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Exploring the Role of Islamic Identity in the Rise of Boko Haram

Samuel Kayode Atewologun
Florida International University, satew001@fiu.edu

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF ISLAMIC IDENTITY IN THE RISE OF BOKO
HARAM

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

by

Samuel Kayode Atewologun

2021

To: Dean John Stack
Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs

This thesis, written by Samuel Kayode Atewologun, and entitled Exploring The Role of Islamic Identity in the Rise of Boko Haram, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this thesis and recommend that it be approved.

Albert Wuaku

Ana Maria Bidegain

Carlos Grenier, Major Professor

Date of Defens: March 26, 2021

The thesis of Samuel Kayode Atewologun is approved.

Dean John Stack
Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs

Andrés G. Gil
Vice President for Research and Economic Development
and Dean of the University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2021

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to God Almighty the Omnipresent. God has kept my family, friends and myself safe during my program at Florida International University, and I also dedicate my thesis to my late mother Olufunke Grace Atewologun. Rest in peace, Mom.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS
EXPLORING THE ROLE OF ISLAMIC IDENTITY IN THE RISE OF BOKO
HARAM

by

Samuel Kayode Atewologun

Florida International University, 2021

Miami, Florida

Professor Carlos Grenier, Major Professor

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the roles of Islamic identity in the rise and perseverance of Boko Haram in the northeastern part of Nigeria. This study's significance is to contribute to the continued research and understanding of Boko Haram as an Islamic identity movement based on the unique political history of northern Nigeria, one drawing on the grievance of Muslim powerlessness in the postcolonial African state. Interpretations for the rise of movements commonly identified with militant extremism in the Islamic World tend to rely on materialist explanations, or attribute them to brainwashing. A broader approach explores political possibilities, socializing structures, and the most recent experiences to counter an over-reliance on economic interpretations. If Islamic extremism is to be appreciated entirely and eventually overcome, it is argued that it must be regarded as a multi-faceted phenomenon triggered by multiple economic, political, social, cultural, and psychological factors.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background of the Study.....	1
Statement of the Problem	6
Thesis Statement.....	7
Methodology	9
Structure of Study	10
CHAPTER TWO.....	11
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RELEVANT LITERATURE	11
John Dollard’s Theory of Frustration-Aggression	11
Concept of Religion.....	12
Islam and Its Evolution	13
CHAPTER THREE.....	19
The Emergence of Islam in Africa.....	19
Islam Identity Grievance	21
The Emergence of Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria	26
Boko Haram’s Ideology	29
Boko Haram Extremism in Northern Nigeria.....	31
CHAPTER FOUR.....	37
THE RESPONSE OF THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT TOWARDS COMBATING BOKO HARAM EXTREMISM	37
Efforts of the Nigerian Government	37
Supports from International Community	40
Challenges/Setbacks	41
CHAPTER FIVE.....	47
CONCLUSION	47
Summary of Findings.....	47
Conclusion	47
Bibliography	51

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
Table 1: Assassination of Islamic Clerics by Boko Haram.....	28

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Northern Nigeria covers about 469,000 square km, which is 51 percent of Nigeria's landmass. It is inhabited by about 53 million people, accounting for about 38 percent of Nigeria's total population, including numerous ethnic groups and religious communities (National Bureau of Statistics, 2006). The region is located mainly in the Sahelian belt south of the Sahara Desert, mostly arid with a low population density of 113 inhabitants per square km (International Crisis Group, 2010). In this wide and fertile region, many related states, commonly known as the Hausa states, were established in the late Middle Ages. The Hausas, who partly came from migrations and partially formed in-situ, became an identifiable (and self-identifying) group in roughly the twelfth century (Jemkur, 1992).

Many Hausas trace their descent from the legendary Bayajidda, reputedly a refugee prince from Baghdad (Osae & Nwabara, 1974). Bayajidda seven legitimate sons founded seven states that bore their names: Biram, Daura, Katsina, Zaria, Kano, Rano and Gobir, collectively known as the Hausa Bakwai (Bokwoi) or pure Hausa states. Each of these members of the Hausa family was allotted a task. Gobir, the youngest, was appointed war-leader; Daura and Katsina were chiefs of trade; Kano and Rano were 'chiefs of indigo,' responsible for industry; and Zaria was the chief of slaves (Osae & Nwabara, 1974). Furthermore, legend states that Bayajidda also had seven illegitimate sons by a slave girl named Gwari. These sons founded Zamfara, Kebbi, Gwari, Yauri, Yoruba, and Kwararafa, collectively known as the Hausa Banza or impure Hausa states. According to Bayajidda legend, the Hausa people immigrated from the east and north-east to found Hausa land, a

place populated by peoples long organized in settled village communities and skilled in using iron (Osae & Nwabara, 1974).

By the thirteenth century, the Hausa states had gained control over much of the region, incorporating some smaller groups into multi-ethnic Hausa-speaking polities (Falola & Heaton, 2008). Initially surrounded by the Bornu Empire to the east and the Songhai Empire to the west, it was not until the seventeenth century that the Hausa Empire flourished by gaining control of significant trans-Saharan trade in salt, gold, and slaves. The Fulani, a large neighboring group, began to influence the Hausa. Through the Mali and Songhai empires, the Fulani migrated from present-day Senegal to Hausa land in the thirteenth century and Borno in the fifteenth century. Though mostly nomadic herdsmen, the scholars among them found appointments in Hausa royal houses, as advisers, scribes, judges and tax collectors, and gradually gained great influence among Hausa nobles. Meanwhile, the Kanuri people, which originated from the Kanem Empire that emerged by the ninth century, were forced to move westward across Lake Chad, subduing local communities to establish the Borno Kingdom (Falola & Heaton, 2008). Beyond migrations and early settlements, initial interactions among the people were also shaped by wars, slavery, commerce, and the spread of Islam. Many of these states waged wars to expand territorial claims and acquire slaves for working feudal plantations or export to North Africa (International Crisis Group, 2010).

In addition to the Hausa, Fulani, and Kanuri, there are also about 160 smaller groups in the area (Falola & Heaton, 2008). These communities can also be found in other West African nations such as Chad, Ghana, and the Ivory Coast. Neither the Hausa nor the Fulani are a rigid lineage group – one can become Hausa by adoption or conversion to Islam.

However, in doing so one enters at the bottom rung of a highly stratified society (Falola & Heaton, 2008). The boundary between Hausa and Fulani is also complex. The Fulani are sometimes grouped with the Hausa as a single Hausa-Fulani cultural group. However, Hausa and Fulani are distinguishable in terms of names and languages and consider themselves distinct. While nearly all Fulani in the region speak Hausa, the region's lingua franca, not all Hausa speaks Fulani.

Northern Nigeria has been profoundly influenced by religion. The Hausa people were originally polytheistic societies, just like the numerous states in pre-colonial Nigeria before the arrival of Islam and Christianity. Since the medieval period, however, a large majority of Northern Nigeria's the people are Muslim. Today there also exists a substantial Christian minority, both indigenous to the area and the product of migration from the south of the country (Brenner, 1993; Gandu, 2016; Ologunwa, 2014). The three largest ethnic groups, Hausa, Fulani, and Kanuri are predominantly Muslim, while many of the smaller groups are Christian or animist. Although, Muslims are the majority in most of the far northern states, in the middle-belt or north-central states like Kaduna and Plateau, the population is mixed, with a large number of Christians (International Crisis Group, 2010; Ologunwa, 2014) in addition to Muslims. Since British colonization in the early 1900s, these have crystallized into what are commonly referred to as "majority groups" and "minorities", with further complexity added by the arrival of substantial numbers of mainly Christian immigrants from the country's south (International Crisis Group, 2010).

Over the years, northern Nigeria has experienced recurrent violent conflicts, particularly ethnic/religious violence, mostly between the Muslims and the Christians,

since the end of the British colonial administration and most especially since the early 1980s (Falola, 1998). These are the product of several complex and inter-locking factors.

From the eleventh and seventeenth centuries, Islam was introduced into northern Nigeria, firstly through peaceful means by clerics and merchants from North Africa and across West Africa. The rulers of the Borno Empire were the first to convert in the eleventh century, and with the coming of Wangarawa traders and scholars from Mali at the end of the fourteenth century and an increase in trade with the Songhai Empire in the fifteenth, Hausa kings followed suit (Loimeier, 1997). By the fourteenth century, Muslim scholars from Mali occupied critical administrative posts in the Hausa city-states (Loimeier, 1997).

The second phase of Islamization started as a revivalist revolution at the dawn of the nineteenth century when a Fulani preacher, Shehu Usman dan Fodio, led a jihad initially aimed at purifying Islamic practices in the region and ultimately at installing a new righteous leadership. With support from the nomadic Fulani and disgruntled Hausa peasantry, who had all suffered under the despotism and corruption of the Hausa kings, the jihad overran the then fourteen Hausa states between 1804 and 1808. It replaced their chiefs with Fulani emirs (International Crisis Group, 2010). The introduction of Islam into northern Nigeria has greatly influenced their material and nonmaterial culture in terms of family life, textile, arts, architecture, housing, habitation, occupation, and tradecrafts (Muhammad, 2014; Zalanga, 2000). Thus, Islam has remained the creed of the people, which has strengthened their connection with the Muslim World (Gandu, 2016; Ologunwa, 2014).

The next phase was a dramatic one. The colonization of northern Nigeria by Great Britain brought about tremendous changes in the socio-economic and religious outlook.

Colonial administration in this region can be traced to the Royal Charter that the British crown granted to the Royal Niger Company at Lokoja in 1886 (Adamolekun, 2004). This charter granted the company the right to dominate the social, political and economic affairs of the North. The Charter was later withdrawn in 1899 by Frederick Lugard, the British High Commissioner of the Northern Region (International Crisis Group, 2010), to be replaced by British state control as the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria. Lokoja was made the first seat of British administration in Northern Nigeria (Umaru, 2013). In 1903, Sokoto Caliphate, which was made up of Southern and Northern Emirates and consisted of Bida, Kontogora, Adamawa for Southern Emirate and Bauchi, Gombe and Zaria for the Northern Emirates, came under the control by the British (Umaru, 2013). In 1913, Lord Lugard made Kaduna the capital of the Northern Region, and by 1914, he had amalgamated the Northern and Southern Protectorates to form a United Nigeria (Harris, 1986).

From the colonial proclamation of 1900 to independence in 1960, the British controlled Nigeria through indirect rule. This practice, already well tested in other parts of the empire, involved restructuring traditional local authorities and deposing those officeholders who resisted in order to fashion a compliant local power base that furthered British interests (International Crisis Group, 2010). Local rulers were used to controlling the populace and raise revenue but were supervised by British officials who could veto their decisions. The British also sought to avoid any direct disruption of the region's social structures, including its dominant religion and culture (slave-owning was only finally abolished in 1936).

Yet, colonial rule introduced significant political, judicial, and cultural changes in northern Nigeria (International Crisis Group, 2010). For instance, it facilitated the Hausa

and Fulani elite's domination, especially in areas that minority groups had hitherto regarded as their exclusive domains, and sowed the seeds for conflicting claims to political space, economic rights and societal values (International Crisis Group, 2010). In the final year of colonial rule, in 1959, the British removed the Sharia content of the legal code on the grounds that some of its provisions were incompatible with the rights of all citizens in a religiously plural society (International Crisis Group, 2010). The Northern Region's government accepted a compromised code ("the Penal Code") that established a Sharia court of appeal with jurisdiction only for Muslim personal law (International Crisis Group, 2010). However, many Muslim leaders perceived this decision as elevating a Christian legal code over their Islamic code (Aliyu, 2002). Muslims resented this change and resisted any perceived attempt at opposing their religious practice. These colonial actions marked the beginning of the post-colonial religious conflict in Northern Nigeria.

The Statement of Problem

Within some segments of postcolonial Nigeria, the legacy of these colonial reforms is perceived as a triumph of Christian or secular social programs, and as marginalizing Islamic religious teachings and practices in northern Nigeria (Benjamin, 2005). Murray (2007) noted that "a driving force behind the rise of various militant Islamist groups in northern Nigeria over the last few decades has been a growing sense of religious insecurities." (p. 605). Many Muslims in northern Nigeria feels that their religion and its practices are at stake.

Boko Haram, which firmly believes in the application of Islamic laws in Nigeria's socio-economic and political systems, has emerged to pursue that course forcefully. The group perceives the political and socio-economic system in Nigeria as corrupt, and that it

corrupts Nigerian Islamic society. Boko Haram, since its emergence, has continuously demanded the full application of the Islamic way of life in all aspects of society. Their frequent ambition has been the installation of an 'Islamic state,' hence their engagement in militant extremism to enforce their demands through what they refer to as *jihad*, or "holy war" (Isa, 2010). Louis and Osemeke (2017) noted that "since the time of British imperialist activity in Nigeria, the Hausa Muslims have defied the colonists' attempt to westernize their societies in terms of education, lifestyle, systems of governance, administration as well as religion."

Boko Haram has engaged in violence through killings, arson, suicide bombing, destruction of homes and properties, tensions and socio-economic instability (Human Rights Watch, 2019). Nigeria has experienced over a hundred religious' conflicts since its return to civilian administration in 1999. Still, none of these can be compared with the Boko Haram's extremism, which has wreaked havoc in northern Nigeria. Thus, Boko Haram's extremism has negatively affected Nigeria's peace, security and stability.

Thesis Statement

This study explores the role of Islamic identity in the rise of Boko Haram in northern Nigeria. Its basic argument is that Boko Haram as a group is a product of Islamic extremism that pursues an Islamic identity, with the self-described mandate to enforce the full tenets of Islamic sharia into the Nigerian state (Gwamna, 2011; Agbiboa, 2013; Agbiboa, 2014).

Since Islamic identity or the installation of Islamic sharia into Nigeria, is the root cause of the Boko Haram extremism, religion has become implicated in the prolonged and incessant conflicts witnessed in northern Nigeria since the early arrival of the millennium.

“Religion plays a pivotal role in every society, including the maintenance of social order and control, and fostering social change, disorder, deviance, social death, and re-birth” (Vaughham, 2009: 271).

In Nigeria, religion plays a vital and influential role in society. This role of religion manifested itself as a potent force of the Nigerian state’s political development from pre to post-independence. Kenny (2006), Kukah (1994), and Suberu (2009) believe that, the Nigerian state cannot be understood without reference to religion. Militant-extremism, the Sharia law controversy, the tensions provoked by the Nigerian accession to the Organization of Islamic countries now Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and, the ongoing religious crisis that has engulfed Northern Nigeria indicate that religion cannot be ignored or pushed aside in the socio-political development of Nigeria. Furthermore, “religion has since become an instrument of political manipulation of the masses to pursue and subvert state resources by both politicians and non-politicians alike” (Smah, 2008).

This thesis argues that Islamic identity or entrenchment of Islamic sharia, or religious law, considering its loss of position within Nigerian society since the colonial period, is the reason for the emergence and continuous agitations by the Boko Haram group in Northern Nigeria. The study is limited in scope to this “Islamic identity grievance” in the emergence of Boko Haram in northern Nigeria.

Most recent studies and efforts on the subject matter have been primarily focused on the socio-economic or material factors responsible for the emergence of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, without adequate examination of the role of Islamic identity grievance. Therefore, the need to adequately address the devastating role of religious extremism, as demonstrated by Boko Haram in their effort to institutionalize Islamic laws

into the socio-economic and political spheres of Nigeria, fosters this intellectual exercise. That gap in research is what this study seeks to fill.

Methodology

The researcher employed both the primary and secondary methods of data collection. Primary data was chiefly written data from official gazettes in addition to personal experience gained during my undergraduate studies in Religious Studies as well as testimonies of some Christian and Muslim clerics during our earlier interactions prior to the start of this degree program. Secondary data sources include textbooks, journal articles, newspapers, magazine publications, and internet materials. These will provide supplemental support to information obtained from the primary source. The primary information will be reviewed with the secondary materials to triangulate the research and reach a logical conclusion on the subject matter of this study.

Structure of Study

The study is structured into five chapters as follows:

Chapter One: Background of the Study

This chapter provides general background information on Northern Nigeria and the emergence of Islam into the region.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Frame and Relevant Literature

This chapter provides a theoretical framework and review of works on the emergence of Islam as a religious entity, its ideology and diffusion, especially into Nigeria.

Chapter Three: Northern Nigeria and the Emergence of Boko Haram

This chapter presents a historical overview of the emergence of Boko Haram militant extremism in northern Nigeria. Its major concern is on the driving force of Islamic identity grievance in Boko Haram extremism in Nigeria.

Chapter Four: Nigeria's Response to Boko Haram

This chapter presents the Nigerian government's various attempts in addressing the menace of Boko Haram extremism in northern Nigeria and the challenges encountered.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

This chapter concludes the study. It provides an overview of the preceding chapter's concerns and then makes suggestions on future possibilities in tackling Boko Haram group in Nigeria.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RELEVANT LITERATURE

Several theories have evolved by scholars in the study of religion and militant extremism. In this work, we apply John Dollard's "Frustration-Aggression Theory" in order to understand the roots of extremism.

John Dollard's Theory of Frustration-Aggression

John Dollard's frustration-aggression theory attempts to explain the cause of violence by suggesting, first, that frustration causes aggression. Secondly, if the source of the frustration cannot be challenged, the aggression gets displaced onto an innocent target. A way to imagine this is the case of a man who, disrespected and humiliated at his work but who cannot respond to this for fear of losing his job, may go home and take his anger and frustration out on his family. The theory is also used to explain riots and revolution. Both are perpetrated by more destitute and more deprived sections of society who may express their bottled-up frustration and anger through violence (Yunus, 2014).

According to Pastore, frustration is the "condition which exists when a goal-response suffers interference," while aggression is defined "as an act whose goal response is injury to an organism" (Pastore, 1950). However, aggression is not always the response to frustration. Instead, a substitute response is displayed when the aggressive response is not effective (Pastore, 1950).

Concerning this study, it is important to note that northern Nigeria is a region predominantly populated by Muslims, some of whose spiritual interest is the application of sharia, or Islamic law, in their lives and affairs. The frustration of this aim, since the

colonial period, gives rise to groups such as Boko Haram. Thus, the most popular explanation for the rise of Boko Haram in northern Nigeria is the Islamic identity grievance, a mandate to ensure the full application of sharia and practice into the Nigerian socio-economic and political spheres. It is the radical opposition against the removal of religious law from its place in society that is being perceived by the group as a major threat to Islam and its mandate. It can thus be argued that frustration about secularization as adopted in Nigeria is what has led to or aggravated the aggressive actions which Boko Haram has been exhibiting over the years.

The Concept of Religion

Religion lacks a concise and generally acceptable definition. Scholars have offered several definitions of the concept of religion based on their different perspectives. For Durkheim, he defined religion based on a distinction between the “sacred” and the “profane”, a distinction which he opined “formed the basis for the creation of a collective conscience about societal norms and values” (Wanser, 2011). The scholar noted that “religions are never just a matter of belief, and all religions involve regular ceremonial and ritual activities which reaffirmed groups’ solidarity in times when people are forced to adjust to major changes in their lives, and providing for them groups to identify with” (Wanser, 2011). Vaughham (2009) quoted Durkheim as saying that “all small traditional cultures have every aspect of life permeated by religion, and that (these) religious ceremonies both create new ideas and categories of thought and reaffirm existing values, thereby conditioning modes of thinking of individuals in traditional societies.”

On his part, Bruce (2003) defined religion as “beliefs, actions and institutions that assume the existence of supernatural entities with powers of judgment and action,” For Obilor (2002:63) religion is “the whole complexes of attitudes, conviction, and institutions through which we express our deep fundamental relationship with reality and not excluding the created order.”

As for the Nigerian case, Awolalu (1976:5) posits that “religion is often seen as the cause of violence and instability in Nigeria as its northern and southern regions are equally divided along religious fault lines.” From an Islamic viewpoint, Juergensmeyer (2005:26) noted that “Islam, the fastest growing religion in the world, is unique as it incorporates religion and politics and structures the political economy of a nation.” Supporting Juergensmeyer’s view, Olomjobi (2013:77) states that “Islam as a political religion is concerned with the struggle for political recognition in the society. The dynamics of Islam are not uniform to all societies. It could be a struggle against oppression, a struggle for scarce resources, a struggle for recognition for Islamic symbolism or a struggle against westernization and modernity.”

Islam and Its Evolution

To understand Boko Haram’s Islamic identity grievance, one must first understand Islam, its evolution, message and major challenges. The term “Islam” comes from the Arabic root ‘s-l-m’, meaning peace, purity, submission, and obedience, among other meanings (Hammudah, 1999). In a religious view, Islam entails submission to the will of God. Islam has spread across the world, from the Middle East, Africa, Europe, Asia, and America. “People of diverse cultures and worldviews have accepted Islamic doctrines,

values, ethics, morals, laws and customs in their daily religious practice, which has contributed to their welfare and prosperity” (Akintoye, 2006: 45).

Islam is a universalist religion. From its emergence, the history of Islam shows that.

Its mission, purpose and diffusion have been focused on the entire human race, a mission to reach the entire world with the God’s message. Its general aim has been to reach every corner of the world to bring about changes, to transform the world’s economic system, politics, religion, and science and technology with Islamic codes and practices (Hagnavar, 2013: 29).

According to Hammudah (1999: 199), “the decree of God that Muhammad is the last prophet is based on the accomplishment of Muhammad, on the universality of Islam, and the applicability of the Quranic teachings to every situation, every age, and every man.” Thus, “Islam transcends all borders and penetrates far beyond all barriers of color, race, status of wealth, or prestige like Judaism and Christianity” (Hammudah, 1999: 199). Therefore, Muslims believe that “Islam is an assurance of the equality of all humans and brotherhood, freedom and dignity, peace and honor, guidance and salvation” (Nadwi, 1979: 115). Muhammad came to carry the messages of God to mankind. He was assigned, not forcefully, but with relevant persuasion, convincing arguments, and clarity of message (Paramole, 2016). His first sets of converts into the new faith were mainly people of lower status in the society, “who were attracted by the Islamic principles of equality of the human race, justice and moral uprightness” (Hagnavar, 2013). Thus, “a number of slaves of Byzantine or Ethiopian (Abyssinian) origin were among the early Muslims. Among these were women and young persons. Also, a number of Meccan dignitaries through the efforts of Muhammad’s close friend Abu Bakr, joined the circle of Islam early, and they were all

reckoned among the most illustrious companions of the Prophet” (Paramole, 2016). Malik (1988: 145) noted that “the teachings of the earlier prophets before Muhammad were limited to a specific group of people, region, and society. Their missions were not comprehensive and encompassing because they were not fully detailed and did not encompass all humanity.” Thus, there was a need for a universal prophet; whose mission and message would encompass the entire human race to proclaim or declare the sovereignty of God to mankind. And according to Muslims, “this assignment became fulfilled in the person of Prophet Muhammad, whose mission was to direct all humans to excellence and unity” (Paramole, 2016). Given this, Yusuf (2006); submitted that,

“the universality and finality of the prophethood of Muhammad has the special honor of the capacity of unifying mankind: For the first time, a prophet came whose message embraced all preceding divine messages. That would be a most effective means of bringing all humanity together” (Yusuf, 2006: 169).

Basically, from the perspective of Islam, all humans are related and share a common origin and original parents. As such, “Islam enjoins all mankind to view diversity in race, color, and geographical locations as wealth and blessings which should not be used to endanger their pristine unity that God intended” (Nadwi, 1979). Thus, since its inception, “Islam has been intended to be a religion of peace as reflected in its two basic doctrines: the oneness of God and the unity of brotherhood of the human race” (Abdullah, 2014). As (Hammudah (1999); noted,

The wider value of the universality of humans in Islam is also reflected in the strictly legal usage of the word. This is because Islam has a two-fold significance in the legal sense: a simple profession of faith (a declaration that there is nothing and no one that deserves to be worshipped except

God and that Muhammad is the messenger of God), and a complete submission to the Divine will which is only attainable through spiritual perfection (p.7).

Therefore, “anyone who simply accepts Islam is a Muslim; and so is anyone who completely submits himself/herself to the Divine will and practices all the Divine commandments, by subduing his/her desires to the will of God” (Olawale & Stephen, 2020: 621). This total submission to God’s divine will then enables the individual to live in peace and harmony with each other and between them and God. In Islamic ideology, everything exists, and all events are orchestrated by God himself (Hammudah, 1999).

Again, Muslims also believe that “Islam’s ultimate mission is to ensure that humans submit to the total will of God and promote mutual peace on earth through the formation and strengthening of brotherhood among humans and bring about a unity of religious practice that is devoid of errors” (Paramole, 2016). That is, it is God’s will through Islam to unite the entire human race into a single body, free from any form of discrimination.

Islam, a body of religion that teaches peace among humans, is concerned with reaching the entire mankind with teachings that promote equality without discrimination. Omotosho (2009) posits that, “Islam asserts the equality of all people; its ideas and values were always couched in the language of humanity with a global audience” (p.10). According to Islamic doctrine, “all humans came from Adam and Eve, emphasizing the primordial equality of all. This universal equality of humans as enshrined in Islam’s ethics and values, is a significant cornerstone upon which globalism is based” (Hamidullah, 1981:4).

However, some Muslims believe that this unity must be created forcefully by human beings, through war if necessary. In the words of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, founder of ISIS,

O Muslims, Islam was never for a day the religion of peace. Islam is the religion of war. Your Prophet (peace be upon him) was dispatched with the sword as a mercy to the creation. He was ordered with war until Allah is worshipped alone. He (peace be upon him) said to the polytheists of his people, 'I came to you with slaughter.' He fought both the Arabs and non-Arabs in all their various colors. He himself left to fight and took part in dozens of battles. He never for a day grew tired of war (Quoted by Whiteside, 2016:23).

Since ISIS represents a minority opinion, it would be inaccurate, then, to believe that Muslims are united in this opinion. On the contrary, according to Hammudah (1999: 200), "Muslims are not a single, homogeneous entity. It is more than a system of theology; it is a complete civilization." The scholar noted further that "Islamic laws allow diversity of opinions among people" (Hammudah, 1999:200). Thus, as with most faiths, Islam has produced divisions, sects, diverse interpretations and schools of thought in its adherents. Although Muslims are united in their belief in God, in the Quran, prophet Muhammad, and the Islamic Five Pillars, "there have been numerous areas or causes of dissensions among them, especially in areas of religious and political leadership, ideology, interpretations of Islamic laws and codes, and in the level of their response to westernization" (Hammudah, 1999: 199). A In terms of ideological, political and religious interpretations, "the Muslims are divided into two sects: the Sunnis (made up of about 85 percent of the world's Muslims) and the Shi'is (about 15% of the world's Muslims)" (Abdullah, 2014). More so, there are diverse schools of theology, law and ritual, in addition to many mystical Sufi brotherhoods.

A major area of division and crisis among Muslims is their diverse responses to modern or western values and practices. Hence, “Muslims have struggled to relate with modernity as it affects their Islamic traditions, their religious codes which have been developed since the primitive age” (Olawale & Stephen, 2020). Since most modern changes and transformations are mostly associated with Western ideas, values, and institutions, “the responses of the Muslim to such issues of reform and modernization like democratic values and practices, liberty, freedom of association, lifestyle, opinion, among others, are occasionally seen to conflict with their Islamic values and practice” (Hammudah, 1999: 200). Thus, the issue of westernization of the world and its values has greatly provoked certain sects within Muslims, resulting in various acts of extremism, militancy and terrorism across the world, as exemplified in Nigeria with the emergence of the Boko Haram sect.

It has been observed that “the major factors in the modern era of globalization- are trade, capital, investment, movement of people with their cultures, religion, dissemination of knowledge and international relations and policies” (Atolagbe, 2018: 83). The increase and movement of people, goods and services across the world, result from advancement in transportation routes, telecommunications media’s like the internet, mobile phones, and satellite television, connecting millions of people in new ways and this have increased the global spread of Islam. This has allowed Islamic ideologies to diversify even further. As a result, several Muslim groups, bodies and organizations are easily connected and efficiently disseminate information, ideas and resources to further their religious interests. While many such Islamic groups and organizations see no conflict between their religious

interests and westernization, others, such as the Taliban, Al-Qaeda, ISIS and the Boko Haram, have grown into radical movements.

CHAPTER THREE

NORTHERN NIGERIA AND BOKO HARAM EXTREMISM

The Emergence of Islam in Africa

Scholars within and outside the African continent have written extensively on the emergence, impact and challenges of Islam in Africa, of which Nigeria is an important part. Historians have traced Islam's emergence and presence as a religious entity in Africa to the seventh century. It was noted that during that time, "the Prophet Muhammad advised a number of his early followers, who were facing persecution from the pre-Islamic inhabitants of Mecca, seeking refuge across the Red Sea at the court of Aksum in Zella under the rule of Al-Najāshī" (Olawale & Stephen, 2020:). According to Muslim belief, this event is regarded as the first migration (Olawale & Stephen, 2020). Several years later, after Muhammad's death (in 632 CE), "some groups of Arabs moved toward Africa and within a period of two generations, Islam had expanded across the Horn of Africa" (Polk, 2009).

Islam in African continent came from the east and north Africa. From these directions, "the Islamic faith crossed wide spaces, such as the Indian Ocean and vast desert sands of the Sahara. The ocean and the desert were thus transformed into excellent transmitters of religious and cultural influences" (Abbas & Zanjani, 1998). Islamic missionaries and traders moved from Egypt in three directions, through the Red Sea towards the eastern coast, up to the Nile Valley to Sudan, and then crossed over the western desert to the Maghreb (Olawale & Stephen, 2020). From the eleventh century, Arab nomads began to enhance the spread of Islam and Arabic practices through their movement from Egypt to Sudan; and across North Africa.

As early as 780 CE, Islam had been introduced to the east coast (Olawale & Stephen, 2020). The Islamic religion later became “the religion of the majority of the Swahili-speaking people between the thirteenth and sixteenth century” (Rahim, 1969: 27). Islamic practices also spread from the Arabian Peninsula to East Africa, and “for over two centuries, many male Muslims from Eastern Africa were sent to study in Hadhramaut in Mecca and Medina” (Rahim, 1969: 27). In the nineteenth century, “a new class of merchants and landowners with wealth from plantations and trade contributed to the Islamic religious revival in the East African coast” (Olawale & Stephen, 2020). This set of elites contributed immensely to the widespread of mosques and Arabic schools, which further increased Muslims socio-economic opportunities. In places like Mozambique and Tanzania, the Yaos were the major Muslim group.

Islam spread to West Africa during the same span of time. Some of the major factors that contributed to the widespread of Islam in Africa were the economic, religious, political, and educational activities that were already in place, due to the activities of missionaries, traders, and political elites. Thus, the Islamic faith became widespread mainly through trading, business activities of merchants, and migration of scholars and the missionary activities of preachers (Olawale & Stephen, 2020).

Islam had been introduced into Northern Nigeria in the eleventh and seventeenth centuries by clerics and merchants from North Africa and the Arab world (Loimeier, 1997). However, the expansive spread of Islam into Northern Nigeria was accelerated in the nineteenth century by the Islamic revivalist revolutionary movement of Uthman Dan Fodio, a member of the Fulani ethnic group; with distant roots in Senegal (Brockelmann, 1999; Malcom & Daly, 1988). He did this through *jihad* (‘struggle’) to ensure true Islamic

practices in the region and bring about the installation of new righteous leadership (International Crisis Group, 2010).

The Islamic Identity Grievance

Today, diverse groups with varying religious identities have emerged, creating diverse conflicts within groups (Aydin, 2006). It is common these days to note that “discussions on religious extremism as a source of terrorism usually identify Islam as a major causative factor (Milton-Edwards, 2005; Hoveyda, 1998). And today, various terrorist groups such as, al-Jihad, Islamic Jihad, Hizb-ut Tahrir, Army of God, Islamic Liberation Front, Hezbollah, Hamas, Al-Qaeda, and Boko Haram make daily headlines in connection with terrorism, situating a link between religion and global terrorism. In view of this, Aydin (2006) noted that,

When we consider the perpetrators and the violent events that have led to the deaths of many civilians, such as the attack on the World Trade Center in 1993, the massacre of tourists in Luxor, Egypt in 1997, the bombings of U.S. Embassies in Tanzania and Kenya in 1998, the attacks on New York and Washington, D.C. in September 2001, as well as bombings in Madrid (2004), Istanbul (2004), and London (2005), it is possible to rather unavoidably (and all too easily) establish a connection between the use of terror and Islam (pp. 7-18).

However, such analyses that focuses mainly on the atrocities of extremists and generalize them to Islam is erroneous at best. Although, “Islam is sometimes used as a tool of self-identification and psychological support for extremist religious groups associated with threats directed at political, societal, economic, and human security at the national, regional, or global levels” (Aydin, 2006: 10), it is incorrect to think that the current security

threat facing the world, and particularly Northern Nigeria, is created by the Islamic faith. Today, “certain radical and extremist groups, imagining identities based on Islam as a religion, pose serious threats to human security worldwide” (Aydin, 2006: 10). Of such group is the Boko Haram Islamic extremist sect which claims to radicalize reactions against the forces of westernization, which the group perceives as a form of neo-colonialism (Forest, 2012).

Murray (2007: 605) noted that “a driving force behind the rise of various militant groups in northern Nigeria over the last few decades has been a growing sense of religious and economic insecurities.” Militant-extremists have continuously demanded the full and adequate application of sharia, in addition to their economic concerns. And, although they adopt Western technology, “they are vehemently opposed to Western civilization and domination; their frequent mandate has been the installation of an Islamic state, hence their engagement in extremism to enforce their demands through what they refer to as “jihad” (Isa, 2010: 321). For instance, Boko Haram believes that the Islamic faith is gradually waning and losing its ideas and influence in Northern Nigeria.

For over a thousand years, the period when Europe was struggling with the barbarism of the Dark Ages, before the Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution, Muslim scholars were highly regarded for their knowledge in arts, science, and technology (Deblj & Muller, 1998: 5). However, today, with the West dominating and ordering the cultural, economic, military, and even the world’s political system, with numerous countries imitating the West in present time, the position and relevance of the Islamic civilization has shifted. This has led the religious extremists to raise questions about the causes and way out of the present world. According to Huntington (1996:109:110), “Muslim extremist

sects in massive numbers are simultaneously turning toward Islam as a source of identity, meaning, stability, legitimacy, development, power, and hope, with the belief that Islam will offer them the solution.”

These analyses present an anxiety about the sharia and the waning of Muslim culture as being at the heart of Muslim political movements, and this view seems to be accepted among the Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria. In particular, the trajectory of the future Boko Haram seems to have been laid out by the secularizing policies of the British colonial administration following the fall of the Sokoto Caliphate. Louis and Osemeke (2017) noted that “since the time of British imperialist activity in Nigeria, the Hausa people have defied the colonists’ attempt to westernize their societies in terms of education, lifestyle, system of governance, administration as well as religion.” Newman pointed out that,

After the British colonial government overthrew the Sokoto caliphate, established control over northern Nigeria in the beginning of the 20th century, the secular schools imposed on the region were pejoratively referred to as ‘boko’ by the Hausa elites. Having seen the secular educational institutions as lacking divine origin, un-Islamic and corrupt, they prevented their children from attending the schools. They only granted their slave (bawa) and servant (baro) access to the new Western education (Newman, 2013:10).

Although the British colonists retained some of the Islamic laws instituted by the caliphate, after some time they restricted its application to only civil matters; and also limited the application of specific punishments and reduced the application of sharia to the local division of native courts (Ologunwa, 2014: 51-64). Today, many Muslims in northern Nigeria feel that their children’s spiritual and moral future is insecure due to the secular

political and socio-economic system in the country, which can be traced to British administration (Last, 2007).

Furthermore, Ologunwa also noted that, “the British came to northern Nigeria desirous of identifying and collaborating with a group of rulers representing a cultural and political entity that they deemed ‘civilized’ and sophisticated enough to be partners in the colonial project; the Hausa-Caliphate world view and their representatives, the Hausa-Fulani emirs and the Caliphate aristocracy were recruited into this role” (Ologunwa, 2014: 52). Thus, the influence of British colonialists caused a division among the people of Northern Nigeria, who were once united by Islam. This division saw, on one side, ‘civilized’ elites who were used by the British as agents of colonization, and on the other side, the commoners, who vehemently resisted Western influence in the region” (Danjibo, 2012). This latter group had developed into different militant extremist sects in the region, transforming into radicalized group with leaders who at some point or the other engage them in activities against the state and moderate Muslims in the area.

In fact, these radical sects within the Muslim community oppose moderate Muslims for their ‘hypocrisies and unholy practices,’ which, according to these sects, do not represent true Islamic ideology. Besides non-Muslims Boko Haram fighters have directed their violence against Muslims who oppose its ideology, as evidenced by the killing of some Islamic clerics by the group (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: Assassination of Islamic Clerics by Boko Haram

S/N	Period of Death/Year	Name of Islamic Cleric/Leader	Location of Death/State
1.	April 2007	Sheikh Ja'afar Mahmud Adam (Izala)	Kano State
2.	October 2010	Sheikh Bashir Mustafa	Maiduguri, Borno State
3.	March 2011	Ustaz Ibrahim Ahmed Abdullahi Gomari	Maiduguri, Borno State
4.	May 2011	Sheikh Goni Tijjani	Maiduguri, Borno State
5.	June 2011	Sheikh Ibrahim Birkuti (Wahabbi)	Biu, Borno State
6.	August 2011	Lima Bana	Maiduguri, Borno State
7.	September 2011	Mallam Dala	Maiduguri, Borno State
8.	October 2011	Sheikh Ali Jana'a	Maiduguri, Borno State
9.	February 2012	Mallam Mai Tatabara	Damaturi, Yobe State
10.	February 2012	Modu Goroma (Arabic teacher)	Dmamturi, Yobe State
11.	February 2012	Sheikh Saina Alhaji Ajiya	Konduga, Borno State
12.	March 2012	Mohammed Alhaji Bukar	Maiduguri, Borno State
13.	April 2012	Goni Mustapha	Maiduguri, Borno State
14.	May 2012	Mohammed Alli (Shiite)	Kano State
15.	May 2012	Usman Muhammed	Potiskum, Yobe State
16.	July 2012	Sheikh Ibrahim Majimi	Maiduguri, Borno State
17.	December 2012	Alarama Dan Gobobirawa	Potiskum, Yobe State

18.	May 2013	Mallam Sheriff	Ngamdu, Yobe State
19.	August 2013	Alhaji Liman Bukar (Chief Imam)	Fune, Yobe State
20.	February 2014	Salafiyyah	Zaria, Kaduna State

Source: Ejodame (2014:24-25)

The above table shows that several Muslim clerics have been killed by Boko Haram extremists. This indicates that Boko Haram represents a sharp division within the Muslim community of Northern Nigeria. This must be kept in mind when trying to understand Islamic identity as the source of their grievance and atrocious activities, evidence have shown that religious explanation is only an aspect of extremism. Thus, Islam as a religious movement is not by any means the causative factor or trigger for the Boko Haram extremism, rather their views represent a specific interpretation of the political role for Islamic law within the Nigerian state.

The Emergence of Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria

Scholars differ on when Boko-Haram started in Nigeria. Still, there is a consensus that, although it can be traced beyond 2002, that year marked the beginning of their activities in the country. But before 2002, there have been several predecessors - violent and non-violent Islamic extremist movements, usually formed around a specific preacher, who have either risen against the government and religious establishment or tried to establish small communities governed by strict sharia laws. These have included the Talakawas in the 1940s and 1950s, made up of Muslim commoners, beggars and unemployed youths; in the 1970s and 1980s emerged the Yan Tatsine, led by the preacher

Mohammed Marwa (Alao, Atere & Alao, 2015) who reviled Western education and took measures to denounce the use of radios, bicycles, and watches (Bumah & Abimbola, 2009; Danjibo, 2012). The Mai Tatsine group orchestrated numerous riots in the country, resulting in many deaths and the destruction of valuable properties (Danjibo, 2012). Therefore, some scholars now perceive the Boko Haram sect as an offshoot of the Mai Tatsine sect (Johnson, 2011; Alao, Atere & Alao, 2015).

Scholars believe that Boko Haram started in 1995 and was known as “Sahaba” under the leadership of Alhaji Abubakar Lawan (Liolio, 2013; Ogege, 2013). Later, the group leader, Lawan, went to study at the University of Medina in Saudi Arabia and handed the group’s leadership over to Mohammed Yusuf. Yusuf later reorganized the group in 2002 to what is known today (Liolio, 2013). While in Maiduguri, Yusuf created a religious compound which consisted of a mosque and an Islamic school. He established a stronghold in some northern states like Kano, Yobe, Bauchi, Katsina, and Gombe. However, in 2004 the unit was moved to Kanamma, Yobe State, Yusuf’s hometown, close to the Nigeria-Niger border, where a radical base is known as “Afghanistan” was created (Liolio, 2013: 65).

Elkaim (2013) noted that “Boko Haram first received widespread attention when it launched attacks against police stations and other public buildings late December 2003; after eighteen members of Boko Haram were killed and the group members fled to a remote base near the Nigeria-Niger border to regroup.” During this period, the group expanded in membership as some students, who became motivated by the group’s ideology, left secular schools for the Islamic schools (Agbibo, 2013).

Obviously, from the aforementioned origins of Boko Haram, it is evident that the group was founded by the late Mallam Muhammed Yusuf; and it was under his leadership that the group became radicalized and gained national and international recognition and collaboration, especially with Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (Abimbola & Adesole, 2012). Since the death of its former leader, Muhammed Yusuf, in 2009 the group has constituted a considerable security challenge in the country.

Scholars have noted that the inability to implement sharia law in the Northern region is a significant cause of Boko Haram development. Following this line of argument is Abimbola (2010), who expressed it in the context of partisan politics and political patronage. Abimbola argued that,

The introduction of Sharia in some parts of Northern Nigeria beginning from 1999 appear to inspire closeness between the leader of the group, Yusuf, and the ruling class since their decision aligned with his plan to promote strict adherence to Islamic law, but he was disappointed at the type of Sharia introduced which fell short of his standards, thus putting him in a situation to reach a conclusion that the ruling elites were not serious Muslims or that their western education was hindering or limiting their commitment. (Abimbola, 2010:21).

Abimbola cites Omipidan (2009), who posits that “Yusuf’s fraternization with the political class possibly informed his willingness to use his group to assist the political elite in securing political power that would, in turn ,be used to protect and possibly advance his career. His abandonment by the political class could have hastened his descent to violence to effect change.”

McConnell (2009) states that “failure to attach the Sharia based laws to social welfare schemes, the implication of which would mean that the dividends of Sharia are not

forthcoming; the reality of this is the radicals stepping in to demand fully beneficial Islamic state” (as cited in Abimbola, 2010). Barna (2014) contended that the implementation of Sharia law is considered by some as incomplete and lacking in meaning as it is not effectively dealing with fundamental issues like corruption or poverty. Thus, religion, that is, Islamic extremism has been the major factor in the various extremist violent activities particularly, in Northern Nigeria. And the claim for an ‘Islamic state’, strictly administered through the sharia legal conduct, that is, with total adherence to Islamic law, has been the prominent bone of contention for Boko Haram.

Boko Haram’s Ideology

Boko Haram believes strongly in the forceful and complete application of Islamic laws in Nigeria’s socio-economic and political systems. The group see Western education and the secular system of government in operation in Nigeria (Campbell, 2010) as an obstacle to this. The group perceives the political and socio-economic system in Nigeria as a corrupt Islamic society. Its founding leader, Muhammed Yusuf, had noted, “Our land was an Islamic state before the colonial masters turned it to a kafir land. The current system is contrary to true Islamic beliefs” (Salkida, 2009).

In 2003, Osama bin Laden urged the Muslims in Nigeria to “incite and mobilize the Islamic nation...to break from the slavery of those regimes who are slaves to America” (Campbell, 2010: 53). He characterized Nigeria as one of the “unjust and infidel” regimes (Campbell, 2010). Boko Haram thus represents a Nigerian-specific case of modern Islamism. At inception, Boko Haram called itself ‘Nigerian Taliban’, and set up a camp which it called ‘Afghanistan.’ In one of his messages, the group leader, Yusuf noted,

“We want to reiterate that we are warriors who are carrying out jihad (religious war) in Nigeria and our struggle is based on the traditions of the holy prophet. 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 adulterated conventional education (Boko) to replace Islamic teachings. We will not respect the Nigerian government because it is illegal. We will continue to fight its military and the police because they are not protecting Islam. We do not believe in the Nigerian judicial system and we will fight anyone who assists the government in perpetrating illegalities” (Zenn, et.al, 2013:49-50)

Boko Haram's core motive is encapsulated in this quotation from Mohammed Yusuf: “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 (Muslims) return to the original state of Islam” (Zenn, et.al. 2013:50). Also, Yusuf told the BBC Hausa Radio before his extra-judicial execution, that “Western education is mixed with issues that run contrary to our beliefs in Islam; our land was an Islamic state before the colonial masters turned it to an infidel land. The current system is contrary to true Islamic beliefs” (Agbibo, 2013:5).

Boko Haram’s leadership holds that *jihad* is the sixth pillar of Islam. The five traditional pillars are the profession of faith, prayer, fasting, charity and pilgrimage. However, jihad is interpreted to be an individual obligation (*fard ‘ayn*), not a collective duty (*fard kifaya*) (Ayoob, 2011:143). These *jihad* fighters are known as “Mujahideen” (holy warriors). According to some traditions, those who die fighting jihad are martyrs whose reward in paradise are “rivers of milk and honey, and beautiful young virgins. Those

entering paradise eventually are reunited with their families and as martyrs stand in front of God as innocent as a newborn baby” (Laqueur, 1999:100).

Boko Haram Extremism in Northern Nigeria

Groups like Boko Haram may have existed in various forms in the past, without constituting much threat to national security. But current realities show that Boko Haram phenomenon has become a severe security issue, particularly in north-eastern Nigeria. In 2004, “Boko Haram started to attack police stations across the northern states to steal weapons. As these attacks persisted, they resulted in reprisal attacks by the police through raids and arrests to recover stolen weapons” (Agbibo, 2013). In 2009, members of the insurgent group became furious when Bauchi State’s government refused them from engaging in public preaching and recruiting new members. The group’s responses became more violent than before due to perceived police brutality while enforcing a motorbike helmet law. “The violent reaction by the Boko Haram sect resulted in a five-day disturbance in four states, where about seven hundred persons were killed with many houses and properties destroyed” (Pham, 2012:1-8). The disturbances were later controlled through a combined effort of the police and the military operation of the police and military, known as ‘Operation Flush.’ “The action resulted in the attack on Muhammed Yusuf’s house. After a two-day standoff, Yusuf was arrested and later killed in police custody. Later, the Nigerian police alleged that he was killed while trying to escape from police custody, but investigations later revealed that it was an extra-judicial killing” (Onuoha, 2012:54-67).

In just a few years since their emergence, they had grown to become one of the world's deadliest terrorist groups (Agbiboa, 2013). Atere and Alao (2015) perceived the increasing spread of activities of the Boko Haram sect in Nigeria and the destruction of lives and property as "a growing concern that could not be wished away with the wave of a hand." Throughout the second decade of the twenty-first century, Boko Haram has engaged in well-coordinated simultaneous attacks daily across the northeast. Their reach extends to the northwest and federal capital territory, Abuja, where they have carried out the targeted assassination and bank robbery and even take on security forces (Akinbi, 2015). Since 2009, the rate at which violence Boko Haram has carried out violence has accelerated.

In 2015, the Vanguard Newspaper reported that "444 people were murdered by Boko Haram in 39 days after President Muhammadu Buhari was inaugurated." It (September 21, 2015) also reported that "at least 54 people had died in the previous day coordinated strikes by Boko Haram with 90 injured, but residents that were caught up in the explosions said as many as 85 lost their lives." The paper claimed that the Nigerian authorities continued to downplay the enormity of the attack. Online cable news media in Nigeria did a detailed compilation of all Boko Haram attacks that took place in 2015, at that point the death toll of all Boko Haram attacks in 2015 alone as 4,780.

The worst attack by the group that attracted international outcry was "the abduction of over 219 students of Government Secondary School Girls who were writing WAEC test in the town of Chibok in Borno State, Nigeria on the night of April 14, 2014" (Akinbi, 2015) This particular action by the insurgent group shocked the nation. People wondered how the group was able to mastermind this brazen attack, which took the government of

Nigeria about two weeks to comment. Another deadly attack by the group was “on December 25, 2011, at Madalla, Niger State, where St. Theresa’ Catholic Church was destroyed with a bomb” (Danjibo, 2012). It was noted that, “about 48 persons died in the attack while over 200 Christians were hospitalized” (Danjibo, 2012). Danjibo (2012) again reported that, “earlier in January 6, 2011, members of the sect struck in Mubi, Adamawa State and killed 20 Igbo men and women. At the end of the massacre this deadly group issued a three-day ultimatum to southerners, mainly Christians, to leave northern Nigeria.”

On June 17, 2012, three churches in Kaduna were set ablaze by bombings, causing havoc among these communities (Danjibo, 2012). Another blast hit the roof of Christ the King Catholic Church, Sabon Gari, Zaria in Kaduna State. At almost the same time, another bomb exploded at the ECWA (Evangelical Church Winning All) church, killing many. “This irked the Christians to barricade the Kaduna/Abuja road and in the process sort out Muslim passersby and executed all they could lay their hands on” (Danjibo, 2012).

According to Newswatch, “no fewer than 70 persons died and more than 130 severely wounded in the reprisal attacks that happened in June 19, 2012 in Kaduna State, Nigeria” (Newswatch Magazine, June 19, 2012). It appeared that the police and the Army Joint Task Force that was ordered to curtail the killings by Boko Haram could not compete with Boko Haram as they seemed to have more sophisticated weapons and even appeared to be more trained in warfare than those sent to drive them from their areas of operation. (Newswatch, July 2, 2012:12-15).

In fact, “hundreds of people were killed in similar circumstances in Kano as the city practically became a war zone from the evening of Friday, January 20, 2011, to the day multiple bomb blast rocked different parts of the metropolis. The government at the

end of the killings put the figure of those killed at 185, but a source told Newswatch that more than 200 people were killed” (Newswatch Magazine February 6, 2012: 25). In another development, in Damaturu and Yobe State, a popular location for Christians known as ‘New Jerusalem’ where most Christians consider a haven, was targeted by the Boko Haram sect and bombed on November 4, 2011. “This was one of the deadliest attacks ever carried out by Boko Haram, the Islamic fundamentalist sect which has become a thorn in the flesh of the nation. The deadly strike claimed more than 150 lives and rendered thousands of people homeless” (Newswatch Magazine, November 5, 2011; Danjibo, 2012).

Furthermore, the Islamic insurgent sect destroyed properties such as houses, vehicles, farmlands, churches, and mosques in these locations. Several communities were destroyed in the area, including Kuborshosho, Kubi, and Garta (Saturday Sun, October 4, 2014:7). During the attack, “the residence of the former governor of the state was destroyed. Members of his family narrowly escaped death through the help of neighbors who assisted in evacuating them during the attack” (Saturday Sun, October 4, 2014: 7). As of the end of January 2017, the Boko Haram insurgency had internally displaced 1,770,444 persons in Nigeria, 176,555 in Cameroon, 121,391 in Niger, and 90,911 in Chad (UNHCR, 2017).

For most of the north, the prolonged insurgency has significantly affected the economy. Some foreign investors in the location, such as the Lebanese and Indian expatriates, have relocated to Abuja and the south, while others have left the country entirely. Thus, various businesses such as banks, hotels, transport companies,

telecommunications, and others, have experienced serious setbacks in their business operations (Ryan, 2015; De Montclos, 2014).

The high level of insecurity in the country has led to a decline in business investment and activities, particularly in the north. According to the UNCTAD (United Nations conference on Trade and Development) Report (as cited in Okereocha, 2012),

“FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) flows to Nigeria fell to \$6.1 billion (N933.3billion) in 2010, a decline of about 29 percent from the \$8.65 billion (N1.33 trillion) realized in the 2009 fiscal year. Also, statistics obtained from the 2010 annual report by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) showed that the total foreign capital inflow into the Nigerian economy in 2010 was \$5.99 billion. The record showed that FDI represented about 78.1 percent drop from \$3.31 billion in 2009” (Okereocha, 2012:47).

The consequence of this is that most manufacturers have reduced their production volume due to a drop in sales. This has further resulted in reduced earnings by the manufacturing companies, while increasing production costs, reducing in capacity utilization, and rising unemployment rate, (Okereocha, 2012). According to Ogege (2013):

“Most manufacturers in Nigeria (MAN) have expressed their frustration at the state of insecurity in the country. A report from a survey carried out by the body, shows that in 2009, a total number of 176 firms became terminally ill and collapsed in the northern area, comprising the Kano and Kaduna manufacturing axis. In the southeast area, which is comprised of Anambra, Enugu, Imo and Abia States, a total number of 178 companies closed shops during the period. While in the south-south area, which comprised of Rivers, Cross River and Akwa Ibom states, 46 companies shut down operations before December 2009. The survey further showed that the southwest area, which comprised of Oyo, Ogun, Osun, Ondo, Ekiti, Kogi and Kwara states, lost 225 companies during the year. The report further affirmed that the Lagos area covering Ikeja, Apapa, Ikorodu and other industrial divisions in the state, followed closely with 214

manufacturing firms closing shop before the end of 2009”
(Ogege, 2013:16)

These firms’ major reason for closure is insecurity, destruction of equipment, and inadequate power supply (Okafor, 2011). If the state of insecurity in the country persists, most businesses are likely to close or leave. In addition, others may relocate to neighboring countries, further worsening the economic state in the country.

According to the International Crisis Group (2014), “the Nigerian government spends \$6 billion of its annual budget on security within an economy of approximately half a trillion dollars. Also, the military is made up of 90,000 active duty, and 25,000 reserve components, for a country of 180 million people.” This is woefully inadequate considering the complex security threats and challenges facing the country. It has been argued that the budget deficits result from of chronic corruption on the part of Nigerian commanders (International Crisis Group, 2014). This inadequate budgetary allocation to the security sector at a time of challenging and sophisticated security threats has led many experts to accuse the Nigerian government of lacking the goodwill to tackle this menace (International Crisis Group, 2014).

CHAPTER FOUR

RESPONSE OF THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT TOWARDS COMBATING BOKO HARAM EXTREMISM IN NIGERIA

Efforts of the Nigerian Government.

The Government of Nigeria has made several efforts to combat terrorism in the country. From the inception of the crisis, the government had relied heavily on military force to confront the insurgent groups by deploying thousands of troops to affected areas in the north (Akande, 2013). In May 2013, the former President of Nigeria, President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan declared a state of emergency in the three worst-hit northern states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa. Furthermore, to redress the *almajiri* (boarding school) system which provides ready foot soldiers for Boko Haram in some northern states. Campbell reiterated this when he noted that,

“In 2013, former President Goodluck Jonathan launched a major offensive against Boko Haram, declaring a state of emergency in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe States; while national forces claimed some success in pushing militants out of cities, attacks in rural areas continued with regularity, and Nigerian troops have been accused of human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings” (Campbell, 2014:112).

The Nigerian government went further to deploy a “special trained anti-terrorism combat squad to the terrorist zones in order to suppress the activities of Boko Haram” (Okupe, 2015). Again, the government went on to “acquire and develop more sophisticated, adequate and appropriate military hardware” (Okupe, 2015). In 2015, the government of Nigeria took a decisive step towards improving the military’s efficiency in combating the Boko Haram sect. Among the steps taken was the movement of Nigeria's

military headquarters from Abuja to Maiduguri, followed by increased funding for its operations and the appointment of a new leadership in the military.

Further steps were taken by seeking assistance from the country's neighbors, who were equally affected by Boko Haram's upsurge. Since 2015, Niger, Cameroon and Chad have collaborated with Nigeria in the fight against Boko Haram by deploying thousands of their troops. This combined effort has been somewhat successful in combating the insurgent group as it has reduced the level of violence since 2015.

Burt (2014) notes that "security partners beyond Africa have also come to Nigeria's aid. Following the abductions in Chibok (Nigeria), France, the United Kingdom, and the United States pledged additional assistance, including equipment and intelligence support." According to News24, (2015), "in late January 2015, a coalition of military forces from Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, and Niger began a counter-insurgency campaign against the Boko Haram. On 4th February, the Chad Army killed over 200 Boko Haram militants."

Thereafter, on 7 March 2015, "Boko Haram's leader Abubakar Shekau pledged allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) via an audio message posted on the organization's Twitter account" (Army Times, 2016). Sami Kukasheka, the Nigerian army spokesperson, had said that "the pledge was a sign of weakness and that Shekau was like a drowning man" (Army Times, 2016). According to BBC News Africa (2016), "that same day, five suicide bomb blasts left 54 dead and 143 wounded." Asharq al-Awsat (2016) and BBC News (2016) further stated that "in the same year 2016, President Muhammadu Buhari declared that Boko Haram had been ousted from their last stronghold

in the Sambisa Forest, effectively reducing Boko Haram to an insurgent force.” According to Al Jazeera (2017),

“In March 2017, the Nigerian Department of State Services (DSS) announced that ‘a suspected member of Boko Haram had been arrested in northeastern Yobe State. The suspect confessed details of a plot to attack the American and British embassies, and other western targets in Abuja. The DSS also later announced that between 25 and 26 March 2017, five suspected members of Boko Haram had been arrested, thus thwarting the plot” (Al Jazeera, 2017:19).

Al Jazeera (2017) further noted that “in April of the same year, the Nigerian military began what it said was its ‘final offensive’ to retake Boko Haram's last strongholds. It further reported that it had arrested about 126 suspected Boko Haram terrorists at the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camp in Damboa, Borno State.” However, realities on the ground have continued to show that the insurgent group is far from being defeated. They continue to carry out wanton destruction of lives and properties in the northern part of the country.

Moreover, the Nigerian government authorized neighboring countries like Chad, Cameroon, Niger to deploy troops in Nigeria. Conversely, the Nigerian military could also “operate beyond borders to hunt fleeing terrorists, thus removing their safe haven” (Okupe, 2015). Furthermore, “a state of emergency was declared in the three most affected northern states, namely Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe” (Akande, 2013:32). The government also encouraged intelligence gathering by both the public and media to support its counterinsurgency efforts.

Support from the International Community

There has also been some international support against Boko Haram through military aid to the Government of Nigeria in the form of funds, arms, ammunition, intelligence tactics, manpower, etc. (Akande, 2013). To encourage international support for Nigeria, the president of France Mr. Hollande stated that “to fight Boko Haram is to fight Daesh, and we can no longer single out terrorism, according to regions. It is the same terrorism, inspired by the same ideology of death” (Wolfrom, 2015).

According to Muzan,

Counterterrorism strategies by the US government through denying of weapons, and sanctuaries of rogue states, building institutional structures, control of base and landing pads of terrorists, etc., appear to be effective. Therefore, effective use of resources (power, military, land reforms, finance, external alliances and hierarchical structure of organization) determines the countering success (Muzan, 2014:218).

The U.S. intelligence community is “monitoring the expanding scope and diversity of facilitation networks, which include semi-legitimate travel experts, attorneys, and other types of professionals, as well as corrupt officials, who provide support services to criminal and terrorist groups” (Muzan, 2014:218). In addition, “repressive responses in form of covert operations which are secretive operations that include several possible counter terrorist measures, such as infiltration, disinformation, and cyber war. Nonviolent covert programs require creative and imaginative methods that are adapted to each terrorist environment” (Muzan, 2014).

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) “formally sought the approval and backing of the African Union (AU) to create a multi-national force to fight the Boko Haram insurgents during the 2015 AU Summit, which was approved” (BBC

News, 2013). Ugwu (2015) noted that “the dangers posed by Boko Haram demand greater attention in Africa and call for a well-formulated and practical counter-insurgency operation informed by a well-coordinated and flexible inter-agency analysis.” This is because “to turn the tide against Boko Haram would require a full-scale counterinsurgency plan across Nigeria, Niger and Cameroon” (BBC News, 2013). Therefore, more effective measures are required for effective counterinsurgency and sustainable national development in Nigeria, and this requires maximum cooperative and collaborative efforts by all and sundry.

The international community has also employed economic sanctions against states and agencies that sponsor terrorism. “Sanctions can either selectively target specific economic sectors or generally restrict trade. The purpose is to pressure state sponsors to modify or end their support for terrorism” (Martin, 2010).

Challenges and Setbacks

Nigeria’s response to Boko Haram has been mixed. For example, a Presidential Committee on Dialogue and Peaceful Resolution for Security Challenges in the North was established in April 2013. The 26-member committee had Tanimu Turaki (Minister of Special Duties) as Chairman. The Committee was tasked with convincing Boko Haram members to hand in their weapons for a state pardon. In response to the committee, Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau said in an audio statement: “Surprisingly, the Nigerian government is talking about granting us amnesty. What wrong have we done? On the contrary, it is we that should grant you pardon” (BBC, 2013).

The government's incoherent response to the threat of Boko Haram has been heavily criticized by many. Undoubtedly, the killing of Mohammed Yusuf by the Nigerian police radicalized the group (Zenn, 2013). Thompson also argues that the group's activities were benign before the killing of Mohammed Yusuf and marked a tipping point in the use of lethal force in the years that followed (Thompson, 2012). From this perspective, it is important that the government adopt policy changes to address the group's grievances as a driving force. This means that significant issues would be brought to the negotiating table, which is critical in the quest for a sustainable solution.

Part of the challenge is the military response to security threats. According to Agbiboa (2013), "the activities of the Nigerian military have been heavily criticized as a heavy-handed response to Boko Haram with the fear that it may fuel radical recruitment." According to Amnesty International, "many civilians affected by the church bombing in Kano in 2012 were quick to blame the security forces rather than Boko Haram and described the Federal Government as a shared enemy" (Amnesty International, 2014).

According to De-Montclos (2015), "the military repression of the Boko Haram uprising in July 2009, massacres, extra-judicial killings and arrests without trial have widened the gap between local communities and the armed forces. The only sustainable way to combat Boko Haram is to protect civilians." These experiences can constitute a major hindrance to a successful counterinsurgency since many of the aggrieved civilians may become uncooperative with the state security agencies (Oarhe, 2013). Akande (2013), reported that "the invasion of and killing in the Baga community in Borno state on Sunday, April 21, 2013 by Nigerian soldiers, who in a single operation killed over 200 civilians suspected to be members of Boko Haram in the aftermath of an attack" (Akande, 2013:31).

The United States Institute for Peace Special Report (2012) is of the opinion that the way the Nigerian State handled the Boko Haram group is responsible for their resorting to violence. They concluded that “weakness in the institutions of politics and the security services creates a political situation where such threats to stability are not dealt with until violence is a certainty. Their only method of dealing with any threat against the state is violence” (USIPS Report, 2012). Boko Haram was created under these circumstances. Aliyu et al. (2015) also contended that “political, external forces and lack of counter insurgency approach by the Nigerian government which are busy fighting the symptoms and not the root causes have been identified as some of the major factors which has contributed in worsening the situation in the north eastern part of Nigeria.”

Hence “Boko Haram metamorphosing from a Dawah to an arms-bearing sect was in part the making of the Nigerian security forces which approach the situation as one of law and order and thus responded as such, there was no attempt to see the issues raised by the movement in a broader multifaceted prism as political, social and economic” (Mohammed, 2014). Stevenson (2015), in a comparative study of Boko Haram, ISIS, and Al-Shabaab, it is stated that these three groups emerged out of crisis within their respective states. He explicitly stated that the rise of Boko Haram in Nigeria could be traced to the governance challenge in the Northeast, aggressive police response, and prison breaks.

Amnesty International reported in 2015 that the security operatives extra-judicially executed over 1,200 people; arbitrarily arrest up to 20,000 people, especially young men, and male youths; tortured hundreds of thousands; and about 7,000 people have died in detention facilities on account of starvation, overcrowding, and refusal of medical care (Amnesty International, 2015:4). The crises within the Nigerian security forces, including

inadequate equipment, low morale, and corruption, has given Boko Haram an advantage in the conflict. For example, Boko Haram insurgents raided prisons to set their detained members free and invaded military armories to pillage weapons (Bappah, 2016). The insurgents even overran the headquarters of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in Baya (Borno State) on January 5, 2015 (Akinola, 2015).

Besides poor intelligence, the Nigerian government does not have the institutional capacity to secure the nation. For example, former President Olusegun Obasanjo blamed the Jonathan administration for failure to act until after 72 hours that the Chibok schoolgirls were kidnapped (Daily Post, February 6, 2016). On their part, the International Crisis Group (2014) notes that.

Boko Haram attacks escalated in 2014 and 2015, raising doubts about the government's progress toward containing the group. In particularly brazen operations, the group claimed a bombing of an Abuja bus station that killed nearly one hundred people on April 14, 2014, the same day it abducted more than two hundred schoolgirls from the northeastern town of Chibok (International Crisis Group, 2014:29).

Some have suggested the Nigerian government engage in dialogue with Boko Haram, utilizing the tenets of the amnesty program that has had great success in demilitarizing the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. However, the reality on the ground is such that the ideological thrust of Boko Haram makes this impracticable. In April 2011, the offer of amnesty by the elected governor of Borno State, Kashim Shettima, was rebuffed, when the group released a statement on a local language radio station about their stance; saying that "first we do not believe in the Nigerian constitution and second, we do not believe in democracy but only in the laws of Allah" (Elkaim, 2013). However,

the lack of clarity in Boko Haram's structure and ideological stance has made it difficult for the Nigerian government to arrive at a policy choice towards curbing the terrorist group.

Even though the government of Nigeria has taken some cautious steps toward combating the terror group by launching several attacks against the group, it appears that more effort is required. And despite declarations by the Nigerian government to the contrary, Boko Haram has continued to present a grave security threat to the integrity of Nigeria. According to Alkali (2015), "Boko Haram has been portrayed as a transnational, Islamist insurgency that was predetermined to be a particularly lethal group, a review of its evolution demonstrates that the group's trajectory is the result of interactions with the state security apparatus and the regional opportunity structure for recruitment and weapons procurement." The consequence of this is that Boko Haram insurgency can only be subdued through an active collaborative method that involves the countries concerned. Albert (2015) notes that "with the existence of over 1,400 illegal routes into Nigeria, the insurgents will continually confront and embarrass the Nigerian state and sooner than later, the other three countries shall also be riddled with various insurgent activities, until when the countries concerned will pragmatically and simultaneously engage Boko Haram both militarily and diplomatically with the sole aim of neutralizing and possibly, annihilating the insurgency" (Albert, 2015: 17). Thus, a counterinsurgency that is pragmatic and tactical, with enough military capability, is required for Nigeria and neighboring countries to successfully defeat the transnational insurgency of Boko Haram in the region.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings

This study explored the role of Islamic identity in the rise of Boko Haram militant extremism in Northern Nigeria. The study's objectives as stated in the background section were: (1) To examine the influence of Islam in Northern Nigeria; (2) To identify the ideology behind the emergence Boko Haram extremism in Northern Nigeria; (3) To evaluate whether the responses by the Nigerian government have been effective in tackling extremism in Nigeria; and (4) to suggest policies that can address extremism in Nigeria.

In the course of the study, the second chapter provided a theoretical and conceptual review of the basic concepts applied in the study. The study also examined the emergence of Islam and Boko Haram in northern Nigeria, and the Islamic identity grievance that propels the group's numerous chaos in the region. It emphasized that Boko Haram is triggered by frustrated desire to implement religious law in northern Nigeria. The study outlined the Nigerian government and international response towards combating the group and the significant challenges or setbacks that they have faced. Finally, the study examined some possible steps towards a victorious fight against Boko Haram.

Conclusion

The continued attacks on lives and properties by the Boko Haram group in Nigeria have battered the country's external image and affected its socio-economic situation and trade relations with neighboring countries. The counter-insurgency measures have so far failed to produce a positive result. The following recommendations

are suggested for possible future success in fighting against the Boko Haram militant extremism.

There is a need for a comprehensive and strategic plan first to understand the crisis more and then mitigate the sect's operational capability. Religion, that is, Islamic extremism due to misconception and misinterpretations has been identified as the motivating factors that led to the emergence of the Boko Haram. Therefore, the government should combat religious radicalism through enactment of laws that will check the activities of religious fanatics, and a program of awareness should be created against religious radicalism. Since, as I have argued, religious ideology is an important way that the members of Boko Haram justify their activities, Muslim clerics and other religious leaders in the North should facilitate interfaith dialogue and encourage pluralism. The Nigerian government can also explore other options by providing a platform for dialogue with the leadership of the Boko Haram sect. This can be done by allowing the group leaders prove their influence in Northern Nigeria through democratic means in any of the specified communities where they currently operate.

There is also an urgent need for the Nigerian government to improve the professionalism and competence of members of the state security agencies. The habit of embezzlement of funds meant for security by some unscrupulous elements within the Nigeria security agencies, notably the Nigerian Army, should be seriously checked and dealt with. International cooperation is also needed, because Nigeria cannot do it alone. According to the International Crisis Group (2014), "concerning the virtually insurmountable task ahead, the Nigerian government will need international assistance – in the areas of counterinsurgency operations, detection of improvised explosive devices,

forensic analysis, intelligence gathering and analysis.” Thus, the Nigerian government should intensify efforts at strengthening its collaboration and cooperation with neighboring countries in order to put up a strong force towards combating the Boko Haram and other terrorist sects in the country and West African region.

In view of this, there should be better coordination and intelligence sharing between the Nigerian army and those of the neighboring countries through the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) and the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF). Also, there should be effective border management or control with other neighboring countries in the Lake Chad Basin to address border crimes such as illicit arms proliferation, terrorism, and kidnapping.

Also, there is need to develop “intelligence-led” anti-terrorism capacity based on stronger synergy between the intelligence bodies in the country and intelligence agencies in neighboring countries (Alimeka, 2012: 4), strengthening of regional cooperation and capacity of neighboring countries based on the realization that terrorism and other security threats also exploit Nigeria’s porous borders and the limited capacities of neighboring countries to its advantage.

The Nigerian Government should prioritize specialized intelligence training for men of the Nigerian Army (NA), Nigeria Police Force (NPF), State Security Service (SSS), and the National Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC), in scientific methods of anti-terrorism war as this is what is obtainable in most advanced nations. Moreover, the government should encourage for research and intelligence development in order to produce intellectually grounded and professionally sound intelligence practitioners. Security and intelligence education need be mainstreamed at all levels of educational development process. Moreover, the budgetary allocation to security and the various

intelligence agencies must be reasonable and adequate in order to have access to modern equipment, information gathering and application as data is key in security.

Going forward, the Nigerian government should be proactive and responsive in matters of security; to solve the issue before it explodes. It has been identified that the slow response from the Nigerian government led to the escalation of the insurgency. The government should be more professional in handling security matters to avoid a situation where suspects are killed extra-judicially.

Finally, there is a need for Nigeria's government to ensure the provision of good governance by making the government's presence felt in Northeastern Nigeria by breaking the poverty cycle of inadequate education, and socio-inequalities in the area. The government should invest in public services in vocational training, skills acquisition, educational opportunities, employment generation and health facilities. This will help lessen the appeal of this destructive ideology for the youth and future generations of northern Nigeria's Muslim communities.

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