

PHASES OF BOKO HARAM: MANIPULATION OF THE NAME OF GOD AND RELIGION

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The use and misuse of religion in the name of God has become problematic among different adherents of religion in Nigeria. The manipulation of religion by religious leaders and their adherents have turned many to religious fanatics and fundamentalists, culminating in religious conflict and violence. Existing studies have largely focused on the concept and role of religion in Nigerian politics and socio-economy, with less emphasis on the implications of fundamentalism as it relates to Boko Haram. This paper is an empirical attempt to unravel how Boko Haram manipulation of the name of God and religion causes religious violence in Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The manipulation of religion and the name of God for violent purposes in Africa has been alarming. Many acts of religious terrorism have been executed by religious fundamentalists who have incorporated murder and suicide in the propagation of the Faith, as is equally the case in Nigeria. It should be noted that Nigeria is a religious-pluralistic state. Before and after independence, the name of God has been central to what the Nigerian society wants to do. In fact, the country's national anthem and the Nigerian Army's logo all clearly reflect the presence of religion in the affairs of the country. This shows that Nigeria cannot do without God or religion in its daily activities regardless of specific religious affiliation.

More importantly, religion and ethnicity are noticeable identities in

Nigeria. In fact, religious and ethnic identities are more fully formed, more holistic, and more strongly felt than class identities as evidenced in the fact that those who identify with religious and ethnic communities are almost universally proud of their group identities.¹ Despite the fact that God cannot be removed from religion and that religion and ethnicity are prominent, primordial, and determinant factors of identity in Nigeria, manipulation of ethnicity and wrong application of the name of God is precisely what has led to the destruction of lives and properties. When religion, enveloped in the name of God, is misused, it will become religious violence/conflict, religious fundamentalism, religious extremism or religious terrorism. This misuse of the name of God and religion by different phases of Boko Haram is one of the major problems confronting Nigeria.

The initial stage of Boko Haram operated under the garb of conservative Islamism, using a fundamentalist approach in order to promote their cause. Later, they metamorphosed to religious radicalism, terrorism and internationalism as their Islamic worldview and ideology changed, using any destructive means at their disposal. Over time, the need to kill in the name of God was legitimized through the group's customs and modes of operation, therefore making killing an act of worship, devotion, and dedication. Thus, as Richard Pech and Brett Slade note, killing is only considered a criminal act if committed "within" the group and against a member of that group.²

There are many existing studies on Boko Haram³ with little or no attention paid to the politicization of ethnicity in the activities of the sect, different phases of the sect, circumstances for group radicalization, and specific events demonstrating the radicalisation processes and leadership. Therefore, this study seeks to contribute to the existing literature with a more comprehensive understanding of the sect, arguing that the use of religion, and to a large extent ethnicity, is a common phenomenon to perpetrate evil in Nigeria owing to inadequate knowledge of one's religion and to political elitism.

POLITICIZATION OF ETHNICITY IN THE ACTIVITIES OF BOKO HARAM

Ademola Adedeji⁴ argues that there is an element of politicization of ethnicity in the evolution and terrorization activities of Boko Haram. The argument is based on the expectation that the northern elites might be instrumental to

the sect's evolution as a result of the foreseen tragedy of losing political influence to a southern president, and consequently losing oil reserves within that area. In addition, the re-enactment of Sharia penal code during President Olusegun Obasanjo's democratic dispensation was seen as a strategy by the Hausa-Fulani to legitimize Islamic religion for political reasons across the country. Thus, Boko Haram might be used as a willing device in the hands of northern elites to achieve their goals (i.e. political powers and material resources) through the process of politicizing ethnicity.

Moreover, since many of the Islamic scholars and clerics are trained in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia with the expectation that, upon their return to Nigeria, they will promote and transfer a politico-religious ideology that preaches hatred and violence against non-Muslims, it can be argued that Boko Haram was invented and nurtured as a weapon against southerners who dominated the political landscape since the return to democracy in 1999. Conversely, due to shifting identities, goals, and the internationalization of the sect, it now operates beyond the control of the northern elites that established it initially.

DIFFERENT PHASES OF BOKO HARAM

Boko Haram Foundation

In contradiction to many publications, Boko Haram was not founded by Mohammed Yusuf as widely speculated, though there are several versions about the evolution of the sect. Virginia Comolli⁵ enumerates some of the versions. One version traces its foundation or origin back to 1995 at the University of Maiduguri, Borno State, when the Ahlusunns wal'jama'ah hijira (Muslim Youth Organisation) was set up by Abubakar Lawan as a Sahaba (an Arabic word to describe the companions of Prophet Muhammed who accompanied him during his lifetime and documented his deeds and words after his death). It was established as a peaceful, conservative Islamic sect devoid of any violence. Lawan left Nigeria in 2002 to pursue further Islamic learning in Medina and Mecca. In his absence, a committee of shaykhs appointed Mohammed Yusuf, an ethnic Kanuri from Girgir village in Yobe State, leader of the sect. Later he ousted the committee amidst allegations of corruption among its members. From around this time, many names were used to describe the sect—Muhajirun, Yusufiyah, and “Nigerian Taliban”—which increasingly showed signs of wanting to overthrow the government and its secular ideology.

Another version is put forward by Andrew Walker. According to Walker, in 2002 some of the most radical young worshippers at the Alhaji Muhammadu Ndimi Mosque in Maiduguri became highly critical of the state administration and also the local religious establishment which they believe to be corrupt and to have lost touch with true Islamic values. This sentiment prompted them to isolate themselves, replicating Prophet Mohammed's hijira, and to move to Yobe State where they set up a base in Kanama, three kilometers from the Nigerian border, under the leadership of Mohammed Ali. The religious community established in Kanama was renamed "Afghanistan." It was based on Salafi principles and the societal model of the Taliban. Reports indicate that the Afghan flag was displayed in the community and that it urged other Muslims to return to the true tenets of Islam. New members arrived from neighbouring Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, but despite its increasingly multinational membership, the group only sought to exert influence within Nigeria and its messages and anti-state criticism were targeted at Nigerian institutions. At that time, they were believed to number around seventy members and to possess some weaponry, albeit only for defensive purposes.

In December 2003, some members became involved in a local dispute over fishing rights and, as the police intervened, sect members managed to overpower some of the officers and stole their weapons. In response, the army mounted siege on the local mosque, a siege which lasted until early 2004 when, during a major shootout, Mohammed Ali and most of his senior followers were killed and their Kanama base was destroyed. The survivors returned to Maiduguri to rejoin their original youth group at the Alhaji Muhammadu Ndimi Mosque, now led by Mohammed Yusuf. Soon after, Yusuf established the Ibn Taimiyyah Masjid (mosque) specifically for the group, north of the town centre, on the land owned by his father-in-law, Fugu Mohammed. From there, they began to expand their reach into Bauchi, Yobe, and Niger States and to establish something akin to a state within the state with independent religious police and a cabinet.⁶

Another account indicates that before 2000, a man called Aminu Tashen Ilimi inspired a group of students to leave the University of Maiduguri and follow the teachings of a foreign preacher who argued that western education was contrary to Islam. The group began to influence Mohammed Yusuf, who was then preaching at the Alhaji Muhammadu Ndimi Mosque in Maiduguri, and who, as a result, left the mosque in 2000 to set up his

own teaching structure in Anguwan Doki, using a building owned by his father-in-law, Alhaji Bapur. From 2002, Yusuf's teaching began to attract growing numbers of pupils but also criticism from Aminu Ilimi, Mola Umar, and others who accused him of promoting an ideology they deemed too liberal. Hence, they broke away from him in October 2003 and moved to Yobe where they set up a new base outside Kanama—"Afghanistan" from which they aimed to establish an independent territory and live a secluded life.

Thus, it can be argued the foundation of the sect was based on a religious fundamentalist approach although the founder's method was based on conventional Islamism. Lawan's conservative Islamic approach was radicalized by Yusuf. Invariably, Yusuf built on the existing religious fundamentalist knowledge of Lawan (in his absence) which Yusuf thought was too soft and insufficient for the desired Islamic revolution against westernism. This shows the problems with religious fundamentalism to be theological, not just political. They involve the undervaluation of human reason, the sin of intellectual pride, and the lack of genuine religious faith. Religious fundamentalism does not deny the human capacity to reason, but it strictly limits the role of reason by affirming a source of truth that is regarded as absolute, plain, and unchanging. On whatever issues this source of truth addresses, reason is confined within a narrowly drawn and self-contained epistemic system. As a result, religious fundamentalism severely constrains, and thereby undervalues, the human capacity for reason.

In addition, religious fundamentalism also is theologically problematic in its claims of certitude. These claims suggest the sin of pride—in particular the sin of intellectual pride or pride of knowledge. At the same time, the claims are premised on an unwillingness to confront competing evidence and arguments, an insular stance that, paradoxically, suggests a lack of genuine religious faith.⁷ Fundamentalism comes from fundamentalist religious leaders and preachers who are parochial in their religious teachings and messages. This results in religious adherents who have become intolerant of other religions due to lack of proper understanding of their own religion alongside others. These adherents are given to intensive proselytizing, tend to be dogmatic, and also tend to be more racially prejudiced.

Boko Haram Radicalization

According to the final version noted by Comolli⁸ Mohammed Yusuf

established the sect in the early 1990s under the name of ahl al-sunna wa-l-jama'a wa-l-hijr (Adherents to the Sunna that Promotes Jihad). Mohammed Yusuf was the spiritual leader as well as amir ul-aam (commander-in-chief) of the group. Under his leadership, an executive cabinet and a Shura (decision-making) Council was instituted to oversee the affairs of the group. Yusuf was assisted by na'ib amir ul-aam I and II (two deputies). Each state where they existed had its own amir (commander/leader), and each local government area where they operated also had an amir. The group appointed amirs in various locations across the area, including in the Kanuri regions of Niger and Chad, to oversee local activities. They also organized themselves according to various roles, such as soldiers and police.⁹ In its early stage, the sect was entrenched in Borno, Yobe, Katsina, and Bauchi states. Over time, it has recruited more followers and established operating cells in almost all northern states, possibly nursing the intention to spread further south.¹⁰

Roman Loimeier described Yusuf as a student of Sheikh Ja'far Mahmud Adam in Kano but from whom he distanced himself in 2003.¹¹ Until 2007, Yusuf engaged in a heated theological debate with Adam through sermons, CDs, and pamphlets in which Adam criticized Yusuf's rejection of western education. The latter believed by Adam to be necessary in the longer term in order to fight western enemies. Adam also discouraged military actions against the Nigerian state while Yusuf opposed the secular educational system and Nigerian institutions as well as modern Islamic teaching, and refused to accept the Sultan of Sokoto as the nominal head of all Nigerian Muslims. In December 2003, clashes erupted between Yusuf's followers and the security forces in Kanama and in January 2004, approximately 200 members attacked several police stations. In September, more attacks took place in Borno State and 27 members were allegedly killed while many escaped to Cameroon. The remainder of those who survived joined Yusuf upon his return from Saudi Arabia. The survivors became the hawks within the Yusufiyya movement.

It is important to note that up to the July 2009 crushing by the Nigerian state, the Yusufiyya movement had no official name for itself. It referred to itself as dawah (proselytizing or preaching Islam), identified its mission as a return to the Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'a (Adherents to the Sunnah and the Community of Muslims), and referred to its members as "brothers." The first reference to its preferred name of Ahlus Sunnah liddawa'ati wal Jihad (people committed to the propagation of the Prophet's teachings

and Jihad) came in the aftermath of the Bauchi prison break in September 2010. The dawah is a major feature of radical Islam in the Muslim world which Mohammed Yusuf had adopted as the main plank of Islamic jihad strategy.¹² In addition, Yusuf's ideology also centered on pervasive ignorance that western education and education for women is a sin and that the earth was made flat by God, in contrast to westernised theories of Darwinian evolution. Thus, its ideology was centered on boko (western education) as haram (unlawful).¹³ It was the media that finally tagged the sect Boko Haram. In fact, in 2009, after Yusuf's death, the then acting leader Mallam Sani Umaru clarified what the group stands for:

Boko Haram does not in any way mean "western education is a sin" as the infidel media continue to portray us. Boko Haram actually means "western civilization" is forbidden. The difference is that while the first gives the impression that we are opposed to formal education coming from the West, that is Europe, which is not true, the second affirms our belief in the supremacy of Islamic culture (not education), for culture is broader; it includes education but not determined by western education. In this case, we are talking of western ways of life which include: constitutional provision as it relates to, for instance, the rights and privileges of women, the idea of homosexuality, lesbianism, sanctions in cases of terrible crimes like drug, trafficking, molestation of infants, multi-party democracy in an overwhelmingly Islamic country like Nigeria, blue films, prostitution, drinking beer and alcohol and many others that are opposed to Islamic civilization¹⁴

As a matter of fact, it was argued that even though Muhammed Ali was the dominant influence in Yusuf's indoctrination, the years under Sheikh Ja'afar Mahmud Adam (the period between the Kanama tragedy and the violent suppression of the sect in July 2009) radicalized as well as legitimized the dawah. Yusuf had been induced by Saudi scholars, particularly the Wahhabi Abubakar b'Abdullah whose text, *al-madaris al-'alamiyya al-ajnabiyya al-isti 'mariyya: ta'rikhuha wa-makhatiruha* (The Secular, Foreign and Colonialist Schools: Their History and Dangers), provided theological backing for Yusuf's rejection of evolution theory and western science.¹⁵

Based on the analysis of the sect so far, it can be argued that it was under Yusuf's leadership that the sect bears different names which include dawah, Yusufiyah, ahl al-sunnswa-l-jama'a wa-lhijr, Muhajirun, Nigerian Taliban

and Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda' awaiti wal-Jihad. Also, Yusuf named his mosque Ibn Taimiyyah. These names reflected changes that occurred in the group—from religious fundamentalist to religious radicalized group. It can also be argued that Yusuf got indoctrinated with Salafi principles (which sometimes referred to as Wahhabism although true Salafists find the association with Wahhabism derogatory) and got inspired from Ibn Taimiyyah. These reflected the theological and ideological vicissitudes that formed the basis of leadership their actions. In summary, two related sets of Islamic theology and ideology were inserted by Yusuf into the purist sect started by Abubakar Lawan to radicalize it in name and mission.

Salafism is a movement within Sunni Islam that strives towards expunging Islam from outside or non-Muslim influences. It strives for a return to the Islam practiced by the “pious ancestors,” i.e. Mohammed and the early Islamic community. It should be noted that only one specific interpretation of Salafism focuses on the use of violence to bring about such radical change and is commonly known as *Salafist Jihadism*.¹⁶ Hence, ultra-Salafism (which is a stricter form of Salafism and anti-innovation in its ideology) and Salafi-Jihadism are violent. What is indisputable is that Salafism is a fundamentalist ideology which promotes non-coexistence with other religions. Thus, Boko Haram began its operation by attacking churches, non-Muslims and public institutions and because of this, the sect was tagged a religious radicalized group.

On the issue of Ibn Taymiyyah, scholars like Kyari Mohammed¹⁷ and Yinka Olomjobi¹⁸ discussed extensively on evolution of Ibn Taymiyyah and how his teachings influenced Mohammed Yusuf. According to Olomjobi, militant Islam can be traced to the teaching of Ibn Taymiyyah (1263–1328), an Islamic scholar born in Harran (Turkey).¹⁹ During his early stage, Ibn Taymiyyah and his family experienced persecution due to Mongolian attacks on Muslims in Damascus. Owing to this, he was eager to restore the concept of a ‘Holy War’ because he believed that the Mongolians were living in a state of jahiliyya (pre-Islamic unawareness) which became his main agenda. In fact, Ibn Taymiyyah wrote much on jihad and even elevated it above the Islamic pillars of fasting and pilgrimage.²⁰ Though he had many critics, some viewed his religious ideas as useful in which many Islamic militants and scholars followed his thought such as Osama bin Laden, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1793), Rashi Rida (1866–1935) and Mohammed Utaz Yusuf. Yusuf based his doctrine, preaching, and teaching on the

teaching and belief system of Ibn Taymiyyah; after Yusuf's death, this was carried on with radicalism, violence and terrorism by Abubakar Shakau.

The introduction of Sharia law in 12 northern states also contributed to the radicalization of Boko Haram. Mohammed²¹ argues that the protagonists of Sharia created the impression that it would lead to a qualitative improvement in the lives of the inhabitants of Sharia states. However, the operation of Sharia as an adjunct to, and its subordination to, the secular constitution was anathema to radical Islamists, who demanded a full complement of Sharia law; Boko Haram also insisted on a full Sharia or nothing. Hence, the failure by the Borno state government to put in place an effective mechanism for the implementation of Sharia law precipitated a falling out and the resignation of Yusuf from political positions which he held during the tenure of Ali Modu Sheriff as governor.

The last attack under Yusuf's leadership took place on October 10, 2004, when a convoy of sixty police personnel came under fire at Kala-Balge on Lake Chad. Twelve officers were taken hostage.²² Between 2004 and 2008, the group remained largely inactive although, the sect continued to carry out various activities that would make the group formidable. For example, during this period some senior Boko Haram members were believed to have travelled to Pakistan to obtain funding from al-Qaeda to carry out attacks against American targets in Nigeria.²³

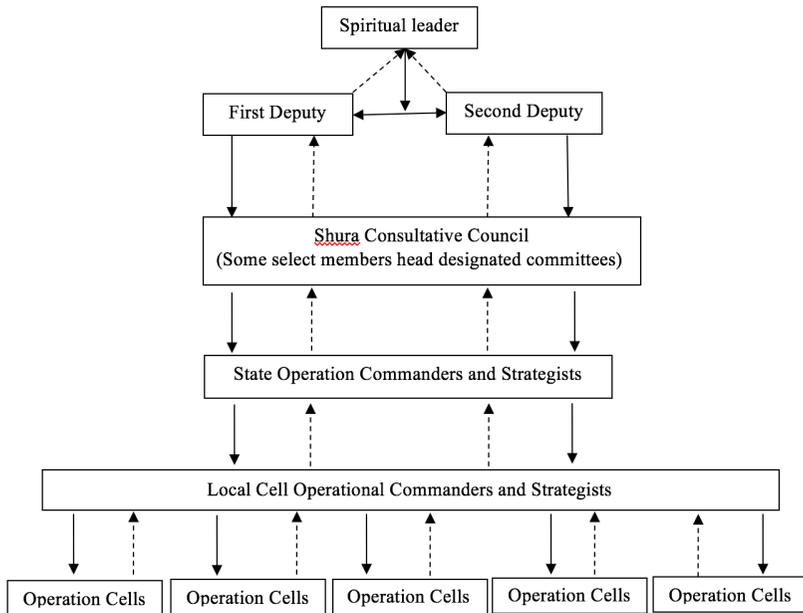
Boko Haram Terrorization

Boko Haram transformed from a radicalized group to a terrorist group owing to the extra-judicial assassination of Mohammed Yusuf in July 2009. This was partly due to security agency mishandling of the situation that erupted in Borno state with the sect. After the death of Yusuf, many Boko Haram members who fled either went for further military training or went into hiding, while some melted into the local population. Also, the aftermath of Yusuf's death led to factionalisation of the sect and the immediate takeover of leadership by Abubakar Shekau, his deputy.

Imam Abu Muhammad Abu Bakr bin Muhammad (Shekau) was introduced to Yusuf by Mamman Nur, possibly in the late 1900s. His radical belief was so strong that he even criticized Yusuf for being too "liberal." His religious drive won him the nickname of Darul Tawheed (specialist in Tawheed or Islamic doctrine). From the time Shekau took over, Boko Haram has expanded their area of operation. From the original states of Yobe and

Borno, Bauchi, Adamawa, Kaduna, Niger, Plateau, Abuja and Kastina all witnessed some violence, later followed by Kano, Jigawa, Gombe, Taraba, and even the more distant Sokoto and Kogi in 2012. The latter is particularly revealing since it demonstrates the group's ability to stage attacks in areas where it is less likely to find a strong support network, including those where the ethnic composition of the inhabitants is very different from Borno or other northern states.²⁴ In addition, various forms of attacks were carried out on churches, mosques, security establishments (police stations and barracks), media houses, schools, and telecommunication base stations, as well as kidnapping of school children, locals, and foreigners. Also, new tactics such as targeted assassination, drive-by-shooting, use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), and suicide bombing have been used in the campaign of terror. The choice of any of these tactics usually depends on the context, chosen target, and objective to be accomplished. The tactic of open armed confrontation is a key operational tactic Boko Haram has perfected since the July 2009 revolt. This is a modification of its traditional tactics of hit-and-run, which require appreciable numbers (10–60) of selected operatives engaging security forces in gun battles. The new method involves deploying large number of members to mount surprise attacks on security establishments (stations, barracks, or prisons) or “soft” civilian targets (markets and churches), where there are usually a large number of forces or people who can overpower its operatives if it adopts any other means.²⁵

Under Shakau, the sect maintains a loose command-and-control structure, which allows it to operate autonomously. Figure 1 shows the organizational structure of Boko Haram under Abubakar Shekau.



KEY: Flow of directives and instructions Flow of information and suggestions

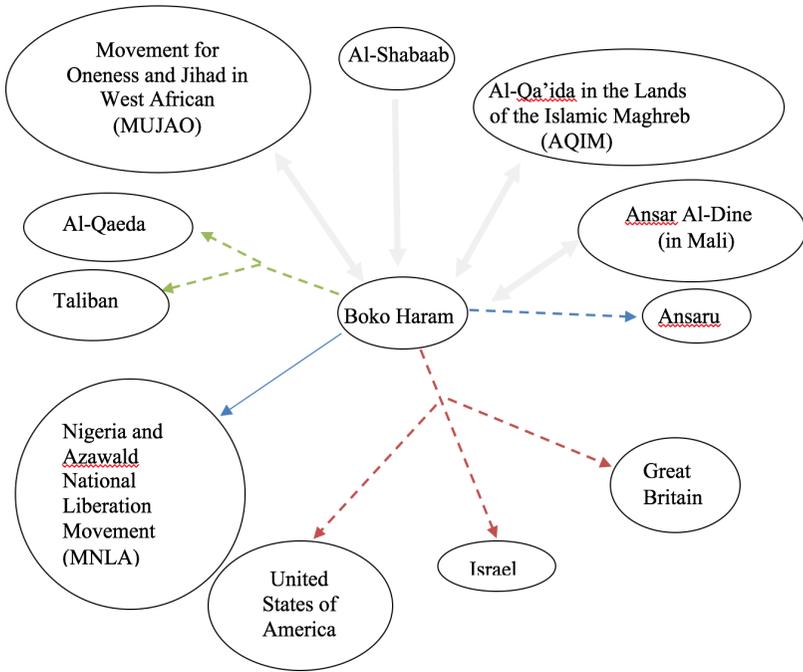
Source: Freedom C. Onuoha, "(Un) Willing to die: Boko Haram and suicide terrorism in Nigeria." Report. Al-Jazeera Centre for Studies. (24, December, 2012) 3.

After the extra-judicial killing of Yusuf, Shekau became the supreme leader of Boko Haram. Though he has been declared dead several times (for example, in mid-August, 2015, by the President of Chad²⁶), he continues to resurface to debunk the rumour and claim that he is still the leader of the sect. Being a ruthless leader, Shekau has the final say on every decision in spite the existence of a Shura (decision making) Council.

Boko Haram Internationalization

Boko Haram was internationalized from the beginning, since it operated from a region with porous borders. At the end of the 1990s, Mohammed Yusuf first extend his influence outside of Borno and Yobe by using the regional networks developed by the Nigerian Izala when they had begun to preach in the mid-1980s, launching their own organisation, Adini-Islam, in Niamey in 1993.²⁷ This took Yusuf and his supporters towards neighbouring countries like Chad and the republic of Niger. In addition, Boko Haram internationalization can also be understood from the fact that Shekau's organization has established links with foreign jihadists and carries out activities outside Nigeria in the immediate neighbourhood and farther afield within West Africa. Partly because of necessity, partly because of convenience, and partly because of ideological affinities, these relations and foreign activities have intensified over the years, most noticeably since 2010. The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism analyses Boko Haram relationship with other terrorist organizations from 2008–2013 in terms of training, ideologies, supplies, militants, financing, weapons, facilitating donation lines from organizations in Great Britain and Saudi Arabia, training camps, and conducting joint operations.²⁸

The appearance of Ansaru has further highlighted the process of internationalization as Boko Haram's offshoot appears to be the group enjoying the closet connection to AQIM and its affiliates and the one with greatest propensity for attacking foreign targets. Comolli provides a closer look at the relationship among international terrorist organisations and Boko Haram: There are reported communications, training, and weapons links between Boko Haram, Al-Qaeda in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Al-Shabaab, and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, which may strengthen Boko Haram's capacity to conduct terrorist attacks.²⁹



Legend

- Primary support through joint attacks/collaboration/funding (MUJAO, Al-Shabaab, AQLIM, Ansar Al-Dine)
- Secondary support through ideological support/verbal praise (Al-Qaeda, Taliban)
- Primary target—fighting enemies (Nigeria and MNLA)
- Secondary targets—only verbal denunciation (Great Britain, Israel, United States of America)
- Splinter organization (Ansaru)

Source: Big Allied and Dangerous (BAAD) Data

Boko Haram activity is described as global terrorism due to their links with other Islamic jihadists across the shore of African continent. This trans-border relationship is strong enough to destabilize the world. In fact,

General Carter Ham, Commander of United States African Command (AFRICOM) raised the alarm over the possible connection between Boko Haram and foreign, more established groups. In August 2011, he declared it was likely that Boko Haram had established contacts with AQIM and, more loosely, with Al-Shabaab. He described this as, if confirmed, “the most dangerous thing to happen not only to the Africans, but to us as well” and believed that there were intentions on the part of Boko Haram and AQIM to coordinate their efforts even if they may not have yet been in the position to do so.³⁰ In March 2010, Boko Haram declared that it was “joining Al-Qaeda to avenge the murder of some of its members and leaders in a series of explosions across Nigeria.” In fact, it was reported that the AQIM leader, Abdelmalek Droukdel, also known as Abu Musab Abdel Wadoud, confirmed that his group has been talking to Boko Haram and intends to supply it with weapons to “defend Muslims in Nigeria and stop the advance of a minority of Crusaders.” He further noted that Al-Qaeda has an interest in Sub-Saharan Africa for “its strategic depth that would give it bigger scope for maneuvers.”³¹ Shakau even expressed solidarity with Al-Qaeda and threatened the US: “Do not think jihad is over. Rather jihad has just begun.”³² However, some scholars argue that Boko Haram has not been recognized by the al-Qaeda core though their rapid evolution and tactics proves that the group has benefitted from exposure to more sophisticated outfits such as AQIM and al-Shabaab.³³

This is evident in the suicide bombing used by Boko Haram to draw attention from the global community as it threatens every facet—economy, education, health, human security, national security, global peace, and security. Freedom Onuoha explains that as at 2014, the sect relied mainly on vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIED), twice on body-borne improvised explosive devices (BBIED), and one each on a motorcycle-borne improvised explosive device (MBIED) and a tricycle-borne improvised explosive device (TBIED).³⁴ He adds that four factors could account for the adoption of suicide terrorism by the sect: the emergence of a more radical and hard-line leadership of the sect in the aftermath of July 2009 revolt; the increased counter-insurgency measures put in place by the government to curtail its traditional tactics of open armed confrontation or placement of IEDs; improved funding from various sources within and outside Nigeria; and, more importantly, the sect’s bond with foreign terror groups, leading to increased fanatic indoctrination of its members by experienced ideologues

skilled in evoking visions of martyrdom to radicalize recruits. These sophisticated tactics qualify the sect as a global terrorist group operating in Nigeria but having greater effects in the world.

BOKO HARAM AND THE MANIPULATION OF GOD'S NAME WITH RELIGION

Although Boko Haram started as a religious sect, at their terrorization phase, the sect has been manipulating God's name with religion to carry out their attacks. The extreme views of Shekau (who was at the helm of affairs at the terrorization phase) in manipulating the name of God and religion were reflected in some of his messages. For instance:

. ...fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and his Messenger, nor acknowledge the Religion of Truth, from among the people of the Book, until they pay the jizya with willing submission and feel themselves subdued. Suratul Taubat 9:29

. ...To him who fighteth in the cause of Allah – whether he is slain or gets victory – soon shall we give him a reward of great (value). Nisa'a 4:74.

. ...fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits: for Allah loveth not transgressors. And slay them wherever you catch them, and turn them out from where they have turned you out, for persecution is worse than slaughter: but fight them not at the Sacred Mosque, unless they (first) fight you there, but if they fight you, slay them. Such is the reward of those who reject Faith. Baqarah 2:190-191.³⁵

On January 2012 when there was series of explosions and casualties that rocked the city of Kano, the sect, opened with this statement:

In the name of Allah, Peace and Mercy! ... This message is to all inhabitants of Kano State especially the security agencies, those arresting our brothers and telling the media they are arresting thieves or armed robbers. ... We don't have the right to attack those who don't attack us but our war is with the government fighting Muslims, its security agencies and Christians (under CAN), those killing Muslims and even eating their flesh and all those helping security agents even if they are Muslims. I enjoyed

killing anyone that God commands me to kill the way I enjoy killing chickens and rams.³⁶

In addition to the manipulation of God with religion, on August 14, 2015, Adamawa State budgeted ₦200 million for prayer warriors towards seeking Allah's intervention to tackle activities of Boko Haram. According to the Chief of Staff to the state governor, the money was sourced from the state and local governments' joint account.³⁷

The aforementioned issues raise questions such as: Is it God (Allah) that sent them to kill and carry out the attacks? Are the messages sanctioned in Islam religion? Can't the money be used for the growth and development of the state? Is there a need for money for spiritual intervention? Why manipulate of the name of God with religion in expressing one's grievances towards the state of the nation and addressing fundamental issues? Olomjobi provides a clue towards these questions. He asserts that since Islam is, primordially speaking, the existing essence of all Muslims in northern Nigeria, it is not surprising that the sect had a large followership in the north. Religious identity is the channel used to convey socio-economic grievance through radicalizing the perceptions of Islam.³⁸ This also shows that Nigeria is entrenched in religious manipulation to siphon public funds towards one's advantage to the detriment of others.

Hence, what Boko Haram and the government have revealed is that they are able to debase the value placed on the name of God and religion, not only by misusing them, but by combining them with the act of terrorism. The sect also use as soft targets those who are underprivileged, oppressed, impoverished, dispossessed, and uneducated people such as girl-child suicide bombers. They are able to use vulnerable people by brainwashing them through misinterpreting, misquoting, and reinventing their own Islamic verses because it is only in religion they can find solace that is missing in their world. In addition, it could also be argued that the Koran and its selective unquestioned misinterpretations are the most powerful and defining framework that influence the mind of Boko Haram. Thus, Boko Haram is driven by the existing socio-economic and political abnormalities in a religious guise while the Adamawa state government is driven by the closed-mindedness of the government toward the plight of the people.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE MANIPULATION OF RELIGION BY THE BOKO HARAM: ANALYZING THE BODY COUNT

Several scholars and articles have expatiated on the effects of Boko Haram religious terrorism. These can be summarized as the breakdown of commercial and socio-economic activities. However, this paper analyses the absolute deaths in the northeast geo-political zone of the country (except Taraba) where the effects of the sect's activities have been felt deeply and also the country at large. Figure 1 to 5 shows the absolute deaths in Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe and Yobe States respectively.

Figure 1
Adamawa State Fatalities

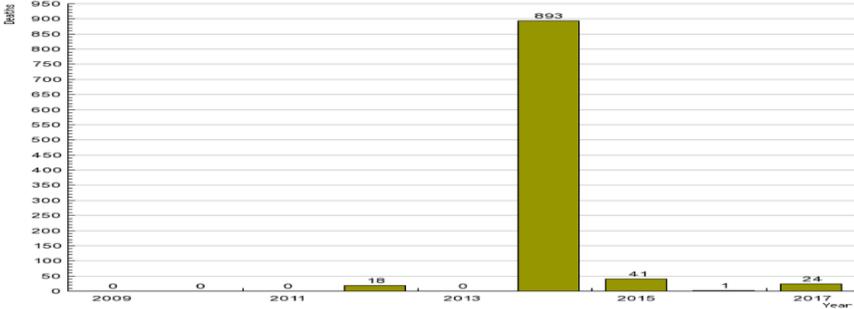


Figure 2
Bauchi State Fatalities

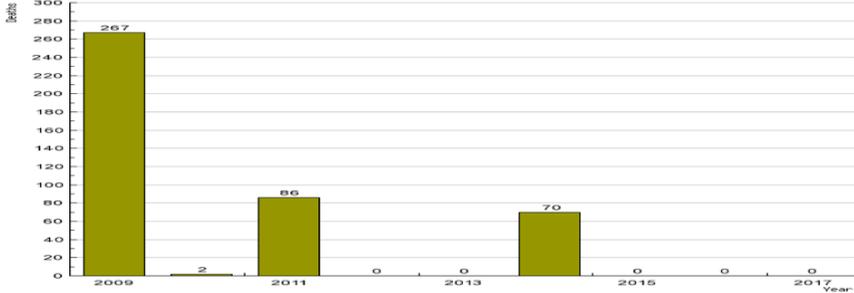


Figure 3
Borno State Fatalities

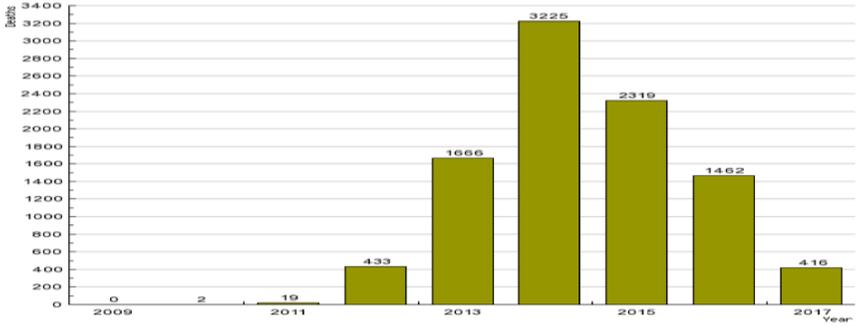


Figure 4
Gombe State Fatalities

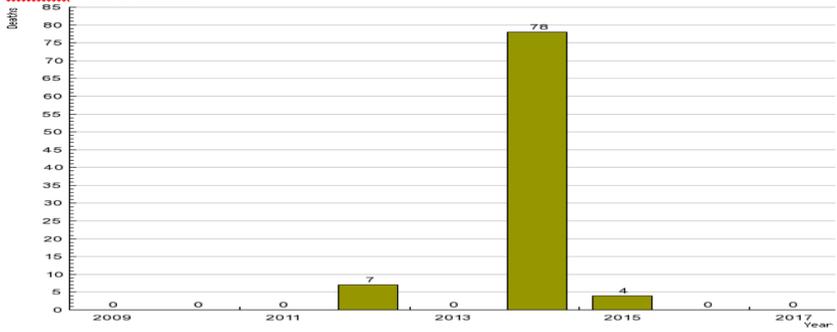
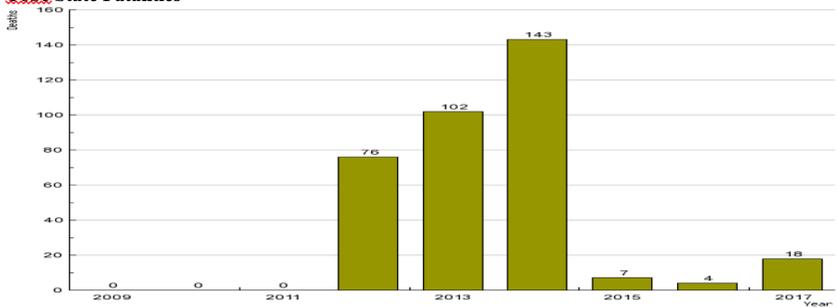


Figure 5
Yobe State Fatalities

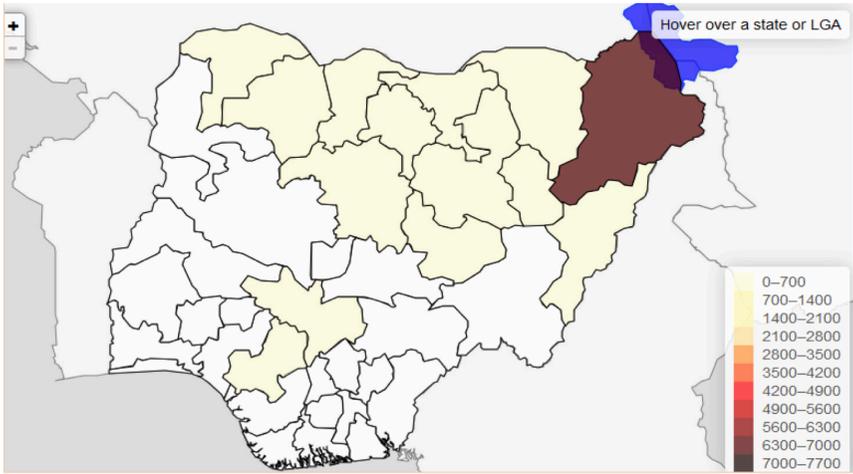


Sources of figure 1–5: Nigeria Watch database

Historically, Boko Haram religious fundamentalism started in 1995 as a Muslim Youth Organization which transformed to Boko Haram in 2002 and started jihad activities in 2009, targeting security forces, westernized institutions, and places of worship. Figures above show that the fundamentalist activities of Boko Haram were at its peak in 2014. It was during this period that the sect gained global recognition after kidnapping over 200 girls in Chibok, Borno State, with over 11 attacks in other parts of Nigeria. In addition, Figures 3 and 5 shows that Borno and Yobe states have been recording constant fundamentalist activities of the sect in the history of Nigeria. This is owing to the fact that Borno State is their focal point while Yobe State has been their targeting centre.



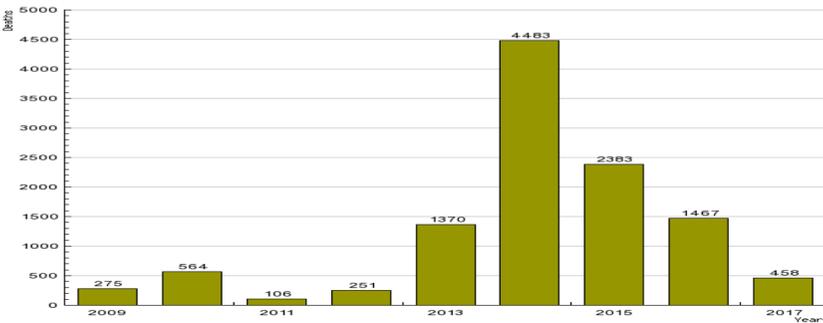
Source: Onuoha, Freedom C. 2010. “The Islamist challenge: Nigeria’s Boko Haram crisis explained.” *African Security Review*, 19: 2, 54–67



Source: Nigeria Watch

Figure 6

Nigeria Total Fatalities



Source: Nigeria Watch

Map 1 and Figure 6 show the distribution of religious fundamentalism-related fatalities across Nigeria since 2009 till date. In Map 2, Borno State has the highest number of religious fatalities in Nigeria. Abubakar

Monguno quotes US-based Council on Foreign Relations that Borno State is the most insecure of all the thirty-six states of Nigeria with a record of 2,400 deaths in only two years.³⁹ In the last nine years, the state has recorded over 7,000 violent deaths. Figure 6 shows that there is a reduction in absolute deaths cases across the country. This may be due to the efforts of the federal government in the northeast. Also, it may be because President Muhammadu Buhari is a Muslim. Religious fundamentalism was at its peak during the tenure of former President Ebele Jonathan (2011–2015) who is a Christian. Presently, the reduction in the number of violent deaths does not mean reduction in the act of religious fundamentalism. Therefore, the act of religious fundamentalism must be addressed if there will be any successful counterinsurgency against terrorism.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, this study recommends the following:

1. De-radicalization is needed as a tool for countering jihadist narratives. An ideology can only be countered by an ideology.
2. A government regulatory agency on religious affairs should curb religious leaders who preach hate speeches and fundamentalist messages capable of inciting violence against other religions and the State.
3. Religious centers, educational institutions, and non-governmental organizations should work hand-in-hand to provide a well-balanced religious education to youth and different religious adherents that will lead to religious tolerance and accommodation.
4. Religious practitioners should reinforce moral values that emphasize religious tolerance.
5. The government should withdraw from politicizing ethnicity and religion or using religion to actualize political objectives, but should carry out their responsibilities to the people in terms of eradication of poverty and the provision of basic social amenities, employment opportunities, a quality education system, and a better standard of living.
6. Religious leaders should ensure that their adherents find solace

in their respective religion and should preach peace.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The manipulation of religion has been deeply rooted in Nigeria because it is a strong primordial factor in the day-to-day activities in the country. Also, religion has a cushioning effect for many Nigerians in their daily activities. Thus, it is very easy for religious fundamentalism to gain access into the country because it can make religiously inclined people fearless in confronting injustice and corruption, as well as promising an eternal reward beyond death. However, as described in the Koran (2:85, 4:93), eternal punishment exists for all who carry out acts of unnecessary brutality, or for the killing of non-combatants or captives. Verses of the scripture that condemn religious violence and fundamentalism should be more emphasized so as to curb the spread of misguided religious utterances through the manipulation of religion in the name of God.

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