrifice any more young Igbomen and women to [Nigerian unity] that means nothing and stand for nothing but treachery, corruption, repression, nepotism, joblessness, poverty, illiteracy, disease, wanton degradation and destruction of human life, shameless stealing of other people's money and resources, and the denial of fundamental human rights including the right to control one's land and property.

Besides such broad condemnation of Nigeria's failings, some of the highlighted grievances are more closely related to the Igbo. These encompass e.g. the properties that Easterners lost when they fled from the North and West before and during the Civil War, and the imposed "20 Pounds policy", which reduced bank savings to 20 Pounds after the war (Bo1, 104). Moreover, some of the major instances of discrimination against the Igbo (as identified above, see 4.2.2) have been invoked. For instance, the movement's leaders have condemned that there has never been an Igbo president in Nigerian history, as expressed by Uwazuruike (B23): "We know that even in the next hundred years no person from the South East or South South would be president of Nigeria and no Igboman will be president of Nigeria. (...) The Hausas and Yorubas do not consider the Igboman as part of Nigeria." Moreover, the unequal distribution of states has been condemned: "If you come to Nigeria, it is only the South East that has only five states and the least number of local governments. And when they share revenues, the North will go home with billions of naira and scanty amount of money will be given to our governors" (B87). In their messages, the movement's leaders have commonly depicted such treatment as particularly unfair considering the post-war promise that there would be "no victor, no vanquished" but "rehabilitation, reconstruction, and reconciliation."

The leaders of MASSOB have also harshly criticized the corrupt and self-serving political leadership of the Igbo, in particular the governors, senators, and national legislators: "The Igbo elite are the agents of our oppressors. They are used to sabotage progressive efforts in Igboland" (Uwazuruike, B79: 7-8). They were denounced as "stooges and errand boys" (B83), and Ekwe Nche asked rhetorically: "How many of you are ready and willing to suffer deprivation and even go to prison like Nelson Mandela in defence of the rights of Ndigbo?" (Bo4). Such condemnation can be found already in the earliest statements, e.g. Uwazuruike's Aba Declaration from 2000 which described them as "selfish" (Bo3).

While many statements purport to (also) speak on behalf of the South-Southern ethnic groups, they hardly contain typical grievances from the region. The complaint about too small federal oil revenue allocations¹⁸⁰, which has been the main grievance of the South-South, was hardly ever made by MASSOB. A few statements by MASSOB, however, refer to the Odi

¹⁸⁰ For example, Uwazuruike complained in 2000 that "[y]ou steal my oil, take every mineral resource in my land and develop other places. There is no development in my own area, then you want to pacify me to agree, so that you can continue to exploit me" (Bo2).

massacre of 1999¹⁸¹ and the environmental degradation from the oil production in the region (e.g. B104). Thus, when speaking about marginalization, the movement's leaders have addressed foremost the Igbo rather than the entire East.

In their problem diagnosis, the leaders of MASSOB have also interpreted the present situation through the lens of the power contestation of the post-independence polity. As described above (3.1.2), after independence the federation had three regions (North, West, and East) which became controlled by the major ethnic groups (Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo) that competed for power.¹⁸² MASSOB's leaders have still framed this as the main fault line of Nigeria. Although this competition still exists, the Nigerian contestations over power and resources have become far more complex since the 1960s (Hill 2012). In this process, the three regions have been dissolved into a total of 36 states and six geo-political zones. Thus, large parts of the problem diagnosis are oriented along the past rather than the present.

7.1.3.2. Security Threats

MASSOB's leaders have depicted the security of the Easterners, foremost Igbos, as threatened due to the purported Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba conspiracy. Insecurity has been a constant and central theme within their framing efforts. In many public statements the leaders draw a historical line from mass killings of Igbos and other Easterners during the 1966 pogroms and the Civil War to the present-day security threats. Uwazuruike did this as follows in 2000 (B03):

[A]bout 33 years ago, there arose the need to save our people from total annihilation. (...) Today, we are yet face with a similar situation. The unprovoked and organized killing of our people in Nigeria have remained unabated. (...) The introduction of Sharia Law in the northern states threatens the economic life of our people in the northern states. It also threatens the security of our people. In a recent demonstration in Kaduna State against the introduction of the said Sharia Law, about 5000 of our people resident in Kaduna were killed.

Diaspora-based organizations such as VOBİ and local groups including BİLİE and BZM recently often described the Civil War and current situation as "genocide." The analyzed documents suggest that speakers of MASSOB proper have rarely used this specific term, but Uwazuruike repeatedly and similarly spoke of "(total) annihilation" (B01, 03, 10).

¹⁸¹ Nigerian military troops killed hundreds of civilians and destroyed almost the entire town of Odi (Bayelsa State) in November 1999 after an armed confrontation between the police and a local gang (HRW 1999, 22 December).

¹⁸² The organizational structure of MASSOB proper also reflects this: Below the top leadership, MASSOB has high-level regional representatives in the North, West, and East.

At the beginning of MASSOB's struggle, the movement's leaders interpreted the introduction of the *sharia*, the riots in Kaduna and Jos, and the presidency of Obasanjo as evidence of a "state policy to eliminate and annihilate the Igbo tribe" (B11): "What is the essence of killing an Igbo in the sharia riots? It's part of the process of annihilation" (B01). Obasanjo's election to the presidency in 1999 sustained the image that the continued marginalization and insecurity of Igbos and other Easterners is state-orchestrated. Uwazuruike framed Obasanjo, who had been a general of the FMG during the Civil War, as "a natural hater of Igbo people" (B01). Similarly, VOBI reminded its listeners that Obasanjo "presided over the genocide of millions of Biafrans by the Nigerian army" (B14). In this light, the movement's speakers linked the violent events of the early 2000s including the Odi massacre, the "Sharia riots", and repression of MASSOB with the Civil War: "Some of us have seen this type of horror before. Biafrans uprooted and disrupted from Northern Nigeria in 1966. Biafrans who experienced the war of self-preservation, the Biafran war, thirty years ago. Biafrans in Kaduna and Jos in the last 2 years" (VOBI, 2002, B14).

During the 2010s, Boko Haram has been the key example to illustrate the persisting security threats. Many statements depicted Igbos, Easterners, and Christians in general as the main victim of Boko Haram. For instance, the editorials of the Eastern Pilot warned that the "Hausas/Fulani have organised themselves into what they call the Boko Haram, aiming to annihilate the southern people and their culture, and also wipe out the religion of Christianity from Nigeria" (B96, similarly: B94, 101). The newspaper also claimed that 65% of Boko Haram's victims, i.e. about 2000 people, were Easterners (B101).¹⁸³ Similarly, in 2013 Onwuka (BZM) lamented that "[w]e are being killed on a daily basis. Our schools, hospitals, places of worship and churches are being bombed on a daily basis. Millions of Biafrans have lost their lives during the past 40 years" (B111). In the same year, MASSOB also dedicated its "stay-at-home" event to the "numerous killings of Ndigbo in Nigeria, mostly in the Northern Region" to "honour our innocent brothers/Sisters (...) who have been wickedly and callously killed, murdered and massacred by Islamist terrorist (Boko Haram) Nigerian Army, police and Islamist Religious fundamentalists" (B113).

7.1.3.3. Repression

The movement's speakers have frequently complained about repression by the Nigerian security agents, in particular by the police and SSS. The arresting or killing of its unarmed

¹⁸³ This seems exaggerated and most victims of Boko Haram were Muslim.

activists has become one of the major grievances. For instance, VOBI expressed in a broadcast that “[w]e share the suffering of yet another group of marchers who were arrested by the Nigeria police and are now under detention in unknown cells and prisons. (...) [W]e shall continue our non-violent protests, until we obtain their release and until Biafra is actualized” (B47). Many statements point out the severity of the repression (B83):

We've lost more than 7, 000 members in the hands of Nigerian security agents, millions have gone through prisons, we have been persecuted, harassed, arrested, dehumanized, tortured, traumatized, taunted, mesmerized, prosecuted, imprisoned, killed, our fundamental human rights abused for our struggle believe in Biafra.

As mentioned, such proclaimed numbers of casualties have often been inflated (see 4.2.5). The movement’s speakers have likely sought to exaggerate the extent of the repression to win attention, make Nigeria appear more oppressive, and instill anger among the audience.

The repression has also been interpreted as part of the broader presumed effort by the North to oppress and eliminate Igbo. Uwazuruike expressed this in a typical statement as follows (B37):

[I]n the context of Ndigbo and the Easterners, the Nigeria Police become too reactionary because of the hatred they have for our people. For instance, day in day out, they kill our people in the North, they make secret arrests. They arrest one or two almajiris, the next day they release all of them. Look at the trend of events, since the Maitatsine up to date that our people have been killed in the North, how many arrests were made? When were they prosecuted, how many people were jailed or killed? None. But you see MASSOB members who never did anything other than hold rallies or meetings, you arrest them, keep them for nine months, one year, two years, then you can understand the hatred and that is part of what I am fighting for because our people are not wanted in Nigeria.

Several such statements emphasized that the repression is particularly unjustified considering MASSOB’s peaceful stance. For example, Onwuka argued that “[y]ou cannot try Uwazuruike because Uwazuruike is fighting for independence of his people. Uwazuruike is not a terrorist, he is fighting against injustices that are meted against our people” (B114). Occasionally, the movement’s speakers suggested that the government even offered amnesty and concessions to armed groups such as the OPC and Boko Haram, whereas it has repressed the non-violent

Biafran struggle (e.g. B37, B116)¹⁸⁴: “[N]o group of freedom fighters has been so treated the way the Massobians are treated in Nigeria” (B52).

The condemnation of repression seems to have been most pronounced during the mid-2000s. Between 2005 and 2007, large parts of the movement’s leadership including Uwazuruike were in prison. Virtually all statements collected from MASSOB proper and VOBI from this time demanded their immediate release. MASSOB’s “stay-at-home” events during these years were also centered on this demand.

7.1.4. Prognostic Framing

Confronted with these grievances, MASSOB’s leaders have propagated that “Biafra is the Answer” (B10). Possible alternatives have been dismissed: For example, they have ruled out a Sovereign National Conference, which could revise the constitution and resource distribution. However, according to Uwazuruike this conference would inevitably be “hijacked” by the powerful groups to the detriment of the Igbo, thus providing only “a cosmetic kind of arrangement” (B38). The movement’s speakers also expressed that granting the Nigerian presidency to the Igbo would be insufficient because the president would still be controlled by the “Hausa-Fulani/Yoruba oligarchy” (B19). Therefore, they argued that only secession in the name of Biafra can solve the Igbo’s plight. To get there, the leaders adopted two framing strategies: Firstly, they have engaged in efforts to shape Biafra as promising homeland for Igbos. Secondly, they have called for internationalized, legalistic, and non-violent actions.

7.1.4.1. Biafra as Homeland

MASSOB’s leaders have sought to “revive” the idea of Biafra and depict it as homeland where Igbos can live in safety and prosperity. For instance, VOBI’s speaker expressed that “only Biafra actualization can protect us from the relentless, calculated one-sided war being thus waged against us by Nigeria” (B47). In this vein, Biafra is often interpreted as “a defensive mechanism” to save Easterners, as proven in 1966 and during the war but still feasible today (B03). Therein, the past Biafran secession is interpreted as a struggle for survival (B12):

What caused the civil war was not the secession by Biafra. What caused the civil war was not because Biafra wanted to secede. Rather Nigerian people asked us to secede because when our people were massacred here in the North, in the West, killings here and there even pregnant

¹⁸⁴ This obviously disregards that the government has repressed the OPC and Boko Haram as well.

women were killed, newly wedded couple killed, new born babies murdered, how did you think we could condone that. Of course, we went for self defense.

The leaders have framed the fact that, despite the mass losses, most Igbos survived Biafra as evidence of its capacity to save the Igbo. Therefore, it can still be the solution for the present insecurities.

Besides a “safe haven”, Biafra is also shaped as promise of a prosperous future. As VOBI’s speaker expressed, Igbos will finally be able to unfold their full potential (B72):

Biafra is the only basis for hope for our hope-less people; Biafra is both the promise and the delivery of a bright future for our people, a future of untold, great opportunities. Biafra is a vessel which accommodates our needs and aspirations; an engine which engages and harnesses our numerous natural and acquired talents. Not Nigeria—no! Biafra, yes!

For Uwazuruike too, “Biafra is the ultimate, and that there is nothing better than freedom” (B11). The leaders have also often proposed that Biafra would follow the US and Israel, which have been role models regarding their social and economic development, democratic system, nationalism, safety, and foreign policy (B18, 22, 79, 99, 102, 104, B30: 416-420). Relatedly, they have imagined Biafra as internally peaceful based on a political culture of dialogue and negotiation.¹⁸⁵ In a nutshell, if Biafra were achieved, the Nigerian problems (such as corruption, oil dependence, inter-group conflict, unemployment, and lack of education) would all disappear (B79: 17-38, B104).

This vision of Biafra strikingly is hardly built upon the exploitation of the Eastern oil reserves. References to the oil have been rare, and the movement’s leaders focused mostly on the potentials of their people: “Biafrans are full of talents. Our independence would unleash the greatest human resource on earth” (B97). This “ingenuity” of Igbos has been praised as Biafra’s key asset (B39, 40, 118). It would allow Biafra to take up from where the Igbo were after the independence when the “Eastern region was the fastest growing economy in the world” (B79: 35). This part of the framing has been strongly identity-affirming through conveying the idea of a gifted people that finds itself in misery only because of an external oppressor. Furthermore, by linking Biafra’s future with the Igbo’s ingeniousness rather than the Eastern oil sources, implicitly the leaders have again framed the struggle mostly as an Igbo and South-Eastern affair.

¹⁸⁵ This evidently downplays the deep social tensions and frequent recourse to violence in the US and Israel.

Especially in their early statements, the movement's leaders addressed those who were reluctant about "reviving" Biafra. To those who "say that Biafra is dead" and "think that over one million Biafrans died in vain" (B03), Uwazuruike told that "[i]t is only the Igbo that wrongly feel so" (B19): "The Republic of Biafra remains undefeated and in fact undefeatable. It lives in our minds, it is not dead, it is indestructible, it is eternal" (B30: 227). In this line, Biafra has even been framed as avenue for the "re-discovering of our lost values and pride" (B17): "Ndigbo have not been the same again as the effects of the war fought against a people from within and without the very enclave known and called Biafra is still hunting and adversely affecting the sub-consciousness and even the entire consciousness of the Igbo people."

MASSOB's leaders have sought to "revive" rather than to "re-invent" Biafra, although some of the initial statements suggest otherwise. Early on, the movement's leaders often used the notion "New Biafra" (B03, 04, 11, 21). In his autobiography, Uwazuruike even expressed that "[w]e have to forget all that happened in the past and alley the fears of others. We have to convince other people that we need Biafra" (B30: 421-422). However, large parts of their framing have been historically inspired. The strategy to achieve Biafra (see also 8.2), however, was revised in core regards.

7.1.4.2. Internationalized, Legalistic, and Non-Violent Struggle

The movement's key figures have propagated that Biafra today can be achieved through an internationalized and legalistic campaign that is most importantly based on the principle of non-violence. This approach was already outlined in Uwazuruike's 2000 public re-declaration of Biafra (B03):

MASSOB has therefore packaged about 25 stages for the actualization of the sovereignty of the new Biafra State through Non-violence and Non Exodus. By this process, no single life is expected to be lost in the realization of our new Biafra State. (...) The process admits of negotiations, dialogue and consultation. (...) It was through a struggle like ours that Nigeria, Ghana, India, South Africa, East Timor etc gained their independence.

The reference to "25 stages" has largely disappeared from the leaders' statements in the meantime¹⁸⁶, but the basic idea of "negotiations, dialogue and consultation" has been retained.

¹⁸⁶ Uwazuruike referred to these 25 stages in various statements from the early 2000s (e.g. B01, 02, 11, 13, 37, 38). He also used the notion to explain MASSOB's strategy in our interview (C111). Yet, it seems to have been a rhetoric tool mostly because none of the reviewed documents outlined the stages.

For this aim the senior figures have advocated mostly three strategies: internationalization, legalism, and non-violence.

Internationalized and Legalistic Approach

The leaders have called on the international community, in particular the US and the UN, to support the Biafran breakaway and have invoked international law, foremost the right to self-determination. Such emphasis on international support was found in statements by the various Biafran organizations throughout the corpus. A typical example reads as follows: “We call on the United Nations to insist on conduct of a plebiscite in Nigeria to determine the future of the country. This plebiscite should include the right to ethnic self-determination, up to the point of secession, from the dubious federation called Nigeria” (B16).¹⁸⁷ As Uwazuruike explained in one of his books, “the freedom fighter must not neglect the impact of the international community in his struggle” (B61: 86). Some of the protest activities including the “stay-at-home” events were also geared at winning international attention (B34). Moreover, BZM-leader Onwuka held a series of public lectures in which he portrayed himself as a diplomat speaking on behalf of the Biafran government in state-like press conferences (see Figure 16).¹⁸⁸ On the occasion, he explained the *raison d’être*, security situation, and foreign policy of the imagined state (B103, 111, 114.). The flags displayed again relate the Biafran struggle to the US, Israel, France, the West, and the international community more generally. Explicitly or implicitly, the right of self-determination and the human rights framework has also often been invoked. For instance, for BILIE “[t]he provisions of the United Nations Charter on Indigenous Peoples’ and Human Rights and African Union Declaration in Banjul on Human and Peoples’ Rights amongst other international legal provisions serve as our bulwark and confidence in this resolve” (B86).

Figure 16: Benjamin Onwuka (BZM) as imitating States’ Press Conferences



¹⁸⁷ Many of these statements even call for international assistance more broadly: “We are using this opportunity to solicit for the support of the United Nations, America and other nations of the World to help us in our cry for liberty” (B22).

¹⁸⁸ Image from YouTube Video (2013, 27 April).

To win credibility, the leaders have often referred to other states that were created through such international assistance and legalism. In the early years, they often pointed to some of the above-quoted examples (Nigeria, Ghana, India, South Africa, and East Timor) and other cases to demonstrate that “a clean and complete break up into individual nations, and fair / equitable negotiations” can be achieved (B15): “[I]f it is perfectly okay and even desirable for the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia to break up, why not Nigeria?” Since the early 2010s South Sudan and Kosovo have been key examples (B86, 97, 102, 111, 113, 114):

We therefore call on the United Nations, the international community, to do what exactly was done in South Sudan when the South Sudanese became independent in 2010 after a prolonged 22 years of civil war in which more than five million people perished. The same as Biafrans between 1967-1970 when over three million Biafrans also perished (B103).

This international orientation has been based on learning from the past Biafran experience, as some speakers expressed. For instance, Onwuka argued as follows (B98, see also: B97):

What has been hampering Biafra’s independence of the past as said many times had being that the international community or the Biafra has not had the diplomatic muscle to counter Nigeria and that is why Nigeria has been very effective in preventing the independent of Biafra. (...) This time around that policy is going to fail because we are going to have the international community fully behind us both militarily and economically. (...) [T]he Biafra Zionist Movement, BZM, believe in actualizing Biafra through international diplomacy, securing the United States support is the most important thing.

The potentially discouraging question of why international support should become available for Biafra this time, when it was obviously missing in the past, has rarely been discussed. At one point, Uwazuruike expressed that during “the civil war (1967-1970) both Israel and America had their own problems” but affirmed that “[a]t the appropriate time they will come to our aid” (B30: 420).

MASSOB’s speakers have even claimed that international support and legalism would allow Biafra to break away from Nigeria without repeating the massacres against Easterners and their mass flight as in 1966 (B03, 33, 52, 61). For Uwazuruike, this principle of “Non-Exodus” has been necessary because “Igbos are everywhere in Nigeria and it will be wrong for anyone to ask them to come back to Igboland, to state of Biafra” (B38). Frequently emphasized during the early years¹⁸⁹, the idea became less pronounced since the mid-2000s. Over the

¹⁸⁹ Occasionally, earlier statements also already contradicted the Non-Exodus principle. For example, in 2001 MASSOB’s Northern Representative Samuel Ike stated: “I am advising my good people here from

threat posed by Boko Haram, some speakers including Uwazuruike even seem to have called on Igbos in the North to return home and offered shelter in the South-East (B117, see also: B91, 109). Onwuka of the BZM argued that in the face of Boko Haram “[i]t is time to return home. You are not safe in Nigeria, anywhere in Nigeria, both Western Nigeria and Northern Nigeria” (BZM, B111; similarly B94). Yet, in contrast to this call for “returning home”, interviewed leaders still referred to the relevance of Non-Exodus.

Non-Violence

Closely connected to internationalization and legalism, the main leaders of the movement have firmly propagated non-violence. Not only by the leadership of MASSOB proper but also of most other Biafran organizations, has called for peaceful protest in countless statements. Threats of rebellion and mobilization for violence have been rare only, as also discussed below. Three main justifications have been given why non-violence is necessary and promising: The (1) Civil War experience, (2) perception of the international community as favorable only to non-violent movements, and (3) inherent power of non-violence.

Firstly, especially at the beginning of the struggle Uwazuruike strongly emphasized that he had introduced non-violence to dissociate the present struggle from the war experience of the Biafran past. In his 2000 public re-declaration of Biafra, he argued that the “memory of the past civil war stares us in the face. The issue of another Biafra therefore raises more questions than answers. We are now faced with the problem of convincing our people that the quest for the new Biafra will not cause another war” (B03). To convince the critics, he promised that the renewed struggle would be different: “No soul will be lost, not a single one” (B01): “[W]e want peaceful agitation because of the hindsight, the lessons we have learnt. I mean I don't know how it will lead to war as we are doing now” (B02, similarly B11, 37, 38, 87, B61: 10).

A second central argument for non-violence has been the perception of the international community, especially the UN and US, as being more favorable to non-violent movements. Uwazuruike expressed this as follows in a media interview (B38):

It is the United Nations that will determine. If they want to recognise the State of Biafra (...) it is up to them. And we are following their principle, the model, non-violence and not recourse

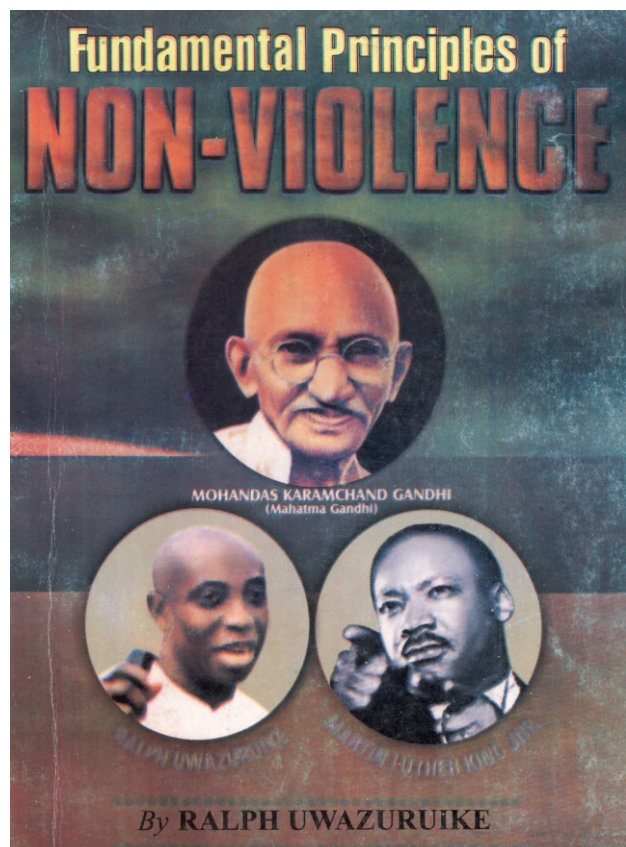
the South South, South East, that if they have made up their mind to reside here in the North, they are very free. But they should start finding schools for their children from now in Biafra our own country because we don't like a situation where father will be killed, mothers will be killed and children also will be killed. I am advising my good people here to transfer their children to Biafran territory” (B12).

to arms or arms struggle. Why we are not violent is not to impress Nigeria. No, we are non-violent because we don't want to annoy the UN. We want them to see us as responsible.

In his book dedicated to non-violence, Uwazuruike explained in detail why this strategy is required and appropriate (B61). He framed it as response to the shift of the international order towards norms and legal procedures of non-violent conflict resolution. In his view, the “world today is moving in the direction of non violence”, “the International Community views with concern the activities of despots who use iron fists”, and it “views with contempt the use of arms to dismantle a democratically elected Government in any country (B61: 83-86). This argument was also made by speakers of the Biafran Students Union who pursue “the principle of Non-Violence based on the dictum of ‘Winning without fighting’, as is required in the settlement of disagreements among peoples and nations in our present day World with reverence to civility” (B22).

Finally, MASSOB’s leaders have frequently pointed to iconic peaceful protesters in order to highlight the power of non-violence. The main references include Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Nelson Mandela. For instance, the cover of his book on non-violence depicted Uwazuruike in the context of Gandhi and King (see Figure 17 and B61). Already early on, Uwazuruike aligned MASSOB with Gandhi: “Our system is through non-violence. We are using the Indian method of passive resistance. It has worked in India, even in the Soviet Union, it worked” (B01). In his view, “[n]on violence has the potency of achieving success more than any imaginable war” but also requires extraordinary sacrifice, resolve, and patience (B61: 13, similarly B02, 38). Thereby, it can powerfully expose injustice and create support for movements’ aims: “As the non violent crusader is peaceful, people tend to be sympathetic to his course. Therefore, any oppressive act against him attracts the pity of the public” (B61: 83). In this regard, Mandela who was 27 years in prison and Gandhi and King who were both assassinated also serve as examples of personal sacrifice. To “translate” the role model of

Figure 17: Self-Depiction of Uwazuruike amid Gandhi and King



Gandhi, as Hinduist activist from India, into the Igbo's context, Uwazuruike emphasized Gandhi's contribution to the struggle against Apartheid in South Africa and also highlighted Christian ideals of non-violence (B61: 14-16, 38-39). Moreover, he clarified that Mandela's struggle had not been entirely non-violent but stressed that the peaceful part was crucial to overcome Apartheid (B61: 39).

Concomitantly, the leaders have sought to discredit the effectiveness of armed means. Uwazuruike highlighted that "in all the places I have seen revolution carried out, it has not really worked out through fighting. At the end of the killings, people still go back to the round-table for discussions" (B01). Even though the "constant brutalization from security agents" may make violence appealing to the activists, Uwazuruike stressed that it must not occur (B61: 81): "Most of these people who clamour for violence (...) do not even have a slight knowledge of the consequences of the violence they intend embarking on" and especially "how long it may last."

The idea of non-violence has also been integrated into the vision of Biafra. The leaders have conveyed the image of Biafra as peaceful in both its domestic affairs and foreign politics. In his book "Ideal Biafra Government", Uwazuruike proposed that the "constitution of Biafra would be based on non-violent disposition" and that the unity of the country would be maintained through good governance instead of force (B79: 36-38). Similarly, the BZM envisioned that between the different ethnic groups within Biafra "[t]here will be discussions, consensus and agreement, there will be no violence or imposition" (B98).

In situations in which activists appear to have engaged in violent activities, the leaders usually made swift statements to condemn the incident, reaffirm MASSOB's non-violent stance, and dissociate MASSOB from proponents of armed means. For example, during the violent confrontation between some of MASSOB's followers, NARTO, and security agents in Onitsha in June/July 2006, the speakers made several public statements calling for non-violence: "We appeal to our members in Onitsha in particular and Anambra State in general not to retaliate, no matter the extent of provocation, in the interest of peace" (B53; similarly 51, 52). Regarding incidents of repression, the movement's leadership usually harshly denounced the violence perpetrated against the movement but still urged the members not to retaliate (B33, 43, 78, 92). Activists and leaders who advocated forceful means also seem to have been expelled for "rebellious tendencies" (B100). For example, Onwuka and Edeson Samuel who formed the BZM with its more belligerent position had been expelled from MASSOB proper before. In short, Uwazuruike and other main leaders have sought to de-escalate situations that were on the verge of escalation into violence.

Frame Dispute

The call for non-violence has not implied a full pacifist standpoint, however. Occasionally, the movement's main leaders including Uwazuruike threatened to promote violent means but saw them legitimate only for self-defense. Uwazuruike explained this position as follows at the beginning of the struggle (B02):

By non-violence, we mean we shall not attack anybody. We shall carry out our 25 programmes peacefully without attacking anybody. But if you attack us, we shall not fold our arms and look at you. (...) If I say non-violence, it doesn't mean if I stay here you come and carry my wife or carry my mother away and I stand looking at you because I say I am not violent. If the Yoruba start burning the houses of Igbo in Lagos, we shall raze the whole of Lagos and teach them that nobody has the monopoly of violence.

The theoretical legitimacy of self-defense was reaffirmed repeatedly over the years (B37, 38, 51, 111). Yet, the reviewed documents do not suggest that any actual violent occurrences were legitimized.

In the face of Boko Haram's rise, threats of violence seem to have increased. Uwazuruike himself proclaimed in March 2013 that "I am ready to declare another civil war in this country if this killings and other senseless activities on Ndigbo continue like this because I know that it was this type of massacre that brought about the first civil war in Nigeria" (B109). Madu similarly warned that "[w]e believe in non-violent approach to issues but they are pushing us to the wall; they are provoking MASSOB to become violent and if we decide to resort to violent this time around, even the Nigeria military cannot contain our attacks" (B90). Although these were harsh statements, they can still be seen as threats of using violence within the logic of self-defense. Moreover, even at this point, they have remained rare in comparison to the continuously frequent call for non-violence. Interestingly, even in the above-cited statement, Madu re-emphasized "to believe in non-violence." Thus, the reviewed documents suggest a strong adherence of most Biafran leaders to non-violence and their effort to prevent the escalation of the protests into rebellion.

Nevertheless, a few more recent statements by less prominent Biafran leaders were more belligerent and hardly connect to self-defense anymore. They can be seen as rallying calls for rebellion. For instance, the BNYL, a radical youth led by Comrade Obuka Chimezie, praised the Biafrans' prowess because "we are the first country to defend ourselves against the combined forces of the super powers and came out unscattered" (B118). In May 2013, they threatened the following (B115):

We the youth of Biafra can no longer fold our hands to watch our people killed unnecessarily in Northern Nigeria (...) [I]f we start dealing with our enemies. It may not take us more than a week to bring down mosques in our land. No group has monopoly of violence. The Igbo are good in manufacturing weapons. We already have our own explosive device called 'OGBUNIGWE' meaning 'to kill in mass.' It was produced during the Biafran war.

This threat of mass killings evidently exceeds Uwazuruike's understanding of self-defense. Such threats of retaliation are not necessarily calls for rebellion, but the latter can also be found. For example, an editorial of the Eastern Pilot newspaper urged Easterners in the North to return home, "set the core North on fire", and "leave that miserable core North behind and in ruins" (B94). Onwuka of the BZM also openly rallied for rebellion, which provoked his arrest in June 2014 (B127):

By March 31, Nigeria must vacate Biafra. Failure to do so, there is going to be bloodbath because this time round, we are going to be armed and prepared. (...) The Biafran people have had enough. The killings of our people on a daily basis, both in the North and here on Biafran soil is no longer acceptable to us. (...) Biafra has risen. I am calling our people to support the quest for Biafra independence.

Still, his position on violent means has generally been ambiguous. In the same statement, he also dismissed having used arms when his group hoisted the Biafran flag at the Governor's House at Enugu. On many occasions, he had called for international support and promoted the legalistic approach, precisely to evade rebellion. Hence, his example illustrates that even those who ultimately propose violent means have been influenced by MASSOB's peaceful and legalistic stance.

Such recent rallying for rebellion indicates that there has been an increasing frame dispute within the movement. On the one hand, there are the proponents of non-violence, most importantly Uwazuruike and the leaders of BILIE/BHRI, VOB, and some other organizations. They have continuously emphasized the need for peaceful protest and legitimized violence only in strict self-defense. On the other hand, recently a few fringe leaders promoted a more forceful approach to Biafra.

7.1.5. Motivational Framing

Emotional appeals permeate the framing. The entire idea of Biafra – including the interpretation of the past, its meaning as a homeland for a deserving people, and the future vision – are expressed through hugely emotional language. This has often eclipsed rational arguments about the feasibility and promises of the Biafran independence. Overall, the

motivational framing has encompassed five main components, four of which can already be found in Uwazuruike's emotional public re-declaration of Biafra at Aba in 2000 (B03):

Fellow Biafrans, do not despair. There is light at the end of the tunnel. Never shall we resolve to acquire inferior status in Nigeria out of cowardice. Nor shall we compromise the future of our children out of fear. It is more honorable to die in the struggle for freedom than to live as slaves. We have initiated the struggle for the emancipation of our people. It is a long-term project. God will provide the circumstance for the realization of our dream. Our duty is to ensure that the struggle does not die.

The four contained motivational elements are the framing of the Biafran struggle as:

- (1) *dream*, hope, and long-term enterprise (“light at the end of the tunnel”, “long-term project”, “our dream”, “future of our children”),
- (2) *fight for freedom* from oppression (e.g. “freedom”, “against slavery”, “emancipation”),
- (3) almost *religious mission* (“God”), and
- (4) expression of *strength* rather than weakness and as needing the followers' *patience* and *perseverance* in non-violence (“never shall we resolve to acquire inferior status in Nigeria out of cowardice”, “more honorable to die than to live as slaves”, “duty is to ensure that the struggle does not die”).

In addition, the leaders have sought to establish the image of the movement as

- (5) being *credible, noble, and responsible*.

In their statements, (1) the leaders have defined Biafra as a dream and hope of a safe and prosperous future. Biafra has been portrayed as a “great historic mission of ours” (B19) and “the only legacy that we can leave behind to our future generations” (B10). Such aggrandizing sustains their emphasis on patience. From early on, Uwazuruike suggested that it will be “a long journey, but we will get there” (B01). Similarly, BILIE explained that (B86):

Standing here today we cannot give us any fail-proof roadmap of how we'll reach that better place beyond the horizon, the Land of our dreams, but we know and can assure you that we'll get there. We know we will. The idea and physical/geographical reality of Biafra endures. Our resolve remains firm and our victory more than at any other time in history is certain.

This dream and hope of a safe and prosperous Biafra, evidently, has been constructed against the background of the Igbo's lamentable present situation and the many failings of Nigeria. In addition, these motivational components have sought to create patience and de-emphasize urgency to strengthen the resolve for non-violence.

The struggle has also been (2) depicted as a fight for freedom. Uwazuruike already opened his 2000 Biafran re-declaration speech with the line that “first and foremost, I bring you freedom” (Bo3). The various leaders depicted the campaign as an effort of “liberation” from the ongoing “oppression”, “suffering”, “humiliation”, “slavery”, “killing”, “massacre”, and even “genocide” against Biafrans and in particular Igbos in Nigeria. In the face of the oppression, they called for “freedom”, “liberty”, “independence”, and “sovereignty.” MASSOB’s headquarters at Okwe is the “Freedom House” and the activists of the movement are commonly termed “freedom fighters.” In MASSOB’s understanding, the freedom fighter is non-violent and this interpretation, as mentioned, has been sustained mainly by the examples of Gandhi, King, and Mandela as a source of inspiration for the non-violent freedom fighter (B61). Still, the term “freedom fighter” often connotes an armed fighter.¹⁹⁰ This stems not only from the fact that the expression is a common euphemism for a terrorist (Ganor 2002), but it was also applied to the Biafran Organization of Freedom Fighters (BOFF), which was a paramilitary branch during the Civil War. In spite of the ambiguity of the term, MASSOB has clearly shaped the image of the “freedom fighter” as a non-violent protester.

The leaders’ framing has often included (3) religious appeal. They have made frequent references to God and drawn biblical comparisons between the plight of the Biafrans and the Israelites. As emphasized by Uwazuruike and other movement leaders, the struggle and Biafra are supported by God: “The actualisation of Biafra is something the Almighty God has already sanctioned” (Bo2).¹⁹¹ VOBI similarly argued that “we are under God’s dispensation, and that divine dispensation is God’s Biafra Plan” (B50; similarly B49). There is, again, a strong identity-affirming element in the framing according to which “[w]e are a people chosen by God” (B97): “We must have the space to demonstrate our God-given talent and to utilize our gifts and make our achievements available to, and for, the rest of the world. (...) We must have Biafra and showcase these divine talents” (B40).

Movement’s speakers have likened the origin and suffering of the Biafrans to that of the Israelites in Egypt (Harnischfeger 2011: 46-53). By God’s hand, they were liberated from their enslavement and guided to the “promised land.” Thus, the speakers have defined the Igbo as “Israelites in Africa” and as “part of the jews scattered all over the world” (B30: 418; similarly

¹⁹⁰ Similarly, the grassroots members are often even called “foot soldiers.” This military expression was not found in the corpus but used by interviewed MASSOB members. It has still been understood as designating non-violent protesters, however.

¹⁹¹ In his manual on non-violence he addressed his followers as “non-violent crusaders” (B61), which has been uncommon in the other reviewed documents, however.

B102, 115). In this sense, “Biafra has a biblical backing and Biafran State is a promised land to us and we must reach there, like the Israelites reached their promised land” (B45). Understood in this context, the emphasis on Non-Exodus adapted the biblical story of the Israelites to its vision of Biafra. Unlike the biblical exodus, the movement has sought to achieve liberation and an independent state of Biafra *without* (again) undergoing mass flight and the related hardship. The BZM as the Biafra Zionist Movement have even taken a particularly strong emphasis on the Jewish heritage of the Biafrans and the close relationship of Biafra and Israel (B102, 103, 111, 114).

Through their framing, the leaders of MASSOB (4) have sought to create the impression of strength and courage, but also called on the followers to be patient, persevere, and continue through non-violence – even in the face of severe hardship. Following Uwazuruike, in Nigeria “not a few believe that non violent approach is dilatory, and a sign of cowardice” (B61: 81). To counter this impression, he and other speakers have sought to convey the image of the non-violent protester as powerful, strong, and courageous (B61). For example, when Uwazuruike was detained from 2005-07 various speakers repeatedly explained that “[o]ur calm disposition on the humiliation meted out to our leader Chief Ralph Uwazuruike and all these brutalities should not be seen as weakness” (B51; similarly B44). Rather, it should be understood as “the most civilized way of handling a ruthless tyrant” (B53; similarly B85). Furthermore, to overcome the possible impression of weakness, the leaders have often emphasized the movement’s numerical strength (B01, 83, 85) and also the justness of its cause and God’s support for Biafra (B21: 10, B33, B75).

To sustain non-violence in the face of such repression, frequent calls on the followers for patience and perseverance have been made. The examples of Gandhi, King, and Mandela have been used to illustrate that suffering is a necessary part of the struggle (B61: 2-3): “[A] non-violent freedom fighter must be prepared to suffer. He must be prepared to die. He must be prepared to stay in prison as long as possible” (B61: 41; similarly B21: 10-12). Thus, movement’s leaders framed the detention of Uwazuruike and other senior figures as a “source of inspiration, courage, motivation, consistency, honour and total commitment to millions of MASSOB members” (B75). Moreover, they framed the repression as part of winning rather than failing the struggle, because it proves that Nigeria has come to fear MASSOB (B21: 9-10; similarly B85). Yet, the leaders’ message has been that Biafra and non-violence requires patience and endurance: “So, come hell or high-water, torture or fatigue, impatience or disappointment, temptations or darkness, life or even death: come any condition or situation at all, it really makes no difference: we continue until we get Biafra” (B50; similarly B03). In his

manual on non-violence, Uwazuruike explained that “[i]n non violence time is not of essence”, that the activist “must not use unfair means to achieve a just end”, and that “above all, he must continue the struggle until the end is achieved, regardless of the tediousness or roughness of the journey” (B61: 127-128). This individual sacrifice will be rewarded in Biafra, when public places will be named after the “freedom fighters”: “Every Massob/BLF member who dies in the cause of Biafra shall never be forgotten for ever and ever” (B21: 11).

Finally, the leaders have sought to create the image of the movement as (5) credible, noble, and responsible. In many statements they dissociated the struggle from criminal activities, in particular from the frequent kidnappings in the South-East and South-South (B56, 106, 120, 127).¹⁹² Their vision of the non-violent protester is that of “a person of honour; he must be a shining example to his followers” (B61: 45). In contrast to “shameful” criminals, a MASSOB activist ought to be an “honorable freedom fighter” (B21: 11; similarly B61: 134). In this vein, the leaders also publicly condemned members who transgressed non-violence. For example, following a clash between suspected MASSOB followers and traders at Onitsha in January 2014, Uwazuruike apologized to the traders, declared to suspend several administrators from MASSOB, and re-stated that the leadership’s aim is “to bring sanity in the struggle” (B125). Relatedly, the speakers also denounced those who claim that MASSOB is violent and criminal. For instance, on the accusation that MASSOB followers could have killed two police officers, Madu stated: “MASSOB members did not kill anybody. (...) They just want to give us bad name. (...) The police knows that from inception that MASSOB is harmless. There has been no record of violence traced to MASSOB” (B43).¹⁹³ In another situation, a MASSOB speaker asked the police for an “unreserved open apology” over an accusation deemed unjustified, and re-stated that “[w]e are a respected organisation in Igbo land” (B129).

To establish credibility and also benefit from his immense popularity, the movement’s speakers have aligned the struggle with the former Biafran leader Ojukwu. In their messages, they revered him as the “father of Biafra, the originator and hero” (B79: 5; similarly B87), have circulated his image in publications (e.g. B30, 61, 96), and framed the current struggle as continuation of his effort for Biafra (B01, 37, 99). There is some evident tension here: Ojukwu led the Biafrans into the war, whereas MASSOB has propagated non-violence. The speakers

¹⁹² For example, the introduction of Biafran license plates was announced as “aimed at identifying Biafrans and forestalling criminal activities among people who hide under our name to perpetrate evil” (B126).

¹⁹³ Crucial here is not whether the members actually committed these killing (which remains unknown), but that the movement has placed emphasis on being noble, non-violent, and responsible.

have addressed this inconsistency by arguing that Ojukwu resorted to armed means only in self-defense in order to save the Igbo from extinction by the North. Another tension pertains to Ojukwu's role since the 1980s. He implicitly renounced Biafra and became part of the corrupt political class that MASSOB opposes. Nevertheless, the movement's leaders have argued that he is still a hero because "Ojukwu is in politics only to protect the people's interest" (B36).

Finally, MASSOB's speakers including Uwazuruike himself have sought to establish the image of Uwazuruike as idealistic and non-corrupt leader. In this vein, Uwazuruike has been presented in line with Gandhi, King, and Mandela, who have been role models of credible and committed leaders. Moreover, in light of his own experience of the Civil War, Uwazuruike expressed that Biafra is the destiny of his life (B30, 38). He also declared that, unlike the typical "greedy" Nigerian politician, he would decline political offices once independence is achieved.¹⁹⁴

7.1.6. Brief Summary: Biafra through Non-Violent Protest

MASSOB's CAFs have carried Biafra and the strategy of non-violence at the core. The movement's leaders have depicted the present situation of the Igbo in Nigeria as oppression. Igbos have allegedly been politically and economically marginalized and endangered by a long-standing conspiracy of the Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba. The oppression is described as a form of silent punishment for Biafra's past attempt for secession and as particularly unfair in light of the post-war promise of full rehabilitation. Furthermore, the speakers have complained about the repression of the movement's non-violent actions and related the repression to the broader oppression of Igbos.

To overcome these pressing concerns, according to MASSOB's speakers, Igbos should strive for Biafra again. They should endorse Biafra as "safe haven" where Igbos can make full use of their economic and other potentials. Moreover, the MASSOB's leaders have propagated that Biafra can be achieved through an internationalized, legalistic, and most importantly non-violent approach. In this regard, non-violence and legalism were introduced as alternatives to the armed Biafran struggle of the past. In addition, the speakers have related non-violence to the rising impression of the UN and the international community as requiring legalistic claims-

¹⁹⁴ A common story told is also that Uwazuruike declined a million dollar bribe by Obasanjo for giving up Biafra in 2000 (Bo8). Impossibly to verify, the narration has certainly aimed at shaping Uwazuruike as incorruptible.

making for recognizing statehood and to several role models of successful unarmed protests around the world. They have framed violence justified only as a last resort and within strict confines of self-defense. In a frame dispute, however, fringe leaders have recently made incendiary statements rallying for rebellion. MASSOB proper and especially the leader Uwazuruike have opposed them and constantly reaffirmed that the movement should pursue peaceful protest only.

The motivational framing has encompassed strong emotional appeals and invoked crucial values for the non-violence approach: The leaders have emphasized the power of this strategy and debunked their critics as well as proponents of rebellion. Many times, they have emphasized that the struggle for Biafra needs patient, committed, responsible, and credible activists instead of criminal and forceful actions. To create patience, the speakers have also promoted the image of Biafra as dream, hope, and even biblical mission. These various parts of the framing, thus, have sustained the core parts of the prognostic framing, in particular the call for non-violence.

7.2. Frame Resonance

This section analyzes to what extent these CAFs have resonated with the Igbo as MASSOB's main audience (see also 7.1.2). For this analysis, I proceed in three steps: Firstly, an overview on the interview sources is given (7.2.1). Secondly, the elite-mass divide in the frame resonance is highlighted (7.2.2). Finally, the resonance of the CAFs among the general Igbo population is reviewed in detail (7.2.3 to 7.2.5).

7.2.1. Overview on Interviews

This part draws on a total of 45 interviews (in total 52 interview respondents) and one focus group discussion at Abuja (FG2) with people who have not been members of MASSOB (for a list and references, see Annex C). The interviews were carried out during the mentioned two field research visits in Nigeria, lasting one month each, in late 2013 and late 2014. Moreover, nine of these 65 interviews (in total) and informal talks were held with several Igbos during two shorter stays at London in August 2013 and at a high-ranking Igbo academic conference in Chicago in May 2014.¹⁹⁵ The interviews were generally held in English (except for one that was

¹⁹⁵ The Annual International Conference 2014 of the Igbo Studies Association was held in Chicago, 22-24 May 2014. At the conference, I discussed the research topic with numerous participants, many of who are Igbo academic lecturers from the South-East.

translated by my research partner) and were conducted in various places including Abuja, Lagos, and the major South-Eastern cities of Enugu, Onitsha, and Owerri. Unlike in the case of Boko Haram, the interviewees were not selected by their place of origin and this was also not recorded in the interview. This is because, irrespective of where they live, Igbos generally maintain strong bonds and familial relationships to Igboland.¹⁹⁶ Besides these formal interviews, I also held many informal talks with dozens of further Igbos during the field research, among other occasions during an Igbo political conference at Abuja.¹⁹⁷ These informal talks provided a valuable further source of information for the frame resonance analysis.

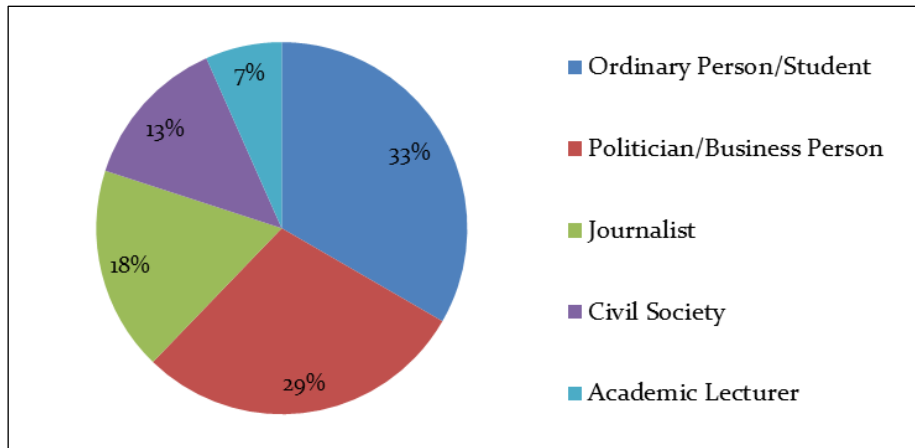
The interviewees were selected to broadly represent all major social segments of the Igbo population. Since ordinary people (by definition) make up the bulk of the society, the largest share of the interviewees were ordinary persons and students (33%, see Figure 18, p. 211).¹⁹⁸ Besides them, about 29% of the interviewees represent the political and economic elite (politicians/business persons), 18% journalists, 13% civil society (i.e. NGO personnel), and 7% academic lecturers. While the elite and the general population can be clearly divided, some of the other categories are not as clear-cut and, therefore, this classification should be seen as rather approximate. Except for three (out of 52), all of the interviewees were male. This, again, is unproblematic considering the much higher participation of males in Nigerian politics and specifically in MASSOB's protests. As found by Duruji (2010: 159), female members are "proportionally insignificant when compared to the male membership" in MASSOB, with a ratio possibly as low as ten to one.

¹⁹⁶ This seems different only among Igbos born in the diaspora, but these were not interviewed.

¹⁹⁷ This was the Annual Lecture Series 2013 conference "Nigeria Politics – The Way Forward for Nd'Igbo", organized by the Orient Club Abuja, 23 November 2013.

¹⁹⁸ As in the case of Boko Haram, this includes mostly men between the age of 18 to 45 with basic occupations (e.g. sellers, security guards, or drivers).

Figure 18: Occupation of Igbo Respondents (Non-MASSOB members only)¹⁹⁹



In terms of data quality and representativeness, the sample could be seen as overrepresenting urban, male, and well-educated Igbos. However, thereby it corresponds closely to the social segments that MASSOB has addressed in its framing. There have also been fewer obstacles to conducting interviews than in the case of Boko Haram. Interview requests were rarely declined, close to all interviews were in English, and people were less reluctant to talk about the protests than in the North. During the interviews initial skepticism also often disappeared. In general, people seemed to rarely shy away from expressing even controversial positions such as their frustration with Nigeria and support for Biafra and MASSOB.

There seems however to have been some bias concerning international support involved in the interviews. Most interviewees strongly stressed the need for international assistance for achieving Biafra. This has certainly been a widely held position, but the interview situation may have led some to overemphasize it. They openly expressed the hope that their participation in the present study could directly lead to increased international support for Biafra. I took this possible bias into consideration when assessing the interview responses.

In contrast to most interviewees from the general population, some of the Igbo politicians were reluctant to discuss Biafra and MASSOB. Three interviewees refused or seemed to evade the topic (C20, 87, 89). This probably reflects the difficult position they are in: If they express sympathy for MASSOB, they risk becoming seen as supporter of the movement and its treasonous demands; yet, if they publicly condemn it, they risk losing public support and voters because of MASSOB's popularity. Nevertheless, a sufficient number of high-ranking Igbo figures was open for discussion.

¹⁹⁹ For this overview, interviews with multiple respondents (who generally were having the same occupation) were counted as single interviews.

7.2.2. Overview: Elite-Mass Divide

MASSOB's CAFs resonate strongly among the Igbo, but, as with Boko Haram, there clearly is an elite-mass divide. Regarding the general population, the common saying in the South-East that "every true-born Igbo is a Massobian" contains much truth. As expressed by one interviewee: "Every true Igbo man believes so much in Biafra. As long as there is some Igbo blood in your veins, directly or indirectly you believe in MASSOB" (C55). The average Igbo person seems to fervent support the Biafran struggle or have at least some sympathy for MASSOB.

Generally, MASSOB cuts across all age segments and education levels of the Igbo population (Duruji 2010: 160-165). In contrast to an opportunistic group, it should not be understood as comprising only "those who have only little to lose." Many of the activists risk much by their involvement in the struggle. Some studies reported a generational divide in the resonance and followership of MASSOB. Accordingly, those who have witnessed the gruesome Civil War today are fervently opposed to Biafra. For example, Onuoha (2011: 93, 101) noted that "the present idea of secession is not popular with older generation of the Igbo (...) comprising many war veterans and much more older adults who witnessed the civil war and who still harbour bitter memories of the agony and pains of the war." The interviews conducted for the study at hand, however, have not found a sharp generational divide. Those who had experienced the Civil War seemed somewhat more reluctant to support another struggle for Biafra and possibly rebellion. Yet, others from the older generation even seemed particularly militant in their views. For example, Lawrence Akpu (President of the Disabled Biafran War Veterans) told journalists the following: "I will continue to encourage our younger ones to ensure the actualization of the Republic of Biafra. I am ready to fight again for the survival of Biafra; and Nigeria should grant us freedom" (The SUN 2011, 30 March).

As mentioned, however, the Igbo elite has remained skeptical and often even outright hostile towards MASSOB. As with the Northern elite and Boko Haram, in the case of the Igbo, too, this is foremost the result of Nigeria's sufficiently effective neopatrimonial system in which the elite benefits from the status quo and, therefore, have little to win but much to lose if they seek to overthrow the political order. Moreover, the Igbo elite holds vast business investments in many parts of the country, most of which would be lost if the Igbos were seeking secession again. Hence, for these structural reasons it is, a priori, unsurprising that the Igbo leaders have not been in favor of the renewed struggle for Biafra. On top of that, the movement's framing also has some weaknesses in the eyes of the Igbo elite, which has further alienated them from supporting MASSOB (as discussed below, see 7.2.4.3).

Nevertheless, for most of the time, the Igbo elite have not engaged in much *counterframing* against MASSOB.²⁰⁰ This is largely the result of the difficult position they find themselves in: MASSOB has been criticizing them publicly and sharply, but they cannot criticize MASSOB. If condemning the hugely popular movement, they may lose public sympathies, which they depend on for winning elections. Hence, except for some occasions for which much *counterframing* can be identified, their approach has been mostly to silence the subject. This strategy of silencing also allows them, after all, to secretly harbor some sympathies for the dream about Biafra.

7.2.3. Diagnostic Framing

MASSOB's diagnostic framing has been hugely compelling to the general Igbo population and even to many Igbo leaders. There is the almost omnipresent perception among the Igbo that they have been marginalized and threatened by a long-standing Northern conspiracy. Moreover, many Igbos find the continuing repression against MASSOB highly unfair.

7.2.3.1. Marginalization of the Igbo

Virtually all Igbos (even including the political leadership) share MASSOB's condemnation of the ongoing discrimination of the Igbo in political, economic, and social regards in Nigeria. This "marginalization of the Igbo" (this is the common expression) is generally seen as the result of the lost Civil War and of the continued Northern effort of dominating the federation. This was pointed out throughout the majority of interviews, which typically included some of the following statements: "I am oppressed because I am an Igbo man", "the war is still on in the sense that no Igbo man is allowed to take part in Nigerian politics", and "the North sees the Nigerian government as a birthright" (examples drawn from focus group discussion with Igbo traders, see FG2). The two most widely pronounced grievances are precisely those identified above as the most obvious forms of discrimination of the Igbo (see 4.2.2), namely the absence of a president from Igbo origin in Nigeria's history and the imbalance in the federal system according to which the South-East lacks one state.

Besides these obvious grievances, Igbos pointed out many further and highly pressing concerns in the interviews. Two widely-cited historical grievances relate to the Civil War,

²⁰⁰ It is striking that Igbo leaders have often been vague about why they do not support MASSOB's struggle. Rather than making unpopular statements to explain their opposition on Biafra, they often merely reaffirmed that they stand for the Igbo's integration into a united Nigeria (for example, see This Day 2000, 21 May, 2000, 11 May).

namely the non-restitution of the property that Igbos abandoned during the massacres of 1966 and the ceiling that was placed on Igbo bank accounts in Nigeria at the war's end, when the deposits were cut at 20 Pounds. Furthermore, other grievances appeared in the interviews as common narratives and even litany about how severely the Igbo are marginalized. These narratives include some of the following: "Kano alone has 44 local governments. The entire South-Eastern states have about fifty-something. But one state has 44, when five states have fifty-something. Is that fair?" (C87). Another typical complaint is that "[i]f an Igbo wants to join a federal university, he has to score 120 points in the admission exam, but the Hausa person only needs to score five points" (C44). In these stories, the mentioned numbers often vary, but the bottom line always is that Igbos have been treated unfairly by the North. Finally, another typical story is that the South-East is disadvantaged regarding infrastructure and federal allocations: "No roads in the South-East, no seaports, no international airport, no cargo. They know we are merchants, and they want to suppress us" (C93). Obviously, many of these stories are largely unsubstantiated and told in ways that exaggerate the amount of Igbo suffering. However, the interviewees did not seem to exaggerate by intention, but rather to repeat these stories uncritically.

Many of the interviewees from the general population were highly frustrated and aggrieved about these perceived discriminations. Especially young men and students expressed their discontent harshly in the interviews: "Look at the level of poverty, look at our houses. People are staying in the bush areas, no road – like rabbits that is how we live! Nigeria is not good, it is a mess country" (C34). Others stressed to be "sick and tired about how Igbos are being treated in this country" (C98). What reinforces this frustration and the related aggression is that most people also not expect that there could be any major improvements anytime soon: "I will not deceive myself by telling you that we are expecting an Igbo man to be president of Nigeria. The opportunity just is not there" (FG2).

As this already indicates, Igbos commonly blame Muslims from the North for the marginalization. They follow MASSOB's interpretation that the present situation is a deliberate conspiracy against the Igbo. What sustains this view and amplifies people's discontent is the unfulfilled post-war promise of full rehabilitation. Interviewees generally assessed the present situation against this baseline and concluded that they have not been rehabilitated but treated as a defeated people. Another common historical reference that many respondents used to make sense of the present situation is a historical quote from the Northern Premier Bello. At some point of the late 1950s/early 1960s, Bello expressed his contempt for the Igbos when he stated in a televised interview that the Igbos always seek to dominate and that he would

therefore prefer to even hire a European for his Northern administration than an Igbo (YouTube Video 2012, 12 February). This statement is widely known among Igbos today and is proof to them of the mindset of Muslims. Interestingly, they invoke this quote by reference to the “Sardauna”, which is Bello’s traditional title and which has the meaning of a war leader (originally the “Captain of the Bodyguard”, see Bello 1962: 49). In other words, Igbos perceive themselves as confronted with a Northern Muslim regime that seeks to suppress and perhaps even eliminate them.

No interviewee differed with the assertion that the Igbo have been marginalized. Although a few pointed out that other ethnic groups have been disadvantaged too, they still held that the Igbo have been the *most* disadvantaged of all in Nigeria. Some of the interviewees, however, highlighted that the problem lies not only with the North, but also with the Igbo elite that have been collaborating with the Northern rulers and that have been failing the Igbo people. Furthermore, many interviewees mentioned that the situation of the Igbo has slightly improved under President Jonathan. Although Jonathan is an Ijaw from the Niger Delta, they saw him as “brother” of the Igbos, especially because his wife is Igbo. They appreciated that Jonathan commissioned the building of a second bridge over the River Niger at Onitsha, that for the first time the Igbo held top military positions under his presidency, and that their war hero Ojukwu was granted a state burial. However, none of the interviewees argued that this has brought the marginalization to an end.

The Igbo’s complaint about their marginalization can also be found in news and other sources. It was common already during the 2000s. For instance, in 2000 former Biafran general Alexander Madiebo lamented that “there was neither reconciliation, reconstruction nor rehabilitation. If anything, some people were reduced to second class citizen status” (Vanguard 2000, 3 June). The same year, an Igbo scholar noted that “the Igbo have been systematically disempowered politically, economically, military and socially by the Hausa/Fulani and Yoruba groups” (Ikpeze 2000). Igbo leaders, too, have nurtured this view in countless public statements. For example, Anambra State Governor Peter Obi argued that “[w]e are no longer talking about marginalisation. [Ndigbo] have lost everything in Nigeria.” (Daily Independent 2008, 15 October). Similarly, Emmanuel Onwe, the former Senator of Ebonyi State, held that “[a]s an Igbo man, I harbour a deep sense of sadness at the manner in which we, as a people, have been consigned to the peripheral reaches of the Nigerian power structure for more than four decades” (Premium Times 2013, 7 January). Hardly anyone among the Igbo’s leadership would express that their group was fully integrated into Nigeria.

MASSOB's framing aligns neatly with the omnipresent narrative of the "marginalization of the Igbo." The Igbo's self-understanding as being suppressed by the North as a punishment for the Civil War corresponds to core parts of MASSOB's diagnostic framing (*compatibility*).²⁰¹ Moreover, MASSOB has succeeded in addressing a very pressing concern (*relevance*): Many among the general Igbo population assume that their lives would immediately improve if the marginalization was brought to an end and the South-East would finally receive its fair share of the federal allocations. What has confirmed MASSOB's argument that the Igbo have been marginalized ever since the war's end is also the fact that almost all Northern military rulers and even the newly-elected President Obasanjo were involved in the war against Biafra (as pointed out by Harnischfeger 2011: 28). In 2000, one Igbo journalist commented Obasanjo's presidency as follows: "It is a big shame and national embarrassment that even the man who so much institutionalised hatred and tribalism and who oversaw the annihilation of an ethnic group is made to preside over this nation again without any sign of remorse of his past deed" (The Post Express 2000, 20 April-b). Hence, the continuation of the rule of the war's victors as personified by Obasanjo gave further *empirical credibility* to MASSOB's claim of incessant Northern dominance.

Through its continued framing, MASSOB certainly also nurtured the common narrative of Igbo marginalization. It is clear that many Igbos felt disadvantaged already during the long years of military rule. When Ojukwu returned to Nigeria in 1982 from exile, he framed his return as an effort of "integrating the Igbo into the mainstream of Nigerian politics" (cited in Okpu 1985: 197). Also, around the democratization in 1998/99 repeatedly Igbo journalists and political leaders referred to the "marginalization of the Igbo" (for example, see Tempo 1998, 28 October-b; P.M. News 1999, 5 March). Nevertheless, MASSOB, probably more than any other organization in the Igboland, contributed to the self-perception of the Igbo as a disadvantaged group.

7.2.3.2. Security Threats

MASSOB's condemnation of insecurity as a result of the perceived Northern conspiracy is widely shared among Igbos. They generally see themselves as living in a hostile environment. For most of the interviewees the problem of insecurity stems from the Northern culture and

²⁰¹ Uwazuruike was right to write: "Every Igbo believes that Ndigbo are marginalised. Even those in government, including the so called Abuja politicians believe that Igbo are actually marginalized. (...) Everybody believes that the war brought untold hardship to Ndigbo, and since after the war, that things have never been the same" (Uwazuruike 2004: 173).

even Islam more generally, which they consider violence-prone. Statements like the following ones were common in the interviews with traders and other ordinary Igbo persons: “We can never live in peace with the Northerners because their culture and religion is a bad one, is an evil one. It is a culture that supports killing and maiming, that someone would just lift up a machete and cut off somebody's head” (FG2); “Nigeria has been Islamized, now they want to do it openly – that is the reason of the Boko Haram” (C94); and “APC, we see them as the terrorists themselves – they should be wiped out so that we have peace of mind” (C88). While many interviewees also saw political and economic motivations behind the Northern oppression, the consensus was that a *jihad* has been waged against Igbos.

What is underlying these views is the assumption of the North not only as inherently violent but also as homogenous and opposed to the Igbo. Few interviewees drew any differences between, on the one hand, Boko Haram and the “Sardauna” (as embodiment of the Northern war leader) and, on the other, the common Northerner and Northern politicians including President Buhari and his party APC. In the common perception, all of them have conspired against the Igbo to eliminate them, either openly through violence, or silently through marginalization. In this sense, interviewees also commonly saw Boko Haram as an “anti-Igbo scheme”: “Every bomb that goes off over there in the markets and churches, it is our Igbo brothers and sisters that are the victims” (C92). This exaggerated perception of the real security threats vastly deepens the sense of insecurity felt by Igbos. As a result, even relatively minor and rather interpretative occurrences are immediately understood as major security threats. For example, in July 2013 a State Task Force seems to have brought 70 Igbos against their will from Lagos to Onitsha (Vanguard 2013, 25 July). Many interviewees referred to this incident as “deportation of the Igbo” and as evidence that they are not wanted and threatened in Nigeria. They commonly made the Governor of Lagos, Babatunde Fashola (a Yoruba Muslim), responsible for the incident, whereby this again is interpreted as part of the broader anti-Igbo conspiracy in which the Yoruba are understood as co-conspirator of the North.²⁰²

Media and other sources confirm this self-perception of the Igbo as a threatened group and show that this existed already during the early 2000s. Like MASSOB, many Igbos understood the “Sharia riots” in Kaduna in 2000 as reminder of their constant insecurity in Nigeria and even as possible re-beginning of the 1966 massacres (The News 2000, 21 March;

²⁰² Interviewees repeatedly expressed suspicions about Yorubas who they considered liars. One interviewed journalist argued that “[t]he Yoruba man is good at talking, but it is all lies. You cannot trust them when it comes to fighting” (C102). This image is related to the Yoruba’s non-support for Biafra during the Civil War.

The Post Express 2000, 25 May). At this point, even the five South-Eastern state governors – for the only time – threatened to support secession: “We cannot again tolerate any situation where easterners are killed without any provocation, and that any further attack on easterners will compel us to re-assess our faith in the continued existence of Nigeria as a corporate entity” (Newswatch 2000, 31 March).²⁰³ Yet, within weeks the Igbo state governors clearly distanced themselves from MASSOB and the renewed struggle for Biafra (This Day 2000, 21 May). Many further statements in news sources sustain the impression that the Igbo see themselves as threatened in Nigeria. For example, in April 2006 an Igbo journalist expressed his grave concerns about the “Mindless Religious Killings” of Igbos, which in his view goes back “as far back as 1945”: “[S]ince after 1980, Igbos and Christians were killed almost every year on the average in the North. (...) The killers would disperse, only to reorganize to strike again at the next opportunity. (...) For how long will this continue?” (Vanguard 2006, 12 April). In April 2013, after a Boko Haram attack on the Christian quarter in Kano, Joe Nwaorgu (Secretary General of Ohanaeze Ndigbo) similarly expressed that “[t]he Igbo nation is taking the heaviest toll on the casualty list and Ndigbo are grossly pained by this organised pogrom on her people” (The Punch 2013, 21 March). By using the notion pogrom, he invoked the 1966 massacres that led to the escalatory spiral and Biafra’s independence declaration.

In light of the widely shared sense of being threatened, MASSOB’s condemnation of insecurity has strong frame resonance. It corresponds to the deep-seated belief that the North seeks dominance over the Igbo and even uses violent means to suppress them (*compatibility*). This is a historical narrative that can be traced back to the 1960s. This perception of jihadism and of a Northern extermination policy not only contributed to Biafra’s independence declaration, but also, amplified by the Biafran war propaganda, created much of the resolve to continue the war despite the desperate military situation (Omenka 2010). As Ojukwu stressed in 1969, “the Gowon junta, with the direct and active support of the British government and Russia, has been waging a hideous and vicious war against the innocent people of what is now Biafra. The real intention is the destruction of a people and nation – genocide behind the façade of maintaining Nigerian unity” (Ojukwu 1969: X). Although no genocide occurred at the war’s end, the narrative of a Northern extermination campaign has persisted ever since then. It

²⁰³ Similarly, the Secretary-General of Ohanaeze Ndigbo, Benjamin Nwabueze, stressed that if “One Nigeria” means “wanton killings, wanton destruction of Igbo lives and property, it is unacceptable to us” (The News 2000, 21 March).

is the lens through which Igbos interpret their security situation.²⁰⁴ Therefore, also the frequent attacks on Southerners in Kano, Kaduna, Plateau, and other Northern places immediately raise the fear among Igbos of “another 1966”, i.e. the re-beginning of their annihilation. The “Sharia riots”, which occurred only months after MASSOB’s foundation, gave much *empirical credibility* to the movement and boosted MASSOB’s prominence (Harnischfeger 2011: 39-40). For the strong and broad vast familial relationships among Igbos in Nigeria, the security concerns of Igbos in the North are widely felt by everyone in the South-East too (Smith 2005).

7.2.3.3. Repression

Many Igbos have perceived the repression against MASSOB as gravely unjustified and expressed their solidarity with the movement. The interviewees generally saw MASSOB as a noble and non-violent movement that strives for a just cause. This makes the repression a source of great injustice and anger. In line with some of the movement’s speakers, several interviewees pointed out that “Boko Haram and the OPC have dined with the government”, despite their armed tactics, whereas the non-violent MASSOB has been repressed. This narrative contains MASSOB’s conflict interpretation: Boko Haram and the OPC are understood as part of the North and the Yoruba, respectively, whereas MASSOB represents the oppressed Igbo people.

The analysis of further sources sustains the interview findings that Igbos generally consider the repression against MASSOB unjustified and part of the broader discrimination of their population. Even some Igbo leaders, who otherwise have remained opposed to MASSOB, expressed their concern. With regard to the Okigwe Massacre I in 2001, the South-Eastern governors as well as Ohanaeze Ndigbo condemned the attack on “innocent citizens associated with MASSOB by the Nigeria Police” (The Post Express 2001, 12 February; Vanguard 2001, 14 February). At the time, one Igbo youth group even threatened that “any other attack on MASSOB members and their associates must be duly retaliated by the entire Igbo nation if the Federal Government does not take action now” (Vanguard 2001, 18 February). During Uwazuruike’s repeated detention, Igbo leaders and local NGOs called for his release: For instance, in 2007 the Ohanaeze Ndigbo leader at Lagos called for “the release of our son, Chief Uwazuruike from detention so that dialogue can take place to enhance government’s policy of

²⁰⁴ For example, already in 1993, when the military annulled the presidential elections and started a wave of repression against the Yoruba, many Igbos immediately fled from the North for precaution (Onuoha 2011: 86).

rule of law” (Vanguard 2007, 30 September). Finally, the complaint that the non-violent MASSOB has been treated more unfairly than armed groups in Nigeria was also made by Igbo journalists and NGO leaders (Leadership 2011, 9 July; Vanguard 2013, 20 April). For instance, one youth leader threatened that “if they go on with their plans to try Uwazuruike for treason after granting amnesty to Niger Delta militants and planning to do same to the Boko Haram sect that has killed a lot of Nigerians, then we will be left with no choice than to cause mayhem in this country” (The SUN 2013, 22 April).

The repression against MASSOB, thus, has given much *empirical credibility* to the movement’s diagnostic framing. In the eyes of many, the state’s attacks on MASSOB have confirmed the movement’s argument that MASSOB and, by extension, the Igbos in general have been treated unfairly in Nigeria. Moreover, the source of the problem has often been seen in a conspiracy by the North and the Yoruba against the Igbo (*compatibility*). This understanding explains why not only the MASSOB members and leaders have become aggrieved about the repression but ordinary Igbos and some among the Igbo’s political leadership too. Thereby, the repression has encouraged people to join and support MASSOB, even though it has also made participation more risky.

7.2.4. Prognostic Framing

MASSOB’s propagation of Biafra resonates widely among Igbos. Biafra has been convincing to most among the general population both as the idea of a homeland and also as a concrete political project that can be achieved by MASSOB’s propagated protest strategy. While many interviewees stressed that only Biafra can solve the many pressing concerns of the Igbo in Nigeria, most saw Biafra as promising but not as the only possible answer. They were inspired by the idea of freedom and independence, but to them it would be equally acceptable if Igbos were fully integrated into Nigerian politics. This was expressed as follows in a typical statement by one interviewed common Igbo person (C107):

The solution is to create more states in Igboland, as many as Hausas have, and to have more representatives. So our allocation will be given to us. Even, if it is possible, let them separate Nigeria and give us our own state Biafra. That will stop it. Let this country disintegrate, let everybody go on their own. Nobody would live in trouble.

Still, there are also some, especially those from the Igbo political elite and the better educated segments of the Igbo population, who remain unconvinced by MASSOB’s framing (as discussed further below).

7.2.4.1. Biafra as Homeland

Igbos commonly understand Biafra as the imagined homeland where they could live in safety and prosperity. For them it is therefore the logical and historically-proven solution to the problem of insecurity and marginalization of the Igbo. This came out clearly in the interviews, in which interviewees from the general Igbo population commonly imagined Biafra as a promised place where justice, safety, and prosperity would prevail. This view was even held by some interviewees who clearly belong to the Igbo elite (C41):

Biafra is a model state where the people will rely on themselves to show that Africa, if left alone, can do something. It is that kind of Biafra that we are thinking of and that is why we are feeling marginalized. But we are not being allowed to use our potentials fully. If people who are inferior to you are allowed to rule you, then there is a problem.

Such positive views about Biafra were very common in the interviews. Many argued that “if we have Biafra today it will be one of the best countries in the world” (C35). Following the respondents, it is not the Eastern oil reserves that would guarantee the success of Biafra, but the “ingenuity of the Igbo” (this expression was widely used). The very positive self-perception of the Igbo and the promises of Biafra were expressed as follows by a young journalist (C91):

I was not yet born during Biafra, but I read a lot about it and I was really encouraged by what I read. In Nigeria today our refineries are not working, or only at 10% capacity. During the days of Biafra, they were working at full capacity. In Biafra they were so resourceful, they were refining the fuel themselves. They had this Ogbunigwe bomb that was locally-made and very powerful. In fact, what Biafra achieved during that war, during that time of 30 months, Nigeria has not been up to it. The stories we hear about Biafra, it was this kind of emerging economy, an economy like in the US today or countries in Europe.

This statement was typical for interview responses from young men in the Igboland, many of whom glorified Biafra along these lines.

Besides the prospects of economic improvements, the interviewees also interpreted Biafra as promising with regard to security. Much like MASSOB, they saw Biafra as a defensive mechanism. The common interview answer on what necessitated Biafra in the past was that the 1966 massacres made it impossible for Igbos to remain within Nigeria. This was put as follows by one interviewed Igbo business person: “We were forced into the war since they did not guarantee the safety of Igbos in the Northern parts of the country. Igbos were fleeing in droves, some were declared missing, and some died. So that necessitated the declaration of the Republic of Biafra. We felt our destiny is not secure in the Nigerian nation” (C36). Relatedly, interviewees generally spoke highly of the past Biafran leader Ojukwu. He was revered by the

interviewees as “hero” and “godfather”, who “stood up when his people needed him” (C12). One interviewed elderly man, who had fought as a soldier during the Civil War but who was very favorable to the renewed struggle for Biafra, depicted Ojukwu as follows: “Ojukwu is a man, he is a very strong soldier. He has not come for oil, but for his people. He is a God-given son who was rescuing his people from total extermination. In the whole world there cannot be more than two or three persons who are as strong as Ojukwu” (C106). Hence, Igbos generally see Biafra as an effort to prevent them from harm in situations of insecurity such as the present one in Nigeria.

The analyzed media sources also clearly show that the understanding of Biafra as a self-defense mechanism is widely shared among Igbos. Already in 2000 an Igbo journalist wrote that “Biafra is about the survival of a people threatened with total annihilation from the face of the earth” (The Post Express 2000, 28 May). This view is also generally shared by the Igbo elite. For example, for Joe Achuzie, former Biafran General and Secretary General of Ohanaeze Ndigbo, the struggle for Biafra was fought because the Igbo were “being killed and pushed out of the federation” (Chinua Achebe Foundation 2005). For the Igbo elite this argument reconciles why the Igbo once sought secession but today strive for “One Nigeria.” As expressed by Law Mefor of the Igbo Leadership Development Foundation, “NdiIgbo have been at the heart of the vanguard of unity and development of the country. (...) Even when they fought the civil war, it was with the sole purpose of self defence, which was why the war was fought within the Biafran enclave” (Mefor 2012). Hence, both proponents and opponents of the renewed struggle for Biafra agree that Biafra is a political option that applies in situations in which the Igbo are gravely threatened. The two political camps, however, differ over whether the present insecurity is so grave that Biafra is necessary again.

Considering these widely held and very positive views about Biafra among the general Igbo population, it is unsurprising that MASSOB has won huge popularity within short time. MASSOB’s framing aligns perfectly with the common perception of Biafra as homeland and effort of self-defense (*compatibility*). The general understanding of Biafra as safe haven for situations of marginalization and insecurity also makes it evident that MASSOB’s framing has become highly *relevant* and convincing to the general Igbo population, which suffers most from the marginalization. Several of these narratives including the idea of Biafra as safe haven and homeland have preceded MASSOB’s foundation and were already main parts of the mobilization of the past Biafran struggle (as further discussed below, see 8.2). Studying an internet forum during the mid-19990s, one scholar found that Igbos in the diaspora held the view that “[t]he massacres of 1966 and 1967 were the main reason why the Igbo wanted a

country apart from Nigeria” and that “Biafra is not only a war lost but an ideal and an imagined homeland” (Simola 2000: 111-112). Hence, at its foundation MASSOB has relied on pre-existing narratives, but the movement has succeeded in promoting these views widely among the Igbo. The most striking aspect of MASSOB’s frame resonance certainly is the present-day glorification of Biafra, which is shared even by many among the Igbo elite.

This present-day glorification of Biafra is strange in many ways and has been reinforced by MASSOB’s framing. In light of the historical events, it is stunning that the Igbo perceive Biafra as a glorious place. This has certainly been facilitated by the long silencing of the war’s traumatizing events and experiences and the lack of reconciliation with the other Nigerian peoples. Nevertheless, the past Biafra struggle was an obvious failure in key regards: The secession aimed at overcoming insecurity and discrimination, but even brought unprecedented human suffering on the Igbo. Moreover, it created lasting suspicions of Igbos among the other groups in Nigeria, which made the Igbos’ full political integration into Nigeria considerably more difficult. Therefore, the Biafran question could be perceived in many negative ways or as dead end. MASSOB’s convincing framing, however, has contributed immensely to reviving the idea of Biafra and framing it as even as the glorious future of a deserving people. The success of this interpretation has probably also resulted from its convenience for Igbos. It puts all the blame for the suffering in Biafra on the North and Yoruba.

7.2.4.2. Internationalized, Legalistic, and Non-Violent Campaign

Many among the general Igbo population long not only for the vision and dream of Biafra but also want to achieve an independent country of Biafra. These interviewees generally expressed severe frustration and were clearly ready for a radical break with Nigeria. They commonly made statements such as: “There is no such thing as “One Nigeria” – and there will never be!” (C44), “It is either separation or further domination by the Hausa-Fulani” (C98), “I believe that if this country is divided, there will be peace” (C88). One interviewed young man expressed his position as follow (C34):

We want this breakup so that every region will use its own resources to develop its state. If you come to Abuja you see good lights, good roads, good buildings, but come to my village and see what is happening. Our government is just deceiving us. That is why we are saying that everybody should go back to his region and develop his region. That is why we need division.

Often, interviewees referred to division rather than secession. This, however, does not imply an opposition to secession. Rather, to them both the disintegration of Nigeria into many

countries or the sole breakaway of the Igbos were similarly promising political strategies. For these interviewees, who were strongly favorable to the struggle for an independent Biafra, MASSOB's proposed strategy of an internationalized, legalistic, and non-violent campaign has been largely convincing.

Internationalized and Legalistic Campaign

Many of these respondents who were favorable of the breakaway of the Igbo from Nigeria strongly emphasized the importance of winning international support to achieve Biafra. Like MASSOB, they argued that Western powers and especially the UN should assist Biafra in the struggle for independence. In a typical statement, this was expressed as follows (C92):

I think the best thing to do is for the Igbo to gain their independence. The only thing is that our fathers and forefathers, they tried for that and they could not succeed. (...) The United Nations are supposed to come in, they should liberate us. They should hold a roundtable.

Two interviewed traders similarly argued as follows (C55):

What we need now is international support. America, Japan, and Britain – Biafra is what we want, we want to be free. (...) With international support, Biafra will become true fast. Like in USSR, Malaysia and Singapur, East Timor, North and South Korea, they split peacefully – that is what we need too.

Like these interviewees, others cited examples of countries from around the world to illustrate the point that with international support, Biafra's independence can be achieved through non-violent means. Crucial here is not whether the cited examples make a plausible case for secession by these means (which some make not), but to highlight that many interviewees found this argument credible. Some of these examples (such as Kosovo, Sudan, and East Timor) even correspond to the cases highlighted by MASSOB in its CAFs. Finally, the interviews revealed a common myth among MASSOB's audience according to which Igbos are even entitled to secession by international law because of the past Biafran war: "According to international law, after an ethnic war, let there be some number of years and you have a right to become a republic of your own" (C35).

These interviews suggest that MASSOB's propagation of an internationalized and legalistic campaign has strong resonance among average Igbos. Many interviewees believed that international support from the West and the UN is indispensable to achieve freedom by peaceful avenues. In fact, many of their views correspond closely to MASSOB's framing and can largely be seen as directly influenced by the movement. There seem to be three main reasons for such resonance of the prognostic framing: Firstly, Igbos generally have a strong

cultural orientation towards European countries and the US. These are role models for how they imagine the country they would want to live in (either within Biafra or Nigeria). Hence, invoking these examples as a blueprint for Biafra has been likely to resonate with Igbos, many of who also have familial relationships to Igbos in the diaspora in many Western countries (*compatibility*). Secondly, the example of Sudan, as frequently referred to in the recent framing by the movement, has strong appeal to Igbos for perceived similarities between Sudan and Nigeria. From the Igbo's perspective, both countries are artificial constructs of British colonialism and in both, Christians in the South have found themselves suppressed by what they see as Northern *jihadist* regime (e.g. C43). The secession of Southern Sudan, facilitated with support from the international community in 2011, therefore raised the hope among Igbos that the same could be possible for Biafra. Thus, the creation of Southern Sudan gave important *empirical credibility* to MASSOB's claim that the international community can act as a liberator from the outside.²⁰⁵ Finally, the emphasis on the importance of international support for achieving Biafra aligns with the historical experience of the past Biafran struggle. It was already a key assertion of the Biafran propaganda that international support needs to be won to win the war (Omenka 2010). The failure of winning such support and the related loss of the war created the lasting perception among Igbos that international support is indispensable to achieve Biafra.²⁰⁶ As expressed by one interviewed Igbo politician, "[t]he mistake in the first war was that we did not have international support. The strategy now is to get international support first" (C12). Hence, for this widely-received historical lesson, MASSOB's emphasis on the importance of international support has been very convincing to the Igbo audience (*compatibility*). For these three reasons MASSOB's propagation of an internationalized and legalistic approach has resonated with many Igbos.

Non-Violence

MASSOB's propagation of non-violent protest has strong resonance with Igbos. This encompasses both those favorable to the struggle for independence and even those opposed. For the latter, the non-violent approach is preferable because it prevents harm. For those who are favorable to achieving Biafra's independence, non-violent protest has been an adequate and promising approach. For example, the above-cited interviewees who stressed the importance

²⁰⁵ This is another example for the often selective reading of history by MASSOB and many Igbos. The Southern Sudanese struggle for independence involved decades of warfare.

²⁰⁶ Evidently, other historical lessons would have been possible as well. Most importantly, the absence of international support for Biafra in the past could suggest that such support is permanently unavailable to Igbos, but this conclusion was rarely drawn in the interviews.

of international support generally interpreted international assistance as an avenue for a legalistic and non-violent approach to independence. Not a single of these interviewees argued that international assistance should be sought for acquiring military support and for waging war for Biafra.

In addition, the interviews revealed two main arguments why Igbos consider non-violence appropriate and promising to achieve Biafra's independence. Firstly, respondents argued in line with MASSOB that there have been successful non-violent protest movements around the world and that this has been inspiring to them. For example, one interviewed journalist from Onitsha argued (C104): "Some believe that violence is the answer, because of how ruthless Nigeria is as a society. When you are pushed to the wall, violence naturally becomes your response. However, violence is not the best answer. Look at Martin Luther King or Gandhi in India, they achieved their aims without violence." Secondly, it was strongly emphasized by interviewees from the general Igbo population that non-violence is the adequate protest strategy because of the Igbo's past war experience: "The Biafra war led to the death of so many people, so many innocent ones. Igbos do not want to do anything that will cause war again, because when they fought they did not get anything from it" (C93). For others, the war has also plausibly shown that rebellion does not work and that therefore a non-violent alternative has been necessary: "Assuming you could get Biafra through violence, the Civil War would have ushered us in to Biafra. We now believe that the only way to get to Biafra is by peaceful negotiation" (C55). This was similarly pointed out by two NGO leaders who argued as follows: "We have lost too much when we tried to break away from Nigeria. We restrain ourselves. It is not that we cannot take up arms. We have done it before to defend ourselves. (...) There is marginalization, stress, and oppression, yes, but we are dealing with it through non-violent means" (C11).

Besides these many interviewees who stressed the importance of non-violence in pursuing the struggle for Biafra, some more belligerent views can also be found among Igbos. When talking to students and other youths at Onitsha, it was obvious that they are frustrated to the point that they would be willing to engage in a violent struggle for independence (C98). A typical statement in this regard is the following that was made by two middle-aged men from the general Igbo population: "Everyone in Igboland is ready to carry the bomb. Whatever [the Northerners] do over there, but let one bomb go off in the Igboland and there will be war. (...) Once Igbos take up arms, the country is over" (C88). Interviewees like these two commonly argued that only violence would bring Biafra because Nigeria is a fundamentally

violent place, Biafra's independence can only be won if violent means are used, and Boko Haram has been challenging the Igbo to the point that a violent response is necessary.

Similar threats of violence can also be found in some news sources. In the face of the Boko Haram insurgency and the attacks on Christians in the North, several Igbo groups invoked Biafran war weapon of Ogbunigwe to express the Igbo's determination not to accept the situation anymore and to use violent means. In early 2012, a self-depicted "counter terrorist group sworn to the protection of Ndigbo" made strong threats of violence by the name of Ogbunigwe. The Ogbunigwe group declared "to avenge any drop of blood of our brothers shed any where in Nigeria", threatened to "use extreme violence to protect ourselves where necessary", and argued that "if we do not return this violence, then we will be systematically eliminated" (247Reports.com 2012, 4 January, 2012, 19 January). Similarly, after another Boko Haram attack on churches in the North, Bishop Emmanuel Chukwuma (South-Eastern chairperson of CAN) made the following harsh threat: "We are prepared for war- physically and spiritually against any form of attack on the church. Time has come for reprisal because nobody can stop us from worshipping our God" (Vanguard 2012, 19 June). These calls for violent means are not explicit rallying calls for the independence of Biafra (probably because these speakers would want to evade the likely treason charge). However, Biafra is hugely implied in these statements through the use of the term Ogbunigwe and perhaps even by threatening to wage war, which from the Igbo's strategic position can only be war for secession.

Explaining Resonance of Non-Violence

The continued propagation of non-violence by MASSOB has resonated with many among the Igbo audience, as the interviews clearly show. For those who oppose secession, it has been a convincing and convenient argument, even if only to prevent conflict escalation and the related suffering. These people have widely shared the view that MASSOB is a non-violent protest movement. Over time, this constant emphasis on the non-violent character by proponents and opponents of Biafra among MASSOB's audience has certainly also influenced MASSOB's leadership towards continuing to propagate non-violence.

For those who advocate the secession of Biafra, in turn, MASSOB's propagation of non-violence has been highly convincing. First of all, it is a plausible and almost indispensable component of the proposed strategy of the internationalized and legalistic campaign. Hence, the framing is *consistent* in the regard that these strategies connect. Furthermore, many among MASSOB's audience have been inspired by the examples of the non-violent protest movements and their key figures (including Gandhi, Mandela, and King) that MASSOB has emphasized in its framing. Many Igbos today make use and even defend the idea of non-

violence by reference to precisely these historical examples. This is very much the result of the movement's convincing framing. MASSOB has brought these examples into the renewed struggle and it seems that their initial and continued resonance resulted largely from Uwazuruike's convincing argument of following Gandhi's footsteps. It is widely known among Igbos that Uwazuruike studied law in India and is dedicated to Gandhi and non-violence for these personal experiences.

MASSOB's propagation of non-violence has been convincing to many Igbos also because it aligns with the past war experience. Interviewees from the older generation recounted their own war experience and some emphasized that it is a miracle to them to even still be alive today. They were surprisingly favorable to the idea of another Biafran breakaway attempt, but several emphasized that this needs to be pursued strictly through non-violence. The younger generation generally knows little about the Civil War, but is aware that there was a war, that Biafra lost it, and that it caused immense human suffering. On these grounds, the call for a different approach towards Biafra and for non-violence in particular has been highly plausible to many of them (*compatibility*).

The war's legacy, however, has not created a cultural context in which mobilization for violence is impossible. Igbos have no firm "Never Again" narrative, which would mean that Biafra and warfare need to be prevented, even at all costs. Rather, the war created some reluctance among them about another violent struggle, which MASSOB then used to propagate non-violence. Some interviewees also saw non-violence as their strategy of first choice but armed means as the next stage, as an elderly man and former Biafran soldier put it (C106): "We do not want to fight anybody. If equality comes through dialogue, that will be even better. But if it does not come that way, everybody is ready to die in the fight for his rights."

The Civil War's legacy has also contained symbols and narratives, which could be exploited for mobilizing for another armed struggle. One interviewee expressed his views as follows (C41):

When thinking about Biafra the slaughter, the killing, and the starvation of the war come to mind, but there is also pride. We were able to do this when the whole world was against us. If we had fought against Nigeria only, they would not have been able to beat us. Russia, America, and Britain were not on our side. Yet, the people fought literally with their hands and stopped the Nigerian army, which was fifty times stronger than the Biafran Army. Biafra also engenders the feeling of pride.

The statement points to the killing and starvation, which could be seen as discouraging another armed struggle for Biafra, but the ideas of pride and fighting strength seem to dominate here. These ideas, the already-mentioned symbol of Ogbunigwe, and Biafran war songs and poems (Ebeogu 1992) could be used for another mobilization for warfare. Moreover, the little historical knowledge of the younger generation about the war, in absence of a public debate on Biafra even today, has clearly allowed war-glorifying narratives to spread. However, MASSOB proper, Uwazuruike, and most other Biafran leaders have not exploited these cultural opportunities to rally for violent means. Instead, they used some of these ideas – including pride, ingenuity, the Igbo’s strength, and the image of Biafra as glorious – to promote non-violence.

MASSOB and the propagation of non-violence has clearly won the frame dispute against the few who have attempted to mobilize the Igbo for another rebellion. The movement has emphasized non-violence to the point that today it has become, while not impossible, at least more difficult to achieve resonance if propagating rebellion. The mentioned rallying calls for an armed struggle for Biafra by the BZM and BNYL have hardly resonated with the audience. Also, calls for retaliation and armed means by the Ogbunigwe group and the South-Eastern CAN chairperson have not led to violence. Considering the Igbos’ severe frustration about the ongoing marginalization and the strong security fears over Boko Haram’s insurgency, the continued non-violence and almost entire absence of retaliatory killings is surprising enough.²⁰⁷ MASSOB’s convincing framing of non-violence has played a major role here. The resonance of the CAFs has also allowed MASSOB to maintain a strong position among the Igbo and to occupy much of the social space in which other, more radical, and possibly war-promoting movements could have grown.

7.2.4.3. Non-Resonance

The struggle for Biafra has strong appeal to Igbos, but some, in particular the more educated and the political leadership, consider Biafra nothing but a dream. This position has been promoted among others by Ojukwu who already during the 1980s coined the expression “Biafra of the Mind” (The Guardian 1988, 28 June). In 2000, he confirmed his support for “One Nigeria” as follows (Vanguard 2000, 17 April):

²⁰⁷ One of the rare retaliating actions in the South seems to have occurred after a presumed Boko Haram attack on Southerners in January 2012. In response, Muslims in Sapele (Delta State) were chased (Vanguard 2012, 6 January). Information on the incident is scarce, but the city lies in a mostly Itsekiri-populated region, which makes involvement of Igbos and MASSOB unlikely.

I do not believe today in the year 2000 that the answer is the hasty proclamation of the Republic of Biafra. (...) Many years back I said yes. I still say yes. The Biafra of the mind must eventually triumph, but possibly not that of territory.

The formula Biafra of the Mind has some ambiguity but seems to suggest that an independent country of Biafra is a beautiful dream of the Igbos but cannot become reality, at least for the time being and perhaps forever. Ojukwu invoked the expression also to urge Igbos to use of the Biafran ideals such as courage, endurance, and inventiveness to become fully integrated into Nigeria (The Guardian 1988, 28 June).

The interviewees who have remained unconvinced by MASSOB's prognostic framing highlighted three major arguments: They (1) found the movement's propagated strategy unrealistic, (2) saw the Civil War experience as strong deterrent, and (3) held that the Igbo need Nigeria economically.

Firstly, some among MASSOB's audience have questioned whether the strategy of internationalization and legalism can realistically lead the Igbo to independence. In their view, Biafra can neither be achieved through advocacy and diplomacy, nor through armed means. For instance, one interviewed journalist expressed that "[w]e fought for thirty months, but we could not get Biafra – how can we get Biafra without firing a single shot as MASSOB is agitating? If you look around the world today, secession does not look that easy, especially when you are talking about a state as imposing as Nigeria" (C91). Similarly, a political analyst argued that "[w]hatever makes the chief architects of such movement believe that what the Igbo could not obtain or achieve in an all-out bitter war could be handed over to them on a platter of gold in peace time beats the imagination!!" (Vanguard 2006, 14 April). One interviewee dismissed MASSOB's promise of "Non-Violence, Non-Exodus" sharply arguing that "[t]here cannot be separation without you moving. (...) In Nigeria, you cannot achieve anything without violence" (C52).

These interviewees have considered MASSOB's propagation of independence through an internationally-organized referendum as wishful thinking rather than as realistic. In this vein, they also pointed to the continued international support for a united Nigeria and argued that not even an armed struggle would bring the Igbos closer to independence. Rebellion in their view would likely only repeat the tragic experiences of the past war. This assessment of the non-feasibility of Biafra's independence seems justified in light of the present structure of the international system – and the absence of major international allies. The economic interest of the international community in maintaining a united Nigeria, humanitarian considerations, and a general reluctance to encourage or recognize secessionist movements all work against

MASSOB's claims. Against this background, the framing has *lacked empirical credibility*, at least among those with knowledge of Biafra's international position. The examples of other successful secessionist movements (e.g. East Timor, South Sudan), as invoked by MASSOB's leaders, can also be easily dismissed for *lack of empirical credibility* due to the substantial violence involved in these campaigns.

Secondly, a few of the interviewees have remained fundamentally opposed to the renewed struggle due to the Igbos' experiences with Biafra. One elderly person recalled that he had "lived the pains and shock of the war" and would not want this to happen ever again (C18). Onyema Ugochukwu, an interviewed senior Igbo leader, similarly held that Biafra is impossible without war and therefore should remain a dream (C42):

The Republic of Biafra can only be a place in the mind. Biafra is dead indefinitely. It died during the bombardment of the war. We believed so much in Biafra. I commanded a platoon of 30 people where we had less than ten guns and we still sustained for three years. There was that kind of belief. But we lost the war in the end. I would not advise anybody to agitate for Biafra unless you are prepared for war.

As mentioned, those born after the war generally know little about the Biafran history, but some have been influenced by the older generations: "Our elders know what happened. They pray for it not to happen again. They tell us that 'you have not seen the war, that is why you are so eager for Biafra'" (C53).

Similar views can be found in news sources. Already in 2000, Benjamin Nwabueze, who was Secretary General of Ohanaeze Ndigbo at the time, invoked the historical experiences to declare the struggle for Biafra futile (This Day 2000, 11 May):

[I]t carries for us the memory of thousands of Igbos and other Easterners killed before and during the war to crush the secession. The Igbos are a forgiving people, but the memory of a tragic event as traumatic as the pogrom of May 29, July 29 and September 29, 1966 and the further huge losses of lives in the civil war can hardly be erased.

Similarly, a Biafran war veteran told journalists that "[m]any of those who are asking for Biafra are those who didn't experience the civil war", otherwise "they would know it is not necessarily the solution to bad government" (cited in IRIN 2005, 19 April). Thus, some people still associate Biafra foremost with human suffering, which implies a *lack of compatibility* of MASSOB's prognostic framing. By using the notion of Biafra, the movement even made it inevitable for Igbos to be reminded of the history. While the latter can be read in many ways, for some the negative aspects have dominated and prevented them from supporting the campaign.

Finally, interviewees from the elite often argued that the Igbo need Nigeria economically. In their view, the Igbos' many investments throughout the federation would all be lost if the South-East left Nigeria. In the interview, the prominent Igbo leader Benjamin Nwabueze expressed this as follows (C45):

The solution for the Igbo is not to break away. We tried it in the Civil War and it did not work. Today, there are Igbos in all other parts of Nigeria. What do you do about their properties? They own hotels, businesses, and schools everywhere, they are very enterprising people. Do you ask them to come back home to Igboland? Is an Igbo state really viable? The truth is that Igbos need Nigeria, perhaps more than Nigeria needs them.

Similarly, an Igbo businessman argued (C36):

The Igbo man is the economic heavyweight of Nigeria, our investments are scattered everywhere. If you actualize the Biafran state the properties you have outside of that Biafran state, how do you do it? Most of our property is outside of the Igboland, 75% of Abuja is owned by the Igbo. This property will be confiscated or highly taxed by Nigeria to frustrate us. We, the Igbos, have much more investment outside the Biafra state than inside of it. So, independence will not favor the ordinary Igbo man.

That Igbos own large parts of Lagos, Abuja, and other major cities throughout the federation has been common knowledge. Likewise, the interviewees expressed the common self-understanding that they are an entrepreneurial people. MASSOB's principle of Non-Exodus has sought to precisely address the feared losses of business investment in the case of secession. Yet, this proposition has not been convincing to the interviewed businesspersons and political leaders. They argued that, exactly as in 1967, the Igbos' investment in Nigeria would inevitably again be lost if Biafra declared secession. Thus, MASSOB's Non-Exodus argument has *lacked in empirical credibility*, partly for evident historical evidence. Paradoxically, MASSOB itself has highlighted the losses of property ("Abandoned Properties") and savings ("20 Pounds ceiling") of the past Biafran struggle. In this regard, the movement's framing has been somewhat *inconsistent*. Furthermore, the repeated attacks on Igbos in the North and the constant threat of imposing the *sharia* on them has reminded many that Igbos would be targeted if they proceeded with Biafra's independence (*lack of empirical credibility*).

Hence, this shows that the elite, high-ranking business persons, and some others have not merely opposed the renewed struggle for Biafra out of economic interest from patronage politics. They have also differed with MASSOB over several core aspects of the movement's prognostic framing, which has not been convincing to them.

7.2.5. Motivational Framing

In terms of motivational framing, several elements of the movement's framing have a strong appeal to the Igbo audience. This encompasses foremost the (1) dream of Biafra and relatedly patience, (2) identity-affirming aspects including the religious framing, and (3) self-depiction as noble and responsible movement.

Firstly, as mentioned, many Igbos today have very positive and even glorifying views about Biafra. For them, as proclaimed by MASSOB, Biafra stands for the hope of a better future. One interviewee even held that there is no need to mobilize for Biafra because the dream is already inherent to the Igbo's very identity (C55).

The dreaming about Biafra has also produced patience. While some interviewees, especially youths, are in a hurry to see Biafra coming true, most expressed that they are patient to see Biafra becoming an independent country. Statements like the following ones were found in many interviews with people from the general Igbo population: "Even if we did not actualize it now, we believe that someday, sometime in the future it will happen" (C55); "What I see as the future of Nigeria is the past of the Soviet Union. You wake up one day and there is no country" (C43); and "if I hear it today that Biafra has been given sovereignty by the world, even if I die tomorrow, I am dying as a very happy person" (C106). MASSOB has been nurturing such patience and hope through its framing. The historical examples of liberation movements in South Africa, India, and other places conveyed the image that the struggle is a grand project, which takes time to realize but in which victory is certain. This framing has resonated with Igbos. For example, one interviewed Igbo trader drew precisely on these examples when arguing as follows: "When Mandela was fighting against Apartheid in South Africa, many people thought it was a lost battle anyway, but over time it became a reality. Martin Luther King would have never thought that the black man will rule America, but now there is Obama" (FG2).

The general feeling of state decay in Nigeria has sustained these views and made MASSOB's framing convincing. Many Nigerians (not only Igbos) are entirely aware of Nigeria's state failure and they assume that the country will eventually collapse over the vast internal contradictions. While framers could exploit this to emphasize that rebellion is feasible and fast military victory is certain because the opponent is weak, this also made MASSOB's framing of patience convincing. Many of the interviewees assume that Nigeria will fall apart and that they merely have to wait for it. Some of the interviewees pointed to the, at the time, upcoming 2015 elections as a nearby possible date for the break-up, others highlighted the "time bomb" of the immense population growth stressing that the country is already "too big." Hence, MASSOB's

framing, which shapes Biafra as a dream and which de-emphasizes urgency, connects with these common narratives (*compatibility*).

Secondly, MASSOB's framing, especially with regard to the religious components and Western orientation, resonates strongly. These elements of the framing give Igbos a sense of who they are and where they belong. Many Igbo scholars have pointed out that the Igbo are in an identity crisis, which was further sustained by the tragedy of the Civil War (The News 1999, 10 September). For example, Nzewi (2011: 23-41) holds that "Igbo society is in a state of decay and needs to be renewed." In his view, Igbos lack identification with their culture (most importantly with their language), they lack a unifying history, and the political and social problems in Nigeria have further torn the Igbo apart. In this situation, examples of Western countries including foremost Israel provide a cultural orientation and role model of how Igbos would want to be and live. As one interviewee argued, "[w]hat we have to do is to re-establish ourselves – just like the Jews. They have a sense of identity and national belonging and that is why they are succeeding" (C11). This identification with Jews and Israel fulfills several functions for Igbos, as analyzed extensively by Harnischfeger (2011: 38): It "allows Igbo to integrate conflicting experiences and self-perceptions", gives them as "sign of being chosen", "indicates that they are closer to God than other Christians in Nigeria who sided with the 'jihadists' and participated in the genocide", and it provides "an appeal to be adopted and put under the protection of America and its Western allies, just as the Israeli enjoy a special relationship with the West."

The idea of Biafra, therefore, gives Igbos who have been in need of orientation a unifying sense and a direction. This underlying identity crisis makes it plausible why many Igbos have adopted a glorifying view of Biafra, despite the many obvious historical failings of the past Biafran struggle. At the same time, this identity affirming aspect of MASSOB's framing also create patience for Biafra, because the movement's framing not only (and perhaps not even primarily) seeks to produce action, but to nurture a dream and shape the Igbo identity.

Thirdly, MASSOB's has strong authority among the Igbo for its high level of credibility. The movement's framing of pursuing a struggle for a noble cause resonates strongly with Igbos. Igbos generally see MASSOB and Uwazuruike as very credible, noble, and highly committed to the Igbo's cause. In a typical statement from the interviews, one journalist expressed the following view on MASSOB: "I have not heard of any case that MASSOB took up arms and started aggressing people. They have always comported themselves. (...) They are not disturbing, intimidating, or harassing people" (C91). When asking people for their views on some of the accusation of criminal and violent activities by MASSOB (e.g. at markets), many

dismissed such allegation as impossible: “MASSOB has never gone to any market to disturb people. How could they be fighting for their rights and disturbing people at markets? So it is impossible that they do that” (C106). This shows that MASSOB even has some immunity from such allegations. By extension, this also shapes people’s view and understanding of Biafra as a noble place and cause. For example, the following was the consensus view of the focus group discussion with Igbo traders at Abuja (FG2):

We are not looking for Biafra for us to become militants and start terrorizing the world. No, we are looking for Biafra to have our freedom and to do good to the world. Biafra will be number one in Africa if it is being declared a republic today because we will contribute to the world instead of consuming.

This view as a noble movement and struggle also again connects well to the self-depiction as non-violent. As another participant at the focus group discussion stressed, the struggle for Biafra is pursued in a “civilized way”: “We don't bomb” (FG2).

The strongest asset of MASSOB’s credibility has been Uwazuruike. One journalist commented the stunning rise of MASSOB in May 2000 as the “Uwazuruike phenomenon” (The Post Express 2000, 31 May-b). Interviewees generally hailed his authenticity, commitment to the Igbo’s cause, and charisma. Several even saw him as the successor of Ojukwu who has easily been the most popular Igbo figure: “After the death of Ojukwu, we Igbo now look up to him as Eze Igbo, our king” (C99). Uwazuruike won tremendous respect foremost for going to prison repeatedly for his commitment to Biafra. This shaped his image as different from the typical Igbo politician who is self-centered, corrupt, and unidealistic. Many interviewees saw him as a *credible* leader and even a hero (C95):

They have been punishing Uwazuruike, have been taking him from one jail to another. That shows he is a brave man. Heart of a warrior. He never gave up, he continued, because he knows that fighting for freedom is not easy and that one day he will make it.

He was repeatedly likened to Mandela in the interviews: “He has been arrested so many times, he is like our Biafran Mandela” (C99). As this statement shows, through accepting the hardship of prison, Uwazuruike confirmed his self-depiction as following the footsteps of Mandela.

Similar views can also be found in media sources. One journalist who remained skeptical about MASSOB still recognized Uwazuruike for having “sacrificed his personal comfort, liberty and virtually everything to put his case and that of his supporters across” (The Post Express 2000, 31 May-a). Bonaventure Melah, an NGO leader, similarly praised Uwazuruike’s courage and resolve (cited in Daily Champion 2011, 28 December):

Uwazuruike is selfless, well- focused, inspired and pragmatic enough to be a natural leader who would not be attracted or polluted by the trappings of politics and power. Uwazuruike has resisted injustice and oppression, has been in the jungle for his people. He has been detained, tortured and sent to prison hundreds of times for the sake of Igbo race and in all these suffering and pain, he has remained dogged with a Mandela spirit that could not be easily subdued.

MASSOB also drew credibility and legitimacy from the support that Ojukwu gave to the movement on some occasions. When Ojukwu joined Uwazuruike for the opening of the Biafra House at Washington in September 2001, he “boosted the militia’s public image, galvanized Igbo youth to join in droves and confirmed Uwazuruike in their eyes as Ojukwu’s ‘heir apparent’” (Okonta 2014: 365).

Besides the strong appraisal, few interviewees held less positive views about the movement and its leaders. They pointed to suspected violent incidents and allegations of corruption against Uwazuruike to stress that the movement is neither noble, nor non-violent (C57, 83, 92). Harsh accusations about criminal activities and corruption were also made against MASSOB in the media (see 4.1.4). However, by far most interviewees considered MASSOB and Uwazuruike as authentic, convincing, and credible.

7.2.6. Brief Summary

MASSOB’s propagation of the renewed struggle for Biafra has resonated strongly among the general Igbo population. All identified components of the movement’s framing have aligned with shared political views, common narratives, and social aspirations of the Igbo audience.

In terms of diagnostic framing, the movement has been highly effective in mobilizing the discontent among the Igbo masses. It is a general feeling among the Igbos that they are being politically and economically marginalized in Nigeria and that they are unsafe. MASSOB’s framing has aligned and nurtured these political views (*compatibility*). The movement has also succeeded to shape the view that the repression is unjustified and that it is part of a broader conspiracy against the Igbo in Nigeria. Giving this interpretation of the repression, the attacks by security agents on MASSOB created public sympathies and solidarity with the movement. It has been the particular fact that MASSOB as an unarmed movement has been violent repressed, which created a huge sense of injustice among the audience and solidarity with the movement (*relevance*). Even many of those who disagree with MASSOB on the desirability and feasibility of Biafra expressed their frustration about the repression against the movement and by extension the Igbo. MASSOB’s diagnostic framing has also resonated because giving a highly convincing interpretation for why the Igbo are oppressed: As propagated by MASSOB, it

is also the general impression among Igbos that the continued marginalization is a punishment for the Biafran attempt for secession (*compatibility*). Hence, all components of the diagnostic framing align with widely shared views among the Igbo public.

The movement's prognostic framing has successfully shaped the image of Biafra. To most Igbos, Biafra is a "safe haven" where they would be free from insecurity and marginalization and where they can make full use of their potentials. This is a dream about Biafra, which is shared by virtually every Igbo. Most among the general Igbo population also agree with MASSOB that Biafra's independence can become a reality through the proposed strategy of an internationalized, legalistic, and non-violent struggle. This prognostic framing has resonated because it connects to various historical and more recent narratives, beliefs, and attitudes: The call for an internationalized struggle aligns with the general Western orientation of the Igbo and the historical interpretation that Biafra needs international support since the lack thereof was the main reason for Biafra's failure in the first struggle (*compatibility*). MASSOB's propagation of non-violence, in turn, is plausible and convincing in the light of the failed armed secessionist struggle of the past, the widely shared view among Igbos of the international community (in particular the UN) as more favorable to non-violence, and the convincing examples of successful non-violent protest movements that MASSOB has stressed (*compatibility*).

The movement's emotional appeals have also resonated and contributed to the mobilizing success of MASSOB. The whole propagation of Biafra is based more on emotion than reason: MASSOB has shaped a vision of Biafra as a "promised land" and hope for a people that sees itself as talented but suppressed. The religious appeals and the comparison with the Jews and Israel have provided a sense that liberation is possible and even certain but also that it requires a long-term effort. These identity affirming aspects of the movement's framing and especially the strong emphasis on patience and perseverance sustain the propagation of non-violence. The movement's framing has de-emphasized urgency and to some extent even the need for action. These components of the movement's framing have been very convincing and appealing to Igbos, many of who dream the dream about Biafra, who find that Nigeria will disintegrate eventually, and who consider MASSOB responsible and credible movement to lead the struggle for independence. The movement's motivational framing has resonated widely because of the huge credibility and popularity of the leader Uwazuruike. Since Ojukwu's death, Uwazuruike is not only the embodiment of Biafra, but probably also the most credible Igbo leader. His word and his emphasis on patience and non-violence is widely respected among Igbos.

While most from the general Igbo population are hugely in favor of MASSOB and the renewed struggle for secession, some – including the entire Igbo elite – have remained skeptical. MASSOB’s framing has not convinced this segment of the Igbo population that there is an opportunity for Biafra at the international level (*lack of compatibility*). Many of the better educated assume that Biafra lacks the necessary international assistance and that the international community will not grant independence to Biafra without another armed struggle. Another armed struggle for Biafra, however, in their view is likely to merely cause another tragic and unsuccessful war. Moreover, to this segment of the Igbo population the Biafran war experience has served as a discouraging reminder about the costs of achieving Biafra, which has made them very skeptical about another attempt for secession. Finally, many among the elite are aware that the Igbo need Nigeria economically because of their business investments and economic opportunities. In the interviews, they even relied on widely shared narratives that seemed to exaggerate the extent of the Igbo’s economic dependence on Nigeria. To them, MASSOB’s framing of Non-Exodus has also not been a convincing argument to overcome this skepticism (*lack of compatibility*). This clearly shows that the non-support of the Igbo elite to MASSOB and the renewed struggle for Biafra results not only from economic interest related to Patronage Politics. To them, for the mentioned reasons the propagation for Biafra has also been unconvincing, which has made it even more unlikely that the Igbo elite would support MASSOB.

The non-support of the Igbo elite weakens MASSOB, but it does not explain why the movement has pursued non-violent protest. The movement clearly has a huge and deeply committed followership among the Igbo masses. Considering that a few hundred or thousand are sufficient to begin a violent struggle, MASSOB has had the opportunity to organize rebellion even without the support from the Igbo elite. In fact, a spiral of violence and counterviolence between MASSOB and Nigerian security agencies would probably give further credibility to MASSOB’s claim of marginalization and oppression, and thereby even push the Igbo elite to support the movement’s cause. However, through its framing the movement has been successful in discouraging many among the Igbo population from supporting the use of violent means. There is a strong belief among MASSOB’s audience that the struggle for Biafra should be pursued by non-violent means only. At the same time, in the face of Boko Haram’s insurgency an increasing number of Igbo seems willing to reconsider the principle of non-violence. The past struggle for Biafra provides a rich cultural stock of symbols, songs, and myths that can be used for mobilization for violence. Some individuals and groups that have drawn on symbols such as Ogbunigwe remained unsuccessful in mobilizing Igbo for a violent struggle. This is to a large extent the result of MASSOB’s continued propagation of non-

violence. Through its framing, MASSOB has appeased many and strengthened the proponents of non-violence among the Igbo. This non-violence framing has been convincing to many among MASSOB's audience and thereby contributed immensely to prevent the escalation of the struggle into violence.

While this clearly shows that MASSOB's convincing propagation of non-violence contributes to explain why those among MASSOB's audience have not taken up arms and pursued a rebellion for Biafra, it is still necessary in the remainder to also investigate which role framing played for the protest participation and protest behavior of MASSOB members.

7.3. Movement Participation

This part investigates if the activists have joined the struggle because they were convinced by MASSOB's framing (7.3.1), because they received or at least expected selective incentives such as money or security (7.3.2), or whether they were forced to join and have been forced to remain part of the movement (7.3.3). Finally, it is investigated if the propagation of non-violence by the MASSOB leaders also explains why the followers have refrained from using violent means to achieve Biafra (7.3.4).

To assess these aspects, the present study relies mostly on interviews with leaders and followers of MASSOB and other Biafran organizations. In total, seven key leaders of the struggle were interviewed (for a list, see 1.4), and 13 interviews with a total of 14 MASSOB followers as well as two focus group discussions were conducted. One of the focus group discussions involved about a dozen MASSOB members who mostly work as traders at a major market at Lagos (FG3), the other comprised the entire leadership of the P-MASSOB faction (FG5). When referring to the movement's followers in this section, this comprises not only the grassroots members but also some local leaders at the lower levels of MASSOB's hierarchy.²⁰⁸

7.3.1. Frame Resonance

MASSOB's framing has strong resonance with the followers of the movement and, according to the interviews, has been the key motivation for them to join and to remain committed. The interviewed activists recounted at length and with great vigor the many ways in which the Igbo have been oppressed in Nigeria. They complained sharply about being marginalized and

²⁰⁸ The hierarchy within the organization can make it difficult to interview grassroots members because they often forward interview requests to the local leaders who may speak officially for movement.

subjected to mass killings at the hands of the Muslim North. In a typical statement, one local leader explained his view on the political situation of the Igbo as follows (C114):

Nigeria is bad, very very bad. We Igbos, we don't have our freedom. We need our freedom. The Hausas and Yoruba peoples are suppressing us. (...) Hausa people are Boko Haram people. (...) We have lost so many of our own people in Abuja, Kano, and so on because of Boko Haram. We, the freedom fighters, we don't like it. I believe that if we have our own country, that is Biafra, everything will be good. (...) I love Biafra, we need to actualize Biafra.

Like this respondent, other interviewees too saw Biafra as the solution to the problems of the Igbo and expressed their belief in Biafra in similarly strong emotional terms. Interviewed MASSOB members generally assumed, as promised by MASSOB, that all the failings of Nigeria will disappear once Biafra is independent. Moreover, they generally find MASSOB's propagated strategy of an internationalized, legalistic, and non-violent campaign convincing. Few of the respondents expressed doubts about whether it is realistic that Biafra can achieve independence through a peaceful and internationally supervised process. Several interviewees were even convinced that the international community has already been taking steps towards granting Biafra independence. For example, one interviewed movement member suggested the following (C100): "Recently, we hear that the African Union, they have recognized Biafra." Another interviewed MASSOB member argued similarly (C56): "The international community is aware of what we are doing already. Let us wait patiently for now. They will take action." This statement shows that the belief that Biafra can achieve independence through an internationally supervised process creates patience among the movement followers and makes a violent struggle dispensable. Overall, also the proposed strategy of non-violence has strong resonance with the movement followers, as further discussed below (see 7.3.4).

The interviewed activists also clearly expressed that they joined MASSOB foremost because they found the movement's demands and vision convincing. They generally argued that their outrage about being marginalized, fears about insecurity, and the prospects of Biafra were the main motivation for them to become members. For example, one grassroots adherent argued as follows (C108):

I have joined MASSOB because I have the zeal for Biafra. This comes from the marginalization of Igbos. If I was born in a time when Nigeria is based on equity and justice, MASSOB should not exist. But it is not like this. The Easterners are being marginalized and killed everywhere. If we can be on our own, we can appreciate what we have. Because everything that Nigeria has comes from our side of the country, yet every infrastructure is in the North. All these things make me join the group to actualize Biafra. I believe that once

Biafra is actualized the Easterners have a place to live. Security, infrastructure, and education – everything will improve.

Put shortly by another interviewee, “I joined MASSOB because I want to be free” (C110).

Further sources confirm that the CAFs have strong resonance among the activists. For example, a member from Lagos expressed to journalists his joy of striving for the “land of milk and honey that is expected of Biafra” (Newswatch 2000, 30 May). The media also often reported the activists’ claims from their protest banners at public rallies: “We are tired of one Nigeria”, “Are Igbos still part of Nigeria?”, “Stop killing Christians in the North”, “Release Uwazuruike now”, “UNO give us Biafra now”, “United Nations come to our rescue”, “Biafra must be achieved”, “No amount of intimidation, harassment, arrests and killings of Biafrans will prevent its actualization”, “In Biafra we stand”, “Biafra is God's own”, “If I die, I die as a Biafran” (Vanguard 2000, 23 May; Daily Champion 2005, 1 November; Daily Independent 2010, 10 March). These slogans have encompassed many core parts of the CAFs, which demonstrates that the followers use them to make sense of the struggle. On gatherings, the activists also common sing Biafran songs such as the identity-affirming “Ebe Ka Uni Si?” (YouTube Video 2013, 19 August-a, 2013, 10 April). In this song, one singer asks “Where do you come from?” and the group responds “Biafra. I will not leave Biafra to live elsewhere. Biafra will survive” (Agu 1991: 9-10). All of this suggests strong attachment to the movements and its core ideas.

The interviews also reveal a strong sense of followership within MASSOB. The activists consider Uwazuruike very appealing and some of their statements suggest that they closely follow his directives. One local leader argued that “[t]he Chief always says the truth. For me, he stands for the truth and I follow him” (C101). Even high-ranking representatives pledged allegiance in strongest terms. For instance, the Western Representative Benjamin Onuegbu stated: “We have a leader. Whatever he tells you, you take it. It is the truth” (C48). No doubt, Uwazuruike has tremendous influence over the behavior of the movement, but the interviews with the members showed that they have not “blindly” followed him. Rather, they have been convinced about the movement’s aim and the propagated action strategy.

7.3.2. Selective Incentives

MASSOB has offered relatively few selective incentives for participation in the movement. Members are occasionally given small services (e.g. money for school fees), arrested followers receive assistance to survive in prison, and – although an unarmed group – through its network of people MASSOB can provide some protection to its followers. Overall, however, these are minor selective incentives. Although the participation in MASSOB is free of charges, followers

still tend to contribute financially to the movement's protest activities rather than to receive any financial or other support. According to the only available survey among MASSOB members, only 12-16% of the respondents answered to have received either cash, food, or medical assistance, and only 7% stated that the MASSOB membership has improved their financial situation (multiple answers possible, see Duruji 2010: 172). Protection may be more relevant as an incentive: About 68% stated that MASSOB has given them protection. Still, these selective incentives play a minor role in motivating people to join or continue participating in MASSOB's protests compared to the appeal of the movement's framing. Interviewees, like the following, generally expressed that the cause and the appeal of Biafra is what motivates them to pursue the struggle (C109):

The incentive of MASSOB, the joy is the birth of the child. The full incentive will come if the state of Biafra is actualized. (...) Even our leader is not paid. We are fighting for a just cause. When we are actualized, we are talking about posts. But for now we are doing it for the just cause.

While the interviewee clearly emphasized that MASSOB pursues foremost a struggle for the immaterial goal of justice, he also mentions that there are benefits in the form of "posts" to be held in an independent Biafra.

In a sense, the idea of Biafra itself encompasses selective incentives. It has been a key part of the movement's framing to promise that there would be economic well-being and safety in an independent Biafra. Moreover, the movement's leaders have made promises to followers that they would be rewarded for their participation and sacrifices. For example, in a lecture from the early 2000s, Uwazuruike explained the following to the movement members: "Having been at the Vanguard of the liberation of our people, you are suppose to occupy important positions tomorrow when the state of Biafra is realised. Such positions include District chairmen, governors, ambassadors etc." (Uwazuruike 2003 [estimated]: 11). Similarly, in 2014 MASSOB promised to some neglected local communities in Anambra State that they would be the first to benefit from Biafra's independence (The SUN 2014, 12 February).

Although such long-term selective incentives are built into the very idea of Biafra, none of the interviewees stated to have been motivated in any major way by the economic prospects of holding public offices in an independent Biafra. The mentioned survey among MASSOB's members confirms that the political program was the principal reason for joining: 89% of the survey respondents answered that they joined for political motivation and 26% for improved security but only 5-6% for expectations of cash or employment (Duruji 2010: 166). Thus, such

selective incentives may provide an additional motivation for participation, but the immaterial aims of freedom, justice, and independence from Nigeria appear by far as prime motivation.

7.3.3. Coercion

MASSOB proper is a hierarchical organization, which even encompasses a Biafran police and security agency. It resembles a state structure that is ready to govern Biafra once independence is granted. Thus, MASSOB has the organizational structure and capacity to coerce people to participate in its activities and prevent them from exiting.

Reportedly, MASSOB used such coercive means to enforce participation on some occasions. According to news reports from “stay-at-home” events, youths who presumably belonged to MASSOB set bonfire on streets to intimidate people (Daily Champion 2005, 6 December; This Day 2013, 9 June). Thereby, they would have pressured people to stay at home. For example, in 2004 one journalist reported the following incident from Enugu (Vanguard 2004, 27 August):

Some youths believed to be members of MASSOB moved round the urban centres in a long convoy of motorcycles, chanting solidarity songs and forcing those who had opened their shops for the day's business to leave or be dealt with. Their action caused panic among residents, some of whom joined the youths who dressed in black with red headband to sing solidarity songs for Biafra.

MASSOB members also seem to have harassed and intimidated people in Onitsha around mid-2006: “As thousands of [MASSOB] members mounted street processions, waving Biafran flags depicting the rising sun, passers-by were frequently beaten and businesses forced to shut and join their activities” (IRIN 2006, 4 September). Nevertheless, it would be misleading to assume that participation in MASSOB’s protests has generally been coerced.

The interviews showed that people in general participate voluntarily in MASSOB’s activities. The interviewees unanimously agreed that there is no compulsion in joining MASSOB and that members are free to leave the struggle at any time. As one young movement member from Lagos explained, “the leaders in MASSOB do not impose anything on anybody. (...) Leaving is not a problem, no one will force or bother you” (C56). According to his account, even people who betrayed the struggle by disclosing information on MASSOB to security

agents are not punished physically but are merely expelled from membership.²⁰⁹ In general, if registered members want to leave the movement, they only have to return their MASSOB ID and do not have to expect to be harassed in any way (C101). Furthermore, the interviewees confirmed that in the movement there is no enforcement of payments for supporting the struggle.

Regarding the reported incidents of intimidation of people, some of this may result from “overzealous members”, as one interviewee put it (C108), rather than leadership’s directives. As mentioned, the movement’s leaders have often publicly denounced coercive efforts and called for noble and responsible actions. In this vein, Uwazuruike publicly condemned the reported incident of intimidation during the 2004 “stay-at-home”: “I gathered that at Enugu, there were bonfires. I take strict exception to that. We will investigate that if we trace it to MASSOB members, then we will punish those who are there. We don’t tolerate indiscipline” (Vanguard 2004, 4 September). The interviews showed that the movement’s leaders have also urged followers not to carry arms. Thus, the Biafran police and security agency under MASSOB have also been mostly symbolic.

In short, there is strong evidence to assume that participation in MASSOB generally is voluntary and that those who used coercive means did so only on their own behalf or became expelled from the movement afterwards. Broadly, people have participated in MASSOB’s actions out of conviction of the demands and vision of the movement. In the following part, I further explore whether such conviction also explains why the movement’s members have refrained from using violent means.

7.3.4. Preventing Rebellion through Framing

The interviews with MASSOB members at all levels – from grassroots followers to local leaders to the top leadership – have shown that there is a constant emphasis and self-understanding that the struggle for Biafra should be pursued by non-violent means. Some of the interviewed grassroots members even drew on the very examples MASSOB has used in its framing when explaining why the struggle should be pursued by non-violent means (e.g. C112). For instance, one local leader of the P-MASSOB put it as follows (FG5):

²⁰⁹ Such a mild response would be surprising in light of the repression and the threats that information leaks may pose to the movements. Moreover, Igbos see saboteurs as particularly severe betrayers because of the historical narrative that Biafra lost the war due to sabotage (Omaka 2013).

We demand for referendum. Let the United Nations help us conduct a referendum for us. Then our people will vote for our independence. (...) We are not doing it violently, we are not carrying arms to fight the government because we know that Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King – all these people did their own struggle through non-violence.

While the interviewed MASSOB members generally stressed that the movement stands for non-violence, most do not take a complete pacifist standpoint. The common position among the movement members reads as follows: “We call ourselves freedom fighters, but it does not mean that we fight with arms but we fight with our wisdom. (...) We want to overcome the suppression but not through military and violent means. If they want it violent, then we will give it to them. But we believe that we don’t want any violence, we want dialogue” (C113). The interviews reveal that the propagation of non-violence by the movement’s leadership, again, is central for the decision of the followers to refrain from advocating rebellion. The following was a typical interview statement from the interviewed MASSOB members: “It’s not that we are very weak. But we listen to the voices of our leaders. They say don’t fight, don’t retaliate” (C49). One young man went as far as arguing that “if the leader decides that we fight, then we fight. I would die for Biafra” (C110). While this quote suggests that the decision by movement members to adhere to non-violence may be based on blind followership, this is not the case for most interviewees. Instead, the followers generally have been convinced that the strategy of non-violence is the adequate approach to achieve Biafra’s independence. This self-understanding as a non-violent movement has also been reproduced between the followers and leaders through chants: It has been a common practice at MASSOB’s meeting that leaders chant “MASSOB!” and that the followers respond by the movement’s slogan “Non-Violence, Non-Exodus” (Uwazuruike 2008: 72).

While most interviewees expressed that the struggle should be pursued by purely peaceful means, a few disagreed. The focus group discussion with MASSOB members at Lagos showed that the participants still follow the movement leadership’s call for non-violent protest, but that some also find that Nigeria has been relentless in harassing MASSOB, that Boko Haram has made it unbearable to remain part of Nigeria, and that the examples of secessionist movements in other countries (including Eritrea and Sudan) suggest that rebellion may be necessary to achieve independence – in short, to some of them the time is ripe for rebellion (FG3). Another interviewed local leader expressed his doubts about the adequacy of non-violence as follows (C109):

*We want non-violence and peace talk, but I think in Nigeria non-violence does not work. (...)
We Igbos, we do not want war again. War is not good. (...) For Muslims you are an infidel,*

you are not meant to live. Killing is part of their religion. This sect, Boko Haram, they are violent by nature. Nigeria does not want peace. That is why I think, in my own time, we will be fighting violence with violence.

This statement again reveals the self-understanding as being part of a non-violent movement and also his reluctance to engage in rebellion because of the past war experience. At the same time, he has not been entirely convinced that the strategy of non-violence is still adequate in the face of the security threat by Boko Haram and his perception of Muslims. This suggests that it is precisely the movement's self-understanding as non-violent and the past war experience which holds him back from advocating for violent means.

Besides the interviews, in other sources some similar war-promoting statements by Biafran activists can be found. For example, one user of the Radio Biafra Facebook group created the following post (Radio Biafra Facebook Group 2014, 7 January)²¹⁰:

Biafrans have to prepare for war. Anybody who think that Biafra will come without war is lying. This is bcos Atiku Abubakar, Olusegun Obasanjo, Bola Tinubu, Mohammadu Buhari, Abdul Salam Abubakar, IBB, and rest of APC, Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba oligarchy will not leave us Biafrans alone without serious fight. We must fight this people and defeat them and that is the only way forward. (...) Anybody who is preaching peace in Biafra restoration is wasting his or her time bcos all the enemies of Biafra are well fortified and are stealing Biafra resources and not ready to leave Biafrans alone without force.

In a similarly harsh statement, a diaspora-based Biafran activist called on Igbos to organize mass killings of Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba to pre-empt them from exterminating Igbos. He further argued that the Igbo should not abide by Nigeria's law anymore since they never had the opportunity to make the law (Radio Biafra Facebook Group 2013, 28 July). Already in the mid-2000s, some MASSOB members questioned the strategy of non-violence by pointing out that "[t]hose who took up arms against the country, Obasanjo dined with them" whereas MASSOB, even though unarmed, has been repressed (IRIN 2005, 19 April). Around the same time also one faction within MASSOB that carried the name Biafra Must Be Society (BIAMUBS) advocated a violent struggle (Duruji 2010: 126).

In the face of these Biafran activists who advocate rebellion the continued propagation of non-violence by the leaders of MASSOB proper and most other Biafran organizations has contributed immensely to prevent the escalation of the struggle into violence. The movement leaders around Uwazuruike have given arguments about why non-violence has been and still is

²¹⁰ The user has a typical Igbo name, but it is unclear if he is based in Nigeria or the diaspora.

the adequate strategy of the struggle. These arguments have been sufficiently convincing to the followers and the movement leaders have been very credible, both of which has made the calls for continuing peaceful protest convincing in the eyes of the movement adherents. Although some interviewed movement followers expressed doubts about non-violence and some activists even seem ready for war, through its framing the movement leaders have created a self-understanding as non-violent protesters among most of the movement followers. They still find that Biafra can be achieved by the propagated strategy of non-violent protest, as pursued through a legalistic and internationalized campaign. Hence, the framing by the movement leadership has prevented those who advocate an armed struggle to achieve frame resonance in order to push the struggle towards rebellion.

The constant propagation of non-violence by the key MASSOB leaders and the self-understanding among movement followers about being non-violent freedom fighters has also prevented the mobilizing success of other Biafran organizations that advocated rebellion. The mentioned BIAMUBS disappeared shortly after its formation and after having failed to convince the MASSOB leadership around Uwazuruike about pursuing rebellion. Chukwudi Anayo, one MASSOB leader, recounted how Uwazuruike dismissed the demand for rebellion in an internal meeting with the BIAMUBS at some point during the early 2000s: “Uwazuruike told them that the agreement he reached with United Nation was that it is going to be non-violence. Since he doesn’t want violence, no matter what you do to him, he will remain resolute carrying on with non-violence, and until Nigerians pushes him to the wall he is still saying non-violence” (cited in Duruji 2010: 126). While further details about the meeting and BIAMUBS are unavailable, it is clear that Uwazuruike with his stance on non-violence won the frame dispute. Similarly, other Biafran organizations including the BZM and BNYL that have made calls for an armed struggle (see 7.1.4.2) have not had mobilizing success among the movement followers, who mostly still consider themselves non-violent protesters. The idea of non-violence is also so deeply entrenched among the movement’s leadership that the P-MASSOB, as the first major MASSOB breakaway faction, has not attempted to create a radical appeal by advocating for rebellion. Instead, the P-MASSOB too has remained firmly committed to peaceful protest. Their leader Madu expressed the following in the interview: “We base the struggle purely on non-violence. We do not want to attract any violence, because we do not want to endanger the lives of our people. We want the international community to see us a mature people” (FG5).

It is not a contradiction to the argument of MASSOB’s successful propagation of non-violence that there are Igbos and Biafran activists who disagree with the movement leaders and

who argue that Biafra can only be achieved through rebellion. In light of Nigeria's political culture (marked by opportunism, the ruthless use of force, and severe human rights abuses), the bad economic conditions, and the widespread perception among Igbos about being existentially threatened by the North, it is almost inevitable that some Igbos would consider only violent means promising to achieve such a major political goal as secession. What is surprising and stunning instead is that the MASSOB leaders have been able to appease the followers and the movement's audience. In a political environment in which the use of violent means is common, it is impressive that MASSOB has been able to make people draw on the examples of Gandhi and other proponents of non-violence, to create the understanding that peaceful protest is powerful, and that the international community can come to the rescue of Biafrans. For many MASSOB followers and Igbos more generally, this has made rebellion for Biafra dispensable and thereby contributed to prevent conflict escalation.

7.3.5. Brief Summary

In this part I showed that the main reason for why people have joined MASSOB, have remained committed to the movement, and have adhered to non-violence is that they have been convinced by the CAFs. The analysis of frame resonance among the movement followers has shown that all major parts of the CAFs have been highly convincing to the followers. MASSOB members typically have been aggrieved about the present situation of the Igbo in Nigeria, have felt threatened, and have attributed the blame for their plight to the Muslim North and the Yoruba. Moreover, they have seen Biafra as promising solution to the dismal present situation and commonly have joined the movement foremost because the framing has resonated with them and has convinced them. Coercion as a possible alternative explanation for movement participation can be almost entirely dismissed. There have been instances in which people were forced to participate in MASSOB's protests, but these have been rare only. In general, participation in MASSOB has been voluntary and without arms. Thus, the movement has even lacked the necessary weapons to coerce people on a large scale. Also selective incentives only play a minor role in motivating people to participate in MASSOB's protests. The movement has provided only very few immediate selective incentives (such as money or security). In contrast, more long-term benefits for movement participation set some incentive for people to join. By framing Biafra as a place of safety and prosperity, MASSOB invariably creates the image that in achieving Biafra there are economic and social benefits for everyone. However, even such long-term expectations about improved well-being do not give a stronger explanation for movement participation than the resonance of the CAFs. Overall, it

can be concluded that the followers have joined and participated in MASSOB protests because they have found the framing convincing.

The propagation of non-violence by the key leaders of MASSOB has also resonated strongly among the movement's followers. The interviews have shown that the common movement follower has a self-understanding as a non-violent freedom fighter and finds the strategy of a legalistic, internationalized, and non-violent campaign adequate to achieve Biafra's independence. Clearly, there are also followers who disagree with the MASSOB leaders and who argue that Biafra can only be achieved through rebellion. Overall, however, the propagation of non-violent protest has been sufficiently convincing to most MASSOB followers to prevent them from pushing the movement towards a violent struggle. As a result, the calls for rebellion as made by some Biafran organizations have not resonated with the movement's followers and also factions that have sought to organize an armed struggle have failed to become dominant within the movement. To sum up, the framing of the struggle as non-violent and the reasons given by the movement leaders of why this strategy should be pursued has been highly convincing to the followers and thereby contributed to preventing the escalation of the protest.

7.4. Case Study Summary

The case study of MASSOB revealed that through their framing the main leaders of the movement have successfully mobilized a large share of the Igbo population to support the renewed struggle for Biafra and to protest by non-violent means. As part of their diagnostic framing, the movement's speakers have complained that Igbos have been oppressed by the Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba, mostly as a covert punishment for the past Biafran breakaway attempt. To overcome the oppression, the movement's leaders have mobilized for a renewed struggle for Biafra. On the one hand, this encompassed an effort of building a consensus that Biafra is still an option and a promising homeland where Igbos can live in safety and prosperity. On the other hand, the leaders have sought to mobilize Igbos for protest action through a legalistic, internationalized, and non-violent campaign. In their view, Biafra can achieve its independence with the support of the international community and through the legal mechanisms of self-determination, which would allow the Igbos to break away without the use of violent means. Their motivational framing has further sustained these calls for non-violence by defining Biafra as a long-term project, emphasizing the need for patience and perseverance in the struggle, and crafting MASSOB as a responsible and noble movement. In those instances in which presumed MASSOB members fought violently, the main leaders of

the struggle commonly made swift statements to condemn the use of arms and to dissociate the movement from those who fight. Over the recent security threat posed by Boko Haram, however, there has also been some frame dispute within the movement. Several leaders of smaller Biafran organizations made ambiguous statements and some even attempted to mobilize Igbos for a violent struggle for Biafra. Yet, the key figures of the struggle including Uwazuruike have still opposed such calls for rebellion.

These CAFs and the calls for non-violence by the leaders have resonated strongly with the Igbo audience. These frames have aligned neatly with many cultural orientations, political attitudes, and social aspirations of Igbos. It has been a common litany among them, precisely as framed by MASSOB's leaders, that they have been discriminated against, that they have been threatened by the Muslim North, and that this has been a punishment for the past struggle for Biafra. The leaders have also succeeded in convincing a large share of the Igbos that Biafra still is the promise of a safe and prosperous homeland and that a legalistic, internationalized, and non-violent campaign is the adequate and realistic strategy to achieve Biafra's independence. This protest strategy has been convincing to many because it has aligned significantly with the common understanding among Igbos that the violent struggle of the past did not succeed, that the international community provides the necessary legal mechanisms to support Biafra's bid for independence, and that, as framed by MASSOB's leaders, non-violent protest is powerful. In addition, their emotional appeals and the huge credibility of Uwazuruike have further strengthened the resonance of the emphasis on non-violence.

The rallying call for Biafra, however, has not convinced the Igbo's elite, and also some among the general population have remained skeptical. To them, the idea that the UN and the international community could grant the Biafran independence without another war has been unrealistic. Moreover, for the history of Biafra, they have remained strictly opposed to another secessionist effort. Finally, they have argued that Igbos need Nigeria economically because of the vast business investments and opportunities for such. Although the non-resonance of the movement's framing among the Igbo elite has weakened MASSOB, the movement has won such a huge and committed followership that it could embark on a violent struggle even without the elite's consent.

However, MASSOB's leaders have been very successful in convincing the followers to pursue the struggle for Biafra by purely non-violent tactics. The framing efforts by the main leaders have strong resonance: The main reason why people have joined MASSOB is that they have been convinced by the demands and vision, as proclaimed by the movement's leaders.

Selective incentives and coercion, in contrast, played only minor roles for mobilizing followers. While there are also members who are unconvinced that Biafra can be achieved through peaceful protest and who advocate a violent pathway towards Biafra, these still remain in the minority. Instead, the typical activist has a strong self-identification as non-violent protester. For this reason the calls for rebellion by leaders of Biafran fringe organizations have not resonated and not driven the movement towards rebellion. Considering the recent rise of some war-glorifying narratives relating to Biafra, it has become crucial for preventing the escalation of the Biafran struggle that the main leaders of MASSOB have continued to emphasize the need for non-violent protests and that they have still been convincing to most among the audience and within the movement.

8. Frame Development in both Cases

So far, the framing analysis of both cases has revealed great differences in their propagated protest strategies, but sufficient resonance of their CAFs among the respective audiences. As a result, people have been motivated to join the protests and collective action has taken place in both cases. While the Boko Haram leaders have made convincing rallying calls for rebellion, the main leaders of MASSOB have been convincing in discouraging Igbos from striving for Biafra by violent means again. In other words, amid similar structural circumstances, the movements have propagated different strategies that have resonated and led to the respective form of contention. The variation in the CAFs and their resonance, thus, solves much of the puzzle. However, this still leaves unexplained why the two movements differed in their propagated protest strategies in the first place: While Boko Haram's leaders mobilized Muslims for migration and even *jihad* already before the escalation of the campaign, the main framers of MASSOB have always called for non-violent protest. As I argue in this part, differences in the cultural context and agency explain the construction of the different CAFs.

8.1. Boko Haram

Cultural Context

Many of the elements Boko Haram has used for its CAFs can already be found in the cultural context within which the movement was formed. During the early 2000s, there had already been broad consensus in the North that politics and society should be reformed according to the tenets of Islam (Harnischfeger 2012: 509; Falola 1998: 69). This goal has been shared by virtually all Northern religious leaders and organizations, including both the traditional Sufi brotherhoods and their Islamist challengers, and also by many ordinary people. Even the Northern political elite promoted it repeatedly during the democratic transitions of 1979, 1988, and 1999. Although these leaders mainly sought to use the *sharia* for their opportunistic purposes, their pledge of allegiance to the Islamic law in 1999 gave much further legitimacy to the project of Islamization. Already during the 1980s, a whole generation of young academics who had become fervent about Islamization accrued around the MSS to form the *sharia* movement (Lubeck 2011: 263). Their core grievance and demand was expressed as follows by the author of a MSS magazine in 1983: “[H]as there been any nation in history which flourished under thoughts, ideas, institutions and political culture which are not only alien but hold in contempt the history, culture and conviction of a great majority of its people? (...) For Muslims nothing is acceptable besides Islam” (cited in Falola 1998: vi). Considering this longing for the

sharia among Islamist organizations and large shares of the population in the North, it unsurprisingly became central to Boko Haram's CAFs.

Other key elements of the diagnostic and prognostic framing of Boko Haram can also be traced back to the cultural context of the movement. In many regards, the following newspaper article by the Islamic scholar Ibrahim Sulaiman from 1988 reads like a blueprint of Boko Haram's CAFs (cited in Loimeier 1997b: 367-370):

The organic integrated structure of Islam has been sacrificed, and Islam itself is subjected to continuous definition to allow secularism to gain a foothold in the domain of Islam, and to accommodate a philosophy and an order of life imposed on us by the Euro-Christian civilization. Whenever in power, the Muslim elite would constitute themselves in an army to fight Islam, which they see as a threat. And whenever there is a crisis between Islam and the cross [i.e. Christians; JS], you can see more clearly the level of their capitulation. Strange and disgraceful laws begin to operate, and logic, facts, common sense, and justice lose their value. (...) The reward for this pathetic capitulation and for serving as mercenaries for the cross can indeed be fabulous: power, wealth, and castles; (...) The ulama [i.e. elite of Islamic scholars; JS] on their part are scarcely any better. Every time they meet, they congratulate themselves for being heirs of the prophets, not caring to examine their actions and lifestyles to see if they measure up to the standards of the prophets. (...) As personal empire builders many of our ulama spend more time among those in the corridors of power than they spend in promoting the cause of Islam. (...) Add to this the imperialist factor. (...) [T]he invisible hand of imperialism works day and night to pull down the edifice of Islam. France, Germany, Britain, and Israel work closely with their master, the U.S.A., to defeat Islam in West Africa (...) [I]n its onward thrust, Islam will determine the nature and orientation of all other religions and change the destiny of Nigeria. (...) Perhaps a time might come when Muslims would be called upon to make the supreme sacrifice by the thousands. It is in those trying times that Islam would finally lay off its heavy burdens, and absorb those among the elite and ulama who are truly worthy of Islam and cast the rest into the dustbin. Then would begin in earnest the process of transformation.

This quote comprises many of the key components of Boko Haram's diagnostic framing. They include the perception of a Western and Christian conspiracy against Islam, the complaint about inappropriate ways of life and un-Islamic values in society, the anger about the corrupt political and religious class, and the criticism of people's bad living conditions. Moreover, it encompasses the demand for the transformation of the political and social order towards true Islam, which is at the core of Boko Haram's prognostic framing. As also pointed out above (see 6.2.3-6.2.5), many of these political attitudes and beliefs were already widely shared among Northerners at the time of Boko Haram's foundation.

The concept of *jihad* also had already been part of Boko Haram's cultural context. In principle, the call for a *jihad* to overcome disbelief and impose an Islamic order has much cultural legitimacy in the North. Dan Fodio has been revered for his struggle, which led to the creation of the Sokoto Caliphate. Especially during the late 1970s and the early 1980s, several Islamist leaders rallied for a renewed *jihad*. For instance, in April 1977, Sheikh Gumi as the forerunner of Salafism in Nigeria declared adherents of the Sufi brotherhoods "infidels" who to kill was legitimate (Loimeier 1997b: 209). Around the time, the Maitatsine even waged a *jihad* against "disbelieving" Muslims for several years to impose its beliefs (Isichei 1987: 196). Other inflammatory preaching in which *jihad* was occasionally pronounced led to a series of shorter outbreaks of violence: clashes between Izala and the Sufi brotherhoods around 1978-80 (Loimeier 1997b: 347-349), violence between Christians and Muslims in Kafanchan in 1987 (Ibrahim 1989), and riots over blasphemy in Katsina (1991), Kaduna (2002), and Maiduguri (2006). The above-cited quote by Sulaiman from 1988 also contains a reference to *jihad*, albeit a vague one, by calling Muslims for the "supreme sacrifice by the thousands" and arguing that those who continue their disbelief should be thrown into the "dustbin." During the 2000s the public image of *jihad* was foremost shaped by the icon of Bin Laden who became hugely popular in the region as a symbol of the righteous struggle against the corrupt political class (Krings 2009).

While the idea of *jihad* has been prominent in the North ever since Dan Fodio's struggle, it has not been a mainstream position. Most Muslim organizations and Islamist movements have refrained from calling for *jihad* most of the time. Boko Haram has mirrored its cultural context in many regards, but the emphasis on *jihad* and some further aspects, as detailed in the following, indicate that there was also agency involved in the construction of the CAFs.

Agency

While drawing on many well-established narratives and symbols, Boko Haram's leaders re-combined them to produce CAFs clearly more radical than those of most Islamist groups in Northern Nigeria. For example, while many in the North have reservations about Western education, Yusuf's argument that *boko* is even religiously forbidden (*haram*) was uncommon in the region. The claim could have been inspired by Algerian-based Islamists and a London-based cleric (Brigaglia 2012: 37; Galtimari Commission 2012). The extreme framing may have also been a marketing strategy: Thereby, Yusuf perhaps sought to attract attention and win followers in the "crowded religious marketplace" of the North. When he declared *boko* as *haram*, he launched a sharp verbal attack on the established Islamist groups Izala and Ahlus

Sunna, who run modern Islamic schools that combine Islamic and Western education (Loimeier 2012: 148).

The clearest and most relevant difference between the framing by Boko Haram versus other Islamist groups in the North has been the propagation of *jihad*. Few groups openly invoked *jihad* in the North during the 2000s. Even the key figures of violent Islamist mobilization, including Gumi and Zakzaky, never rallied for *jihad* over an extended period (Loimeier 1997b: 298-302). Zakzaky has apparently not used the idea of *jihad* past the mid-1980s. Rather than mobilizing for *jihad*, virtually all Islamist movements in the North argued for Islamizing Nigeria through established and non-violent political pathways (Umar 2012: 127). Through the call for *jihad*, Yusuf drew a clear line between his new and radical faction and the Ahlus Sunna (Brigaglia 2012). He also did so through aligning his faction with Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda, who the Ahlus Sunna leader Adam had remained ambiguous about (Brigaglia 2012: 40). Like other Salafists in the North, however, Yusuf did not align his group with the Maitatsine and their insurgency, because the Maitatsine's beliefs contradict the Salafist ideals (Falola 1998: 143-144).²¹¹ Finally, Boko Haram's framing of the term "infidels" has also partly differed from the mainstream understanding among Northern religious groups. For most, the term has applied only to Muslims who do not follow Islamic principles. However, the leaders of Boko Haram clearly extended its application to also designate Christians as "infidels" and make them a legitimate military target of the *jihad*.

Boko Haram's leaders have also differed from other Islamist movements by developing the readiness for *jihad*. Gumi and Zakzaky, for instance, abandoned *jihad* during the 1980s once violence occurred. Yusuf, too, did not seem eager for rebellion. Other senior figures of Boko Haram, however, appear to have been more belligerent: Shekau and Tashen-Ilimi had already fought by violent means as leaders of the short-lived Nigerian Taliban faction (ICG 2014: 18-19). In 2006, Tashen-Ilimi expressed his position towards journalists as follows (AFP 2006, 11 January):

Allah, the almighty Lord, has authorised every Muslim to fight to establish an Islamic government over the world. One day it will happen in Nigeria and everywhere. (...) When I repented and discovered the true faith, understood the true words of Allah, I left everything behind: my family, my job, and migrated. (...) I'm ready to take up arms. I don't know who gave us the name Taliban, I prefer 'mujahideen'; the fighters. I only know the Taliban in

²¹¹ This includes the self-proclamation of the Maitatsine leader as Prophet, the group's belief in magical powers, and its opposition to all forms of technology.

Afghanistan, and I respect them and what they did very much. (...) Those who fought in Kanama and Gwoza are only Muslims who performed their holy duty. (...) Bin Laden did very good work. He obeys the rules of his God. With attacks, he strikes fear in the enemies of Islam.

This suggests that some within Boko Haram had developed the resolve to waging *jihad* already by 2006. Furthermore, this indicates the Taliban and Bin Laden as sources of his motivation. Shekau is widely considered the most radical of these leaders. Under his leadership Boko Haram reorganized as clandestine group and began the lasting insurgency from September 2010 on.

Briefly summarized, Boko Haram has adopted many parts of its framing from its cultural context. However, if it had merely mirrored the mainstream positions of typical Northern Islamist groups, it would have pursued its struggle through non-violent means. Instead, through their agency, strategic considerations, and also inspiration from other jihadist movements, Boko Haram's leaders developed the rallying call for *jihad* and the readiness to wage the struggle. In MASSOB's case, both cultural context and framers' agency has been clearly different.

8.2. MASSOB

Cultural Context

In contrast to Boko Haram, MASSOB was founded in a cultural context that was barely permissive to organizing a rebellion for Biafra, let alone to mentioning the word "Biafra" in public. While Boko Haram could draw on a wide Northern consensus that a political-religious renewal along the tenets of Islam is necessary, MASSOB first had to create a consensus that Biafra is desirable again and feasible at all. Among the Igbo's elite, it still has to create this consensus even by the mid-2010s.

In the aftermath of the war, Igbos and Nigerians in general largely silenced the issue of Biafra. Until MASSOB's foundation in 1999, Biafra remained anathema: "After the war there was a mentality that the war is finished – let's not talk about it!"²¹² Although MASSOB broke the taboo of using the term Biafra in Nigerian politics and even succeeded in making the struggle for secession widely popular among Igbos again, a public discourse on the Civil War and effort of reconciliation has still been missing in Nigeria. Even within families, the war

²¹² As expressed by an Igbo scholar at a major conference (see also footnote 195).

experiences have rarely been told (Adiele 1996). As an interviewed young journalist explained (C91), “[p]eople do not often discuss the Civil War. It is as if the elderly ones do not even want to remember, not to mention discussing it. Therefore, many of those who were born after the war do not even know what happened. (...) Myself, I cannot even remember the number of times that my mother told me about the war.” Relatedly, Igbo scholars noted that in “[t]he post-civil war Nigerian public space (...) people harboured the memory of hurt and injury, but did not express them” (Onuoha 2013b: 2188). Thus, “[a] systematic attempt to forget the war has been made even though the conflict’s aftermath still shapes a large part of Nigerian national life today” (Korieh 2012: 23). This absence of public debate also allowed for the above-described selective story-telling about Biafra, which led to the increasing interpretation of Biafra as a glorious place for the gifted, yet suppressed, Igbo people.

Considering the lack of any major public debate about Biafra at the time of MASSOB’s foundation, the movement did not simply reflect widely current ideas, but acted as a pioneer. It created and shaped the public discussion on Biafra and the Igbos’ attitudes thereon, as further explored below. Taking a closer look at the cultural context, however, some of the narratives, symbols, and ideas that MASSOB’s founders used for the frame development can already be recognized among the Igbo before 1999. For example, the reasoning that the political and economic discrimination against Igbos has been a punishment for the Civil War predated MASSOB’s foundation. A news report from 1998 suggested that Igbos felt treated as an “enemy” by the federal government because of Biafra and the war (Tempo 1998, 28 October-a). Similarly, the view that Biafra would have been glorious pre-existed. The Igbo politician Joe Igbokwe expressed in 1998 that “[i]f Biafra had won the civil war, it would have been exporting cars today” (P.M. News 1998, 26 October). Some parts of the essay “The Promise that was and still is Biafra”, as published in the mid-1990s in the US, can even be read as a blueprint of MASSOB’s CAFs (Okoroanyanwu 1995, 11 May):

It goes without saying that the future of Nigeria has been mortgaged to the whims and caprices of the feudalistic and parochial elements of the Hausa/Fulani oligarchy and their agents, the Nigerian military establishment (...). [A] cross section of the southern political elites have wittingly and unwittingly advanced the Sokoto Caliphate’s fundamental agenda which the late Saduana articulated as the continuation of the ‘interrupted march’ to the Atlantic. (...) As these events unfold, we as Biafrans and as Igbo people, must not be caught napping, for those who fail to chart their own destinies are doomed to have others do it for them. (...) I have no doubt in my mind that had Biafra been able to withstand the forces of darkness that were unleashed against it, it would no doubt have taken its rightful place in the community of highly industrialized and technologically advanced nations in the world today.

(...) [W]e must not lose sight of the fact that the fundamental issues that led to that war have still not been resolved twenty five years after the cessation of hostilities. The lives and property of our people are still not very safe in regions north and west of the River Niger (...) Although we do not have a politically sovereign Biafra, at least for the time being, we must press forward by all possible means, with actualizing the noble ideals of Biafra.

This essay, written when Biafra was still largely silenced, already contains positions and beliefs that became central to MASSOB's CAFs. This comprises the view that the Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba have been imposing an Islamic agenda, that this has been a punishment on Biafrans and in particular the Igbos for the past, that an independent Biafra has the potential to become a leading country in the world, and that there is the need to renew ("actualize") the Biafran quest and its noble ideals.

Some of these aspects, which became part of the collective memory and MASSOB's CAFs, can also be traced back to the Biafran war propaganda. For example, the need for secession was justified in 1967, similar to the present argument by MASSOB, as a means of last resort to protect Easterners from annihilation by a Northern jihadist regime (Harnischfeger 2011: 5). Following Ojukwu in 1969, "[t]he Biafran revolution stands firmly against genocide, against any attempt to destroy a people, its security, its right to life, property and progress" (Ojukwu 1969, 1 June). At the time, he already hailed the ingenuity of the Biafrans and depicted them as "hard-working, courageous, ingenious, persistent, modern" (Ojukwu 1969: xv). Ojukwu also used the notion "exodus" to describe the 1966 mass flight of Igbos to the East (Ojukwu 1969: 37). Thus, for its frame development and campaigning, MASSOB has relied on several historical ideas and narratives from the past Biafran struggle. In addition, it has widely used some of the Biafran symbols including the flag, currency, and coat of arms.

In light of the silencing of Biafra and the unresolved war trauma, the cultural context was hardly permissive for propagating an armed struggle at the time of MASSOB's foundation. A 1999 survey among South-Easterners documented that the war experiences were still fresh to many Igbos (ICRC 1999: 3-4): still about 60% of the respondents stated that they had personally experienced the war (e.g. as refugees) and lost family members and property; consequently, they described their war experience foremost as "horrible" (59%), "disruptive" (48%), and "humiliating" (24%), and hardly ever as "hopeful" or "exciting" (1-2%). An Igbo scholar thus noted in the mid-2000s that another violent struggle for Biafra "would not go down well with the majority of the Igbo who are still reeling from the crushing defeat and setback of the previous war" (Omeje 2005: 634).

Although the cultural context at MASSOB's foundation made non-violence probable, its non-violence frame was not inevitable. Essentially, the Biafran history is a story of warfare that left a rich cultural stock of speeches, narratives, poems, songs, and symbols that could be employed to justify violence (Agu 1991; Nwachukwu-Agbada 1996). As mentioned, there has neither been a "Never Again" narrative among Igbos, nor did they shy away from armed means. In reprisal to the Sharia riots in early 2000, armed youths killed 300 Northerners in South-Eastern cities (Tempo 2000, 2 March; Harnischfeger 2008: 110-111). Afrobarometer surveys from 1999-2005 also suggest that Igbos were no more reluctant to justify violence than the other main ethnic groups: 20-31% of the Igbo respondents stated to find violence acceptable to achieve just political aims²¹³, which is similar to the rates by Hausa-Fulani (18%-30%) and Yoruba (23%-35%). Thus, even early on, the movement's leaders could have attempted to exploit this cultural stock of war-legitimizing symbols and narratives to propagate rebellion. As I argue, agency matters to explain why they modelled MASSOB along the principle of non-violence.

Agency

The movement's founders placed non-violence at the core of MASSOB. They did so mainly for three reasons: They (1) themselves had experienced the Civil War and sought to clearly distinguish the renewed struggle from the past, (2) they had been inspired by Gandhi and other icons of non-violence, and (3) they copied key parts of the prognostic framing of the Ogoni-liberation struggle.

Firstly, statements by the key founders of MASSOB suggest that they adopted non-violence partly because of their own dramatic war experiences and to strategically dissociate MASSOB from the disturbing Biafran past. At the age of 9-12, Uwazuruike himself had been within Biafra, become a refugee, and lost friends and his sister due to the war-related disease kwashiorkor (Uwazuruike 2004: 13-17): "I had that bitter experience that she wouldn't have died if there was no war" (The Guardian 2004, 25 September). Furthermore, he stated to have witnessed war atrocities including reprisal killings against Biafran soldiers (The Guardian 2004, 25 September). According to his autobiography, these incidents directly motivated him to continue the struggle for Biafra: "The loss of the war pained me (...) I felt that Biafra must not go into oblivion. I made up my mind, that when I grew up, I would in one way or the other

²¹³ Findings from Afrobarometer surveys in 1999, 2001, 2003, and 2005 (for citations, see footnote 113).

continue the issue of Biafra” (Uwazuruike 2004: 16-17). Similarly, Prince Orjiakor as another of the early leaders recounted his views on the war as follows (cited in Okonta 2012: 40):

The events of the war are still fresh in our minds, like when you see the Kwashiokor pictures. You hear stories of people who were driven out of their homes, as refugees. And then you hear stories of mass graves and bombs dropped at market places and church buildings. (...) Some of us believe that the war is the second largest holocaust in human history, coming behind that of the Jewish nation.

In light of the collective war experience of the Igbo, however, the decision to adopt non-violence was also strategic. As Uwazuruike stated in an interview, “when I re-declared Biafra on May 22, 2000, a lot of people were sceptical. (...) They knew Biafra from one concept: the Biafra of the gun, of killing, of hunger, kwashiokor, starvation, barricade and all that. But they had not experienced the Biafra of non-violence” (Newswatch 2004, 20 September). Alternatively, he could have simply evaded creating allusions to the war by the use of another term than Biafra. Yet, for him Biafra symbolizes the “hallmark of injustice” against Easterners and has therefore been indispensable (The Guardian 2004, 25 September). These personal accounts of MASSOB’s founders show that, rather than the immediate cultural context, their position within it, personal experiences, and strategic considerations explain why they placed non-violence so centrally in the movement’s CAFs.

Secondly, in the process of frame development Uwazuruike also imported non-violence from the example of Gandhi in India. In the interview, he explained his motivation to adopt non-violence as follows²¹⁴:

I studied Mahatma Gandhi in India. I stayed in India for about 10 years. It was in India that I learned that Mahatma Gandhi was lawyer; therefore, I studied law after finishing political sciences. I saw that the violence through Ojukwu could not solve it, so I learned in the library that Mahatma Gandhi could achieve independence through non-violence. (...) Having studied Gandhi, I know the potency of non-violence. Because at the end of the day, even when you fight in a battlefield and kill so many, you must still come to the roundtable and discuss. That aspect of discussing at the roundtable is non-violence. (...) You cannot solve the problems by fighting, you have to sit together and talk, discuss the issues. That is why I cherish non-violence. Why should you fight in the first place and waste human lives?

²¹⁴ This account closely resembles his earlier media statements and the story told in his autobiography (Uwazuruike 2004: 16-17, 30-32; The Guardian 2004, 25 September).

In several of his books, he depicted Gandhi as a role model for him: “I want to live the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi with the hope that others will follow suit. It is necessary to diffuse the craze for power among our people as this is borne out of sheer corruption not patriotism” (Uwazuruike 2011: 33). Other founding members seem to have found the alignment of MASSOB with Gandhi convincing. Founding member Benjamin Onuegbu stated in the interview (C17): “You remember the history of India and South Africa? It is not only by violence that you can get what you want.”

Obviously, the examples of Gandhi and other non-violent protesters that MASSOB has relied on heavily were not derived from the movement’s immediate cultural context: Biafran war propaganda sought to legitimize and create resolve for rebellion but not for non-violence. Although there was post-colonial thinking in Ojukwu’s later speeches in Biafra (e.g. Ojukwu 1969), he seems not to have invoked the examples of Gandhi and King, and Mandela rose to most of his prominence only later. The alignment with these figures and the argument about the power of non-violence was largely introduced by Uwazuruike himself, which indicates agency.

Finally, MASSOB’s frame development was inspired by the example of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP). MOSOP was founded in 1990 to represent the small ethnic group of the Ogoni who have suffered from environmental degradation due to oil exploration in the Niger Delta (Osaghae 1995: 326-332). The movement’s figurehead was the internationally renowned writer Ken Saro-Wiwa who was executed by the Abacha regime in 1995. It is no coincidence that the acronyms MASSOB and MOSOP are strikingly similar (Okonta 2012: 36). MASSOB also drew inspiration from MOSOP with regard to how to pursue the struggle, namely as legalistic, internationalized, and non-violent.²¹⁵ The Ogoni movement has used legal means and addressed the UN and the US diaspora to win international recognition of its grievances and support for its struggle. It has been extraordinarily successful in winning international attention and shaming the Shell Company. One scholar predicted that the Ogoni’s success “is a lesson sure to be followed elsewhere in Africa” (Welch 1995: 644), which precisely occurred in the case of MASSOB.

²¹⁵ MOSOP has been dedicated to non-violence but a series of armed clashes occurred between Ogonis and neighboring ethnic groups around 1993/94. Probably, this was instigated by a covert attempt of the military to strike down the Ogoni movement through a local proxy (Osaghae 1995: 337).

MASSOB oriented not only its prognostic framing along MOSOP's approach, but also relied on the Ogoni's example for its first actions.²¹⁶ The movement sent a "Biafra Bill of Rights" to the UN in November 1999, exactly as MOSOP had done with the "Ogoni Bill of Rights" in 1990 (Okonta 2012: 36-37). Comparing the two documents, there are strong parallels regarding the protest strategy of legalism and non-violence. Strikingly, MASSOB even copied the wording of the entire three opening paragraphs from the Ogoni's document.²¹⁷

To summarize, MASSOB's non-violence frame was not immediately derived from the cultural context but developed by the founders and through their agency. Their personal experience of the Civil War and related strategic calculations as well as the inspiration from Gandhi and the Ogoni liberation struggle made them form MASSOB based on the principle of non-violence.

8.3. Summary: Frame Development in Comparison

In this chapter, I showed that both cultural context and framers' agency played an important role in the development of the CAFs of both movements. They used pre-existing symbols and ideas from their immediate cultural context. This context was more permissive to organizing an armed struggle in the case of Boko Haram than MASSOB at the time of the movements' foundation. Core parts of Boko Haram's CAFs had already been well established in the North: Large parts of the Northern population held and still hold that Nigerian politics and society should be reformed along the Islamic ideals and that *jihad* is legitimate for this aim. In contrast, MASSOB's founders faced a situation of no consensus among their audience about the desirability and feasibility of the movement's main aim, namely the secession of Biafra. Among Igbos, the idea of Biafra was still foremost associated with a catastrophic war and mass suffering. This necessitated reviving the idea of Biafra first, which also made non-violence a likely strategic choice to distinguish the present struggle from the past.

Yet, these differences in the cultural context alone do not sufficiently explain why the movements have differed in their calls for protest. Other than Boko Haram, during the 2000s hardly any Islamist organization in the North called for *jihad*. Moreover, Igbos did not consider the use of violent means as entirely illegitimate, and the cultural stock even provided many

²¹⁶ As a mostly Igbo-based movement, however, MASSOB has not frequently invoked the Ogoni's case (for exceptions, see B07, 10, 115), even though the Ogoniland lies within the East that was Biafra.

²¹⁷ For the "Ogoni Bill of Rights" and its addendum, see MOSOP (1990: 4; 1991), and for the "Biafra Bill of Rights", see the extracts cited by Okonta (2012: 23-24).

narratives, symbols, and other elements from the Biafran past that could have been used to mobilize for another rebellion.

Amid this context, the leaders of both movements contributed significantly to the frame development. The founders of Boko Haram seem to have chosen the very radical condemnation of *boko* and the strategy of *jihad* partly for conviction, partly for inspiration from historical and foreign jihadists, and partly for the strategic purpose of distinguishing their movement from others. In contrast, the founders of MASSOB adopted non-violence out of their awareness of the tragic Biafran history, which they had personally experienced. Moreover, they drew inspiration from prominent non-violent protesters and the Ogoni's liberation group MOSOP. Interestingly, the leaders of both movements propagated the need for patience, but Boko Haram's key figures abandoned this frame in mid-2009 and urged the followers to wage rebellion, whereas MASSOB's leadership has continuously emphasized patience to sustain non-violence. As Uwazuruike put it in the interview, “[w]e are not desperate; it is not a do-or-die affair. We have to keep the fire burning to make sure that the struggle continues non-violently. It is God that will decide when Biafra rises” (C111). Thus, the agency of the framers – in particular their perceptions, convictions, and strategic aims – played a major role for the development of the protest strategies within the respective cultural context.

Moreover, the variation in agency and cultural context also contributes to explain why the leaders of Boko Haram declared to wage rebellion in July 2009 over a relatively minor incident of repression, whereas similar and worse attacks on MASSOB did not drive its leaders to justify armed means. Generally, the leaders of both movements have shown strong commitment to their propagated protest strategies: On the one hand, Shekau, Nur, and others within Boko Haram did not abandon the *jihad* after the severe crackdown on the movement in July 2009. The repression seems to have only strengthened their resolve for rebellion. In sharp contrast, despite severe repression, MASSOB's key leaders have refrained from calling for rebellion. They rather interpreted the repression as unfortunate but necessary evil of winning the non-violent struggle for Biafra.

9. Conclusion

In this final part, I review the main findings (9.1), discuss their limitations (9.2), and highlight the implications for the study of rebellion as well as avenues for further research (9.3).

9.1. Main Findings

The study at hand shows that the dominant explanations of rebellion which relate to Opportunity, Grievances, and Patronage Politics remain insufficient. These theories overemphasize structural conditions for the occurrence of violence and take an overly rationalist perspective. However, it remains unconvincing to assume that rebellion occurs automatically once feasible, once people are sufficiently aggrieved, and once patronage networks make the use of violent means economically beneficial. The case studies clearly show that these theories cannot explain why Boko Haram has pursued a rebellion, whereas MASSOB has remained non-violent (see chapter 4). This is because both movements emerged under strikingly similar structural circumstances: In both cases, rebellion would have been feasible, and the audience and activists have been very aggrieved about discrimination and repression. Also, neither of the movements has been deeply enmeshed into patronage networks nor directly controlled by some “Godfathers.” The structural circumstances were certainly influential: They point to variables that explain why these protest movements emerged at all, what motivated people to join them, and why rebellion was feasible for Boko Haram. However, from these theoretical perspectives it still remains puzzling why only Boko Haram’s protest escalated into rebellion, whereas MASSOB has remained non-violent despite similar grievances and opportunities.

These theories miss that for protests to occur, there is also the need for leaders to seize the opportunity, exploit and amplify grievances, and have a cultural context at their disposal that allows legitimation of violence. Moreover, these theories disregard that it is, after all, protest leaders who develop rallying calls for protest and who are influenced by structural circumstances but also possess agency to a great extent. Finally, these theories miss that people from discriminated identity groups decide to join protests not only based on the rationalist calculation whether protests are the most effective strategy to achieve their political aims or the most economically rewarding approach. Instead, people need to be convinced emotionally; otherwise, they are unlikely to participate in protest.

The study argues that the framing approach provides a strong analytical tool to assess these aspects and it proved highly relevant to solve the puzzle. Through the framing approach,

the study finds that *Boko Haram* has waged a rebellion (and *MASSOB* has pursued peaceful protest) because the key protest leaders of *Boko Haram* (*MASSOB*) have propagated the need for rebellion (non-violence) and have developed CAFs that convinced a sufficient share of people among the respective movement's audience to join these protests. The framers of both movements have succeeded in mobilizing people because their frames aligned sufficiently well with the political attitudes, cultural orientations, and social aspirations of the addressed identity group. Moreover, they have succeeded because their framing had strong emotional appeal, high consistency and credibility, and, in some cases, charisma. These reasons demonstrate the importance of agency, structure, and micro-level meaning-making processes. In a nutshell, to explain protest behaviors and conflict escalation, it is necessary to consider, in a first step, how framers develop frames based on their agency, the cultural context, and other structural circumstances. Thereafter, the critical question is whether these frames align with the political attitudes, social understandings, and the culture of the audience. The following briefly reviews these processes regarding the two movements.

The leaders of *Boko Haram* developed very radical framing already before the beginning of the armed struggle: They urged Muslims to strive for overcoming the corrupt present political order and imposing Islamic principles, most importantly the *sharia*. To achieve this goal, they mobilized the followers to withdraw themselves from any contact with the secular state (migration) and prepare themselves for rebellion in the form of *jihad*. For emotional appeal, they framed this as a religious duty of every Muslim, presented themselves as challenging the authorities, and repeatedly invoked historical and foreign examples of *jihadism*. Thus, they drew on established elements from their immediate *cultural context*, e.g. narratives about detrimental Western influence and Christians, the powerful symbol of the *sharia*, and the ideas of migration and *jihad*, which are culturally well established in the Muslim North. In combining these into some of the most radical CAFs in the region, *Boko Haram*'s leaders also exhibit pronounced *agency*. Moreover, they showed strong commitment and resolve to not only propagate *jihad* but also to prepare and ultimately pursue rebellion.

The *Boko Haram* leaders and activists seem to have developed their commitment to violent struggle already for some time before the beginning of the rebellion. Therefore, a very minor incident of repression was sufficient for them to declare war and wage the violent uprising of July 2009. Even the brutal and devastating crackdown on the movement by the security agents did not discourage them, but probably even further encouraged them to continue their violent struggle. The change of leadership after Yusuf's killing further sustained their commitment when the more militant Shekau took over. Under Shekau, *Boko Haram* has

shown continued resolve to fight by violent means and made many public statements to mobilize Muslims for *jihad*.

In contrast, the main leaders of MASSOB have always attempted to mobilize Igbos for non-violent protest. The movement sprung up in a *cultural context* much less permissive to organizing rebellion than the cultural context of Boko Haram, and to even organizing any struggle for Biafra. Therefore, MASSOB has engaged in much consensus mobilization to convince Igbos, in light of the catastrophic war experience, first of all, that Biafra still is feasible and desirable. Their framing, thus, has had a strong identity affirming dimension, de-emphasized urgency, and portrayed Biafra as long-term dream and hopeful promise of a better future. At the same time, the movement's leaders have also engaged in action mobilization, advocating a legalistic, internationalized, and most importantly non-violent campaign for Biafra. The founder and leader Uwazuruike has been a particularly strong agent based on personal convictions. Through his and others' *agency*, the principle of non-violence was adopted against the cultural background of the Biafran history and inspiration from other non-violent campaigns.

The key movement leaders of MASSOB have shown strong resolve *not* to pursue rebellion. In countless statements, Uwazuruike and others have appealed to their followers and Igbos in general to refrain from using violent means to achieve an own state of Biafra. Although the movement has been violently repressed, unlike Boko Haram, the leaders have appealed to the activists to remain calm and patient, to persevere in non-violence, and to accept hardship as part of winning the struggle. Amid similar structural circumstances and facing severe repression, the leaders of Boko Haram and MASSOB, thus, have adopted different strategies due to differences in the cultural context and the agency of the leaders. However, it is still necessary to review why these different framings each succeeded in mobilizing people from the respective audience.

Although most Muslims in the North have disagreed with Boko Haram over the legitimacy of and need for rebellion, its framing has achieved sufficient resonance. It has several strengths: The frames have strong cultural compatibility and emotional appeal because they have relied on common narratives about an ongoing Western and Christian conspiracy to dominate Muslims, because they have carried the very popular goal of the *sharia* at their core, and because the methods of migration and *jihad* have much cultural legitimacy in the Muslim North. The framing has also been highly relevant to the audience, mostly because it has addressed people's very pressing concerns about their bad living conditions. Furthermore, the strong emphasis Boko Haram has placed on resolve and fighting power has had strong

emotional appeal. Finally, Yusuf was also a charismatic and credible figure and Shekau has become an established radical authority.

In spite of much counterframing by the Northern political and religious leaders, who declared Boko Haram outright “un-Islamic”, these frames seem to have resonated with an important share of the audience and have mobilized them for insurgency. Also with regard to the inner processes of the movement, the framing seems to have contributed significantly to marginalize opposing views. Only a single and unsuccessful call for dialogue and an end to *jihad*, as made by one faction of the movement, was found. From observable actions, the movement’s leadership convinced many within the struggle to remain committed. Selective incentives and coercion have hardly played a role for both motivating people to join and sustaining the resolve of the combatants, except for later stages of the rebellion. To sum up, it is mostly the resonance of the CAFs that convinced people and kept them committed to partake in the struggle, even when it moved from non-violence to rebellion.

MASSOB’s leaders, in turn, have convincingly propagated non-violence. Their CAFs have strong cultural compatibility too: MASSOB drew on and amplified the omnipresent narrative of the “marginalization of the Igbo” and their perceptions of insecurity in Nigeria. Moreover, it has managed to (re-)shape the meaning of Biafra as a promised land of safety and prosperity for Igbos. The principle of non-violence has resonated strongly because it aligns with the past unsuccessful violent struggle for Biafra and the continued public silencing of the traumatic Civil War experiences. In addition, MASSOB has been very successful in introducing and popularizing the idea that non-violence is powerful by using evidence from other non-violent movements around the world. Its strategy of a legalistic and internationalized campaign is also highly compatible with the Igbos’ self-understanding as being part of the “civilized” Western world. Moreover, the perception has been rising among Igbos that the international community and the UN prefer legalistic and non-violent pathways to self-determination. Finally, Biafra has strong emotional appeal to Igbos, and Uwazuruike has become widely seen as proto-type of a credible and responsible Igbo leader. Based on the cultural compatibility of the CAFs, the credibility of the framers and their messages, and the emotional appeals of the movement, the struggle for Biafra has achieved massive popularity among the general Igbo population and non-violence has become widely accepted as preferable. As with Boko Haram, selective incentives and coercion, in contrast, have played only small roles for the mobilization success.

Through this continued and convincing propagation of non-violence Uwazuruike and other key leaders of MASSOB have prevented the escalation of the protests into insurgency. As

a result of their framing efforts, most movement followers have developed a strong self-understanding as being non-violent, patient, and hardship-enduring freedom fighters. Their conviction commonly stems from the examples of other successful non-violent protest campaigns and their expectation that the international community would assist Biafra in achieving independence. As a result of this successful framing of non-violence, the calls for rebellion, which were recently made by leaders of a few other Biafran organizations and other individuals, have hardly resonated with the general Igbo public. Uwazuruike's framing has also been sufficiently convincing within the movement to fend off movement-internal coup attempts by factions that advocate using more forceful means. Even among those leaders and followers unconvinced of non-violence as successful means, the awareness that MASSOB officially stands for non-violence serves as a restraint for advocating an armed struggle (more) openly. Considering that by now, many Igbos have rediscovered narratives and symbols from the Civil War which could be exploited to justify another rebellion for Biafra, it has become ever more important that Uwazuruike and other MASSOB leaders remain convincing in order to prevent the escalation of the struggle into violence.

In short, the very different framings of the two protest movements and their resonance explains why, despite the many similarities in structural conditions, Boko Haram has pursued a rebellion, whereas MASSOB has remained non-violent. This implies the theoretical finding that the framing approach contributes significantly to explain whether and why violence escalates.

9.2. Discussion and Limitations

To sustain the findings and conclusions, it is necessary to critically discuss four major conceptual, theoretical, and methodological issues here: the potential problem of circularity in the main argument, circularity in the framing perspective itself, the difficulty of assessing frame resonance, and the question if the cases can be compared at all. Limitations regarding the available data on the case studies are highlighted below (see 9.3).

Firstly, there is a tendency towards circularity in much framing research. This problem was described by Benford (1997: 412):

[W]e have failed to demonstrate that one of our central theoretical constructs – collective action frames – affects mobilization. We lack studies of negative cases, as when framings fail to stimulate collective action. Instead, movement framing studies often are plagued by circular claims in which unverifiable causal relationships are implied (...) [W]e tend to work

backward from successful mobilization to the framings activists proffered and then posit a casual linkage between the two.

To some extent, the present study taps into this problem. Boko Haram and MASSOB have existed for more than a decade and, therefore, almost automatically can be assumed to have achieved (some) frame resonance. It is unlikely that these movements could have persisted had they not made legitimate claims, provided a convincing vision for political change, and given emotionally appealing answers to the question of why the proposed collective action is needed. Therefore, the main finding that the CAFs of both movements have resonated may appear self-evident.

However, the finding is not necessarily trivial: Both movements could have developed in drastically different ways. They could have shifted their protest behavior at some point in time or even have declined. In fact, the research for this study began in July 2011 when Boko Haram was a small terrorist group only. At the time, the later scale of warfare was hardly foreseeable, and it was not at all clear that it would succeed in mobilizing large numbers of people for *jihad* as it did eventually. MASSOB's peaceful campaign had already existed for more than a decade by mid-2011. Nevertheless, especially the rise of Boko Haram also set incentives for MASSOB to shift course and wage rebellion. Hence, when both cases were selected, the trajectories of the movements, the course of their framings, and their resonance were relatively open. In addition, to address the potential problem of circularity, the study also investigated alternative explanations for mobilizing success. It is not a priori self-evident that mobilization through framing is the main or even a major recruitment mechanism of movements. They may also recruit large numbers of people through coercive means or selective incentives. Yet, as the analysis revealed, they relied on these other recruitment strategies to a relatively limited extent, which sustains the framing argument. Finally, possible frame disputes within the movements were also assessed. These turned out to be of limited extent only, but this shows that the framing could also have shifted: The YIM attempted to bring the *jihad* of Boko Haram to an end, and the BZM, BNYL, and some individuals attempted to escalate MASSOB's protests into insurgency. Yet within both movements, these efforts to shift the protest behavior failed because of the limited resonance of these alternative courses of action. In a nutshell, I sought to minimize the problem of circularity in the argument by historical openness, testing alternative explanations, and studying movement-internal frame disputes as well.

Secondly and relatedly, there is the potential problem of circularity when working with the key concepts of the framing approach. While the various concepts (including CAFs, frame development, and frame resonance) are clearly separable in theory, in reality framing processes

are complex and interacting. This makes it challenging to locate where frames come from, identify how and why frames shift, and distinguish senders and receivers in order to elucidate the above-mentioned “unverifiable causal relationships.” The methodology of detailed and perhaps ethnographic micro-level analysis of short time frames may help to solve the problem. Since the present study investigated both movements over more than a decade, the often complex processes between CAFs, framers, the audience, and (possibly changing) structural circumstances have been difficult to pinpoint exactly.

To deal with such circularity, the present study sought to disentangle as much as possible the framing of the protest leaders from the political attitudes and cultural orientations among the audience and activists. The success conditions of framing were used to set the actors, structures, and processes into relation. In addition, to assess where the movement’s frames originally came from, the frame development and the role of both agency and structure were examined. Nevertheless, in further research scholars should investigate more rigorously the effects of the framing by Boko Haram and MASSOB on structural circumstances including the cultural context and on the framers themselves.

Thirdly, there are major methodological and practical difficulties when working with the concept of frame resonance. Since framing research has not developed an instrument for measuring frame resonance, interviewing individuals from the movement’s audience and followership to assess if they find the demands, goals, and emotional appeals convincing still provides the best approximation. An inherent problem with this research strategy is that interviews can be held only after the beginning of the campaign. Moreover, it is difficult to impossible to conduct interviews with active clandestine or even armed movements. In most cases, such interviews can be conducted only considerably after a person joined the movement or, as usual with armed groups, only after the end of the insurgency or after the person exited. At such late stages, however, the individual may not correctly recall anymore what s/he used to know and think about the movement before joining and what role the movement’s messages had played in motivating for participation. What also makes this analysis challenging is that becoming a member is often a slow, gradual, and non-linear process rather than a one-time decision (McCauley and Moskaleiko 2008: 419-421; Snow et al. 1986: 467). Moreover, at this late point, beliefs and perceptions about the movement and its framing may have already been influenced much through individual experiences and the knowledge obtained as members. With regard to the interviewed MASSOB activists, possibly some have become fully convinced about the movement’s strategy and aims only after joining.

Furthermore, the study has the limitation of treating frame resonance only in probabilistic terms. Clearly, not every person with whom the framing of Boko Haram and MASSOB has resonated also joined the protest movement. For further research, it would be important to close this explanatory gap and identify the mix of circumstances, beliefs, and motivations that drove people to participating. One possible starting point could be to examine the role networks have played for mobilization. Duruji (2010: 166) already indicated the relevance of networks: 61% of his survey respondents joined MASSOB through networks of friends and neighbors. Gaining a deeper understanding of the role of networks for recruitment, however, remains difficult. As large parts of MASSOB operate clandestinely, even basic questions about meetings, proceedings, and the internal structure were often dismissed in the interviews (e.g. C48). Alternatively, to close the explanatory gap between frame resonance and protest participation, a stronger focus could also be placed on emotions. While these are already part of the present study, the focus herein – as within most framing research (Jasper 1998: 412-414) – still has been more on the cognitive dimension of mobilization.

Finally, it is necessary to review whether it is fair to compare Boko Haram and MASSOB. Some could argue that the comparison of the movements, a priori, is skewed because of differences in their aims and identities: For instance, some primordialists could argue that Boko Haram merely reflects the violence inherent in Islam, whereas MASSOB has a Christian background. Such primordial arguments, however, are theoretically and empirically weak (see also 5.3.1). A better question would be whether the mobilization processes of religious and ethno-nationalist movements can be compared at all. In contrast to ethnic movements, religious groups can promise an afterlife and use the idea of a god, which may have a strong mobilization appeal to prepare people for ultimate sacrifice. However, existing research finds that the processes of mobilization and conflict escalation are strikingly similar, irrespective of whether movements are based on religious, ethnic, left-wing, or other ideologies (Stewart 2009; Della Porta 2013). Furthermore, even ethno-nationalist movements such as MASSOB can create a strong sense of sacrifice by framing their cause as matter of life and death.

The comparison could also be questioned with regard to the different dynamics of competition within the respective movements. Boko Haram has been a radical offspring of the Northern *sharia* movement. It emerged in a contested “religious marketplace” in which the sect’s leaders developed their very radical framing partly for the strategic interest of giving their organization a unique image. The organization of MASSOB proper, in contrast, was a “first mover.” It became a role model for other Biafran organizations that have copied

MASSOB's CAFs in large part. As a result, there has been less competition for followers and resources in the Biafra case than among the Islamist groups in the North. As scholars of terrorism research showed, competition for followers and support can set incentives for radical "outbidding" and the use of armed means (Pearlman 2011; Bloom 2004). Yet, as this study finds, meaning-making processes and the agency involved may limit such competition. Therefore, few Islamist organizations in Nigeria other than Boko Haram have called for *jihad* recently, even though they have operated in the same contested "religious marketplace." In the case of MASSOB, the limited extent of competition is not external to the framing, but to a large extent results from the movement's convincing framing. In short, competition does not give an independent explanation for the different protest behaviors and the contestations between different movement organizations and factions have also been reflected at various points of the framing analysis herein.

The chosen method of the within-country comparison of synchronic cases can entail problems of interdependence (George and Bennett 2005: 33-34). Indeed, there has been some interdependence between Boko Haram and MASSOB: Many Muslims in the North have seen MASSOB as part of the Southern conspiracy to suppress them. Vice versa, Igbos generally consider Boko Haram proof of the Northern effort of their oppression in Nigeria. Hence, the existence of the other movement has increased security fears and anger among people in both cases. This has contributed to make conflict escalation more likely in both cases, yet to a different extent: Boko Haram has clearly posed a strong threat to the large Igbo communities in the North, whereas MASSOB as a non-violent movement has hardly threatened the few Muslims in the South-East. The interdependence between the cases, therefore, makes it even more puzzling that MASSOB has evaded rebellion.

Lastly, the case of MASSOB and Biafra could be seen as outlier (George and Bennett 2005: 30-32). In this reasoning, Igbos have had such a catastrophic experience with Biafra that they seek to evade any recurrence of warfare. However, in general a past civil war is one of the major risk factors for another rebellion (Fearon and Laitin 2003). Even severe wars do not necessarily produce a "Never Again" narrative. It is up to the meaning-making within identity groups who experienced war to develop the collective memory about it. The Igbo's war experience has certainly provided a fertile background for MASSOB's non-violence frame, but it was only through the agency of the framers that this frame was developed (see chapter 8.2). In this process, the framers were also influenced by sources of inspiration other than the Igbo's historical experiences. In the meantime, many Igbos have even come to glorify Biafra and particular aspects of the Civil War. This could even provide a discursive advantage for

legitimizing another violent struggle for Biafra. Moreover, Northern Nigeria has experienced warfare as well: Dan Fodio's *jihad* of the early 19th century became a role model for social reform. The devastating and unsuccessful Maitatsine struggle during the early 1980s has also not discouraged Islamist movements. In short, rather than the war itself, its interpretation matters for the recurrence of warfare, which implies that MASSOB and Biafra should not be treated as outlier that cannot be compared with other movements.

To sum up, none of these discussion points posed any fundamental problem to the findings of the study. While there is need for further research on several of these aspects, overall this discussion has consolidated the findings.

9.3. Theoretical Implications and Outlook

The main theoretical implication of the findings is that processes of meaning-making by protest movements need to be studied to explain why rebellion occurs. Conflict escalation is not merely the result of a “fatal” mix of structural circumstances related to opportunity and grievances. The ideational perspectives from rebellion research also fall short of providing complete explanations: In contrast to the instrumentalist perspective, the present study showed that it is important to treat culture not merely as a repertoire from which strategic agents select the most promising narrative and symbol for mobilizing the audience. Instead, the framers are also social agents who bring in their own ideas and convictions and who make strategic decisions based on their aims and worldview (see chapter 8). The culturalist camp, in turn, neglects the important role of such agency in the process of meaning-making. However, as the case studies showed, the efforts of mobilization by both movements clearly have not been determined by the cultural context, but the protest leaders have significantly influenced them through interpreting meanings and constructing CAFs (see also chapter 8).

This study showed that framing can contribute to overcome these weaknesses of the existing theories of rebellion research. The puzzle can be solved by taking a micro-level perspective on the protest leaders, their frames, and the audience, and by investigating the discursive interactions between them. In theoretical terms, I argued that *for rebellion (non-violent protest) to occur, protest leaders need to develop CAFs that call for rebellion (non-violent protest). When developing these frames, they draw on pre-existing cultural ideas and their perception of the political situation, but also engage in meaning-making through re-combining and perhaps partly re-interpreting such elements from the cultural stock. If these frames resonate with the audience, people become convinced about the need and legitimacy of the propagated course of collective action and they become emotionally aroused. As a result, they*

start participating, whereby protest occurs. The resonance of these frames, in turn, depends on their alignment with structural circumstances, discursive battles between framers and counterframers, and qualities of the frame and the framers. This strong emphasis on processes of meaning-construction based on structure and agency resembles the recent finding by Jackson and Dexter (2014: 2):

[O]rganised and sustained political violence requires the presence of both a particular set of material and discursive structures, including the military instruments for sustained violence, an economic basis for prosecuting war as well as an established set of society-wide military norms, values and practices, and willing and capable agents who can transform the structural potential of the society into active participants in violence within a given historical and social context.

They drew this conclusion based on anecdotal evidence from several countries. The present study, in contrast, examined only two cases but conducted a systematic comparison against a broad theoretical background, which provides for a strong theory test.

On these grounds, I argue that framing processes matter in explaining conflict escalation and that the framing perspective should be adopted more widely in rebellion research. Scholars in the field should much more investigate discursive processes, use the framing approach for this purpose, and complement framing by other relevant theories. Thereby, as in social movement research, framing should become part of the standard theoretical repertoire to examine armed movements and non-violent campaigns at the verge of rebellion.

To sustain and specify the findings of the present study, there are also several avenues for further research regarding both cases. Concerning Boko Haram, there still is a major information gap of how and why people have joined the movement. While this study has sought to answer precisely these questions, it will be important to validate or revise assumptions made herein through conducting interviews with former Boko Haram members. Relatedly, the role of broader support networks should be investigated. Sympathy and perhaps covert support for Boko Haram has likely come from the Northern Islamist community, which shares many of the demands and beliefs of the rebels. With regard to the movement's early years, it would be important to obtain further documents (e.g. recorded speeches and books) for re-collecting the CAFs and assessing frame shifts ahead of the 2009 uprising. Additional information on the leaders would also allow more thorough analysis of the processes of frame development and the agency involved. Finally, for lack of material, the present study has

hardly examined the theological aspects and various religious sources of Boko Haram's framing.

Similar research needs apply to MASSOB as well. Most importantly, the movement-internal communication processes such as speeches and practices during meetings and events need to be studied more. Relatedly, the efforts of political education and the movement's cultural production should be explored. For instance, the activists have often sung songs from the past Biafran struggle, partly with new lyrics. In short, more insights into the inner workings, use of the CAFs, and social and cultural "glue" of the movement are necessary. In addition, through interviews and possibly surveys, the attitudes of activists versus non-activists should be investigated. In the meantime, much of the Biafran activism has also moved online. Facebook alone contains a seeming endless amount of data on the movement, which can give further insights into the perceptions, grievances, and preferred action strategies. This data would also allow analysis of the typical process of how activists re-frame the leaders' messages (so-called audience effects, see Benford and Snow 2000: 630).

This final section showed that there are still many avenues for further framing research on Boko Haram and MASSOB and, more broadly, that framing research on armed groups and conflict escalation is only about to begin. Scholars may be tempted to study CAFs from a descriptive perspective. Although this certainly can yield valuable information, in my view more insights can be generated if framing is applied analytically to study causes and dynamics of protest behavior. Thereby, framing can help elucidate why rebellion occurs and also why protest leaders may succeed in convincing their followers about the power of non-violence.

Annexes

Annex A: Corpus of Boko Haram Documents and Statements

ID	Date	Speaker	Document type	Word no. ²²⁰	Reference(s)
A01	unknown	Mohammed Yusuf	Preaching*	5100	(YouTube Video 2011, 28 October-c)**
A02	unknown	Abubakar Shekau	Preaching*	5500	(YouTube Video 2011, 28 October-d)**
A03	unknown	Abubakar Shekau	Preaching*	1450	(YouTube Video 2011, 28 October-a)**
A04	16 March 2009	Mamman Nur	Preaching*	4400	(YouTube Video 2011, 28 October-b)**
A05	16 March 2009	Mohammed Yusuf	Preaching*	3650	(YouTube Video 2011, 28 October-b)**
A06	28 March 2009	Mohammed Yusuf	Preaching	5000	Translation obtained from Atta Barkindo, SOAS London
A07	June 2009	Mohammed Yusuf	Preaching	450	(Umar 2012)
A08	June 2009	Mohammed Yusuf	Preaching*	2450	(Unknown n.d. [probably 2011])
A09	27 July 2009	Mohammed Yusuf	Statement to Journalists	450	(Daily Trust 2009, 27 July-a)
A10	30 July 2009	Mohammed Yusuf	Interrogation*	700	(YouTube Video 2009, 3 August)**
A11	2009	Mohammed Yusuf	Book	2150	(Yusuf 2009)
A12	2009	Mohammed Yusuf	Interview	1200	(Unknown n.d. [probably 2011])
A13	n.d. [probably 2009]	Mohammed Yusuf	Preaching*	3100	(Unknown n.d. [probably 2011])
A14	9 August 2009	Sani Umar	Statement to Journalists	700	Translation obtained from Atta Barkindo, SOAS London
A15	29 May 2010	Musa Tanko	Interview	250	(AFP 2010, 29 March)

* indicates that original video material was accessed.

** indicates that the video was translated by Atta Barkindo, SOAS London.

²²⁰ This counts direct quotes only and numbers were rounded.

A16	1 July 2010	Abubakar Shekau	Interview	250	(Daily Trust 2010, 1 July)
A17	28 December 2010	Abubakar Shekau	Audio/Video Message*	550	(Sahara Reporters 2010, 28 December)
A18	25 April 2011	Abubakar Shekau	Letter/Leaflet	100	(Daily Trust 2011, 25 April)
A19	7 June 2011	Abu Zayd	Statement to Journalists	550	(Pointblanknews.com 2011, 7 June)
A20	21 July 2011	No speaker [Yusufiyya Islamic Movement]	Letter/Leaflet	350	(Vanguard 2011, 21 July)
A21	24 November 2011	Abu Qaqa	Statement to Journalists	100	(AFP 2011, 24 October)
A22	24 December 2011	Abu Qaqa	Statement to Journalists	50	(AFP 2011, 24 December)
A23	2 January 2012	Abu Qaqa	Statement to Journalists	150	(Daily Trust 2012, 2 January)
A24	12 January 2012	Abubakar Shekau	Audio/Video Message*	900	(Sahara Reporters 2012, 12 January)
A25	18 January 2012	No speaker [Ansaru]	Letter/Leaflet	4150	(Guidère 2014)
A26	21 January 2012	Abubakar Shekau	Letter/Leaflet	200	(Nigerians Saving Nigerians 2012, 21 January)
A27	22 January 2012	No speaker [Boko Haram]	Letter/Leaflet	600	(Sahara Reporters 2012, 22 January)
A28	27 January 2012	Abu Qaqa	Statement to Journalists	300	(The Guardian 2012, 27 January)
A29	27 January 2012	Abubakar Shekau	Audio/Video Message*	250	(Reuters 2012, 27 January; AP 2012, 27 January)
A30	29 January 2012	Abubakar Shekau	Letter/Leaflet	100	(AFP 2010, 29 January)
A31	29 January 2012	Abu Qaqa	Statement to Journalists	150	(Sahara Reporters 2012, 29 January)
A32	31 January 2012	Abu Usamatal Ansary [Ansaru]	Audio/Video Message*	1200	(YouTube Video 2012, 09 November)
A33	3 February 2012	No speaker [Boko Haram]	Statement to Journalists	150	(Sahara Reporters 2012, 3 February)
A34	22 February 2012	Abu Qaqa	Statement to Journalists	350	(Daily Trust 2012, 22 February; Vanguard 2012, 22 February; AFP 2012, 21 February)
A35	9 March 2012	Abu Qaqa	Statement to Journalists	100	(AFP 2012, 9 March)
A36	21 March 2012	Abu Qaqa	Statement to Journalists	650	(Sahara Reporters 2012, 21 March)

A37	12 April 2012	Abubakar Shekau	Audio/Video Message*	800	(The Nation 2012, 13 April)
A38	1 May 2012	No speaker [Boko Haram]	Audio/Video Message*	900	(Premium Times 2012, 1 May)
A39	1 June 2012	No speaker [Ansaru]	Audio/Video Message	2950	(Danjibo 2014)
A40	5 June 2012	Abu Usamatal Ansary [Ansaru]	Statement to Journalists	150	(Desert Herald 2012, 5 June)
A41	7 June 2012	No speaker [Boko Haram]	Statement to Journalists	100	(AFP 2012, 7 June; Sahara Reporters 2012, 7 June)
A42	10 June 2012	Abu Qaqa	Statement to Journalists	100	(AFP 2012, 10 June)
A43	11 June 2012	Abu Ja'afar [Ansaru]	Statement to Journalists	300	(Desert Herald 2012, 11 June)
A44	10 July 2012	Abu Qaqa	Statement to Journalists	250	(Sahara Reporters 2012, 10 July)
A45	1 August 2012	Abu Qaqa	Statement to Journalists	350	(The Nation 2012, 1 August)
A46	4 August 2012	Abubakar Shekau	Audio/Video Message	150	(AFP 2012, 4 August)
A47	6 August 2012	Abu Qaqa	Statement to Journalists	100	(Daily Trust 2012, 6 August)
A48	13 August 2012	Abu Qaqa	Statement to Journalists	50	(Sahara Reporters 2012, 13 August)
A49	23 August 2012	No speaker [Boko Haram]	Statement to Journalists	400	(Sahara Reporters 2012, 23 August)
A50	6 September 2012	Abu Qaqa	Statement to Journalists	100	(AFP 2012, 6 September)
A51	1 October 2012	Abubakar Shekau	Audio/Video Message*	400	(Sahara Reporters 2012, 1 October)
A52	26 November 2012	Abu Usamatal Ansary [Ansaru]	Audio/Video Message*	200	(Desert Herald 2012, 26 November)
A53	26 November 2012	Abu Usamatal Ansary [Ansaru]	Audio/Video Message*	200	(YouTube Video 2012, 30 November)
A54	29 November 2012	Abubakar Shekau	Audio/Video Message*	1500	Translation by SITE Monitoring Service, cited in (Eveslage 2013b)
A55	20 January 2013	Abu Usamatal Ansary [Ansaru]	Audio/Video Message	150	(Desert Herald 2013, 20 January)
A56	19 February 2013	Abu Usamatal Ansary [Ansaru]	Statement to Journalists	100	(Desert Herald 2013, 19 February)
A57	25 February 2013	No speaker [Boko Haram]	Audio/Video Message	300	(YouTube Video 2013, 25 February)

A58	4 March 2013	Abubakar Shekau	Audio/Video Message	550	(Vanguard 2013, 4 March)
A59	19 March 2013	Abubakar Shekau	Audio/Video Message	800	(Premium Times 2013, 19 March)
A60	11 April 2013	Abubakar Shekau	Audio/Video Message	100	(Daily Trust 2013, 11 April)
A61	13 May 2013	Abubakar Shekau	Audio/Video Message	100	(AFP 2013, 13 May)
A62	28 May 2013	Abubakar Shekau	Audio/Video Message*	150	(AFP 2013, 28 May)
A63	18 June 2013	Abu Zinnira	Statement to Journalists	50	(Premium Times 2013, 18 June)
A64	21 June 2013	No speaker [Ansaru]	Letter/Leaflet	1700	(Desert Herald 2013, 21 June)
A65	14 July 2013	Abubakar Shekau	Audio/Video Message*	100	(AP 2013, 13 July)
A66	12 August 2013	Abubakar Shekau	Audio/Video Message*	450	(Premium Times 2013, 12 August; YouTube Video 2014, 13 August)
A67	27 September 2013	Abubakar Shekau	Audio/Video Message*	1850	Translation obtained from Atta Barkindo, SOAS London
A68	9 October 2013	Abubakar Shekau	Audio/Video Message	100	(Daily Trust 2013, 9 October)
A69	4 November 2013	Abubakar Shekau	Audio/Video Message*	150	(Daily Trust 2013, 4 November)
A70	12 December 2013	Abubakar Shekau	Audio/Video Message*	100	(AFP 2013, 12 December)
A71	February 2014	Abubakar Shekau	Letter/Leaflet	150	(Nigeria Watch 2014c)
A72	19 February 2014	Abubakar Shekau	Audio/Video Message*	1300	(Nigeria Watch 2014d; YouTube Video 2014, 20 February)
A73	25 March 2014	Abubakar Shekau	Audio/Video Message*	2200	(Nigeria Watch 2014e)
A74	20 April 2014	Abubakar Shekau	Audio/Video Message*	700	(Premium Times 2014, 20 April)
A75	5 May 2014	Abubakar Shekau	Audio/Video Message*	3800	(Nigeria Watch 2014a)
A76	12 May 2014	Abubakar Shekau	Audio/Video Message*	1850	(Nigeria Watch 2014b)
A77	14 July 2014	Abubakar Shekau	Audio/Video Message*	600	(Premium Times 2014, 14 July)
Total word count (direct quotations only)				74,000	

Annex B: Corpus of MASSOB Documents and Statements

ID	Date	Speaker	Organization	Document type	Reference(s)
B01	10 April 2000	Ralph Uwazuruike	MASSOB	Interview	(The News 2000, 10 April)
B02	17 May 2000	Ralph Uwazuruike	MASSOB	Interview	(The News 2000, 17 May)
B03	22 May 2000	Ralph Uwazuruike	MASSOB	Speech	(Uwazuruike 2000, 22 May)
B04	24 May 2000	No speaker	Ekwe Nche	Newspaper Article	(The Post Express 2000, 24 May)
B05	12 July 2000	Ralph Uwazuruike	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(Vanguard 2000, 12 July)
B06	7 August 2000	Ralph Uwazuruike	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(The Post Express 2000, 7 August)
B07	2 October 2000	Unknown	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(Vanguard 2000, 2 October)
B08	27 November 2000	No speaker	Ekwe Nche	Newspaper Article	(The Post Express 2000, 27 November)
B09	12 February 2001	Christian Iwuanyanwu	MASSOB	Press Release	(The Post Express 2001, 12 February)
B10	22 May 2001	Ralph Uwazuruike	MASSOB	Speech	(Uwazuruike 2001, 22 May)
B11	30 May 2001	Ralph Uwazuruike	MASSOB	Interview	(The News 2001, 30 May-b)
B12	8 December 2001	Samuel Ike	MASSOB	Interview	(Vanguard 2001, 8 December)
B13	12 January 2002	No speaker	MASSOB	Press Release	(MASSOB 2002, 12 January)
B14	2 February 2002	Unknown	VOBI	Radio Broadcast	(VOBI 2002, 2 February)
B15	13 July 2002	Unknown	VOBI	Radio Broadcast	(VOBI 2002, 13 July)
B16	11 September 2002	Uche Okwukwu	MASSOB	Press Release	(Okwukwu 2002, 11 September)
B17	18 September 2002	Obinna Okoro	MASSOB	Press Release	(Okoro 2002, 18 September)
B18	28 September 2002	Unknown	VOBI	Radio Broadcast	(VOBI 2002, 28 September)
B19	17 October 2002	Chukwukere Uche	MASSOB	Press Release	(Uche 2002, 17 October)
B20	late 2002 (estimated)	Obinna Okoro	MASSOB	Press Release	(Okoro 2002 [estimated])

B21	2003 (estimated)	Ralph Uwazuruike	MASSOB	Booklet	(Uwazuruike 2003 [estimated])
B22	2003 (estimated)	No speaker	MASSOB	Public Announcement	(MASSOB 2003 [estimated])
B23	18 January 2003	Ralph Uwazuruike	MASSOB	Interview	(Vanguard 2003, 18 January)
B24	1 March 2003	Unknown	VOBI	Radio Broadcast	(VOBI 2003, 1 March)
B25	29 June 2003	Obinna Okoro	MASSOB	Press Release	(This Day 2003, 29 June)
B26	12 July 2003	Unknown	VOBI	Radio Broadcast	(VOBI 2003, 12 July)
B27	29 September 2003	Obinna Okoro	MASSOB	Press Release	(Okoro 2003, 29 September)
B28	8 November 2003	Unknown	VOBI	Radio Broadcast	(VOBI 2003, 8 November)
B29	24 November 2003	Uchenna Madu	MASSOB	Press Release	(Vanguard 2003, 24 November)
B30	2004	Ralph Uwazuruike	MASSOB	Book	(Uwazuruike 2004)
B31	20 March 2004	Unknown	VOBI	Radio Broadcast	(VOBI 2004, 20 March)
B32	8 May 2004	Unknown	VOBI	Radio Broadcast	(VOBI 2004, 8 May)
B33	10 May 2004	Oliver Chidozie	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(Vanguard 2004, 10 May)
B34	26 July 2004	Uchenna Madu	MASSOB	Public Announcement	(MASSOB 2004, 26 July)
B35	25 August 2004	Samuel Ike	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(This Day 2004, 25 August)
B36	4 September 2004	Ralph Uwazuruike	MASSOB	Interview	(Vanguard 2004, 4 September)
B37	20 September 2004	Ralph Uwazuruike	MASSOB	Interview	(Newswatch 2004, 20 September)
B38	25 September 2004	Ralph Uwazuruike	MASSOB	Interview	(The Guardian 2004, 25 September)
B39	25 December 2004	Unknown	VOBI	Radio Broadcast	(VOBI 2004, 25 December)
B40	12 March 2005	Unknown	VOBI	Radio Broadcast	(VOBI 2005, 12 March)
B41	28 May 2005	Unknown	VOBI	Radio Broadcast	(VOBI 2005, 28 May)
B42	28 July 2005	Uchenna Madu	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(Daily Independent 2005, 28 July)

B43	12 September 2005	Uchenna Madu	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(Daily Champion 2005, 12 September)
B44	26 October 2005	Chris Mocha	MASSOB	Press Release	(Mocha 2005, 26 October)
B45	1 November 2005	Patricia Okwaraeke	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(Daily Champion 2005, 1 November)
B46	7 November 2005	Uchenna Madu	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(YouTube Video 2008, 25 November-b)
B47	12 November 2005	Unknown	VOBI	Radio Broadcast	(VOBI 2005, 12 November)
B48	20 March 2006	Innocent Dike	MASSOB	Press Release	(Dike 2006, 20 March)
B49	8 April 2006	Unknown	VOBI	Radio Broadcast	(VOBI 2006, 8 April)
B50	6 May 2006	Unknown	VOBI	Radio Broadcast	(VOBI 2006, 6 May)
B51	9 June 2006	Daniel Nwadike	MASSOB	Press Release	(Nwadike 2006, 9 June)
B52	30 June 2006	Prince Kingsley Isigwe	MASSOB	Press Release	(Daily Champion 2006, 30 June)
B53	31 July 2006	Nnamdi Ohiagu	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(Vanguard 2006, 31 July)
B54	11 November 2006	Unknown	VOBI	Radio Broadcast	(VOBI 2006, 11 November)
B55	27 January 2007	Unknown	VOBI	Radio Broadcast	(VOBI 2007, 27 January)
B56	31 January 2007	Edeson Samuel	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(Daily Champion 2007, 31 January)
B57	31 August 2007	Unknown	VOBI	Radio Broadcast	(VOBI 2007, 31 August)
B58	12 October 2007	Uchenna Okorie, Christian Umeaka	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(Vanguard 2007, 12 October)
B59	5 November 2007	Ralph Uwazuruike	MASSOB	Speech	(Vanguard 2007, 5 November)
B60	14 December 2007	Unknown	VOBI	Radio Broadcast	(VOBI 2007, 14 December)
B61	2008	Ralph Uwazuruike	MASSOB	Book	(Uwazuruike 2008)
B62	28 March 2008	Unknown	VOBI	Radio Broadcast	(VOBI 2008, 28 March)
B63	14 May 2008	Sylvester Okafor	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(Leadership 2008, 14 May)
B64	23 May 2008	Unknown	VOBI	Radio Broadcast	(VOBI 2008, 23 May)

B65	6 June 2008	David Mac Davies	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(The SUN 2008, 6 June)
B66	22 August 2008	Unknown	VOBI	Radio Broadcast	(VOBI 2008, 22 August)
B67	21 November 2008	Unknown	VOBI	Radio Broadcast	(VOBI 2008, 21 November)
B68	2009	G.S.A. Okoro	MASSOB	Press Release	(Okoro 2009)
B69	13 March 2009	Unknown	VOBI	Radio Broadcast	(VOBI 2009, 13 March)
B70	13 April 2009	G.S.A. Okoro & Innocent N Orji	MASSOB	Press Release	(Okoro and Orji 2009, 13 April)
B71	7 August 2009	Unknown	VOBI	Radio Broadcast	(VOBI 2009, 7 August)
B72	4 September 2009	Unknown	VOBI	Radio Broadcast	(VOBI 2009, 4 September)
B73	14 January 2010	Uchenna Madu	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(Vanguard 2010,14 January)
B74	22 January 2010	Uchenna Madu	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(Daily Champion 2010, 22 January)
B75	2 February 2010	Uchenna Madu	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(Vanguard 2010, 2 February)
B76	11 March 2010	Uchenna Madu	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(Daily Champion 2010, 11 March)
B77	29 March 2010	Ekwe Ikechukwu, Uchenna Madu	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(The Source 2010, 29 March)
B78	11 July 2010	Uchenna Madu	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(Daily Champion 2010, 11 July)
B79	2011	Ralph Uwazuruike	MASSOB	Book	(Uwazuruike 2011)
B80	2011 [estimated]	No speaker	BHRI	Constitution	(BHRI 2011 [estimated])
B81	20 January 2011	Ralph Uwazuruike	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(Daily Independent 2011, 20 January)
B82	29 January 2011	Ralph Uwazuruike	MASSOB	Interview	(The SUN 2011, 29 January)
B83	4 February 2011	Uchenna Madu	MASSOB	Press Release	(The SUN 2011, 4 February)
B84	20 June 2011	Ralph Uwazuruike	MASSOB	Interview	(The SUN 2011, 20 June)
B85	23 June 2011	Uchenna Madu	MASSOB	Interview	(Daily Independent 2011, 23 June)
B86	29 October 2011	Joseph C. Madu	BILIE	Speech	(BILIE 2011, 29 October)

B87	11 December 2011	Ralph Uwazuruike	MASSOB	Interview	(Vanguard 2011, 11 December)
B88	2012	Various	Various	Movement Newspaper	(Eastern Pilot 2012)
B89	24 January 2012	Uchenna Madu	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(Vanguard 2012, 24 January)
B90	27 January 2012	Uchenna Madu	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(Vanguard 2012, 27 January)
B91	1 February 2012	Ralph Uwazuruike	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(The Nation 2012, 1 February)
B92	11 February 2012	Arinze Igbani	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(The SUN 2012, 11 February)
B93	21 February 2012	Chief Uwazuruike	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(The Nation 2012, 21 February)
B94	June/July 2012 (estimated)	Various	Various	Movement Newspaper	(Eastern Pilot 2012, June/July [estimated])
B95	29 August 2012	Ralph Uwazuruike	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(Vanguard 2012, 29 August)
B96	October 2012 (estimated)	Various	Various	Movement Newspaper	(Eastern Pilot 2012, October [estimated])
B97	22 October 2012	Benjamin Onwuka	BZM	Interview	(The Advocate 2012, 22 October)
B98	4 November 2012	Benjamin Onwuka	BZM	Interview	(The Advocate 2012, 4 November)
B99	5 November 2012	Benjamin Onwuka	BZM	Speech	(The Advocate 2012, 5 November)
B100	7 November 2012	Ralph Uwazuruike	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(The Nation 2012, 7 November)
B101	December 2012 (estimated)	Various	Various	Movement Newspaper	(Eastern Pilot 2012, December [estimated])
B102	2013	No speaker	BZM	Homepage	(BZM 2013)
B103	2013	Benjamin Onwuka	BZM	Speech	(YouTube Video 2013, 27 April)
B104	21 January 2013	Benjamin Onwuka	BZM	Press Release	(The Advocate 2013, 21 January)
B105	February 2013 (estimated)	Various	Various	Movement Newspaper	(Eastern Pilot 2013, February [estimated])
B106	February 2013	No speaker	BNYL	Public Announcement	(BNYL 2013)
B107	8 February 2013	Uchenna Madu	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(The Punch 2013, 8 February)

B108	13 February 2013	Tony Nwodo	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(The SUN 2013, 13 February)
B109	19 March 2013	Ralph Uwazuruike	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(The SUN 2013, 19 March)
B110	2 April 2013	Ralph Uwazuruike	MASSOB	Speech	(National Mirror 2013, 2 April)
B111	8 April 2013	Benjamin Onwuka	BZM	Speech	(YouTube Video 2013, 10 April)
B112	23 April 2013	Chris Mocha	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(National Mirror 2013, 23 April)
B113	9 May 2013	Chinedu Amaifeobu, Prince Adili Ighetius	MASSOB	Press Release	(The Nation 2013, 9 May)
B114	12 May 2013	Benjamin Onwuka	BZM	Speech	(YouTube Video 2013, 12 May)
B115	17 May 2013	No speaker	BNYL	Public Announcement	(BNYL 2013, 17 May)
B116	3 June 2013	Arinze Igbani	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(Vanguard 2013, 3 June)
B117	31 July 2013	Ralph Uwazuruike	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(The SUN 2013, 31 July)
B118	3 August 2013	Obuka Chimezie	BNYL	Speech	(BNYL 2013, 3 August)
B119	17 September 2013	Ralph Uwazuruike	MASSOB	Press Release	(Leadership 2013, 17 September)
B120	19 October 2013	Tony Nwodo	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(The SUN 2013, 19 October)
B121	28 October 2013	Uchenna Madu, Osita Obiajulu	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(Leadership 2013, 28 October)
B122	9 November 2013	Ralph Uwazuruike	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(The SUN 2013, 9 November)
B123	12 November 2013	Ralph Uwazuruike	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(The Punch 2013, 12 November)
B124	28 January 2014	Ralph Uwazuruike	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(Vanguard 2014, 28 January)
B125	31 January 2014	Ralph Uwazuruike	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(Daily Independent 2014, 31 January)
B126	10 February 2014	Larry Odimma, Kenneth Okwudili	MASSOB	Statement to Journalists	(Daily Post 2014, 10 February)
B127	13 March 2014	Benjamin Onwuka	BZM	Statement to Journalists	(Nigerian Tribune 2014, 13 March)
B128	23 March 2014	Emmanuel Omenka	MASSOB	Speech	(The SUN 2014, 23 March)

B129	25 March 2014	Augustina Ugwoke	MASSOB	Press Release	(The Nation 2014, 25 March)
B130	22 April 2014	Ralph Uwazuruike	MASSOB	Press Release	(The SUN 2014, 22 April)

Annex C: Overview on Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

ID	Interviewee (Position)	Date	Identity	City
C01	Student leader from Plateau State	8 September 2011	Muslim	Jos
C02	Religious leader from Plateau State	8 September 2011	Muslim	Jos
C03	NGO person from Plateau State	12 September 2011	Muslim	Jos
C04	Civil servant from Plateau State	14 September 2011	Muslim	Jos
C05	Business person from Plateau State	15 September 2011	Muslim	Jos
C06	NGO person from Plateau State	16 September 2011	Muslim	Jos
C07	Student	8 August 2013	Igbo	London
C08	Nnamdi Kanu (Radio Biafra)	10 August 2013	Igbo	London
C09	MASSOB follower	12 August 2013	Igbo	London
C10	MASSOB follower	14 August 2013	Igbo	London
C11	Two NGO persons	16 August 2013	Igbo	London
C12	Mazi Obi Okoli (Politician, Congress of Igbo Leaders UK & Ireland)	17 August 2013	Igbo	London
C13	Enyinna Amadiokwa (Good Shepherd Movement)	19 August 2013	Igbo	London
C14	Chief Dr. Uzoalor (Politician, President of Ohanaeze Ndigbo UK)	19 August 2013	Igbo	London
C15	Mannir Dan-Ali (Editor-in-Chief of Daily Trust)	8 November 2013	Muslim	Abuja
C16	Academic lecturer	8 November 2013	Igbo	Abuja
C17	Benjamin Onwuka (BZM/F leader), phone interview	10 November 2013	Igbo	Abuja
C18	Civil servant	11 November 2013	Igbo	Abuja
C19	Civil servant from Gombe State	11 November 2013	Muslim	Abuja
C20	Uche Onyeagucha (Politician and former House of Representatives Member, 2003-07)	11 November 2013	Igbo	Abuja

C21	Civil servant from Yobe State	12 November 2013	Muslim	Abuja
C22	Civil servant from Bauchi State	12 November 2013	Muslim	Abuja
C23	Civil servant from Nassarawa State	13 November 2013	Muslim	Lafia
C24	Civil servant from Nassarawa State	13 November 2013	Muslim	Lafia
C25	Academic lecturer from Nassarawa State	13 November 2013	Muslim	Lafia
C26	Local politician from Adamawa State	14 November 2013	Muslim	Mayo Belwa
C27	Ordinary person from Taraba State	16 November 2013	Muslim	Zing
C28	Ordinary person from Borno State	16 November 2013	Muslim	Yola
C29	Student from Adamawa State	16 November 2013	Muslim	Yola
C30	Ordinary person from Borno State	17 November 2013	Muslim	Yola
C31	Academic lecturer from Borno State	18 November 2013	Muslim	Yola
C32	Student from Borno State	19 November 2013	Muslim	Yola
C33	Middle-aged man (ordinary person) from Kano State	21 November 2013	Muslim	Yola
C34	Two young men	23 November 2013	Igbo	Abuja
C35	Young man	24 November 2013	Igbo	Abuja
C36	Business person	24 November 2013	Igbo	Abuja
C37	Two religious leaders (origin unknown)	25 November 2013	Muslim	Abuja
C38	Imam from Kano State	26 November 2013	Muslim	Abuja
C39	NGO person from Yobe State	27 November 2013	Muslim	Abuja
C40	Business person from Yobe State	27 November 2013	Muslim	Abuja
C41	Academic lecturer	27 November 2013	Igbo	Abuja
C42	Onyema Ugochukwu (Politician, former Special Adviser on Communication to President Obasanjo)	27 November 2013	Igbo	Abuja
C43	Lawyer	29 November 2013	Igbo	Lagos

C44	Journalist	30 November 2013	Igbo	Lagos
C45	Benjamin Nwabueze (Politician, former Secretary General of Ohanaeze Ndigbo, 1976-2004)	1 December 2013	Igbo	Lagos
C46	NGO person	2 December 2013	Igbo	Lagos
C47	Ordinary person	2 December 2013	Igbo	Lagos
C48	Benjamin Onuegbu (MASSOB's Western Representative)	2 December 2013	Igbo	Lagos
C49	Mid-level leader of MASSOB	2 December 2013	Igbo	Lagos
C50	Mid-level leader of MASSOB	2 December 2013	Igbo	Lagos
C51	Sheikh Abdulrahman Ahmad (National Missioner of Ansar-Ud-Deen Society of Nigeria)	3 December 2013	Muslim	Lagos
C52	NGO person	4 December 2013	Igbo	Lagos
C53	Local politician	4 December 2013	Igbo	Lagos
C54	Elderly man, trader	4 December 2013	Igbo	Lagos
C55	Middle-aged traders	4 December 2013	Igbo	Lagos
C56	Grassroots MASSOB member	5 December 2013	Igbo	Lagos
C57	Local politician	5 December 2013	Igbo	Lagos
C58	Justin Akujieze (Ekwe Nche founder)	22 May 2014	Igbo	Chicago
C59	Two students from Adamawa State	8 November 2014	Muslim	Yola
C60	Two students (origin unknown)	8 November 2014	Muslim	Yola
C61	Middle-aged man (ordinary person, origin unknown)	10 November 2014	Muslim	Yola
C62	Middle-aged man (ordinary person) from Adamawa State	10 November 2014	Muslim	Yola
C63	Middle-aged man (ordinary person) from Adamawa State	10 November 2014	Muslim	Yola
C64	Religious leader from Adamawa State	10 November 2014	Muslim	Yola
C65	Religious leader from Adamawa State	10 November 2014	Muslim	Yola
C66	Religious leader from Yobe State	10 November 2014	Muslim	Yola

C67	Two IDPs from Borno State	10 November 2014	Muslim	Yola
C68	Journalist from Adamawa State	11 November 2014	Muslim	Yola
C69	Academic lecturer from Adamawa State	11 November 2014	Muslim	Yola
C70	Religious leader from Adamawa State	11 November 2014	Muslim	Yola
C71	Local politician from Adamawa State	11 November 2014	Muslim	Yola
C72	Local politician from Adamawa State	12 November 2014	Muslim	Yola
C73	Ordinary person from Borno State	12 November 2014	Muslim	Yola
C74	IDP from Adamawa State	12 November 2014	Muslim	Yola
C75	Two IDPs from Borno State	12 November 2014	Muslim	Yola
C76	Two IDPs from Borno State	13 November 2014	Muslim	Yola
C77	Two IDPs (female) from Borno State	13 November 2014	Muslim	Yola
C78	NGO person (female) from Adamawa State	15 November 2014	Muslim	Yola
C79	Journalist from Borno State	16 November 2014	Muslim	Yola
C80	Local politician from Adamawa State	16 November 2014	Muslim	Yola
C81	Business person	19 November 2014	Igbo	Enugu
C82	Sam Edeson (BZM/F leader)	19 November 2014	Igbo	Enugu
C83	Journalist (female)	19 November 2014	Igbo	Enugu
C84	Journalist	19 November 2014	Igbo	Enugu
C85	Ordinary person	20 November 2014	Igbo	Enugu
C86	Local politician	20 November 2014	Igbo	Enugu
C87	State-level politician	20 November 2014	Igbo	Enugu
C88	Two ordinary men	20 November 2014	Igbo	Enugu
C89	NGO person	21 November 2014	Igbo	Enugu

C90	Journalist	21 November 2014	Igbo	Enugu
C91	Journalist	21 November 2014	Igbo	Enugu
C92	Young trader	23 November 2014	Igbo	Onitsha
C93	Young trader	23 November 2014	Igbo	Onitsha
C94	Middle-aged trader	23 November 2014	Igbo	Onitsha
C95	Business person	23 November 2014	Igbo	Onitsha
C96	Middle-aged man (ordinary person)	23 November 2014	Igbo	Onitsha
C97	Academic lecturer	23 November 2014	Igbo	Onitsha
C98	Three students	24 November 2014	Igbo	Onitsha
C99	Two young men (ordinary persons)	24 November 2014	Igbo	Onitsha
C100	Grassroots member of MASSOB	24 November 2014	Igbo	Onitsha
C101	Local leader of MASSOB	24 November 2014	Igbo	Onitsha
C102	Journalist	25 November 2014	Igbo	Onitsha
C103	NGO person	25 November 2014	Igbo	Onitsha
C104	Journalist	25 November 2014	Igbo	Onitsha
C105	Local politician	25 November 2014	Igbo	Onitsha
C106	Elderly man, former Biafran soldier	26 November 2014	Igbo	Owerri
C107	Shopkeeper (female)	26 November 2014	Igbo	Owerri
C108	Grassroots member of MASSOB	26 November 2014	Igbo	Owerri
C109	Grassroots member of MASSOB	26 November 2014	Igbo	Owerri
C110	Two grassroots member of MASSOB	27 November 2014	Igbo	Okwe
C111	Chief Ralph Uwazuruike (MASSOB founder and leader)	27 November 2014	Igbo	Owerri
C112	Grassroots member of MASSOB	27 November 2014	Igbo	Owerri

C113	Local-level leader of MASSOB	28 November 2014	Igbo	Owerri
C114	Local-level leader of MASSOB	28 November 2014	Igbo	Owerri
Focus Group Discussions				
FG1	Focus group discussion with three local Imams and about a dozen <i>Almajiri</i>	20 November 2013	Muslim	Yola
FG2	Focus group discussion with five traders	26 November 2013	Igbo	Abuja
FG3	Focus group discussion with about a dozen MASSOB member who are traders	29 November 2013	Igbo	Lagos
FG4	Focus group discussion with four young market sellers	9 November 2014	Muslim	Yola
FG5	Focus group discussion with eight leaders of the P-MASSOB faction including Uchenna Madu (Director of Information) and Chief Rommy Ezeonwuka (Politician)	22 November 2014	Igbo	Onitsha

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